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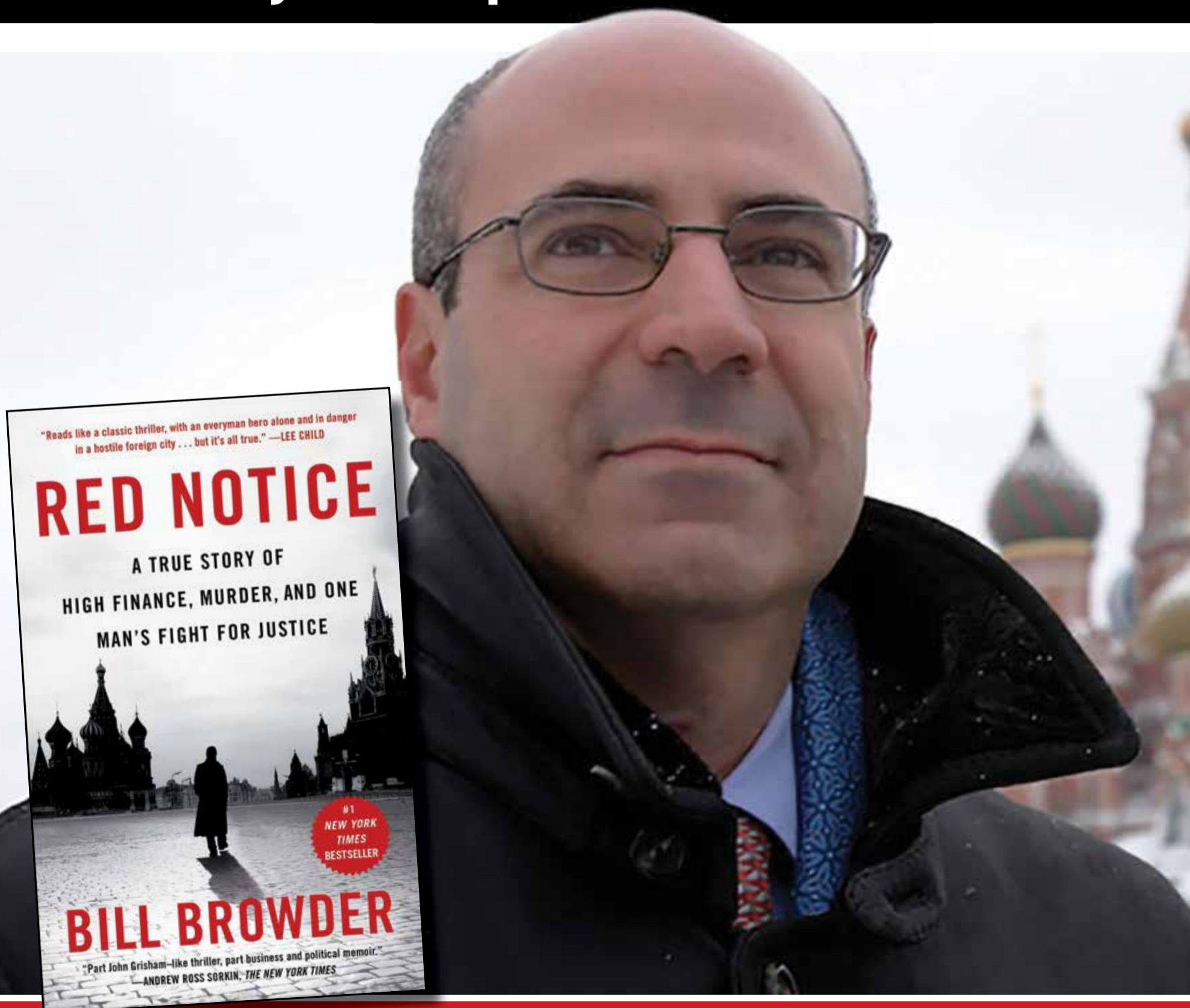
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Twenty-one year old survives COVID-19 by a breath

TALI FEINBERG

We've all heard that COVID-19 doesn't generally affect young people. So when Capetonian Ryan Lipman tested positive in late July, he thought his age was in his favour. He was wrong.

The young musician fought for his life for three weeks in hospital, including 11 days in the intensive care unit (ICU). Now, he has survived to tell the tale, and is begging the unvaccinated to get the jab.

"That first night in hospital was when I realised how serious COVID-19 is," says Lipman. "Without oxygen, it feels like you are trying to breathe through a toothpick. You cannot get enough air into your lungs."

"I messaged my mom saying how scared I was. I believed that this was how it was going to end. I was going to die from COVID-19."

He was the youngest COVID-19 pneumonia ICU patient at Milnerton Mediclinic. Recalling the moment he was wheeled in, he says, "All I could see was people on ventilators. Mouths open. Pipes everywhere. I completely lost it. I begged them not to let me die. I barely ever cry, but being in the ICU at the age of 21 with COVID-19 pneumonia, not knowing if you will ever see your family again ... trust me, you learn that crying is pretty much all you do."

Going back to the beginning, he says his family was careful to follow the COVID-19 protocols. "All I ever wanted was to stay clear of this virus. But we celebrated my dad's birthday by going out for supper – a rare treat in a pandemic." He's not sure where his

family picked up the virus, but it could have been there. First, his mother got sick, but she had already had one dose of the vaccine. His father had had two doses, and only had mild symptoms.

Lipman also tested positive. He wasn't vaccinated as he was too young at the time. "It started with chills and a headache. While I have asthma, I'm 21 and healthy." They all registered with the Community Security Organisation's COVID-19 Wellness Programme. "Without this monitoring programme, I don't think I would be alive today," he says.

"On day two, I woke up with body aches and fatigue. With every movement you make, it feels like someone is aggressively hurting you. Day three began with a raging fever that wouldn't go down, day four with pain in my chest and back. With a dry cough and extreme dizziness, I woke up on day eight with my oxygen levels dropping to 90%. My dad decided he was taking me to the hospital. At first, I refused. Why would I need to go to hospital for COVID-19? This doesn't happen to young people."

But he eventually agreed, and it turned out to be a lifesaving decision. "I later asked my doctors what would have happened if my father hadn't brought me in when he did. They told me that any later, the outcome would've been very different."

At the hospital, he says, "One nurse put a nasal cannula in my nose, one inserted a drip and one checked my blood pressure and oxygen saturation, which were now at 88%."

"A representative from Pathcare came to take a 'blood gas' from an artery to see exactly how much oxygen was in the blood. The pain is excruciating because it's done 'blind'. You can't see an artery, so if the person drawing the blood doesn't hit the artery, the needle digs deeper."

The Emergency Room doctor listened to Lipman's lungs. "I can

still hear her shouting, 'I think we have a case of COVID-19 pneumonia, I need dexamethasone'. The doctor explained that I was hypoxic." He was admitted. The next morning, his oxygen levels were still at 88%.

"Night arrives and my fear gets worse as I still feel like I cannot get air into my lungs. I ask the nurse to increase the flow rate. At about two in the morning, my breathing

problems start to increase again. I find my remote on the floor and manage to grab it with the small amount of energy I have, but it had stopped working."

"It was at this point I started to believe that this was my end. I prayed to G-d and told Him that if it's my time, he must just take me. I managed to crawl out the bed and banged on the window to get the nurse's attention. After fixing my remote, I felt that maybe the flow of oxygen was too much, making it even more difficult to breathe. As she slightly decreased the flow of oxygen, an overwhelming feeling of relief came over me as I could finally breathe."

His oxygen levels went down to 86%, and he was put on a high flow oxygen system. "This delivers humidified oxygen up to 60 litres per minute. They left me for two hours flat on my stomach to see if they could get my oxygen levels back to at least 95%. This is an incredibly uncomfortable experience. The

head nurse checked my SATS again – 89%. She added a re-breather mask. I'm now on the highest amount of oxygen before they ventilate you."

Lipman was then moved to ICU, where he saw things that no 21-year-old should see – "the weeping cries of people saying goodbye to their family members, people getting intubated in front of you, and people passing away."

"The head nurse promised me he would do everything to get me out of there alive and said I needed to keep positive. I've learnt that as much as COVID-19 is a physical fight, it's also a mental fight."

His parents were allowed to visit him in ICU. "As my father left, I begged him to get me out of there. Every day in ICU was the same. Imagine a blood gas every morning? To stop this pain, my doctor decided that I would need an arterial line for blood to be taken at any time without having to stab a needle into my artery. I would basically

Continued on page 50>>



Ryan Lipman leaving the hospital with his father Tyrone



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ChevrahKadisha

The end of the Liliesleaf era

NICOLA MILTZ

A sombre press statement issued by The Liliesleaf Trust announced its closure at midnight on Wednesday, 1 September, following years of financial difficulty and a lack of political will to ensure its survival.

"This isn't something that happened out of the blue," said Nicholas Wolpe, the founder and chief executive of The Liliesleaf Trust.

"It shouldn't come as a surprise. The signs for the entire sector, including all sports, arts, and culture, have been there for years. Sadly, COVID-19 has shone a light on something that has been a perpetual, structural problem."

Wolpe fought tooth and nail to keep the iconic, historical

place of memory afloat. A crowdfunding campaign earlier this year kept the doors open for a while, but the situation became unsustainable.

"There is donor fatigue out there," he said. "We have a department of arts and culture that is totally disinterested and shows no concern, sensitivity, or understanding. It's the department's responsibility to provide financial resources and an environment that ensures that as a collective, we all survive."

The stress of unsuccessfully trying to reach the ear of those in power sent Wolpe's blood pressure sky high.

"I experienced a heart attack in July, and my cardiologist says it's from all the stress," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

He hopes Liliesleaf's

closure will be temporary. "At this point, the battle may be lost, but the war has yet to be won."

Wolpe has become the mouthpiece for the arts, heritage, and culture sector – one which, in his view, is dismally neglected. He has relentlessly tried to highlight the anger and frustration felt by artists at what he calls the "abject failure of a minister and his officials to address the ailing plight and gradual demise of the sector".

In a Facebook post this week, Wolpe said, "I'm yet again reminded of the evocative poem by Martin Niemöller, *First they came*, and in particular the last few lines: 'Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.' This can easily be changed to, 'soon there will be no art, culture, or heritage to protect, preserve, or cherish'."

After an endless battle with local authorities to explain Liliesleaf's dire financial situation, Wolpe wrote to Gauteng Premier David Makhura, pleading for political support for the sector.

He referred to a WhatsApp message by Gauteng MEC Mbali Hlophe saying she would look into the privately owned heritage site, but said nothing had come of it.

"I must confess, given the dire financial plight Liliesleaf, museums, other sites of memory are facing, I'm bewildered, as it would appear MEC Hlophe has taken no further steps or action," he said.

Between 1961 and 1963, Liliesleaf served as the

secret headquarters and nerve centre of the African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and Congress Alliance. It was at Liliesleaf that the overthrow of the apartheid regime was discussed, and where leaders of the liberation movement took refuge in their struggle for a non-racial, just, free, and democratic South Africa.

Wolpe was only a baby when police raided Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg, on 11 July 1963, arresting the high



Nic Wolpe at Liliesleaf

command of Umkhonto we Sizwe. His father, Harold, was one of them.

The famous Rivonia Trial followed. The accused included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi, Lionel Bernstein, James Kantor, Andrew Mlangeni, and Raymond Mhlaba. Kantor and Bernstein were acquitted, but the other eight were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

Wolpe's parents, Harold and AnnMarie, fled into exile shortly after Harold escaped from the Marshall Square police headquarters in Johannesburg by bribing a young warder, just before the start of the Rivonia Trial. Wolpe returned to South Africa as a young man on a mission to bring those defining moments in the history of South Africa to life.

"I have put 20 years of my life into Liliesleaf, and it has come at a cost. I'm at the end of my tether, so I'm having to re-evaluate possibilities for the future," he said.

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Torah Thought

Seeing the big, beautiful picture

This week's fundraising campaign for Community Security Organisation Medical in Cape Town and Hatzolah in Johannesburg beautifully replaces our obsession with daily infection statistics, hospital occupancies, and rates of transmission with awareness of (and gratitude for) the number of lives saved, families cared for, and thousands vaccinated in protection against the virus.

However, once you've made your generous contribution, that nagging feeling comes back: how many deaths in our community this year? What are the global and local statistics of antisemitism and crime? How bad is emigration from South Africa? Are there any young people excited about future – or even present – Jewish life in South Africa?

How are the numbers?

Well, it depends on what you're counting. The short-term vision created by the

numbers gives us valuable data that should inform our long-term planning and community development strategies to ensure that we mitigate against the possible consequences of those realities, and more critically, reverse those trends.

Built into our spiritual and collective national DNA however, is the ability to see, act upon, and live with the vision of a far greater picture.

What's that vision?

"You are standing, today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d." This is the message of the Shabbos before (and that blesses the week of) Rosh Hashanah.

Close to 1 000 years ago, Rashi unpacked for us in this verse a powerful message that speaks to us today, not only as a legacy from our ancestors three millennia ago, and more than just by virtue of our souls' presence there. No. It's way beyond that.

Rabbi Asher Deren, Chabad of the West Coast – Cape Town



Today, in September 2021, as you read this Torah article in the *SA Jewish Report*, you are standing, joined by the hundreds of millions of Jews in each and every generation before, the hundreds of thousands of our brethren who lived in South Africa, as well as every generation that's yet to materialise – "before Hashem your G-d".

"You are standing, today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d."

When we live a life aligned to the infinite wisdom of Torah, the atomic power of each *mitzvah*, and the unconditional unity of our entire nation across the borders of times, space, and social class, then we can be confident in our future.

The numbers are great. And we are assured of a sweet New Year with an abundance of revealed goodness for all of us.

South African Jewish Report
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SAZF complaint about conduct “grossly unfair”, Desai says

NICOLA MILTZ

Judge Siraj Desai has called for the dismissal of the complaint laid against him by the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) of being an anti-Israel “politicised judge”.

In June, Professor Anthony Arkin on behalf of the SAZF lodged a complaint with the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC) of the Judicial Services Committee (JSC) against the highly respected Western Cape High Court judge, accusing him of action and conduct “entirely unbecoming of a judicial officer”.

In his blistering 24-page response, Desai vehemently denied the allegations, calling some of them “factually incorrect” and “based on hearsay evidence”. He said the complaint “was without merit”, and requested its dismissal.

Desai’s response, lodged on Tuesday, 31 August, included information about his career as a “prominent human rights lawyer and activist”. He said he subscribed to the principle that “silence by judges in the face of injustice and violations of basic human rights, particularly given the history of South Africa, is inconsistent with judicial office”.

“Judicial officers, therefore, have a particular duty to confront injustice, promote equality for all under the law, and condemn racism in all its forms,” Desai said.

“Secondly, judges don’t exist in isolation. They don’t perform their functions in a cloistered monastery isolated from society. They are members of the community with their own beliefs, opinions, and sympathies.”

Quoting the Constitutional Court, he said, “absolute neutrality was something of a chimera in the judicial context because judges are human. They are unavoidably the product of their own life experiences, and the perspective thus derived inevitably and distinctively informs each judge’s performance of his or her judicial duties.”

“True impartiality doesn’t require a judicial officer to have no sympathies or opinions when it comes to violations of human rights, injustices, and inequality. What is required is the ability to adjudicate issues reflecting different points of view and doing so with an open mind.”

The SAZF approached the JCC claiming

Desai had breached the JSC Act and code of judicial conduct between 2009 and 2020.

It charged that Desai became involved in political controversy; and used or lent the prestige of judicial office to advance his own private interests, or others. It went on to say that he failed to recuse himself in a matter where there was a possible conflict of interest. It also alleged that he became involved in extra-judicial activities in breach of the impartiality rules, and became involved in activities incompatible with judicial office.

It charged that Desai had, over many years, breached the code of judicial conduct, and accused him of being a politicised judge. It also questioned his recent appointment by President Cyril Ramaphosa as legal services ombudsman, in which his role is to safeguard the integrity of the legal profession.



For many years, Desai, who served as a judge of the Western Cape High Court for 25 years, has been an active anti-Israel lobbyist and has openly shown support for pro-Palestine activities and lobby groups including the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement.

SAZF Legal Forum spokesperson Rolene Marks said, “The SAZF believes that Judge Desai has made use of the prestige of his office to cause political controversy and advance his private interests including anti-Israel political movements and support for

Iran, Hamas, and BDS.”

She said the judge “must be held accountable” for his behaviour according to the code of judicial conduct.

Acting chairperson of the JCC, Sisi Khampepe, designated Justice Nambitha Dambuzza, a member of the JCC, to look into the complaint “to determine its merits”.

Desai’s response went on to outline that he had “appeared as legal counsel in many important and politically significant

The complaint relates to matters and events as far back as 12 years ago. “The SAZF doesn’t provide any coherent explanation for why it took it 12 years to lodge this complaint,” said Desai.

“Judge Desai is entitled to hold political views in his capacity as a citizen provided he exercises such rights in a manner consistent with the independence and impartiality of the judiciary as protected by the Constitution,” he said in his response.

Referring to some of the allegations, he said it was “unacceptable” for the SAZF to make broad, sweeping, and generalised allegations of judicial misconduct.

In its conclusion, he said, “The complainants have gone through the judge’s life with a fine tooth comb in an attempt to discredit the judge and curb and curtail the space for human-rights advocacy. This scatter-shot approach is patently unfair, and cannot reasonably and rationally constitute the basis of a valid complaint. Despite all their attempts, they have not been able to make out a valid case against the judge.

“It’s also grossly unfair to confront a retired judge with perceived improper conduct which allegedly occurred during his tenure as a judge and which relates to events that may have occurred more than a decade ago.”

Finally it said, “Ultimately, Professor Arkin and the SAZF seek to protect and conceal human-rights abuses which are apparent in, inter alia, the Goldstone Report. Judge Desai is implacably opposed to human-rights abuses everywhere. There is simply no moral equivalence between a party who seeks to promote and protect human rights and one who violates it.”

It called on the JCC to “make a decision whether it’s proper for a judge to engage in activities to promote human rights and condemn gross abuses where they occur”.

The SAZF was examining the response at the time of going to print. The JCC invited it to comment in writing to Judge Desai’s response by 15 September.

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As we stand on the threshold of Rosh Hashanah 5782, we face a world very different from the one we expected this year: to share the celebration of this wonderful chag with family and friends as we did before the scourge of Covid.

Once again families will be separated, and once again there will be restrictions on movements and gatherings; but that in no way will affect the joy we feel as we welcome the new year 5782.

At the same time, we celebrate our 90th anniversary, 90 years of uplifting and enriching many thousands of lives.

The history of the Union of Jewish Women is inspirational: it has been at the forefront of caring, nurturing, educating, empowering, supporting and responding to the needs, in both the Jewish and wider communities, of those most disadvantaged, those most under-privileged, those most deserving, with the help of our generous and gracious donors.

On behalf of our valued UJW volunteers and staff members, we extend our warm wishes to our wonderful community across the country, and we look forward to a year of peace, good health, achievement and prosperity.

May we all, and our beloved Israel, receive Hashem’s blessings in abundance.

Bev Goldman, National President UJW SA

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Africa4Palestine compares Israel to Nazi Germany

TALI FEINBERG

Local Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) group Africa4Palestine has taken its hatred for Israel to a new low, comparing the Jewish state to the Nazis.

In a Facebook post on 19 August 2021, the group shared a cartoon of a soldier pointing a gun at an old woman. The soldier has the Israeli flag on his helmet. His reflection in a mirror shows Nazi insignia on his helmet and a man in concentration camp uniform lying on the floor. Africa4Palestine captioned the cartoon, "Irony is just honesty with the volume cranked up."

Also on 19 August, the group shared an image of Auschwitz survivor Dr Hajo Meyer saying, "Call Zionists what they are: Nazi criminals." Africa4Palestine added the caption, "The truth is like the sun, you can shut it off for a while, but it's not going away."

Then on 24 August, it posted an image of three women holding a sign saying, "If you are silent when it comes to Palestine, you would have been silent at the time of the Holocaust."

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA's) working definition of antisemitism, states that drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis is antisemitic.

The IHRA definition is "a useful definition to provide a quick indication if an act is likely to be antisemitic or not. The definition is widely accepted in many countries and by scholars," says Dr Günther Jikeli, associate professor at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University.

Jikeli, who is doing extensive work on social media and antisemitism, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Such analogies between Israel and Nazi Germany or the situation of Palestinians today with Jews in Europe during World War II are clear examples of libel against Israel and diminishing the Holocaust. An honest comparison would reveal fundamental differences quickly.

"The next question, then, is why such delusional comparisons and false allegations are made. Ignorance can be excluded, given the vast documentation of the Holocaust that's readily available for everyone who has access to the internet. It's highly likely that such comparisons are motivated by antisemitic sentiments even if the actors don't explicitly say that they hate all Jews," he says.

"Research has shown that antisemitism often works in coded language after World War II. Additionally, Jews are affected directly by vilification of the Jewish state because they are constantly suspected of supporting this alleged 'evil entity'. This ties into patterns of antisemitism that are hundreds of years old.

"The reference to Hajo Meyer is an example of a widely used attempt to camouflage antisemitic ideas of the Jewish state using quotes from anti-Zionist Jews," Jikeli says. "The case of Mr Meyer shows that Jews and even Holocaust survivors can say things that are antisemitic.

"These antisemitic posts are a strong indication that this is an antisemitic organisation," he says.

Meanwhile, Professor Yehuda Bauer, one of the world's foremost Holocaust experts, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "A comparison between the two situations actually means that just as the Nazi regime had to be

annihilated, so Israel [has to be annihilated], in other words, they want to kill the seven million Jews there. So this comparison is genocidal."

"Factually – not that facts matter to these propagandists – even the harshest critique of Israel's policy of occupying the West Bank (Gaza is a matter of confrontation, not occupation) doesn't ignore the fact that there are no such things as Israeli concentration camps or any racial discrimination," says Bauer. "It's a struggle between two ethnic groups over a piece of land. Any comparison with the 1930s is totally ahistorical.

"There is any number of ethno-national confrontations going on in the present, and to pick on Israel only singles out the Jews as a criminal body, just as the Nazis did," he says. "In other words, the argument that the Jews are Nazis leads to the conclusion that whoever argues like that actually repeats Nazi arguments. In the end, it's antisemitic propagandists who are like the Nazis."

The head of media at Yad Vashem, Simmy Allen, says, "Using Nazi images and the Holocaust to criticise or attack Israeli actions is known as 'Holocaust inversion' and is considered by scholars to be a form of antisemitism. The tragedy of the Holocaust and that of the Palestinians are two very different historical events.

"Equating the two does great injustice to both, and doesn't contribute to furthering our understanding of the history of the Palestinians or to finding a solution to the conflict in Israel."

Official Yad Vashem documentation explains, "Whereas the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel can be seen as one over land and sovereignty, with tangible issues and a long and bitter history, Hamas advocates the total obliteration of Israel and the murder of as many of its people as possible. As such, Hamas is at its core an antisemitic, genocidal terrorist movement. Right now, Israel is engaged in a military operation to prevent Hamas from carrying out its murderous intentions. Despite the tragic casualties implicit in warfare, in no way can this be construed as Israel perpetrating a Holocaust."

Dr Shmuel Lederman, a research fellow in the Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research and Education at the University of Haifa, says, "It should be absolutely clear: whatever one's criticism of Israel is, depicting Israelis as Nazis is ignorant, offensive to most Jews, and shuts down any potential discussion and co-operation with many Jews, including Israelis, who might otherwise share much of that critique.

"For people who know anything about the Holocaust, the difference between even Israel's harshest policies toward the Palestinians and gas chambers, mass executions, the extermination of two thirds of European Jewry, and similar basic facts about the Holocaust, is clear enough to make such comparisons tragically ridiculous. Also, they undermine more reasonable claims made by the Palestinian solidarity movement."

Says Milton Shain, local antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, "Africa4Palestine knows well the power Holocaust memory evokes. 'Perpetrators, bystanders, and victims' have become a trope deeply etched in the Western psyche. In reality, these comparisons are ludicrous. Besides dishonouring the

Continued on page 50>>



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Communal organisations help make Rosh Hashanah special

SAUL KAMIONSKY

With Rosh Hashanah upon us, communal organisations are hard-pressed to make sure that every community member is looked after, but the number of people needing help has spiked since the onset of the pandemic.

The Chevrah Kadisha – which looks after the lion’s share of those in need – has recorded a 35% increase in the amount of financial assistance that it gives families towards living costs. In the Western Cape, Jewish Community Services Cape Town (JCS) recipients have increased more than 100%.

The Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society (JWBS) has also noticed an increase in the number of people in need over the past few years. “With COVID-19, it’s especially hard,” said Maureen Disler, the co-chairperson of the organisation which has survived for more than 127 years. “People have lost their jobs, and some people ask for food vouchers. They haven’t got enough to feed their children.”

The Chevrah Kadisha gives special *yom tov* meals to the 850 elderly and physically or mentally challenged people living in its residential facilities. However, its



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

wider reach extends to nearly 11 000 people, helping them with living costs, food, healthcare, education, accommodation, and social services throughout the year.

“The Chev is unique in the sheer volume of people it helps, the duration of time that it helps them for, and the diverse range of its activities from cradle to grave,” said Saul Tomson, the chief executive of the largest Jewish welfare organisation on the African continent.

The organisation distributes R5 million every month to families in the community, totalling R60 million for the year. This is a significant increase from pre-COVID-19 times. It’s also involved in education, with nearly R1 million a month going towards 279 children in Jewish schools and remedial schools, as well as 130 university students who are being educated through the Chev’s interest-free student-loan programme.

“Particularly now leading up to Rosh Hashanah, a lot of assistance is being distributed through our COVID-19 emergency release fund,” Tomson said.

Smaller organisations like Yad Aharon & Michael have also been inundated with new requests over the past two years.

“Whereas the number of families who receive weekly food parcels from us stands at about 700, families who aren’t in a position to provide festive meals for Rosh Hashanah through to Sukkot apply for food parcels, which we gladly provide, thereby increasing the number of parcels packed by anything between 20 to 30 plentiful

yom tov hampers,” said Alice Friedman, the chief executive of the organisation founded more than 23 years ago.

Ingrid Koor, the chairperson of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW), which assists just more than 100 people over Rosh Hashanah, said, “There are many more people in need as many families have emigrated, leaving elderly people. The economic downturn and COVID-19 have made things more difficult. With, unfortunately, many more elderly passing, our numbers have remained the same for a few years.”

The UJW’s flagship project, Kosher Mobile Meals (KMM), will supply festive cooked kosher Rosh Hashanah meals, plus honey for a hopefully sweeter year. “We will also distribute *yom tov* joy parcels supplied by the HOD [Hebrew Order of David] consisting of treats and non-perishable food to recipients,” said Koor. “KMM distributes kosher cooked meals to those Jewish elderly over 75 who are unable to cook for themselves.”

For Rosh Hashanah, Yad Aharon & Michael is handing out double portions of seasonal fruit, apples and vegetables, supplemented by meat, chicken, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Its dry goods hampers include honey, grape juice, challahs, and honey cakes in addition to all the basic requirements needed to prepare *yom tov* meals and usher in a happy and sweet new year.

“I’m confident our families won’t need to shop for extra food for two days of *yom tov*,” said Friedman. “Our aim is to enable them to enjoy plentiful meals free from worry and anxiety. This is made possible by the community’s renowned generosity.”

JWBS is giving money to its recipients to sweeten their Rosh Hashanah. It also recently gave out activity packs. “People are lonely and isolated, so we’ve given them each an activity pack. They really look forward to it,” said Disler.

This Rosh Hashanah, the JCS’s hampers include round challot, ready-made vegetable soup, roast chicken, pumpkin pie, vegetables, salads, and strawberries.

“Of course, we add in the apples, honey, grape juice, and candles,” said Lauren Cohn, the chairperson of the JCS Tikvah Foodbank Committee. “In addition, we include a Tupperware container filled with teiglach, meringues, dried fruit, and Sparkles. Every food hamper has a special Rosh Hashanah card handmade by children in our local Jewish schools. These food hampers are well thought out, meticulously planned, and beautifully presented with the love, dignity, and respect that we all deserve.”

The JCS is raising funds through the Rosh Hashanah Appeal, which entails sending out e-cards on behalf of the Tikvah Foodbank’s donors. The organisation also relies on volunteers.

“Our Rosh Hashanah and Pesach [fundraising] campaigns are the biggest,” said Friedman. “We have a Rosh Hashanah campaign running at the moment. It’s widely posted on social media, advertised on street poles in suburbs known to be frequented by the Jewish community, and in the *SA Jewish Report*. We’re also selling beautiful *yom tov* gifts at various points in Joburg, which is a successful initiative.”

The JWBS phones people to ask for donations as COVID-19 restrictions prevent it from running traditional functions such as theatre shows and golf tournaments.

Since many of the UJW’s recipients don’t have family nearby or the funds to pay for their meals, KMM is run mostly on donations. “We launched a fundraising campaign on social media and via our databases to raise money,” said Koor. “We also phoned people to ask for donations.”

Although the UJW’s principal need is donations, it also needs volunteers to chat to its isolated elderly when it’s safer to do so. “KMM recipients are more isolated since COVID-19,” said Koor. “We used to host elderly people to a Wednesday lunch at our UJW house. These people are sorely missing the social interaction.”

Asked what advice she has for those wanting to help others on Rosh Hashanah, Friedman said, “*Teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* are the three elements which Hashem takes into account when finalising our verdict for the coming year. I’m fully cognisant that everybody is financially stretched, but helping those in our midst who cannot celebrate Rosh Hashanah and the *chaggim* without our assistance is a communal responsibility. Treating the needy with sensitivity, kindness, and empathy underpins Yad Aharon’s brand of *chesed*, and addressing the harsh reality of hunger and destitution in our midst forms an integral part of our mission.”

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JNF-SA trail commemorates “Great Jewish Escape”

STEVEN GRUZD

Between 1945 and 1948, up to 300 000 Holocaust survivors and Jewish partisans were rescued across war-ravaged Europe in preparation to enter British-occupied *eretz Yisrael* before the declaration of the Jewish state. Yet, the remarkable achievements of the Bricha (escape or flight) Movement have been all but forgotten in Israel today. The Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF-SA) is trying to change that by creating the Shvi Bricha walking trail in the Carmel mountain range in Israel’s north. It symbolises the thousands of kilometres traversed on foot by the Bricha Movement to freedom.

The Bricha – the Great Jewish Escape – was the topic of a webinar hosted by the JNF-SA and the South African Zionist Federation last week.

Pre-eminent Holocaust historian Professor Yehuda Bauer wrote one of the only books on the Bricha, published in 1974. He explained how in July 1944, Abba Kovner, a Jewish partisan commander, travelled to Soviet-occupied Vilnius in Lithuania to convince the authorities to let the Jews leave.

“It was a hopeless endeavour,” said Bauer. Zionist youth movements became active leaders in the Bricha, the clandestine, underground movement to rescue partisans (and later, survivors and those who were hidden) to smuggle them out of Europe.

After the war, millions of people were on the move throughout Europe. At first, there were no separate displaced persons camps for Jewish survivors, and they had to fight for recognition of their Jewish national identity. The Bricha Movement was central to these efforts.

In September 1945, the first *shlichim* (emissaries) from *eretz Yisrael* arrived in Europe to co-ordinate the Great Jewish Escape. One was Tzvi Netzer, himself an escapee from Europe just two years before, proficient in German, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. Bricha leaders had to bribe many border officials across Europe to allow people to pass into different countries, from Poland to Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Allied-occupied Germany and Austria. They needed graphic designers to forge visas and other official documents. Sometimes, the Jewish groups pretended to be Greeks returning home. They spoke Hebrew, passing it off as Greek to the none-the-wiser Polish authorities. The entire operation was funded by the Joint (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

Many gathered in displaced persons camps, and then eventually moved on to Greece, Italy, and France and then on to *eretz Yisrael* by ship as part of “Aliyah Bet” in defiance of the British naval blockade curbing Jewish immigration before 1948.

“It was absolutely amazing,” said Bauer. “It was the largest illegal mass movement in Europe in the twentieth century. Without the Bricha, there would have been no state of Israel. The Holocaust almost destroyed the hope of a Jewish state. Vast numbers of potential immigrants were killed. The displaced persons camps and the Bricha put pressure on the British and United States to help create the state.”

Professor Avinoam Patt from the University of Connecticut is the author of *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and the Bricha after the Holocaust*. He noted that about 75% to 80% of Holocaust survivors were aged between

17 and 35. Most had lost their entire families and their homes. They faced enduring antisemitism in Europe (such as the devastating Kielce pogrom in Poland in 1946) and had to take control of their lives. With other avenues closed and feeling unwelcome in Europe, many embraced Zionism, helping to revive Zionist youth movements decimated in the war. Some set up kibbutzim – communal farms – in Europe, to learn agriculture in preparation for aliyah.

“The Bricha Trail is now an open-air museum and major educational tool of the Great Jewish Escape,” said Dr Omri Bone from the Keren Kayemet L’Yisrael, the

JNF-SA’s parent body. He lauded JNF-SA for its efforts to make this become a reality.

“
THE NEGLECT OF THE BRICHA REFLECTS A DEEPER AMBIVALENCE ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

Dr Miri Nehari, a clinical and educational psychologist, is the chairperson of the Bricha Legacy Association in Israel. She is the daughter of Tzvi Netzer. “The Bricha isn’t known, spoken about, or researched in Israel,” she said. “The Shvi Habricha is the only commemoration for the Bricha Movement. The association receives no funding from the state. Its main argument is that it didn’t take place on the soil of Israel.” She says the neglect of the Bricha reflects a deeper ambivalence about the Holocaust and its role in the formation of the state of Israel.

Hopefully, JNF-SA’s efforts will start to change all that.

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Taliban takeover – a booster shot for radical Islamists

STEVEN GRUZD

The rapid assumption of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan as the United States (US) withdrew its forces will have ramifications far beyond Central Asia, not least for Israel, according to veteran US diplomat and academic Ambassador Dennis Ross.

Ross, who advised the Clinton and Obama Administrations, was interviewed by Carly Maisel in a Lockdown University webinar, broadcast by the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre on 28 August.

“Begun in 2001, Afghanistan was the longest war in US history,” Ross said. “Afghanistan is known as the ‘death knell of empires’, as discovered by the British, the Soviets, and now the Americans.”

President Donald Trump wanted the US out of Afghanistan, what he called a “forever war”. From a high of 150 000 US troops, there were just 2 500 remaining when Joe Biden assumed office in 2021. He, too, was determined to leave Afghanistan. In spite of investment of more than \$85 billion [R1.2 trillion] in the Afghan army over 20 years [and more than \$1 trillion (R14.6 trillion) spent on the war in total] “there was massive corruption and poor morale. It was a hollow force,” Ross said.

After being vanquished in just six weeks in 2001, the Taliban melted away, bided its time, and regrouped, drawing support from local populations and neighbours such as Pakistan. “Afghan governments looked like foreign implants; they were corrupt and lacked credibility. This helped the Taliban gradually rebuild itself,” said Ross.

The new Taliban government wants international support and recognition. It has therefore sought to project a more

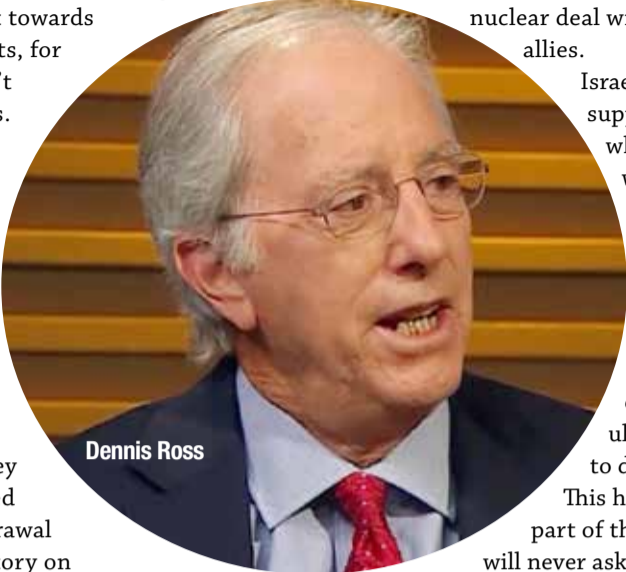
moderate image than it had in its first stint in government from 1996-2001. Its pronouncements about being more tolerant towards women’s rights, for example, don’t convince Ross.

“The risk is that the Taliban victory acts as a recruitment tool – a booster shot for radical Sunni Islamists. They have portrayed the US withdrawal as a great victory on social media. They want to show they’re back in business,” said Ross. So what effect will it have on the region and wider international community?

Iran has a history of hostility and suspicion for the Taliban. They almost went to war in 1998, after the killing of nine Iranian diplomats by the Taliban. Also, the Taliban are radical Sunni Salafists who see Shia Iran as heretics; neither side is tolerant. The Taliban has profited from the opium trade from Afghani poppy fields, fuelling drug addiction in Iran.

Nevertheless, the two have been building a relationship over the past few years, including Iran arming the Taliban. “They have a shared desire to see the defeat of the US everywhere, and seek its humiliation,” said Ross. “Their commentary has been gloating.” He predicts that the new

Iranian government will be even more confrontational with the US, and will “want more, for less” in any renegotiated nuclear deal with the US and its allies.



Dennis Ross

Israel has received support from the US, which has resupplied weapons to Israel after the clashes with Gaza, and continued financial support. “But Israel has always told everyone that ultimately, it needs to depend on itself.

This has always been part of the Israeli ethos. It will never ask the US to die for it. Israel will defend itself by itself. The American experience in Afghanistan has only deepened this sense,” said Ross. The security establishment wants the US to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal not because it thinks it’s a good deal, but so that it can buy the time Israel needs to stop Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, by force if needed.

Pakistan has provided sanctuary for Taliban leaders, partly to undermine Indian influence in Afghanistan. It has suffered heinous terror attacks by the Taliban, but

sees everything through its struggle with India. The world must be wary of a nuclear-armed Pakistan, with growing radicalism.

Russia hasn’t rushed to recognise the Taliban government. It has kept its embassy open, and has a “wait and see” attitude. By conducting military exercises in the former Soviet republic, Tajikistan, President Vladimir Putin is sending a message to the Taliban and other radical Islamists: don’t mess with us, according to Ross. But, “Russia, too, will celebrate every US defeat.”

China may seek to exploit large lithium deposits in Afghanistan, but it, like Russia, fears Islamist insurrection in its vast territory. Getting to the lithium would require major investment, and China may incorporate it into its “Belt and Road” initiative – a grand plan to build supportive infrastructure on China’s main trade routes.

“China and Russia will seek to take some advantage, but will both tread carefully because of profound suspicion of the Taliban,” Ross said.

Looking ahead, Ross said there could be civil strife within the Taliban. “We may face a mess for some time to come in Afghanistan. I’d love to say we achieved something, but at what price? We hoped we would see competence after the chaotic dysfunction of the Trump presidency. It sure doesn’t look like it. We’ll need some foreign policy successes.”



Israel eases quarantine for Israelis after third jab

TALI FEINBERG

Israel made the surprise announcement on Monday, 30 August, that from 3 September, Israelis who are a week after their third dose of COVID-19 vaccine won’t have to do a week of quarantine upon returning from overseas.

This could increase travel to South Africa, as some *olim* told the *SA Jewish Report* they would consider a trip if they don’t have to quarantine on their return.

According to Dov Lipman, a former Knesset member and the founder of *olim* assistance organisation Yad L’Olim, Israelis who have had their third inoculation will have to quarantine only if they are returning from a “red listed” country. For countries on the “orange list” like South Africa, they will need to quarantine for 24 hours or until they receive their negative PCR results from a test when they land.

This also applies to non-Israelis who received a third dose in Israel which has been recorded in the Israeli health system.

In addition, from 3 September, anyone who is within six months of their second dose of the vaccine won’t have to do a week’s quarantine upon entering Israel. Instead, they will need to quarantine for 24 hours or until the post landing negative PCR comes back.

The country also opened up third vaccine shots for anyone over the age of 12 if five months have passed since their second dose.

“At the moment, there’s no change in policy for those vaccinated outside of Israel. They are still required to do seven days of quarantine with a negative PCR test upon arrival, and a negative PCR test on day seven,” says Lipman.

“Starting from 1 October, the green passports

[allowing people into public places if they have been vaccinated] will expire six months after the second or third dose. This is to encourage people to get a third shot.”

Does all this mean that more Israelis may choose to travel to South Africa? One *oleh*, Robin Nussbaum, says it may convince him to make the trip. “I haven’t seen my parents in nearly two and a half years or my twin brother in four years, and I miss them. Last week, my colleague lost her mother in Turkey, and it made me want to get onto the soonest flight to Joburg to go and give my mom the hugest hug. But I couldn’t just go because it would have meant doing *bidud* [quarantine] while my kids start school this week.”

He says the change in quarantine rules may convince him to go, “because it would mean being away from my wife and kids for just my time in South Africa. Whereas before I would’ve had to take extra leave from work to isolate from my family for another week.

“Ideally, I’d love to take my kids to South Africa as my parents haven’t seen my daughter since she was a few weeks old, but that’s still not a possibility,” he says. “I have two sisters in Sydney, and they can’t see an end to their travel ban, which makes me feel more inclined to go, as I guess we’re lucky, and should take advantage of the situation. On the one hand, I think that I should go now before things change again and on the other, I want to wait to see if Israel will cancel isolation for vaccinated foreigners or first-degree relatives. It’s still not an easy decision.”

“I imagine that more people will leave Israel to visit family due to this change,” Lipman says. “However, I do caution everyone that given the reality of new variants that are popping up around the world, the rules are always subject to change.”



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Spot checks, sign-ins, sanitising, and social distancing – shuls get stricter

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein is calling on the South African Jewish community to go back to shul as COVID-19 protocols are in place, and shuls need the community and vice versa. “Now, as we prepare to welcome in the year 5782, is the time to renew our shuls as active players, not spectators, and partners, not consumers. The community needs the shuls,” he wrote in his Rosh Hashanah message.

His message is echoed by Professor Efraim Kramer, a leading international expert in emergency medicine with a specialty in mass gatherings, and a member of the community’s medical advisory team. “Shuls are a safe place to be, and they are therapeutic psychologically, spiritually, and socially,” Kramer says.

In South Africa, COVID-19 regulations require shuls to implement social distancing, sanitise the hands of all attendees, and only allow entry to those wearing face masks. The limit on attendees per venue is 50 indoors and 100 outdoors. In addition, religious services must be concluded by 21:00.

According to Kramer, there are no other precautions applicable to shuls. If a campus has multiple structures, it can run several “venues” on campus. This would increase the total number who could attend services.

An eight-hour direct flight away, Israel has recently reinstated the *tav hayarok* (green pass), applicable to synagogues with more than 50 attendees. A green pass grants access to venues or events to those carrying documentation showing that they are vaccinated.

“Attendees should have either been vaccinated, have current negative test results, or have recovery certificates issued by *kupat cholim* [health and medical service providers],” says Jeremy Rosenstein, the chairperson of the McDonald International Shul in Netanya.

More than 2 000km from there, Hungary currently

has no restrictive provision for interiors, so no masks are required. “Believers are free to decide whether or not to wear masks in synagogue,” says Robert Deutsch, the president of the Hungarian Orthodox Jewish community. “If the weather permits, they will keep the side entrances to their synagogues open for ventilation.”

Travelling north-west through Austria, Germany encourages virtual facilities for those whose age or previous illnesses places them in a high-risk group for COVID-19 infection. As per the regulations developed by the Central Council of Jews in Germany, each person must be separated by at least 1.5m during prayers. All objects in the synagogues should be disinfected regularly, and worshippers should have their own siddur and Chumash.

Journeying past the Netherlands and the North Sea, the United Kingdom has some rules specific to Rosh Hashanah. According to Mark Frazer from the office of the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, guidelines state that the *baal tokea* (shofar blower) must have taken a lateral flow test and received a negative test on *erev yom tov*. Moreover, all attendees should take a lateral flow test on *erev yom tov*, and children’s services should be held in a separate building apart from the main shul.

Across the North Atlantic, the Canadian province of Ontario is in what its regulations refer to as “step three” due to 70% to 80% of adults being vaccinated with one dose and 25% vaccinated with two doses. The guiding principle of this step is to expand access to indoor settings, with precautions, including where there are larger numbers of people and face coverings can’t always be worn. According to Ontario official regulations, the capacity of indoor and outdoor religious gatherings is limited to permit physical distancing of 2m. Synagogues must post signs at all



entrances so that individuals can screen themselves for COVID-19 before they enter.

Wayfaring south, the rapid spread of the Delta variant throughout the United States has thrown a spanner in the works for shuls. For many synagogues, the assumption until just a few weeks ago was that vaccines had made it safe to come back together in person. Now, preregistration, social distancing, and a live streaming option will be the norm. B’nai Israel Congregation, a modern Orthodox synagogue in Maryland, will be shifting services outside, eliminating the sermon, singing, and other traditional elements.

In Indianapolis, congregation Beth-El Zedeck is enabling social distancing by allowing each member to choose three in-person services over the course of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Except for the clergy, all *bimah* traffic will be eliminated. The cantor will be the sole Torah reader, and in-person *aliyot* will be recited from a stand at the base of the *bimah*. Shofar blowing will be abbreviated and muffled by a face mask.

B’nai Jeshurun, a non-affiliated synagogue in Manhattan, isn’t allowing unvaccinated children to attend indoor services due to the risk of the Delta variant for children. All family and early childhood services will be outdoors and live-streamed. In the event of rain, these will be held virtually.

At Temple Shir Shalom in Michigan, the family service will be held at a local football field.

Ikar, a synagogue in Los Angeles, will offer tickets to members, who will be guaranteed a ticket to only one in-person service on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. For those who feel more comfortable gathering indoors in small groups, Ikar will encourage “watch parties” at private homes, where smaller groups of vaccinated members can gather to watch the live stream of services.

There is no uniform practice among congregations in Illinois, even though the community says it has the utmost concern for

pikuach nefesh (saving a life). “Some congregations are hosting services virtually, some outdoors in-person, some indoors in-person, and some via a hybrid,” says Linda Haase, the senior associate vice-president marketing communications at the Jewish United Fund of Chicago.

In Illinois’ Congregation Beth Shalom, a conservative synagogue, the customary four-hour Rosh Hashanah and five-hour Yom Kippur morning services will be held in two consecutive two-hour shifts. Given the time constraints, Torah processions will be eliminated, and the sermon will be briefer.

Moving further south, synagogues in Mexico will generally have a percentage of attendees between 30% and 50%. According to Comité Central de la Comunidad Judía de México, people must register to attend a synagogue. The country has Orthodox and conservative (Masorti) synagogues. The latter won’t have attendees as they have decided to transmit services online.

On the other side of the Pacific, the Australian cities of Sydney and Melbourne are in lockdown. Therefore, no shul services will be taking place. If the lockdown is lifted, some of the likely precautions would be checking in via a QR code or mandatory sign in, a COVID-19 marshal on site, and spot checks and audits taking place on some shuls.



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Underpants tales – Zoom reveals some home truths

STEVEN GRUZD

Much as we’d hoped that the year 5781 would see the end of it, the pandemic is still here. Many who normally worked from an office have had to adjust to working remotely from home. Our lives have gone digital. On video conferencing software like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, the sentence heard more than any other this year was, “You’re on mute!” Here are some of the lighter online moments from the past year or so.

Lockdown has made us lazy, especially when it comes to getting dressed for work. A lot of us are “business on top, party at the bottom” when preparing for online calls. A journalist on *Good Morning America* wears a smart blue-collared shirt and grey jacket as he reports

on drones delivering medicine. When the camera angle changes, you can clearly see him wearing a pair of boxer shorts.

In a four-person Zoom call, the guy in the top left window gets up and turns away from the camera. His colleagues start raising eyebrows and giggling as they see he’s wearing red and black boxer shorts. He scratches his bottom with both hands inside his shorts, and the others are in hysterics. Jen yells out “Johnny! Johnny!” to no avail. Someone says to Jen, “Call him!” When Johnny picks up his phone, Jen says “We can all see you!” Shocked, Johnny bolts from the room to more mirth.

A lot of us are “business on top, party at the bottom” when preparing for online calls.

Another serious man in a suit is sitting in his living room talking on BBC about something terribly important. A ginger cat’s tail waggles across the screen. Without missing a beat, he says, “I apologise for my cat’s tail”, and carries on talking. But the cat doesn’t move and the tail wafts up and down. The serious man says, “Rocco, put your tail down please!” Speaking of cats, a Mr Rod Ponton was participating in an online court hearing in Texas. In the lower right window, Mr Ponton appears as a white kitten, with big eyes. The judge says, “Mr Ponton, I believe you have a filter turned on in the

video settings.” Mr Ponton says it’s a filter and he has his assistant trying to remove it. He says, “I’m here live. I’m not a cat.” There are hundreds of these videos. There is the boss who appeared as a potato in a group chat, someone speaking to the United States Congress with his head shown upside down, and the kid under his blankets when his maths teacher asked him a question. Then there was a call with about 10 participants when Jennifer is clearly seen

going to sit on the toilet in her little Zoom window. This was much to the amazement and amusement of her colleagues. “I saw nothing” one man says, drily. In a Zoom class, one portly student doesn’t have a shirt on. While the teacher is speaking, he jiggles his body, causing undulating ripples on

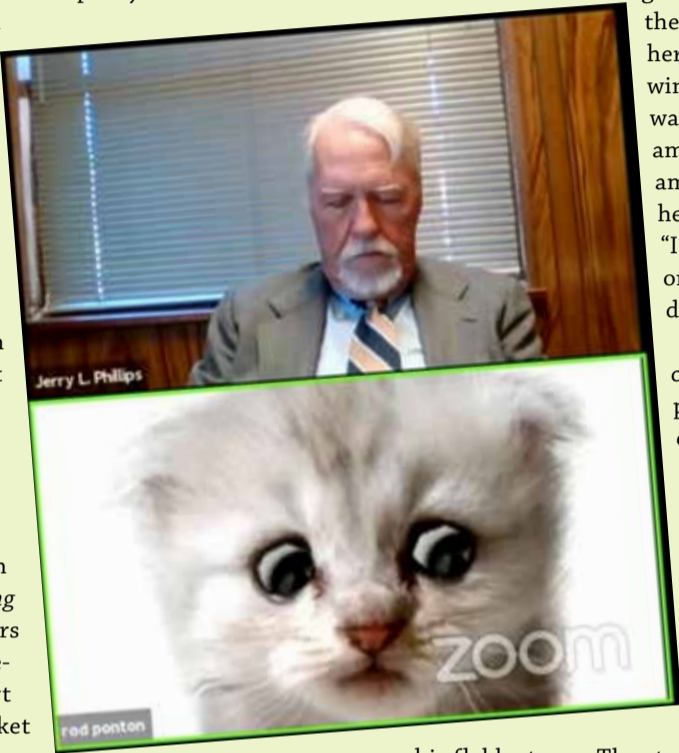
his flabby torso. The students think it’s hilarious. The teacher, however, does not.

There are many examples online of microphones not being muted, and people saying or doing the most inappropriate things in front their fellow video-conference participants. This includes insulting teachers, gossiping about people on the call, and apparent amorous liaisons. Then there is “Zoom bombing”, where people interrupt ongoing conversations with inappropriate remarks, pictures, or actions.

Although he wasn’t video conferencing, Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders caused an internet sensation this year. He sported brown woollen mittens, a well-worn thick anorak, and his blue face-mask to President Joe Biden’s inauguration on a chilly January. Photoshopped memes of him hunkered down on a folding chair at well-known landmarks and appearing in famous artworks and movie scenes abounded. There was Bernie on the bench with *Forest Gump*, Bernie on the Iron Throne from *Game of Thrones*, and Bernie on the *Friends* couch. The posts went viral and #BerniesMittens dominated social media for days.

Finally, how can we forget one of the greatest live TV interruptions ever? It happened in 2017, before video calling became so common. In jacket and tie, in front of a world map in his home office, Professor Robert Kelly is being interviewed on the BBC about North Korea. His toddler, in a yellow jersey, marches into the room like she’s the boss. He tries to ignore her, then pushes her away gently. Suddenly, a younger child in a round walking ring waddles into the shot. Then their mother slides in, skidding on the floor. She crawls to grab both children and drags them out of the door, closing it behind her. Kelly apologises, and continues to talk about North Korea. The clip has now had 44 million views on YouTube. It’s still hilarious to watch.

Just google “Zoom funny moments” to view these modern day COVID-19 classics!



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TALI FEINBERG

“Olly broke all the rules. From no sleeping upstairs, he was in our beds within a couple of weeks. Olly formed a special bond not only with his people, but his fellow canines [one of whom sadly left us just a few short weeks after Olly’s arrival]. We consider ourselves blessed to have been able to give this wonderful pup a home. Aside from being spoiled, Olly’s access to people 24/7/365 has given him almost human traits, and every day is an adventure. Lockdown pets are, indeed,

In Cape Town, Kelli Lunskey says, "We'd been umming and aching about a puppy for a while. We'd wanted to get one for our son, Cameron, for his seventh

Riley “He was the absolute delight and joy we needed to help us through the boredom and monotony of lockdown,” she says. “He got involved in online learning, attended

Meanwhile, some are continuing the trend as lockdown continues in one form or another with no end in sight. In Cape Town, Stephen “Sugar” Segerman says, “We have two older cats, but a month or so ago, we decided to get a kitten as a ‘lockdown upper’. I’ve always wanted a ginger kitten, but when we went to see one at a foster home, it turned out that there were two – twin boys. We took them both, and named them Archie and Naartjie. They have captured our hearts and home, adopted our dog Buddy as their uncle, and have brought nothing but joy to us during these difficult times.”



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The hidden, holy lives of Orthodox Jewish women

TALI FEINBERG

Much has been written and explored about the lives of Haredi Jewish women, from Netflix shows to academic theses. But what about women who aren't Haredi yet still Orthodox? What do we know about their Jewish lives, and how they balance their spiritual and secular obligations?

These are some of the questions that form the basis of a new, ground breaking book titled *Challenge and Conformity – The Religious Lives of Orthodox Jewish Women* by Dr Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from her home in London, Taylor-Guthartz explains that the book is based on her doctorate, which she received from University College London. She has lectured at the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, and Middlesex, and at Vassar College, New York, and has taught at the London School of Jewish Studies. She has presented at many international conferences including Limmud South Africa, and says the South African Jewish community's warmth and unity had a profound impact on her when she visited the country.

"You can't do a PhD unless you're in love with the subject," Taylor-Guthartz says. Originally, she wanted to explore the customs of Orthodox Jewish women in the British Jewish community. "They were things I had never heard of after returning to England from many years in Israel."

As she tells it in the introduction to the book, "In 2002, an informal talk on 'Jewish superstitions' alerted me to a variety of



Dr Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz

individual, generally family or home-based practices that were very much part of women's religious lives even though they were often described by both women and men as 'superstitions'. Most of these were unfamiliar to me, though many were recognised and also practised, by members of the all-female audience.

"They included practices related to marriage, childbirth, and death, as well as protective rituals in everyday life," she writes. "When I came to conduct formal interviews for this study, many more activities were mentioned. The women I interviewed told me about the Rosh Hodesh movement and women's *tefilah* groups, and their part in these groups. They explained about *berakhah* parties and partnership *minyanim*, which have sprung up in the past two decades and are still not widely known, raising the question of how change and innovation takes place in a conservative community and what factors determine the acceptance or rejection of a new practice.

"I participated in all these activities and more as I explored how they form part of women's religious identity and constitute an area in which Jewish women can exercise agency, acting independently and making their own choices."

Taylor-Guthartz realised that she had to explore these rituals in the wider context of women's lives. She did, indeed, fall in love with the subject, and

“TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, THEY ARE OFTEN COMPLETELY INVISIBLE. AND IN THE JEWISH WORLD, MEN DON'T KNOW WHAT WOMEN ARE DOING. THEY'RE TOTALLY UNAWARE.”

eventually turned her thesis into the book.

The book comes at an exciting time in the Jewish world, when there has been "accelerated change. There's been an explosion of women's Torah learning," she says. "There are even women training for Orthodox rabbinic ordination, something that was unthinkable a few years ago." Taylor-Guthartz is, in fact, one of the women who did just that, at Yeshivat Maharat in New York.

"I wanted to learn more," she says. While she has no desire to become a community rabbi, she hopes that the qualification will enrich her life, learning, and teaching. "I want to help others with questions of Jewish law, and give more people access. Halachic texts are very difficult to access."

Turning to her book, she says it explores the "double invisibility" of Orthodox Jewish women. "To the outside world, they are often completely invisible. And in the Jewish world, men don't know what women are doing. They're totally unaware."

While her book focuses on the British Jewish community, there are many themes that are relevant worldwide. Discussing the return to religiosity that has swept the South African Jewish community over the past 25 years, she says it's "a global phenomenon seen in America, Israel, and the United Kingdom. There has been a huge amount written about it." But she notes "people don't stay in one place with their religion all their lives". Her interviews for the book encompass many women and their families drifting closer to or further from

Judaism at different ages and stages.

Looking to the future, Taylor-Guthartz says that shuls moving online as a result of COVID-19 led to people exploring other synagogues or denominations. "It's created a huge question about going back [to shul]. It might be a game changer, allowing people to be more flexible."

This has been particularly beneficial for women, who have been able to hold online services and events that may have been frowned upon in person. She believes that such openness is key to Jewish communities surviving and thriving, and that forums like Limmud are a "lifeline".

For her, the most inspiring part of writing her book was finding out "how resilient women are, and how they cope, get round obstacles, and manage. For example, they have *tefilah* groups that have survived in spite of opposition from the London Beth Din. They have created their own space for their voice to be heard. I have enormous respect for how Orthodox women have created their own religious life."

Who should read this book? "Everyone!" she says. But in particular, she hopes that rabbis and men read it. She emphasises that she doesn't make "policy recommendations", but simply documents what's happening on the ground. "I hope it will help rabbis realise how female congregants feel. I hope the fact that it's about women doesn't make men feel it's not for them." She says that of those Orthodox women who have read it, many say it corresponds with their experience.

As she writes in her conclusion, most Orthodox Jewish women in the diaspora "inhabit a set of overlapping worlds. In their conformity and allegiance to the Jewish community, in their creativity in Jewish ritual and its interpretation, and in challenging or working around male-dominated structures to make spaces where their voices can be heard, these women demonstrate remarkable agency and adaptability."

The book can be bought from the Liverpool University Press website.



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Bill Browder's *Red Notice* makes SA state capture look like playtime

STAFF REPORTER

South Africa isn't the only country to suffer state capture at the hands of powerful, ruthless politicians and businessmen. Russia, too, has been captured by Vladimir Putin and his inner circle of cronies.

In South Africa, brave whistleblowers Mcebisi Jonas, Vytjie Mentor, and Themba Maseko among others, raised awareness of how state resources were being stolen. Their claims ultimately resulted in the Zondo Commission, where the sordid details of government malfeasance and corruption in the African National Congress were exposed. In Russia, the forces of state capture are far more powerful, and abuse their positions to eliminate all opposition. Very few voices have been able to sound the alarm and live to tell the tale. The most vocal and influential such voice is William (Bill) Browder.

Browder was born into a Jewish American family with a rich, communist pedigree. His paternal grandfather, Earl Browder, who was born in Kansas in 1891, was a communist radical and lived in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for several years starting in 1927. He was the leader of the Communist Party USA from 1930 to 1945. Browder's father, Felix, entered MIT at the age of 16, and received his PhD from Princeton at the age of 20. In spite of his genius, Felix couldn't find employment because of his father's political history. He was hired by Brandeis University in the 1950s only because Eleanor Roosevelt, the former United States (US) first lady and chairperson of the board, championed his application.

Browder studied Economics and earned an

MBA from Stanford before starting a career in finance in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell and communism was collapsing in eastern Europe. Working from London, he operated in the eastern European practice of Boston Consulting Group, then moved onto Maxwell Communication Corporation, Robert Maxwell's media conglomerate, which went into administration in 1991 after Maxwell's untimely and suspicious death. Browder then turned his focus back to eastern Europe, managing Salomon Brothers' Russian property investments.

In 1996, Browder founded Hermitage Capital Management with Syrian-Brazilian Jewish financier Edmond Safra. Controversial Israeli businessman Beny Steinmetz was also a founding investor in the fund. During the heady days of early post-communism, the Russian economy was privatised in a mass sale of shares of all formerly state-owned enterprises. Hermitage Capital Management entered Russia with an initial \$25 million (R364 million) investment fund. Although the 1998 financial crisis knocked investors' confidence in Russia, Browder remained committed and became a prominent activist shareholder in large Russian companies such as Gazprom, Sberbank, and Surgutneftegas.

As an activist investor,

Browder would study companies' financials and try to account for the discrepancy between share price, assets owned, and potential earnings. Through improved business practices, Browder expected the share prices of the companies he had invested in to soar. At first, this strategy was wildly successful, and Hermitage would eventually have \$4.5 billion (R65.5 billion) of assets under management, become the single biggest foreign investor in Russia, and in 1997, was the best performing fund in the world.

Diligent research in the companies he held shares in resulted in Browder exposing large-scale corporate malfeasance and corruption. The links between the state and these bastions of Russian business put Browder on a collision course with the Russian authorities and the "godfather" of the mafia-style state that Russia had become: Putin.

When Browder's investigations questioned Gazprom and other large companies, Russia retaliated, refusing him entry into Russia on 13 November 2005, and deporting him back to London. In classic Russian style, he was declared a threat to Russian national security. On 4 June 2007, officers from the Russian Interior Ministry raided the Moscow offices of both Hermitage Capital and Firestone Duncan – the American law firm representing Browder in Russia. Browder tasked the Russian head of Firestone Duncan's tax practice, Sergei Magnitsky, to uncover the aim of the raids. Magnitsky realised that the authorities had confiscated the registration documents for Hermitage's investment holding companies and while they were being held by the police, the companies had been reregistered in the name of an ex-convict. The perpetrators then used these companies to apply for a \$230 million (R3.35 billion) fraudulent tax refund, which the state paid out on 24 December 2007.

Magnitsky testified twice in 2008 to the Russian State Investigative Committee, incriminating among others interior ministry officials. Five weeks after his second testimony, on 24 November 2008, Magnitsky was arrested at his home. In custody, Magnitsky was mistreated and urgent medical treatment withheld

from him. Magnitsky's condition deteriorated, and he died in custody at the age of 37 on 16 November 2009. His "crime" was to document large-scale theft from the Russian state carried out by government officials.

After Magnitsky's death, Browder lobbied Western governments to pass a law to punish Russians who violate human rights: the Magnitsky Law. In 2012, former US President Barack Obama signed the Magnitsky Law. In 2016, Congress enacted the Global Magnitsky Act, expanding the Magnitsky Law to allow the US government to sanction foreign government officials implicated in human-rights abuses anywhere in the world. (Israeli mining billionaire Dan Gertler is currently sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Act for corrupt business practices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.)

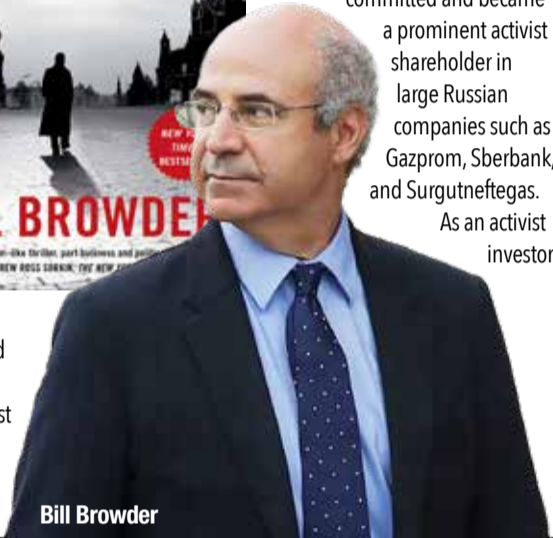
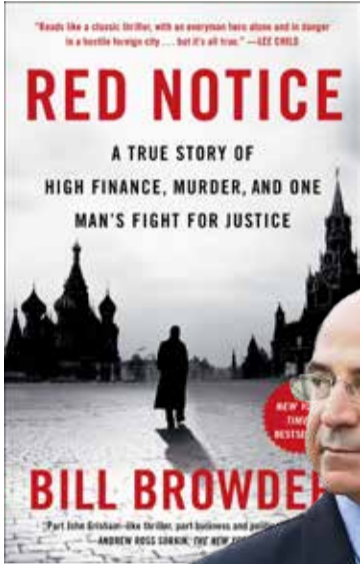
Putin, undeterred, had both Browder and Magnitsky tried in absentia in Russia in 2013 for tax fraud. With good reason, Browder, fearing for his life, then wrote a book, *Red Notice* (Transworld Books), which was published in 2015. The best way to guarantee his safety was to publicise the methods of the Russian state and to make any attempt on his life look like a retaliation ordered by Putin.

Not only does Browder recount what happened to him and Magnitsky, he also offers readers a fly-on-the-wall account of how Putin rules Russia and intimidates the richest Russians to part with portions of their wealth, which is paid to him as protection money.

Putin's Russia has mastered state capture to a degree that even former South African President Jacob Zuma and the Guptas could only dream about, and when opponents stand in the way of the full-scale pillage of the state, nerve agent Novichok can always be used to knock people off. Just ask Sergei and Yulia Skripal, and Alexei Navalny.

Bill Browder's story has been made into a movie scheduled for release on 12 November 2021.

Earlier this year, the United Kingdom and the US both imposed sanctions on the Guptas, citing their Magnitsky Acts.



Bill Browder

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The Jewish doctor who escaped the Nazis and founded the Paralympics

EVELYN FRICK – JTA

Much like the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, there are plenty of Jewish athletes to support in the Paralympics currently being held in the city, like emerging track and field star Ezra Frech and veteran swimmer Matt Levy.

But unlike the Olympic Games, the Paralympics have an inspiring Jewish origin thanks to its founder, Ludwig Guttman.

Guttman was born on 3 July 1899 in Tost, Germany (now Toszek, Poland), to a German-Jewish family. In 1917, while working as a volunteer at a hospital for coal miners, Guttman encountered a patient with a spinal injury and paraplegia. At the time, paraplegia was effectively a death sentence; unfortunately this proved true for the young coal miner. However, the memory of this patient had a deep impact on Guttman.

Just a year later, Guttman began training in medicine at the University of Breslau before transferring to the University of Freiburg in 1919, where he graduated with his medical degree in 1924. At Freiburg, Guttman became an active member of a Jewish fraternity that tried to stop the spread of antisemitism in universities. Eventually the fraternity also became a centre for physical

activity and fitness, so that “nobody needed to be ashamed of being a Jew”.

By the 1930s, Guttman was working as a neurosurgeon at the Wenzel Hancke Hospital in Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), as a university lecturer and as an assistant to Otfried Foerster, a pioneer of neurosurgery. Guttman was on track to be the next big German neurologist – until the rise of the Nazis in his country. In 1935, Germany passed the Nuremberg Laws, which among its other antisemitic stipulations prohibited Jews from practicing medicine. Guttman was expelled from his university appointment, fired from his hospital job, and stripped of his doctor title. He was assigned to work at the Breslau Jewish Hospital.

Not long after came Kristallnacht.

“On 9 November, I took my car and went to the synagogue,” Guttman remembered later. “And there, the whole thing was surrounded by hundreds of people, burning, and SS men playing football with prayer books. I stood there and realised that my tears were running down. But I became quite determined to help persecuted people.”

That evening, 64 people came to the hospital seeking refuge from the pogrom and the Gestapo. Guttman admitted them all. The next morning, he was called down



Photo: Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Ludwig Guttman leads members of the British team to what was then the Commonwealth Paraplegic Games at Gatwick Airport in London on 6 November 1962

to the hospital by the SS.

“I went to the hospital and there were three SS officers sitting there,” Guttman recounted. “Sixty-four people were admitted. How can you explain this?” I discussed every case, and of course, I invented all kinds of

diagnoses. Out of the 64 people, I saved 60.”

In spite of his courage, Guttman and his family weren’t safe in Germany. By 1939, avenues of escape were quickly closing, but Guttman was given a rare opportunity: The Nazis reinstated his passport and ordered him to travel to Portugal to treat a friend of the Portuguese dictator. With his family in tow, Guttman travelled there, with his return trip to Germany scheduled through England. The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics anticipated his arrival, and arranged for Guttman and his family to stay in the United Kingdom (UK). On 14 March 1939, the family arrived in Oxford, and in 1945, Guttman became a naturalised citizen of the UK.

In England, Guttman was able to continue his spinal injury research at the Radcliffe Infirmary, and later, was asked to establish and direct the Spinal Injuries Centre at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Not only was the centre revolutionary as the first specialist unit in the UK for spinal injuries, it’s also where Guttman pioneered treatment and rehabilitation for tetraplegic and paraplegic patients. At the time, the mortality rate of paralysed patients was still incredibly high due to infections caused by bed sores.

Guttman’s answer to this was simple yet determined care – every two hours patients were turned on their sides to prevent bed sores. Through this treatment, which Guttman often administered himself, patients with paraplegia lived.

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We believe in unleashing students’ potential, encouraging them to persevere through the challenges and focus on the possibilities. Many parents comment that our special-needs curriculum should be taught in all schools to all children because life and work skills are critical for survival and seriously lacking in students leaving the traditional school system.

on critical social skills, appropriate behaviour, and attitudes required in the workplace.

From 2022, our special-needs streams will integrate the ASDAN programmes and courses into our curriculum. Based in the United Kingdom, ASDAN offers a variety of accessible and practical courses for students with special needs focusing on personal, independent living, and employability skills, culminating in certification from the UK. Oak House Vocational Academy will also launch its first SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority) accredited NQF1 Business Practice learnership from 2022 for students in their final year.

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Multi-disciplinary team and placement

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They may experience various barriers to learning, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, visual difficulties, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), mild autism, dyscalculia, language delays, and so on. Remedial programmes usually focus on narrowing or closing academic gaps so that students can be re-introduced to mainstream schooling. Our remedial stream follows the Grade 1 – 7 CAPS curriculum, with accommodation and adaptation depending on students’ needs. Most of the students in our remedial stream enter mainstream schools and achieve good Grade 12 results.

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In addition to his work at Stoke Mandeville and with the Paralympic Games, Guttman founded the International Medical Society of Paraplegia (now the International Spinal Cord Society), serving as its president until 1970, and the British Sports Association for the Disabled (now the English Federation of Disability Sport). He was also a longstanding member of the Association for Jewish Refugees.

For all he accomplished in the field of neurology and for the disabled community, Guttman was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire and knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1966.

Guttman died on 18 March 1980, but his legacy lives on. His work surpassed the Nazi eugenics that tried to eradicate him along with Jewish and disabled communities.

• This article originally appeared on Alma.



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This year, be the change your shul needs

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



COVID-19 has drastically accelerated change in the way the world works – from a social, work, health, and travel point of view. Politics, economics, and social behaviour has shifted dramatically. And it has had a deep impact on our shuls.

As a community, we are at a watershed moment and have a unique, historic opportunity to rebuild our shuls – creatively and with renewed focus on purpose and meaning.

And we need to do it together.

Many have become comfortable davening at home, and have even begun to question the necessity of returning to shul. I would like to suggest why it's not just important, but vital.

Praying in isolation can easily become a self-centred experience. Alone with our thoughts, we have only our own hopes and concerns to focus on. But when we pray with a *minyan* – when we are able to see each other and feel real empathy – we have the opportunity to pray for each other. We see the pain on a person's face who is struggling financially. Or another person struggling with health complications. Or someone else struggling with a family issue. We are able to truly open our hearts to those around us, and pray for them in their moment of need. The Talmud tells us there is also tremendous personal merit in praying for others' needs before our own.

And there is the undeniable spiritual power of davening in a *minyan*. Our sages explain that when we pray together, we come before Hashem not just on our own merit, but with the collective merit of the community – and, in fact, all of *klal Yisrael*. A

minyan represents not just its members but links us spiritually to Jews around the world and across the generations. Our prayers are therefore exponentially more powerful. This



out to fellow congregants with messages of love and support; or contributing to the everyday running of the shul, sponsoring a brocha, or championing a new programme ourselves.

There's a paradigm shift here. We need to start viewing ourselves not as clients of our shul, but as partners, active participants – not spectators, but players. Our relationship with our shuls shouldn't be as a consumer weighing whether the product or service is of sufficient benefit to us; the decision to return to shul or daven at home shouldn't be a cold cost-benefit analysis about what suits us better. We need our shuls. And our shuls need us.

Ultimately, it's for our own good. Hashem has hardwired us to derive the greatest satisfaction, paradoxically, from moving beyond self-interest. Transcending the self – acting for the sake of the collective, contributing to a greater cause – is deeply fulfilling and deeply pleasurable. Coming back to shul and driving these changes is its own reward.

Among the great challenges society is going through during this pandemic is widespread depression and isolation, each reinforcing the other. And the greatest antidote to these twin challenges is to leave our isolation – to get out there and make a contribution. To get involved in the community. This is absolutely vital for both our own mental health and spiritual vitality, and our communal vibrancy.

Now, as we prepare to welcome in the year 5782, is the time to renew our shuls as active players, not spectators, and partners, not consumers. Ready to make a difference. Together.

The day of judgement is a day of love

OPINION

REBBETZIN GINA GOLDSTEIN



I recently argued with a good friend. She always tries to be strictly objective in her assessment of her children. I objected. I feel strongly that my job as a mother isn't to be objective about my children but always to see the good in them, to judge them favourably, and love them unconditionally.

This positivity bias toward my children is obvious and natural, but at the same time, I truly believe that life experience will teach them to be realistic and humble, that I don't have to. All the encouragement, support, and love I can give them can only build them up and make them great.

This unconditional positive regard and acceptance can swallow up so many of their problems, so much of their self-doubt and negativity. It can charge my children with all the confidence and strength they need to face life's challenges and make a success of their lives. I believe in them, and they know it. You're entitled to your own parenting style, but this is mine, and I stand by it.

It occurs to me that this is also a model to understand our relationship with Hashem, who is like a parent to us. Too often, we approach Elul, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur with trepidation and fear. We become discouraged and demoralised, too mindful of our failings, too oblivious to our potential. This approach is valid if we believe that Hashem's judgement of us is impartial – "objective" and unbiased. We could justifiably be afraid if we imagine that Hashem is coldly examining our thoughts and deeds and dispassionately attributing credit and blame.

But instead, I offer you the idea that the prevailing atmosphere of Elul is love. We are Hashem's children, and He is not objective about us at all. At this time of year, when we are in Hashem's presence, we can allow ourselves to feel loved, encouraged, and supported. We can believe that He

sees so much more good in us than bad.

This attitude can inspire us to overcome our faults and weaknesses. Knowing that Hashem believes in us and wants us to succeed can enable us to conquer self-doubt and negativity. We're not in a power struggle with Hashem, we aren't His adversaries. He's always helping us and supporting us. And in this light, on Yom HaDin, our day of judgement, we have little to fear.

We can feel safe in the knowledge that we all have the unfair advantage of being judged by our Loving Father in heaven, who believes in us. He regards each of us as a hero. He knows that our strengths can overwhelm our weaknesses. He wants only to reward us and help us succeed. Like the perfect parent, He judges us favourably, waits for us patiently, loves us unconditionally, allows us to grow up slowly, watches our choices, and gets much *nachas* from our growth!

Shana tovah uMetuka! May we all be written and sealed for goodness!

• Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein has been speaking, teaching, writing, and volunteering in the South African Jewish community for more than 25 years. Together with her husband, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, she co-founded The Shabbos Project, Sinai Indaba, and Generation Sinai.



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“Enoughness” is enough at this time of the year

RABBI YOSSI CHAIKIN

- Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at The Oxford Synagogue Centre, and chairman of the Rabbinical Association of South Africa.



- Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at The Oxford Synagogue Centre, and chairman of the Rabbinical Association of South Africa.

It changes everything if we see G-d as constantly reaching out to connect with us, to be close to us, not giving us loads of laws that can trip us up and for



These *mitzvot* are tools for us to be our best selves (the 21st century mantra), and to help us find our way back to the divine partnership. Why engage in this divine partnership at all? Because never mind finishing your to-do list, or being just a bit more that and a bit more this. Being close to the source of all good things, to the source of blessing and belonging, will most certainly feel like enough – more than enough.

- *Word-lover, avid reader, spiritual-seeker, Torah teacher, publisher-author, crazy crafter, mom of three – Batya Bricker also happens to be GM books and brand for Exclusive Books.*



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The buzz about honey and the humble bee

STEVEN GRUZD

One of the quintessential customs at Rosh Hashanah is to eat apples dipped in honey for a sweet, well-rounded new year. How did what my high school science teacher indelicately termed “bees’ vomit” get onto our tables? The history of honey drips with interesting facts and anecdotes.

Bees have been producing honey from the pollination of flowers for about 40 million years. The first indications of human beings gathering honey is from Valencia, Spain, in Cuevas de la Araña. Here, cave paintings that are at least 8 000 years old show people foraging for wild honey. The humans are shown carrying gourds or baskets, and reaching the bees’ nest with ladders and ropes. Prehistoric humanoid creatures probably followed birds like the greater honeyguide to wild beehives.

When constructing a pipeline in Georgia from Baku to Ceyhan, archaeologists unearthed the oldest honey remains in the world. Inside clay vessels in an ancient tomb, they found fossilised honey that was between 4 700 and 5 500 years old. Ancient Georgians would bury the dead with honey for their journey to the afterlife, as would the Egyptians and Mesopotamians.

The first written records of beekeeping – rather than just harvesting wild honey – originate from ancient Egypt from about 3 500 BCE. There, honey was used as a sweetener for foods and for mixing the pigment used to create hieroglyphs. The Egyptians kept bees at their temples to produce honey for offerings, mummification, and consumption. Beekeeping was big business in Egypt, practised by all strata of society. Special rafts were constructed to transport beehives along the Nile to get close to seasonal flowering plants so the bees could pollinate them. Besides being eaten, honey was used by ancient Egyptian doctors to heal wounds. At times, honey was so valuable in Egypt, it was used as currency. Marriage vows

included a husband’s promise to provide his new wife with honey.

Honey was also produced in ancient Greece. In 594 BCE, a law was passed about beekeeping: “He who sets up hives of bees must put them 300 feet [90 metres] away from those already installed by another.” The promulgation of a law always suggests a widespread practice that it is trying to regulate. Beekeepers in the Hellenistic period would move their hives to far-flung places to coincide with the growing cycles of vegetation to yield more frequent harvests, as the ancient Egyptians did on the River Nile.

According to Greek myth, Melissa, the daughter of the king of Crete, fed Zeus with the honey of the bee Panacride. In 400 BCE, Persian generals defeated invading Greeks by feeding bees toxic rhododendron flowers, which poisoned the Greek army’s honey. When Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, his body was transported more than 2 800 km from Babylon to Macedonia, submerged in a vat of honey.

The Tanach, too, has many mentions of honey. In the Book of Judges, Samson found honey and a swarm of bees in a lion’s carcass. Leviticus says, “Every grain offering you bring to the Lord must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in a food offering presented to the Lord.” The Book of Proverbs says, “Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

Eretz Yisrael is described in the Book of Exodus as a “land flowing with milk and honey”. Several commentators, however, believe that the original biblical word *devash* (translated as “honey”) is actually a reference to sweet date syrup rather than bees’ honey.

An archaeological dig in Tel Rehov in Israel in 2005 found an apiary from the 10th century BCE with 100 hives. It would have probably produced half a ton of honey each year.

Honey is considered kosher even though it’s produced by a non-kosher creature – a flying insect. It’s the only such exception in kashrut. The Talmud deems it kosher as it’s not an actual secretion of the bee; the bee functions only as a carrier and facilitator as its enzymes transform nectar into honey.

It’s not digested by the bee, and is thus deemed kosher in its raw form. Packaged honey would need a kosher certification mark on its label.

The spiritual and healing properties of honey are also celebrated in Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

In the Middle Ages, the main beekeepers were monasteries, using beeswax for candles to provide light for huge cathedrals. Beeswax burns cleaner than animal fat. Only in 1900 did the Pope permit churches to burn non-beeswax candles. Monks produced mead (fermented honey) as an alcoholic drink.

Honey was the main sweetener in the

West until supplanted by the cane sugar that originated in southeast Asia, which became available and affordable from the 1850s. The flavour and colour of honey varies according to which flower-nectar it comes from and the region where these flowers grow.

Today, bee populations worldwide are threatened with colony collapse disorder in which worker bees disappear due to pesticides, destruction of habitat, and other poisons. Much of nature and therefore life depends on bees, and important efforts are being made to prevent this collapse. So, spare a thought for the humble bee this Rosh Hashanah.

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Fragility gives us strength

OPINION

RABBI YUVAL CHERLOW

On the eve of a new year, we find ourselves once again in a time of confusion and uncertainty and are reminded of the remarkable insight behind the phrase in Mishlei, “*Rabot machshavot b’lev ish v’atzat Hashem hee takum*” (Great are the thoughts in the heart of man, but it’s the counsel of G-d that’s everlasting). Over the past year and a half, this teaching has been reinforced within us so many times over in so many different, practical ways.



On the most basic level, we have been reminded nearly every single day of one of the central aspects of the Rosh Hashanah service – the humility and fragility of us as humans in the face of heavenly greatness. While it’s also a central tenet of our belief that we are created in the image of G-d, and that our role on earth is

to lead the world in that image, we can never ignore our limitations, which are the second side of the equation, namely that everything we do and everything that occurs around us is subject to the will of a higher authority. Perhaps nothing in recent history has made that reality clearer than the immense power of a miniscule virus which has wreaked havoc on an entire global community. While the extent of that destruction is immeasurable and

from this period is to realise that as powerful as we ever think we might be, we must always remain humble in the face of Hashem’s infinite power. This is a realisation that not only has tremendous practical implications for how we lead our lives, teach our children and students, and build families and communities, but in the very way we think about the world around us. More than ever before in recent memory, deeply challenging moral and ethical questions have been thrust into our lives – questions about medical priorities and how hospital teams are forced to “choose” who deserves to be treated first. These were certainly theoretical dilemmas dealt with by ethicists and philosophers, but the scope of the medical crisis has brought them into the triage units of hospitals in the most developed parts of the world. Many of us are being confronted by deeply personal challenges surrounding “gossip”, and how and when we are allowed to discuss problematic decisions made by others regarding vaccination. Are we allowed to shame others who make those choices? Should they be socially ostracised? In almost every community, these are questions that have very practical, nearly daily implications.

Our modern world is increasingly willing to place trust in its leaders. Although political criticism has always been present, it has created a pervasive culture of blame of authorities who we elect to protect us, and public officials who fail in those responsibilities carry more of a burden than ever. The pandemic has certainly exposed the good in humanity as well. We understand that we are all in this together. Efforts like social distancing and helping others forced into isolation, as well as the willingness of so many to vaccinate in recognition that it’s for the greater good, are heartwarming. These and so many other examples give us hope that in spite of the immensity of the challenge, perhaps we will learn the proper lessons. The one constant in all of this is that we have little idea where the future will take us. It would be incredibly innocent to try and project what the next 12 months will look like, and what we’ll need to do to confront the challenges along that path. But even uncertainty and the fragility of humanity are concepts that can help make us better people, teachers, and parents. On the spiritual level, they demand that we refocus our individual strengths

to deal with the unexpected and overcome difficulties. Appreciating that not everything is in our control demands that we become a more empathetic people, that we take more time to think about others, be more prepared to embrace solidarity and surrender to the understanding that as powerful and advanced as we might ever claim to be, strength will always only go so far. As we stand before G-d on these holiest of days, this is an understanding that should inspire our prayers. We must turn to the heavens, and ask for His incredible mercy because we know that only He has that power to grant us all the good that we hope awaits us in the coming year. Humility is an incredibly powerful concept spiritually, ethically and practically, but sometimes it takes events like those we are living through now to realise just how central it is to every aspect of our lives. We have much to ask for as we approach this coming year. May we be granted with a new year of real health, prosperity, and personal and communal wisdom. Shana tova! • Rabbi Yuval Cherlow is the director of Tzohar’s Center for Jewish Ethics in Israel.



Homey comparisons from the homeland

OPINION

DANI SACK

My gap year has been filled with firsts – my first free Shabbos, my first bus ride alone, my first class. Soon I will experience another first – my first Rosh Hashanah away from my family. The high holidays are a big deal in my home. My mother spends hours cooking, the delicious smell of meat and spices filling the air for days. Family members are in and out, delivering gifts and contributions to the meal up until the last minute. My sister and I sit every night going through outfits, shoes, *divrei Torah*. My cousins and I chat on WhatsApp excitedly, so happy at the prospect of spending time together. Last year, that experience was snatched away from us by COVID-19. I was particularly upset by this because I knew that, even if my family could see each other this year, I wouldn’t be able to spend it with them. I would be here in Israel, so far from the family traditions I adore so much. G-d had other plans. My family will spend Rosh Hashanah alone again,

mourning the sudden loss of my beloved grandfather and wishing we could all be together again around one table. I’ll most likely be in a large eating hall, surrounded by hundreds of girls from around the world, eating copious amounts of challah and honey while pining for home. I don’t mean to sound ungrateful. To be in Israel during the high holidays is incredible. The energy is electric as bakeries begin pouring out dozens of round challot, fruit vendors in the *shuk* shout that their apples will be the best this year, and hundreds of women and children fill clothing shops in search of a new dress or some jewellery. The Kotel is filled every day for a month with people begging Hashem for mercy and forgiveness during Elul, the ultimate preparation for getting sealed in the Book of Life. My seminary is buzzing with *shiurim* about *tikkun olam*, loving your fellow Jew, and the power of forgiveness. It’s an experience unlike any other, and I’m so excited to be here at this time.

The phrase “home is where the heart is” rings particularly true for me this year. My heart is torn between two places – South Africa and Israel – the two places in which I feel truly at home.  Praying at the Western Wall While I wish I could spend *yom tov* with my family’s warm hugs and delicious food, I’m ecstatic

at the thought of spending it surrounded by my friends and the incredible Torah I’m lucky enough to learn every day. I miss the bustle of the Glenhazel strip, but I’m loving watching the throngs of people walking up from the Kotel every day. My mind is full of homey comparisons and gratitude. I’m grateful to have such positive, warm memories of my South African *yamim tovim*, and I’m grateful to have the opportunity to create new memories of an Israeli-style *chag*. So much has changed in my life this year, yet it amazes me how so much stays the same, no matter where we are or who we are with. The traditions that bind us as Jews run deep and consistent, providing a nurturing safety net wherever we may find ourselves. Wishing everyone a *shana tova umetukah* from the holy land! • Dani Sack is on Bnei Akiva’s MTA gap year programme studying at Midreshet Harova seminary in Jerusalem.



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It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new year, and I'm feeling good (kind-of).

OPINION

MIKE ABEL



There's always an element of hope that comes with new beginnings, and I'm additionally hopeful that this Rosh Hashanah won't just herald incremental change for South Africa and beyond, but can be used more as a springboard to a much better space and place for humanity.

It's a well-known fact that the British and other nations who followed managed to conquer and colonise the globe (much like the Romans did well before that) by applying a simple and brutally powerful strategy – divide and rule.

It's accurately described as “the policy of maintaining control over one's subordinates or opponents by encouraging dissent between them from uniting in opposition”. This is the great trick that has been played on planet earth, sadly, over millennia. However, with the level of connection and education in the world today, there is the possibility of an awakening. A new awareness can inspire everyday people, the eight billion of us, to actively reject the constructed strategies put in place to divide us – and for those who truly don't wish the world well, to be vanquished.

The greatest dividers of “man” are race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. As my wise grandfather, Phillip Perl, would have said “a dislike of the unlike”. I have a close friend who won't touch pork, he was circumcised as a baby, his uncle died the other day, and was buried within 24 hours in a shroud, and Abraham is the founding father of his religion. When he prays, he ends it with “Ameen”. He's Muslim.

There is a fundamental human truth

here. There is far more that unites us than that which divides, but the “divide and rule” strategy focuses exclusively on those tiny things that could be used to separate us. There's always gain in it for someone, but never for broader society or humanity.

The Church decided, more than 100 years after the Romans crucified Jesus, that they would shift the blame to the Jews for his murder. Then, 1 500 years later, the Catholic Church attempted to repudiate that slur through the catechism produced by the Council of Trent, in which blame for this decide was to pass back to all humanity, not just the Jews. But this “forgiveness” was rejected by most at the time, and even today, because it didn't suit their heinous agenda.

To blame the Jews for murdering Christ is akin to the apartheid National Party blaming the African National Congress for the murder of Steve Biko. It's utterly preposterous, and defies all logic. The Jews were ruled with an iron fist as second-class citizens by the Romans. The Romans punished and murdered those who threatened their absolute sovereignty through crucifixion. Jesus was crucified. And yet, when the New Testament was written 1 200 years after Jesus, someone had a good enough memory – 40 generations later – to peg the murder on the Jews, who allegedly, as slaves, instructed their masters, the Romans, to do their bidding. That's why, in 1982, I

had an apple thrown at my head at my Anglican school, “because I murdered Christ”.

It's a curious, tragic, and accurate observation, as we explore the mind-crushing stupidity of “man” in falling for the “divide and rule” strategy, to think that although anyone who had a



Jewish parent or grandparent was sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz and five other large extermination camps for this religious lineage, it escaped the millions of murderers (and all those who conspired and supported this genocide) that the man on the cross in their very churches was a Jew himself, as most certainly was his mother, Mary, a Galilean Jewess and the wife of the equally Jewish Joseph. Yet, people were so blinded by a combination of hate and avarice (being the legal permission to steal everything their Jewish friends and neighbours owned) that they willingly went with this convenient lie amplified by a lunatic failed art student and his fellow

psychopaths in the Nazi party.

It was no different in Rwanda in 1994 with the Hutus and Tutsis – where 800 000 Tutsis were murdered by their former friends and neighbours because they were brainwashed into suddenly believing they were “cockroaches”. Or the Bosnians murdering 8 000 of their Muslim men and boys in 1995.

You see, I raise these things because it's not ancient history. It's here and very much a current reality. Not that COVID-19 sees any real difference between any of us. Nor cancer, tobacco, addiction, or any other affliction. It's all man-made, to drive a senseless wedge between us for power and money. There are more guns in America today than there are people, in arguably the world's greatest democracy. Just think about that for a moment. There also happens to be a lot of money and power in guns, weapons, and warfare.

We are in an age where vice is often wrapped up as virtue. Where the United Nations Human Rights Council and even Human Rights Watch, under inveterate antisemite Ken Roth's “leadership”, will pass tens of resolutions against a tiny speck of a land, Israel, (the only Jewish country in the world as it happens) with almost no evident concern for a single human-rights violation in that bastion of human rights, the Middle East.

The small matter that Israel is fighting an existential war against Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, which openly claim

that they don't want a two-state solution but rather the annihilation of the entire country and all her people, has somehow escaped them.

So, why am I hopeful?

Because I believe that there's a profound opportunity today to unlearn the nonsensical and idiotic prejudices that have been programmed into us by shifting focus from those tiny differences, which are tragically used to divide us, to the overwhelming and beautiful things that unite us. Family, friendship, values, hopes, dreams, health, the environment, and everything else that builds the concept of humanity. What we believe about others is simply a reflection of who we are, not who they are. If COVID-19 has taught us one thing, it's that we are one people. And that together, we will either triumph or fail.

I wish you all a *shana tova*, a happy new year. Let the apple we dip in honey be the apple that represents a whole and full year, not the apple that the snake gave to Eve. Let the sweet honey remind us of our common humanity. Let's open our eyes to the obvious and put love, kindness, and humanity ahead of any hate and constructed separation. Let's move from “divide and rule” to #UniteAndCool.

Copyright: Mike Abel

• *Mike Abel is a founder of M&C Saatchi Abel and M&C Saatchi Group South Africa. He has worked for three of the world's great advertising agencies, and is one of the most prominent ad-men in South Africa.*



Irma Stern, *Near Amanzimtoti*

LIVE VIRTUAL AUCTION

Impression/Expression From Hugo Naudé to Georgina Gratrix

Johannesburg

Tuesday, 14 September 2021 at 6.00pm

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Strauss&co

ADVERTORIAL

Impression/Expression: *From Hugo Naudé to Georgina Gratrix*

Strauss & Co's upcoming virtual live auction, Impression/Expression: from Hugo Naudé to Georgina Gratrix, will feature a selection of 90 works, all by South African artists, that fall under the admittedly broad banners of impressionism and expressionism. The works on sale help make sense of some of the many stylistic and conceptual shifts that have taken place in this country over the past century. While art historical definitions remain imperfect, these two movements provide an international aesthetic context for so many of our finest artists.

Even if impressionism is no longer explained only in terms of method, technique or period, and despite the fact that the majority of twentieth-century modernisms rely on some form of expressionism, the two terms remain influential and valid to artist and art historian alike. Of course, many of the works in Impression/Expression, whether painted or sculpted, mid-century or contemporary, can sit comfortably in both categories. Works from each school, however, can still be tied together by theme, tone, impulse, or style. Impressionist pictures, for instance, can capture the transience of light, can be stirred by modernity, and in pursuit of atmospheric sensation. Many expressionist works, moreover, are made with instinct, are defined by intimacy, and are drawn to visual anarchy. The works in Impression/Expression are presented with these often overlapping attributes in mind.

The stunning array of 90 iconic works on Strauss & Co's auction ranges from sweeping mountain landscapes, to picturesque Cape street scenes, still lifes, figural studies, conceptual compositions, and cast bronzes.



So-called ‘first generation’ South African Impressionist Hugo Naudé is represented by a characteristic sun-drenched sweep of colour in Namaqualand Flowers and Quiver Tree, and pioneering modernist Irma Stern, who trained and exhibited with the German expressionists in Europe early in her career, by the lyrical Bathers, executed in vivid blues and aquas juxtaposed with peachy flesh tones offset by crisp white highlights.

Thoughtful, gestural abstracts by cutting edge contemporary artists Io Makandal and Lucy Jane Turpin will delight potential buyers as will the exuberant painterliness of Georgina Gratrix's colourful flower study All that Glitters, and the lively snapshots of urban life by venerable Johannesburg master David Koloane. Zoltan Borberekí's bronze Market depicts a row of Rodin-like draped figures, in contrast to Italian South African Edoardo Villa's naked small-scale geometric Torso.


The live virtual sale takes place on Tuesday 14 September from 18:00, and will be live streamed in real-time through the auction house's website www.straussart.co.za. An interactive e-catalogue will be available to view ahead of the sale, and the works will be on exhibition in the company's Houghton showrooms.

For more information contact
Strauss & Co's Johannesburg office at 011 728 8246 or jhb@straussart.co.za

Ten ideas to make the high holy days more meaningful

OPINION

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



As we approach Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the start of the Jewish year, here are 10 short ideas which might help you focus your davening and ensure you have a meaningful and transformative experience.

1. Life is short. However much life expectancy has risen, we won't, in one lifetime, be able to achieve everything we might wish to achieve. This life is all we have. So the question is, how shall we use it well?
2. Life itself, every breath we take, is the gift of G-d. Life isn't something we may take for granted. If we do, we'll fail to celebrate it. Yes, we believe in life after death, but it's in life before death that we truly find human greatness.
3. We are free. Judaism is the religion of the free human being freely responding to the G-d of freedom. We aren't in the grip of sin. The very fact that we can do *teshuvah*, that we can act differently tomorrow than we did yesterday, tells us we are free.
4. Life is meaningful. We aren't mere accidents of matter, generated by a universe that came into being for no reason and will one day, for no reason, cease to be. We are here because there is something we must do; to be G-d's partners in the work of creation, bringing the world that's closer to the world that ought to be.
5. Life isn't easy. Judaism doesn't see the world through rose-tinted lenses. The world we live in isn't the world as it ought to be. That's why, in spite of every temptation, Judaism has never been able to say the messianic age has come, even though we wait for it daily.
6. Life may be hard, but it can still be
7. Our life is the single greatest work of art we will ever make. On the *yamim noraim*, we step back from our life like an artist stepping back from their canvas, seeing what needs changing for the painting to be complete.
8. We are what we are because of those who came before us. We are each a letter in G-d's book of life. We don't start with nothing. We have inherited wealth, not material but spiritual. We are heirs to our ancestors' greatness.
9. We are heirs to another kind of greatness: to Torah and the Jewish way of life. Judaism asks great things of us and by doing so, makes us great. We walk as tall as the ideals for which we live, and though we may fall short time and again, the *yamim noraim* allow us to begin anew.
10. The sound of heartfelt prayer, together with the piercing sound of the shofar, tell us that that is all life is – a mere breath – yet breath is nothing less than the spirit of G-d within us. We are dust of the earth but within us is the breath of G-d.

So, if you can remember any of these ideas, or even just one, I hope it will help you to have an even more meaningful experience over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

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



Shofar alerts us to present possibilities, not future peril

OPINION

ADINA ROTH



Nothing quite heralds the arrival of Rosh Hashanah like the sweet, hopeful scent of jasmine. This year, however, not all the sweetness of jasmine, apples, and honey is quite enough to do away with a certain quiet gloom that ripples through our community, gloom which comes from the devastating third wave to the terrifying protests, not to mention load-shedding and other perennial South African challenges of crime, poverty, and service delivery. I have heard many a conversation recently where the underlying claim has been, "There is no future here."

We are lucky to have an Yda Walt print in our home of one of the main shuls that once thrived in Kovno, Lithuania. Its beautiful black-and-white image reminds me of where we came from, how our Jewish world was destroyed and then born again in South Africa, giving rise to a community that's hailed as one of the most supportive and effective in the Jewish world. Although I don't turn a blind eye to the complex problems facing our society, I'm struck by how we re-created this very special reality in South Africa, and that each one of us has the chance to continue to be co-creators of this reality – or not. Either way, language matters. The statement, "there is no future here", isn't just destructive to people who choose to remain here, it's also not a Jewish way of seeing things.

At no time is this more prescient than on Rosh Hashanah. Although we reflect on our past year through the high holy days, Rosh Hashanah invites us into evaluation of where are now, in the present moment, and compels us to be open to the possibilities of life, instead of claiming to pronounce on the future. Indeed, every action in the present moment is within our control, while the future is in the hands of G-d.

The Talmud teaches that we blow the shofar at this time "*le'arbev hasatan*" (to confuse the accusing angel). As we present our good deeds to G-d, the accusing angel tries to divert G-d by pointing out our flaws. However, something about the shofar's call distracts the Satan, giving us the opportunity to present our case to G-d without, as it were, interruptions.

A Hasidic reading of the root of the word "Satan" turns the image of the accusing angel into something us moderns might relate to. The word for distraction in Hebrew is "*listot*", which seems to share the same root as Satan. From a modern point of view, Satan could be regarded as the angel of distraction, who pulls us away from the present moment. Satan diverts our focus. Distraction can assume many forms: it can be endless scrolling through social media, it can be regret about the past, or endless worry about the future. Distraction pulls us from the "power of now", to reference one of Oprah Winfrey's favourite self-help gurus, Eckhart Tolle.

If Satan distracts, the simple, atonal and

amelodious sound of the shofar is without distraction. Like a winter tree stripped of all its leaves, the shofar is rid of frills and reduced to essence. In its bareness, its sense of nothing, we are neither in the past nor in the future. If we can truly connect to the emptiness of its sound, anything becomes possible. The sound of the shofar never says, "There is no future". Rather, it says, "*Hayom harat olam*" (Today, the world is conceived). With my actions, my thoughts, my attitude, I can participate in the unfolding of the world and in the shaping of my reality.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev says this is why Rosh Hashanah takes place at the end of summer, when the harvest granaries are full and the work has been done. He describes the spiritual state of such fullness using the paradoxical term of *ayin* (emptiness or nothingness). We have our harvest and all is complete. Berditchev explains it in the following way: it's as if when we are bursting at the seams, there's no space for the specifics of new life to enter. The concept of *ayin* is also a term for G-d. G-d is so filled with infinite possibility that G-d requires the specific wishes and hopes of humans to bring infinity – the *ayin* – into reality. Yitzchak explains that humans initiate the conception of the world each year. It's our requests, our hopes, and dreams that reach into the *ayin*, the fullness of existence, and set in motion the particular responses of the universe, of the creator. The Esh Kodesh shares a similar idea. Citing the great Kabbalistic work of the Zohar, he says the work *delatatah* (of below) arouses the work of *de'la'ilah* (of above).

We aren't in charge of what will happen in this or that country, we don't know what will happen with viruses, or with dissident party factions. But as Jews, we work with an assumption that our deeds have an impact, and that our thoughts and beliefs can be self-fulfilling. *Teshuva*, *tefillah* and *zedakah*, self-examination, introspection, and right action can reverse the evil decree. Rosh Hashanah consists of Jewish spiritual practices that open up possibilities instead of delimiting futures.

The *ayin*, the empty potential of Rosh Hashanah, presents to human beings a great spiritual invitation.

Every time we hear the shofar, we can connect to that *ayin* and bring it down into our world in specifics. It's deeply moving to consider the largely Lithuanian Jewish community which transplanted to South Africa and re-birthing in the forms of schools, shuls, South African activists, Limmud conferences, and Jewish communal organisations.

Hayom harat olam – we have created new worlds in South Africa. So, let's be careful before we utter, "there is no future here". Rather, let's set our thoughts, prayers, and intentions to appreciate what we have, and ask for what we want. Let's tune in to the call of the shofar, and participate in the unfolding of a full and good future, wherever we may find ourselves.

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




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OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY

During the past December holiday season, I happened upon a stationery shop and saw on one of its shelves a gratitude journal. Its cover was bright orange with the letters, “I am grateful – 365 days of gratitude” written in bold across the cover. Intrigued and ready for an adventure, I bought this little A5 journal and on the spur of the moment, committed to write at the end of every day three things I was grateful for. As a bonus on the bottom row of the page, there’s a line or two to write down three words that describes your day.

That first night, excitedly, I opened the fresh, clean book and penned my first entry. I must admit, it took a lot of thought. I had to relive my day and really concentrate to find three things that I was grateful for. I struggled somewhat, but managed to get the three items down. I didn’t want to be *kitsch* about it. I tried my level best to be genuinely and sincerely grateful for things, and to focus on the meaning of what they were for me.

Interestingly, I must admit, I struggled the first few weeks to find three things every single day. But I persevered, and as time went by, surprisingly, it became a little easier. Now it’s a habit, and every day before I fall asleep, I make sure to pen in the three requisite items.

Even more astonishingly, there are times now as I go about my day that I surprisingly notice something

during the day and say, “Ah, this is something to be grateful for!” and make a mental note to add it to my journal later that night.

As I opened the journal this week, a thought came to me. This exercise has been eye opening for me. I was flexing a muscle that I wasn’t using adequately, and the proof was in the pudding. The more I practiced gratitude, the easier it became, and the more aware I was of the good things that were happening to me. Some were big and others were small, but nevertheless, they were good. Then I thought, why was this so difficult in the beginning? If I was to be honest with myself, I’ve had a tremendous number of good things happen to me during my lifetime (thank you, Hashem!) Why was it never properly acknowledged ... what’s the deal here?

If you spend a few minutes thinking this through, you’ll very easily see that we are hardwired as humans to vacillate towards the negative much more easily than the positive. It’s much easier to see the cup half empty than the cup half full. Much easier to see the next person’s bad points than their good ones, much more money is made selling bad news than good news ... which, while talking about that, when last did you see a headline on your social-media feed that spoke about good things? It’s only about how bad everything is, how much worse it can become, how corrupt

everything is. How upside down everything is. The sad reality is that we’re so used to hearing about bad things that we almost never focus on good things.

A story comes to mind. Many years ago in 1977, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suffered a severe heart attack. He was chided by those close to him, especially his medical doctor, to take things easier and slow down, or as the doctor put it, “Rebbe, if you continue, you have a 20% chance of another attack.” To which the Rebbe responded, “So what you’re saying is that I have an 80% chance that nothing will happen?”

What a flip! I imagine that if we lived our lives like this, a lot of anxiety, worry, and depression would simply go away. Our entire perspective of the world would start becoming colourful again and pulsate with vitality.

As you read this article, we are about to herald in the New Year 5782. Externally, the world looks greyer every day, and the news gets more and more depressing. We can all sit down and bemoan the year gone past, the trials and tribulations, the hardships, and challenges. Indeed, to be a realist, all that’s true. It’s been painful, it’s been gruelling. But you and I have a choice – get swallowed up in all this negativity, continue to perpetuate the bad news, or maybe



it’s simply time to look for the good things in your life and focus your attention on them.

For starters, if you’re reading this, you’ve made it to another year. G-d has granted your life! And I’m sure G-d has granted each one of us a lot more than that. Stop for a few minutes and meditate, even better, write down all the good things that have happened to you this past year. Not just three items, make it ten! Twenty!

You’ll see that behind the madness and mess, G-d has been looking after us, guiding us, and trying so hard to bring us to a better place. This world doesn’t run haphazard. There’s a plan and a direction. Perhaps we haven’t allowed it to come to fruition because we’re still stuck on what’s wrong as opposed to trying to find out what’s right.

If you knew you were about to meet the Queen of England, would you just complain about how the weather

isn’t conducive, how long you must wait, or how you must dress? Nay, you would be excited at the privilege, you’d ignore the inconveniences, and you’d be grateful for the opportunity. So, here’s your opportunity to bring yourself to a state of gratitude and realise what G-d has truly done for you this year. Then, when we are granted an audience on Rosh Hashanah, we can stand before the king and ask that He continue to shower us with revealed blessing. And why wouldn’t G-d acquiesce – who can say no to a child who is grateful and thankful for everything he has?

Wishing you all a year of revealed sweetness and abundant blessings. Shana tova!

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

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Interrogate your inner critic, and be your own champion

OPINION

This past year has been tough for all of us. The thought of another potentially tough year is daunting. How easy it is to become paralysed by fear and dread as we contemplate the coming year. How easy is it to be harsh with ourselves as we wonder where we might have gone wrong, and where we may have been responsible for some of the difficulties we faced, personally and as a community.

But how mistaken would we be to fall prey to this fear and to our destructive thoughts, to prognostications of doom and gloom? While this reaction may well be understandable given the sadness and struggles of the past year, it would be a travesty. In truth, we are meant to approach the *yom tov* of Rosh Hashanah with a strong sense of our unique and inestimable value as the children of Hashem. It's only with this awareness of our dignity and worth that we can stand before Hashem, proclaim Him as our king and father, and envision a new year filled with meaning, purpose, and growth.

To combat this default standpoint, we need to experience ourselves as worthy of our own esteem, as people who matter greatly to Hashem and who are needed for a purpose and mission that only we can fulfil in the year to come.

This may resonate with you, but you could easily ask, “Yes, but how? How do I move from a space of negativity and despair when I look at my failings, my fragility, my brokenness? How do I combat the chokehold my thoughts have on me, the self-accusations, and endless criticism, my failure to meet the demands my mind places on me? Is it even possible to free myself from this dark place?”

I tell you categorically that the answer is yes. Just as your mind has the power to submerge you in misery, so equally does it have the power to lift you out of despair, into hope and vision. Further, not only is it possible, it's also not that hard. It may take some work, but the results will be phenomenal. Are you ready for the ride? Is it worth putting in the effort required to release yourself from fear and anxiety, to empower yourself to face the new year with hope and trust? If your answer is yes, then let me share a simple tool from the More to Life Program which you can use whenever you wish to move into a happier and more productive space.



I want you to identify an area in which you struggle and often fail to meet your own demands. It could be in your work, in a certain relationship, or in regard to a characteristic you possess which you don't like – your weight, exercise, anything at all that has you coming down hard on yourself. It could be that you have a difficult relationship with a member of your family. You find yourself getting angry easily and expressing yourself harshly in response to their provocation. You miss the mark often, and you feel guilty and ashamed. Now listen to your inner dialogue, to what your mind is saying. Use the words, “I have to, I should, I must” as well as “I shouldn't, I mustn't ... or else”. Here is an example from my own inner dialogue.

“I have to be thoughtful and sensitive, I have to be understanding. I should be the bigger person, I should bite my tongue, I shouldn't give in to my impulses, I shouldn't attack back, I should be calm, I should be more mature.” Or else, “I will be a destructive person. I will be a failure as a human being. I will be worthless.” This might sound familiar to you, or it might not. We each have our own set of demands for who we should be, how we should behave, and our own set of accusations about what it would mean if we fail to live up to our expectations of ourselves. But the pressure of these inner demands is felt by each of us in a similar way. As I hear these demands, these “shoulds” and “have tos” I feel heavy, tense, anxious, stressed, and generally miserable. I feel trapped and hopeless. And then I take a breath and ask myself whether any of this is actually true.

Do I have to be more sensitive and thoughtful? The answer is no. No-one is holding a gun to my head and forcing me to be more sensitive and thoughtful! I'm the only one demanding this of myself. And telling myself lies about what it would mean if I didn't meet this demand. For example, my mind tells me that if I fail to be sensitive, it would mean that I'm an insensitive, hard hearted, and thoughtless person. Really? Is that truly who I am, fundamentally? No, absolutely not. In my essence, I'm a caring and kind person. My job is to let go of the accusations and lies that my mind is hurling at me, and to hold onto the truth. The way I do this is by knowing that there are no “have tos” or “shoulds”, there are only choices and truths. I'm now ready to battle my inner demons. I evaluate each demand and ask, “Is this actually true?” I end up saying “false” to each of the “have tos” that I hear in my mind, and in so doing, I free myself from their grip and destructive power. As I say, “false, false, false”, I clear a space for the real me to speak. Instead of “I have to”... “or else”, I move into choice and purpose – “I choose to ... because”.

I choose to notice when I'm feeling triggered. I choose not to react immediately. I choose to take a breath, and consider my response. I choose to tell the truth and share my feelings. Why do I make these choices? Because I'm someone who wants to build relationships, who wants to grow in the moment of challenge, who wants to manage my own emotions and to reach out with sensitivity and thoughtfulness. And I want this because I'm fundamentally a deep and caring person, a person of value. As I breathe into these choices, I feel empowered and uplifted, capable and energised, willing and ready to implement these choices.

With this renewed sense of self-worth, I can stand before Hashem on the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, and make a firm commitment to bring my best self forward, to keep reaching for clarity and purpose. I can appear before my G-d, my master, and say, “Here I am, ready to do my best. My soul is connected closely to my maker. I stand straight and breathe deeply and freely.”

• Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler is the co-founder and director of Koleinu, the helpline for victims of abuse in the South African Jewish community.



REBBETZIN WENDY HENDLER



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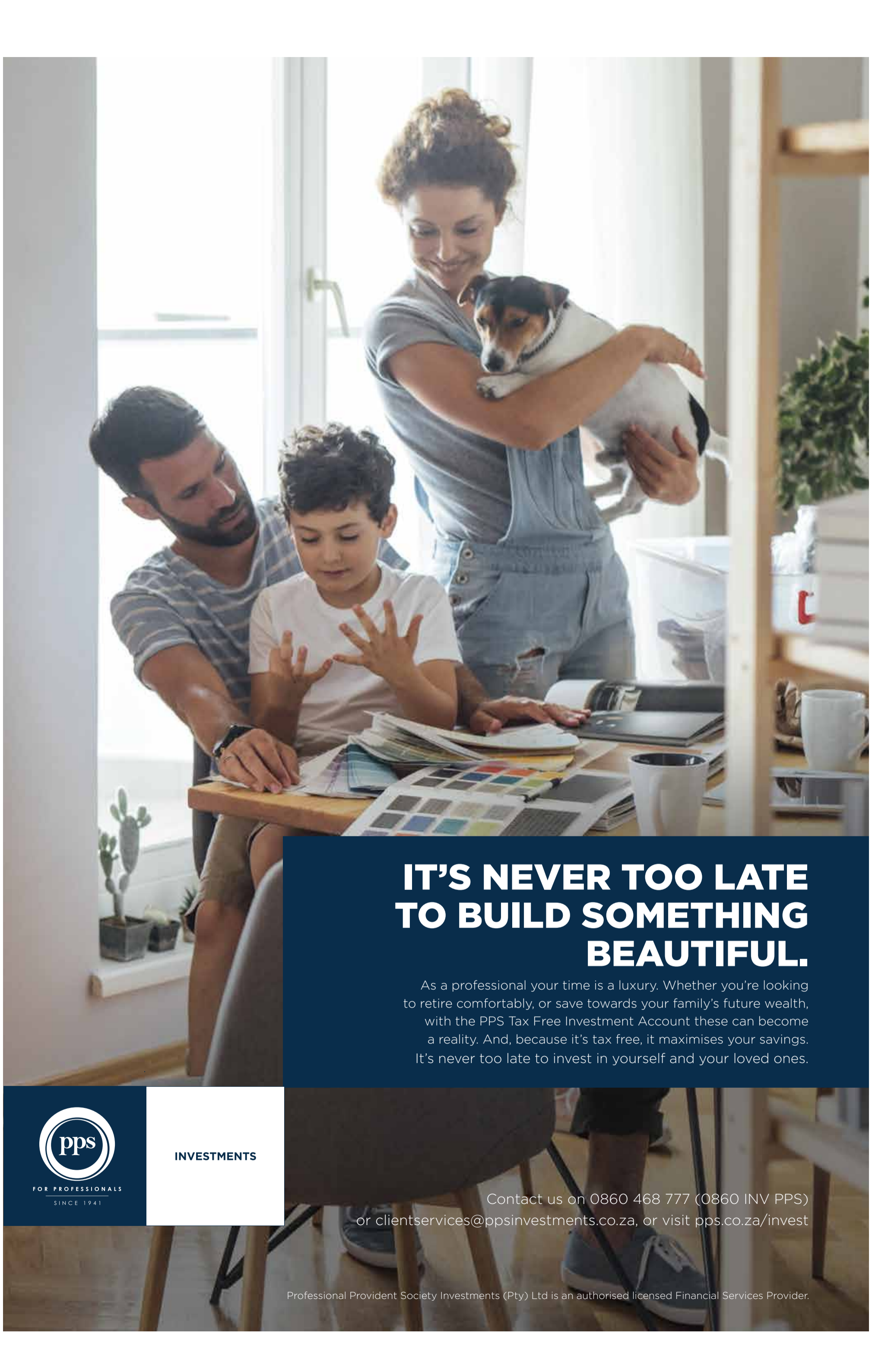


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The blitzing of the Bokke teaches us a lesson

OPINION

RAV ILAN HERRMANN



When they get going, there’s no stopping the sensational green and gold. They instil fear and trepidation into the hearts of their opposition. Blink, and you might find two tries have been scored by the *vinnige* Blitzbokke. Over the years, they have captured the hearts of South African rugby fans as they tally up an array of trophies that have made them number one in the world in the rugby 7s, many times over.

Which is why I was so utterly disappointed, frustrated, and annoyed at what happened on Tuesday, 27 July at 11:45. I know the time because I had logged on to watch the Olympic Rugby 7s quarter-finals between South Africa and Argentina. Coffee in hand, on a brisk, cold winter’s day, I was sure I’d be warmed up by a fine result from our boys. I didn’t have to wait long before Selwyn Davids cruised passed the Argentinian players to score after just two minutes. Seven-zero up and looking good. Then, a minute later, an over-enthusiastic high tackle by Argentina’s Gastón Revol resulted in him being red-carded. It was surely going to be a massacre now. Revol was literally crying on the sideline, feeling the anguish of his blundering foul having let his teammates down at this all-important Olympic quarterfinal.



The Blitzbokke

No-one expected anything other than that the feared Blitzbokke, with a one man advantage, would overwhelm the talented Argentinians.

As a South African, the next 11 minutes were painful to watch. The Blitzbokke became complacent. They became sloppy. Their systematic style was nowhere to be seen. The Argentinians, however, were galvanised by the disappointment of losing a player, and rallied with an incredible show of guts, heart, and pure commitment to make up the shortfall. Marcos Moneta ran away with two tries. Captain Santiago Álvarez scored a third in the second half. With little time to go, the Blitzbokke were given a chance after being awarded a penalty try. Argentina then had another player sent off, this time yellow carded and sent to the “sin-bin”. Yet, the five-man Argentinian team resolutely defended the last short period and defeated the mighty Blitzbokke.

That 15 minute 7s rugby match made an indelible impression on me. I analysed it for the amazing phenomenon that it was, and extracted a few important lessons, particularly pertinent as we prepare to enter the day of judgement and start the new year with positive resolutions.

Proud not anguished

Jewish thought teaches that the Jewish people are one team with a common and intertwined destiny. Each Jew has a vital role to play and together, we combine to fulfil *am Yisrael’s* overall mission. When Moshiach comes, how our part was essential to the overall task of the Jewish people will be recognised. By playing our part in the team effort, we will be able to stand proud alongside our historic team when the final whistle signals for full time. What we don’t

want is to squander our special privilege and opportunity and, like Revol, be on the sideline writhing with torment at having let our team down. Rosh Hashanah is a time to recommit to being part of the great team of *am Yisrael*, and playing the role that we have been allotted.

Keep rising

The Blitzbokke became complacent after their advantage widened and they were playing a man to the good. In Ethics of the Fathers, the great sage, Hillel, teaches the Mishnah: “Do not trust yourself until the day you die.” It refers to he who becomes complacent and thinks that he has it all figured out and doesn’t have to be vigilant, that he doesn’t have to be on guard against the dangers of temptation and the *yetser harah* (inclination to do evil). He is fooled by the sense that he has it in the bag and can take it easy – not having to keep pushing forward and growing. This smug approach can lead to disaster. Judaism teaches that man has a natural tendency towards material drives and that he needs to keep striving, toiling, and putting effort into his spiritual growth otherwise he will regress. The often-used analogy is that in life, one is walking up an escalator against the escalator’s downward motion. By standing still, one will back-slide. Only by continuously walking up and pushing forwards will one grow, reach higher, and avoid descending. The dangers of complacency are iterated in Talmud Berachot (29a), where it tells of Yochanan, who after having faithfully served as *kohen gadol* for 80 years, lost his way and became a Sadducee.

Rosh Hashanah is a time to charge and strengthen our souls to ensure that we prevail over *yetser harah* the year over.

Chips down – heart up

The Argentinian team, after having lost a player, instead of acquiescing to what seemed to be an inevitable defeat, defied expectation. The loss and subsequent deficit in their team made the players even more determined and brought out in them a valiancy, raising them to greatness. Jewish thought explains that even if one sees that the chips are stacked against one and it may look as if the situation is bleak, one must never despair and lose one’s belief and resolve. It’s in times of difficulty that one is, in fact, able to access even greater reserves and find the deeper strengths that lie within, and can thereby prevail. Numerous examples of this are evident throughout Jewish history. The Maccabees for one and, in modern times, the numerous wars that Israel has fought against seemingly insurmountable odds – yet, we have seen that with G-d’s help and the resolute Jewish spirit, the few have defeated the many.


On an individual level, the same is true for each of us as we strive to face and overcome our inner enemy which seems at times to be overwhelming. Although the darkness seems acute and formidable, the light of our godly soul is so much greater and more powerful when it’s aroused and its flame fanned. It’s then that the seemingly insurmountable darkness is blitzed by the light of the irrepressible Jewish *neshama*, and transformation and redemption takes place.

• Rav Ilan Herrmann is a spiritual leader in the South African Jewish community, where he has served for more than two decades. He is a writer, lecturer, and publisher.

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 Pick n  Pay

Sudden change requires slow commitment

OPINION

I have always been fascinated by the ability to change. On the one hand, change is the most mundane, even trite, topic to discuss on the *yamim noraim* (high holy days). Yet, the ability to change is one of the most difficult human traits to accomplish. My husband and I have an ongoing philosophical debate: he, perhaps a bit more cynical than I, believes that people can never change. They are who they are. I have a more optimistic, perhaps naïve, approach. With hard work and real desire, people can and do change.

But change is a process. And so is the process of *teshuvah* (repentance).

Teshuva becomes our focus, beginning in earnest in Elul as we begin hearing the shofar, compelling us to reflect on who we are and what we want to change. But the concept of *teshuvah* – knowing how to and what to change – can be overwhelming. Rav Kook, in his beautiful work, *Orot Hateshuvah*, translated as the *Song of Teshuva*, offers us a *teshuvah* road map.

In chapter two, Rav Kook writes, “Regarding its length of time, *teshuvah* may be divided into two types: sudden *teshuvah* (*teshuvah pitomit*) and gradual *teshuvah* (*teshuvah d’ragit*).”

Teshuvah pitomit – sudden *teshuvah* – comes upon us like lightning, like an illuminating flash that enters the soul. A moment of complete clarity. One minute, you’re blind, in the dark about what you need to do to change or even that there was a problem in the first place. And then, suddenly, it hits you, a clear vision, and pathway forward. It’s the kind of change that we know, just from our gut, our intuition, that we must change. It’s that moment of clarity that a tough relationship must come to an end. Or that new job opportunity is actually the right fit. That your bad habit must come to an end. It’s a breaking point that’s reached, and a conscious decision to begin to change.

The truth is, this kind of sudden awareness can be treacherous, with unexpected results. It’s the sudden *teshuvah* of Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordai (Avodah Zara 17), about whom we are told that he spent his whole life engaged with vice – there wasn’t a prostitute that he didn’t visit. Until one day, while with the most beautiful woman in the world, he has a *teshuvah pitomit* moment. She chastises him that he would never be able to repent, and he realises that he must change. The story ends with Rabbi Elazar putting his head between his knees and crying, asking for forgiveness. Immediately, his soul departs – he dies – and the *bat kol*, a heavenly decree, proclaims, “Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordai is destined for the life of the world to come!”

“

Each person, in his or her way, must have that conscious awakening where they decide that something must change. And then, the work of change begins.

Rabbi Eleazar acquired *olam haba*. He did *teshuvah*, but perhaps, this large, heroic, almost intuitive, fast *teshuvah* comes up short; it’s not enough.

Slow *teshuvah* has to be paired with the second type of Rav Kook’s *teshuvah* – *teshuvah d’ragi* – gradual repentance.

This kind of change happens slowly over a period of time. It’s taking that knowledge of wanting to change, and then doing the hard, plodding work of achieving it. This kind of *teshuvah* may even go unnoticed for a time as the incremental nature of it may not be obvious at first. But, over time, this kind of *teshuvah* results in lasting change.

Both types of *teshuvah*, an emotional flash of clarity and a slow, gradual process, are necessary to achieve lasting change.


Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman’s two systems of how we process information, how we are wired to make decisions, resonates with Rav Kook’s two processes of *teshuvah*. In his book, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Kahneman describes the intuitive quick, almost gut decisions that people make. His description of fast thinking, which he calls system 1, that our brains are primed to make immediate even emotional assumptions, is similar to Rav Kook’s *teshuvah pitomit*. But to make good decisions in life, system 2 must also become activated – that’s our slow, deliberate ability to



process information over time, in a strategic, step by step way – Rav Kook’s *teshuvah d’ragit*.

It’s the interplay of the two systems, the two forms of *teshuvah*, that help us to change.

It was the sudden onset of the recent riots that propelled South Africans into action. People gathered and distributed food to those affected. The swift and sudden events, almost like lightning, awakened people to a deep-rooted problem that they must face. But the work of creating lasting change, of making policies that keep people safe and fed, of redirecting resources and changing attitudes, will take a long time.



RABBA SARA HURWITZ

Each person, in his or her way, must have that conscious awakening where they decide that something must change. And then, the work of change begins. I find this a helpful framing as I consider the change I want to make in my own life and in the world at large. This Rosh Hashanah, as I listen to the powerful shofar blasts, I will be thinking about my own process of *teshuvah*. The fast, quick *truas*: *tu-tu-tu-tu* will awaken within me the things I know I must change. I will seek clarity, and allow that lighting rod to awaken my soul and help me decide to act. And then, the slower drawn out sounds of the *shevarim* – *tu, tu, tu* – will remind me of the gradual work that’s necessary to get there.

May this year, 5782, bring deep cathartic awakenings, quick and necessary resolutions, and also the patience and fortitude to gradually make that change an everlasting and impactful one.

• Rabba Sara Hurwitz, the co-founder and president of *Maharat*, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy, also serves on the rabbinic staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in New York City.

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Hear the sound of the shofar – and get help

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Rosh Hashanah shakes us out of our complacency, forcing us to make changes. This has also been the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, say psychologists, who emphasise the importance of having the right emotional toolkit for a rapidly changing world.

“The shofar has sounded,” says educational psychologist Sarah-Jane Lipshitz. “COVID-19 has come and feels everlasting and overwhelming at times. The shofar doesn’t stop blowing, sometimes there are moments of respite, lulls between waves, but who knows what’s to come? If anything, this time has taught us that we need to be resilient and armed with our own personal strengths. It’s also opened a much-needed space for contemplation, self-care, and for realising what really matters in life.”

While some may have used this time to re-evaluate their lives, others have struggled to cope with the upheaval COVID-19 has brought. Not only is it a physical health crisis, it also poses a significant risk to mental health. For some, this has offered a back door to therapy, says Lipshitz.

“Prior to COVID-19, many people weren’t able to talk about themselves and explain that they

had a problem. Yet now, many are struggling, and find themselves facing increased anxiety due to the uncontrollable nature of the virus. They’ve therefore opened up more than they would have previously.”

“One of the greatest signs that we need to make a significant change in our lives is when we keep finding ourselves in the same unfavourable situation where the same pattern keeps replaying itself.”

That’s why Lipshitz started an online support group with trauma therapist Jacqui Yates. Titled “This is us”, it hosts webinars providing psychological support for those battling to handle the emotional fallout of the pandemic.

Clinical psychologist Shai Friedland has also observed a greater openness to therapy. “COVID-19 has fast-forwarded things. It’s made people explore therapy a bit earlier than they would have otherwise, helping them to learn new things about themselves,” he says. “It’s opened

people’s eyes to mental health, and showed that there doesn’t have to be a stigma around it.” Once they realise the benefits of the resource therapy provides, they’re more willing to make necessary changes, thereby increasing awareness about the practice.

That’s not to say that the therapeutic process is simple. “New beginnings are very anxiety provoking. The unknown always comes with anxiety,” says Friedland. “But we need to embrace the chance to begin again and realise that there’s a lot of good that can come from that.” It all starts with a shift in mindset. “Instead of seeing change as difficult, see it as a new start, a way to learn something.”

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it’s that we need be fluid and adapt to what life throws at us. While we must accept that there are certain things that we cannot change or control, we must also be willing to put in the work where we can make improvements.

“When things aren’t going well, there’s no point in remaining stagnant, you’ve got to make changes to bring about lasting change in your life,” says Friedland. “I work from a cognitive behavioural therapy

perspective. The idea is that to get a different perspective, you need to have different thoughts about a particular scenario. If you change the way you see something, it may make it easier for you to change your behaviour. Conversely, changing your behaviour, as difficult as that is, will then result in a change in thought process and emotional awareness.”

Making such behavioural and cognitive changes should be a gradual process, especially in these times.

“Make slow changes,” says Friedland. “Start with the building blocks of mental health, including getting enough sleep, exercising, following a healthy diet, and having a healthy relationship with work and

socialising.” During COVID-19, we’ve largely had to adapt how we integrate these practices into our lives. “Slowly start to add some exercise to your day, even if it’s at home,” he suggests. “Even simply calling someone can signal a new beginning.”

What are the signs we need to make a fresh start? “One of the greatest signs that we need to make a significant change in our lives is when we keep finding ourselves in the same unfavourable situation – where the same pattern keeps replaying itself,” says clinical psychologist Amanda Fortes. “A new beginning often means letting go of something that clearly isn’t working or serving us in our lives. Even though it might seem like the obvious and healthy choice, it’s often difficult to implement as our brain prefers the familiar and the outcomes that we know. Sometimes those difficult, uncomfortable situations or outcomes feel more comfortable than starting something new.”

That’s because our patterns of behaviour and thoughts are engrained in our brains through neural pathways. “But through slowly and repeatedly enacting different behaviours, having different types of thoughts, and trying to see things in different ways, the brain does start to make those changes, developing new neural pathways,” says Friedland. “Then we’re able to move forward, and hopefully, new beginnings lead us to a place of better mental health.”

To start this process, we need to turn inward, and ask ourselves some key questions, says Lipschitz. Are we managing? Are we doing the best we can? What can we do better? Once we reach a place of understanding of where we are right now and an acceptance of the feelings that come with that, we can move forward with new goals in mind.

“Therapy is a journey,” says Lipshitz. “I work with clients in terms of understanding and facilitating their life experience, discovering where they’re at, and what they want to achieve. COVID-19 has opened many doors because it basically forces people to reflect on who they are, get out of their rut, and figure out a new space for themselves, somewhere we have the emotional tools we need to cope with whatever comes along.”

Encouraging us to turn inwards, Rosh Hashanah offers that same opportunity to change the things that aren’t serving us, embracing who we’re meant to be, and moving forward with a fresh perspective.



5781 – a year of jabs, Jacob, and Olympic heartache

STEVEN GRUZD

As the Hebrew year 5781 concludes, here’s a look back at the major events that shaped Israel, South Africa, and beyond in the past 12 months.

The dominant factor in our lives this year was undoubtedly COVID-19. Vaccines were developed in record time, and millions of doses were made, but this didn’t bring the elusive “herd immunity”. Israel became a world leader in terms of vaccinating its population, but the virus persists there. South Africa dithered.

Antivax propaganda, vaccine hesitancy, rich countries dominating the market, slow roll-out, laxness, and mutations into new variants set back the global battle against this deadly modern-day plague. Lockdown and social distancing restrictions curtailed celebration of the *chagim* and closed down shuls and schools. The post-matric Rage party in Umhlanga in December proved to be a super-spreader, including in the Jewish community. South Africa faced deadly second and third waves. Will we still be in COVID-19’s grip another year from now?

A remarkable achievement in the dying days of Donald Trump’s presidency was the signing of the Abraham Accords on the White House lawns, normalising Israel’s relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Later in 2020, Morocco and Sudan also joined the process. Regular flights between Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Marrakesh have commenced, and cultural exchanges have sought to make this a warm peace.

Predictably, South Africa fulminated against these developments.

Across the Atlantic, Joe Biden won a close-fought United States election in November, which Trump was unable to overturn through means fair or foul. On 6 January, Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol in a brazen attempt to stop Congress from certifying the election result. Trump survived a second impeachment process over fomenting the insurrection. People speculated about what a Biden administration meant for Israel given the conjoined-twin-like closeness of Trump and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel lurched to its fourth election in two years in March 2021. Once again, it was effectively a referendum on Netanyahu, who faces charges of breach of trust, fraud, and bribery. This time, however, the opposition cobbled together a motley coalition at the eleventh hour in June to finally oust Israel’s longest-serving prime minister. Naftali Bennett became Israel’s 13th prime minister in June in spite of his party winning only a handful of Knesset seats. Yair Lapid, the foreign minister, is positioned to become prime minister in 2023, but that’s a long way away in the volatile world of Israeli politics.

Israel also faced yet another conflict with Gaza this year. Controversy over evictions in Jerusalem and reaction to Arabs throwing stones on and from the Temple Mount in early May quickly degenerated into almost 4 400 rockets being fired at Israel from Gaza, and

strong Israeli relation against Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Israel struck 1 500 targets and destroyed tunnels and buildings housing terrorists in Gaza, many of them unfortunately situated in civilian areas. The Iron Dome missile defence system certainly saved Israel from many more casualties and deaths. When Operation Guardian of the Walls finally ended after 11 days, 15 Israelis and 256 Palestinians had lost their

lives (some from rockets that misfired). An uneasy truce exists, with Gazans still sending incendiary balloons over the border to burn Israeli fields, and retaliatory attacks from Israel.

The Middle East conflict also ignited antisemitism worldwide, including in South Africa. Provocative marches and protests against Israel took place in Sea Point and outside Beyachad in Raedene, which houses many communal Jewish organisations.

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng came under fire for his pro-Israel statements, and prospective Constitutional Court Judge David Unterhalter was grilled for his connection to the South African Jewish

Board of Deputies by the Judicial Services Commission.

The imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma for contempt of court for refusing to attend the Zondo Commission into State Capture in July proved to be the spark for deadly violence in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Widespread looting led to the destruction of thousands of shops and warehouses, and 337 people lost their

lives in South Africa’s worst post-apartheid unrest. Total losses could top R50 billion. The Jewish community rallied to help clean up and provide food and other essentials to communities in need. These events have led to many a serious Shabbat table discussion about the future of Jewish life in this country. Aliyah from South Africa is already at record highs in spite of COVID-19 restrictions.

Important figures in the Jewish world who passed away included Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, journalist Suzanne Belling, entertainer Dawn Lindberg, philanthropists Eric Samson and Herby Rosenberg, Holocaust survivor Veronica Phillips, and educationalist Graham Bloch.

The year ended with the Tokyo Olympics, deferred for a year to July-August 2021. Israel had its highest ever medals haul with two gold and two bronze, while South Africa’s haul of three medals – one gold and two silvers – was one of its worst showings. It’s all a matter of perspective.

May 5782 be a better, healthier, and more peaceful year, for everyone.



Naftali Bennett



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This Rosh Hashanah, our **renewal to support those in vulnerable situations** feels natural. For much of 2021, we've continued to pivot and respond to the lockdown in line with the national strategy. We've made new and strategic decisions that sees us reaching thousands of young people and their families in a sustainable way.

Kids from our Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres are currently participating in our **Garden to Kindergarten programme** across our five community centres in Alexandra, Orange Farm, Mfuleni, Diepsloot and Braampark. Through these garden sessions, our learners are afforded the opportunity to appreciate where fresh produce comes from, gain insight into careers in agriculture and simply enjoy getting their hands dirty.

Our aim to instil the importance of **long term food security** was the reason our #IAmAfrika campaign was launched and ultimately successful. Through this campaign, 4 000 packs of vegetable seeds and 12 pop-up garden bags were donated and distributed to families in our beneficiary communities. Half-day vegetable gardening workshops were conducted with parents in all five Afrika Tikkun centres.

In keeping with this, our Agripreneurship Programme, underway in our Diepsloot and Orange Farm centres, is offering groups of unemployed young people passionate about farming, the opportunity to turn their interest into income. They learn about the **sustainable** breeding of farm animals, beehive keeping, crop rotation and nursery establishment, among others.

In 2021, we have also intensified our focus on digital tools and access by acquiring a Learner Management System (LMS). COVID-19 accelerated our move to digitisation and LMS enables our young people, their parents and partner organisations to **access learning material and content remotely**. Through our incredible partnerships we have also been able to equip our community centres with digital tools. ECD tablets are preloaded with age-appropriate activities such as nursery rhymes and phonetics which are rolled out during class time. Our Math Olympiad, held earlier this year, proved that our learners' familiarity with the digital devices are necessary to making

learning effective and fun.

Nowhere has the Tikkun call of **"repair"** been so urgent as during South Africa's recent social unrest. Like many others, we were dismayed by the levels of violence and looting, astounded by the destruction of so many vibrant community structures and businesses. However, it also inspired us to launch the campaign **'Reviving Township Economies'** a joint effort between public, private and civil society organisations to assist a number of community-based entrepreneurs severely affected by the protests. Wherever possible, Afrika Tikkun will use its credibility and experience in understanding community dynamics, to support, build and repair. This New Year, we renew this commitment for fervently than ever.

We thank our donors, partners and friends for being instrumental in making this happen.

Shana Tova and may Hashem bless us for a year of great purpose in all our lives.

Warmest wishes
Marc Lubner

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Teshuva – the chance to paint a new picture

OPINION

LISA HACK



pick up the paintbrush, dip it in a deep blue hue, and gently sweep it across the canvas. Sweeping and wisping, this way and that. Turning the bristles to a rhythm only I can hear. Always returning to that first dab on the material to touch up on missed spots.

It’s a euphemism for the high holy days that are upon us, isn’t it?

This is the season of turning and returning. It’s a time when we must enter into the process of *teshuva* and turn away from the ways we’ve missed the mark, guiding ourselves back onto the right path.

Whether we’ve been lazy, careless, or let ego get in the way, *teshuva* challenges us to take note and “get with the programme”.

Teshuva is a process. It asks us to do four things: recognise, regret, resolve, and refrain.

But is it that easy? Do we simply breeze from regret into resolve? Like a fluid stroke of the paintbrush?

Or is there more creativity to it?

I see *teshuva* as a process of creating a new self. A blank canvas, if you will.

With introspection and dedication, we can all recognise patterns in our behaviour that harm the flow of energy and love between ourselves and those around us.

Think about it. How often have you woken up and decided that today is the day you will speak calmly? You’ll take a deep breath before you speak. And no less than a few hours later, something sets you off, and you can’t bite your tongue.

You’ve recognised, regretted, and resolved. But you just can’t refrain. It makes the entire process feel pointless.

But here’s the point. You are the artist of your life. Your actions, yearnings, choices, losses, discoveries, words both spoken and unspoken, learnings, love, guilt, and anger paint the picture of the life you’ve lived when you reach the end of your days.

Every single one of these elements is important and has a place in our pallet of life.

The extent to which you find your life a work of art depends on how deeply you engage with the raw materials we’re blessed with.

The creative process is a practice for life’s



journey, in which grief, love, judgements, and thoughts are our pastels and acrylics. And just like picking up the brush, dipping it in your favourite shade and sweeping it across material – caught up in that moment – we live in the moment.

No image or map exists. We start with a

desire. Something small. The feel of a brush. The pigment of colour. And then we make our mark, wisping here and there, filling in the blank spots, allowing each stroke, each moment to be guided by desire.

We add a dab of blue here. We leave a square blank just for now. Each desire calling from intuition, a place beyond the intellectual mind. A place beyond words and older than time. It truly is the source of creation, and we feel it when we create in this way. It becomes tangible.

To onlookers, it’s a way of painting that looks too simple and as if there’s no technique. The sky is streaked with a vibrant rainbow. Houses appear big and bold. Moths sprout wings. But all the time, we’re opening up to the intuition of the creator.

When you heed to the call of the moment, the inspiration flows. When we paint, we become fluid in hearing that call. It’s staying with it that’s the challenge.

Our minds are full of belief and expectation. Our ego strives to get its way, clinging rather than moving with the fluidity of creation.

When you cease to listen to the flow, you allow the ego to take control. You get stuck. Uninspired. Exhausted. To do anything more than paint by numbers becomes terrifying.

We might not be raised to be explorers of our soul, to hear the call of the universe. Rather, we’re conditioned to replicate an image of what we’re told our painting – our life – looks like. But in clinging to this safety, we miss the place of all possibility, our innate creativity.

Without this connection, *teshuva* is impossible. When we can’t see ourselves, know ourselves, and forgive ourselves. We bar the door to our quest. Our painting languishes, and the fullness of who we are goes untapped.

Don’t spend the great celebration of creation behind closed doors. Assume your rightful role as the artist of your life. Dare to create a world anew. In so doing, we emulate the creative process of the divine.

These high holy days, I challenge you to find the beauty of the materials on hand, the stuff of your life – bitterness, selfishness, rage, jealousy – and create a world, a self, from here.

Recognise. Regret. Resolve. Get creative.

The sacred days are supposed to renew and remind us of G-d’s creative power, and the creative power within each of us.

This season, *teshuva* calls us to return to our depths, to remember that we are made in the image of the divine creator. Each one of us is created creative.

We are artists. Our life is our art. Let’s go into the high holy days with the courage of spirit, openness of heart, and intrepidness of mind to notice what’s there and embrace its uniqueness as we allow it to lead us to what’s next.

Pick up the brush anew. Dip it in a golden-honey shade, and paint your way into a year that’s sweet, healthy, and full of inspiration.

May every moment of 5782 be a blank canvas for your creative expression.

• Lisa Hack is the Gauteng chairperson of the South African Union of Progressive Jewry.

5782 OUR SEARCH FOR MEANING



The trauma of this past year forces us to re-evaluate our lives and everything we think we know. And it leads us to ask ourselves the biggest questions of all: **What is the purpose of life? Why are we here?**

On the eve of Rosh Hashana 5782, I’ve written a piece called: “Our search for meaning”, which may be the most important essay I’ve written, exploring the answer to these questions and how it can reinvigorate our lives.

Writing this has given me clarity and direction, and newfound inspiration. I hope that reading it will do the same for you.

Gina and I wish you a *shana tova* and כתיבה וחתימה טובה

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Emigration makes *yomtavim* bittersweet

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

A time for beginnings and endings, Rosh Hashanah will be especially poignant for families who face recent or looming emigration. “Out of all the *yomtavim*, Rosh Hashanah is the most meaningful in terms of family,” says Belinda Abramowitz. “It’s a serious time of reflection, and it’s rooted in memories of good food and special family time. I didn’t grow up in a religious home, so Rosh Hashanah was always the main holiday that

with the Abramowitz side for *yom tov* in Israel, where one of David’s sisters lives. The couple have three sons – a baby, a three-year-old, and a six-year-old, which adds another dimension to the impending separation. “The fact that we have small kids is the hardest when it comes to leaving family and being apart over festivals,” Abramowitz says. “The people who leave are the lucky ones who go off and have an adventure – it’s the people who you leave behind that it hits the hardest. We have good friends in London,

privileged and blessed to be living in Israel.” Aside from her mother’s home-made soup and her sister’s famous pavlovas, Ferreira says she’ll miss special family time over *yom tov*. “My best memories are the constant laughter we shared. I always said my mom and dad were lucky because all their children were still in South Africa, which meant my children got to grow up and spend these special occasions with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I will miss how every *yom tov* we walked down memory lane, sharing our childhood stories with my children, nieces, and nephews.”

To cope with being apart, they’re planning to use Zoom to connect with family in South Africa. Ferreira is also planning to continue a long-standing family tradition of putting presents on her kid’s beds before first night begins, a ritual that her mother started when she was young. Rosh Hashanah this year will be especially hard for Anthony and Sharona Smith, who are in the process of emigrating to the UK. “This will be the first time in 11 years that we won’t be together on Rosh Hashanah,” says Anthony. Anthony, who holds a British passport moved to

London in April to find work, leaving his wife and two-year-old twin children behind in Joburg. “We’re going the spousal visa route, which means I have to be working here for six months before Sharona can even apply,” he says. Being apart for so long is often heart wrenching. “It’s hard day-to-day, but it’s especially difficult approaching *yom tov* where we’d always be together,” says Sharona. “Pesach and Rosh Hashanah are the two times of the year when we do the hosting. It’s not something we



Anthony and Sharona Smith with their twins

can generally afford, so when it comes to *yom tov*, it’s quite special to be in charge of that. I’ve always really enjoyed being the hostess and having everyone at my table. We have a small family, so it was generally us, my mom, and Ant’s parents and brother.” Anthony has also always been very involved in the preparations, taking time off work to help with the preparations. “We would go all out, setting the table and cooking, and we’d do everything from scratch,” he recalls. “We spent the entire day in the kitchen having



The Ferreira family outside the Dan Panorama Jerusalem Hotel on their arrival in Israel

fun. It’s a treasured memory of spending that day getting everything together.” Sharona hopes to continue hosting *yom tov* once she gets to the UK, although she jokes that she has no idea who will be around her table aside from her mother who plans to join them in the UK. Anthony’s parents also have long-term plans to make the move. For now, Sharona and the twins will be spending their last Rosh Hashanah in South Africa with both families. “It’s always been a time for us to come together, not worry about normal daily stresses, and just enjoy that special quality time together. I think it’s going to be harder for Anthony this year because he’ll be away from all of us.” Nevertheless, Anthony is grateful to have been invited to friends in London who are also ex-South Africans. “I was concerned that I wouldn’t have anywhere to go,” he says. “I didn’t want to impose, but the community here is really welcoming. It’s nice to know that I’m not going to be alone on those nights. I consider myself lucky to have both new and old friends here. When my wife arrives next year, our *yom tov* traditions will come alive through being with these friends.”

This is the case for Darren Sheer, who recently moved to Amsterdam to live, work, and travel abroad. He’ll be spending *yom tov* with friends, old and new. “As someone who is traditional rather than religious, I feel that *yom tov*, like any holiday in any religion, is a special time which brings family and friends together,” he says. “That’s the part I value of any festival. I would love to incorporate some traditions of Rosh Hashanah into my day to share our culture with some of the non-Jewish friends I’ve made here, just as I look forward to spending the Christmas/Chanukah holiday season in their homes.” In South Africa, Sheer generally spent Rosh Hashanah with his family and his brothers’ in law. “I’ll miss watching my nieces evolve year after year at the *yom tov* table,” he says. “Every year, the atmosphere gets louder and more hilarious. It’s amazing to watch them grow up. It makes you look back at your memories of life at their age.” At special times like Rosh Hashanah, it’s ultimately the memories that keep us connected, no matter where in the world we find ourselves.

The Abromowitz family



we celebrated.” However, for Belinda and her husband, David, who recently got a work transfer to the United Kingdom (UK), Rosh Hashanah this year will be bittersweet. They’ve timed their move to London for 3 October so that they can celebrate *yom tov* with both their families in Joburg before they leave. “We always spend Rosh Hashanah with family,” Abramowitz says. “I think it will be quite intense and filled with emotion because we know we’re leaving after Sukkot – it’s our last *yom tov* together really.” They do hope eventually to reunite and will be joining a nice, religious community. I do think we’ll feel the lack of family on *yom tov* though.” Cachita and Alan Ferreira and their two sons feel lucky to be celebrating their first Rosh Hashanah in Ra’anana since making aliyah in April. “I have mixed emotions about *yom tov* though,” Ferreira says. “In normal circumstances, I would either be going home or there would be a high possibility that my sister and her family would come to Israel. Due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions, we need to deal with being without family, but we are

This year wasn’t for sissies

OPINION

HOWARD FELKDMAN



I genuinely have no idea how the year 5781 has been. I know that I’m still here, and that’s good. I know that my father isn’t, and that’s bad. And that it has been a year of medical gains, of community losses, and more Zoom calls than I can possibly count. I have been on mute more than I would have liked, and muted less people than I have imagined doing. It has been a year dominated by vaccine discussion and steamed up eye glasses. A year dominated by nervousness and worry about the future of the world, of family and friends, and of the country. This was a year that wasn’t for sissies. In spite of this, and as we head towards Rosh Hashanah, I’m filled with optimism and gratitude. Not only because we have made it this far, but also because of encouraging signs along the way. Many in our community have been vaccinated, shuls are open as are schools, and although things are far from “normal”, much like spring, there are buds of hope wherever we look. We will see them if we choose to. As critical as I was earlier in the process, I’m proud of what we have achieved in the country. Vaccines aren’t in short supply, our medical facilities and workers have done us proud, as have our community organisations that cared for the sick, protected the elderly and vulnerable, and provided much needed charity to those who needed it. More so, when the politically inspired unrest hit the country, it was “normal” South Africans who stood up to the criminality and sent a message to the government that this behaviour wouldn’t be tolerated, and then, if that wasn’t enough, still rolled up their sleeves and helped

to clean up the mess that they hadn’t created. It was impressive! Really impressive. There were many who chose to leave the country in the past year, and although I wish them great success, I challenge them to find a community anywhere in the world that displays half the heart, a small measure of the grit, as well as the care of the one they left behind. As unnerving as it is when people decide that our home is no longer right for them, it still doesn’t mean that their decision should be ours. And if there is something that I intend to give myself this coming year, it’s the permission to be happy in South Africa, a country that’s imperfect and troubled, but which is as unique as her people are. I bless us all with the gift of being able to see what’s in front of us, and not what’s not. My blessing to us all is that in the next year, we’ll be able to appreciate the nuance in our lives, the positives that are all around. And that we can continue to add texture and value to whoever we encounter. I wish for us a year that will take place in the real and not virtual world, that we will mute ourselves only when we choose to, and that there will soon be a time when we will see the radiance of a smile without it being obscured by a mask. Shana tova and G-d bless.

• Howard Feldman writes a regular column for the SA Jewish Report and hosts the Morning Mayhem show on Chai FM.

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From the pens of youth

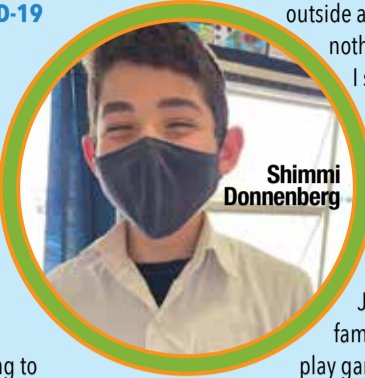
As we move into the new Jewish year, the SA Jewish Report asked our Grades 4 to 7 youngsters how the changes to Rosh Hashanah and life due to the pandemic has impacted on them.

How has Rosh Hashanah changed for you and your family during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Rosh Hashanah hasn't changed for me, because even though we can't have big *yom tov* meals like we usually do, that's not what Rosh Hashanah is about. It's about connecting and getting closer to Hashem, which we can still do from home even if shuls are closed. The only thing that's different is that we are going to daven for COVID-19 to end, and for a *refuah shlema* for everyone who has COVID-19. **Rachel Barnes, Grade 5, Yeshiva**

My family always used to enjoy hosting guests during Rosh Hashanah as well as the other *yom tovs*, giving them a warm welcome in our home, catching up and chatting about things, as well as serving wonderful food. This Rosh Hashanah will be different for the second time round as it's still not safe to have all our friends together. That's why Rosh Hashanah has changed for me. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

Usually, the whole family would celebrate together with lunches and suppers. That feeling of being in a real *chag* has been lost as we are just at home, but I try my best to make it special by singing songs with my brother and helping my mom cook meals for my grandparents before *yom tov*. Being in shul isn't the same. I really missed standing on the *bima*, being shoulder to shoulder with all my friends



Shimmi Donnenberg

listening to the rabbi blowing the shofar. Standing outside and standing apart is better than nothing, but it's not the same! At least I still get to enjoy apples dipped in honey. **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**
On Rosh Hashanah before the COVID-19 pandemic, my family and I would go to shul, sing songs, and pray. We'd go all over Johannesburg to friends and family for lunch and eat, talk, and play games for hours. I shared a jar of honey with four other children to dip apples in, and secretly stuck our fingers in sideways. After COVID-19, Rosh Hashanah almost felt surreal. There was no shul and no friends. I did enjoy learning about it in school and doing Rosh Hashanah-based activities (the honey was delicious when I managed to get my mask off). Speaking of masks, they definitely made everything more difficult and tedious. I missed seeing people's happy faces and gentle laughter. Close to Rosh Hashanah, my grandmother had a stroke, which made not seeing her (or anyone else) a lot harder. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**

I'm sad because I can't spend Rosh Hashanah with my grandparents and entire family. **Kara Rozentvaig, Grade 5, KD Ariel**

Many traditions that involve physical touching (passing around apples and honey), have to be stopped or changed and of course, big family gatherings have become unsafe. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

Last year, not being at shul on Rosh Hashanah was sad, but spending quality time with my family was amazing. **Jesse Bregman, Grade 7, Sandton Sinai**



Liya Barnett

What does Rosh Hashanah mean to you?

Rosh Hashanah means more to me during COVID-19 than in other years because it has made me appreciate every day that I've been alive. I'm grateful that Hashem gave me and my family another year to live in health because so many people have died, as did my grandfather last year, and therefore not everyone has been blessed to live to this Rosh Hashanah. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

Rosh Hashanah is special because I was born on first day of Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Suchard (from Sandton Shul) was walking around Morningside Clinic blowing the shofar for all the sick Jewish people when they told him that a Jewish baby had just been born. He came into the delivery room and blew the shofar for me and my parents when I was only 20 minutes old! I can't remember it, but my parents tell me it was very special. This Rosh Hashanah is my Barmitzvah, so it's extra special. I will be doing my first *aliyah* in shul the day after Rosh Hashanah – I can't wait! **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

Rosh Hashanah is a genuinely joyful time. It makes me feel safe to know that I can restart, and have another year filled with *chags* and *simchas*. I enjoy all the customs that give people hope for sweet years and forgiveness. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**
Rosh Hashanah means a sweet year with our friends and family, and to forgive others and yourself. **Aiden Beifus, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

Rosh Hashanah means an opportunity for me to better myself next year. **Ashira Katz, Grade 6, KD Ariel**

Rosh Hashanah is important to me because it's almost like a second chance. If in the previous year



Ashira Katz

you've been unkind or mean, Rosh Hashanah is the chance to ask for forgiveness and turn over a new leaf. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

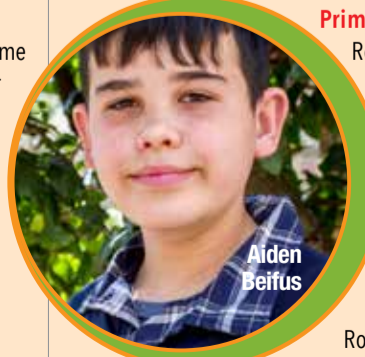
It means that we start a new year, and can try to be better people. **Josie Goldberg, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**
Rosh Hashanah means that Hashem gives us a second chance to do things better. **Dean Raphaely, Grade 4, KD Sandton**
Rosh Hashanah gives me another chance to be the best version of myself. **Tamra Sweidan, Grade 4, KD Sandton**

Rosh Hashanah is when we honour the anniversary of the creation of the world. It feels especially meaningful to me that it corresponds with the beginning of spring – a fresh, new start, a celebration of life! **Liya Barnett, Grade 6, KD Linksfield**

Rosh Hashanah means to think about all the good and bad things that happened in the year, and to reflect on yourself. This is the time to ask for forgiveness, and start a fresh year. **Adam Gad, Grade 6, Herzlia Highlands Primary**

Rosh Hashanah is the time when Hashem is really close to us and loves us dearly. **Jesse Bregman, Grade 7, Sandton Sinai**

Rosh Hashanah means going to shul and davening with a lot more *kavanah* (purpose). **Azriel Shevel, Grade 5, Sandton Sinai**



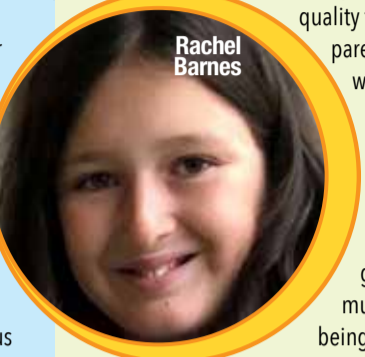
Aiden Beifus

Do you believe there are messages for us in what's happening in the world? If so, what are they?

The first message is that there may be a lot of negativity from the virus, but there are also positive things. For example, even though we had to stay at home for many months last year, it made me spend a lot of quality time with my parents and sisters and we had lots of fun together, especially when it was cold during winter. Another message COVID-19 has given me is that you must spend your life being as productive as possible and get as much as you can done because every day is so precious. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

COVID-19 has taught me that even little things like going to school and to family for supper is important, and we shouldn't take them for granted. It has also taught me that when we are in a time of need, the Jewish community always comes together and helps each other. I have learned that our community is strong. I realise how much people actually want to be with other people. The speed with which the virus spreads shows people's need to be together. **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

I don't believe that Hashem sends us things like COVID-19 to make us miserable. But, once something like COVID-19 arrives, humans are able to adapt and learn from circumstances. Hashem gives us that ability. Part of the message is to be grateful for what we have. It has also taught us to try harder to protect our environment. When no one went outside or flew overseas, air pollution got much less. There are also things I've learned about my close family that I didn't even know before because of the quality time we spent together. We have also learned things about ourselves because we're living in a quieter environment. I think we've learned to be much more grateful for the people around us. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**
I don't believe that there's a message



Rachel Barnes



Azriel Shevel

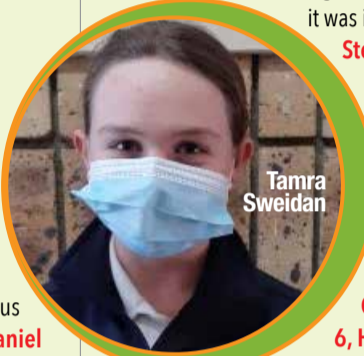
for the world, as all I can see is people dying. **Hodaya Shenker, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**
A good message is not to take things for granted because things happen that you can't control, and you realise you miss things only when it's too late. **Aiden Beifus, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

Because we've been stuck at home, it gives us the chance to appreciate our close family more than before. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

The message is to enjoy the little things in life and hold onto those closest to us. Also, to be thankful that we can still have Rosh Hashanah in these tough times even though it might not be like it was in the past. **Joshua Stein, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**

The message is that we don't have to be busy all the time, sometimes it's important to have a break. **Josie Goldberg, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**

When COVID-19 started, everything shut down, and it reduced air pollution. I think it's here to help our world. **Dean Raphaely, Grade 4, KD Sandton**
We have learned to overcome challenges, always stay positive, and most of all, to fight for our beliefs no matter the challenge. **Adam Gad, Grade 6, Herzlia Highlands Primary**
Hashem is sending us a message that we should act respectfully, kindly, and more honestly to our friends and family. **Jesse Bregman, Grade 7, Sandton Sinai**



Tamra Sweidan



Maya Roth

We must start doing *teshuva*. Lockdown seems like the isolation for *tzaraat*, which is the punishment for *lashon hara*. So, I think we are speaking too much *lashon hara*. **Azriel Shevel, Grade 5, Sandton Sinai**

Has this pandemic had an impact on your beliefs? If so, what is it?

COVID-19 has had a positive impact on me because, before, I didn't really focus on the little things in the world. But when we went into lockdown and were stuck at home, I was able to see Hashem in the small things – which I realised are really big things – like seeing the seasons changing and being healthy. **Rachel Barnes, Grade 5, Yeshiva**

The pandemic has made me so upset for those unfortunate people who were affected or even passed away. But it hasn't changed my belief that Hashem will guide us out of this plague just like he did with the Jews when he took them out of Egypt. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**
Hashem is trying to send us a message not to take things for granted, and to realise how important our health is. I have a stronger belief system since COVID-19, probably also because it has coincided with my Barmitzvah learning year. **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

The pandemic has broken my world of rainbows and cupcakes, and shown me that there can be bad things too. Living with 18 months of the pandemic has stripped away my childhood, and now I can see the things that matter most. But it has also taught me to believe in human beings and that in a crisis, we can be there for each other and come up with creative solutions from medical science. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**

I still believe in Hashem. It's just hard for me to daven knowing that a lot of people are sick. **Kara Rozentvaig, Grade 5, KD Ariel**
The pandemic has strengthened my belief in G-d, as I see people helping each other and the majority of people pulling through this horrendous virus with the help of Hashem. **Joshua Stein, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**
COVID-19 hasn't changed my beliefs. Hashem does everything for a reason, even if we don't understand it. **Tamra Sweidan, Grade 4, KD Sandton**

The world we live in today shows us that no matter who you are or how much money you have, Hashem decides what our days, weeks, months, and years will look like.

My parents have taught me that I need to do everything I can in every situation, and leave what's out of my control to Hashem. **Liya Barnett, Grade 6, KD Linksfield**

No matter how careful you are, if Hashem wants you to get the virus, you'll get it. **Azriel Shevel, Grade 5, Sandton Sinai**



Asher Meyers

How have you adapted to learning during the pandemic – online and then in class with restrictions?

In the beginning, I thought that Zoom school would be fun but after a while, I began to wish for something I never believed I would – all I wanted was go back to school! I hated sitting in my room all day, and I missed my teachers and friends. Being back at school with restrictions is still way better than being at home. In the beginning, it was hard to wear a mask all day, but now, when I get into the car to go home, I forget to take my mask off. My friends and I still manage to enjoy break time, even with social distancing. **Rachel Barnes, Grade 5, Yeshiva**

Online school took a lot of getting used to at first, but once it started to become the norm, it was easier to navigate through the work and all the changes at home. It was great online, but sitting back in my class for the first time last year was definitely better. I did have to adjust to a few changes, such as the masks on our faces, sanitising our hands and desks 24/7, and making sure we kept a social distance by putting hula hoops around ourselves and our desks. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

Online learning has been a rollercoaster. From my bedroom being my classroom, to my bed being my locker, it has been a huge adjustment, but it has been good to find out how self-reliant I actually am. In class with restrictions, it's almost the same as pre-COVID-19, but one puzzle piece is always missing – like playing rugby at break, or having fun activities like galas. I still love being in class and seeing my friends, but I really miss doing big group work. Nevertheless, I love school more than online learning – COVID-19 or not! **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

I found learning online very difficult. There were many distractions and glitches. There was always the fear that Eskom would strike again. Adapting to online school was a long (and perpetual) experience. It was new to most people. Going online in Grade 6 was a bit better because the teachers and students had more experience. I think I speak for everyone when I say that going back to school in person was an exciting time. It was a huge upgrade from online school, but it did have its problems. Masks, of course, were one of them. It felt like there was no emotion anymore (no facial



Daniel Segal

expression.) My hands got dry from the sanitiser, and social distancing was hard to control because it was so incredibly exciting to see friends. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**

I don't like online school. **Hodaya Shenker, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

It was hard to get used to online learning last year, but now I'm used to it and it's easy. Masks have been a big restriction because I can't hear the teachers properly. **Aiden Beifus, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

Online, I've been more organised with work and sticking in worksheets. Online learning has been easier as it isn't stressful, and (in class), the restrictions have been annoying. **Ashira Katz, Grade 6, KD Ariel**

There are pros and cons about hybrid learning. On the one hand, there are many physical projects that we couldn't do, but on the other, there are many elements of online classes that have aided learning. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

I have adapted easily to restrictions at school – wearing masks and sanitising has become part of my daily routine. Online classes are almost the same as school, but I would much rather be in school with my friends than online. Learning under restrictions can take its toll on people, but we have learned to adapt. **Joshua Stein, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**

I've become used to online and in-class learning. I've become much better at working on the computer because I had never experienced online school before. **Josie Goldberg, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**

I've learned to be grateful for online school, as other children don't have access to it, even though I don't enjoy it at all. In class things are different as we must be careful – social distance, wear masks, and sanitise. It's nice to see our friends, but we still have to be cautious. **Tamra Sweidan, Grade 4, KD Sandton**

I'm grateful to attend a school which has given me the opportunity to learn, whether at school or online. Incredible technology gave me the tools to learn and stay close to my teachers. **Liya Barnett, Grade 6, KD Linksfield**

I have adapted badly to online learning. I found it difficult. It's easier in class with restrictions. **Aziel Shevel, Grade 5, Sandton Sinai**

Shenker, Grade 5, Eden Primary School

I miss being able to hug or have a celebration with my friends because now you literally have to stay away from them so I miss having a proper relationship. **Aiden Beifus, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

I miss hanging out and having fun with my friends the most. COVID-19 ruined it. **Kara Rozentvaig, Grade 5, KD Ariel**

I miss big festive family gatherings such as on Pesach, Chanukah, birthdays, Barmitzvahs, and Batmitzvahs the most. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

I miss being free from wearing a mask, but we have adapted well to everything else. We have learned to appreciate the little things in life, and enjoy all the beauty around us. **Joshua Stein, Grade 6, Herzlia Weizmann Primary**

I miss just being able to see everyone's faces. **Tamra Sweidan, Grade 4, KD Sandton**

I miss spending time with family and friends without worrying about COVID-19. I miss my routine, and the fact that I can't show or receive love and care in a physical way. **Liya Barnett, Grade 6, KD Linksfield**

I wish life would go back to normal. I hope that next year we will have contained COVID-19 or stopped it completely. I hope I and my family will be healthy and embark on new adventures. **Adam Gad, Grade 6, Herzlia Highlands Primary**



Joshua Stein



Jesse Bregman

What do you miss most about the time before COVID-19?

I miss many things, mostly arrangements, sleepovers, Bnei Akiva sleep away camps, the school gala and netball matches, my other extra murals, big Shabbos lunches with our friends, and most importantly, I miss my brother and sister who have been in Israel since the beginning of COVID-19. **Rachel Barnes, Grade 5, Yeshiva**

I miss playdates with my friends. I really missed being in shul and davening with my community when the shuls were closed. I wish I could walk around without constantly having to cover my mouth. I also wish I didn't have to worry that I might spread a deadly virus to someone else so that I could do simple things like share stationery with my friends during class. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

I miss going to a movie and sharing popcorn with my friends. I miss huge gatherings like concerts and sports events. I miss the indoor cricket tournaments I played every year from when I was nine years old, and I really, really miss hugging my grandparents. **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

I miss connecting with people, social arrangements, parties, sleepovers, and even the normality of school without masks. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**

I miss seeing my family in Israel. **Hodaya**



Adam Gad

What do you wish for in the coming year?

I know everything Hashem does for me is good, even if it's sometimes hard, but I hope that this year will be blessed with everything that's good and sweet. I also wish for a *refuah shlema* for everyone who is sick. And I wish that I could see my brother and sister soon. **Rachel Barnes, Grade 5, Yeshiva**

As I work towards my final year of primary school, I hope COVID-19 won't be as serious in my first year of high school next year, and that I can go back to a normal school day without any restrictions. I pray Hashem will look after us during this terrible plague. **Shimi Donnenberg, Grade 6, Yeshiva**

I hope South Africa will lower the vaccination age to 12 years old, and for everyone to be vaccinated as soon as possible. Next year, I want most things to go back to normal. **Daniel Segal, Grade 7, KD Victory Park**

On a global level, my hope is for the development of vaccines and cures for COVID-19. I also wish it would stop mutating, and get weaker. On a personal note, this is my Batmitzvah year, and although we are trying, my Batmitzvah probably won't be the same as how I'd always imagined it. Family overseas won't be able to come, and there will definitely be masks involved, but I hope I can celebrate it happily and feel a change in my life spiritually. **Maya Roth, Grade 6, KD Victory Park**

I wish COVID-19 would end, and that people could live a happy life. **Hodaya Shenker, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

I wish COVID-19 would disappear, and I wish the



Jodie Goldberg

world peace. **Aiden Beifus, Grade 5, Eden Primary School**

I hope COVID-19 dies down, and I don't get stressed about silly things. **Ashira Katz, Grade 6, KD Ariel**

I wish COVID-19 would reduce, and we could enjoy our lives. **Kara Rozentvaig, Grade 5, KD Ariel**

I don't think we'll ever go back to how it was before COVID-19, but I would like to have a year without the worry of COVID-19 and to start celebrating *simchas* again. **Ashton Jordan, Grade 7, Crawford International Sandton**

I hope everyone is happy and healthy next year, that we can get rid of this virus, and somewhat return to how things were before. **Tamra Sweidan, Grade 4, KD Sandton**

I hope Hashem will help us remove COVID-19 so that we can put all the energy we have been using to stay healthy into other activities that bring us positivity and *simchas*. I hope that in the year to come, Hashem will bless us with health and happiness so that we can go back to the way things were before COVID-19. **Liya Barnett, Grade 6, KD Linksfield**

I wish for everyone to stay healthy, and that COVID-19 will eventually go away and we can return to a "normal" fun time. **Jesse Bregman, Grade 7, Sandton Sinai**

Sinai

I wish COVID-19 would come to an end. **Aziel Shevel, Grade 5, Sandton Sinai**

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Why Israel’s kashrut reform bill matters for the diaspora

OPINION

In mid-July, Israel’s minister of religious affairs proposed a bill that would reform the country’s kashrut industry. Although this most directly affects Israeli businesses and consumers, by definition as the centre of the Jewish world, it will have practical and broader implications for Jews across the globe.

Perhaps the next time you come to Israel – and may we be blessed to see the full re-opening of our borders speedily – or even when you purchase products manufactured here, you might initially be confused by these new developments. It’s therefore important that you understand that the ramifications of this process will be increased effectiveness and greater integrity, while always promising that the ultimate commitment remains steadfastly to preserving halachic standards and ethics which are at the very heart of our tradition.

Beyond the practical aspects of this reform, it deserves to be heralded as a major step forward in making Jewish observance in Israel something which can be embraced by all its people as food is so central to celebrations and family gatherings. Therefore, alongside many other aspects of daily Jewish life, it cannot be something which is held hostage or controlled based on political or personal considerations in the hands of one agency or rabbinical group.

In many ways, the passage of this bill should be viewed as a victory for all people who have long sought out this more transparent, effective, and competitive kashrut infrastructure, but also for those who strive for a more inclusive and just Israeli Jewish society.

In Israel, kashrut has always been managed under one centralised monopoly in the form of the chief rabbinate of Israel. Such a centralised system, by definition, leads to inefficiency and sadly, even corruption. A widespread presence of such irregularities was the conclusion of a comprehensive report on Israel’s kashrut industry issued several years ago by Israel’s state comptroller.

It’s important to stress that such corruption and operational failure isn’t because the chief rabbinate is seeking to impose anything other than a high level of kashrut. But when you have a system with no competitors and limited oversight, it’s only natural that it will lead to cutting corners, improprieties, increased costs, and sadly, be truly broken.

It’s also well worth pointing out that many within Israel’s ultra-Orthodox community recognise this, and even the very individuals who are involved in overseeing the rabbinate’s kashrut don’t trust it when it comes to the food they eat. Israel’s high court has found that the current system is problematic because of the existence of illicit compensation relationships between business owners and supervisors. Operationally, the very structure through which local rabbinates are meant to supervise local businesses is also broken. At present, there are about 30 municipalities, including major cities like Tel Aviv and Haifa, where for several years, there have been



no local rabbis overseeing the religious councils – an absurdity that lends itself to lax kashrut standards and supervision.

In business, no one would accept such a scenario, so it’s hard to believe that the people of the Jewish state should accept it when it comes to one of our most important and sacred traditions.

In February 2018, following an intensive review of the report and options under law to begin to reform kashrut, the Tzohar Rabbinical Organisation, which I founded and chair, opened a programme to act as a kosher supervising agency. Due to restrictions under the law to keep the rabbinate’s power centralised, we were prohibited from using the word “kosher” in our certification. Although we faced intense political, public, and communal pressure, we knew that this process needed to take place if we wanted to increase the level of integrity of kashrut in Israel.

The reform bill introduced in July intends to make that vision of alternative kashrut supervision the operating standard. Should the bill be passed into law, multiple agencies, fully committed to strict halacha, would be able to provide kosher certification.

It’s once again critical to explain that in spite of the ill-informed criticism that has been made against the proposed changes by political rivals, this process will in no way weaken halachic standards – in fact to the contrary. The very structure of the bill ensures that halachic oversight and regulation will remain in the hands of members of local rabbinates – people who I know to be G-d-fearing advocates of strict halacha whose goal is to ensure that kashrut observance is accessible and managed in a reliable, professional, and transparent way.

While the details are complex to the point that they cannot be fully explained in this forum, on a technical level, this reform will allow groups of qualified city chief rabbis to certify independent kashrut organisations to provide kashrut across the country. The practical significance of this change in the law is that independent agencies – like Tzohar kashrut but certainly others that we look forward to welcoming into the marketplace – will now be able to provide full kashrut services all over the country. The key point is that there will be a clear separation between the role of rabbis, who will set the standards, and independent organisations who will certify the eateries.

Costs will be reduced and as importantly, de-centralisation will allow for far better oversight

that translates to enhanced efficiency from both operational and halachic perspectives.

I know that there are those who fear that such a move delegitimises the chief rabbinate or will lead to reduced stringency in kashrut supervision. But as explained above, the effect will be just the opposite because it will preserve the standards of the chief rabbinate as halachic regulator while promising that operational implementation will be placed in more competent hands.

For Jewish life in Israel to be observed in a way

that respects us all, it ultimately needs to be conducted in a manner that’s first and foremost driven by real Jewish values – values only possible when they are guided by integrity, justice, and respect. This is an understanding that deserves to be embraced by every Jew, regardless of where we find ourselves on the globe.

• Rabbi David Stav is the chairperson and founder of the Tzohar Rabbinical Organisation in Israel.



Reflecting on sin, and striving for correction

OPINION

GRANT GOCHIN

Rosh Hashanah is our time for gathering together with family to reflect on the past year and plan for the next. None of us is without sin, none of us will remain without sin. Our strength as Jews is recognising our misdeeds and striving to correct them, not repeat them. As a people, this is customarily an internal impetus. As an individual, I have customarily used Rosh Hashanah as a milestone to reflect on my own behaviour and actions, correct, and reset. Religiously, we are required to do so.

We Jews are a strange lot – we’re accustomed to existing as a minority whose imperfections are magnified by others that exaggerate and distort our characteristics for purposes of antisemitism. We often give others the credibility to accuse us collectively and individually without basis in reality. Sometimes we reflect on those allegations, and often internalise them.

Without clear rational or genetic reason, and no matter how religiously non-observant we may be, we Jews have learned to react collectively. When crimes or misdeeds are committed and reported, often, we worry, “Please let the criminal not be Jewish.” Why? Because we know it feeds into rampant antisemitism. We are collectively blamed for the actions of individual Jews.

Antisemitism in South Africa recently reared its ugly head, opportunistically using the Gaza conflagration as another example to increase fervour against Jews. The accusations hurled were almost entirely false. As our youth assimilates these canards, they have sometimes “virtue signalled” by attacking our values to identify with those that hate us. The truth has been inverted in a propaganda war and 10-second soundbites.

Rosh Hashanah is a time to re-evaluate. Israel remains the most moral army in the world. Israeli failings are within the range of normal. Holding Israel and ourselves to a standard our adversaries could never themselves possibly meet isn’t examining and rectifying our conduct, but rather,

prejudice in action.

The ever-morphing accusations against our people become tiresome, painful, and frustrating. Our introspection shows that we have lived up to our highest aspirations, and Israel is a force for good in the world. Nothing will ever match perfection. The constant barrage of vitriol is based on disguised antisemitism, not reality. Our introspection has led us to this place of goodness.

So, too, on Rosh Hashanah must we be internally introspective. Our values of love, justice, compassion, hope, and forgiveness guide our conduct. This year, as every year, we renew and rededicate ourselves to justice on all levels. It’s our responsibility that the truth be told. Our legacy as South African Jews is that our families are mostly Lithuanian. Our responsibility must be to remember and convey our heritage, our suffering, our strengths, and our guidance to the next generations.

During the Holocaust, Lithuanian citizens often chose our own holidays as the days on which to murder. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in 1941 were dates of massive slaughter and infamy. We cannot bring our families back, but on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we are obligated to remember them and recite kaddish in their memory. We are the only ones who can preserve the memory of our families. As Lithuania continues to be intent on distorting reality, we continue to be intent on preserving the authentic memory of our destruction at the hands of Lithuanians.



We, who are alive in the diaspora, are fortunate that Lithuania is in our past, not a component of our future.

Our quest for justice is inimitable. We will always protect the downtrodden. As South Africa convulses in instability, our Jewish values continually remind us of what we must do.

Rosh Hashanah is my fulcrum period, balancing my past family and personal conduct with my future obligations as a husband, a father, and a Jew. Our Jewish morals guide and dictate our conduct, ever considering the needs of our societies.

We ask those who we have transgressed against to forgive us, and we ask G-d to forgive our transgressions against G-d. We are asked to forgive those who transgressed against us personally. We aren’t entitled to forgive on behalf of those who are no longer with us.

In times of frustration, I wonder if my fight for truth in Lithuania can lead to reconciliation. The constant doubling down by the Lithuanian government in its morass of Holocaust lies makes me wonder if the values of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can ever become universal. Whatever your tradition may be on these high holidays, I respectfully request that you and your family think about our murdered Lithuanian brethren and what they would want us to do to expose the truth.

Rosh Hashanah is only a few days away. Where does this leave us? We need to continue our fight for justice, and then reconciliation with those who continue to transgress.

• South African-born Grant Gochin is actively involved in Jewish affairs, focusing on historical justice. He has spent the past 20 years documenting and restoring signs of Jewish life in Lithuania. In March 2019, he took the Lithuanian government to court to get it to recognise its active role in the Holocaust.

L’ Shana Tova

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LIVING THE EXPERIENCE

How not to fast on Yom Kippur if you have an eating disorder

SARAH SIMONE – JTA

Yom Kippur is arguably one of the most important days in the Jewish calendar. It's the Day of Atonement, a day for reflecting and repenting, where sins of the previous year are acknowledged and restitutions made. Your repentance sets the tone for the future, and intentions are set for bettering yourself in the year ahead. That the atoning traditionally manifests itself as fasting all day isn't problematic for some.

For others, like me, who are either in recovery from or still struggling with an eating disorder, the issue is far more complex.

The National Institute of Mental Health in the United States estimates that one in five women suffer from eating disorders or disordered eating, a statistic that entirely excludes the men who are often overlooked. Regarding anorexia alone, men make up a quarter of those suffering and, according to the National Eating Disorder Association, are more likely to die due to the cultural denial of male eating disorders. Anxiety-related disorders have been amplified during the pandemic, and those with eating disorders may be reverting to harmful behaviours to gain a sense of control.

My eating disorder began when I was 12, and landed me in hospital by the age of 16. At 18, I was firmly in

the beginning stages of my recovery, though it's important to note that recovery isn't a linear process with a fixed endpoint but a process with ups and downs. Almost everyone who has received treatment for an eating disorder is aware of the therapeutic conversations that surround big holidays. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter – these holidays all centre

for Yom Kippur. As a child, I'd been difficult, always feeling there was much for which I had to atone. Later, in the thick of my eating disorder, it was an opportunity to restrict for a day without excuses or sleight of hand. Traditionally, you don't have to fast until you've been a Barmitzvah or Batmitzvah and are seen as an "adult" in the eyes of G-d. This usually

falls around puberty, which is an unfortunate coincidence regarding the risk period for developing an eating disorder.

Once my eating disorder became public to my close family, at age 16, the

conversation about Yom Kippur became all the more relevant. My overprotective mother immediately and adamantly said "No fasting!" She was right in doing so, and while I knew I shouldn't – and couldn't – disagree, I still felt like it was a cop-out. It's not like every other girl my age hadn't struggled with thoughts of frustration and sadness when it came to their body, I told myself, and they weren't skipping the fast. A few years of unhealthy choices and suddenly I'm exempt for life? It didn't seem right.

Children, elders, and the ill are

free from fasting. Those of us with eating disorders in our histories aren't mutually exclusive to any of those categories. For me, that meant I needed more than a "well, babies don't fast either" brush-off when I asked why I shouldn't. Ultimately, Yom Kippur is a holiday about self-reflection and solitude, and I didn't want to miss out on that. The point, as I'd always assumed, was kind of that you're made to suffer, and in that suffering lies redemption.

But since then, I've come to realise several key things through my years of recovery regarding Yom Kippur, and what it means not to fast:

1. It's a day for self-reflection, meaning that what everyone else is doing with their bodies in relation to their faith is none of your concern, and your eating habits should likewise be none of theirs (provided said eating habits aren't causing you bodily harm).
2. The way to atonement isn't through pain, and punishing your body has nothing to do with redemption. My belief is that G-d wants each of us to be healthy and kind to ourselves, and when you are engaged in disordered behaviours, you're not being either.
3. In terms of atonement, Yom Kippur is a day not only for thinking about your actions, but how your actions have affected others. When engaged in your eating disorder, you are thinking of yourself. This is an uncomfortable

thought, since so many with this disease are people-pleasers and accommodators, but in practice, it has truth. So think instead of your family, of those who love you and want you healthy and alive, and practice love for them by nurturing your own body.

Yom Kippur, more than being a Day of Atonement, is a day for setting goals and sealing fates for the coming year. If you are suffering or have suffered from an eating disorder, rather than repenting through the act of not eating, repent by giving your body and soul the sustenance they had once been denied. Ask your body's forgiveness, and more than anything, try to forgive yourself.

Punishment and atonement aren't the same. What I assumed about the role of fasting was incorrect. Yom Kippur isn't at all about suffering, it's about apologising. I used to spend the day – and much of my life – apologising to others. Now that I'm healthy, on the Day of Atonement, I apologise to myself.

• *This article originally appeared on Alma, a sister site of JTA.*
• *Sarah Simone was a student at the University of Colorado Boulder in 2020 studying English literature, Jewish studies, and peace and conflict studies. She is involved with the restorative justice community in Boulder, and is interested in applying restorative techniques wherever possible to build a more just world.*



on food. That's not unusual by any stretch; where people gather, they often break bread. What rarely exists in treatment, however, is a conscious awareness around Jewish holidays that centres on eating differently.

It's one thing to have your mom looking over your shoulder making sure that you fill your plate. It's another to be religiously obligated to fast for a holy day when fasting is exactly what you need to avoid.

Before my habits became public to my family and healthcare professionals, I would fast every year

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To be or not to be traditional

LAUREN BOOLKIN

I had a great deal of difficulty deciding which recipes to select this year. On the one hand, I was tempted to go the traditional route – chopped liver, gribenes, and tzimmes. On the other, I feel that we are all longing for spring and all the bounty of summer. So, I settled on a bit of both. Hope you enjoy!

SIMANIM SALAD
Serves 10
Ingredients

- 4 beetroots (it’s nice to mix and match different colours and varieties)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 packet baby spinach
- 1 packet rocket
- 1 packet red lettuce or mixed greens
- 2 blood oranges
- 1 grapefruit
- 2 baby fennel bulbs
- 1 avocado cubed
- ¼ cup chopped dates
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds
- ½ cup toasted pistachio nuts (leave out if you don’t eat nuts on Rosh Hashanah)

Dressing

- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

- 2 tbsp orange juice
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 tsp salt
- Black pepper

Method

- Preheat your oven to 220C. Line a baking sheet with baking paper, and peel the beetroot. Toss them in a small bowl with two tbsp olive oil, and place them on the lined baking sheet. Roast them until soft. It takes 45 to 60 minutes.
- Whisk all the dressing ingredients together except the olive oil. Slowly pour in the olive oil while continuing to whisk. Set aside.
- Arrange the greens on a round platter. Top with the sliced oranges and sliced grapefruit. Add the cooled sliced beetroot, slivers of avocado, and thinly sliced fennel. Garnish with the toasted pistachio nuts, chopped dates, and pomegranate seeds.

“In Romanian tradition, garlic is used in excess to keep the vampires away. In the Jewish tradition, a dispenser of schmaltz is kept on the table to give the vampires heartburn if they get through the garlic defense.” - Calvin Trillin

MINI CHOCOLATE POMEGRANATE CAKES

If you don’t have mini-Bundt tins, don’t stress, you can make one large one. The baking time will be longer, so you would need to watch carefully. The cake is ready when a skewer comes out clean. I bought my tins from Yuppiechef, but I believe they are easily available. My long-suffering husband found a pomegranate orange juice mix at Freshfellas, it worked perfectly, and we had no difficulty finishing the bottle of juice. PS, don’t finish the juice before you’ve made the glaze.

Ingredients

- 4 jumbo eggs
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup castor sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 cup pomegranate juice
- ½ cup oil
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- 1¾ cup flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp baking powder

Method

- Preheat your oven to 180C. Spray your Bundt pans well with Spray and Cook, and then toss a little flour around the tin. Check that all the crevices are coated. Beat your eggs and both sugars together. Add the vanilla, oil, and pomegranate juice.
- In another bowl, sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder, and bicarbonate of soda. Add this mixture to your egg mixture, and combine well with a metal spoon. Fill the tins two-thirds full, and bake for 20 to 25 minutes. Check on them as the baking time will vary according to the size of your tin. Remove from the oven, and allow to cool completely before removing them from their tins.

Glaze
Ingredients

- 1½ cups icing sugar
- 1½ tbsp pomegranate juice
- Water if necessary

Method

- Combine the ingredients and drizzle over the cooled cakes. Top with pomegranate seeds.

CHOPPED LIVER WITH GRIBENES

As a young child, I remember my great-grandfather eating gribenes. I had no idea what they were made from, but the yumminess remained with me in the recesses of my brain. Miracles of miracles, they appear to be making a comeback! Yes, I know they are like mini atomic bombs for your heart, but you have to try them at least once in a lifetime!

Ingredients

- 500g kashered livers (try get them at the last possible moment)
- 250g chicken skins roughly chopped
- 3 onions thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 6 hardboiled eggs (reserve two for garnish)
- 1½ to 2 tsp salt
- Ground black pepper

Method

- Rinse the chicken skins and place them in a pan over low heat. Sprinkle with ½ tsp salt. Cook until they are golden and crispy. Pour into a sieve and save the chicken fat in a glass jar for later use.
- In the same pan, on a low heat, cook the onions in the oil until they are soft and limp. It takes a long time. Add the livers and cook gently just until they are no longer red inside. Using the mincing attachment of your Mixmaster or food processor, mince the livers, onions, and four of the eggs. Some people use a potato masher, I haven’t tried this, but it may be worth a shot. Season with salt and pepper. I like to add a small amount of the chicken fat to the mixture so it’s not dry. (Remember Jewish cooking is very much a touchy-feely thing.)
- Place the liver on a platter, and garnish with the gribenes and grated egg.

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In honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris

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Fortune spent on anti-Israel adverts, but no money for salaries

It’s worth pondering how unpaid African National Congress (ANC) employees feel about the organisation allocating resources to massive billboards decrying Israel. ANC policy aside, it must be frustrating to see both the effort and cost that the organisation has invested while unable to pay its staff. Grand gestures are all good and well, but it can’t taste good on an empty stomach.

Over the weekend, the ANC resorted to a crowdfunding initiative to assist it in the payment of employees who haven’t yet received their salaries. In doing so, it shared a poster on a number of social-media platforms with banking details, asking ordinary members of the public and ANC supporters to make contributions to a Nedbank account.

It went swimmingly, apparently, with one of the organisers saying, “The public response was very positive, the masses have responded positively.” I can confirm that my response was also more positive than anything else. Positively gobsmacked. Positively outraged. Positively tickled. And positively horrified. I was also positive that this couldn’t be real, and that the ANC or someone with a fantastic flair for creative finance was pulling our proverbial leg.

Only, the situation is hardly funny. The ANC, South Africa’s ruling party, is unable to pay its staff. Unable to meet the most basic commitment that it has made to the people it employs. That isn’t a laughing matter. People who have worked have every right to be paid. The fact that it’s unable to do so speaks volumes not only about its lack of responsibility and care, but also about its financial incompetence. It’s also no surprise, given the state of the

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



nation, the state of ANC municipalities, and the economy under its watch.

What seems to drive the ANC is grandstanding and its desire to showcase itself as some sort of moral bastion even though its reputation today is more synonymous with corruption than anything else.

“End Israeli Apartheid” screams the ANC billboard that probably costs a number of salaries per month. There are, as a matter of interest, two ANC anti-billboards. One in Jabulani and one on the East Rand. That the “apartheid” label has unfairly been used is neither here nor there. Nor is it here or there that women in Afghanistan are living in fear of their lives, that Christians are persecuted across the Middle East, or that Iran is hanging gay people. It also matters not at all to the ANC that Muslims are being herded into concentration camps in China, and that its friends, the Cubans, have systematically deprived their people of rights.

What matters to the ANC is popularism and point scoring. Even if it comes at the expense of its own employees, and at the expense of its own people – Jews and Christians alike – who are supportive of Israel.

The fact that the ANC had to turn to crowdfunding to raise money to pay salaries is embarrassing. But more so is the fact that there are those who throw good money after bad, and supported it.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Celebration, contemplation, and challenges of the chaggim



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



The Jewish festival season commences this coming Monday evening with the ushering in of the New Year. Rosh Hashanah – unlike its secular counterpart, which tends to be characterised by raucous celebration – marks the beginning of an intensified period of spiritual stocktaking and introspection known as the *aseret yemei teshuva* (the ten days of repentance). This being my last column before Rosh Hashanah, I wish everyone a *ktiva ve chatima tova*. May we all be inscribed and sealed with a year of success, health, and peace.

As always at this time, I urge everyone to comply with the security guidelines of the Community Security Organisation (CSO), especially when travelling to and from shul. We also need to be constantly aware of our surroundings, and report anything out of the ordinary to the CSO on 086 1800 018. Those requiring any advice about improving the security of their installation should email jhbroutine@cs0.org.za.

From the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) point of view, one of the perennial challenges that confront us during this period is to address cases of university exams being set on the *chaggim*. Fortunately, over the years, we’ve been able to address such difficulties, but to continue doing so, we rely on those affected to inform us in good time. If you have a scheduling clash and haven’t yet informed the Board, make sure to do so as soon as possible by writing to sajbd@sajbd.org.

SA Jewish heritage

In a now famous address to the 1905 South African Zionist Federation conference, Rabbi J H Hertz

• 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

Hudaco-ORT helps disabled entrepreneurs

ORT South Africa hosted a ceremony on 12 August for 10 entrepreneurs who it assisted to obtained SETA qualifications to help them start their own businesses.

The potential and existing entrepreneurs were assisted by Hudaco-ORT to obtain National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 2 new venture creation qualifications, assisting them to start and grow their business ventures.

Hudaco-ORT helps people with disabilities by facilitating their completion of the NQF level 2 qualifications, which equips them to capitalise on opportunities. The beneficiaries received their Sector Education Training Authority (SETA) certificates at the ceremony.

“We often unintentionally consume ourselves with what’s considered the norm rather than focusing on our own uniqueness,” Hudaco-ORT said. “People with disabilities are the epitome of uniqueness, forming a

vital part of society and reminding us to value our own strengths and weaknesses.”

Said, beneficiary Mncedisi Bengu, “It was a surprise. I was fairly happy and shocked at the same time. I didn’t think I would be successful. My teacher, Sarah Malape, gave me an experience that I had never had in my life. She taught me to respect myself and other people, and to be myself.”

On receiving his certificate, he said, “I’m excited. At my home, they gonna [sic] be happy for me, and say, ‘Wow you did it.’”

Said another beneficiary, Sthembile Gumede, “I’m so happy, and my grandmother is happy for me. I wish I learnt more because I like books.”

ORT SA wishes all the beneficiaries of the Hudaco-ORT Project well in their future endeavours, and is grateful to Hudaco for partnering with it to make a difference in people’s lives.



Mncedisi Bengu, Ariellah Rosenberg, and Ian Jacob

Letters

US LEFT’S OUTRAGE OVER KABUL BOMBING SMACKS OF HYPOCRISY

As the deadline for the evacuation of those desperate to flee the Taliban take-over of Afghanistan approaches, ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) detonated two deadly suicide explosions in the airport precinct of Kabul, killing more than 60 civilians together with 13 United States (US) military personnel.

This tragedy as the events in Afghanistan unfold bought home the reality of having to contend with these types of contemptable and despicable atrocities that aren’t foreign to the Middle East – not to forget where suicide bombing originated more than 20 years ago.

The untimely deaths of the 13 US servicemen has had a profound effect on the psyche of the American public, whose outrage is expressed in most prominent press reports, and is a stark reminder of the dangers of foreign assistance to unstable areas around the world.

Why should American boys die while defending freedom and democracy, is a question on everybody’s lips.

Most Americans, from Democratic liberals to the Republicans, are outraged and incensed – about the only time that the two agree on anything. Even those high-profile celebrities, with the likes of “The Squad” – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib. Not to forget Trevor Noah and the Hadid girls, and of course, the left Jewish college students, who all had much to say in their condemnation of the only country in the region able to stand up to terrorism of this kind.

Just a short while back, these good folk were singing the praises of another organisation, the actual founders and inventors of suicide attacks, in fact showing no remorse whatsoever that such attacks are perpetrated against other democracies. In those cases, the perpetrators are the heroes, and the victims condemned by this coterie. Would this set be accused of hypocrisy? Surely not, given the outrage demonstrated today in the US. – Allan Wolman, Israel

Twenty-one year old survives COVID-19 by a breath

>>Continued from page 1

become a ‘blood tap’. As the line was inserted, I screamed in pain. As soon as the doctor flushed the line, my entire hand started to burn. An intense burning never experienced before in my life.”

Eating was a huge battle, as “every time that mask came off for a few seconds, I would need to catch my breath. Just slightly adjusting my body so that the physios could work on my back would feel like I had run a marathon.

“Each day, the physios push you to your max with breathing exercises as well as physical exercises. It took six days to get me standing and another five days to learn how to walk again.”

Lipman slowly and miraculously recovered. “I couldn’t believe I survived. I constantly feared death. It was too close for comfort.”

Before he left the hospital, he returned to the ICU one more time to thank them. “All I needed to say was ‘thank you all for saving my life’ to turn me into a complete emotional wreck. ‘I could have died, I could have died,’ I cried. ‘But you didn’t. You were given a second chance at life – now take it,’ they said.

“This experience has taught me so many things, but mainly, to be grateful for every single moment,” he says. “I was nearly on a ventilator, fighting for my life, and endured traumatic events that will most likely haunt me forever. My parents were vaccinated and I wasn’t. Please get vaccinated.”

Africa4Palestine compares Israel to Nazi Germany

>>Continued from page 4

victims of the Holocaust and all genocides, it flies in the face of reality. Whatever the sufferings of ordinary Palestinians – and these shouldn’t be minimised – they haven’t faced genocidal or Nazi-like assaults at any time.”

Says South African Jewish Board of Deputies Gauteng Chairperson Karen Milner, “The use of Nazi and Holocaust imagery to attack Israel deliberately invokes the most traumatic period in Jewish history to hurt Jews. Such rhetoric not only shockingly defames the Jewish state, but by implication, it belittles the true extent of the horrors inflicted against the Jewish people during the Holocaust.

“It falls into a long line of antisemitic propaganda, which uses that which is most hated and reviled in society to demonise Jews,” she says. “Not only is the analogy a thoroughly vicious one in both substance and intent, it’s intellectually lazy. The Holocaust isn’t some casual metaphor to be dragged out whenever outrage is required, and to engage in such comparisons is to cheapen it.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), says, “It’s abhorrent and deeply hurtful for our Jewish community to have to continue to endure

the odious statements from some antisemitic organisations such as Africa4Palestine that deliberately and egregiously compare the horrors of the Nazis to Israeli actions. It’s hurtful and damaging for Jews even to begin to explain why this comparison is false and deeply malicious. The SAZF is reminded that it was, in fact, a Palestinian leader, Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who was a Nazi collaborator.”

He also notes that on 15 May 2019, the German parliament adopted a motion designating BDS methods and actions antisemitic.

“The SAZF condemns this disgraceful behaviour from the BDS movement,” Polovin says. “Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, and is a model of tolerance and inclusion of minorities of all ethnic and religious persuasions. This is light years away from the totalitarian organisations and states that proliferate across the Middle East causing untold human suffering.”

The SA Jewish Report reached out to Africa4Palestine for comment, but didn’t receive a response at the time of going to print.

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Powerlifting dad-son duo head for Sweden

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When Ian Furman and his son, Justin, participate in the World Powerlifting Championships in Sweden at the end of September, they will become one of the rare father-son duos to compete alongside each other in the same sport.

Cricket fans in South Africa might be vaguely familiar with another such duo. Dudley Nourse, the captain of the country at the halfway point of the 20th century, played alongside his father Dave on six occasions.

Although Ian and Justin will be competing in different categories at the two-week long championships, they are looking forward to their first-ever trip to Sweden.

Had tragedy not struck in 2019, they would have already visited this Scandinavian country. With his dad accompanying him as coach, Justin was about to travel to the World Powerlifting Championships that year.

However, his hopes for competing ended when he broke his ankle while playing for King David Victory Park’s 1st rugby team in its final rugby league match. On a positive note, King David won the game, giving Justin a lot of impetus for his recovery.

The BCom Business

Management student at the University of Pretoria is ranked 449 out of the 1 402

South Africans on openpowerlifting.org and, like his dad, trains at a gym called Barbell Bullies in Sunninghill at least four times a week.

Asked about the record amount he has lifted in the three powerlifting disciplines, Justin said, “I squat 272.5, bench press 160, and deadlift 275 – so the total is 707.5.” His dad’s speciality is the bench press. “My South African record stands at 255kg in the equipped division, and 200kg in the non-equipped,” said Ian.

Several factors explain why Ian has always competed in powerlifting instead of weightlifting.

“I started too late in the sport. You need to start weightlifting at a very young age. I never experienced weightlifting at all, and neither has Justin. Weightlifting is a very technical sport. It’s a sport you’ve got to do every single day of

your life, sometimes twice a day. We don’t really have the regime in this country to produce world-class weightlifters because we don’t have the sponsorship or the backing to do it on a professional level.”

With Ian being involved in the sport since 2000, Justin was exposed to powerlifting throughout his upbringing.

“But I was more into rugby and then my dad said, ‘Listen, just come do a little bit of weight training, get a little bit stronger for rugby.’ I



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eventually realised that I really did enjoy the sport and wanted to start doing it competitively. I never really thought, ‘Should I do powerlifting or weightlifting?’ It was just that powerlifting was always there.”

After all, his dad not only competed in countries like New Zealand, Luxembourg, and Slovakia, but has also coached many powerlifters.

“My highlights have been more as a coach than a lifter,” said Ian. “I’ve taken South

African teams to world championship events, and various lifters have won medals at these competitions. I’ve been a coach of Paralympic lifters to world championship events as well.”

Ian said the upcoming championships would probably be the highlight of his powerlifting journey. “I’m going with my son not only as his coach, but as a fellow powerlifter. That’s more special than anything I’ve experienced so far. I suppose it’s testament to all the hard work and longevity that I’m still able to compete at an international level.”

Although Justin qualified by winning his category with a total of 637.5kg, Ian will compete in Sweden even though the total of 585kg that he lifted at the SA Classic Powerlifting Championships was good enough only for second place in his category. “The guy who won isn’t going, so I’m going instead,” said Ian.

If Ian or Justin are victorious in their category in Sweden, they won’t be the first Jews to do so. Shachar Head, once dubbed by the *Daily Mail* as “Britain’s strongest schoolgirl”; Ellen Stein, who had a successful running career before even picking up a weight; and Naomi Kutin, the subject of the 2016 documentary *Supergirl*, have all tasted glory at the championships at least once.



Justin and Ian Furman at Barbell Bullies



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