

south african Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

■ Volume 25 - Number 35 ■ 14 October 2021 ■ 8 Cheshvan 5782

www.sajr.co.za



ACTIVITIES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

November 2019- October 2021

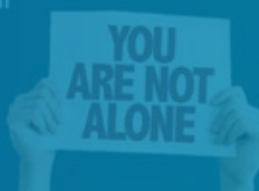


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Community Security Organisation
Nechama Brodie, Media expert
Sean Jammy, COO CAP (Community Active Protection)
Zev Krengel, Vice President, SAJBD
Rabbi David Shaw

Host: Prof Karen Milner (Chairperson SAJBD Gauteng Council)

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SAJBD



POLITICAL & CIVIL SOCIETY

As the representative spokesperson of South African Jewry, the SAJBD ensures that the voice of the community is heard on all issues that concern it. To this end, it maintains effective channels of communication and forges sound working relationships with leading figures in the political, media, educational and civil society spheres.



SAJBD Gauteng Council meeting with Johannesburg Executive Mayor, the late Geoff Makhubo, October 2020. From left, Nick Selamolela, Wendy Kahn, Mr Makhubo, Prof Karen Milner, Danny Mofsoowitz



Representing the community at the 2020 State of the Nation address: SAJBD National Chairman Shaun Zagnoev and the then Parliamentary Liaison Chaya Singer



Cape SAJBD meeting with Cape Town Executive Mayor Dan Plato, May 2021: Dawn Nathan-Jones, Mr Plato, Tzvi Brivik, Daniel Bloch



Gauteng Council business delegation meeting with MEC Parks Tau and team from the Gauteng Department of Economic Development, August 2021



FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM

The Board safeguards the Jewish community against antisemitic attacks, using its legal, media and diplomatic resources to deal with all incidents that come to its attention and working where necessary with such State institutions as the SA Human Rights Commission, Equality Courts and broadcasting regulatory authorities. Since the last conference, a number of hate speech cases were brought to a successful conclusion. In partnership with the SA Zionist Federation and others, the Board also combats anti-Israel bias, including on university campuses and in the media and political spheres.



The Board also successfully approached the Randburg Magistrates Court for a restraining order against white supremacist and Nazi sympathiser Jan Lamprecht.



Pictured outside the court after the ruling are Advocate Laurence Hodes, Ian Levitt and Nick Kourie from Ian Levitt Attorneys, Prof Karen Milner and Wendy Kahn.

In October 2020, the Randburg Magistrates Court imposed a first-ever criminal conviction for antisemitism against Matome Letsoalo after he had incited violence against the Jewish community.



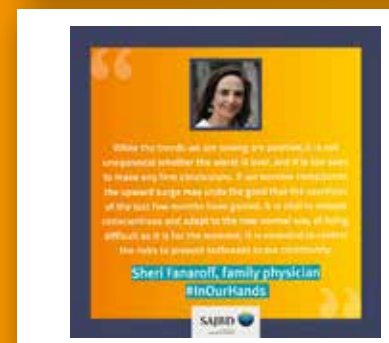
In December 2020 former Wits SRC President Mcebo Dlamini apologised for his 2015 offensive remarks against the Jewish community. He went on a facilitated visit to the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre. This followed a successful mediation between the SAJBD and Dlamini facilitated by the SA Human Rights Commission.



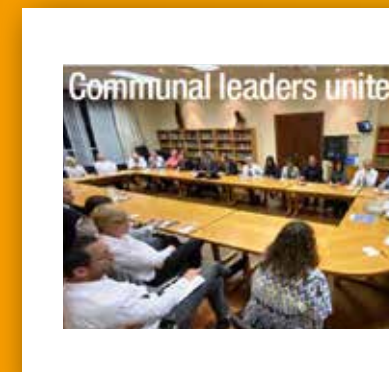
THE SAJBD & COVID

The two years since the last SAJBD conference have been dominated by the worst pandemic in living memory, the deadly and destructive effects of which continue to be felt the world over. To help the Jewish community navigate these exceptionally difficult times, the SAJBD has taken the lead in coordinating a wide range of support programmes, educational and advisory projects and relief initiatives.

Access to reliable, up-to-date information has been critical to maintaining communal safety. In view of this, the Board set up a COVID Jewish Community Platform to provide expert medical, financial, mental health and legal advice, as well as updates on local developments and decisions.



The Board convened regular community leadership forums to ensure coordinated, strategic and properly communicated responses to every aspect of the pandemic.



With the assistance of donors in the community, the Board set up an emergency Food Relief Fund to alleviate hunger in rural and urban areas across eight provinces, working closely with the Angel Network and other Jewish organisations. It further participated in many Community Action Network (CAN) initiatives and widely publicised the outreach work of the Jewish community.



Working with the South African and Israeli embassies, Departments of International Relations and Cooperation and Home Affairs, international airlines and others, the Board was instrumental in repatriating dozens of South African citizens stranded in Israel and assisted individuals in travelling to Israel on compassionate grounds.



National Chairman Shaun Zagnoev, President Mary Kluk, and National Director Wendy Kahn participated in regular COVID interfaith engagements with President Ramaphosa. Mark Kluk has represented the community throughout the pandemic on the COVID Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Behaviour Change.



THE GLOBAL ARENA

The SAJBD maintains solid working relationships with global Jewry, building coalitions to address such common issues as antisemitism and security, defending Israel and fostering cultural and intellectual exchanges. Board members hold important representative positions on international Jewish bodies, including the World Jewish Congress (WJC). President Mary Kluk and national vice-chairman Marc Pozniak sit on the executive of the WJC while Alana Baranov is a member of the steering committee of the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps. Through sharing skills and experiences, the SAJBD enhances its own effectiveness while also leading South African Jewry in being an active, contributing component of the greater Jewish world.



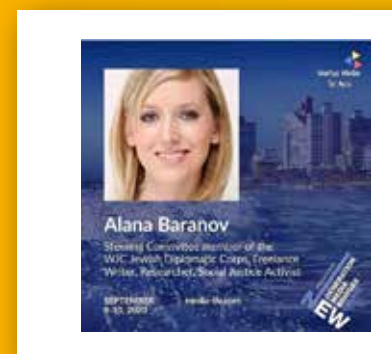
Mary Kluk at the 75th anniversary commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 2020.



Wendy Kahn as a panelist at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations annual leadership summit, Jerusalem, 2020



In September 2021, the SAJBD and SA Jewish Report held a joint webinar to mark the 20th anniversary of the UN World Conference against Racism, an event notorious for propagating antisemitism in the name of fighting racism. Panellists included former Canadian Minister of Justice Prof Irwin Cotler, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Ahmed Shaheed, Director of the Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights Felice Gaer and American Jewish Committee CEO David Harris.



MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

It further works with other organisations in combating prejudice and fostering a culture of respect and tolerance for diversity in the wider society. Board spokespersons regularly comment on a wide array of issues for both the local and international media.

The SAJBD'S Communications Department promotes the work of the SAJBD, publicises what Jewish organisations and individuals are contributing to South Africa and responds to anti-Jewish and anti-Israel bias.



Through its weekly current affairs programme Jewish Board Talk on 101.9 Chai FM, hosted by Charisse Zeifert, the Board highlights issues of importance to the local Jewish community as well as publicising the activities of a wide range of Jewish organisations and individuals.



Jewish Affairs, a journal devoted to Jewish history and culture, has been published under the auspices of the SAJBD since 1941. This year, JA marked its 80th anniversary with the launch of its new website (<https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/>), which includes all material published since the beginning of 2009.



COMMUNAL EVENTS AND SERVICES

Holocaust Education and Commemoration

The Board organises the annual Yom Hashoah ceremonies in all major centres countrywide. Due to COVID restrictions a unified virtual national commemoration was organised in collaboration with the SA Holocaust and Genocide Centres. This attracted an audience of 17 000 people.

Despite additional difficulties caused by the lockdown, the Board continued to work with the relevant universities in successfully resolving problems of exams being set on Yom Tov.

Throughout lockdown the SAJBD organised online communal events.

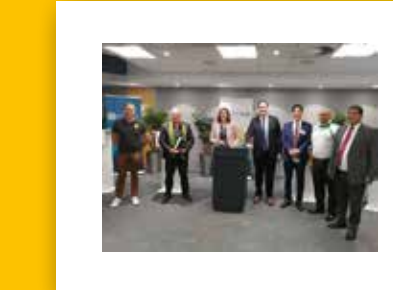


Outreach and Upliftment

In times of crisis in the wider society, the Board involves itself in disaster relief and social upliftment projects. The Board was called upon to assist with relief during the unrest and looting in KZN and Gauteng in July 2021. The national, KZN and Gauteng Boards assisted with immediate food relief and thereafter the clean-up and rebuilding processes.



"The SAJBD assisted with a post-riot clean-up in Daveyton and afterwards delivered food relief to the ECD centres, schools and aged homes in the East Rand, Soweto, Alexandra, Durban, Inanda and Phoenix."



For the 2021 local government elections, the Board is again running its regular #MakeUsCount pre-election awareness campaign to help the Jewish community identify with and involve itself in the democratic process. The campaign includes multi-party election debates, a voter registration drive and assembling a multi-faith election observer team to assist the Independent Electoral Commission on voting day.



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SA warmly welcomes Palestinian foreign minister

TALI FEINBERG

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor, warmly welcomed the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine Dr Riad Malki to South Africa last week – hospitality certainly not offered to Israelis.

Malki was in the country from 7 to 9 October, and was hosted by Pandor on 8 October for bilateral talks, according to a media statement made by department of international relations and cooperation spokesperson Clayson Monyela.

In reiterating their commitment to each other's causes, "both sides agreed to exert joint efforts aimed at reversing the decision to admit Israel as an observer member to the African Union", according to a joint post-talks communiqué. The ministers also agreed to a planned a state visit in which South Africa would host Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

South Africa is also going to host a conference for Palestinian heads of missions in Africa this year to deliberate Palestine's policy towards Africa.

"South Africa attaches great importance to its relationship with Palestine, which is underpinned by historic bonds of solidarity, friendship, and co-operation. South Africa's support for the Palestinian cause conforms with the basic tenets of its foreign policy," Monyela said.

"The international community has an obligation to find a comprehensive and just resolution to the Palestinian issue," he said. "South Africa calls for international support and increased efforts for the just cause of the Palestinian people to address their legitimate demand for an independent state alongside a peaceful state of Israel. The visit

aims to further strengthen the relationship between South Africa and Palestine."

In their joint communiqué, the ministers "expressed their satisfaction with the cordial relations that exist between the two countries, which is to be further augmented by Abbas's visit and the Palestinian leaders' conference to be held in Cape Town in November this year".

The South African government committed its support for initiatives that would refocus the international agenda on Palestine and the Middle East peace process. South Africa reiterated its support for a two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The two ministers agreed that "they would continue to work to achieve peace for the Palestinian people", and "in the absence of sustainable peace in the region, there could be no global peace, stability, and economic prosperity".

In their communiqué, the ministers insisted that "security and stability in the Middle East is being undermined by continued occupation of Palestinian territories and the aggressive actions of the Israeli regime". Having said that, they called on the international community to "further strengthen their support for the return of all parties to the negotiation table without pre-conditions".

They agreed to "exert joint efforts aimed at reversing the decision to admit Israel as an observer member to the African Union". They also expressed support for "the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action" which they say "remains a clarion call for anti-racism advocacy and action worldwide".

The Durban Declaration was the document that emerged out of the World Conference against Racism, Racial

Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, also known as the infamous "Durban Conference" held in South Africa in 2001.

According to the Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa Facebook page, Malki also met with a group of African National Congress leaders in Pretoria, and Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) groups Africa4Palestine, Palestinian Solidarity

Alliance, and the South African BDS Coalition, amongst other meetings.

Local political analyst Steven Gruz says the visit shows that South Africa's support for the Palestinians "continues to be vocal and loyal. The hot issue, however, is the granting of Israel's observer status at the African Union. The two pledged to work together to overturn it. Relations with Israel will remain tense. There has been no change from

South Africa towards the [Naftali] Bennett government."

He says the visit "reinforces ties [with the Palestinians] and puts South Africa squarely in the Palestinian camp. It has shed all pretensions of being an 'honest broker' in this conflict, and for a long time, has chosen sides. The key thing to watch is what happens at the African Union. Israel has its

Continued on page 2>>

The triumph of the 'Cheetah'



Photograph courtesy Amir Ben David

See story on page 16



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AUTO AFRICA

Israeli-American Joshua Angrist shares Nobel Prize

Professor Joshua Angrist, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with dual Israeli-American citizenship, was named one of three winners of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on the impact of public policy developments on society.

Jewish teacher accused of forcibly removing student’s hijab

A Jewish teacher at a New Jersey public school has been accused of pulling a hijab off of a seven-year-old girl, and the Council on American Islamic relations has called for her removal.

The teacher, Tamar Herman, allegedly told the girl to take off her hijab in front of her class at the Seth Boyden Elementary school in Maplewood. When the girl refused, the teacher allegedly removed the hijab herself.

A lawyer representing Herman

disputed the account, saying Herman asked the student, who was wearing a hooded sweatshirt, to take off her hood because it was blocking her eyes. When Herman realised the student was wearing the hood as a hijab, she told the student she didn’t need to remove it.

The South Orange-Maplewood school district is investigating.

First Jewish wedding in Bahrain in 52 years



half a century, a Jewish couple was married in Bahrain on Sunday, 10 October.

The wedding, which was held at the Ritz Carlton in Manama, was a milestone for the Jewish community in the Gulf nation, which opened diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020.

Bahrain has been home to a Jewish community for more than 140 years, but many of its younger members choose to leave the country. Community leaders hailed the wedding as a sign of the community’s resurgence.

Rome mayoral candidate apologises for antisemitic comments

A leading candidate for mayor in Rome has apologised to the Jewish community over an article he wrote last year in which he suggested that victims of mass murders other than the Holocaust get less

attention because they “didn’t own banks”.

Jewish community leaders and others decried the comments by Enrico Michetti, a radio host who is the centre-right coalition’s candidate in the 17 and 18 October mayoral election.

“Each year, 40 Holocaust-related movies are shot, trips and cultural initiatives of all sorts are financed to commemorate that horrible persecution, and up to here, I have nothing to say,” Michetti wrote on the website of the radio station where he is a host. “But I wonder why the same pity and consideration isn’t given to the dead killed in the foibe massacres [of Italians by Yugoslav partisans], in the refugee camps, and in the mass murders that still take place in the world?”

“Perhaps because they didn’t own banks, perhaps because they didn’t belong to lobbies capable of deciding the destinies of the planet.”

• All briefs supplied by JTA

SA warmly welcomes Palestinian foreign minister

>>Continued from page 1

its fair share of African opponents, but also many African friends. Will they stick their necks out for Israel? We will see. South Africa has been lobbying against the [observer status] decision, and has influenced southern African states to oppose it.”

Gruzd maintains there’s “virtually no chance” of Israel’s Foreign Minister Yair Lapid being invited for a similar visit. “Relations remain tense, and South Africa won’t be seen to reward Israel for its policies and practices,” he said.

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), says, “The SAJBD believes that for South Africa to play a meaningful role towards a peaceful outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, it would need to engage with both Israelis and Palestinians. Without speaking to the Israeli leadership, it’s not possible to truly understand the situation and to gain trust in order to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

“The dogged campaign by South Africa to exclude Israel from the African Union is antithetical to our international-relations

policies of conflict resolution through negotiation and talking,” she says. “This action only seeks to push peace building and the attainment of a sustainable two-state solution even further away.”

“The South African Zionist Federation [SAZF] has noted the comments of Minister Pandor and Palestinian Minister Malki. It seems the entire focus of the engagement was to undermine Israel’s admission as an observer to the African Union,” says SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. “We believe this is a foolhardy and hypocritical approach to international relations.

“Israel has had a mutually beneficial relationship with African states for more than 70 years. It has been at the forefront of efforts to help solve some of the most important developmental challenges on our continent, including in the areas of health, agriculture, youth development, water, education, and energy,” Polovin says.

“The admission of Israel as an observer to the AU, alongside more than 70 other countries, is a historic

and welcome development. The South African government remains out of step with the rest of the continent who are moving swiftly ahead with relations with Israel,” he says.

“The new Israeli government’s prime minister and foreign minister have been warmly welcomed in the major capitals of Europe, the United

States, Africa, and the Arab world. It’s not Israel, but South Africa, that’s the odd one out. We would encourage the South African government to take the opportunity to reach out to Israel to engage for the mutual benefit of both nations and as a means of making a positive, proactive contribution to finding further peace in the region.”


Shabbat Times

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Torah Thought

In the brave steps of Abraham

In this week’s Torah portion, Lech Lecha, we read about the first Jew, Avraham, who resisted the tide of paganism, idolatry, and immorality. Society had moved away from monotheism and Avraham’s beliefs were ridiculed. However, Avraham stayed the course and in spite of great personal risk and at the cost of ostracism from his family, he spread the belief in one G-d.

The portion opens with G-d giving Avraham a direct command to travel out of his homeland and away from his family in order to spread his newfound message. G-d’s command to Avraham in this

verse can additionally be seen as a command to us to leave the comfort of our insular lives and venture out to the world at large to transform it into a G-dly place.

While we may be satisfied by staying within the safe confines of the Judaism that we have grown up with, it’s no recipe for growth. G-d therefore tells us that if we enter the real world, our full inner potential will be realised, and our true, best selves will come to the fore.

Fighting the prevailing attitudes of the day has never been easy, but as Jews, we can be reassured that our forefathers have travelled

this path before us. The Midrash teaches that “the actions of the fathers are a signpost for the children”. Another translation of the word *siman* or “signpost” is “empowerment”, and the Midrash teaches us that by risking their lives to spread the belief in one G-d, our forefathers made it easier for us to follow their example.

At this time of year, when we have hopefully been inspired by a month of festivals and are thinking about moving forward in our Judaism, we can be confident that we are following the advice of tried and tested authorities all the way back to Avraham.

Rabbi Pini Pink,
Chabad Greenstone

Jeweller’s senseless murder leaves community reeling

NICOLA MILTZ

The hearts of a Johannesburg family have been ripped apart after the senseless murder this week of well-known jeweller Mark Kopelowitz, who was shot in cold blood during an armed robbery outside his store. Kopelowitz’s tragic death on Monday, 11 October, has sent shock waves through the community. Hundreds of people are struggling to come to terms with the untimely passing of this much-loved father of four who “lived for his family”.

“He was my everything, the absolute love of my life,” said his devastated wife, Linda, who told the *SA Jewish Report* she was “battling to make sense of it all”. “I cannot believe it. I’m still waiting for him to come home,” she said. The couple were childhood sweethearts and soulmates from the moment they met in their teens. “We went out for ten years and have been happily married for 25. How am I going to get through this?” asked Linda, who said their young son and three older daughters, one of whom writes her matric finals in two weeks, were heartbroken.

When Kopelowitz, 54, left home on that fateful Monday morning he was filled with renewed optimism about work. Earlier that morning after attending shul, he and his son, Cole, 13, made coffee for all the congregants present at the *minyan*. The third wave of the pandemic was over, and retail business was picking up. Tragically, Kopelowitz arrived at his Kays Family Jewellers in Centurion Mall while the armed robbery was in progress. He was fatally shot while robbers were fleeing the shop with stolen goods.

Linda received an urgent and dreaded phone call from Michael Phillips, Kopelowitz’s cousin, who was there to meet him at the store. The rest is a blur as Linda frantically hurried to be by her husband’s side.

“I got there after they had already covered his body. It was a crime scene,” she said in disbelief.

Police arrested two suspects that night in Hillbrow in connection with the robbery, and are on the hunt for a further four suspects who are still at

large. As news of Kopelowitz’ passing rippled through the community, heartfelt tributes come pouring in from close friends and family who described Mark as a “true *mensh*”. He was a devoted and committed son, husband, father, and brother, described by all who knew him as “thoughtful, kind, caring, and generous to a fault”, someone who would literally give the shirt off his back. The family are stalwarts of the Linksfield Senderwood Hebrew Congregation, with just



Mark, Ruby, Cole, Amber, Linda, and Aurah Kopelowitz

about the entire shul present at Tuesday’s funeral. Rabbi Levi Avtzon described the family as “royalty in the community”, being one of the oldest members of the shul. A religious and observant man, Kopelowitz attended morning and evening prayers with his son every day, and the two had recently started wearing black hats. “Every one of us standing here felt like somebody had stuck a hand into our hearts and removed a part of it,” said Avtzon, describing Kopelowitz as “one of a kind in so many ways”. He recalled a day when Kopelowitz stripped off his clothes to hand to a beggar who

was without trousers and shoes. “In good Mark style, he doesn’t give him money, he takes off his pants, takes off his shoes, hands it to the beggar and goes home early without pants. And it happened more than once,” he said. There were no half measures with him, said the rabbi. “I have never seen a father so obsessed with his kids. Each night he would come home, talk to each one of them individually, lie down with them, ask them how their day was. His biggest dream was to have *naches* from his children.” Addressing Linda, he said, “He was obsessed with you, and you were obsessed with him. Everybody knew it, it was no secret, and he did whatever he could to bring joy to his family.” To the four Kopelowitz children, Amber, Ruby, Aurah, and Cole, he said, “The biggest way to honour your father is by living life to the fullest. I can only imagine Mark saying, ‘Please don’t sacrifice your happiness and

dreams for me.” Kopelowitz was born and raised in Witbank. He matriculated from King David Linksfield, and attended the University of the Witwatersrand, where he completed his LLB degree. “He was a qualified lawyer, but business was his passion,” said Linda. According to friends, Kopelowitz was a natural entrepreneur and retailer. He sold jewellery in flea markets in his early twenties before going on to make a name for himself in the mainstream retail sector as MK Jewellers, with a handful of stores in upmarket shopping malls. Friends this week said Kopelowitz had a great sense of humour and was a sociable person who was exceptionally goal driven and ambitious. He loved beautiful things like décor, spending time with his family, and hiking when time allowed. His two older sisters, Maxine Jaffit and Robyn Sher, said their brother was “a deep thinker who was the embodiment of compassion and kindness”.

“EVERY ONE OF US STANDING HERE FELT LIKE SOMEBODY HAD STUCK A HAND INTO OUR HEARTS AND REMOVED A PART OF IT.”

“Mark loved business and always wanted to do well. He was an extremely hard worker and never stopped trying. He did everything for us,” said Linda. Police said the arrested suspects were found in possession of the vehicle which was allegedly used to flee the scene of the robbery. Both suspects are expected to appear in court shortly. The police are appealing to the public to come forward with any information that can assist with the investigation on the Crime Stop line 08600 10 111.

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3

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3

3

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Desai “dismissive and unapologetic” about breaching code

NICOLA MILTZ

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) this week called for former High Court Judge Siraj Desai to be held accountable for contravening the judicial code of conduct for his anti-Israel views and support of terror organisation Hamas.

“As a citizen, he has every right to be an ardent pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist advocate,” the SAZF said in its replying affidavit submitted on Tuesday, 12 October, to the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC). “As a judicial officer, he is constrained by the code, yet he plainly continues to conduct himself without restraint in advocating against Israel and in support of Palestinian causes.”

In the affidavit, the SAZF again accuses Desai of continuing to politicise the judiciary with inflammatory comments that run contrary to the judicial code of conduct. By allegedly doing so, the organisation accuses Desai of undermining the separation of powers between government and the judiciary.

The JCC is part of the Judicial Services Commission which is responsible for dealing with complaints against judges.

The matter goes back to July, when the SAZF lodged a complaint with the JCC accusing Desai of action and conduct “entirely unbecoming of a judicial officer”. The SAZF 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 as legal services ombudsman in which his role is to safeguard the integrity of the legal profession.

For many years, Desai 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.

Desai lashed back in a 24-page replying affidavit in which he 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 submitted that his response must be considered in the context of the following principles, to which he subscribes and which are relevant to this complaint.

“First, 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,” he wrote.

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

“Second, 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, his response 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 experience, and the perspective thus derived inevitably and distinctively informs each judge’s performance of his or her judicial duties.”

In this week’s response, Professor Anthony Arkin on behalf of the SAZF, said it was clear from Desai’s reply that he didn’t deny his conduct and the events upon which the complaint was based, accusing Desai of adopting a

“somewhat insouciant and dismissive attitude towards the gravity of his violations of the code”.

The affidavit said Desai relied “heavily on background descriptions of his character and pro-human-rights work” but said that the complaint was about his conduct. All the background information amounted to “an attempt to deflect the focus from conduct that is a clear contravention of both the underlying precepts and provisions of the code”.

The response said Desai was “utterly unapologetic in his disregard for the limitations placed upon him by the code”, and accused Desai of being “rather quite brazen” in trying to justify it on human-rights grounds, “which is again an evasion of the issues at hand”.

The response said Desai’s conduct and stance was “incompatible” with the position of the law, as noted by Judge Phineas Mojapelo in the matter between Africa4Palestine and Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng.

In that matter, Judge Mojapelo noted, “The rule is clear: South African judges are prohibited from belonging to political parties; and they are not to be involved in political controversies [debates/disputations], whether linked to political parties or not. Judges are to

stay out of politics.”

The SAZF’s affidavit accused Desai of adopting a partisan view of the conflict in the Middle East, and accused him of selectively citing from the contents of the Goldstone Report by failing to mention that the report concluded that both sides of the conflict were guilty.

It said Desai’s failure to mention any blameworthy conduct by Palestinian armed groups again demonstrated that plainly, he was a partisan advocate who supported one party in the conflict.

In a statement this week, the SAZF said, “An officer of the South African court shouldn’t support an anti-Jewish extremist organisation, Hamas.

“For example, last year, during an interview with an Iranian YouTuber, Desai made inappropriate statements likening Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, an acknowledged violator of human rights, to former President Nelson Mandela. This comparison between the champion of peace, who led the struggle for the fall of apartheid, with a regime that commits gross human-rights abuses, is offensive to South African history and calls into question the moral judgement of Desai.”

The SAZF said that during the same interview, Judge Desai undermined South African foreign policy by referring to the United States, a major trade partner and supporter of our country, as a “Great Satan”.

Continued on page 5>>

Israel’s status on agenda of AU executive

NICOLA MILTZ

On the eve of the meeting of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) this week, there has been much speculation about whether Israel’s recent granting of observer status will be debated, and if calls for the decision to be rescinded will be heard.

The announcement in July that Israel had been granted observer status at the AU drew sharp reaction from several countries on the continent, including South Africa.

Last week, International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister Naledi Pandor met her Palestinian counterpart, Riad Malki, and again expressed dissatisfaction with Israel’s status. (See story on page 1.)

During the official bilateral talks held at Dirco, Pandor said South Africa wasn’t party to the AU’s “shocking” decision to grant Israel observer status.

In July, Pretoria moved swiftly to lobby other Southern African Development Community states against the decision.

Many said the decision had been taken unilaterally by AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, and expressed solidarity with Palestine.

Out of 55 member states, 46 enjoy diplomatic relations with Israel. There are about 17 member countries opposing observer status.

It’s understood that the matter was placed on the agenda of the AU executive council following complaints by some member states.

Professor Hussein Solomon of the University of the Free State wrote recently that South Africa was “out of sync” with the views of most African heads of state. “Isolating Israel won’t work in promoting the well-being of Palestinians. This was tried for decades by Arab countries and has failed.”

Jean-Pierre Alumba Lukamba, the international director of the African Diaspora for Development, (ADD), told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that according to the guiding principles of the AU, Israel should be at the opening of the AU’s executive council meeting this week as an observer member for the first time in nearly 20 years.

The ADD has reiterated its call to African heads of state to maintain unanimously the admission of the state of Israel as an observer member.

In a statement, the ADD said, “The African people will derive great benefit from the state of Israel, which has notably established agricultural co-operatives, youth training centres, and medical facilities in countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Côte d’Ivoire.

“Israel supported the use of technology for the sustainable development of Africa in accordance with a resolution adopted by the United Nations,” it said, and it was “convinced” that admission to the AU of Israel would help to advance the African continent towards a better future for the well-being of African people.

The ADD joined its voice to those of other civil society organisations, and asked the African heads of state to include it on its agenda this week.

Earlier this week, the ADD held a peaceful rally in Abuja in support of Israel’s observer status.

Olubunmi Fagbuyiro, the Economic Community of West African States representative of the ADD, said that there was still concern about countries who opposed this observer status. “The AU should embrace Israel, as the country has already demonstrated its willingness for fruitful partnership with Africa,” Fagbuyiro said.

He said Israel had been pivotal in the provision of green energy, health infrastructure, and infrastructure for sustainable water supply in many countries on the continent. He noted Israel’s contribution to the fight against Ebola in Africa.

“It’s our view that the AU can play an important role

in bringing about peace between Israel and Palestine, drawing on lessons from the African nationalist movements and the experiences of decolonisation and reconciliation following various conflicts can be used to inspire negotiation and peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.”

Meanwhile, the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) has joined various African civil society organisations from across the continent in their call for African heads of state to reaffirm unanimously Israel’s admission as an observer member of the AU.

“Israel has had a mutually beneficial relationship with African states for more than 70 years. It has been at the forefront of efforts to help solve some of the most important developmental challenges on the continent. These include the areas of health, agriculture, youth development, water, education, and energy.



Assembly of the African Union

“The admission of Israel as an observer to the African Union, alongside more than 70 other countries, is a historic and welcome development. It should be celebrated and not undermined by those who aren’t interested in peace and prosperity on the continent,” it said.

The SAZF called on other organisations connected to Africa and its diaspora to sign a letter of support to the AU.

The letter is signed by prominent progressive international African organisations, companies, leaders, activists, youth movements, and trade unions. It says Israel’s admission seeks to “enhance the work of Israeli African co-operation on development programmes at bilateral and multilateral levels. Admittance is in the interests of peace and dialogue.”

Faki Mahamat accepted the credentials of Aleigne Admasu, Israel’s ambassador to Ethiopia, on 22 July.

He said at the time that he hoped the move would contribute to the “intensification of the advocacy of the AU for the fulfilment of the principle of two states and the restoration of peace between Israel and Palestine” and reiterated the “unflinching commitment” of the AU to the fundamental rights of the Palestinians.

This included their “right to establish an independent national state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of a global, fair, and definitive peace between Israel and Palestine.”

Faki Mahamat said the reservations expressed by “a few members” about this decision justified his intention to include it on the agenda of this week’s session of the executive council.

Israel obtained AU observer status after 20 years of diplomatic efforts. It had previously held the role at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), but was long thwarted in its attempts to regain it after the OAU was disbanded in 2002 and replaced by the AU.

Apart from South Africa, other countries opposing Israel’s member status include Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia.

Most other countries on the continent have sought closer ties with Israel, such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda, and have secured Israeli help, expertise, and investment in many areas from water and agriculture to tech start-ups.

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No more double standards

When the South African government hosts the foreign affairs minister of another country, it’s generally good news. When we welcome leadership from elsewhere, it mostly means increased co-operation between the two states, building relationships, and boosting trade.

In fact, in the past 18 months, in spite of the pandemic, we have hosted a number of leaders, including President Emmanuel Macron of France; Spanish secretary of state for foreign affairs, Cristina Gallach Figueras; Algerian Foreign Affairs Minister Sabri Boukadoum; Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, the president of the Republic of Malawi; and Lesotho Prime Minister Dr Moeketsi Majoro.

The countries we invite or simply welcome are varied, some being more or less important to us in terms of trade and bilateral agreements. Some official visitors are more or less impressive to host. Nevertheless, making friends and influencing other governments is generally a good sign in a country’s leadership.

Considering this, I would expect to be glad when South African International Relations and Cooperation Minister Dr Naledi Pandor hosted and welcomed with open arms the minister of foreign affairs and expatriates of the state of Palestine, Dr Riad Malki. It’s neither here nor there if such a country in fact exists. South Africa should be enhancing relationships with other leaders around the world.

However, it gets stuck in my throat when the same honour isn’t proffered to the leadership of Israel. In fact, our dear minister of international relations and cooperation is unlikely to be available for such a meeting even if it was hosted in her honour.

But yet, at the same time, she will have these warm and friendly meetings with this Palestinian leader, talking about peace in the Middle East and finding a two-state solution. This actually sounds wonderful, except that you cannot work towards peace by dealing with only one side. You cannot negotiate peace without both parties being given an equal platform, or am I somehow mistaken?

Let’s talk more about creating an equal platform. In their discussions, the foreign ministers of South African and ‘Palestine’ agreed to do all they could to remove Israel’s newly bestowed observer status at the African Union. Why, you may ask? Quite simply, to punish Israel. Is that a way of working towards peace between Israelis and Palestinians? I think not.

Then, while Pandor is going to welcome Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas for a state visit to South Africa, she wouldn’t be seen anywhere near the company of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. And, the latter’s crime? None that I know of, but we would have to ask the very learned Dr Pandor.

The Palestinian and South African bilateral discussions also brought about agreement to host a Cape Town conference for Palestinian heads of missions in Africa this year where the “state of Palestine’s policy towards Africa” will be discussed and contemplated. What are the chances of our government hosting such a conference for Israelis? The truth is, in this instance, I’m sure holding such a conference for Israelis would be perfectly acceptable, only it would inspire a huge protest, and so on.

So, I repeat, government hosting this Palestinian leader is essentially good news, as is its hosting of most other leaders. However, it’s the double standards that irk me.

Though South Africa will entertain leaders from countries with horrific human-rights records, it won’t meet Israel. China is way up on this index, as is Libya, Syria, Iran, all of whom are friends of our government, but not Israel (which doesn’t really feature on this abusive list).

What’s so perplexing for me is that it seems like South Africa is being left behind with its anti-Israel sentiment – or can I go as far as calling it South Africa’s blind spot?

Most countries in the world recognise these days that a relationship with Israel can only be good for them. Israel is way ahead of so many countries in terms of technology, agriculture, science, and even medicine, that it’s worthwhile to maintain a good working relationship with it.

So many African countries with a good relationship with Israel have benefited hugely on numerous fronts, but South Africa cannot or will not consider this.

I totally understand that a country with a background of human-rights abuses would find it unconscionable to be friends with a country that commits human-rights abuses. If Israel was really such a country, then perhaps we wouldn’t have room to talk.

However, Israel is in the heart of the Middle East, nestled among a number of countries where human-rights abuses are horrific. And yet, South Africa picks this tiny country to put its pins into, ignoring the friends it has that commit human-rights abuses. I say it again: these are very convenient double standards!

I also understand looking out for Palestinian women and children who have been treated badly and made homeless. I feel for them, and wish I could help them. However, what about Afghan women and children? Or is it okay to abuse them or ignore the fact that they are being abused because it isn’t *woke* to protest against that?

I feel as if I have said this all before, and I know I have. However, somehow, it seems important to come back to it when our government’s double standards are being showcased once again when it comes to Israel and the Palestinians.

I can’t ignore it. We can’t ignore it.

The only solution is to make it clear that if the South African government or our foreign affairs minister is going to meet Palestinian leaders, then she needs to meet Israeli leaders. She needs to get to know the issues from both sides, to sit down and discuss them. Visit Israel. See for herself. Don’t take it from others. Do the research, and make up her own mind based on the facts.

It isn’t rocket science. It’s simply taking away the blinkers of prejudice and replacing them with the facts. We can help! Just say the word.



Service delivery comes last in race for power

OPINION

PAUL BERKOWITZ



We are less than three weeks away from a local government election, and it’s likely to be our most chaotic and fractious since 1994. The country has been under lockdown for 18 months, and this has had a direct effect on voter registration and political campaigning. Voter turnout will probably reach a 15-year low.

Ironically, just as political participation and education has been declining, the need for clean, accountable local government has never been greater. The vast majority of municipalities – including the City of Johannesburg – have unacceptably high levels of financial risk and service delivery failures.

The long-term decline in national government’s finances plus the persistent corruption and maladministration at municipal level has resulted in infrastructural backlogs, above-inflation increases in service tariffs, and cash shortages in many municipalities.

Municipalities’ core function is to provide basic service delivery (water, electricity, sanitation, and rubbish removal). In addition, larger municipalities provide basic health services, police, firefighting, emergency medical services, and more. Municipalities are also tasked with the spatial development of communities, working with other spheres of government to formalise housing and drive local economic development.

It’s critical that voters make an informed choice in the elections, and vote for candidates and parties with a track record of community service and good governance. Unfortunately, voters have less information than ever about their political choices: parties have been unable to campaign effectively under lockdown, and new candidates are mostly unknown to their wards and communities.

Our electoral system also leads to a few practises that make it harder for voters to make an informed choice. For example, many political parties take advantage of a legal loophole to field the same ward candidates across multiple wards. This is done in order to maximise a party’s votes and increase the number of seats it can win in council, but it leads to parties fielding candidates who are weak and not representative of the wards where they are standing.

In the City of Johannesburg metro alone, there are 54 parties and 44 independent candidates. At least 25 of these parties have registered ward candidates in every ward across the metro. Many – if not most – of these candidates have been chosen to make up the numbers, not because they have experience in government or are dedicated to serving their communities. Most voters in the metro will have to choose from more than 25 ward candidates with little to no information about them.

Basic service delivery isn’t an exciting idea for most voters or parties, and parties tend to campaign on issues which have nothing to do with local government or service delivery. Many parties make promises or commitments which are completely unrealistic and unachievable. This just adds to voters’ confusion, and increases their apathy towards political participation.

Many voters, including members of the Jewish community, make ballot choices based on ideology and gut feel. In past elections, the African Christian Democratic Party has been touted as a viable choice because of its pro-Israel stance. ActionSA has incorporated xenophobia and border control in its 2021 campaign, parties like the Patriotic Alliance and the Cape Coloured Congress have appealed to racial identity, while the African National Congress (ANC) and Economic Freedom Fighters have used populist slogans and messaging to appeal to voters. Even the Democratic Alliance, which has a proven track record of service delivery in the Western Cape, has resorted to negative campaigning and comparisons with the ANC’s governance failures.

None of these issues have a link to service delivery and clean, accountable government.

What should voters and communities consider before casting their votes? Unfortunately, there’s not much time to learn more about candidates, and there is little information available. The Electoral Commission’s website does have a portal for the 2021 local government election where voters can download candidate lists. These lists are in PDF format, and are difficult to navigate.

Even if voters can create a shortlist of the parties and candidates in their ward, there’s not much that they can do to learn about those candidates. It’s possible to google the candidates’ names and research their social-media presence, but not all candidates have an online profile. Some candidates have done their best to campaign in recent weeks and reach constituents, but they are in the minority.

The truth is that the hard work really begins after the election date. It’s highly likely that there will be more coalitions in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The track record of coalitions over the past five years is poor: many coalitions have collapsed and others have been sabotaged. Ordinary South Africans will need to become more involved in political life beyond the election cycle in order to improve governance and service delivery.


At The Third Republic, we are dedicated to the research needed to hold local government more accountable, to track public spending, and council decisions. We invite you, the reader, to work with us over the next five years to ensure that local government improves and that communities are able to participate in the decision-making that affects service delivery and local development.

• *Paul Berkowitz is a director at The Third Republic, a non-profit organisation working to deepen democracy and political participation across South Africa.*



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Major parties undermined by “angrier, poorer” electorate

STEVEN GRUZD

South Africans go to the polls on 1 November in “elections that no parties really want”, according to political journalist Stephen Grootes. In the midst of a pandemic, established parties are losing support “and people have become angrier and poorer” since the last local government elections in 2016.

Grootes was moderating a webinar on Tuesday, 12 October, titled “Navigate the local government elections 2021”, organised by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. The webinar is part of the Board’s mandate to encourage voter registration in the Jewish community, formally observe the elections, and promote political debate.

Are these municipal elections about service delivery or about elements of identity in the context of South Africa’s racialised inequality? According to Nompumelelo Runji, the founder and chief executive of Critical ThinkAR – a research and stakeholder management consultancy – it’s a little bit of both in this highly polarised society.

“Good governance isn’t just about clean audits, sewage infrastructure, and tarred roads,” she said. For many, the yardstick is whether their quality of life is improving or not. They are asking if the African National Congress (ANC) can really deliver for all rather than the elite few.

Political analyst Dr Ralph Mathekga also senses

popular anger, but no consolidation of support by any political party to capitalise on the ANC’s failures. “The ANC is held back by its own history,” he said, and hopes to get by on *mea culpas* [acknowledgement of wrongdoing] and faith. “It’s the devil people know,” Mathekga said. He judged that talk of renewal in the ANC was illusory, describing it as “a party in great difficulty”. “Corruption has been democratised in local

the MFMA [Municipal Finance Management Act].” She characterised the problem as a toxic mix of lack of responsibility, no accountability, deficient oversight, and a dearth of consequences for maladministration. “Party loyalty and dynamics become more important than delivering services,” she said.

Wayne Sussman, elections analyst for *Daily Maverick*, views it as a unique election in which the two major parties have little momentum 20 days before the vote.

“There are only 400 members of parliament, but there are far more council positions up for grabs,” said Sussman. In an environment of high unemployment, the prospect of a middle-class job for five years in a municipal council has proved enticing for many. Independent candidates have mushroomed, and he expects them to do marginally better because of their sheer volume. “They will find it hard to influence politics in the metros, but they will play a role in this election,” Sussman said.

Looking at opposition parties, will the Democratic Alliance (DA) be punished at the polls? A lot depends on differential turnout, according to Sussman. If the suburbs come out in numbers and disillusioned ANC voters stay at home, “the DA may not do that badly. It was the first out of the starting blocks with its posters. But to use a rugby analogy, with the try-line in front of them, they have had knock-on after knock-on in the past week.” He predicts that the party will retain Cape Town and be the biggest or second biggest party in all the country’s

metropolitan councils.

“The DA seems to want to attract controversy and get into trouble, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has no plans to co-operate with anyone,” Mathekga said. “It would be shocked if it actually won a council.” He agreed that the DA often failed to read the public mood, and didn’t appear to have a real strategy for the Gauteng metros. The EFF is growing in South Africa’s neglected small towns, and the party may emerge as kingmaker in several councils, like it did in 2016. But its refusal to commit to coalitions makes for unstable politics. There is the real chance that some councils will be deadlocked and unable to agree on the election of a speaker, a mayor, and to pass the council budget. If they fail to do the latter, they will come under national administration. The speakers predicted there may be chaos like this in Tshwane, the nation’s capital.

Sussman is also carefully watching the performance of former Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba’s ActionSA, which has taken a gamble by contesting only in Gauteng’s three metros (Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Ekurhuleni) and in three municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal. It has run a slick social-media campaign. “He has to do well on election night,” Sussman said. “If he does badly, it’s probably the end.”

Finally, the panellists agreed there was merit in retaining separate municipal elections, as it promoted local-level democracy. This particular election will certainly make for interesting analysis in the weeks to come.



A screenshot from the webinar

government, with mammoth irregularities in public procurement,” Mathekga said, pointing out that criminal elements like protection rackets have filled the vacuum where the state has retreated.

Runji said local elections were “a vehicle for employment, a jobs pipeline for parties. Capacity and skills are trumped by factional allegiances. There is a failure to adhere to financial governance practices like the PFMA [Public Finance Management Act] and

Declining immunity points to need for booster shot

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Booster jabs may well become essential as it appears that antibodies to COVID-19 decline significantly six months after receiving a second dose of the

Pfizer vaccine.

That’s according to a recent study by the Sheba Medical Center, Israel’s largest hospital, rated by *Newsweek* as one of the top-10 hospitals in the world for the third year running.

Published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* on 7 October 2021, the study was conducted on 5 000 of Sheba’s medical workers comprised of different populations including immunocompromised individuals who were monitored with weekly serological testing.

The findings clearly illustrate a waning response to the vaccine, with neutralising antibodies decreasing sharply in the first three months following the second dose of the vaccine, and significantly abating afterwards.

“This study tends to support the view that durable protection decreases sometime after vaccination, especially after six months,” says Professor Barry Schoub, who chairs the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 vaccines.

Schoub, also professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand and the founding director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, points out that Sheba’s study and the observations of increasing post-vaccination “breakthroughs” aren’t definitive evidence of waning immunity after six months.

“These observations may be a reflection of the prioritisation of higher-risk individuals, such as the elderly, in the earlier stages of the vaccination programme, as, for example, in Israel. It’s important to note that the precise correlates of immune protection are still being studied and haven’t yet been definitively established. Neutralising antibodies may well be one of these components.

“However, other elements of the immune system certainly also play an important role in immune protection, such as cell-mediated immunity and non-neutralising antibodies, and these are considerably more durable than neutralising antibodies.

“Studies in South Africa and the United States have demonstrated the persistence of these components of the immune response to SARS-CoV-2 well past nine months following vaccination. Nevertheless, as an added precaution in certain vulnerable situations, such as people who are immune-suppressed or are in high-risk exposure situations such as healthcare workers, it may be appropriate to administer a booster dose of vaccine.” As of 7 October, United States President

Joe Biden is one of the about 6.4 million people who have received a booster shot in America, according to an *NBC News* analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

Meanwhile, England and several European Union member-states have already launched their own booster campaigns, and, from 11 October in Australia, severely immunocompromised individuals could get COVID-19 vaccine boosters.

Interestingly, Israel is believed to be the first country to make a valid vaccination passport conditional on having received a booster shot. On 26 September, it introduced new rules for determining coronavirus vaccination status, making a booster shot a requirement for full inoculation and vaccination passports.

Another Sheba study was one of the main determining factors in Israel’s decision to administer a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. It showed an increase in COVID-19 morbidity as time elapsed from vaccination.

“These study results have great significance, especially for countries that haven’t yet administered a booster dose or for countries where six months have already passed since its citizens received the second dose,” Professor Gili Regev-Yochay, the director of the infectious diseases unit at Sheba, told the media. “We anticipate that these findings will be a significant part of decisions on vaccination protocol in the future.”

Schoub says that the following two issues are still under discussion: when the booster will become available in South Africa; and what other vaccines besides Pfizer will need a booster.

With other research coming out of Israel, the *Jerusalem Post* has noted, “If COVID-19 doesn’t make you sick, diet soda might.”

According to Ben-Gurion University scientists, new research has found that certain artificial sweeteners can cause previously healthy gut bacteria to become diseased, leading to discomfort and digestive issues.

Ariel Kushmaro, a researcher from the university, noted that there’s little accurate labelling of artificial sweeteners on products, making it difficult to know how much each product contains.



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Israeli company brings SA dam back to life

TALI FEINBERG

Just before Pesach this year, the *SA Jewish Report* detailed how leading global “watertech” company, BlueGreen Water Technologies, was assisting local government authorities to transform toxic water into healthy drinking water at Setumo Dam on the Molopo River in North West province.

Six months later, the company has announced that its water clean-up intervention has been successfully completed. For the first time in decades, the people of Mahikeng are receiving safe drinking water from their main water supply source, which was severely contaminated by toxic algae blooms. The project was in collaboration with Sedibeng Water, the company overseen by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

“BlueGreen is committed to making water safe,” says Eyal Harel, the chief executive and co-founder of the company. “We undertook this project pro-bono, knowing it was the only chance for this community to access clean drinking water, enjoy Setumo Dam as a safe water source, and unleash its potential for recreational purposes. We wish to empower local authorities to reclaim their water sources and advance the health and livelihood of their communities.

“To clear Setumo Dam was an unprecedented technical and operational challenge, with far-reaching consequences for the rural community that relies on it,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “The project has not only confirmed BlueGreen’s ability to remediate lakes under the toughest conditions, but also improved water quality and water availability. Setumo Dam can now be used not only as a source of drinking water but also as a local attraction for recreation. The economic development possibilities in and around the lake are far-reaching.”

The outbreak at Setumo Dam was considered one of the worst cases in South Africa. The heavy load of blue-green algae was the result of decades of insufficiently treated sewage being released directly into the dam. The dam’s size and level of contamination had deemed it



“untreatable”.

BlueGreen’s treatment protocol was tailored to the unique conditions in Setumo Dam by BlueGreen’s field specialists. It also eliminated unpleasant taste and odour compounds from the drinking water.

“The unique situation we found in the field brought about two previously unaddressed challenges,” says Harel. “The first was the rural location and lack of basic infrastructure. This mandated an out-of-the-box logistical adaptation so that our treatment could be delivered timely and accurately.

“In addition, we encountered extreme biological conditions that rendered the entire dam a dead aquatic zone. Reviving the lake meant tailoring a specific treatment



protocol that would reverse infectious processes that have been dominating the dam for decades, and give a fighting chance to non-toxic species that would enhance the lake’s biodiversity. As time went by, changes became evident from treatment, not only in the colour of the water, but a clear change in the number of animals, primarily birds, approaching the water, as well as an increase in their diversity.

“Shortly before starting treatment, we witnessed the local community performing rituals that involved entering Setumo Dam’s toxic water. We saw some fishermen trying to catch the few small fish that survived the harsh conditions. We grasped how under-developed the area was, in spite of its amazing potential. And we realised that once cleaned,

we wouldn’t just improve the health and livelihood of the people around Setumo Dam, we would create a historical opportunity for local authorities to turn the lake into a place that could bring about much-needed development and prosperity.”

Asked if the company will work in South Africa again, Harel says, “As part of our work at Setumo Dam, we tried to establish an economic model that will allow us to repeat this in other under-developed areas in South Africa and around the world. We have established that a clean Setumo Dam saves the local community as much as 90% of their ongoing drinking water production cost! We hope that these findings will push other communities into action to reclaim and revive their water sources.

“Years of drought, pollution, growing population, and global warming have all contributed to South Africa’s deteriorating water availability and water quality,” he says. “Water has turned into a matter of national security. BlueGreen has made it part of its business to support local, rural communities, and establish their basic human right to clean water. Our means to remediate Setumo Dam’s water couldn’t have been put into play if not for the tremendous help of local government, including South Africa’s Department of Water and Sanitation and Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, local water boards (Sedibeng Water and Rand Water), as well as the active support of our local partners, AECI group and Capitol Air. This united effort and commitment by so many is heartwarming, and an encouraging indication of South Africa’s innate ability to overcome great challenges.”

Jurgens van Loggerenberg, the director of Africa for BlueGreen Water Technologies says, “The project has had a positive impacted on more than half a million lives as a direct result of improved water quality. Setumo Dam’s high cyanobacterial cell content [billions of cells per millilitre] far surpassed the levels deemed safe and approved by the World Health Organization and the South African Bureau of Standards.

“The heavy organic load was also disrupting the ability of the local water treatment plant to operate, increasing the overall costs substantially and keeping the final water quality well below national and international standards. This historical achievement is the result of a joint effort that included the Department of Water and Sanitation, Sedibeng Water, and Rand Water Analytical Services working together.”



THE BIG SHABBOS WALK

23 OCT 2021

3 - 5 pm

Walking on sunshine: It’s time to feel good!

Spring is in the air, the birds are chirping, and friends and families are gearing up for their Big Shabbos Walk!

End off your walk at an outdoor location, where our wonderful shuls will be providing refreshments and exciting outdoor activities – think picnics, sundowners, lawn games, kiddies’ stories, meditation circles, learning under the trees...

Look out for more details from your shul about activities on the day and organise your own walks with family and friends!

Big Shabbos Walks are happening all over town between 3pm and 5pm, so that everyone will be out in the streets together. It’s going to be magic!

For lots more ways to experience the magic of The Shabbos Project, visit www.theshabbosproject.com

“This is our chance to reconnect as a community - walking in the streets, greeting each other, feeling part of our special South African Jewish community.”

CHIEF RABBI *Warren Goldstein*

Keep it together safely

By now we all know what to do to be safe from the virus, so let’s do it! Look out for your special Shabbos Project masks.

Yiddish machzor finds its way back to family

TALI FEINBERG

When Shelley Hariri read that a Yiddish machzor originally printed in Vilna had been uncovered in Cape Town, she couldn't hold back the tears, realising that the owner, Jacob Dick, was her late grandfather.

"After reading the article, I was overwhelmed with emotion. A flash of more than 140 years of my family's history passed over me," says Hariri. She attributes the connection to "the power of journalism, which led to a series of events that unravelled within two weeks in September 2021".

The original article, published in the *SA Jewish Report* on 13 August 2021, explained that the machzor, printed in Yiddish in Vilna in 1876, had resurfaced in Cape Town just before the high holidays. The address of the owner was written inside, and was the same address that now houses a section of Cape Town Torah High (CTTH).

"The book was given to me by Peter Greenberg, who found it in a box of old Jewish books belonging to his late grandfather," says Rabbi Levi Silman, who collects old books and connected the dots between the machzor's owner and CTTH's address. He noticed that the owner had written his name, J. Dick, and his address, 29 Maynard Street, on the machzor. The address jumped out at Silman because his daughter spends much of her school day at CTTH Girls Campus at that address.

Silman was thrilled with the discovery, and gave the book to CTTH Principal Avi Shlomo to house in the school. That is, until Hariri contacted him from Israel. Says Hariri, "My sister, who lives in Johannesburg, received a call from our cousin who had read the article. She mentioned that Jacob Dick was written inside the machzor. On hearing this, it filled me with an eagerness to know more about an amazing, important, and historical find belonging to my late grandfather."

She immediately sent a message to the *SA Jewish Report's* Facebook page, asking for further information. The *SA Jewish Report* responded with all the information and contact details of the people involved.

Says Hariri, "My late mother, Julia Dick Ostilly, passed away 50 years ago. This machzor was a wonderful link to her and to my grandfather, who passed away in 1941. Jacob Dick was born in Lithuania in 1876. He settled in the Western Cape on his arrival in South Africa in 1903. My mother and her siblings were born in Calvinia. Sadly, they have all passed away.

"In the 1920s, they moved to Cape Town. One address I remember my mother speaking about was in Gardens. As a young girl, I remember my mother would tell me how her father would go down to the docks during World War II and invite British sailors for Friday night dinner. My mother described her father as a generous, simple, kind, and pious man. My uncle, Eli Dick, who lived in Oranjezicht, was a very well-known and respected member of the Jewish community."

Hariri reached out to everyone involved, including Greenberg. "Peter enabled me to join the dots. He had an old suitcase filled with Jewish books which belonged to his grandfather, Jacob Potashnik. He recalled that his grandparents were very friendly with the



Rabbi Avi Shlomo Hands over the machzor to Percy Choritz

Dick family. The Potashnik family also lived in Oranjezicht. Before making aliyah in the 1970s, Eli Dick, I assume, gave his friend, Mr Potashnik, the suitcase of Jewish books which he inherited from his father, Jacob Dick. Thus, the story unfolded, and came full circle.

"After corresponding with Rabbi Shlomo and proving that this machzor indeed belonged to Jacob Dick, it was returned to my cousin, Percy Choritz. Percy knew the Dick family for many years. I'm pleased that a relation of the Dick family received the machzor instead of it being sent in a package. Things are meant to be. On his return to Israel in February, Percy will give me the machzor."

Greenberg was delighted to hear that the machzor would be given to Hariri. "It seems right that it's being returned to the Dick family and also to Israel," he says.

"It was a beautiful ending to the story," Shlomo says.

"Percy Choritz and his wife Irene [who is the niece of Eli Dick] came and collected it. We put on tefillin together, and it was beautiful. The machzor has facilitated many good deeds and we used it in school to study from its unique commentary. So it's only appropriate that the story ends with another *mitzvah* – that of returning a lost item to its rightful owners."



"While there was definitely a sense of loss in sending it away as we felt so connected to it, we were thrilled it was going to the grandchildren of Jacob Dick who now had this priceless memento of their grandfather and his bygone world," he says. "We photographed the front pages and will frame them in a display at 29 Maynard Street, Jacob's home, and now part of Cape Town Torah High School - connected by Torah and *tefillah* for more than 100 years."

Silman was also deeply moved. "I always think that books, especially historical ones, should be where they have the greatest impact or where they can make the greatest difference," he says. "So if it goes back to family where they will cherish it and it will inspire them to use it more, then that's definitely where it should be. And it's always good that things find their original place and go back to their roots."

Writing to Shlomo and the staff of CTTH, Hariri said, "In honour and blessed memory of my late mother, Julia Dick Ostilly, and her late father, Jacob Dick, I thank you for returning this meaningful, religious, and historic machzor, which belonged to my late grandfather, Jacob Dick. There is one place in the world to which you don't escape nor immigrate – you come home to the land of Israel. As I live in Israel, I feel a relic of Jacob Dick has come home. My family will preserve this piece of heritage for generations to come."

Back to Africa: shlicha's journey comes full circle in Cape Town

TALI FEINBERG

Exactly 30 years ago, emissaries from the Jewish Agency came to Ethiopia to tell Batya Shmueli's family that "the way to Jerusalem is open". Soon after, at the age of 11, she made aliyah as part of Operation Solomon. Now, she has returned to the continent of her birth as a *shaliach* (emissary) of the Jewish Agency, closing the circle.

She and her husband, Hed Shmueli, and their three children arrived in Cape Town as *shlichim* the week before Pesach. She has taken on the role of aliyah and community *shlicha* while he is working as head of Israel education at United Herzlia Schools. With roots in Ethiopia, Romania, and Iraq, they bring the diversity of Israeli society to the southern tip of Africa.

"We always felt we would do *shlichut* in America or Canada," says Shmueli. "But when we met Cape Town community leaders Esta Levitas and Julie Berman, we immediately connected and knew this was the community for us."

It hasn't been a simple journey. "When we were told we could come to Israel, my father was 81 years old. Every Jew in Ethiopia had waited for this moment. It was the first time I saw my father cry," Shmueli recalls. The family had lived a difficult life, needing to hide their Jewish identity and battle for survival. While the flight was a moment of joy, adapting to life in Israel wasn't easy.

"We lived in a caravan near a small town in the Galilee. After living there for three years, I attended boarding school. It was a tremendous culture shock," she says. Wanting to blend in and be accepted, she threw off her family's religious values and tried to become a secular teenager. "I even made my hair blonde!" she laughs. She learned Hebrew quickly, and tried to distance herself from her parents and her past.

But after school, she finally started to embrace her history and identity as an Ethiopian Jew. She found out that it was members of the Israeli Navy along with Mossad who had come to Sudan to help Ethiopian Jews come to Israel, and became inspired to join the navy during her army service to "close the circle". Eventually, she served in the Israeli Navy with an elite naval commando unit.

"My father passed away before he could see me in uniform. So many people helped me in my journey in Israel. This was my opportunity to serve and give back," she says.

It was in the navy that she met Hed whose family came to Israel from Iraq and Romania. He also had a connection to Africa. "After tragically losing his father, who was only 51 years old, he decided to take himself on a journey to discover the world. Being an artist and sculptor, he spent time as a volunteer arts project leader in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, and learning traditional East-African wood carving in Kenya," says Shmueli.

"After returning to Israel, the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs sponsored an artists' mission to Dakar, Senegal. Hed was involved in co-ordinating and leading a group of Israeli artists sent as cultural representatives to Senegal for Israel's 60th birthday celebrations."

She also travelled after the army, spending a year in Los Angeles. It was there than she began to regret turning away from her identity and vowed "to return to my roots and culture".

"I cried a lot that year, thinking about the pain and loss that my parents' generation felt," Shmueli says. "I wanted to go back to Israel and explain who we are as Ethiopian Jews. I wanted to be the voice of my parents."

Returning to Israel, she realised she couldn't "wait to be invited" to share her story, she had to just start doing it. She began to address audiences, sharing Ethiopian Jewish customs, culture, and

cooking. She also got her Bachelor of Arts from Haifa University, where she studied teaching and the history of the Jewish people. She later received her Master's degree in the history of Israel and Jewish law.

She then developed a programme that taught students about leadership and responsibility. In 2009, she returned to Ethiopia with the Israeli foreign ministry to teach village women about entrepreneurship. For the past 11 years, she has been fundraising for new immigrant populations.

When deciding where to raise their family, the Shmuelis chose to settle in the beautiful artists' village of Ein Hod. It was a very secular community, however, so they decided to bring their passion for Judaism into the fold by commissioning a Sefer Torah for the village. It was made in the name of their late fathers, who had taught them to hold onto their Jewish heritage no matter what. "One thousand people came to the *hachnasat* [welcoming] Torah event," recalls Shmueli. "There were Israelis from every sector of society."

Eighteen years ago, they also opened their home to travellers hiking the Israel National Trail from the south to the north of Israel. Calling it "Avraham's Tent", they hosted more than 20 000 travellers.

The Shmuelis bring all of this passion and purpose with them to their *shlichut* in Cape Town. Their determination has seen them through delay in arrival as a result of the pandemic. In addition, their three children battled with being uprooted and being under lockdown.

"Israel is a country of children, and there is so much freedom for kids. So they have struggled, but we feel this is the best gift we can give them," says Shmueli. "We are showing them that they belong to the Jewish people, and to bring that opportunity for connection to others."

They believe they are in the right place at the right time. "After 20 minutes of talking to Esta and Julie, we looked at each other and said, 'This is the correct place for us'. It's a unique community with a unique history. This isn't just about a new job, it's something much deeper. We feel it's the time to support the Jewish community."

They have spent the past few months immersing themselves in the community and its organisations. "It's so unique. It's not every day that you see a community where all the Jewish children go to the same school and where there is so much support for everyone who needs it," she says.

Just like she was given so many opportunities when she started her new life in Israel, she wants to create awareness about the possibilities that Israel provides, especially for the younger generation. She wants to help the youth feel proud of their heritage and connection with Israel.

"I want to be a bridge between Israel and South Africa," she says. "We live our *shlichut* day and night, and are here for the community at any time. And we are here to learn from you too."

They plan to meet people from all walks of life, sharing the diversity of their family and Israeli society. "We won't apologise for who we are ... we stand strong," says Shmueli. At the same time, she encourages questions, discussion, and debate.

"The Ethiopian Jewish community never gave up on their dream of going to Jerusalem," she says. Being part of the generation that got to go back to Israel means that she sees her *shlichut* as a continuation of that journey. "To be back in Africa as Israelis for the Jewish community – I thank G-d for showing us the way."



Batya and Hed Shmueli with their children, Shneur, Noah, and Naomi

Accusations of antisemitism absurd, say Ben & Jerry’s founders

SHIRA HANAU – JTA

In an interview that aired on HBO, both of the founders of the Ben & Jerry’s ice cream brand reiterated that they stood behind the company’s decision to stop selling their products in the West Bank.

But for Jerry Greenfield, being accused of antisemitism is “painful”. For Ben Cohen, it’s “absurd”.

“Ben & Jerry’s and Unilever are being characterised as boycotting Israel, which isn’t the case at all. It’s not boycotting Israel in any way,” Greenfield said in an interview with Axios that aired on its HBO show on 10 October.

The Jewish duo, who founded the company in 1978, are no longer its owners, but they remain the most recognisable public faces of the company. They had previously defended the West Bank decision in a *New York Times* op-ed shortly after the move took place in July, but the Axios interview gave them a chance to expound on the human side of the aftermath.

“It’s a very emotional issue for a lot of people and I totally understand it. It’s a painful issue for a lot of people,” Greenfield said.

“Ben & Jerry’s and Unilever are being characterised as boycotting Israel, which isn’t the case at all. It’s not boycotting Israel in any way.”

They were also asked how it felt to be “wrapped up in accusations of antisemitism”.

“Totally fine,” Cohen said, laughing. “It’s absurd. What, I’m anti-Jewish? I’m a Jew! All my family is Jewish, my friends are Jewish.”

Ben & Jerry’s had long been engaged in social issues when it decided to pull its product from the West Bank after months of pressure from pro-Palestinian activists in the wake of Israel’s latest armed conflict with Gaza. The decision prompted calls to boycott Ben & Jerry’s and its parent company, Unilever, along with accusations of antisemitism from some pro-Israel activists. The state of Arizona divested nearly \$200 million (R2.9 billion) from Unilever in September, and several other states have since reviewed their investments in the conglomerate.

Unilever has also said in public statements that it doesn’t believe Ben & Jerry’s is boycotting the state of Israel, and that it plans to keep selling within the borders Israel established after the Six-Day War in 1967. However, Israeli law outlaws business that boycotts the West Bank, so it remains to be seen whether the company will be allowed to follow through with its plan.

When asked why Ben & Jerry’s continued to sell its ice cream in states with policies that aren’t in line with Cohen and Greenfield’s values – such as Texas, where access to abortion is now limited, and Georgia, where voting rights have been curtailed. Cohen didn’t have an answer.

“I don’t know. I mean it’s an interesting



question, I don’t know what that would accomplish, we’re working on those issues of voting rights and ... I don’t know. I think you ask a really good question, and I think I’d have to sit down and think about it for a bit,” Cohen said.

Greenfield suggested that the answer had to do with international law.

“One thing that’s different is that what Israel is doing is considered illegal by international law, so I think that’s a consideration,” Greenfield said.



SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER

Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies

Faculty of Humanities

The Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town seeks to appoint a Senior Research Officer (equivalent in rank to a Senior Lecturer) to further the social scientific study of Jews in South Africa.

Since its founding in 1979, the Centre has conducted a variety of sociological, demographic, and attitudinal studies. These include national studies of the South African Jewish population in 1991, 1998, 2005, and 2019; a national opinion survey in 2016; an intensive community study focused on Cape Town in 2018/9; a programme of oral history interviews; and a current project to track and quantify racism and antisemitism on social media in South Africa. The appointee will be expected to lead and develop this programme of research going forward.

The post is on the standard academic track, qualifies for ad hominem promotion, and is permanent (subject to the ongoing availability of funding.) It is hoped that the successful candidate will commence duties by January 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Requirements

- A PhD in sociology, demography, anthropology or a cognate discipline
- Evidence of proficiency, and training at graduate level, in quantitative and qualitative research methods
- A record of research involving the application of social scientific methods to the study of Jews and / or other ethnic and religious groupings, as well as familiarity with scholarship on sociological and demographic trends within Jewish populations.
- Evidence of ability to conceptualize and develop a coherent research agenda relevant to the focus of the Centre, and to lead and manage research studies

Advantageous:

- Experience of post-graduate supervision
- An active record of publication

Responsibilities:

The appointee will be responsible for conceptualizing, designing, coordinating, and managing all social scientific projects undertaken by the Centre. In addition, the successful candidate will be expected to maintain a productive record of scholarship and publication, to provide occasional supervision to students at the graduate level, and to participate fully in the intellectual life of Centre and in the broader field of Jewish Studies. For willing candidates, opportunities for teaching may be offered.

Informal inquiries may be sent to: adam.mendelsohn@uct.ac.za

The 2021 annual cost of employment for Senior Research Officer (equivalent to Senior Lecturer level), including benefits, is R921,012.

To apply, please e-mail the below documents in a **single pdf file** to Ian Petersen at recruitment02@uct.ac.za

- UCT Application Form (download at <http://forms.uct.ac.za/hr201.doc>)
- Cover letter
- Curriculum Vitae (CV), including the names of three referees and their email addresses
- A writing sample of between 6000 – 10 000 words on a relevant topic

Please ensure the title and reference number are indicated in the subject line.

An application which does not comply with the above requirements will be regarded as incomplete. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Telephone: +27 21 650 3162 **Website:** <http://www.kaplancentre.uct.ac.za/>

Reference number: E210346 **Closing date:** 15 November 2021

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UCT reserves the right not to appoint.

Allan Greenblo: a story that ended too soon

TALI FEINBERG

A Cape Town boy with a Joburger’s drive, Allan Greenblo was a pioneering journalist, editor, and publisher who always landed on his feet. Filled with optimism and ambition, he wasn’t yet done when he died suddenly at the age of 76 on 11 October 2021.

Growing up in the Mother City, Greenblo attended Wynberg and Westerford schools. He studied at the University of Cape Town, where he was a member of the student representative council. He found his calling in financial journalism, where he became editor at *Financial Mail*. He was with the publication for 11 years before breaking away to co-found *Finance Week*. Punching above its weight, the publication was a thorn in the side of many.

Carolyn Raphaely, former *Finance Week* features editor, says, “It’s probably not surprising that Allan had a life-long love affair with bulldogs – he was a bit of a bulldog himself. One of the feistiest, most doggedly determined journalists I’ve ever met, he would gnaw at a story like a dog at a bone until he finally unearthed the truth. Allan was an early corruption-buster, muckraker, and investigative journalist long before investigative journalism became fashionable, and truly understood what it meant to follow the money.

“He was also incredibly supportive of his staff’s attempts to unearth a good story,” she says. “He had an excellent sense of humour, and always managed to extract the best from a small team of eccentric journalists – including his economics editor, a former acrobat, who took regular walks along the fifth floor window ledge of *Finance Week*’s Rissik Street office. She took pleasure in knocking on his office window to give him a fright, particularly when he was on deadline! I feel immensely grateful for the privilege of working with him and for everything he taught me about tenacity, pursuing the truth, and exposing injustice.”

Greenblo was then appointed the first managing director of BDFM, at the time a joint venture between the *Financial Times*

of London and the local media group now known as Arena Holdings. Once again, he adapted to a new role without missing a beat.

“I had been editor of the *Financial Mail* since that January,” says columnist Peter Bruce. “I liked Allan immediately, and really enjoyed working with him. He was always encouraging and quick with praise when it was warranted. He made an effort not to interfere, which must have been hard for a journalist turned manager.

“We had only one falling out. I took my wife to a slap-up dinner at the Westcliff Hotel, and we both had the lobster. I tried to expense it based on the fact that I had been working hard for weeks and had barely had time to talk to her. He refused the expense claim, and I think I sulked for a while. But he was, of course, right. He had a big brain and a big heart.”

Business editor Tim Cohen says, “Allan Greenblo was a remarkable force in journalism in South Africa, full of the best kind of contradictions. He was easy-going yet determined; he was full of understanding yet relentlessly quizzical; he was deeply thoughtful yet full of light and fun. In all of these things, he was a rarity not only as a journalist but a person, underpinned not by deep ideological concerns but by a broader humanity and intellectualism.”

In 2005, Greenblo started *Today’s Trustee*, a quarterly magazine aimed at serving the principal officers and trustees of South African retirement funds. “I knew Allan for more than 15 years, and was always humbled whenever he asked me to contribute to editorial in *Today’s Trustee* or speak at the many conferences he arranged,” says Teri Solomon.

“Allan was kind, always engaging, a consummate professional, and an absolute gentleman,” she says. “He was, above all, an outstanding financial journalist dedicated to



Allan Greenblo

the pursuit of integrity, transparency, and accountability in an often murky industry. He always called it like it was, and never shied away from controversy. Indeed, he tackled some very difficult topics, but he did so head on, with clarity, logic, and just plain common sense.

“*Today’s Trustee* was his passion,” she says. “The magazine, which went from a printed version to now fully digital, is an indispensable publication for the retirement-fund industry, and an incredible source of information and educational content for trustees, principal officers, and chairpersons like myself. I hope the publication will continue, and by doing so, will continue to honour Allan’s legacy.”

A defining moment in his career was when Greenblo wrote an unauthorised biography of Sol Kerzner to be published by Jonathan Ball in 1997. It was effectively banned by the courts at the last moment. Chief executive at Jonathan Ball Publishers, Eugene Ashton, recalls, “I met Allan more than 20 years ago, in our offices in Denver, Johannesburg, where Jonathan Ball and Allan would be locked in day-long meetings dealing with the intricacies of the Kerzner legal action.

“Allan remained resolute that it was an important book, a book that was, in effect, a study of South African business during apartheid. At the same time he was – much like Jonathan – certain that we should ensure that all legal obstacles were cleared before publication, if that were ever possible. As

lockdown hit last year, our conversations became more frequent. There was – and is – a book that should be published. It’s my view that the injunction served to prevent publication wouldn’t stand today. This doesn’t change the fact that there are two court orders against publication.”

On 8 October, Ashton and Greenblo met for breakfast at Teta Mari in Illovo. “We talked about politics, about Churchill, about marriage, the joys of the Kruger Park, and why we stay in South Africa. We also talked Kerzner, picking at the Gordian knot – where to next?” But that question might never be answered with Greenblo’s passing.

Greenblo won Afrox and Sanlam awards for financial journalism; worked as a South African advisor to the FTSE (Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index); and, in 2019, received the Sanlam financial journalism award for lifetime achievement.

Besides his career, he found a passion for Judaism. “About 18 years ago, he started to study every week,” remembers Rabbi David Masinter of Chabad House in Johannesburg. “Every Wednesday, he and Robbie Brozin would have a shiur. He had an insatiable appetite to study and learn. It was a journey, and it led him to put on tefillin every day, and come to shul every week. As a critical thinker, he understood that he may not be able to get all the answers, but he felt that there was something ‘very right’ in his Jewish heritage. He was a fantastic husband to Riana and father to Mia, and he loved his dogs. He wanted to do a lot more to help fix the country.”

Brozin says, “We used to play squash together for about 15 years, and then both our knees gave in, so we started walking. The weekly shiur was an absolute highlight in his life and mine. He kept it going.”

“He was an icon of journalism,” Brozin says. “He was a journalist’s journalist. He really understood how journalism and publishing worked, how to follow a good story. And I think towards the end, he was distraught with the corruption that was happening in South Africa. Yet he always felt positive. He definitely fulfilled his mission in the world.”

Farewell to the tenacious “bulldog” of journalism

TRIBUTE

NEIL JACOBSON



It was in my former role at the media group then known as Times Media Limited that Allan and I fully crossed paths, although as journalists, we had touched sides over the years. And very quickly, I learned that if there was one word to describe Allan, that word was “tenacious”.

I was moved to read a comment by another member of our journalistic era, and one of Allan’s former colleagues, Alec Hogg, now the founder and editor of *BizNews*. Alec noted that Allan’s Twitter handle was @Harrybulldog. While named after his favourite pet, it perfectly sums up the Allan we worked alongside: once his teeth were into a story or an issue that needed tackling, he simply wouldn’t let go. Tenacious indeed!

He’s been quite rightly described as one of the doyens of South African financial journalism, a tribute well earned. Few journalists could claim to equal Allan’s encyclopaedic knowledge of South Africa’s financial and business community.

When he was managing editor of BDFM (the company that jointly owned *Business Day* and the *Financial Mail*) we served together on that board. The owners at that stage were Times Media and Pearsons, the United Kingdom-based Financial Times group. Allan’s contribution on the board, whether in Johannesburg or London, was focused,

unwavering, and positive. He cared passionately about the quality of journalism and the publications he managed, and was always prepared to rattle management cages when it came to defending that quality.

His involvement in journalism was lifelong. For many years, he worked on the weekly *Financial Mail*, but then in 1979, he co-founded a feisty competitor, *Finance Week*, which quickly earned a reputation as an independent and fearless scrutineer of the South African business scene, breaking many major financial stories. It was his tenacity after he left BDFM that led him not into retirement, but to become writer and editorial director of *Today’s Trustee* magazine, focusing on the critically important retirement industry. He worked on this and his other pet journalism projects right up to his death on Monday, 11 October 2021, after falling seriously ill the day before.

Condolences to his family, especially Liana, his wife of more than 39 years, and daughter Mia.

• *Neil Jacobson is the former managing editor of Business Day, and the former deputy chief operating officer of Times Media Group.*

Beautiful World, Where Are You? not headed to Israel soon

BEN SALES – JTA

Bestselling author Sally Rooney won’t allow her recently published novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* to be published in Hebrew by an Israeli press because she supports a cultural boycott of Israel.

Like the acclaimed Irish author’s first two books, *Beautiful World* explores the life and romance of intellectual, urbane millennials. It debuted at the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list when it was published in September, following a publicity campaign that came on the heels of Rooney’s popular second novel, *Normal People*, which was also adapted into a TV series.

That publicity campaign, however, won’t be reaching Israel. The Hebrew-language publisher of Rooney’s first two books, Modan Publishing House, told *Haaretz* last month that Rooney didn’t give it the rights to her new book because she supports an Israel boycott.

In a statement on Tuesday, 12 October, Rooney said that though she wouldn’t sell the Hebrew-language rights to an Israel-based publisher, she would be open to publishing it in Hebrew with a non-Israeli press or one that complies with the boycott’s guidelines. Whether that’s possible is unclear as the Hebrew publishing industry is centred in Israel, the only country where Hebrew is an official language.

Rooney, 30, has been open about her opposition to Israel. In July, soon after the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Rooney was one of thousands of artists to sign a letter accusing Israel of apartheid and calling for its international isolation. The letter called for “an end to the support provided by global powers to Israel and its military; especially the United States”, and for governments to “cut trade, economic and cultural

relations”.

Rooney’s characters generally have leftist politics, and her books invoke Israel in that context. In *Normal People*, the main characters attend a protest against Israel during the 2014 Gaza War. And in Rooney’s debut novel, *Conversations with Friends*, a character named



Bobbi talks about how relationships are about power, but people instead focus on “niceness”. She then says, “I mean this is an issue in public discourse. We end up asking like, is Israel ‘nicer’ than Palestine.”

Rooney isn’t the first prominent author to refuse to publish a book with an Israeli press. In 2012, Alice Walker, who also supports the movement to boycott Israel, wouldn’t allow *The Color Purple* to be translated by an Israeli publisher.

Ireland has a history of pro-Palestinian sentiment owing to what many Irish citizens see as a cultural link to their struggle against the British. This summer, the country passed a motion condemning “de facto annexation” of Palestinian land. In 2018, Dublin’s city council passed resolutions endorsing a boycott of Israel and calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland.

Libya’s destroyed Jewish graveyards being rebuilt online

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

During a visit to his native Libya in 2002, David Gerbi saw something that he says still haunts him almost 20 years later. “I was horrified to see children playing atop the ruins of the Tripoli Jewish cemetery, scampering about debris littered with human remains,” Gerbi, who left Libya many years ago for Italy, told the *Behdrei Haredim* news site in Israel last week.

The experience turned Gerbi into an advocate for what are known as heritage sites in his old community. But over the years, his efforts to preserve or restore communal Jewish sites in war-torn Libya, where no Jews remain, came to naught.

So Gerbi began to consider alternatives. And now, the psychologist who lives in Rome has announced a new effort to set up a virtual cemetery to replace each of the physical Jewish ones that have been devastated in his country of birth.

“Especially in Tripoli and Benghazi, the Jewish cemeteries were obliterated,” he told the news site. “So I decided to make a virtual cemetery for our loved ones buried in Libya.”

The virtual cemeteries will have sections for prominent rabbis and commemorative pages for victims of the Holocaust – hundreds of Libyan Jews died in concentration camps operated by Nazi-allied Italy – as well as other pages recalling

the victims of three waves of pogroms, in 1945, 1948, and 1967, he said.

Users of the website will be able to light memorial candles virtually and dedicate Kaddish mourning prayers through the website interface. “It will be a way to remember the dead of a community gone extinct,” Gerbi said.

The initiative is a collaboration with ANU – The Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, which seeks to document the experiences of Jews around the globe and over time. Together, they’re asking people with information about

Gerbi’s effort is narrower, focusing exclusively on the cemeteries of Libya, where, during World War II, 40 000 Jews lived in communities with a centuries-long history.

The Holocaust and the antisemitic policies of the independent Libyan government that followed, as well as hostility toward Jews by the local population, drove all of them out. By 2004, Libya didn’t have a single Jew residing in it, according to Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust museum.

Gerbi’s family was part of that migration. They fled Libya in 1967 when he was 12 years old, making them among the last Jews to leave the country. By 1969, the country had only 100 Jews.

The decades that followed, under the iron-fisted rule of dictator Muammar el-Qaddafi, offered few opportunities for preservation. But the central government collapsed after he was overthrown and executed in 2011, and the last decade has been marked by intermittent fighting among clans and militias with competing claims to leadership.

While those conditions have been harsh for Libyans, Gerbi said he hopes the shake-up could eventually give rise to a government that would be willing to address the country’s Jewish history and possibly normalise relations with Israel, as other Arab nations in the region have done in the past year. But he knows that could take many years, and he has essentially given up hope of having officials

“Especially in Tripoli and Benghazi, the Jewish cemeteries were obliterated.”

facilitate physical restoration work in the near future, Gerbi told *Behadrei Haredim*. The situation of those sites was poor even before Libya erupted into civil war, he said.

It’s been 19 years since his visit to Tripoli’s Jewish cemetery, but “the gruesome sights and chilling images I saw won’t let go of me”, he said. In 2007, Gerbi visited the site again, “and I was shocked to discover that even the debris had been cleared out. They built a highway on the ruins of the Jewish cemetery and high-rise buildings. There’s isn’t a shred left.”

In Benghazi, Gerbi saw a warehouse full of boxes with human remains stuffed into them haphazardly. They had been collected from another Jewish cemetery before it was destroyed, he said.

Old synagogues are also at risk, said Gerbi, a prominent member of the World Organisation of the Jews of Libya, which promotes the interests of people whose families have roots in Libya.

Earlier this year, he told Italian media that an abandoned and ancient synagogue in Tripoli is being turned into an Islamic religious centre without permission.

“The Sla Dar Bishi in Tripoli is in the hands of the local authorities [read: militias] since there is now no Jew living in Tripoli,” he told *Moked*, the Italian Jewish news site.

“It was decided to violate our property and our history,” he wrote. “The plan clearly is to take advantage of the chaos and our absence.”



A high-rise building stands on what used to be the Jewish cemetery of Tripoli, Libya, in 2007

Jews buried in Libya to reach out. Their effort is in line with other initiatives that aim to rebuild extinct Jewish communities online because their former homes are so inhospitable to restoration efforts, such as Diarna, a massive website that allows users to explore the cities in North Africa and the Middle East where Jews used to live.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Rebuilding hope and rewarding service



This week, we have been hard at work finalising the upcoming South African Jewish Board of Deputies national conference, to take place on Sunday, 17 October, from 16:00 to 18:00.

The theme of the conference is “Hope and Recovery”, and as the title indicates, the focus will be on rebuilding following the testing and often traumatic events of the past two years. To share the challenges as well as the path of hope and recovery in areas of crucial concern, we have a panel of experts comprising Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana, Eskom Chief Executive Andre de Ruyter, and Advocate Wim Trengove. We are further privileged to host Ambassador Ronald Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress, and Israel’s Minister of Diaspora Affairs Nachman Shai, both of whom will be speaking.

The Board’s national conferences are also an opportunity to honour community members who have made a particularly noteworthy contribution to society, whether to the country as a whole or South African Jewry specifically. Since 1999, we have recognised those who have advanced the cause of human rights and democracy. The scope of the award, now called the Rabbi Cyril and Ann Harris Humanitarian Award, includes those involved in social outreach and upliftment work.

This year, it will be presented to Natie and Francis Kirsh and family in recognition of the unfailingly generous support they have provided to our community and our country over many years, but particularly during the COVID-19 period.

For those who have excelled in communal service, we will be presenting the Eric Samson Mendel Kaplan Award. Two presentations are made, one to a lay leader and the other to a professional. In the “lay” category, the recipients are Professor Barry Schoub and Dr Richard Friedland, two leading medical experts who during the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown extraordinary commitment and played such a pivotal role in guiding

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

ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



our community. In the “professional” category, we will honour Vivienne Anstey, the exemplar of a thoroughly professional, innovative Jewish public servant for more than 30 years, and Uriel Rosen, Hatzolah’s operations manager and the originator of its Wellness Monitoring Programme that has been so transformative in helping those suffering from COVID-19.

Please join us for what promises to be a fascinating conversation about how to move forward and rebuild. To register, go to <https://www.corpcam.com/SAJBD17102021>

#MakeUsCount events

Along with preparing for conference, the Board has been running its #MakeUsCount pre-election awareness campaign. During the past week, our Gauteng, Cape Town, and Durban branches have hosted lively and well attended “Great Debates” between representatives of the main competing parties. At the time of writing, Gauteng is preparing for a second event, a webinar with leading political journalist Stephen Grootes in conversation with political and election experts and analysts Wayne Sussman, Nompumelelo Runji, and Dr Ralph Mathekga. I look forward to updating you about further #MakeUsCount events in the days leading up to the municipal elections on 1 November.

This being my last Above Board before my term as National Chair comes to an end, I take this opportunity of recording how great an honour it has been to serve our community for the past four years and wishing my successor everything of the best.

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

Challah – bread of Jewish men’s affliction

There are many reasons why it isn’t easy to be a Jewish male. Expectation of performance begins at eight days, and hardly eases up until we shuffle off the mortal coil, well ahead of our time, exhausted from the effort and stress of it all.

The expectations are seemingly without end. We need to make our parents proud, we need to provide for our families, to be good husbands and better fathers, and we need to have run at least one marathon in a far-flung city by the time we are 45.

We need to be able to sing in front of the community at our Barmitzvahs, just when we are at our most awkward and when our voices are the most unreliable. We need to be able to intone anything at any given time.

And then, on the one night of the week when we can relax, we are required to cut the challah with the precision of a surgeon, the speed of Usain Bolt, and we need to do so while everyone watches in hungry expectation.

Following the kiddush prayer and the ritualistic washing of hands, there is a period of silence. With no speaking until the eating of the challah, it’s one of the most underrated aspects of being a Jewish male. It’s a moment that represents almost every aspect of “Jewish maleness”, and it happens week after week after week. Why?

Because no matter what, it will be done wrong. The slices will be too thick. Or thin. Or the wrong challah would have been selected. Too much, too little salt will have been added. And the challah serving plate will have been passed in the wrong direction. Eyes will be rolled, lips pursed, and heads will be slowly shaken. From side. To side. To side.

A Jewish male it would seem, cannot please a Jewish woman.



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

I have asked around. A friend’s wife told me that she can’t stand the way he cuts the challah, and prefers to do it herself. “He just can’t get it right. It’s got so bad that I hardly even let him carve the meat.”

She even went as far as to buy an electric carving knife, which she used before he got home from work on a Friday so that he didn’t need to. It might be worth mentioning that when he’s not “butchering” the challah, he’s a well-respected surgeon. At least he made his parents proud.

And there are those who are too precise for their own good. My father-in-law is one such case. Each piece of challah is measured to perfection. Sliced the way through, and then checked in case any remnants of attachment to the piece before remains, before moving on to slice number two. And so on.

Generally, we like to start Shabbat on Wednesday when visiting, as it takes about that long before we get to eat. All while we sit in silence.

The slicing of challah is the most underrated aspect of being a Jewish male. It carries with it all the expectation along with all the disappointment of generations of men who have failed before them.

It’s a moment that’s shared in all households across the Jewish world week after week. It bonds Jewish women to the past, and will link them to their great granddaughters, who will one day share knowing looks with their sisters as they watch their husband “butcher” the challah, just as their father did.

King David schools victorious at Israel Quiz once again

Students at King David High School Linksfield and King David High School Victory Park brought the Israel Quiz trophy home for the sixth consecutive year on 5 October. The quiz, hosted by the Israel Centre South Africa, is participated in by students from Jewish high schools around Johannesburg.

Following a preliminary round, King David proudly filled nine of the 10 finalist places. Mazaltov to Romy Zeifert in Grade 10 at King David Linksfield, who won first place. Mazaltov to Liana Wes – second place (Grade 9, KDHPV); Megan Gruzd – third place (Grade 11, KDHPV); Daniel Kapeluschnik – fourth place (Grade 9, KDHPV); Dina Levy – fifth place (Grade 10, KDHL); Saul Gelbart; Hannah Evan; Gilana Rubinstein; and Dina Scop.

King David schools welcome the opportunity for our students to participate in events like these which educate and instil a love of Israel, perpetuating the Zionist values of our schools.

Romy Zeifert from King David High School Linksfield won first place at the 2021 Israel Quiz



Rogoff does Yeshiva proud

The tension was tangible as Yeshiva College Grade 10 pupil Avigal Rogoff went head-to-head with nine other finalists in the nail-biting finale of the Israel Quiz on 5 October after weeks of preparation. The competition was fierce, but that didn’t stop Avigal from doing Yeshiva proud.



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be daunting. The complexities of understanding the multitude of legal and tax implications coupled with language and cultural issues sometimes makes even thinking about a "Plan B" a non-starter.

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"After my first fight, the first competition, the

"I think it's a better style for a girl. She does box and does kickboxing, but she's not



Said her father, "She's extremely

"My dream is to be a world champion and a black belt," she said. "I was also thinking of being an astronaut because I love space, or a palaeontologist because I like dinosaurs, so I'm not really sure about it yet."

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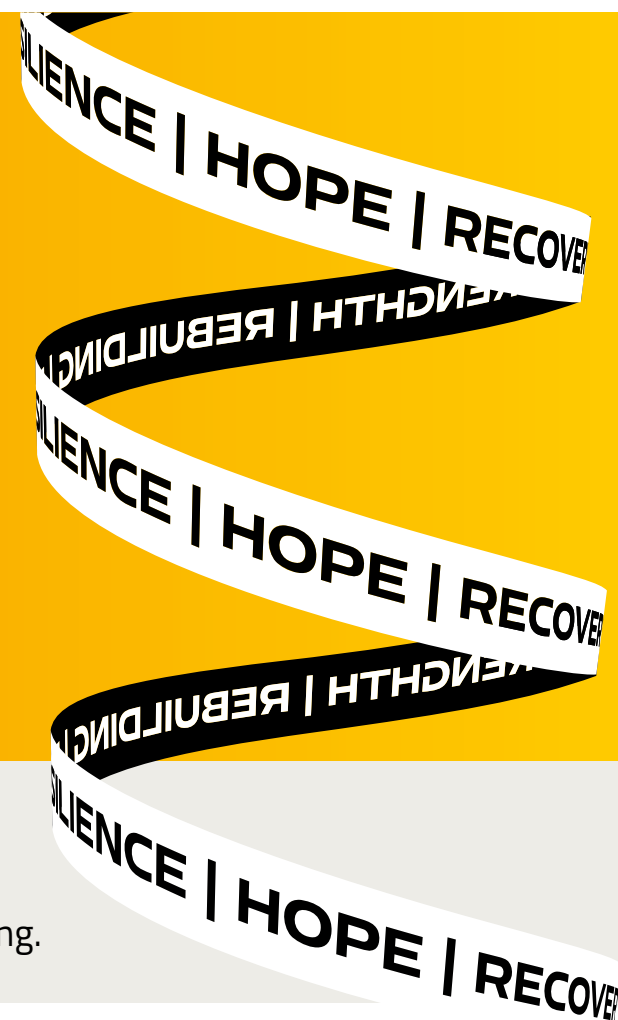
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Panel discussion

The speakers will share the challenges as well as the path of hope and recovery in their respective fields.



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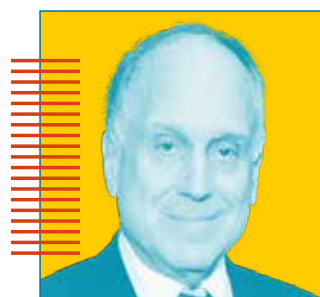
Group Chief Executive Officer
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