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SA anti-Israel group tries to boycott Zoom

TALI FEINBERG

Africa4Palestine, formerly Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) South Africa, has called on the international BDS movement office in Ramallah, the Boycott National Committee (BNC), to add video conferencing platform Zoom to its international boycott list.

This follows Zoom blocking a San Francisco State University (SFSU) event in which Palestinian terrorist and hijacker Leila Khaled was the main speaker. The event was streamed on YouTube and Facebook, but even this footage was later taken down by both platforms.

“The BNC guides global BDS efforts on what to boycott,” wrote Africa4Palestine in a statement. “We will await direction from BDS, and hope that it will provide guidance on the way forward before we embark on boycotting.”

However, the BNC cut ties between Africa4Palestine and its international organisation in May this year after its “mishandling and failure to properly investigate serious allegations of sexual harassment”, according to international BDS movement co-founder Omar Barghouti at the time. “This group is no longer part of the BDS movement. The BNC, which leads the BDS movement, has informed this group that it can no longer carry the BDS name,” he said in a video message.

“It seems that Africa4Palestine didn’t get the memo that BDS international doesn’t support it!” says Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations. “I don’t think this boycott would have much influence here [in South Africa] because no reputable entity is going to support a local chapter that’s no longer supported by its parent body.”

Discussing whether such a boycott could go ahead internationally, Gon says, “It’s difficult to tell whether BDS international would boycott Zoom, because two other entities [Facebook and YouTube] also refused to show Khaled. So BDS would have to boycott them too.”

Technology expert Arthur Goldstuck agrees, saying that the situation “is reminiscent of the old spy versus spy cartoons, except now it’s boycott versus boycott – but it’s hardly comical. The organisation’s use of an icon of terror underlines the destructive nature of the call to boycott, and also its likely failure.

“Even for the most human-rights-oriented tech boycotts, such as the response of many advertisers to Facebook’s inability to maintain its own community standards, the sheer size of the user base and utility of the platform means such campaigns have limited impact,” says Goldstuck. “In this case, the organisation is merely tilting at windmills, as they say. The bottom line is that Zoom is, indeed, applying community standards, and a hate-oriented

boycott of this kind will work only among those committed to peddling hate.”

According to *Israel Hayom*, the Lawfare Project initially sent a letter to Zoom with a warning that by knowingly permitting Khaled to use its platform to communicate directly to United States college students, the online platform could violate federal law. This makes it illegal to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organisation. The Lawfare Project is an American, non-profit think tank and litigation fund for the protection of human and civil rights of Jewish and pro-Israel communities worldwide.

The Lawfare Project said it had held “intensive dialogue” with Zoom regarding the event. The online platform’s deputy general counsel and chief compliance and ethics officer, Lynn Haaland, then issued a statement:

“Zoom is committed to supporting the open exchange of ideas and conversations, subject to certain limitations contained in our terms of service, including those related to user compliance with applicable US export control, sanctions, and anti-terrorism laws.

“In light of the speaker’s reported affiliation or membership of a US-designated foreign terrorist organisation, and SFSU’s inability to confirm otherwise, we determined the meeting was in violation of Zoom’s terms of service, and told SFSU it may not use Zoom for this particular event,” it said.

Africa4Palestine noted that “A Women’s Day event that #Africa4Palestine held with Leila Khaled was also interrupted, on 9 August 2020”. The organisation said it was “convinced that it was a deliberate attempt by Zoom not to allow our event with Leila Khaled”.

It believes that Zoom’s actions are “part of a litany of attempts by the Zionist and pro-Israel lobby to suppress advocacy for Palestinian human rights and should be met with appropriate consequences”.

Khaled (now 76) is known for being the first woman to hijack a plane. She was part of a team that hijacked TWA flight 840 on its way from Rome to Tel Aviv in August 1969. A year later, she participated in the attempted hijacking of an El Al flight from Amsterdam to New York City as part of a series of simultaneous hijackings carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an organisation that is blacklisted as a terrorist entity by the United States, Israel, and the European Union.

After the second hijacking, Khaled was

Continued on page 2>>

UAE and Israel ambassadors get together for coffee

TALI FEINBERG

Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Mahash Saeed Alhameli met for the first time last week to celebrate the Abraham Accords signed between their two countries. Their meeting was held at the UAE embassy in Pretoria on 30 September.

When the *SA Jewish Report* contacted Alhameli after the meeting, he was delighted to hear from the newspaper as a first step to engaging with the broader South African Jewish community.

He said the meeting with Keinan was of historic importance to him as it was vital to connect with “our brothers and sisters” after the signing of the Accords. “It has been over 25 years since the last peace accord was signed with an Arab nation. The normalisation of ties between the two nations is a new narrative of hope, dialogue, and prosperity in the Middle East,” he says.

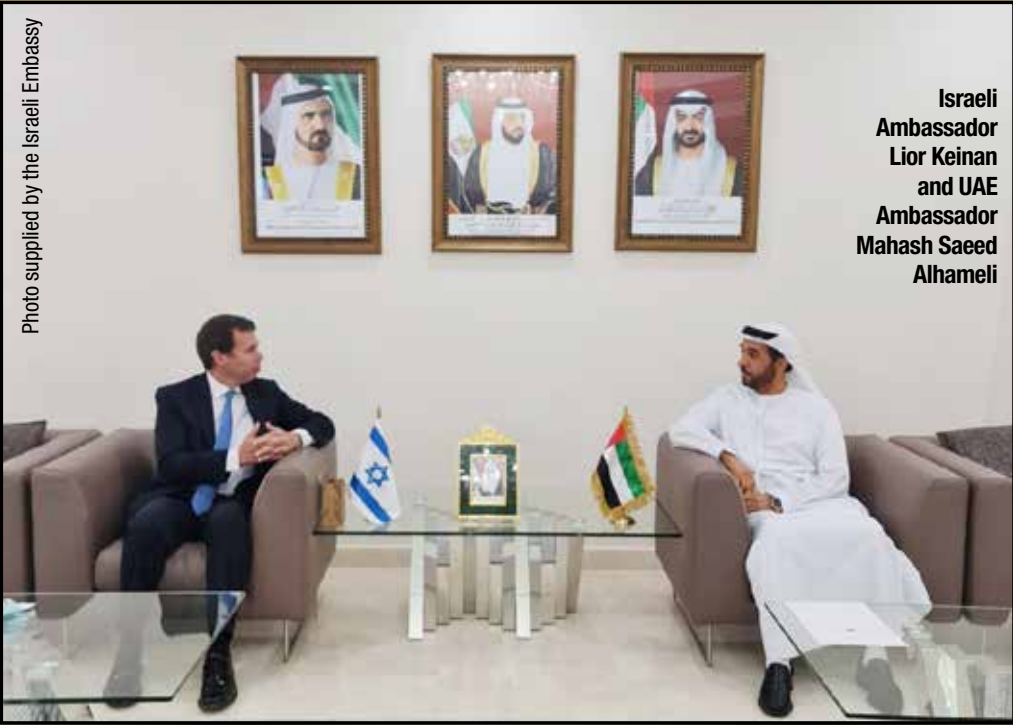
Alhameli believes in “working together in South Africa to strengthen relations between our communities and South Africa in the areas of the economy, social development, cultural integration, and many other issues”.

He sees the Accords as a “people to people” agreement that will expand into business, economic, social, and cultural co-operation. Calling Israel a “partner state”, he said the countries, as well as Jews and Arabs, had much in common. Envisaging peace and stability across the Middle East, “There are no limits in co-operation between us.”

Alhameli says the embassies hope to partner on numerous initiatives in a variety of spheres, such as cultural events or business expos. One such example is the upcoming Dubai World Expo from October 2021 to March 2022. An event so large it has been compared to the Olympics, Alhameli hopes that this new partnership with Israel will allow the Jewish community to be part of the expo. “We encourage the business community to get involved,” he says.

In 2021, the UAE is celebrating its Golden Jubilee. “In looking at what we have achieved in 50 years, it’s indicative of a nation that believes in

Photo supplied by the Israeli Embassy



**Israeli
Ambassador
Lior Keinan
and UAE
Ambassador
Mahash Saeed
Alhameli**

the future and the importance of prosperity, science, and innovation as well as cutting through barriers,” he says.

For Keinan, “It was marvellous to have a meeting like this. It was definitely a historic moment. I meet regularly with other diplomats, but this is the first time I have met with the representative of a country that we have just made peace with. It was festive, and great to connect with a colleague from the Middle East.

“Both sides were very happy to arrange the meeting after the signing ceremony at the White House,” says the ambassador. “It felt like an immediately close relationship. We were very comfortable, nothing was difficult, from arranging the meeting to the conversation itself.”

While he won’t reveal the details of a private meeting, he says he and Alhameli spoke over coffee, were introduced to each other, and were informed about each embassy’s activities in South Africa.

“The feeling was that this is a mutual first step, and we will take further steps,” says Keinan. “We will see what we can do together, and how our staff can work together, embassy to embassy. It was a first meeting, and hopefully not the last. I look forward to future co-operation between our embassies and nations.”

South African parliamentarian involved in world peace declaration

NICOLA MILTZ

Democratic Alliance member of the National Assembly, Darren Bergman, represented South Africa as a Parliamentarian For Peace (P4P) at the World Normandy Peace Forum last week.

Bergman, the shadow minister for international relations and cooperation, was one of 10

parliamentarians from around the world who worked together over two months to formulate a peace policy platform.

On Friday, 2 October, the P4P presented its peace declaration at the World Normandy Peace Forum.

According to Bergman, the declaration suggests political solutions to help resolve political tensions. “It also calls on international leaders to enhance efforts for sustainable peace,” he said.

The Normandy World Peace Forum is an international event initiated by the Normandy region, attended by heads of state, academics, and political specialists in Caen, usually just before the anniversary of D-Day and the battle of Normandy. It provides an annual opportunity to discuss global tension and peace-building. The main goal is to build bridges and foster sustainable peace solutions.

This year, because of the global pandemic, many of the events

were held virtually for those who could not travel to the Abbaye Aux Dames in Caen.

The P4P brings together diverse parliamentarians to highlight impactful policy solutions for peace guided by shared principles.

Bergman said although he did not meet the parliamentarians face to face because of COVID-19, the experience was “extremely valuable”.

“Ten of us from around the world in similar positions, but with different political outlooks and environments, were put together to find common purpose in two short months in this prestigious programme. I had the opportunity to network with interesting people who share a common objective of trying to find solutions to everyday world problems.”

The parliamentarians worked on the three main factors threatening peace: environmental deterioration, social upheaval, and the digital revolution.

They worked jointly to design transnational legislative work to address new threats to global peace in the areas of education, social policies, environment protection, sustainable development, and new technology and innovation.



Participants were invited from France, South Africa,

Brazil, Norway, Canada, Senegal, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, India, and Taiwan.

“I have had the pleasure of representing our region, but to represent the continent and to push the issues most important to me in terms of global conflict and human rights is great especially when I have the opportunity to push the United Nations reform agenda,” said Bergman.

“The ‘take home’ for me was that no matter where in the world one is, the issues will be universal, but some might be perpetrators and some might be victims. We tried to ensure that this wasn’t just another peace proposal in words, but something that would be welcomed at the Normandy World Peace Forum and then introduced in regional and national parliaments. Ironically, my first spin off came a day later when I sat on a panel at a UN forum to discuss reforms to the UN.”

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Africa4Palestine calls for boycott of Zoom

>> Continued from page 1

arrested in London, where the pilot, Uri Bar-Lev, diverted the plane. Now an Israeli retiree just shy of 90, he told the *Jewish News of Northern California* that 50 years ago last month, he foiled Khaled and an accomplice in their hijacking attempt. “In America, if you want Leila Khaled to speak, [then] you forgot the awful pain you had in 9/11 by terror,” he said.

“On board Flight 219, according to Bar-Lev, Khaled had pulled the pins on two hand grenades. With moments to spare, he put the plane in a steep dive,” the article stated. “The aircraft plummeted 10 000 feet (3km) in less than 60 seconds. He knew his passengers, all seated and strapped

in, would be safe. The terrorists were another matter – they were thrown to the floor. Khaled passed out, dropping her grenades, and they failed to go off. Once the plane levelled out, one of the two on-board Shin Bet sky marshals shot her accomplice dead. Khaled was physically subdued.”

She was arrested, but later released in exchange for hostages from another hijacking. She lives in Amman, Jordan, and remains a member of the PFLP.

Also on the panel of speakers with Khaled was South African Jewish struggle activist and former minister Ronnie Kasrils, who has long linked himself to extremist Palestinian ideology. He is also the convenor of

the South African National BDS Coalition for Palestine, the new group aligned to the international BDS movement in the wake of the rupture with Africa4Palestine.

Africa4Palestine remains resolute. “When our borders are completely open and travel

is unfettered, we will be sure to bring comrade Leila back to South Africa,” it wrote in its statement. “We are proud of comrade Leila as well as her political party, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and give them our solidarity.”

Yom Tov/Shabbat times this week

9/10/11 October			
CL	MS/CL	YTE	
17:53	18:44	18:44	Johannesburg
18:38	19:31	19:31	Cape Town
17:44	18:36	18:36	Durban
18:03	18:54	18:55	Bloemfontein
18:09	19:02	19:03	Port Elizabeth
17:59	18:51	18:52	East London
CL – Candle-lighting YTE – Yom Tov ends MS – Motsei Shabbat			

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Torah Thought

Yizkor: the meaning of memory

For those who believe in the terrible finality of death, once someone has left physical life behind, it's dead and buried and the proverbial nail in the coffin puts the seal of finality on it. Case closed. Gone, and soon forgotten.

But we Jews have never believed that life ends with the grave. Physical life may have indeed ended but spiritual life never ends. The soul leaves the body, but as a spark of G-dliness, it, too, is immortal and simply moves on to a higher sphere of existence.

Belief in the afterlife is intrinsically connected to the 13 principles of Jewish faith. Reward and punishment are enshrined as a cardinal doctrine, and the rabbis long ago determined that this takes place not in this physical world but in the world to come.

Yizkor means “remember”. We pray that Hashem remembers our departed loved ones. At the same time, we pledge *tzedakah* in their memory. The Yizkor service takes place in shul on Yom Kippur,

and we will also recite it in shul on Shemini Atzeret, this Shabbos, as well as on the last day of Pesach and second day of Shavuot.

Once upon a time, shuls would be packed out for Yizkor. Just the word “*yizkor*” would send a tremor down Jewish spines. Today, this seems to be limited to those who understand its meaning and symbolism.

Still, Yizkor does have a special place in many Jews’ consciousness even today. Rabbis usually address their congregations just before Yizkor, and that sermon is often more emotional than most, with a touching story to help get people in the right frame of mind for a memorial prayer.

The basic idea behind Yizkor is that even departed souls can be elevated by our good deeds. They cannot perform *mitzvahs* any longer. The time for action is in this world when the soul is still clothed in a body. But if we do a good deed here in their memory, it's as if they did it themselves, and it can assist them in reaching a higher state of peace and bliss in the world to come.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Sydenham Shul



This is tremendously comforting for us. By invoking their names and pledging *tzedakah* in their memory, we become the virtual embodiment of their souls.

Then, too, we may also pray that the souls of our loved ones entreat the heavenly tribunal on our behalf. We hope that when we remember them, they will put in a good word for us where it counts. They are, after all, closer to “head office”, so to speak.

Finally, by remembering the dead, we ourselves focus on more profound matters than empty materialism and the usual everyday nonsense. Appreciating our own mortality can be a sobering experience. Reflecting on the theme of life and death makes us more pensive, philosophical, and sombre, thereby reaching a deeper level of awareness and spiritual consciousness.

May our remembrances this *yom tov* be meaningful for us here and for our loved ones above.

South African Jewish Report

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‘It’s about service’ says student leader on ANC ticket

JORDAN MOSHE

University politics aren’t top of the agenda for most Jewish youth, but for Gabriella Farber, they are a calling.

Farber has thrown her name into the ring for a seat on the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Student Representative Council (SRC) this week on the ticket of the African National Congress-aligned Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA). The PYA has in recent years been overtly opposed to the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS).

Farber – a proud Jew and committed activist – has chosen to run for a position through this alliance, which is comprised of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), the Muslim Students Association (MSA), the South African Students Congress (SASCO), and the Young Communist League (YCL).

It’s here that she felt she stood the best chance of making a tangible difference on campus, having joined the group in September last year. It’s an odd choice for Farber, a second-year BA law major, considering that she attended a seminary in Israel for two years after matriculating from Yeshiva College, seldom leaving her Jewish bubble.

“When I came to Wits last year, I knew nothing about politics,” Farber told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “Like most Jewish students, I preferred to keep company with other Jews, and seldom stepped out of my Glenhazel bubble. Then the PYA disrupted one of my lectures, and I started to think differently.”

A keen activist and the former vice-chairperson of Bnei Akiva, Farber identified with the values of the alliance. After attending a PYA-led protest and learning more about the group’s manifesto, she decided to join its ranks. From action against gender-based violence to sit-ins in the office of the vice-chancellor, Farber has spent the past year heavily involved in a variety of student causes.

Her SRC campaign is the latest step in her political journey, one which has

exposed her to people and places few Jewish youngsters even contemplate.

“In the beginning, it was weird,” she says. “I was and remain the only white person involved. I was the first Jew many of my comrades had ever met, and together, we have engaged in a journey of mutual learning, understanding one another’s backgrounds, cultures, and situations.

“To me, they’re family. To them, I am Gabisile.”

Says Farber, “Campus is a microcosm of South Africa. It features individuals from across society who are the future of the country and for whom the university space is the start of the rest of their lives.

incoming SRC, Farber has been engaged in a gruelling election campaign driven by an overwhelming urge to help less fortunate students.

“G-d has blessed me with privilege, and it’s not something I can use as an excuse not to be involved – it’s the reason why I must be. I can’t enjoy freedoms when the students sitting next to me in class don’t have the same. I never thought I’d enter this space and see things from the other side, but as a Jew, it’s my obligation to stay here and make a difference.”

Given the PYA’s recent history of opposing SAUJS and its heavy ANC leaning, Farber’s choice of party appears somewhat odd at first glance.



Gabriella Farber

“As a Jew, I can’t let the opportunity to make a difference pass me by. It’s my moral obligation to avoid being a bystander and effect a revolution for those in need.”

As Wits students take to virtual polls this week to vote for their

“Historically, the posture taken by the PYA has been antipathy toward SAUJS,” says political analyst and former SRC activist, Jamie Mighti. “This is because of its Zionist ideology. However, the position hasn’t been fully consistent, with other campus organisations



which adopt an ideology not being targeted by the PYA.”

This contradictory behaviour has resulted in the adoption of more tolerance, illustrated by Farber’s ability to join the alliance’s ranks, says Mighti.

“To see someone affiliated with SAUJS competing under a PYA ticket shows a reform in approach which actually makes sense,” he says. “The ANC is an organisation which has representation from across South Africa, including members of the Jewish community. It seems peculiar that an organisation which has a history of working with the Jewish community would continue to single SAUJS out.”

Mighti says that this significant shift is certainly welcome. “It’s a more honest appreciation of what the Jewish community is and does. Jewish students are South African too, and they can have political affiliations with the ANC. Farber’s involvement will probably lead to more discussion on divisive issues [like Israel].”

Farber says that the PYA and its ANC-informed values match her passion for helping fellow students and South Africans.

“It’s about the idea of service,” she says. “The people in the ANC and PYA serve the country and students as equals, not charity cases. They fight for them because they deserve better on campus, at school, and in the workplace.

“No South African should be left behind, and I’m determined to make a difference whether I get onto the SRC or not.”

Shimron Shapiro, a lawyer who was the first SAUJS activist to get onto the SRC at Wits in 2002, believes that Farber’s involvement has the potential to realign the values of the PYA, an alliance which he helped form while studying at Wits.

“Farber can make a tremendous difference in student politics,” he says. “There has always been a misperception amongst non-Jews that Jews are no longer involved in the struggle for democracy and freedom. It’s far from the truth, and the work that Farber does goes some way towards proving this.

“I was part of SAUJS when we formed the PYA, then a very progressive alliance that ruffled many feathers. Sadly, the MSA forced it to oppose SAUJS, and it was later hijacked by BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement]. Gabi’s involvement has the potential to bring about positive change within the PYA and create proper dialogue between opposing groups.”

ANC stalwart Joy Coplan believes Farber’s involvement can help the national ANC realign its own priorities.

“The ANC has fallen to anarchy and lawlessness, forgetting its core foundational values of anti-racism, anti-violence, and freedom,” she says. “Gabi Farber has taken the initiative to stand for these values, and could well help drive a revival at student level. As a Jew, a woman, and South African, she is standing true to the values on which our democracy is based,” Coplan says.

“Her candidacy makes me feel hopeful, and I pray that other youngsters in our community will follow her brave lead. We need more like her.”

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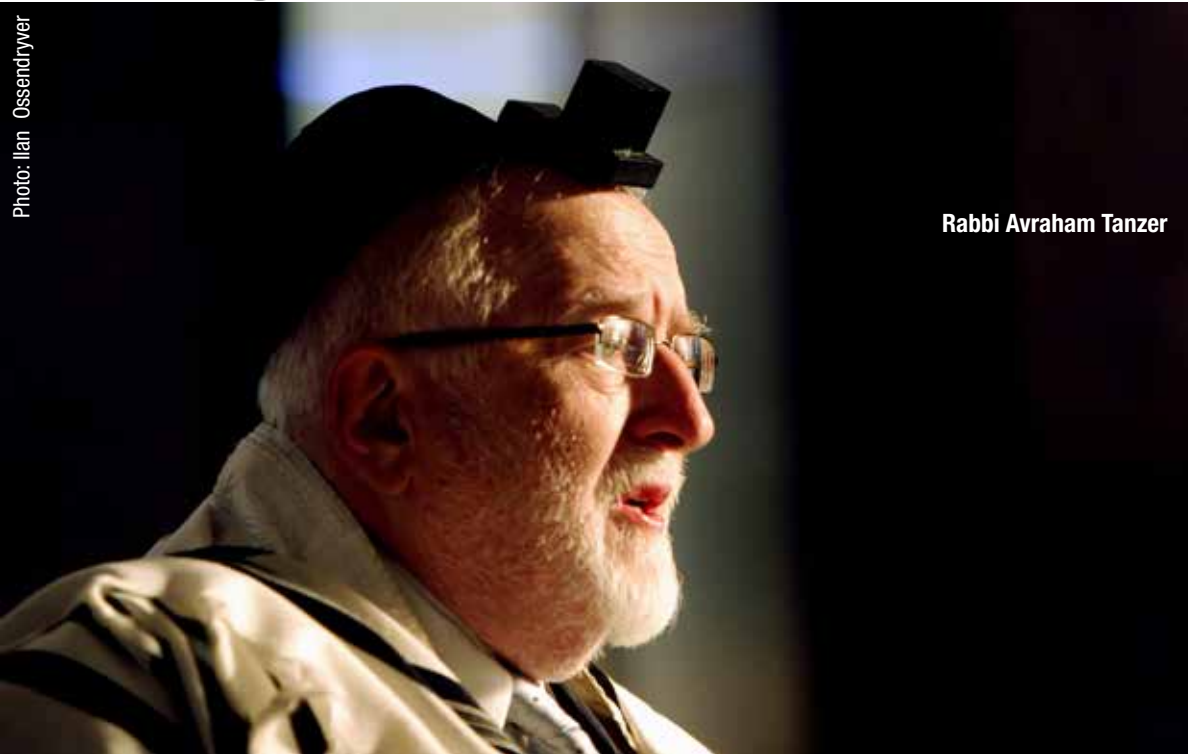
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Farewell to a Torah giant and gentleman

JORDAN MOSHE

When Rabbi Avraham Tanzer passed away last Tuesday night, his machzor was still lying on his desk and his tallis was still draped over his chair from Yom Kippur. Shock at the loss of this 85-year-old Torah giant and gentleman spread like wildfire as the community went into mourning. “The world isn’t the same world we know,” said Rabbi Alon Friedman, the associate rabbi of Glenhazel Hebrew Congregation, in a eulogy delivered at a tribute event held on Yeshiva College campus on Wednesday morning last week. “We’ve lost a giant. We all went to sleep last night thinking it was a terrible nightmare, but we were woken this morning confused and lost without our beloved Rosh Yeshiva, taken from us so suddenly moments after Yom Kippur.” Tanzer, a pillar of the Johannesburg Jewish community,

dean of Yeshiva College School, and spiritual leader of the Glenhazel Hebrew Congregation, leaves a legacy few could rival. Tanzer was the ultimate rabbi’s rabbi and people’s rabbi, Friedman said. “He lived by the mantra of nothing is permanent, that Hashem will get us through everything. His entire life he got up before the birds to learn,” Friedman said. “Who could forget the Rosh Yeshiva standing at the pulpit and living his *droshas* and *shiurim*? He did it all with grace, love, and warmth.” “He had an open-door policy, and literally never closed his study door unless dealing with a private matter. He was accessible to everyone: Jews and non-Jews, students, alumni, and staff. He had time for anyone who walked through his door. “When someone was pained, he was. When someone had a *simcha*, he did. He carried around a notebook in his jacket pocket with hundreds of names of sick



people for whom he davened daily. He knew every person and what they needed. “He never forgot anyone, and after meeting the Rosh Yeshiva, no one forgot him.” Tanzer was born in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in 1935, and arrived in South Africa in the early 1960s to take up the position of associate Rosh Yeshiva at newly opened Yeshiva College

for what was supposed to be a two-year stint. He and wife, Marcia, ended up staying and making an impact few could match. Together, the couple invested their efforts in furthering the religious interests of our community, nurturing the recently founded Yeshiva College Boys High School, and founding an iconic community shul which would become the home of about 750 families.

Rabbi Dov Tanzer spoke of his father, “Who could discern what needed to be said like you could? Everything I ever said I asked you about first. I knew that If I asked your advice, what you felt was always the right thing. You just understood.” “You taught that *kavod* is something to give, not to take. So humble, so gentle, so normal. Yet a giant.” For close on 60 years, the great rabbi’s son said that he woke up every morning feeling warm because he knew that there was someone whose love he could count on all the time. “You were a person who really cared,” he said. “Now, *abba*, the world is a bit colder. For your family, your children, this is like the *churban hamikdash* [the destruction of the temple].” Rabbi David Masinter, Tanzer’s son-in-law, said that with Tanzer’s passing, Johannesburg, South Africa, and the Jewish world had lost some of its splendour. “For the past 35 years, wherever I spoke [where Tanzer was in attendance], I got a call the next morning without exception from my father-in-law to tell me how well I’d spoken.” Tanzer’s passing leaves our community bereft and orphaned, said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein. “We have lost one of the greatest rabbis in the history of South African Jewry,” he said. “I feel bereft and a deep sense of loss. Rabbi Tanzer was a mentor, guide, teacher, friend, and rabbi to me, and I feel such a sense of loss and pain at his passing. “Before he got up to deliver a *drosha* in shul, he turned to me to ask me to *daven* for Hashem to

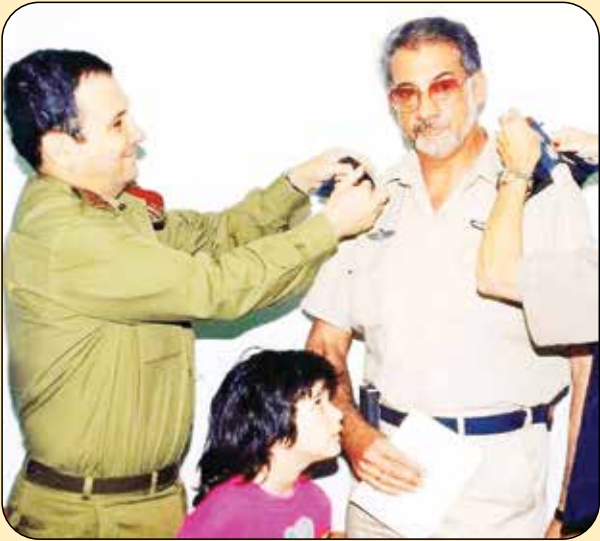
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Sky was the limit for SA-born Entebbe doctor

TALI FEINBERG

The South African-born doctor who headed the medical team in the Entebbe raid in 1976, Dr Jossy Faktor, passed away at the age of 80 on *erev* Rosh Hashanah in Israel. “He hardly ever spoke about Entebbe. He respected that they weren’t allowed to talk about it,” says his brother, Basil Faktor, from Pretoria, where he, Jossy, and their late brother grew up. “We found out that he had been on the Entebbe team only after the fact. We were so proud, but also knew how dangerous it was. “The only time he spoke about it was when he was the director of Afula Hospital and he managed to raise a substantial contribution by giving talks about Entebbe in the United States,” says his wife, Barbara Faktor (nee Weiner). “With the money raised, a CAT scanner was acquired for Afula Hospital – the second or third in the country.” Faktor’s earliest childhood memories of his brother are of their years growing up in the then-thriving Pretoria Jewish community, where Judaism and Zionism were the guiding forces in their lives. “My father came from Plungyan, and my mother from Kovno, both in Lithuania. My father was already an avid Zionist back in Lithuania, and my mother was a Hebrew teacher. Our parents spoke Yiddish at home.”

Habonim played a huge role in their lives. “We would go to weekly meetings, seminars, and machaneh, and those are the memories of our youth that stand out the most,” says Faktor. “Jossy eventually became *bakoach* [head] of Habonim in Pretoria, then studied medicine at the University of Pretoria [Tuks], graduating as a doctor in 1962.” A year later, he married Barbara, who he met at Habonim. “He had no doubt in his mind from a very early age that he would make *aliyah*,” she says. “He came to Israel to Tel Hashomer Hospital [now the Sheba Medical Center] as a medical student, and worked in the hospital as part of an exchange programme. As soon as he finished medical school, he was accepted for an internship of two years at Tel Hashomer. Hospital Director Dr Haim Sheba [who the hospital was later named after] took Jossy under his wing and was like a father to him.” The couple made *aliyah*, settling in what was “possibly the first house in Herzlia Pituach”, says Faktor. His brother did a residency in obstetrics and gynaecology (obgyn), which he specialised in. The couple had four children. One son passed away at the age of 42. Amidst a career of exceptional achievements in obgyn and hospital administration, Faktor had a second career in aviation medicine. “He was interested in aviation and volunteered for flight training, becoming a reconnaissance pilot in 1973. He was also a flight surgeon in the Yom Kippur



Dr Jossy Faktor (right) of ‘The Entebbe Raid’ medical team, receives additional rank from then Chief of Staff, Ehud Barak (left)

War,” says his brother. Faktor became an Israeli Air Force physician and was sent to participate in a course at the School of Aerospace Medicine at the Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio in the United States, returning to Israel to assume the post of Israeli Air Force surgeon general. He held this position from 1975 to 1978, and was in the role during the Entebbe raid. A *Washington Post* article on Entebbe three years after the event reported how, “The worst for him was sitting on Entebbe runway with the bay of the huge transport yawning open to a night sky streaked with tracers and bomb flashes. For 53 minutes, they watched, readying the plane for use as a flying hospital, wondering if perhaps the whole group would be blown up, if they themselves would be gunned down. The amazing thing was that there were fewer than 10 wounded – three hostages and the operation’s leader were killed. “Faktor goes unrecognised on the streets of Jerusalem. He received no medals, nor did anybody else on the raid,” continued the report. “He’s not allowed to give interviews in Israel, and even here he cannot reveal certain details. ‘We may have to use these techniques again some day,’ he explained in his South African British drawl.” “Jossy related to Entebbe as part of his medical service and as his obvious duty as an airforce medical officer,” says his wife. He was also president of the Israel Society of Aerospace Medicine – a field in which the patients are pilots, aircrews, or astronauts. In this role, “he organised a highly successful International Aerospace Conference in Jerusalem with a record turnout from all over the world”, says his wife. “He was appointed as a member of the transport ministry’s Medical Appeals Board in 1986, a position he held until his passing, and participated in military and civilian aeromedical evacuation work. In 2009, he was appointed civil air surgeon for the Israel Civil Aviation Authority, a role he held until he retired less than a year ago. He was also elected a member of the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine,” says his successor as head of the airforce medical unit, Dr Yehezkel Caine.

“He was an Israeli. The minute he arrived in Israel, he soared to fantastic heights. He spoke a very pure, perfect Hebrew,” says his brother. “But he remained interested in rugby, and sometimes spoke Afrikaans interspersed with Hebrew. He didn’t forget his South African past.” There was an eight-year difference between the brothers, “so I always thought of him as another father. I remember going to my first machaneh at the age of eight, and my brothers looked after me. We thought Jossy was invincible. He always lived for the day, and I think he achieved everything he wanted to in his career, but he would have loved to see all of his eight grandchildren have their Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs and get married.” His niece, Nikki Gilbert, spoke about her uncle in a Habonim online tribute, “Jossy was a gentle, kind, wise, and funny uncle, who always had time for my sister, brother, and me. He also had a special relationship with each one of my kids, not easy to accomplish from 10 000 miles [16 093km] away. He told interesting [sometimes rambling] stories, shared corny jokes, loved sprinkling his conversation with Afrikaans, and his memories of growing up in Pretoria. And, he always cooked us delicious meals. We miss him, and our future visits to Israel will never be the same. His memory will always be for a blessing.”

Linda Givon: turning art into activism

TALI FEINBERG

Linda Goodman Givon, the founder of the world-renowned Goodman Gallery and known as “South Africa’s first lady of art” and “the grande dame of the South African art world”, passed away on 5 October in Johannesburg.

Held in the highest regard across the global art world, Givon will be remembered as the gallerist who refused to abide by apartheid laws and put South African art on the map.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Los Angeles, her son, Robert Miller, reflected that she was “primarily responsible for bringing the South African art scene to where it is today, both in South Africa and internationally”. Due to the pandemic, Miller is unable to return to South Africa for his mother’s funeral.

Givon, born Linda Finger, was the daughter of Morris and Hetty Finger, both immigrants from Lithuania. Her father first moved to London’ East End before coming to South Africa after World War II. Here, he became a prominent businessman and member of the community, founding a shul in Yeoville, and becoming very involved in Oxford Shul.

“Her mother, Hetty, never had a formal education, but she devoted life to education and culture, and was an avid art collector,” says Miller. “She would hold lectures and classes at their house.” From this conservative but deeply cultural environment, Givon became a “rebel with a cause”, and a lifelong devotee to the arts.

She graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand with a Bachelor of Arts degree and graduated from the London School of Dramatic Art with a teaching and acting diploma. She travelled to Florence, and for a time she worked as an actress. She married Brian Miller, the father of her two children, and they settled in London.

“It was in London that she ended up working at Grosvenor Gallery”, an important turning point in her life. “This was where she ‘cut her teeth’, and was mentored by [American art collector, art dealer, and author] Eric Estorick. It was her entry into the commercial art world,” says her son.

She returned to South Africa with her children, and later married Tony Goodman. “I was six or seven when she founded the Goodman Gallery in 1966, in her father’s shopping centre, Hyde Square,” recalls Miller.

“From the beginning, she lived her life as if apartheid didn’t exist. She launched artists on the basis of what she saw as their quality, skill, and their ability to see what needed to be expressed in South Africa at the time,” says Pippa Skotnes, professor of fine art and the director of the Centre for Curating the Archive at the University of Cape

Town. “She did it fearlessly,” Skotnes says. “She was working in a ‘man’s world’, commanding a team of dedicated people,” and she herself was “quite terrifying at times! She had a strong presence and personality.”

Launching the careers of black artists meant “defying apartheid laws, applying for black artists



Linda Goodman Givon

to stay overnight in white areas so that they could attend their own exhibition openings”, Skotnes says.

In her own words, Givon told the *New York Times* in 2003 how exhibition openings required “cop watchers”, who kept an eye out for the Special Branch police unit, who were sure to shut down multiracial gatherings. Givon told of how she kept stacks of trays around and handed them to black guests if the police arrived. “Everyone would turn into a waiter,” she said. “We would have more waiters than guests at our openings!”

This anecdote has become legend, and was just the tip of the iceberg of how Givon ensured that her gallery was an activist institution. As a child, Miller remembers meeting black artists that Givon harboured in their home. “It was dangerous, as these artists were under scrutiny.”

Miller said they often asked their mother if she was in danger. “I believe her phones were tapped. She walked a fine line. While I don’t think there was ever an overt threat, she was definitely ‘on the radar’. She took a stand every day.”

Givon’s generosity and philanthropy stands out in many accounts. “Linda was always someone I could go to for advice or help. When we had a special student who couldn’t afford the fees to study further, she willingly supported them. She set up a bursary fund, and always followed our students with interest,” says Kim Berman, professor in visual art at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

“After the fire that burnt down [community-based printmaking centre] Artist Proof Studio in which Nhlanhla Xaba died, Linda called me to come

and see her. We were devastated, not knowing how to go forward. She took out her cheque book, and wrote out a personal cheque for R150 000. It was to buy a start-up kit for every artist who lost their work and livelihood. We bought 60 portfolios, sketchbooks, and art materials. She didn’t want to be there at the presentation, preferring to remain anonymous. She helped so many of us believe in ourselves, and gave us the confidence and example to follow our dreams, to succeed, but always to give and look back.”

For Liza Essers, Givon’s generosity began when Essers was just starting out as an art collector, and the gallery owner would take time to walk her through the exhibitions and allow her to pay for her purchases in instalments. The two worked on a number of projects together before Givon eventually sold the Goodman Gallery to her in 2008. “While it was hard for her, she did this with much grace and leadership, standing back to allow me to take the gallery in new directions,” says Essers.

“From the start, her identity was completely tied up in the gallery and its mission. She was the gallery and the gallery was her,” says Miller. So when her health declined and she made the decision to sell, he admits that the impact was “brutal”. “It was such an integral part of her, but physically she just couldn’t keep up.” She married her third husband, Reuben

Givon, in 1974, and spent her later years as a patron of the arts and completing an autobiography that is yet to be published.

Essers says that because there is so little funding for the arts in South Africa, the Goodman Gallery filled that role, becoming a “centre for contemporary art. Students would come there to read books on art, and the gallery would fund big museum shows to make art more accessible”.

Givon’s legacy continues in the Goodman Gallery’s enduring leadership of the South African art world, and in art collections around the globe. In an online tribute page set up by the Goodman Gallery, Yvette Christiansë and Rosalind Morris write from the United States, “Our home is a haven of places at which to stand, to pause, and inhale thanks to the Goodman Gallery. Our walls open to lives and worlds... Each room of our home contains the luck of such encounters, and this luck began with Linda and Neil [Dundas, the Goodman Gallery’s senior curator] who embraced our eager, timid hopes of buying our first pieces. We will take time today to pause in front of our favourite pieces and think of her with a mix of newly grieving joy.”

Miller believes his mother’s legacy is one of generosity, compassion, and humanity. “She was the cornerstone of an entire cultural milieu,” he says.

Farewell to a Torah giant and gentleman

>> Continued from page 4

help him find the words,” the chief rabbi said. “I don’t know why he asked – he was a master *darshan* [Torah orator]. But he always used to ask for that.”

When Rabbi Tanzer came to South Africa, he didn’t predict the future but created it, said Goldstein.

Israel Bender, the chairperson of the Yeshiva College board of governors, said the success of Yeshiva College and its shuls was owed to Tanzer’s 58 years of creating and breathing life into the campus.

“Where Yeshiva College received the plaudits, one man was able to harness the support of so many, and ably backed by his wife and committed family, drove its success,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

“Rabbi Tanzer wasn’t an influence over Yeshiva College which he built brick by brick, classroom by classroom, and student by student. He is, was, and always will be the life force, that with much *siyata dishmaya* [providence] gave Yeshiva College its *chiyus* [spirit], its *neshoma*, and its influence over the hearts and souls of every individual that passed through.”

Tanzer was the benevolent rav of the people, with a bold and consistent human touch that spoke to everyone irrespective of age or creed, said Bender, a master orator but a quality listener.

“All of us have in some not-so-small way been shaped by the Rosh Yeshiva’s five decades of constant giving, building, and nurturing,” he said.

Tanzer is survived by his wife of 60 years, Marcia, his six children, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren across the world.



Rabbi Tanzer with Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Photo: Ilan Ossendryvel

“He created with his rebbetzin a future that he pioneered and gave birth to in a way that is startling,” he said. “When Yeshiva College Shul [Glenhazel Hebrew Congregation] started here, a delegation came from the Sydenham Shul to tell them that a shul like this wasn’t necessary. What was in Glenhazel?”

“Yet, Rabbi Tanzer came and built, nurturing a fledgling school into a shining light with thousands of *talmidim*. He spread Torah with refinement, gentleness, and even humour.”



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Taking care and looking after our own

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have come and gone, and we are now winging our way to the December holidays. We are literally in the last stretch of this year and, normally, we have our holidays booked and the young and more academic among us are well into exam and study mode.

This year is such a different year, and there is a unique atmosphere around us.

While there’s definitely excitement about summer and a reserved sense of freedom, we simply can’t escape the fact that COVID-19 is still with us.

Though we have all been gearing up for freedom, and some have literally thrown away their masks and caution, we are hearing about people in the community having just contracted the virus. Worse, some of us know people who have died very recently of the virus.

We were hoping this wouldn’t happen. We were all counting on being lucky enough to go into a relaxed, devil-may-care countdown to the end-of-year holidays. We were hoping to be able to have holidays as close as possible to what we normally experience, but I don’t think that’s going to happen.

If your regular timeout is staying in a hotel in small coastal towns, where you eat in communal places, and hang out on crowded beaches or around hotel swimming pools, you may want to rethink it. Should the pandemic escalate, how close will you be to a hospital or Hatzolah? This is just one of the crazy things we have to think about now.

I wish we were through this tunnel, and didn’t have to worry about COVID-19, but we aren’t and we still do.

To be honest, I’m tired of it, and wish I didn’t have to wear a mask and keep social distance. I know I’m not alone.

Driving through areas where young people congregate to either socialise, dance, or drink, you would be amazed to find how many have discarded COVID-19 precautions. I won’t name and shame, but I hope those people who have thrown caution to the wind don’t bring the virus home to their loved ones. The chances are unfortunately strong that they could do so.

On the flipside, we need to look forward to a new tomorrow. During this tough time, so many members of our community have achieved extraordinary feats to save or enhance lives in and outside the community.

The extent to which people have gone beyond any call of duty to safeguard us since March is astonishing.

We owe such a debt of gratitude, and I feel so grateful to be a part of this community. As the *SA Jewish Report*, we will honour our heroes on 1 November at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, which will this year be like no other. Although it won’t be a physical gathering, our team under the guidance of Howard Sackstein, is pulling out all the stops to make sure it’s an event you’ll never forget.

However, as the *SA Jewish Report*, we make it our business to help and give back to our community. We certainly don’t have oodles of money to throw at anyone, but we can do what we can to get the community back to work.

We are aware that our community – much like every other group – has been hit hard in terms of job losses. I’m aware of many who, having been gainfully employed for decades, are really battling to find work and feed their families.

There are people with degrees and years of experience who are happy at this point to do just about anything to put food on the table. And, for the most part, they would be an asset to your business.

So, we are offering space in our newspaper for people to advertise their skills and the work they are looking for. We trust that those able to employ people will look to our newspaper to see the calibre of those needing work, and employment *shidduchim* (matches) will be made.

Let’s help each other to get the community back to work and kickstart our economy. If you are in the job market, simply go to <http://bit.ly/jcomback2work> to fill out your details, and we will put it into our next “Get the Jewish community back to work” pages.

As hard as it has been for people whose livelihoods have dried up, we are still able to help each other. As they say, as long as we have our health, we can work out the rest.

In the past week, we have lost a few icons in the community, not least of all Rabbi Avraham Tanzer. While I certainly can’t say I knew him well, I had occasion to interview him a few times. I was always bowled over by his dignity and humility. He would offer advice without sounding like he knew better than you, although he obviously did. Because of this, he was the rabbi that the most senior of rabbonim went to for advice.

Losing him is huge for our community, and he will always be remembered. So too will Linda Goodman Givon, who was an icon in the global art world. Hundreds of South Africa’s top artists owe their careers to Givon.

As we move forward toward our end-of-year break, let’s be inspired by the great people who have given so much of themselves for others. Not all of them will be recognised, but every little bit counts.

However, first and foremost we need to look after our health and that of our loved ones. Let’s keep a second wave of COVID-19 at bay.

Shabbat shalom and chag sameach!

Peta Krost Maunder

Editor



Be careful to prevent a second wave of COVID-19

OPINION

DR DANIEL ISRAEL



A diabetic man enters my office, and instead of unveiling his quarterly collection of diabetes questions in order to receive reassurance, today he has only one query: “Is COVID-19 under control in your practice doc, and is it going to stay that way?”

This patient isn’t alone. This is perhaps the foremost question in all of our minds today. Its answer has direct and far reaching consequences.

I can report that the percentage of positive PCR swabs (COVID-19 tests) we are receiving pale into insignificance compared to the past six months. My practice has assisted 205 COVID-19 positive patients this year, many of them through telemedicine.

In the past month, only six cases have contributed to this number. Lest you turn the page now and walk away with a skewed idea that COVID-19 is over, let me quickly state that as optimistic as I am, I’m equally concerned.

The synopsis of the current COVID-19 situation in South Africa is a wonderfully positive picture, with a possible future threat. At the height of the pandemic in June, the

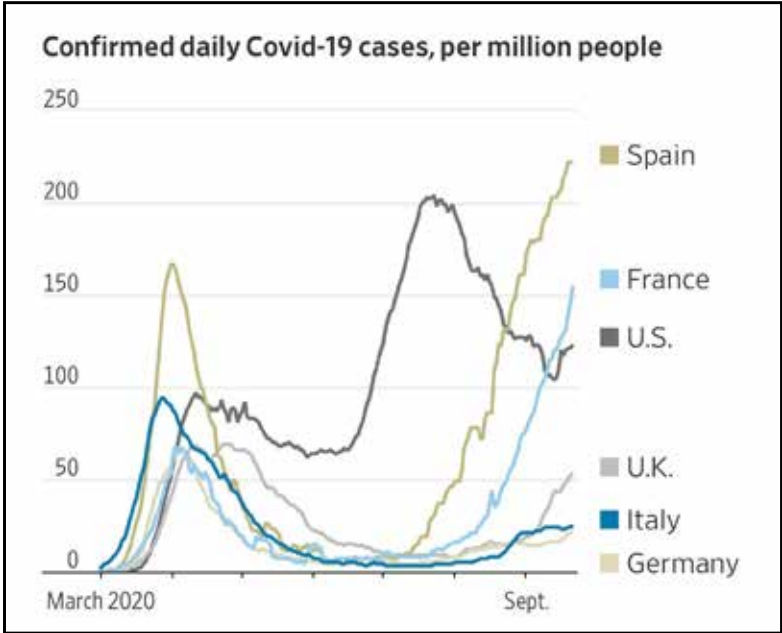
most devastating COVID-19 outbreak with the most deaths in the infancy of the pandemic, hasn’t experienced a similar second wave. With a population of 60 million, Italy is now experiencing only 2 000 new cases a day in its second wave.

This low infection rate isn’t attributable to herd immunity, which is still unreachable, but voluntary public adherence to social distancing, sanitising, and mask-wearing.

The left-wing government and right-wing opposition in Italy have together promoted this behaviour. The Italian public, scarred by the memories of bodies being transported out of cities that couldn’t cope with the deaths in the first wave, continues to wear masks and carry sanitiser in outdoor areas, both not obligatory practices. Self-imposed lockdowns continue with restaurants empty, and life purposefully not “back to normal”.

About 120 countries have already hit a second wave. Half of these countries are experiencing a larger number of cases or more severe disease than in their first wave. The mean time from the peak of the first to second wave is 55 days.

Professor Abdul Karim, the chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19, and an expert epidemiologist recently told me that since South Africa’s cases peaked in mid-September, he predicts a second wave on our shores in mid to late November unless we sustain our non-pharmaceutical preventative measures. What practical behaviour must we continue to adopt to prevent a second wave? Ideally, our community



COVID-19 doubling time was 14 days. Every 14 days, the number of actively-infected individuals would double. Today, the doubling time is roughly 79 days.

At the height of the pandemic, our country had 13 000 new cases a day. We are currently experiencing 1 000 to 1 800 new daily cases countrywide.

I conducted a poll across Gauteng GPs over the past two weeks, and 80 of them (including most of our community’s bigger GP practices) took part. Fifty-five of them hadn’t seen any COVID-19 cases in the past week, and 47 in the week before that. How encouraging is it that 65% of doctors (primarily in Northern Johannesburg) haven’t had any COVID-19 cases in the past two weeks!

However, anecdotally, the few currently positive patients I do have in my practice all contracted COVID-19 at family gatherings on Rosh Hashanah. The Hatzolah Wellness Programme has also experienced an uptick in cases this October, which it also attributes to increased social contact over the *yom tov* period.

Worldwide trends bear evidence to this concept. Europe has experienced a dramatic escalation in infections since mid-August. Public-health experts have put these escalations down to increased travel over Europe’s summer, and younger people wanting to return to normal life and socialising.

Israel has followed suit. This week, there have been 5 000 to 7 000 daily new cases of COVID-19 in Israel. This is proportionately four times larger than the highest daily numbers we have seen in South Africa to date. Noteworthy though, Italy, which had the

members shouldn’t spend time with anyone who doesn’t live under the same roof. Certainly, staying home saves lives.

However, no statistic – however alarming – will influence a grandmother pining for her grandchildren to stay away indefinitely. We have, indeed, had one of the highest adoptions of social distancing in Jewish communities across the world. We should be proud of this, and continue to practice it. I believe it’s incumbent upon the healthcare leadership to guide the community in terms that are achievable for its members.

The basic concepts still apply. Limit your social contact as much as possible. Where you decide social contact is necessary, ensure it’s only with asymptomatic people in well-ventilated spaces with masks worn and social distancing kept.

Masks have unequivocally been shown to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in spite of anti-maskers insisting they don’t. Cleaning hands remains mandatory. Meals are the most challenging interaction, and should be attempted only after screening attendees, and in large enough spaces with excellent ventilation.

Food and drink should be pre-dished, and not passed between people. Let’s keep up our guard, and follow Italy in preventing a second wave. We’ve experienced enough trauma as a community to enable us to take the Italian position in keeping up safe behaviour. This is the only way to prevent further COVID-19 spikes.

• Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg.

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Twins birthed in baby product entrepreneurs’ home

NICOLA MILTZ

Owner of 4aKid, Ally Cohen, is in the baby business. But this did little to prepare her for one of her staff going into premature labour delivering not one but two precious babies at work.

“It was like a movie,” said Cohen, who never in her wildest dreams thought she would witness the birth of twins at her Wendywood home from where she runs her baby and child safety products and accessories business.

Cynthia Nkosi, 31, didn’t think much of it when she felt a few uncomfortable abdominal pangs in the minibus taxi on her way to work on Friday, 25 September. After all, she was heavily pregnant and considered it normal. Later that morning, when the pain grew more intense, she knew “something wasn’t

right”. Little did she know she was in full labour and about to give birth – several weeks before her due date.

There was no time for baby showers, bed rest, birthing plans, or even time to pack a hospital bag – let alone an epidural or other pain medication.

“I wanted to rush Cynthia to hospital, but my domestic worker, Gertrude Dlamini, who has delivered many babies before, said, “There’s no time, the babies are coming!” said Cohen, who sprang into action.

Cohen, a mother of two including a special-needs child, is no stranger to medical emergencies. She called several emergency services asking for urgent help.

“I hit the Namola app [an app allowing users to access emergency assistance] on my phone to request an ambulance,” said Cohen, who knew that time was of the



Caitlynn Kruger from Emer-G-Med with one of the babies

essence.

“I was told there were no immediate ambulances available and a private ambulance without medical aid would cost R10 000,” she said.

“It was hectic. Cynthia felt like she needed to push. I have done basic first aid, but I was in no position to deliver a baby, let alone twins, who were in the breach position. By this stage, I was hysterical that we would lose all three without medical assistance,” she said.

Gertrude, who has worked for the Cohens for several years, said she worried that the pre-term babies would need oxygen and require emergency help.

“I have delivered many babies, but I haven’t delivered breach twins before. I was scared. I told Cynthia not to push, and to wait for the ambulance,” Dlamini told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Hands-on assistance with Fingertips of Africa

JORDAN MOSHE

When Yehuda Lazarus heard that a 13-year-old girl had been raped at knife point in Hammanskraal last month, he didn’t hesitate for a moment. He set out to help her and her family overcome their ordeal, and refused to take no for an answer.

“I’ve never been so harassed by someone wanting to help,” says Wendy Hendler, the director of Koleinu SA, who first heard about the incident. “I happened to tell Yehuda about a case which had been brought to us, and he insisted on doing something about it that moment.”



Lazarus provides a Malawian carpenter with a winter blanket at his outdoor workspace

Jewish community daily.

Although Fingertips really came to life under COVID-19, Lazarus has always been defined by his determination to have a positive effect on others.

“I grew up in a Chabad family in Cape Town,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “My parents were *shluchim* [emissaries] there for 30 years, and when they moved to the United States, I went with them before coming back to South Africa to finish my schooling.”

After traveling extensively across America and Israel, Lazarus returned to South Africa in 2009 fuelled with a determination to assist others.

“I wanted to do something to help people.

Fingertips was my dream child, but it wasn’t yet born, so I started preparing unofficially by doing things like visiting hospitals and helping kids in cancer wards.”

This was just the start, as Lazarus was soon driving numerous initiatives aimed at assisting others, often involving friends. From township visits to Mother’s Day drives, his projects increased rapidly.

“I’d call my friends and say, ‘let’s go buy pancakes, whipped cream, and strawberries, and make breakfast for all the moms

in the Gen’s [Johannesburg General Hospital’s] cancer ward to celebrate Mother’s Day’,” he says. “It was all unofficial, but it was leading up to something bigger.”

Lazarus gradually increased the scope and impact of the initiatives he piloted, including assisting those affected by the xenophobic attacks of 2008. After spending two years abroad, he returned to South Africa and made the decision to establish Fingertips in 2017.

But, it wasn’t until earlier this year that the organisation really took off.

“When COVID-19 hit, a police officer in Sandringham came to speak to my brother and asked if there was a way we could help homeless people living behind Edenvale Hospital,” he says. “We put some stuff together, and I posted it online because I was out of budget and wanted to see what more we could get.



Yehuda Lazarus offloading supplies for those in need during lockdown

“I was sitting with one of the co-directors, Gilana Assness, who made the decision to launch us on Instagram, and that was that. From that moment, the ball really started rolling and we went from feeding 20 people a day to 10 000 in a few weeks.”

From charity partnerships to plated meals, food kitchens in Alexandra, to packing supply hampers, the projects “have come fast and furious, operating both within and without the Jewish community. Lazarus also endeavoured to assist in other religious communities, reaching out to Muslim and Christian communities when the need arose.

“It has nothing to do with race or religion – we’re there to assist,” he says.

“If there’s a gap, I want to fill it. If there’s a need out there, I ask, what can we do about it? Do we have the capability to assist? If there’s a need and we’re available to help, that’s what we’ll do.”

Lazarus has converted his own home into the headquarters of the charity, and is on the clock practically 24/7, working with a core team of nine unpaid individuals and a broader group of 55 volunteer cooks across Fingertip’s kitchen network.

“I get up at 04:30 every morning, after going to bed at midnight,” he says. “I live in one room of my house, and the other four belong to Fingertips. What was a bedroom is now a bed against a wall and storage facility for groceries, another is a sewing academy to teach ladies how to sew and give them the ability to feed their family, another room is an office, and the other is a fresh-produce store room.”

Although their projects and partnerships are many, Lazarus says that his ultimate intention is to help people in need support themselves.

“We try not to deal with individual cases but aim to assist on a communal or organisational level, partnering with others to get things done,” he says. “We want to help others create an infrastructure for self-dependence, avoiding a constant reliance on support. We want to help others help themselves.”

Lazarus praises the Jewish community for the generous spirit it exhibited under COVID-19, saying that the generosity of organisations like the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Angel Network ensures that his organisation can continue to help

those in need.

“We are just fish in the ocean. One and a half million meals sound like a lot, but millions of South Africans are living below the poverty line. I need to do more. I can’t just step away.

“With my incredible team, I know we’ll get things done. Anyone can help someone else – you just need to make the time.”

Thankfully, a paramedic from Emer-G-Med arrived, who assisted the mother with the help of the experienced Gertrude. Soon after, Hatzolah arrived and took over.

Advanced life-support paramedic, Uriel Rosen of Hatzolah, knew delivery was imminent when the call came through.

“When we got to the home, the mother was already in labour, and one of the babies was already halfway out. Both babies were breach and somewhat premature, so this was by no means a simple delivery,” he said.

“The first baby was already in distress, so we had to move quickly.”

Within minutes, the first baby, a girl, was delivered. “She required oxygen, and pinked up nicely after about 15 minutes,” said Rosen.

The baby boy who came out second, about 45 minutes later, took his time following a more complicated birth, he said.

The twins were wrapped in beautiful new baby blankets from Cohen’s 4aKid stock before going to hospital.

Hatzolah transported Cynthia and her baby daughter to the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital while Rosen accompanied the baby boy, whom he placed in an incubator in an ER24 ambulance.

“By the time we reached the hospital, the baby boy was stable and alert, and was reunited with his mother and twin sister soon after,” he said.

Rosen, whose years of experience and training kicked in, said it was “a difficult, stressful call with a very good outcome”.

“I have done many births including twins in a hospital setting. This was my first time delivering twins who both presented as breach babies outside of a hospital setting. It was a new experience, and will go down in the books,” he said.

Cynthia told the *SA Jewish Report* she and the babies were doing well.

“I’m so happy. I was very scared, but I’m so grateful to Ally and Gertie and all the paramedics who helped me. I was very lucky,” she said.

She named her baby daughter Fortunate and her baby son Fortune. They weighed 1.7kg and 1.8kg respectively. She believes they were a little over 34 weeks.

“It was a very exciting day at the office,” said Cohen.

“We are so grateful to Hatzolah and the emergency personnel who helped Cynthia to deliver her beautiful babies safely, a double blessing.”

Historic webinar marks ‘academic accord’ between universities

NICOLA MILTZ

Strong co-operation between the University of the Free State (UFS) and University of Haifa in Israel is to be marked next week with their first international webinar on the Middle East.

There will be an academic interchange and discourse between the two respected universities who have a signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) for co-operation between them.



Professor Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political science at UFS, said, “Haifa is an academically strong university, and Middle East studies is still very underdeveloped in South Africa. If we can build on these ties with Haifa, we at the UFS can create an amazing, strong Middle East studies programme.”

Solomon, who is an expert in Middle East and North African (MENA) affairs, told the *SA Jewish Report* there was much to learn and share on issues affecting the region.

“The Middle East region is going through tectonic changes, and I think it is important to understand what’s going on. It’s also imperative that this understanding seeps into the South African consciousness because I don’t believe our academics are strong in terms of the Middle East. This relationship with Haifa, which I hope is the first of many, will help in terms of dealing with these gaps in South African scholarship.”

MoU facilitator and webinar convenor Dr Glen Segell, who is a fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf

Studies at the University of Haifa, has been to UFS and has formed a close association with academics at the institution.

“Over the past few decades, staff from both universities have met at international conferences and have collaborated on various topics from Islam in Africa to security in the Horn of Africa, terrorism, and religious fundamentalism,” Segell said recently. “In April 2018, it was decided to form a MoU, which would afford academics the opportunity to expand on this relationship,” he said.

Not only would political science benefit from the MoU, Segell said, the departments of speech and hearing at both institutions were also collaborating. The idea is to learn from each other about a variety of topics of interest including political science but also economics, healthcare, water, the environment, and other areas.

Professor Solomon, whose book titled *Arab MENA Countries: Vulnerabilities and Constraints Against Democracy on the Eve of the Global COVID-19 Crisis* comes out later this year, said the universities planned to collaborate on future online courses and modules.

The webinar, he said, would give the universities the opportunity to exchange views on terror and related topics.

“As we move forward, I’m hoping this will lead to other engagements with other academic institutions and NGOs [non-governmental organisations] both in South Africa and outside our borders,” said Solomon.

“There is a lack of understanding of the region amongst our policy makers in South Africa. We want to hold certain international positions but without real understanding. I think it’s important for two academic institutions to get together and share.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said he was excited about this collaboration. “The agreement is one of the most important Israeli-South African academic developments in the democratic era. Already, thanks to this co-operation, other Israeli and international organisations are looking to partner and co-operate with South African institutions. It could very well be that this conference is South African academia’s ‘Abraham Accords’ moment. In fact, we’d like to call this the ‘Academic Accords’.”

An international workshop marking the MoU was due to be hosted by the University of Haifa in March this year, but was prevented from happening by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is being replaced by the webinar on 14 October.

Esteemed academics from both institutions will speak on an array of subjects. Some titles on Iran include, “The

people’s voice: What can we and what can’t we learn from social media”; “The Threat of a Nuclear Iran: a dissident view”; and “Iran-Israel regional rivalry”.

On the Persian Gulf, some titles include, “The new government in

Iraq and the Iraqi scene”; “Israel, the Gulf and the Palestinian Question: a new area?”; and “New diplomatic relations transforms geopolitics.”

Segell said that the idea of co-operation is that “the more you talk, the more you understand”.



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Storm over inclusion of Israel-boycott academic at conference

NICOLA MILTZ

The Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) has defended its decision to include an academic who supported the academic boycott of Israeli institutions at UCT in an upcoming conference.

This follows a strongly worded petition criticising the Kaplan Centre for its decision by a group calling itself Concerned Citizens for Academic Freedom at UCT.

The petition, released on Tuesday this week, has called on the Kaplan Centre to explain why it has included Jewish UCT academic Mitchel Hunter in the conference taking place later this month.

He will be on a panel alongside University of the Witwatersrand academic and member of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Professor Karen Milner; Gavin Morris from the South African Jewish Museum; and Tali Nates from the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. They are to discuss “Jewish History in SA Public Life”.

The international conference titled, “Jews in South Africa: New Directions in Research” is being hosted by the University College of London Institute of Jewish Studies in partnership with the Kaplan Centre. The conference will include discussions based on pre-circulated academic papers.

The petition states, “Astonishingly, the convenors have chosen to place a leading proponent of the Israeli academic boycott at UCT, who is also a member of the antisemitic Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, as a speaker on one of the panels.”

Rowan Polovin of the South African Zionist Federation



believes the Kaplan Centre’s decision to include the academic is wrong. “The South African Zionist Federation is appalled that a well-respected Jewish institution would deliberately host someone who actively promotes institutional antisemitism by calling for the unique sanction and discrimination of the Jewish state at UCT,” Polovin said.


Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre and associate professor of history at UCT, said the centre stood by its decision. “Although I don’t dispute the right of anyone with a grievance to launch a petition, there’s a certain irony in this one. Last year, these same petitioners appealed to UCT not to infringe on academic freedom by instituting a boycott of Israeli academic institutions. This year, they in effect propose the opposite, that an academic research centre at the University of Cape Town change the programme of an academic conference because they disapprove of the political views of one of the speakers.”

He said the Kaplan Centre had organised the conference in collaboration with the UCL Institute of Jewish Studies, and that the scholars participating responded to an open call for papers and submitted proposals describing the research they planned to present.

“These proposals were vetted by conference organisers who paid particular attention to the scholarly rigour of the proposals, as well as to indications that the research would contribute to advancing the study of Jews in South Africa,” said Mendelsohn.

“We didn’t inquire as to the political views of the presenters, nor would we do so. Purity tests are matters for an inquisition, not for a serious academic institution built on the premise that rigorous research, vigorous debate, and academic freedom are essential. We stand by our decision.”

Continued on page 14>>


South African Board of Jewish Education

The South African Board of Jewish Education invites dynamic and motivated applicants for the position of

Head of Jewish Life Victory Park

The King David Victory Park campus is looking for a dynamic Jewish Leader & Educator to coordinate, create, and engage with Jewish Life activities on campus. This individual would be intimately involved in multiple levels of Jewish Education offering across the four Campus Schools.

Responsibilities include:

- Work together with the campus wide Jewish Education Leadership (including Primary School, High School, and Informal departments)
- Cross-campus visibility & engagement with all stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents)
- Holistic integration of the tefillah program from the pre-primary through matric
- Coordination of campus-wide Jewish events and commemorations
- Enhancing and managing the SOUL parent engagement activities on the campus
- Teaching lessons in High School and Primary School
- Active involvement in Jewish Life at KD Ariel

Experience/qualifications:

- A relevant tertiary degree
- A successful track record of 5+ years in Education and/or Jewish Community leadership
- Experience in leading, managing, and mobilising teams
- Self-motivated, inspirational and creative
- Strong administrative and organisational skills
- Strategic educational thinker in line with knowledge of best practice and current trends
- Strong background in Jewish learning and knowledge
- Someone who is Orthodox and Torah Observant

A Curriculum Vitae and contact information of two references should be emailed to sevitjz@sabje.co.za
(Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted)
Closing Date for Application: Wednesday 21st October 2020

SA Jews asked to help find Holocaust child killer

JORDAN MOSHE

Renowned Nazi hunter Efraim Zuroff has called on South African Jewry to help him identify a woman who may be responsible for unspeakable acts of cruelty during World War II.

“Sadistic just isn’t the word,” Zuroff said of her actions in an interview with the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “If we can identify this person and

expose her, we’ll be able to ensure that some justice is achieved for those who perished at her hands.”

According to the records Zuroff has access to, this woman, who was referred to as “the student”, murdered Jewish children. “According to the description, a survivor saw her at a pit outside of the town of Rassein [in Lithuania] murdering Jewish children,” says Zuroff. “He describes how she would smash their heads in

with rocks, sometimes even using other babies’ heads instead.

“This image has haunted me from the moment I read it.”

Unfortunately, the account provides only a last name for this woman. After much investigation, Zuroff found a 95-year-old woman living abroad with the same surname and of an age that potentially fits the student’s timeline. Given the lack of information, he is appealing to the

local Jewish community for help with the investigation.

Although 75 years have passed since the end of World War II, there are still Holocaust war criminals at large. Zuroff has spent decades pursuing and convicting war criminals for the atrocities they committed during the Holocaust. He is hoping there are South Africans of Lithuanian descent who can help him.

The woman (whose name cannot be divulged for investigative purposes) came to Zuroff’s attention after being identified in the testimony of a survivor by the name of Leib Kunichowsky, a resident of provincial Lithuania.

“Kunichowsky lived in Kovno, endured the ghetto, and survived the Shoah,” says Zuroff. “He then spent four years collecting testimonies from across the provincial towns of the region, collating what would become an important set of papers that only come to light in 1989.”

Kunichowsky’s collection amounting to 1 684 pages remained unknown for decades owing to his reluctance to allow outside access to the information.

“He wanted to publish the whole collection, and no one was willing to help him do it,” says Zuroff. “It wasn’t written like a book – it was a huge collection of testimonies. It was only after Kunichowsky finally decided to hand it over to Yad Vashem that we got access to the information at last.

“It was incredible. Kunichowsky had taken every effort to ask other survivors to name perpetrators in full, including the names of people who had been their neighbours. They came from across the provincial towns in Lithuania, and had all been involved in some act of violence against Jews.

“This made clear the role played by Lithuanians in the act of mass murder.”

About 171 separate Jewish communities are mentioned in the testimonies, with each page written in Lithuanian Yiddish, and signed by both the survivor and Kunichowsky himself. Zuroff worked closely with the text for years, extracting every perpetrator’s name and compiling a list of 1 284 implicated local Lithuanian residents.

“We only knew about 163 of them from other sources. That meant we now had the names of 1 121 individuals that we wouldn’t ever have otherwise known about who had been actively involved in murdering Jews. It was a treasure, in a sense.”

Zuroff spent years tracking down the people mentioned, relying heavily on the records of the International Tracing Service established by the Red Cross after the war. Consisting only of innumerable index cards, the records included names and



Efraim Zuroff

immigration destinations of thousands of people who relocated after the war, Jewish and non-Jewish.

“There was no way of knowing if a person was actually a Nazi or not,” says Zuroff. “I had to work closely with multiple other pieces of information to track people down and bring Nazis to trial. The index cards were ultimately copied onto microfilm, and only Israel allowed free access to the information. It wasn’t easy to find people.”

Over the years, Zuroff has pursued numerous cases drawn from Kunichowsky’s information, many of them successfully. From camp commanders in the Balkans to female camp guards at Ravensbruck, his efforts have taken him across Europe to find some of the most sadistic individuals imaginable. This has brought him to his latest case.

“Because the majority of South African Jewry has roots in Lithuania, we are looking for Jews in South Africa with any connection to Rassein who might help us to discover this woman’s full name.

“Whether your ancestors come from there or you know someone living there today, any information which could help us identify this woman would be incredibly helpful.

“From the minute I heard that a woman by the surname mentioned was alive and living abroad, I started thinking of the poor children who suffered at her hands. The cruelty of this woman resulted in her committing atrocities at a young age, murdering our Jewish children. If this is her, we need to bring her to justice.”

Zuroff is determined to identify the woman, strip her of her adopted citizenship, and deport her for trial. “This is a process that takes time, and she is already very old,” he says. “If it is her, we need to expose her and make sure people know who she is and what she did.

“To identify a perpetrator 79 years later and track her down would be one of the most important achievements of my career. Think what this means: if you harm a Jew, another Jew will make sure you pay for it, even decades later. As Jews, we’re all responsible for one another.”

• Any relevant information can be forwarded to swcjerus@netvision.net.il

Holocaust museums strive to stay relevant

JORDAN MOSHE

Holocaust museums have to find ways to ensure that they remain accessible in this rapidly-changing world to stay relevant.

Because the Holocaust ended 75 years ago, there are no brand-new stories. However, it’s essential to make sure that the museums resonate with people to keep their lessons alive.

This issue was discussed in an online presentation last Wednesday, 30 September, the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the death camps. More than 1 000 viewers from across 30 countries participated in the event.

“The history of genocide has to some degree been a story of forgetting,” said

Dr Michael Berenbaum, a renowned developer of museums and historical films, stressed that the lessons we draw from the Holocaust remain unfortunate necessities in 2020.

“I have a dream that the Holocaust becomes irrelevant,” he said. “We live in a world in which the issues the Holocaust raises are looked upon as something of the barbaric 20th century that has no relevance to the world in which we live.

“The problem we face is radically different. The Holocaust has abiding relevance because it raises many of the critical issues central to the world in which we live.”

In spite of significant leaps in Holocaust education, much hasn’t

people, and done fewer things. The question of how people lived in hiding will intrigue people.”

Museums must also grapple with the issue of transition, and the loss of Holocaust survivors.

“All of us understand we’re living in a transitional time”, said Berenbaum. “We are living at a distance from the Holocaust, yet one of the ironies is that the Holocaust grows in influence year on year since the actual event. It was more powerful in the 50s than the 40s, the 80s than the 70s.

“It has become a mainstream of world culture, but we are at a moment of transition between the lived memory of survivors and historical memory given to us by them. For many museums, the

question is: what will take place of the survivor, the living voice of the experience?”

The idea expressed by famed Nazi hunter, Elie Wiesel, speaks to part of the problem, said Berenbaum.

“Wiesel had a notion that only those who were there will ever know, and



The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre

Paul Salmons, exhibition curator and Holocaust education consultant.

“Human societies have always told the stories that they want to tell about themselves, and the stories of the atrocities we commit are too often suppressed. The Holocaust has entered popular discourse, and stimulated the recognition of other genocides since.”

The atrocities committed by the Nazi regime remain an integral part of global discussion, said Salmons. Many millions visit sites of the Holocaust, mark memorial days, visit museums, watch films, and otherwise engage with the subject of the Holocaust around the world.

“It shouldn’t be taken for granted that on continents other than Europe it has also become an important part of memory and education,” Salmons says. “Reports by UNESCO [the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation] in 2014 found that the Holocaust is taught in about 135 countries around the world.

“And yet, when we look around the world, how satisfied can we really be that Holocaust memory has helped to secure the liberal values that we have promised? We see the resurgence of far-right nationalism, shameful responses to refugee crises, rising xenophobia, and increasing antisemitism.

“We see threats to liberal, democratic values around us. This is the context in which we need to take stock.”

changed, laments Berenbaum.

“The slogan ‘never again’ cannot be uttered with a straight face because we have seen genocide rear its head again and again,” he said. “Even antisemitism, which for a time was depressed by the events of the Holocaust, has reared its head again in a new series of formats. Germany, which defines itself as anti-Nazi, has seen Nazis once driven underground now morphing and coming above ground.

“Tragically, the Holocaust has relevance. I wish it weren’t the case.”

It’s for this reason that museums remain central to the discourse, Berenbaum said. However, if they are to be effective, they need to define their goals and remain relevant to modern audiences.

“A museum is a story-telling institution,” he said. “Where film has moving imagery and a captive audience, a museum has captive imagery and a moving audience. You visit a museum by the way in which you enter it. People can change, but a museum doesn’t.”

Visitors continue to bring their own experiences to bear on museums, a fact which museum curators need to take into account.

Berenbaum provided an example. “[After COVID], everyone entering a Holocaust museum from now will be interested in how people lived in hiding,” he said. “We’ve all experienced six months in which we’ve seen fewer

those who were there can never tell,” said Berenbaum. “We’ve had to learn to accept the former, and reject the latter. There is something that survivors know that we can never know.

“I will never know what it was like one day in Auschwitz, but I can certainly listen to testimony of those who were there and I can go back to that world though I will not know some of what they knew.”

Berenbaum said museums are being asked not only to deal with the Holocaust, but issues beyond it.

“They have to deal with other genocides, human rights, and more,” he said. “We had that issue in Dallas, Texas. We created a museum which dealt with the Holocaust and concluded with the double dimension of the Nuremburg Trials and the International Declaration of Human Rights, and then transitioned into the United States today to show the relevance of such issues.

“We didn’t diminish the Holocaust or move away from it, but began to interact with its full implications. It has to be addressed.”

It falls to museums to strike this balance, Berenbaum said.

“It’s about moving with the Holocaust, not from it,” he said. “We must find ways to include other genocides and consider issues that are part of and implicated by the Holocaust without moving away from it, applying it to the world in which we live.”



GESHER GRANTS ITS 100TH LOAN

The Gesher Small Business Relief Fund exemplifies the spirit of the South African Jewish community, working together to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating economic impact.

In the week leading up to Rosh Hashanah, the Gesher Small Business Relief Fund approved its 100th interest free loan. In just a few months, the volunteer teams of businesspeople, bankers and lawyers have worked tirelessly to ensure that small qualifying businesses obtain the funding required to help them through this period, securing the ongoing livelihoods of over 100 Jewish families, their 1,300 employees and 13,000 dependants.

The businesses supported range in size from those with turnover of under R500,000 and just one employee to larger businesses generating turnover of R60 million with 450 employees. The total turnover generated by businesses receiving a Gesher loan is in excess of R500 million.

Gesher was established with cornerstone funding from the Donald Gordon Foundation and another founding donor. We have been extremely fortunate to have raised additional funding from a community foundation and a number of other philanthropists. Accordingly, we continue to be able to support small businesses and professionals where they broadly meet the qualifying criteria set out on our website.

If your business or professional practice has been impacted by Covid-19 and you require financial assistance please visit www.gesher.org.za for more information or to apply.

The Gesher Small Business Relief Fund is an independent non-profit organisation offering interest free loans of up to R750,000 to majority Jewish owned SMMEs throughout South Africa which have been negatively impacted by Covid-19.

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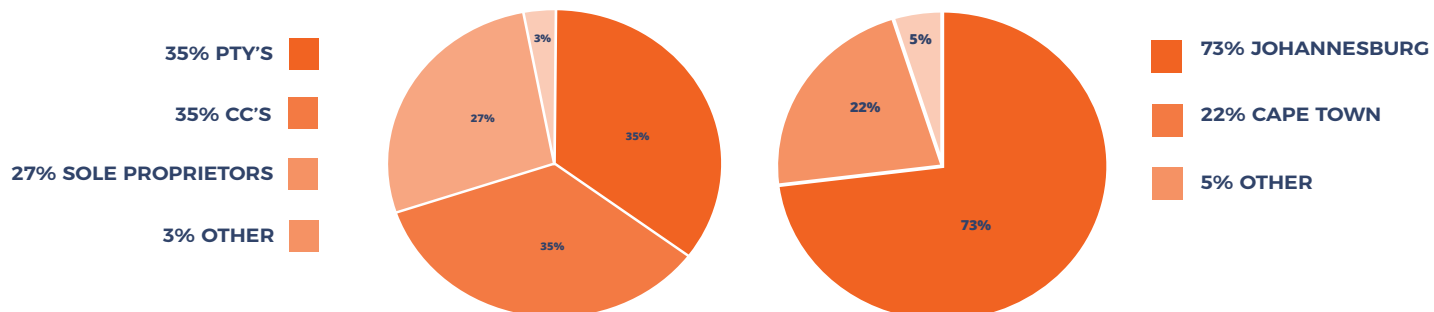
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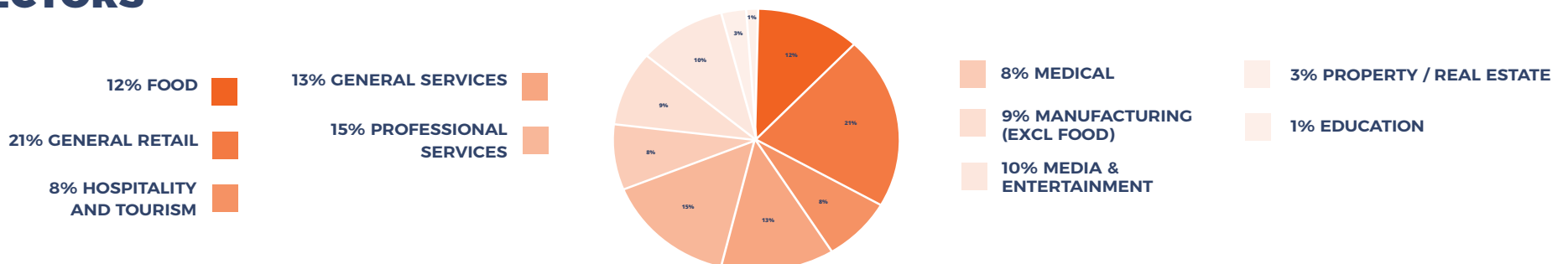
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It’s a high-stakes election for US expats

TALI FEINBERG

As America heads towards a historic presidential election in just under a month’s time, American Jewish expats and dual citizens in South Africa feel strongly about the outcome.

“I fear for the long-term impact of a [President] Donald Trump victory on America and the world,” says Professor Adam Mendelsohn, a dual citizen of the United States and South Africa. “There is already much evidence of the erosion of democracy in America.

“Outside America, Trump has been a wrecking-ball, not only undermining America’s traditional allies, but failing to support basic values in the international arena. Some argue that Trump’s support for Israel outweighs all the negatives. For many reasons, I disagree with that position. In all, it will take a long time to roll back the damage that Trump has done to America domestically and internationally.

“Trump has exposed weaknesses within American democracy, and, even if he loses, has shown future political aspirants that a paranoid style of destructive populism works,” Mendelsohn says. “So expect copy-cats, even if he loses. Much like [former President] Jacob Zuma did in South Africa, he has corrupted the functioning of parts of the state. We know how difficult it is to rebuild institutions and trust after they are undermined.

“I’m not sure that antisemitism will get any worse in the United States as Trump has already created an environment where it thrives,” says Mendelsohn. “To me, the bigger concern

is what sort of society Jews will live in: an open society built on tolerance and the promise of equality for all [albeit imperfectly delivered], or one built on bullying, division, and ignorance.”

He expects the election to be close and to come down to voters in a handful of states. He and his wife, Dr Andrea Mendelsohn, a native of Boston, will be voting by email – they’ll be sent ballots to fill out and email back.

Madeleine Levy, who lives in Johannesburg, says, “I feel invested in these elections. Even though I live in South Africa, I believe one still feels attached to one’s country of birth and where one grew up.” She won’t vote this year, but if she was to do so, she would vote for Trump.

“The Democrats have gone too far left in their thinking and policies. What’s at stake is keeping the extreme left away from power – that would be a disaster,” she says.

“South African Jews already know that Trump has been excellent for Israel. I’m sure they would like that to continue. The recent Israel, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain peace deal looks like the beginning of change in the Middle East.”

She thinks Trump will win, “but it could be close”. She says a lot of family members in the US see the situation very differently from her, and will most probably vote Democrat. “Jews historically – including my immediate family – voted Democrat. That changed with the Clintons and Barack Obama.

“Obama was one of the worst presidents for Israel. I don’t think we can trust the Democrats with achieving anything for Israel except for repeating

more or less what Obama did.”

In her view, “The world today needs a strong leader who can stand up for what’s right. Getting rid of the Iran deal and standing up to a Europe that fully supported it took great courage. We have seen that with the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] countries, and with standing up to China as well. There are many examples of Trump’s decisive leadership, and I believe he is capable of leading the US for another four years.”

Dan Brotman has lived in South Africa for many years, but still feels invested in the US election.

“The US is one of only two countries in the world [Eritrea being the second] that taxes its citizens worldwide regardless of their country of residence. As a native Bostonian, I wholeheartedly subscribe to the political slogan from the 1700s, ‘No taxation without representation’, and so I vote, even though I haven’t really lived in the US since I was a teenager,” he says.

“In addition, my entire immediate family lives in the US, as do many of my close friends, so even though I don’t live there, its political future has an impact on people who are close to me. I’m also deeply pained by what I see happening in the US right now in terms of inexcusable inequality, the handling of COVID-19, political and social divisions, racial injustice, and the treatment of immigrants.

“This election will determine whether we see a further decline in what the US has historically stood for. Germany’s Bertelsmann Foundation recently published a report measuring factors such as equitable education, labour-market access, and health. Tragically, for the wealthiest country in the world, the



Dan Brotman and Adam Mendelsohn feel strongly about changing the status quo in the US



US ranks #36 out of #41. I was taught growing up that if you worked hard in America, you could achieve anything. As a millennial whose generation has experienced two global financial crashes within a decade, and given the US’ individualistic orientation and limited social safety net, the system isn’t working anymore,” says Brotman.

“I don’t yet know what the alternative is, but it can’t be the status quo. As summarised in a recent article by Canadian anthropologist Wade Davis, ‘The American cult of the individual denies not just community but the very idea of society. No one owes anything to anyone. All must be prepared to fight for everything: education, shelter, food, medical care. What every prosperous and successful democracy deems to be fundamental rights – universal health care, equal access to quality public education, a social safety net for the weak, elderly, and infirm – America dismisses as socialist indulgences, as so many signs of weakness.’”

Brotman registered as an absentee voter in Tennessee, and he was emailed

a ballot a few weeks ago.

“I went to the US consulate in Sandton, and dropped off my absentee ballot. I voted for [Joe] Biden because overall, he is more likely to create a stronger social safety net and is more likely to succeed at beginning to heal societal divisions. However, I don’t discount some of Trump’s foreign policy achievements, such as moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, being tough on China, and brokering a normalisation agreement between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain.”

To Brotman, “South African Jews should care about these elections first and foremost as South Africans, as the US is South Africa’s third biggest trading partner. A weakened US wouldn’t be good for South Africa’s already extremely vulnerable economy. As Jews, we should care about who becomes the president of Israel’s closest ally, with the potential of making or breaking Israel’s role on the world stage and in the Middle East.”

Furthermore, “A weaker America is ultimately bad for Jews living in all democratic countries, as currently, there is no other superpower that can stand up to authoritarian values. And if the US position on Israel reverts back to what it was under the Obama administration, it could put American Jews in an awkward position in which they feel that they need to choose between declaring loyalty to the US versus Israel, especially if those two countries’ leaders or positions are at odds.”

He believes Trump will win a second term. “The US electoral system is designed around the Electoral College, not the popular vote. This factor, combined with the complications of mail-in voting and people being too scared to go to the polls due to the pandemic, makes me think that Biden has too many odds stacked against him. I watched the recent Republican National Convention, and Trump is able to derive enthusiasm from his voters in a way that Biden simply doesn’t.”

However, “Like the last presidential elections, my liberal coastal friends are confident that Biden will win, just as they were confident that Hillary [Clinton] would win. When it comes to US elections, and due to the complexity of the electoral system, one can never be too confident about the outcome.

“What I want to see change in the US is a realignment of values away from pure individual responsibility, and more towards societal responsibility for one another,” says Brotman. “We will have future pandemics, and just wait until the ice caps melt! We need a society where people’s most basic needs are looked after by the government, especially in situations when they lose everything for reasons that are no fault of their own. Neither Biden nor Trump will ultimately be able to realign these values alone, it has to come from within the American people.”

Can a changing Middle East curb Islamic extremism?

STEVEN GRUZD

Will Israel’s normalisation of relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain and warming ties with African states counter extremist Muslim ideology in the Middle East?

This was the question posed by Dr Seth J Frantzman in a Zoom event organised by the South African Zionist Federation and World Zionist Organisation on 30 September. Frantzman is Middle East correspondent at the *Jerusalem Post*, and executive director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis.

“Since 1948, Israel has struggled to have diplomatic relations with the Arab and Muslim world,” Frantzman said. This is partly a function of how the state was born, and the colonial powers of Britain and France quitting the region abruptly. The solid relations Israel once had with African countries withered in the wake of the 1967 and 1973 wars. Currently, about 30 countries worldwide don’t recognise Israel.

“There emerged

a consensus that Israel would have to make concessions for peace” said Frantzman, such as in the Saudi-sponsored Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. “We don’t hear this logic in other conflicts, such as India-Pakistan or Greece-Turkey over Cyprus.

“The Trump administration is rewriting a more than 20-year-old paradigm,” Frantzman said. “The 1993 Oslo Accords were premised on a withdrawal from the territories for peace, but Trump has turned this on its head.” Trump has proved willing to throw away decades of United States foreign policy concepts, chief among them that there will be no normalisation without peace with the Palestinians. “Trump’s approach has been pragmatic and practical – he likes doing deals.”

Frantzman noted that since the 1990s, the Saudis and other Gulf States had drastically decreased their support for extremist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. They are now promoting tolerance and coexistence. This has moved them closer to the US – and Israel – as a counter to Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. Egypt, Iraq, and Syria are no longer the predominant powers in the Arab world, as all are now focused on internal problems. The twin powers today are Iran and Saudi Arabia.

“The Palestinians are divided [between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the West Bank], the Gulf is divided. The whole region is divided, and riddled with proxy conflicts.”

Frantzman said the historic accords signed with the UAE and Bahrain last month – with Saudi Arabia’s blessing – may give these countries more leverage to push for a resolution of the Palestinian question. The peace could potentially be warmer than with Egypt and Jordan on a people-to-

people level. Beyond the Gulf States, Frantzman speculated that there might be potential for recognition from Bangladesh, Brunei, Djibouti, Malaysia, and Pakistan in the offing.

In February, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Uganda, his fifth trip to Africa since 2016. There, he held exploratory talks with Sudan, a country seeking to be removed from the US’s terrorist list and an end to sanctions. He also met the leadership of Chad to explore diplomatic recognition.

When asked what a Joe Biden White House may mean for the Middle East, Frantzman said Biden was unlikely to be as pro-Israel as Trump. “He may soften on Iran a bit, but be tougher on Turkey.”

Frantzman is the author of *After ISIS: America, Iran and the Struggle for the Middle East*. He recounted how the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which had its roots in Al Qaeda, sprung up in 2013-2014. It captured large swaths of territory, and declared a caliphate – a new state to be run under Sharia law. “It was extremism on steroids,” Frantzman mused. “They beheaded journalists and perpetrated a genocide on the minority Yazidis. It took one day for ISIS to capture the city of Mosul, and nine months to remove them.”

He noted how radicals from all over the world were attracted to fight for ISIS, and many have returned to their countries, posing a threat of violence. “But ISIS was defeated by fellow Muslims, including the Kurds, and not by Europeans.”

ISIS is active across the Sahel in northern Africa, in ungoverned, unstable areas. “It radicalises people when the government is weak.”

Frantzman said South Africa should take the insurgency in northern Mozambique extremely seriously. “You can’t let the Mozambican state be destroyed and melt away. South Africa has one of the strongest armies in the region and should seek to destroy these groups with the support of other states. ISIS is like an octopus crossed with a snake – its deadly fangs and tentacles keep growing.”



Dr Seth J Frantzman

Pandemic’s emotional damage ‘bigger than disease itself’

JORDAN MOSHE

COVID-19 has taken a major toll on the emotional well-being of our community. While some have developed a number of coping mechanisms, many continue to battle with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts brought on by the uncertainty it has brought to our lives.

“The emotional fallout caused by the pandemic is going to be bigger than the disease itself,” Robyn Salkow told the *SA Jewish Report* recently. “Based on what we’re seeing, people are going to be suffering emotionally from this for some time yet.”

Salkow is operations manager of the ChaiFM Helpline, a support and intervention line launched in August last year. Although the line has typically assisted people with a variety of issues, the pandemic caused a swell in calls from people across the country whose lives have been turned upside down.

“People who had anxiety or depression before COVID-19 have gone into more severe categories like paranoia,” Salkow says. “They are being diagnosed with the condition after becoming unbearably anxious about getting infected, touching things others may have touched, and going out of their homes.

“Whereas before someone may have said they were occasionally depressed, it has worsened to the point where they are asking how they can end it all because life isn’t worth living.”

According to Salkow, there has been a significant increase in calls to the helpline in terms of both volume and severity. The number of calls rose from 164 in April to 180 in June, with 192 in July. In August, there was a major leap to 244 calls. As for their severity, calls deemed severe or potentially life-threatening jumped from three in April to 55 in August.

“We were quite flabbergasted by the increase,”

Salkow says. “The conditions we’re seeing are mainly depression and anxiety, but some cases are far more severe.”

LifeLine counselling services manager, Reabetsoe Noge, has had a similar experience.



“We’ve had 186 counselling calls and 350 requests for counselling sessions in the past month,” she says. “Our counsellors are booking shifts on a daily basis to meet the expectations of clients who are feeling distressed.”

Says Noge, “People have had the time to introspect under COVID-19, and have discovered the gaps in their lives. This prompts them to become depressed or even suicidal and, hopefully, to reach out to us. Underlying issues are being brought to the fore, triggering all sorts of serious emotional responses.”

LifeLine has been operating on the phone and over WhatsApp, fielding requests for help daily. It’s a similar situation at the ChaiFM Helpline, where 27 volunteers spend 18 hours a day taking calls and following up on previous callers who fall into the severe or moderately severe category.

Salkow says that follow-ups are made regularly where circumstances demand, including subsequent

hospital admission or family intervention if needed. The line ensures that callers get the help they need, be it securing a bed at a medical institution, a referral, or simply a supportive conversation.

“Under the circumstances, it’s crucial that we do whatever we can to bring about a positive result to the best of our ability,” says Salkow. “We can’t just leave someone because they’re not getting out of bed in the morning. If they need help, something has to be done.”

Emergency medical-response service Hatzolah has also initiated a crisis response line to help people through the emotional upheaval of the pandemic.

“The crisis line is available to assist people with all the difficulties that COVID-19 has presented,” says social worker Sheri Hanson, who works in Hatzolah’s Crisis Response Unit. “The unit is there to help people air difficult feelings, and reduce the enormous sense of loss and isolation.”

Hanson says the crisis line is reflective of what has been happening globally on an emotional level.

“At first, people were feeling anxious about contracting COVID-19 and concerned about transmitting it to others, particularly if they had family members with high-risk comorbidities. In addition to the psychological stressors related to COVID-19, people have been feeling the financial stress that has arisen due to loss of jobs, lockdown, and businesses closing.

“As time has passed, this has become a real concern for those whose earnings have been negatively affected by the restrictions of COVID-19, which in turn has had an adverse effect on their mental health.”

Hanson says being confined to a home in difficult circumstances and with no relief from this reality has

been challenging for many.

“For those in the community who have kept themselves away from others for fear of contracting COVID-19, the social isolation has been brutal and often a debilitating depression has set in,” she says. “COVID-19 has brought with it an enormous sense of uncertainty.

“This has increased already high levels of anxiety, as people have been unable to put a timeline to this new normal of masks, sanitisers, isolation, and economic stress.”

Salkow says that, contrary to initial expectations, the demographic of those who are typically using helplines has gone beyond the elderly and the immunocompromised.

“We accepted that the greatest demand would be from older people,” she says. “However, we’re seeing a demographic from as young as age six calling for support. Teens and varsity students have also been in a very bad way, with their academic careers and lives being disrupted.

“The younger generation is scared of what the future will hold and what sort of world they will be growing up in.”

Moving forward, Noge believes that people are developing coping mechanisms or becoming more willing to reach out for help.

“People took a knock emotionally, but I think that they are finding their feet,” she says. “The calls we get show us that people are feeling distressed, but that they are also more open to calling now. It seems some people are becoming more resilient.”

Nonetheless, Salkow maintains that until certainty is restored, the calls for help will remain constant.

“I don’t like to make predications, but I believe we will see intense pressure on mental health for the next four years at least,” she says. “The lack of certainty will cause emotional upheaval, but I’m hopeful that we can help people see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

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Lessons from an octopus teacher

TALI FEINBERG

If you haven't yet seen the hit documentary *My Octopus Teacher* currently streaming on Netflix, you might be living under a rock, much like the subject of the film. A phenomenon making waves around the world, it was directed by first-time filmmaker Pippa Ehrlich, who grew up in Johannesburg and currently lives in Cape Town.

While the documentary has been nominated for a string of awards, and won a number of them, the 33-year-old's proudest moment so far was when her *bobba* told her how much *naches* she was getting as people around the globe responded to the film with joy, amazement, and fascination.

"I'm forever changed," said one person on social media, while ex-South African author Joanne Fedler wrote, "I recognise in it what I have never been able to achieve in all my years as an advocate. It's the highest form of activism. This is what art is supposed to do."

Ehrlich says she could never have predicted the response. "I knew we had a beautiful film and story, and I knew Netflix liked it. But I never expected this. It's been incredible to reach so many people. The first week was overwhelming – we were getting an email every three seconds! It's been a rollercoaster, and I feel deeply privileged to have had this experience."

While the story is about one man's relationship with an octopus, it's also about so much more. "We wanted to expand people's perceptions of the natural world," she says. "We created a portrait of a creature that couldn't be more different to us, that had her own miraculous way of being and special personality. And that's true for every living thing. There's much negative press about the environment.

To frame your work as a story of hope ... it has a much better chance of reaching hearts and minds."

She and the film's subject and producer, Craig Foster, are part of the Sea Change Project, a community of scientists, storytellers, journalists, and filmmakers who made *My Octopus Teacher* and are dedicated to raising awareness of the beauty and ecological importance of South Africa's kelp forest, which they call "the Great African Seaforest".

Ehrlich's earliest memories of the ocean are at Boulder's Beach near Cape Town, where her grandparents had a holiday home and where she first learnt to swim. In coming full circle, the film takes place in the same region. She's now a "skindiver" (swimming without a wetsuit) who has been diving in the kelp forest every day for four years.

Her path to being part of the project was a long and winding one. "I was working at the Save Our Seas Foundation – a well-paying job that allowed me to interact with some of the best marine biologists on the planet and fly all over the world. But I felt in crisis – everyone I worked with had amazing stories of being in nature and I felt like a voyeur. I didn't have my own experiences to share." It's a similar story to the one Foster tells in the film, of his own breakdown as he longed to immerse himself in the natural world.

"I met Craig in 2015. I've been diving in the Cape since my early 20s, and thought I knew this environment, but after that first dive with Craig, I realised I knew nothing. It was like putting on magical glasses. I discovered animals I didn't know existed, and things I didn't think possible. When going through this crisis, I asked him to teach me how to dive in cold water and track animals. It took me six months to learn to



dive [without a wetsuit] for as long as he could. "At first he was very cagey about the octopus – it was a precious thing that only he had experienced. Then one day he sent me a treatment [outline of the story]. I was sitting at my desk at this very scientific organisation and I started to cry. I didn't expect it to resonate with me. Then, when I looked at the footage, I realised it wasn't just a powerful story, but could also be a powerful film that could resonate with others."

The week Foster asked her to make the film was the same week she had an interview for a Masters scholarship in the United Kingdom. "It was scary ... I had to choose. I abandoned the scholarship that I had spent six months applying for, and gave up my stable job. We made the film in Craig's attic and had zero production budget at first. Thankfully, the Sea Change Project managed to procure some funds, giving me a small stipend for the first two years."

Ehrlich spent three months just watching footage of the octopus and the kelp forest that Foster had recorded. As the film came into focus, she and her team had to make brutal editing decisions about what to keep and what to cut. One such moment she would have loved to include was when a giant stingray swam over Foster, covering his whole body.

"It's one of the most dangerous animals in the kelp forest and is the animal that killed conservationist Steve Irwin. Craig kept very still and filmed it. We wanted to include the scene, but it just didn't fit the story," she says. "Likewise, the beginning of the film was probably cut 25 times. Craig's life is fascinating, but we had to compress it. Working with top natural history filmmaker [and fellow director] James Reed made this clear."

Although she had created short films at her previous job, Ehrlich had never directed a feature film. "It was a baptism of fire," she says, humbly adding that it's almost unheard of for a film made by a first-time director to be bought by Netflix. She believes that every film that gets

made is a miracle because of everything it takes to get it to that point.

"It was rejected over and over again. We took a long time to get the story right. It was sent to someone who had just joined Netflix. She watched it on a plane and her little boy climbed onto her lap to watch it, enthralled. That moment convinced her, as Netflix is always looking for projects that people can watch as a family. So it was miraculous. If that child had not been there, Netflix might not have taken it on." While Netflix is "the dream", it was also "terrifying to deliver to the most demanding broadcaster in the world. For three years all I did was dive, edit, and sleep."

Turning to the recent parody of the film titled *My Kreeepy Teacher* that has since gone viral, she says, "It really made me laugh, and they put in a huge effort. The artistry and creativity is fantastic. Everyone had been taking the film so seriously, which was quite intimidating. So it's great to have a lighter take."

While Foster makes swimming in the kelp forest look effortless, Ehrlich advises that people don't just head out there. "It's dangerous. Swim in a tidal pool first, train, and get used to the cold. The ocean is unpredictable." Even as an experienced swimmer, she once had a frightening moment when she almost got swept onto rocks by an ocean swell.

To the thousands of people who want to bring the beauty of the film into their own lives, Ehrlich advises "carving out time to getting to know one aspect of nature. There is a concept of a 'sit spot' which is one place you visit every day. You observe and notice changes, and you start to feel like this place or animal or plant is a character in your life. It begins to take up more space in your mind and you become more curious.

"Don't take your phone," she emphasises. "Just not having your phone creates a huge space in your mind and heart. Our phones are rewiring humanity. The antidote to a synthetic reality is an organic reality, rooted in time spent in the natural world."

Storm over inclusion of Israel-boycott academic at conference

>>Continued from page 9

Milton Shain, the emeritus professor of historical studies at UCT and a former director of the Kaplan Centre, told the *SA Jewish Report* that conference organisers called for papers a long time ago.

"Anyone working in the field of South African Jewry was alerted. I haven't had a hand in the organisation, but I'm sure that – as is the case with academic conferences generally – the organisers looked at the merits of the proposal and most importantly, considered its appropriateness for the conference theme," says Shain.

"It would be outrageous for one's political beliefs to be a consideration at a university. That's precisely why the Kaplan Centre has fought against those who call for a boycott of Israeli academics at UCT. How could that battle be fought if the Kaplan Centre did its own censoring?" he asked.

The petition said if Hunter "got his way" and an Israeli academic boycott were to be

adopted at UCT, then the Kaplan Centre would be unable to fulfil its mandate as a centre for Jewish Studies, nor would it be able to host this international conference with participating Israelis.

David Kaplan of the Concerned Citizens for Academic Freedom said in the petition, "We are thus puzzled as to why the Kaplan Centre would deem it appropriate to legitimise radical individuals with extremist positions that harm UCT and the pursuit of academic freedom. Placing a well-known BDS activist at an academic conference undermines the credibility of the conference and the important discussions set to take place."

Hunter, who wasn't aware of the petition until being informed by the *SA Jewish Report* said, "I'm looking forward to an academically rigorous and inspiring conference, and to share some of the findings from my masters research into South African Jewish history."

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A socially transmitted disease

Going to shul over Sukkot felt somewhat like gaining access to the business-class lounge. Aspiring entrants wait nervously in line for their documentation to be carefully checked, information recorded, physical features scrutinised, before being waved into a space that is spread out, spacious, and socially just a little awkward. Much like a business-class lounge, it also presents a magnificent opportunity to “people watch”. Which is what I did when after a seven-month absence, I went back to shul this past weekend.

COVID-19 is very clearly a social disease. And in spite of what they might have told us, it’s not the diabetic, the bald, or the aged who are at risk, but those who don’t have the ability to follow the social rules that pandemics ask us to. One morning in shul, and it became clear why some had already contracted the disease, and why others would soon follow.

The service I went to took place outside. Chairs were spaced a good few metres apart, and each person was given a seat for their posterior and one for their luggage. There was hand sanitizer everywhere. Anyone called up to the Torah did so from their seats, and mask wearing was mandatory. Mingling was kept to a minimum. By most, that is. Best of all was the efficiency that meant that the whole service was done and dusted in one hour and fifty minutes.

But not everyone was able to manage. And it was fascinating to observe those who simply couldn’t “get” what was expected of them. A few cases in particular caught my attention. First, there was someone who would take a carefully placed chair and move it to a non-careful place. Then, there was

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



someone else who would come and simply stand in close proximity between two people, and then there where those who wore masks as a face decoration rather than a preventative tool.

In observing them, I realised that these are the people who on a Zoom call wouldn’t look to see that the camera isn’t focused up their nose. These are the folk who might walk out the house before checking that they haven’t buttoned their shirt to their pants zipper or who would unquestionably leave a patch of hair on their cheek when shaving. They are the ones, I realised that day, who are most at risk, and who might well kill us all.

Until now, I had no appreciation how dangerous a lack of social awareness could be. Now I’m certain that it’s potentially deadly.

I have often told my children that I was unlikely to hire a person who didn’t button their collar down if the shirt required it to be done because this meant that they couldn’t see what was clearly in front of them, and that their attention to detail was lacking.

It sounds harsh, but the reality is that we need to be aware not only of those around us, but how we appear and the impact we have on our environment. COVID-19 has underscored that lesson.

It’s not difficult to get into that business-class lounge, it’s getting out of it while healthy that’s more of a challenge.

Rabbi Tanzer leaves magnificent legacy

The passing last week of our much loved Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, z”tl marked the end of an era in the history of our community. It was another sad loss for South African Jewry, yet even as we mourn the passing of this remarkable individual, we can also be heartened and inspired by what he accomplished during his more than half a century as a universally esteemed congregational rabbi, educator, and communal leader.

As Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein so aptly put it, “He was a builder par excellence, and the thriving institutions he left behind are eloquent testimony to everything he achieved”. That Rabbi Tanzer also made a deep imprint on global Jewry was further evident by the long list of eulogies delivered by acknowledged leading rabbis around the world.

From the very day he arrived in South Africa with his young family in 1963, Rabbi Tanzer committed himself heart and soul to his adopted community. For most people, building up Yeshiva College from what was then no more than a small boys’ high school into the vibrant campus it is today would have been achievement enough, but it was only one area in which he left his mark.

When the Glenhazel Hebrew Congregation was founded shortly after his arrival, he was appointed as its first spiritual leader, and served in that capacity for more than 50 years, becoming one of the country’s most respected congregational rabbis. Not content with this, Rabbi Tanzer was very much involved in many other aspects of Jewish communal work. Among other things, he was president of the Southern African Rabbinical Association, served on the executive of the South African Zionist Federation, was active on the United Communal Fund, and from 1965, was an executive committee member and eventually honorary vice-president of South African United Mizrahi. In 1987, he was elected



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

to the Transvaal (later Gauteng) Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and continued to serve in that capacity for the next 30 years, including a term as vice-chairperson.

Throughout this time, he was an unfailing source of guidance and support to successive generations of board leaders. Indeed, innumerable community members, from his colleagues in the rabbinical and teaching professions, to congregants and students looked up to him as someone who had profoundly influenced their lives, careers, and personal development. Speaking personally, I can say he was a much revered mentor, and I shall miss his frequent calls offering support and constructive advice.

One of Rabbi Tanzer’s most outstanding attributes was his ability to promote peace and resolve conflict. He epitomised *ahavat Yisrael* (love for a fellow Jew) in all his dealings with community members. This tolerant, accepting, and non-judgemental approach to all Jews, whatever level they were on, was central to the great success he achieved in building up Yeshiva College and the Glenhazel shul into the powerhouses they became. The success of our community has often been attributed to the prevailing spirit of unity, tolerance, and good fellowship. If so, Rabbi A H Tanzer was the embodiment of those special qualities. May his memory be for a blessing, and may the example he set be an inspiration to us all.

• 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

The luxury of living in the moment



SCHOOL SAVVY

Dani Sack

The matric dance is arguably the most exciting part of the matric year – second to finishing it, of course. It’s all about getting dressed up, taking some nice pictures, hearing some speeches, and then running off to an afterparty to dance until the early morning.

So when lockdown was announced and matriculants around South Africa realised that the matric dance was probably off the cards, it resulted in some wallowing.

For some, it was cause for celebration – no need to spend money on a dress or suit, no need to find a date, no need to go to a party they didn’t really want to go to. Personally, I was on the fence.

I was fortunate enough to go to a matric dance last year, as Grade 11s at my school are invited because they are involved in organising the event. So, I wasn’t too upset about missing the dance – I’d had the opportunity already.

On the other hand, I love putting on make-up and a nice pair of heels, eating delicious Gary Friedman food, and just enjoying time with my friends. So while I wasn’t devastated, I was, naturally, a bit upset.

And then, at the beginning of August, as the restrictions began lifting and life began settling into some form of normality, our school management informed us that we would be having a combined matric dance and valedictory ceremony.

We could come dressed up, supper would be served, and we would get some semblance of the night we had all been mourning for months. I can’t say I had high hopes.

It would be nothing like the usual matric dances. I was worried. It turned out that that worry is what

ended up making the night so beautiful.

Instead of the HOD, our school field was decorated in fairy lights and candles, foregrounding a magnificent sunset and the tempting smell of Burger & Brew. It was a night of camaraderie – loud cheers and claps as people went up for awards, dancing (in a socially distant manner), and laughing at the speeches of our vice-head students. (As is tradition, they roasted the entire class.)

It was possibly one of the best nights of my life, a time where I could live totally and blissfully in the moment, which is something I think we’ve all lost sight of during this pandemic.

For once, I wasn’t stressing about the future – I was living, and enjoying it. I can’t remember the last time I felt like that, and therein lies the message.

I’ve learnt the importance of living in the moment. I urge all of you to stop for a moment, and be grateful for where you are. Live in it, instead of stressing about exams, supper, or COVID-19.



Yeshiva College girls at their matric dance

When talking about anxiety, my mother told me, “Dan, we all have it.” A sad reality, and one that can’t be fixed with a few words from a 17-year-old such as myself.

But – and apologies for the cliché – what I can do is pass on some lessons I’ve learnt in the past few weeks: Breathe. Focus on today. Don’t panic about things beyond your control. And keep in mind that, in spite of the sadness, anxiety, and pessimism, my matric dance still happened. And it was beautiful.

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



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ORT SA educates for life

“Our primary function should be to focus on getting businesses online and familiar with the digital world,” said Professor Barry Dwolatzky, the director of the Joburg Centre for Software Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand, pointing out that digital transformation has been fast-tracked by COVID-19.

Dwolatzky delivered the keynote speech to the recent ORT SA biennial general meeting (BGM) 2020, which was hosted successfully online for the first time. Themed “Honouring our legacy, reshaping the future”, the BGM focused on ORT SA’s success in rising to the challenge of moving from traditional classroom teaching to online methods. Dan Green, World ORT chief executive, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, and Israeli ambassador Lior Keinan, also addressed attendees.

“The current situation in the world and the coronavirus pandemic has to lead us into unprecedented times,” said Dwolatzky, who has recently joined the ORT SA NEC Board, talking about the current and future workplace. “Not only have we been thrust into a new way of learning and teaching, we have also had to adopt a new way of thinking in our daily lives and everyday business routines. Coronavirus forced companies to allow their employees to work remotely from home or be shut down. While most companies went the route of #WFH, some companies were unable to do so and after many years of providing a service or product, have shut down.”

ORT SA’s commendable achievements were acknowledged by the ORT SA NEC committee and supportive World ORT members. “I have been inspired by this community for making it through this year, which truly shows the greatness of the human spirit,” said Goldstein. “The work that ORT and ORT Jet does is so important by giving people skills, knowledge, and insight to improve themselves. This is true empowerment. Helping others to reach their full potential and contribute to the economy – this comes from education. It has been an honour to be associated with this organisation,” Goldstein said.

World ORT’s Green and Rabbi Craig Kacev, the general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE), announced the permanent affiliation of the SABJE to World ORT.

“ORT has over the past years been a faithful and dedicated partner of Jewish education,” Kacev said. “King David, Herzlia, and the other Jewish schools have benefitted from the organisation’s guidance in technology education, teacher training, and outreach and upliftment initiatives to fellow South Africans.

“The move to a permanent affiliation is an honour,” said Kacev, “one which the SABJE will ensure is nurtured for the mutual benefit and synergy of the SABJE and ORT.”

Said Green, “Two of the pillars of World ORT today are *tikkun*



olam – repairing the world – which I’m sure you are all familiar with and *tikkun am*, which is essentially the creative and significant flourishing of the Jewish people. I can’t think of a better example where these two philosophies reside together with such tremendous results than in ORT SA.”

Talking about World ORT’s vision of educating for life, Green said, “If someone has been blessed with more, then they have the privilege and responsibility of helping someone who has less. The point is to help them to become independent, to giving them life skills.



We all know about teaching a man or woman to fish. The most important thing is to give someone dignity, to give someone the ability and opportunity to make something of themselves.” Ariellah Rosenberg, the chief executive of ORT SA, was commended by Green for her tremendous leadership, courage, and dedication to the vision of World ORT.

“COVID-19 and lockdown implications worldwide have demonstrated the opportunities for disruption in education and schooling. It’s the perfect timing to formalise the affiliation of the SABJE to World ORT. World ORT is known for its cutting-edge technology in education and worldwide network of schools. I therefore envisage collaboration and interventions that promote 21st century skills, project-based learning that develops analytical and investigative skills and, most importantly, the connection with people to enhance the social and emotional intelligence of our youth,” said Rosenberg.



Passing of mighty ‘Little Lor’ leaves void at WIZO

Lorraine Rosmarin, a past president of WIZO SA and honorary life vice-chairperson of WIZO Johannesburg, died on Yom Kippur, 27 September. However, her illustrious titles don’t portray the essence of a special lady, according to her WIZO co-workers.

She was known on the committees as “Little Lor”, small in stature, but displaying a determination that belied her size. She never said no, not to challenges, new ideas, championing the rights of staff members, volunteering for almost everything, and always being present at WIZO functions and those of other organisations, they said.

Only when the matter was important enough did she voice her agreement or objection, always displaying circumspection when it came to idle chatter and comment.

But when the subject was one of morality, or choosing the better way forward, Lorraine voiced her considered opinion quietly and forcefully, and that opinion counted.

She was said to have been friendly, loyal, generous to a fault, and will be remembered for so many things, like her love of hosting family and friends, and her sumptuous teas in the sukkah, which WIZO members all looked forward to annually.

Not even chronic knee problems could dissuade her from attending the international WIZO conference in Israel, complete with her three kilogram fruitcake, which she *schlepped* to her cousin.

Lorraine was valued and loved in WIZO, and will be remembered with great affection. She touched many lives and has left a deep, unfillable void within WIZO, her family, and friends.



Partnership of giving brings joy to Bara kids



A UJW member handing out gift bags at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital

Children in paediatric wards at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital were overjoyed to receive packs containing reading books, colouring books, workbooks, and crayons recently. What with their families not being allowed to visit them, they were given the packs along with a donation of DVDs to the wards to keep them entertained.

Yudi Leibowitz, a physiotherapist at the hospital, and the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) in Johannesburg were responsible for this joy. Leibowitz wanted to do something for the children at the hospital, so she contacted Bev Cohen, the convenor of UJW Johannesburg’s Bags for New Beginnings project. The UJW sprang into action,

partnering with Amy Pleaner from Back a Pupil, who supplied the packs.

UJW’s Bags for New Beginnings also supplies starter packs for new moms at various clinics and hospitals around Johannesburg. Many of these women have absolutely nothing for their newborns, with some preparing to take their babies home wrapped in newspaper. The packs include babygros, vests, beanies, nappies, a blanket, a soft toy, as well as pamper items for moms. Recent distributions were made to Hope of the Hopeless for a day of baby showers, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, and Thelle Mogoerane Regional Hospital.



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