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# South African Jewish Report

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## Hostage crisis hits close to home for Cape Town rabbi

TALI FEINBERG

It was the middle of the night when Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation's (Temple Israel's) Rabbi Greg Alexander (Rabbi Greg) heard that a fellow faith leader was being held hostage in a Texas shul on Saturday, 15 January.

Although the shocking event was unfolding across the oceans, it hit hard as he realised he knew the rabbi being held hostage.

in 2001 when we lived in Jerusalem," recalls Rabbi Greg. "Andi and Rabbi Charlie's wife, Adena, studied together at the liberal Bet Midrash on King David Street. Rabbi Charlie was a rabbinical student. We spent some Shabbatot together, and stayed in touch when they went back to the United States and we moved to London.

"We met them at the height of the Second Intifada when there were bombings in Jerusalem," he says. "It was a time of fear and uncertainty then, and I can't imagine what it must have felt like now to be in that synagogue, or

reached out to local Muslim communities and hosted them for Ramadan." Temple Israel has done the same.

As the hostage crisis unfolded during an online Shabbat service, Rabbi Greg was alerted to the news a million miles away in time and place, late on Saturday night (South African time).

"We found out while Rabbi Charlie was still being held with the other hostages in the synagogue. The network of progressive rabbis around the world were all sharing what little information they could find, and we watched with

horror to see what would unfold. Many people davened for their safe release. Of course, you immediately think of your own shul, wondering if it could happen to you. We are blessed in South Africa not to have experienced the levels of antisemitic violence we have seen in Europe or America, but that doesn't mean it can't happen here. Please G-d it won't, ever."

At times like this, "his synagogue could be any synagogue," he says. "When something happens to one of us, it happens to all of us." In fact, when Rabbi Greg posted on Facebook that he was praying for the safety of Cytron-Walker, a local Chabad rabbi commented on his post, "We are all praying for their safe release. Please G-d we will hear good news soon."

Rabbi Greg says Cytron-Walker is "the definition of a good guy – a mensch of the first order. He's

kind, generous, and quick with a smile. As a rabbi, he has always emphasised peace work, social justice, and interfaith work. Everyone has commented on how calm and unflappable he was throughout the crisis."

He says this isn't the time to lose hope in connecting with other communities. "We will continue to reach out to our interfaith partners to build bridges of understanding in our local community."

Asked if he ever imagined something like this happening in the shul of a fellow rabbi, Rabbi Greg says, "I'm well aware of how incidents of unapologetic Jew-hatred have increased in the world in the past decade. Ten years ago, nobody thought we would be living through this kind of violence and verbal attacks, but it's now sadly commonplace."

In fact, after the deadly Pittsburgh attack in which 11 Jews were murdered in the Tree of Life Synagogue on 27 October 2018, Cytron-Walker wrote to people from other communities who had supported his congregation by expressing their grief.

"When I heard about the deadly attack in the middle of our Sabbath service, the feeling was all too familiar," he wrote at the time. "The emptiness and the pain, the anger and the helplessness. Too many times in Jewish history we faced tragedy without love or support. Too many times to count, we were left to pick up the pieces of tragedy and destruction. Believe me, the love and support matters. It's something we all should be able to expect of each other. Thank you for helping us through these dark times. Thank you for standing together. When it comes to hatred and violence, we must all stand together."

In the aftermath of his own ordeal, he once again thanked others for their support. "I'm thankful and filled with appreciation for all the vigils, prayers, love, and support, all the law enforcement and first responders who cared for us, all the security training that helped save us. I'm grateful for my family. I'm grateful for the CBI [Congregation Beth Israel] community, the Jewish community, the human community. I'm grateful that we made it out. I'm grateful to be alive."

His words echo that of a psalm which Rabbi Greg says is one to remember at this time. "Psalm 116: 7-11 from the full Hallel in Rabbi Edward Feld's beautiful translation in Siddur Lev Shalem reads: "Be at ease; I said to myself, 'for Hashem has done this for you.' You have saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I shall walk in G-d's presence in the land of the living."

"I hope Rabbi Charlie and the congregants taken hostage can ease their hearts with Hallel psalms," Rabbi Greg says. "There's nothing like *tehillim* for articulating how it feels to be freed from terrible danger."



Photo: Andy Jacobs/AF/ via Getty Images

A police vehicle sits outside of the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, some 25 miles west of Dallas, 16 January 2022

"Suddenly the world felt small again. It took a moment to register that this was happening," says Rabbi Greg. Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and his congregants escaped around the same time that an elite FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) hostage rescue team breached the Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, after an 11-hour standoff. The hostage-taker, Malik Faisal Akram, was killed. "My wife, student rabbi Andi, and I met Rabbi Charlie

for her watching and waiting..."

"We haven't seen Charlie or Adena for nearly 20 years even though we have followed each other online, and have gone in similar directions in our rabbinic work," he says. "They are such amazing people, and are working every day for a better world. It's so important to know in talking about this attack that of the many social-justice causes he initiated, his synagogue has specifically

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# Israel hatred sours drawn-out Clover strike

NICOLA MILTZ

Israel is being used as a political football by striking workers, unions, and the anti-Israel lobby in the protracted domestic labour dispute with Clover, which has entered its ninth week.

Clover was acquired in 2019 by a consortium called Milco SA, which is led by Central Bottling Company (CBC). CBC is an Israeli-based manufacturer and distributor of soft drinks, dairy products, and alcoholic beverages.

The merger was complicated from day one as anti-Israel lobbyists attempted to scupper the much-needed R4.8 billion deal.

Essentially, when the merger was unfolding, Clover

made commitments to the South African competition authorities to create more jobs and protect existing jobs. However, the company has now embarked on a series of retrenchments arising from the restructuring of its operations.

Disgruntled workers have downed tools for nearly 10 weeks in protest over, among other things, restructuring, non-payment of bonuses, retrenchments, job losses arising from crippling factory closures, salary cuts, and working conditions that have allegedly worsened over the past two years.

It's messy, and the relationship between workers, unions, and Clover may sour further with no end in sight. The anti-Israel lobby has jumped on board from the start, lending its voice to the strikes.

It should be noted that job losses were identified by Clover before Milco approached it with a merger proposal.

Trade unions representing Clover workers, including the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA) and the Food and Allied Workers Union, said hundreds of workers had already been dismissed, while hundreds more had accepted voluntary severance packages. They said more jobs were under threat.

Clover has reportedly said it has "explored all possible avenues to minimise retrenchments", but cannot avoid lay-offs.

In a statement, the company said retrenchments were "necessary to enhance Clover's resilience for the benefit of its collective stakeholders". The company, it said, "had been subject to a difficult trading cycle for several years, where economic growth has been poor, costs have generally been rising above inflation, and consumer spending has been subdued. COVID-19 has added to these pressures and the uncertainty faced."

Striking Clover workers marched through the Johannesburg city centre on 18 January, stripping Clover products from shop shelves including places like Checkers, and leaving them in shopping trolleys.

Last week, there were similar scenes of chaos at shops such as Pick n Pay selling Clover products in Observatory, Cape Town.

Among many demands, the workers are insisting that the company stop plans for further retrenchments and

reinstate all workers. They also want it to be independent of the Israeli CBC. Calls have also been made for nationalisation of the company.

Political economist Phumlani Majozi said that while workers had a constitutional right to mobilise and push for their demands, it was important to look at what motivated this particular strike.

"The matter has been politicised, which is a bad approach from our unions, but it's not surprising. Any labour dispute shouldn't be politicised because then the dispute gets tainted. Going into the issue of Israel and Palestine isn't going to help their members secure jobs," Majozi said.

"Going into shops and causing chaos will obviously have a negative impact on Clover, and this will definitely have an impact on jobs and there will be more job losses. It's sad that this issue is being politicised, and it's sad there are some politically motivated movements that have joined in the strike to push their agenda. It's disappointing."

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) this week said it was "disturbed" by the "trite attempt" by the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement to exploit a South African labour dispute to pursue its own nefarious, antisemitic agenda.

SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin told the *SA Jewish Report*, "The retrenchments and wage cuts which have brought about the strike are, for BDS, merely an afterthought in its fervent pursuit of demonising Israel in cases where the connection can only be described as diluted."

Polovin said Clover was owned by a subsidiary of Israel's CBC, and it was patent that at its core, this was a local labour dispute.

"Lacklustre attempts by BDS have been made in an attempt to shoehorn Israel into the fray of this matter by stating unfounded conspiracy theories. Chief among these bizarre allegations is that Israeli companies are attempting to flood the market with Israeli dairy products in order to destroy local industry, akin to cases that are already plaguing the global South," he said.

"Furthermore, BDS has accused Israel's CBC of



breaking international law, this claim of course being made without justification. These allegations are entirely baseless, and one can quickly deduce the true intentions of the BDS when they are forwarded."

Political analyst Daniel Silke said industrial action in South Africa including strikes and worker unrest applied across a variety of industries and companies, so it wasn't necessarily peculiar to a company with Israeli ownership or shareholding.

"However, the fact that there's an Israeli connection certainly makes Clover a little more susceptible to industrial action," Silke said.

"Trade unions here are vehemently anti-Israel and take a pro-BDS standpoint. The Israeli connection adds a degree of militancy and mobilisation to any kind of industrial action. Companies with an Israeli connection will find that if there is industrial action, it could take on more sinister or difficult global overtones rather than just being a domestic industrial or labour issue."

Labour expert Sara Gon from the Institute of Race Relations said that in terms of the Labour Relations Act, a company was entitled to restructure if it was inefficient, costly, or overstaffed. "This is contrary to what's being said in public-sector strikes, where the impression has been given that restructuring and retrenching is unlawful."

She said management was entitled to embark on these actions if it believed it would benefit the larger company.

However, a company has to consult with employees and/or their representative trade unions and justify its actions and consider the views of employee

Continued on page 11>>

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## Torah Thought

### Two sides to the Ten Commandments

This week we read the portion of Yisro, which contains one the most famous passages of the Torah – the Ten Commandments. We read of the build-up, the aftershock, and the actual giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Of the Ten Commandments, the first two were spoken by G-d and the other eight by Moses. In the Book of Psalms, King David refers to this, and says, "one did G-d speak, two were heard". The Talmud explains this to mean that G-d spoke the first two commandments simultaneously, but as this was incomprehensible to us, He repeated them as two separate commandments. As the creator of man, G-d was well aware of human constraints, so why did He speak both commandments at once if He knew He would have to repeat them?

The Torah comprises a total of 613 commandments broken down into two categories. There are 248 positive commandments that we must act upon such as putting on tefillin, family purity, and making kiddush on Shabbat. The other 365 are "negative" commandments that inform us what we must refrain from, such as prohibited actions on Shabbat and non-kosher food. This division is echoed in the first two Ten Commandments. The first commandment is positive – we must express our belief in one G-d – and the second is negative – we must refrain from worshipping other gods.

Fulfilling the different mitzvot also has different effects. A positive commandment draws down positive energy into this world, making the world a better place to live in with

blessings and spiritual light. The reward for negative mitzvot is the removal of negativity – reducing evil in the world and removing sickness, suffering, war, and spiritual darkness.

When G-d spoke the first two commandments at the same time, then repeated them separately, He was teaching us that although the commandments seem to differ in their form and effect, they are essentially one and the same – to make the world a better place. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, positive or negative, G-d is teaching us that there's a way to bring blessing and goodness into the world.

Rabbi Pini Pink,  
Chabad Greenstone



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# 'Happy-go-lucky' twins' tragic deaths raises questions

NICOLA MILTZ

Identical twin brothers Leonard and Jason Rom – inseparable in life and death – were laid to rest side by side on Sunday, 16 January, at Westpark Cemetery on a bleak, grey morning attended by a small gathering of mourners.

No one knows exactly what pushed the brothers, aged 44, to take their lives in a dramatic, seemingly macabre, and grisly finale to what must have followed months of anguish, desperation, and despair.

Devoted to each other from birth until their dying minutes, the Rom brothers' bodies were found on 10 January in their company-branded car in Simon's Town, about 35km from Cape Town.

The bodies of Jason's four beloved bulldogs, Hercules, Franky, Gucci, and Coco, were found with them in their small Peugeot. Attached to their car was a trailer containing all their belongings. Both divorced, Leonard leaves behind two young children, a boy and a girl.

His distraught son clutched onto the trolley carrying his father's coffin for what seemed like forever as the twins' coffins were wheeled side by side to their final resting place.

According to reports, Simon's Town police were called to the scene at about 08:30, where they found the brothers with gunshot wounds to their chests. They were declared dead on the scene by paramedics.

Captain Frederick van Wyk told the *SA Jewish Report* that the circumstances surrounding the deaths are under investigation, and an inquest has been opened.

The Rom's untimely and sudden deaths have left many reeling in utter disbelief. Those who knew them were aware that the brothers were extremely close and did everything together. They lived together and were in business together as the former owners and partners of 1 Two 1 Cellular, a cellphone repair company in Craighall Park, Johannesburg.

"They couldn't live without each other. I have never seen a brotherly bond like this," said their friend, Quentin Neuper, who described them as fun-loving, warm, and friendly.

"They were awesome guys. I adored them. They would go out of their way to help customers, often driving to their homes. Every time I was in the shop, they made me laugh and made my day."

He said Jason loved his dogs "with his life". "They were his everything. They both loved animals. We are all trying to make sense of this."

The brothers apparently didn't leave a note, but no sooner had news of their passing spread, so too did rumours and wild speculation.

Was it a hit? Was it a robbery gone wrong? Were they on the run? Was it a moment of blind madness fuelled by drugs or alcohol? Were they simply in too deep, above their heads? Or did they fall prey to the endless cycle of depression and anxiety exacerbated by the brutal COVID-19 pandemic?

The twins may have taken the answers to their graves, but they have left behind loved ones hanging on to lasting memories.

Jason's ex-wife, Monique Cardona, told the *SA Jewish Report* that she last spoke to Jason about two weeks ago. She kept in regular contact with the brothers, even though she had been divorced from Jason for 10 years.



Jason Rom



Leonard Rom



The 1 Two 1 company branded car

"I'm shocked, this was totally unexpected. They seemed ok, things were hard, but they weren't more down than usual," she said.

"They weren't just brothers, they were best friends, attached at the hip. They even wore matching clothes sometimes and always had this way of making people smile," she said fondly. "They came as a package deal, and always ran things by each other."

excellent, personal service. Jason took care of the customers in the front of the shop, while Leonard was the technician.

Having started out in the early 2000s, the company

grew steadily. Sadly, the business took a few knocks, and after some time, Jason sold his house in Fairmount, just a few houses from Leonard's house. It's believed a series of break ins, some bad luck, and the pandemic finally took their toll. Relationships fell apart, and the close-knit brothers lived together before deciding to try their luck in Cape Town sometime last year.

Customers this week praised the pair for their expertise and professional service, many recalling their jovial, friendly, and good-humoured demeanour.

"This is a story I cannot get my head around," said Rabbi Shaul Bacher, describing their passing as "a calamity" and a "tragedy of such magnitude". Speaking at the funeral, he said, "There are no words to give comfort."

Bacher said it was "hard to believe" that both brothers were in such a bad way that neither could see a way out or persuade the other that they were making a grave mistake.

"I work in drug rehabilitation, I have seen depression, but I have never seen something like this. You can't make this up," said Bacher.

Like most, the rabbi is dismayed at the circumstances surrounding their passing. "None of it makes any sense," he said, urging the urgency of addressing depression and anxiety.

"All of this is hard to fathom, but we need to take something from this that will encourage those in need to reach out and get the help they desperately need. People should also make it their business to become aware of those suffering around them."

The twins' half-sister, Beverley Mans, who lives in Israel with their sister, Sharon Slimowitz, said the family was heartbroken and in shock. "We are all devastated beyond words, we can't believe it," she said.

"They were such happy-go-lucky boys, we cannot believe what transpired. Whoever you ask is in total shock. They didn't say much, we know times were tough for them as for everyone else. They wanted to start a new life in Cape Town."

She said the Rom boys were born in Johannesburg, and made aliyah with their late mother in 1994. They returned to South Africa, where they were first involved in the towing business before starting 1 Two 1 Cellular.

Their loved ones are waiting for the results of the inquest, hoping it will help them to reach closure.

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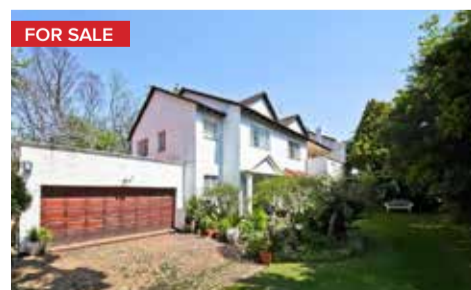
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# What's driving SA's record aliyah numbers?

TALI FEINBERG

In 2021, there were record aliyah numbers from South Africa – the highest since 1994. Israeli media reported a 50% to 70% increase on 2020. *Olim* and those in the field say that a combination of the pandemic, uncertainty about South Africa's future, and unemployment have led to this increase. Just as 1994 was filled with unknowns about South Africa's future, so too is a post-pandemic world. South African Jews are questioning where they want to be – and many are choosing Israel.

"We had 555 *olim* [from South Africa] in 2021. It was a record number since 1994," says Israel Centre Director Liat Amar-Arran. "The numbers in 2022 will depend on the situation in South Africa, the world, and Israel. I'm assuming we're going to see the same [numbers]."

Telfed Chief Executive Dorrn Kline says 753 South Africans made aliyah in 1994. "However, in 1994, the community was double the size it is now. Therefore, proportionately, 2021 holds the record of the most South African Jews making aliyah since the 1970s.

"The number of *olim* scheduled to arrive in January 2022 is almost double the number of arrivals in January 2021," he says. "Given these numbers, we anticipate another large aliyah wave."

In January alone, there were 46 new South African *olim* and another flight with 35 to 40 people is planned for next week. There may be another aliyah flight with El Al on 15 February.

"People have had the opportunity to re-evaluate their lives," Amar-Arran says. "People who lost jobs may have decided it's time for a change. Some believe there's no future for their kids. Others realised they could work remotely, so they make aliyah and work from there. I also believe the riots [in South Africa in July 2021] made people decide to make aliyah."

For Stan Sadman who came alone on aliyah from Cape Town in January 2021, the main driver was his inability to find work. "I'm in my 50s. I was in sales, and I struggled," he told the *SA Jewish Report* from Netanya. "Especially when COVID-19 came, and even the year before, the economy was going down. I'm now working as a janitor in a big retirement village. There's no doubt about it, there's a

and higher education; younger and older families; elderly people joining their kids – all types of demography."

"Families made up almost half of our 2021 *olim*," says Kline. "Thirteen percent of 2021 *olim* were young singles [18 to 25]. Seventeen percent of new *olim* were seniors."

Amar-Arran agrees with Sadman that aliyah is a big adjustment. "It's a very



The Goodman family arriving in Israel on 12 January 2022

lot more opportunity here if you're willing to get your hands dirty. But you've got to start fresh as an Israeli. When you leave South Africa, close the door. Unless you come with a lot of money, you've got take a step or two down in your standard of living."

Another *oleh* wrote on Facebook that "a big motivator is more job opportunities. For me, it's certainly true – especially with the incentives [in South Africa] which are harshly unfavourable to white males."

"The South African Jewish community is Zionist, so there's always a pull factor to live in Israel," says Kline. "Another significant factor is that many *olim* are joining family who have already made aliyah. Many young families are moving here because they believe Israel offers a better future, employment prospects, education, and healthcare. Personal security is an obvious factor. And let's not forget that Israel is a vibrant democracy with a strong and stable economy."

Amar-Arran says the demographics of *olim* are wide-ranging. "We have 18-year-olds going to the army, ulpan,

different culture – Israelis can be less polite! It's more expensive, and homes are smaller. People may struggle with Hebrew."

Says Kline, "Understanding the differences between the cost and standard of living between Israel and South Africa is important. Telfed hosts *klita* [absorption] webinars for new *olim*, during which our social worker explains the importance of budgeting and living within one's means. There have been instances where *olim* took out loans that they struggled to repay, so we do caution against this. Emigration can also be an emotionally challenging experience. In the webinars, our social worker speaks about the importance of finding networks for support – in shuls, schools, communities, through hobbies, volunteering, or just finding one reliable friend who can offer good advice."

Sadman says basing the place you live in on a job is a mistake. It's more important to find your community and settle in, then find a job. "I made that mistake, and I'm now in Netanya, although I would have preferred to be

in Ashkelon. At the same time, I'm a 10-minute walk from the beach. The freedom here is amazing." He advises people to work part-time until they find something more permanent as the rand's value is low and one needs to earn shekels to get by.

Amar-Arran says the high aliyah number has had an impact on the Israel Centre. "We're working very hard. Especially during COVID-19, the amount of bureaucracy and paperwork for aliyah is crazy. I wish we had more time to contribute to people, as we are trying to give a personal service. But when you have 70 *olim* in one month, you don't really have the time to sit with each one of them privately. We don't really have a budget to hire people, but I hope we can have another aliyah worker who can assist us this year."

On the other side, the high numbers have also had an impact on Telfed. "Our services are in high demand – including employment counselling, support from our social worker, housing [there is a long waiting list for Telfed rental

apartments in Ra'anana and Tel Aviv], and scholarship applications," says Kline.

"We are dependent on donations to allow us to continue to offer these free services. Donations also allow us to provide urgent financial assistance to *olim* who have fallen on difficult times. A committee assesses each request to ensure that support is given to those in genuine need. In addition, we offer financial counselling so that those in need of help can get back on their feet."

Amar-Arran emphasises that making aliyah isn't for everyone. "It's important to know that aliyah isn't going to solve your problems. Israel is an amazing place to live, but people need to know that feeling settled takes time."

"Aliyah is a sharp learning curve, exacerbated by the language and cultural barrier," says Kline. "Arriving with realistic expectations, some spoken Hebrew, and patience can stand *olim* in good stead. If you're considering making aliyah, get in touch with us. Community support is instrumental to successful aliyah."

## Pandor ends year with extreme rhetoric against Israel

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa's anti-Israel stance is one thing we don't seem to be leaving behind in 2021, as Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister Dr Naledi Pandor devoted a section of her end-of-year media briefing to the topic.

Her comments suggest Israel's very existence is problematic, blame Israel for the conflict, and emphasise South Africa's vehement opposition to the Jewish state being given observer status at the African Union (AU).

Pandor titled this section of her speech, given on 14 December 2021, "International solidarity work relating to Palestine and Western Sahara". She then devoted the entire section to criticising Israel.

"In 2021, we have highlighted concern that the situation relating to Western Sahara and Palestine remains deadlocked – in some instances even worsening," she said. "The question of Palestine is still unresolved after 70 years, and continues to challenge human conscience and international justice."

As Israel has existed for 73 years, her comments show that she finds the very existence of the Jewish state problematic.

"In keeping with South Africa's long-term and principled support for the Palestinian people, the government of South Africa remains committed to supporting initiatives aimed at refocusing the international agenda on Palestine and the Middle East peace process. The Palestinian question remains at the heart of the Middle East situation," she said.

"The South African government believes the only way to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East is to have a comprehensive and unconditional negotiated settlement to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and Israel's continued blockade of Gaza. The ongoing delay in achieving such a settlement leads to an unending cycle of violence.

"In the context of Israel's continuing violation of its international-law obligations,

we have worryingly seen the African Union Commission this year granting Israel the status of an observer at the AU. This came as a shock, given that the decision was made at a time when the oppressed people of Palestine were hounded by destructive bombardments and continued illegal settlements of their land," said Pandor.

"The unjust actions committed by Israel offend the letter and spirit of the charter of the African Union," she added. "The AU reflects Africans' confidence that it can lead the continent through practical expression of the goals of the charter, especially on issues relating to self-determination and decolonisation. The decision by the AU Commission in this context remains inexplicable. We look forward to the 35th ordinary summit of the African Union where the heads of state will discuss this matter."

Local political analyst Daniel Silke notes that "the statement continues to reflect



Dr Naledi Pandor

South Africa's clear decision to side with the Palestinians rather than adequately balancing this with a deeper and more meaningful interrogation of the concerns of both sides, including the security needs of Israel. South Africa is largely excluding itself from the changing dynamics in the Middle East, such as the Abraham Accords, which have brought a much greater understanding between Israel and many of its Gulf and other Arab neighbours. Not to mention the fact that in past weeks, we have seen Egypt, Jordan, and even Turkey possibly indicating that they are looking for closer relations with Israel.

"South Africa will continue to drive the AU agenda," he says. "But again, increasingly it's going to come up against a changing dynamic of improving diplomatic relations between African countries and Israel."

Continued on page 10 >>

## Thulsie twins' defence in contradictory motion

TALI FEINBERG

The Thulsie twins have now spent almost six years behind bars awaiting trial for allegedly planning terrorist attacks on Jewish and other institutions and individuals. One would think they wouldn't want to wait a day longer for their trial to begin, but it appears their defence may be trying to delay proceedings for as long as possible.

Tony-Lee and Brandon-Lee were arrested in a 2016 raid in Gauteng. Authorities allege they are linked to the Islamic State (ISIS) group.

In the official indictment filed in the Gauteng High Court in August 2018, "the said terrorist activities would have been perpetrated using firearms, explosives, and possibly poisons, and would have been directed against cartoonist Zapiro, a Jewish South African investment manager, Telfed, King David High School Linksfield, Jewish community events, and conferences as yet not more specifically identified by the accused". They also planned to direct their enmity on other "individual South African Jews and Jewish entities followed on Twitter, and a Jewish event identified on the Habonim website", as well as other targets, according to the indictment.



Tony-Lee and Brandon-Lee Thulsie



The twins appeared in the Johannesburg High Court on 17 January for a trial date. The state told Judge Ratha Mokgoatheng that it was ready to proceed with the trial, but Advocate Abu Bakr Omar, counsel to the twins, objected to the livestreaming of court proceedings.

Describing the case as "very sensitive", he said that they didn't mind the media live tweeting or publishing details of what happened in court, but he believed live proceedings would put witnesses and his clients in danger.

The judge was clearly frustrated, and argued that the trial couldn't be held in secret. He said that if safety was a concern, applications for protection of witnesses could be made to the judge.

Because of this request, the matter was postponed to 18 January 2022 so that media could submit formal applications to livestream proceedings.

Yet on 18 January, the twins' attorney, Nadeem Mohamed, said the brothers wanted their story to be heard and weren't opposed to the court proceedings being broadcast live.

"The twins want the world to know exactly what's happened and show the world they're innocent of these completely trumped up and fabricated charges," he said.

Mokgoatheng set a trial date for 7 February 2022.

# Kay family connection to Israel stronger than ever

TALI FEINBERG

It's been almost two months since 26-year-old South African *oleh* Eli Kay was murdered in the streets of Jerusalem.

As the days pass and the reality of the tragedy sets in, one would imagine that his parents and siblings might feel angry or vengeful. But speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Israel, they say they want to move forward from a place of openness and positivity, contributing to the Jewish state and honouring Eli's legacy.

"We are mourning deeply but in our pain, we are strong," says Eli's mother, Devorah Kay. "We are getting up every day, and plan our days in a proactive way. Sundays are particularly hard days [as Eli was murdered on a Sunday] and those need extra planning. It's important for us to start being involved in things to make a difference in this country."

The family hasn't returned to South Africa since the tragedy. "We have never thought that 'we need to leave' because this happened to us," says Eli's father, Avi Kay. "On the contrary, this has strengthened our resolve that we made aliyah for a purpose. Being in Israel has been the most comforting thing. The support has been phenomenal, from our own community to the larger community, to support from South Africa.

"We understand that the terrorist attack was a '9/11 moment' for the South African Jewish community," he says. "And yet, though people were in shock and mourning, there was still an outpouring of letters, tributes, events, and projects in Eli's memory. This shows just how special the South African Jewish community is."

The family has no desire for revenge and

doesn't want to become embroiled in the complicated politics that follow a terrorist attack. At the same time, it doesn't want any other family to endure this agony. And so, Avi and his daughter appeared at a hearing at Israel's High Court of Justice on Tuesday, 11 January 2022. There, arguments were heard about whether the Israel Defense Forces can demolish the house of the killer, Hamas terrorist Fadi Abu Shkaydam, a 42-year-old resident of Shuafat in East Jerusalem, who was killed in the minutes after the attack.

Kay provides background on these events. "A week or two after Eli was murdered, I was contacted by an organisation asking if our family would support it in pushing for the terrorist's house to be destroyed [as punitive action for the murder].

"We said we absolutely wouldn't proactively support it. If that's procedure, then that's what Israel must do, but it's not our 'headspace,'" says Avi. "Then a few weeks later, the organisation asked us to support it to push for the brother of the terrorist to be fired from his job as an Egged bus driver. We said, 'No, it's none of our business, and if he

was an upstanding citizen, then why should he be fired?' Perhaps we are naïve about Israeli politics, but it was something we were uncomfortable with and didn't want to get involved in."

Then, two weeks ago, "we got a call from the head of the army in the Jerusalem region, saying that it was a courtesy call to let us know that they will be destroying the house of the terrorist in 72 hours". We asked if it had anything to do with us, and he said no, he was just calling to let us know.

But then the terrorist family's legal team petitioned the High Court to block the demolition, supported by the organisation HaMoked – Center for the Defense of the Individual.

The case then went to the High Court of Justice, and the Kay family was asked to be there by Palestinian Media Watch (PMW). PMW is a non-profit Israeli research institute that reports on the Palestinian Authority's promotion and glorification of terror.

"We were apprehensive for a number of reasons", says Avi. "First, for our own safety – we didn't want our faces to be in the public eye. And second, we felt it was an ethical

issue. But we were told that by appearing in court, we could prevent a future terror attack. If we weren't there, it would look like we were indifferent, and if the house wasn't destroyed, then there would be no incentive against another attack and no consequences".

"So, we went to court not out of revenge but hopefully to prevent another terror attack. As our lawyer said in court, our family is uncomfortable with a home being destroyed, but if terrorists don't kill Jews, then their homes won't be destroyed."

The outcome of the hearing is expected in two to three weeks. Avi points out that because the terrorist's home was on the fourth floor of a five-story building, it won't actually be demolished. Rather, they will seal that floor so that no one can get in and take out the internal walls. A senior engineer told the court that there would be no structural damage to the building, especially the units above or below. But that floor will essentially become uninhabitable.

Israeli media interviewed Avi and his daughter at the High Court, and both spoke spontaneously, with great feeling. Avi says his daughter has been "the heroine of this whole story", navigating complex emotions and events with a wisdom beyond her 19 years. He says she and Eli were very close, and she plans to build her future in Israel. He's also grateful to Midreshet HaRova where she has been studying for its support and guidance.

Speaking to the Israeli media at the hearing, his daughter said, "We're here to ensure that this never happens again. As much as they're trying to kill us, they're also trying to create terror and manipulate us

through fear. We're here to say that we're not going to be scared, we're going to continue to fight against terror and make sure that this doesn't happen again. We're going to continue to walk in our streets, be strong, and show that this is our country and we're not afraid of them. Eli's life wasn't given in vain. We're here to continue his fight."

Avi emphasises that the family plans to stay in Israel, as "there's a lot of work to do here, especially in areas that Eli was passionate about such as land, education, and agriculture. This is what we plan to spend the rest of our lives doing, being a vibrant part of Israeli society."

He says other parents who have lost children to terror or wars "have reached out in the most incredible way. I never thought I would be part of a group that's so large. It's almost unfathomable that so many parents are suffering in the same way. There are many support organisations which have been a tremendous help in multifaceted ways."

Asked about the virulent comments from anti-Israel South Africans regarding his son's army service, Avi says he wasn't aware of such a sentiment until now. "But it's simple: Eli came to live here, and part of his inauguration and contribution was to do his military service to protect Israel."

This doesn't reflect opposition to their home country. "We and our children love South Africa, and it's the most amazing place to live and bring up kids. My wife even left England to live there. We want to emphasise that we came to Israel, we didn't leave South Africa. To the South African people and our community who grieve with us, all I can say is, 'Thank you.'"



Eli Kay

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## We don't need saving, thanks!

There must have been a giant international Jewish sigh of relief when all those who were held hostage in the Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, managed to escape after a more than 10-hour standoff.

And while the hostage taker was killed when the rescue team moved in to free the hostages, there are way too many concerns about this just to move on.

We cannot ignore the fact that a hostile stranger was able to walk straight into a shul without being stopped. This is extremely concerning.

We have seen the terror and violence that has ensued when Jewish schools and shuls weren't properly secure and safeguarded, especially when people were praying.

I know it doesn't seem right to have armed security outside a shul or school, but what's our alternative? The Jewish world has learnt too many times that there are none. We have to secure these precious places to safeguard our lives.

The truth is, it doesn't matter how small your shul or *shtibel* is or how safe you feel in it, we – and I mean South Africans and the world over – have to be sure that we can learn and pray in peace and security. It's that simple.

Sitting on the southern tip of Africa where we understand crime, we can clearly see the analogy of leaving the front door of your home and your garden gate open all day and night. We just wouldn't do that. Not a chance. We would be asking for trouble. In fact, I have phoned neighbours before to make sure they were okay when they accidentally left their gate open in the middle of the day. So, why would we leave our shuls and schools open for anyone to access?

In some places around the world, we would be seen as paranoid or even ridiculous, but unfortunately, we have learnt the hard way.

Having said that, *bli ayin harah* (without the evil eye), we have been fortunate that our South African shuls have never been attacked the way the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was during a Shabbos morning service. The attacker killed 11 people in the shul, and wounded six. This wasn't the first incident of its kind, nor will it be the last.

Our lesson in this for the Jewish world is to safeguard Jewish institutions no matter what. Fortunately, in South Africa, we have the Community Security Organisation (CSO) and CAP, and between these two organisations, every precaution is taken to safeguard our community.

I'm grateful every single day for the CSO and CAP. I'm also grateful that our community got this message loud and clear long before the rest of the world. I appreciate that we don't take what the CSO says lightly because we shouldn't. They keep us safe.

So, it made me sit up when I heard that the CSO was concerned that the hostage taker had a goal in sight, to release an Al-Qaeda prisoner in return for the hostages.

Again, hostage taking isn't something we're very familiar with in South Africa. It happens, but not much.

The thing is: we can't allow it to happen. How easy is it to take a hostage or hostages and demand that some lowlife gets out of prison? Let's not even take this to the level of antisemitism, which isn't difficult. At all costs, we have to prevent this from happening.

Desperate people do desperate things. And as is so obvious in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, some are willing to take their own lives in the process of vengeance, hatred, or simple antisemitism. So, we have to take every precaution and, to be honest, there are many communities around the world who could take a leaf out of our book.

This brings me to an opinion piece that was carried in the *Jerusalem Post* early in December, in which Rabbi Stewart Weiss called on Israel to save South African Jewry.

When I first read it, I kept wondering what he was going on about. He had convinced himself that we needed rescuing as our days here were numbered. He made us out to be real *miskeinim* (desperate souls) waiting to be saved by Big Brother Israel. Really?

I'm not going to challenge him because South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Chairperson Wendy Kahn did that exceptionally well in a later edition of the same newspaper. However, what astonished me is how he missed the fact that we have a model community here, one that takes care of ourselves. We may have people who don't like us much, but we live in a democracy, and we can and do hold them to account.

Yes, it's true, the ruling party has taken a stand for Palestinians and against Israel, but this sentiment doesn't extend throughout the country.

And in truth, antisemitic attacks in South Africa have actually been the lowest in the diaspora, according to Kahn's piece.

In 2019, Kahn says, South Africa recorded just 37 incidents compared to Canada's 2 207, Australia's 368, and 1 805 in the United Kingdom. Also, South Africa doesn't see much in the way of violent antisemitism, according to Kahn.

As she says, "We aren't a community in distress", nor do we need rescuing.

What we have is something Jewish communities around the world long for, and that's a strong, vibrant, unique, and close-knit community which takes care of itself and has a wonderful quality of life.

I agree that South Africa has problems, but who doesn't? It's true that as individuals, we all have our fair share of issues, not least of all in the COVID-19 era. But we are just fine, and don't need saving. Those of us who want to make aliyah are doing so. Those of us who want to continue our quality of life in South Africa don't want to be "saved", thank you very much.

**Shabbat Shalom!**  
**Peta Krost Maunder**  
Editor



## Israel's path from dream to fear and back again

OPINION

SAMUEL HYDE



The dream was simple: Israel's victory in the 1967 war would lead to victory over war itself.

Many back then believed that the trajectory of the Jewish people would undergo an enlightened shift after the 1967 Six-Day War. The Golan Heights, as well as Judea and Samaria and the Sinai Peninsula, were now in Israel's hands. Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, which had previously held these territories, now demanded their return. Many saw this desire on the side of the Arabs as an opportunity for the Israelis: for the first time in history, we held solid bargaining chips that if acted upon wisely, could be traded in as part of a peace agreement. The dream was simple: Israel's victory in the war would lead to victory over war itself.

Peace was thought to alter not just Israel's fate but also the fate of the Jewish people. Israel would cease to be an isolated state, rather becoming an integral part of the Middle East, and once completely integrated, would also be fully accepted by Europe and the entire West.

By taking destiny into our own hands, Jews' two-millennia-long estrangement from humanity would finally come to an end, and we would be accepted into the family of nations.

However, it appeared there was another way to reap the benefits of victory. Israel could settle the land rather than exchanging it for peace. Many felt this would transform Jewish history from the bottom up. According to this perspective, a nation isn't connected to itself when it lives outside of its own land. In other words, there will be a crack



Taking a break at the Western Wall during the Six-Day War

in the nation's soul if the nation's present doesn't unfold in the same places as its history.

The early memories of the Jewish people were forged in places like Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Nazareth, and Israel's triumph in the 1967 war allowed Jews to return to these areas of the historic homeland. This would establish a living link between the past and the present, and was seen as a process allowing the Jewish people's wounded and traumatised psyche to heal. It was thought that repairing the nation and settling on ancient soil would also cure the future.

The conflicting ideas behind these two dreams is noticeable, yet they were both supported by a fundamental agreement. Both parties felt that by properly leveraging wartime victory, they could alter the future of the Jewish people.

They had one more thing in common: they were both proven incorrect.

This isn't a statement to be taken lightly. Israel's inability to achieve peace by no means fell solely at the feet of the Jewish state. In fact one could argue successfully that continued Palestinian rejection of any two-state solution offer is what has led to the status quo. Regardless of one's view, as time passed, these dreams began to fade and more and more Israelis broke free from these two beliefs.

So, what happened to the dreams? To begin with, both the Israeli left and right shifted. Many on the left gave up hope that a peaceful diplomatic solution to the Middle East's problems was on the horizon. The right was likewise altered. The majority of the right no longer thinks that

settlement, even if it fulfils prophecies, will result in tomorrow's redemption.

There's another distinct difference – the "blame-game". Ever since the Second Intifada, many on the left have talked less about peace and more about the harm done by the occupation. Also ever since the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the right has talked less about redemption and more about the security threat.

Essentially, in spite of your views on settlement, solution, peace, and security, which traditionally placed you on one side of the aisle or the other, today's divisions are often based on who is deemed more responsible and essentially to blame for the conflict.

The left's prevalent position today is that if Israel remains in the territories and continues to govern over a Palestinian civilian population, it will suffer three consequences: moral degradation, diplomatic isolation, and demographic loss.

Most demographers anticipate that the day will soon come when Jews will no longer form a majority in Israeli-controlled territory. Hence, once the Jews become a minority in their own land, it will cease to be their land.

The right frequently responds to this demographic argument with denial, citing alternate demographers which estimate that the Jewish majority isn't in jeopardy. Even if that's true, and Palestinians account for "just" 40% of the country's population, it would be difficult to designate such a country as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

In other words, the desire to cling to the land of Israel defies the self-definition of the state of Israel. One is inclined to admit that this argument possesses tremendous weight.

It's fascinating to observe how the right and left have become mirror images of each other. The right no longer believes that settling the land will bring redemption, but says withdrawing will bring disaster. The left no longer believes that withdrawing from the territories will bring redemption, but says remaining there will bring disaster. The left and right have undergone similar processes: they have

both moved from dreams to fears.

However, new processes have begun to form, the Abraham Accords for one. Those at the centre of the "dreams and fears" debacle seem to have found mutual ground by attempting to replace paralysis with pragmatism.

Though this is based less on a romanticised vision of peace or redemption and rather economics and mutual agreement of the military threat Iran poses to the region, this too, if acted upon wisely, could lead to Israel becoming a fully integrated and accepted part of the Middle East.

As divided as Israeli politics appears, one finds a basic consensus in the needs, desires, and demands of the everyday person on the street regardless of their affiliation.

So, perhaps the dreams aren't dead but in a process of renewal. Maybe they're less philosophical and more based on realism, which could be argued is a positive step. Maybe the romantic dreams lie not in political ideology but in the daily exchanges and normalisation between Israeli and Arab citizens from countries that currently constitute the Abraham Accords, and in the hope that more will join soon.

• Samuel Hyde is a political writer based in Tel Aviv, Israel. As an op-ed columnist he has been published in publications both within Israel, the United States, and South Africa focusing on topics such as Israel's political climate, antisemitism, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the Jewish world, conflict resolution, and Jewish pluralism.

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# It's not a sin to stand up against abuse, say Jewish leaders

STEVEN GRUZD

Understanding, confronting, and reporting sexual abuse is difficult and painful for any community. Leaders tend to want to close ranks and cover up any impropriety. Survivors of abuse battle to have their voices heard, and fear the consequences. And the South African Jewish community is no exception.

These are some of the key messages emerging from a community webinar hosted by South Africa's Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein on Monday, 17 January, titled "Sexual abuse: let's talk openly".

Renowned American rabbi and psychotherapist Dr Tzvi Hersh Weinreb said we must normalise conversations about abuse. Today, it's no longer a taboo subject compared to 30 years ago. He mentioned a ground breaking book by the late Rabbi Dr Abraham Twerski written in the 1990s about domestic violence in the Jewish community, called *The shame borne in silence*. This shame and silence endures.

"All communities have the tendency to hush things up," said Weinreb. "They prefer not to see ugly things, and hope it will all go away."

"We don't want to sully our souls," Weinreb continued. "But our souls are put into a body which faces material, physical, and sexual challenges and struggles throughout life." People face temptations all the time, some of which cannot be denied or ignored. They have to be confronted to overcome them.

Dr David Pelcovitz, a veteran American psychologist and observant Jew, said, "We need to talk about [sexual abuse]. We need to shine light on places where there is darkness. It's natural to want to recoil." He stressed the critical importance of empowering victims and survivors, and said abuse was usually committed by someone known to the victim, especially within families.

Pelcovitz said parents need to develop a balance when speaking to their children about sexual abuse. They should tread between creating anxiety, building trust, nurturing self-esteem, and spurring action if required. He praised the South African Jewish community's abuse-prevention programmes.

An abuse survivor often lacks confidence, particularly when facing defensive leaders and community members who want to bury the issue. Survivors need to feel safe, valued, and empowered to stop the cycle of abuse. "It's not a sin to stand up," Weinreb said. "People's lives are at stake."

The Torah promotes *pikuach nefesh*, the halachic principle that the preservation of human life takes precedence over almost all other religious rules. It also warns in Leviticus, "*Lo ta'amod al dam re'echa*" (Don't stand by the blood of your neighbour), interpreted as an instruction not to be indifferent about what happens



to other people. Both injunctions point to intervention against evil actions like sexual abuse. They provide a halachic framework for dealing with this issue.

The community needs to provide an environment of support, understanding, respect, and empathy, Goldstein said. By law, abuse must be reported to the authorities.

Resilience is extremely important in recovering from abuse. Pelcovitz said the three core elements of resilience are

someone who cares; belief beyond the self; and *chesed* (kindness), helping others. He encouraged mindfulness to protect our children in an age of distraction. "There's no greater protection than being there, eye to eye, heart to heart, to give them focus and courage. Nothing matters more," he said.

The webinar concluded by highlighting two organisations in the South African Jewish community devoted to combatting abuse. Advocate Liza Segal is

chairperson of the Abuse Review Board, set up by the chief rabbi in 2017 as a port of call for community members not satisfied with how organisations have handled complaints.

Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler and Rozanne

Sack head up Koleinu SA (Our Voice), established in 2014. They were both abused by a religious doctor in the Johannesburg Jewish community, and felt largely alone, not believed, and censured for supposedly "conducting a witch hunt". Koleinu SA runs anti-abuse educational programmes at Jewish schools and shuls, a helpline, and provides support for victims. The helpline receives hundreds of calls, including reports of abuse by older children of younger siblings.

Calls to Koleinu are treated in strict confidence. Koleinu draws on a strong support network of experts, including attorney Ian Levitt and child protection consultant Luke Lamprecht.

Though there's a lack of trust in the police and justice system in South Africa, "we use what we have and try to fix its flaws", said Hendler. "Abuse can stop only by reporting it. We can no longer turn a blind eye. We can all do better. We need to make this a space where perpetrators feel unwelcome and scared."

Abuse cuts across every fault line in South Africa, from the poorest communities to the most affluent. No community is immune. "We must talk openly about this problem," said Goldstein. "We must air the ugly issues. By shining light, we begin the process of making the world safer. We have incredible child protection organisations as the first port of call."

• The Koleinu SA Helpline is 011 264 0341. Its website is [koleinusa.co.za](http://koleinusa.co.za)

## Sexual abuse: we dare not stand idly by

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



As the devastating testimony of victims in the Chaim Walder case emerged a few weeks ago, I felt strongly that, as a community, we need to use the justified outrage it provoked in the Jewish world as a catalyst to renew our resolve as the South African Jewish community to fight the horrifying phenomenon of sexual abuse in all its forms.

As Jews, we have a specific *mitzvah*, a clear halachic obligation directly from the Torah: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your fellow." We cannot be passive while lives are being destroyed by sexual abuse. We cannot be silent while predators remain a threat. We dare not stand idly by.

“

SEXUAL ABUSE IS A CRIME WHICH THRIVES UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, IN SECRET, AND IN SILENCE. NOW IS THE TIME TO SHINE LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS AND BREAK THE SILENCE. LIVES DEPEND ON IT.

Practically what this means is that we must support and work with the institutions we have established as a community that are specifically geared towards helping victims come forward and report abuse.

That includes state-designated child-protection organisations such as the Chevrah Kadisha's Community Social Services division in Johannesburg, and Jewish Community Services in Cape Town. It also includes organisations like Koleinu SA, which offers a helpline and emotional and psychological support to victims of abuse.

In addition, in 2017, I established the Abuse Review Board as a place of last resort to assist victims with their cases. Headed by advocate Liza Segal accompanied by other experts in all areas of abuse – medical, social, and legal – the Abuse Review Board is an additional safety net to pursue every reported case to the fullest extent of the law so that no victim is unprotected and no case is swept

under the carpet.

We have the institutions required to combat sexual abuse and we must make use of them. In recent community-wide communication regarding the threat of abuse, I have included the contact details of these organisations and how to make use of them.

"Not standing idly by" means taking seriously our halachic obligation to report abuse. We cannot waver. As Hashem says to Joshua when he becomes the leader of the Jewish people at a time of great danger and challenge, "*Chazak veematz*" (Be strong and courageous).

Strength and courage. This is how, as a community, we must confront this threat. We need to be brave enough to talk about these dark issues in public – in our shuls and schools, in our homes. It's with this in mind that I convened a community webinar this week on the issue of sexual abuse. Though the subject is deeply disturbing, the most effective way to prevent and address sexual abuse as a community is to talk openly about it. Through empathy and understanding, we give strength and courage to victims to come forward and report abuse.

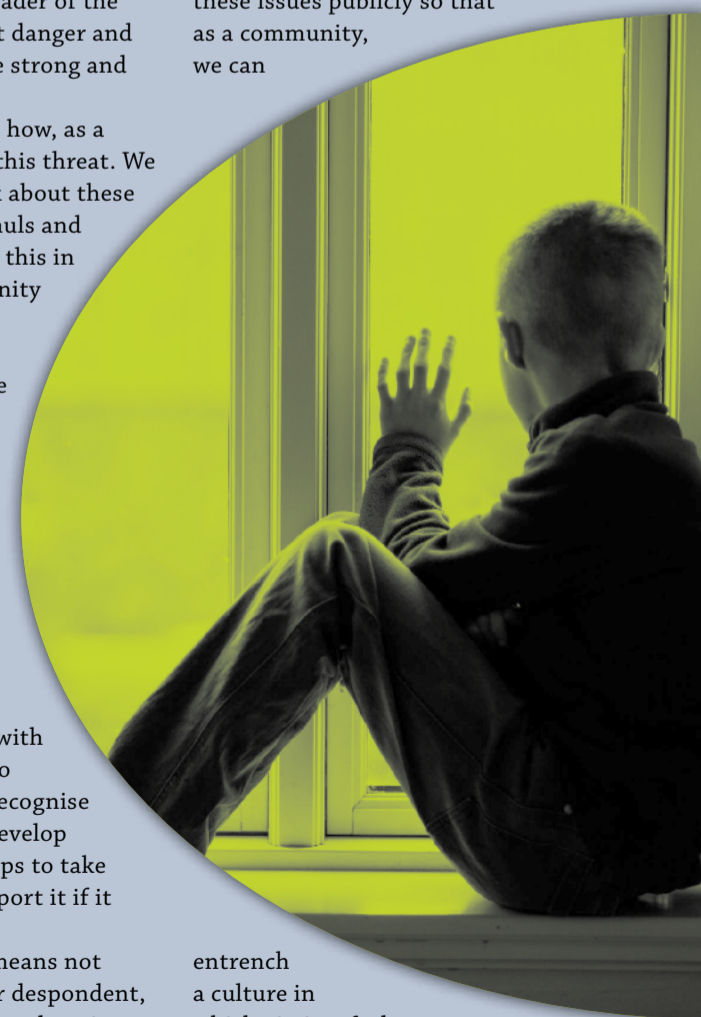
We especially need to help our children understand this phenomenon, equipping them with the knowledge and awareness to identify predatory behaviour, recognise unsafe situations before they develop any further, and know what steps to take to prevent abuse and how to report it if it happens.

"Be strong and courageous" means not feeling intimidated, helpless, or despondent, held back by self-defeating fear and anxiety. We have to be proactive, which means peering into darkness, acknowledging the problem, and doing something about it – lifting up our voices and using the institutions set up for this very purpose.

Most importantly, we need the courage and resolve to tackle it together, as a community,

with a sense of common purpose – an unwavering, collective commitment to righting this evil and stamping it out altogether. These two Torah teachings must be our guiding light: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your fellow" and "Be strong and courageous."

In my personal capacity, I pledge to continue to do everything possible to raise these issues publicly so that as a community, we can



entrench a culture in which victims feel supported to speak about instances of abuse and take action.

Sexual abuse is a crime which thrives under cover of darkness, in secret, and in silence. Now is the time to shine light into the darkness and break the silence. Lives depend on it.



# Max Coleman: a businessman who took on apartheid jailers



TERRY SHAKINOVSKY

TRIBUTE

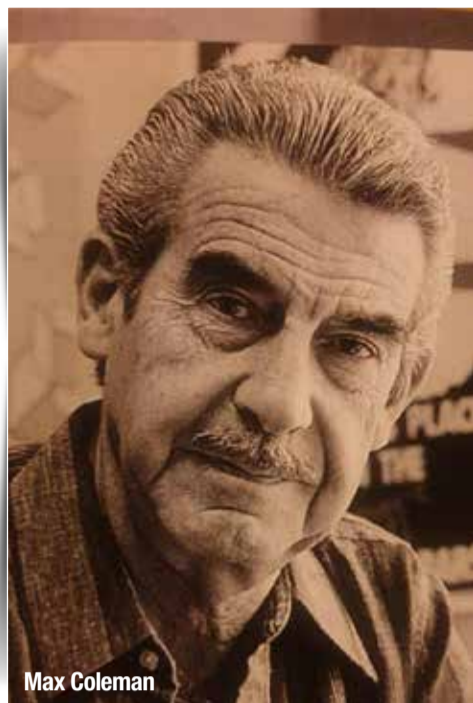
My last memories of Max Coleman are of him, at more than 90, pulling out records of the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC) from his meticulously-maintained filing cabinets. I was seeing for myself the rigour that many describe in Max – part of what enabled him to contribute so much to the fight for human rights in South Africa.

He was an extraordinary man, as I was to hear over and over again as I interviewed people about the DPSC. His courage, his determination, his integrity, his formidable capacity to marshal information and to drive action all shone through. But so, too, did his kindness and generosity.

Max was catapulted into the world of detention without trial when his son, Keith, was taken into detention at John Vorster Square by Captain Andries Struwig, a man notorious for his cruelty as an interrogator.

Keith remembers how Max found a way to instil courage in his son. "My father said to Struwig, 'If anything happens to my son, I will hold you personally accountable.' And I believed him, absolutely. But I also saw that Struwig believed him. This big monstrosity of a human being looked at my father and in that moment, he was scared."

Max's actions that day foreshadowed the many confrontations he would have with the security police and the South African government over the conditions in which detainees like Keith were held. But Max, and his wife Audrey, didn't stop at securing concessions for their son. Rather, Max stepped away from his role as a prosperous businessman to help found, with Audrey, an organisation that was often the only source



Max Coleman

of support for tens of thousands of South Africans held in South Africa's jails without any recourse – the DPSC.

Daphne Mashile-Nkosi describes the immediate impact of the DPSC's assistance. "Max bought takkies for people to use in their minutes of exercise. Suddenly there were food parcels for people in prison. Max would ask, 'How many detainees?' and they would buy packs. You are struggling to buy things at home, let alone when you are in prison. Your parents don't have that extra cash. This was a huge intervention."

She says many parents didn't know how to write, and Max wrote applications for them to gain visiting rights to their

children. To this day, Daphne expresses amazement at what the DPSC was able to set up for families defenceless against the detention system.

"The Colemans were able to pull the Black Sash, the medical profession, psychologists, business people, professors from universities, lawyers for human rights. I have always asked myself – and I'm still asking – 'How did Max transform into a person supplying food parcels and toiletries to detainees in the township because we had none?'"

Max was also at the forefront of wider battles for detainees. The South African state sought to discredit accounts of torture and human-rights abuses suffered by detainees. But no court or media outlet was able to deny the information presented by the DPSC.

Azhar Cachalia, who represented the DPSC, says, "Max Coleman must take a lot of the credit" for the organisation's capacity to present information vital to legal challenges to detention and to those supporting the detainees' cause. As a consequence of its reputation for scrupulous research, the DPSC became South Africa's voice to the world about human-rights abuses in the country, with Max and other members of the DPSC called upon to testify on the international stage.

The legal battles and challenges brought by Max, the media victories won, and the ongoing interaction with a repressive government are too numerous to describe here.

He fought a brutal state with every legal weapon he could marshal. But DPSC staff members remember, too, Max's great

personal kindness to them. They said Max never turned away anyone in trouble, never refused to help or to give.

The DPSC was heavily restricted from carrying out its work in 1988. But Max, Audrey, and the other members of the DPSC fought to the end for political detainees.

The African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned in February 1990, but in December of that year, the *New York Times* quoted Max as saying, "Our reports of torture and death in detention continue."

And in November last year, when Max and Audrey were awarded the Order of Luthuli by President Cyril Ramaphosa, their call was once again for justice. "The freedoms Nelson Mandela and the ANC so bravely fought for, the vision of egalitarian, non-racial democracy, is today but a flickering glimmer of the light that shone brightly on 27 April 1994," they said in a statement.

Max was a giant: a profoundly compassionate and principled man who was also a formidably effective fighter. He remains an example to us all of humanity in the face of unspeakable brutality, of the courage to fight for justice when the odds are stacked against us. And of personal kindness and generosity in the worst of times.

• Terry Shakinovsky co-wrote (with Sharon Cort) a book about Audrey and Max Coleman titled, "The Knock on the Door – The story of the Detainees' Parents Support Committee". She spent many hours interviewing Max and others about the Colemans.

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# Parliament's destruction will be felt for at least a decade

OPINION

MICHAEL BAGRAIM



On 2 January this year at approximately 06:00, a fire broke out in Parliament. This tragic fire follows hot on the heels of a fire that broke out in Parliament in March 2021.

Subsequent to the March fire, a substantial report was commissioned and filed outlining numerous faults with the building and systems. The minister in charge, Minister Patricia de Lille, has held onto the report for more than eight months, and it appears nothing was done.

It's now common knowledge that the following systems weren't working in both instances of fire outbreak: alarms were inactive; the sprinkler system was faulty; fire doors weren't closed; electrical systems hadn't been maintained; and staff weren't alerted.

The first fire was contained, but the second one has virtually destroyed most of the campus. We are told that Parliament is self-insured, and the costs for the buildings and contents could be anything up to R2 billion if not more.

I was privileged to be appointed as a member of our South African Parliament about seven years ago. I have occupied a seat since then in the House of Assembly, and have an office in the Marks Building on the parliamentary campus.

I understand that our Parliament isn't bricks and mortar, but it must be remembered that the national legislature consists of two houses, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, whose members are elected by the people of South Africa. The historical buildings are, indeed, grand.

The building housing the National Council of Provinces stands alongside the avenue at the top of Adderley Street and housed the Assembly of the Cape Colony. It was completed in 1885 after 10 years of building.

This building was used from 1885 to 1910 for the two houses of the Cape Parliament. This building with all its contents is unfortunately severely damaged, water-logged, and smoke damaged. With the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the Cape Parliament ceased to exist and the original building was used for the Senate and the building now known as the Old Assembly housed the National Assembly.

In 1997, the current Constitution of South Africa came into force in which the Senate was replaced by a 90-member National Council of Provinces, and the new building housed the National Assembly of 400 members.

All three buildings were interlinked with fire doors between them. All three buildings were very different from each other, and all housed administrative staff working throughout the year.

These buildings represent the different stages of South Africa's history, and the majority of the staff and members of Parliament treated these buildings and its contents with enormous respect and understanding. The fire has damaged most of this history.

When I first moved into my office at No 20 Marks Building on the parliamentary campus, I was extremely lucky to have an office that faced the front door of the original building, which was initially designed by Charles Freeman and was completed in 1885 with a cost of £220 000. I could feel the full impact of history when I looked out of my window facing the steps of the noble building.

The first thing I wanted to do when I moved into the office was to fix my mezuzah to my office door. Understanding some of the protocols of our Parliament, I wrote to the administration seeking permission to affix the mezuzah. After many discussions and rather convoluted explanations, permission was granted.

I asked my stepson, Eitan Kagan, to fly down to Cape Town and to gather with family and friends to bless the office and the building. Unfortunately, this mezuzah

was stolen two weeks later, and I immediately presumed that an antisemite was at work in the building.

At the time, it hadn't occurred to me that someone might have stolen the mezuzah for the sterling silver casing. The affixing of the new mezuzah took place a few days later, but this time in a see-through plastic holder, which still stands intact to this day.

Remarkably, the Marks Building is one of those buildings that hasn't been affected by the fire. During my first five years in Parliament, prior to COVID-19, I received groups of visitors and many expats who wanted to go on tours of the parliamentary precinct. I received literally hundreds of Jewish visitors to Cape Town who wanted to see and hear about the houses of Parliament.

I was able to take visitors throughout the precinct to view the architecture, contents, and hear about the history. On a few occasions, I did think that these tours were time consuming but thankfully, I never cancelled one of them.

I was able to give these visitors an insight into our history, which might never be able to take place again. The antiques, Persian carpets, memorabilia, and original paintings throughout the complex are completely irreplaceable. Each piece had its own history, which will probably never be told again.

On one particularly memorable occasion, I was approached by the chairperson of the

Greek community of Cape Town to arrange for an evening in the Old Assembly with representatives of the Jewish community of Cape Town.

The planning for this event took almost six months, but it was certainly worth it. Both communities gathered in the Old Assembly one evening in Parliament, with about 200 people from each community.

Representatives from both communities came with messages of goodwill and unity between our two communities, and the setting couldn't have been better. Similar events were being planned for the future in the same venue. Discussions had started between the Jewish community and the Portuguese community of Cape Town, but COVID-19 had put this on hold.

The fire has now destroyed any chance of such a meeting taking place in the Old Assembly with its grandiose benches and setting. Sadly, we will now have to explore other venues.

The fire has disrupted literally hundreds of staff members of our Parliament who are the backbone to the legislature. Although members of Parliament had been meeting virtually during lockdown, the effect of the destruction of the offices will be felt for at least a decade.

Law making is a complex process, and is notoriously slow. The fire will retard this process even more. The country can ill afford this tragic event.

My colleagues in the Democratic Alliance are all shocked and still trying to internalise what has happened. I sincerely believe that the majority of MPs have had a similar reaction.

The messages I've received from around the world have expressed shock and sympathy. The message that must be sent to the government and administration is that we cannot allow our infrastructure to be so neglected.

We're all aware that literally hundreds of government installations haven't been maintained for two decades. It's now the duty of the opposition to ensure that we have every responsibility of oversight of all the country's assets.

Our work has already begun in earnest.

• *Michael Bagraim is a Member of Parliament for the Democratic Alliance and deputy shadow minister for employment and labour.*

# Olim face a ticking tax time bomb

OPINION

MICHAEL KRANSORFF AND LAURA SASSOON



This week, another full plane of South African olim touched down at Ben Gurion Airport. It follows more than 550 people who made aliyah last year, the largest number in decades.

Changing countries is a stressful and admin-intensive exercise. Though most of the process around aliyah is well understood, the South African tax requirements seem to be a major knowledge deficit.

A recent study by a private wealth manager in Israel has revealed that many South African olim have neglected to change their tax residency status with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). This oversight could have serious financial implications. For many years, these taxpayers have been able to remain below the radar. However, with the widespread sharing of financial information by revenue authorities around the world, those days are over. Rectifying the situation with SARS is required before it closes in.

## Where you are tax resident matters

South Africa operates a residence-based system of tax. Consequently, South African tax residents are required to pay tax on their worldwide income and capital gains. Ceasing to be a South African tax resident will also trigger an exit charge.

Unbeknown to many, changing your physical residency or citizenship doesn't automatically change your tax residency. Determining your tax residency and the timing of any changes is complex. It requires understanding Israeli and South African tax law, the double-tax agreement between the two countries, and will depend on the taxpayer's unique circumstance. Numerous factors such as where you have a permanent home, your social and economic ties, and the time you spend in a particular jurisdiction all need to be considered.

SARS requires taxpayers to submit proof formally of a change in tax residency status. Failure to do so may result in significant back taxes, penalties, and interest.

SARS is now honing in on ex-South Africans, even those who left many years ago, who haven't officially tax emigrated. The introduction of common reporting standards globally has resulted in tax authorities and international financial institutions sharing information about taxpayers. When SARS is alerted to foreign income earned by an ex-South African with an inactive or incorrectly coded tax number, SARS can raise an assessment on this undeclared income at any time.

## Benefits of tax emigrating

After officially tax emigrating from South Africa, only South African source income and capital gains will be subject to tax in South Africa. Consequently all foreign

income and capital gains won't be taxed in South Africa. There are also generous exemptions for dividends tax, interest, and capital gains on South African shares for non-residents.

Another important benefit is that cashing out of South African retirement savings can be tax free due to the favourable double-tax agreement between Israel and South Africa. Surprisingly, given the financial risks in South Africa, international research has shown that the vast majority of ex-South Africans haven't withdrawn



their retirement savings after emigrating. This presents a big opportunity for those who haven't yet done so.

## How to rectify your situation

Former South Africans who haven't yet officially tax emigrated should do so sooner rather than later, and while they still can. Currently, SARS offers a voluntary disclosure programme through which tax emigration can be backdated and potential penalties on exit charges avoided. This generous remedy isn't available if SARS has already identified a violation.

Another concern that makes doing so urgent is that there's speculation among tax practitioners that SARS is seeking to remove the ability to "backdate" a tax emigration. This could result in much higher exit charges, back taxes, interest, and penalties for former South Africans going forward.

Consulting a South African tax professional is vital to help you backdate your tax emigration without penalties, pay exit tax on the asset base you had when you left South Africa, and make sure you're in good standing with SARS. But we don't know how long this will remain possible.

• *Michael Kransdorff is a Harvard educated international tax practitioner and Laura Sassoon is a Chartered Accountant and former senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand.*

# Pandor ends year with extreme rhetoric against Israel

&gt;&gt;Continued from page 4

Local political analyst Ralph Matheka agrees that pushing an anti-Israel agenda at the AU may not work in South Africa's favour. "The AU hasn't focused much on the issue of Israel/Palestine because there are more pressing issues for the region," he says. "South Africa also has its own challenges, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems quite distant in terms of priorities."

"South Africa will be a prime mover in trying to get the AU to reverse its decision on observer status," says Steven Gruz, the head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs. "It will be interesting to see how much support Israel has been able to consolidate in Africa after five years of diplomatic positioning. The chair of the AU passes from Democratic Republic of the Congo to Senegal in 2022. Israel has good relations with both, but this decision will almost certainly be challenged."

The national chairperson of

the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Professor Karen Milner, says, "We welcome Naledi Pandor's call for a negotiated solution, even though it's regrettable that she wrongly places all the blame on Israel for its failure. In view of the need for the international community to engage with all parties in the conflict to help them reach a lasting settlement, the government's continued opposition to Israel's observer status at the AU is baffling."

South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Rowan Polovin says, "The minister's speech ignores the actual reasons why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains persistent to this day. In spite of decades-long efforts by both Israel and external actors, all attempts at a lasting and universal peace have failed. The responsibility of this failure lies squarely in the hands of the Palestinian leadership which has unfailingly and consistently rejected peace and recognition of the Jewish state.

"Minister Pandor bizarrely positions Israel at 'the heart' of the ongoing crises in the Middle East," says Polovin. "This crude analysis is done without elaboration or mention of the ongoing conflicts and human-rights disasters where Israel is either a mere spectator or committed to assisting those in dire predicaments.

"Within international relations, dialogue should be encouraged. These ideals are ironically espoused in the minister's speech. However, it's made clear that the intention of Dirco is rather to isolate Israel, which would consequently dash any hopes of a settlement resolved with the joint participation of the international community."

"South African Jewry has sadly got used to the government's extreme position," says Gruz. "Minister Pandor has said strongly anti-Israel things before. Equally sadly, without real peace-making in this conflict, this government could become even more intolerant of Israel."

**Netanyahu ponders plea that could bar him from politics**

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is reportedly negotiating a plea deal with prosecutors in his ongoing corruption cases that could bar him from politics for several years and further reshape Israel's political landscape.

Various Israeli media reports allege that Netanyahu has laid the groundwork for a possible deal that would dismiss some of the charges against him while having him confess to "moral turpitude" in a series of corruption cases.



**Benjamin Netanyahu seen during a plenum session in Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, 5 January 2022**

**US officials meet Jewish groups on shul security**

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the United States considered the hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, "an act of terror" and "an antisemitic attack targeting the Jewish community" according to a Jewish leader who joined a phone call with top US officials on 18 January.

Majorkas, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Federal Bureau of Intelligence Director Chris Wray, and other national security officials held a call with major Jewish groups to discuss synagogue security concerns in the wake of the week's hostage crisis in Texas.

The executive director of the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center, Nathan Diament, said they met about 1 200 synagogue leaders, including representatives from the OU as well as the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations.

During the call, federal officials reiterated security measures already in place, such as Nonprofit Security Grant Program funds available to synagogues, email information systems, and online resources for synagogue security training.

**Pfizer CEO awarded Genesis Prize for vaccine**

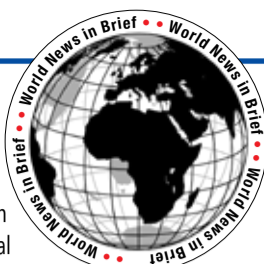
Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla was named the winner of the 2022 Genesis Prize, called the "Jewish Nobel".

The award, which "honours extraordinary individuals for their outstanding professional achievement, contribution to humanity, and commitment to Jewish values", was announced early on 19 January. It will be presented by Israeli President Isaac Herzog at a ceremony in Jerusalem on 29 June.

The announcement noted Bourla's work at Pfizer, which developed one of the first vaccines against coronavirus. Bourla's win was determined by an online vote in which 200 000 people participated, according to the announcement.

The Genesis Prize comes with a \$1 million (R15.4 million) prize. Bourla will donate his prize money to projects aimed at preserving the memory of victims of the Holocaust.

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her look incredibly stupid in this movie."

Whedon said in the *Vulture* interview that Gadot, who is Israeli, had misunderstood him. "I don't threaten people. Who does that?" he said.

He recalled arguing over a scene she wanted to cut. He told her jokingly that if she wanted to get rid of it, she would have to tie him to a railroad track and do it over his dead body. "Then, I was told that I had said something about her dead body and tying her to the railroad track." Gadot didn't agree with Whedon's version of events. "I understood perfectly," she said.

**Selling dolls for Sammy's Kitchen**

SAUL KAMIONSKY

What started as a fun pastime for Belinda Daniels, a South African emigrant in Australia, has resulted in the establishment of a soup kitchen that's feeding hundreds of people in Orange Farm, Gauteng.

Daniels, a generous donor to The Angel Network, started crocheting clothes for dolls as a form of recreation during COVID-19. The dressed dolls ended up flying off the shelves and raising almost R100 000 for Sammy's Kitchen, a soup kitchen named after her son, in the informal settlement of Tjovitjo in Orange Farm.

The kitchen was set up by The Angel Network, founded by Absa Jewish Achiever 2021 Humanitarian Award winner Glynne Wolman, and has been feeding 600 people every week.

It was set up in memory of Daniels' late son, Sam, who tragically died eight years ago at the age of 21. A plaque in his memory will soon be unveiled, and T-shirts sporting his photograph and name will be given to volunteers.

For Daniels, this is a bittersweet initiative because she would rather have her son with her than an initiative named after him. However, she says, she knows that "he would love it. He was just so kind".

The initiative, says Daniels, was "really just a matter of fate". A friend of hers gave her a lot of dolls which Daniels and her group crocheted clothing for to raise money for charity. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative didn't take off, so Daniels showed the clothed dolls to her friend, another ex-South African, Louise Fisher, who was running a Christmas-present drive in Australia for those who had suffered during the pandemic.

"Louise is an advocate for charity and The Angel Network, and she said we should sell them," recalls Daniels. Daniels didn't believe that

people would buy them, but Fisher was convinced otherwise.

They both wanted to use the dolls to raise money for those in need back in South Africa and to do it to honour Daniels' son. So, Fisher stumbled on the idea for Sammy's Kitchen.

"When we had R80 000, the kitchen was feeding about 15 000 children," says Fisher.

When they had raised R90 000, they could provide 24 000 men, women, and children with at least one meal. Alternatively, Sammy's Kitchen could have chosen to supply about 1 000 meals a week to support 200 people for 24 weeks with one hot, hearty meal a day, five days a week.

"It's going to feed people for at least a year," says Fisher. "It's just been an incredible project. Everyone in Australia knows about it. We've got money from America and Canada and everywhere. Basically, from absolutely nothing, we will get to R100 000."

Daniels has been overwhelmed by the communities who supported the project from all over the world.

"The dolls flew out the door. I could hardly keep up with the crocheting. I've done about 120 dolls. A lot of people donated money without actually wanting the doll. Those dolls we gave to Australian needy children."

They have been inundated with requests for dolls via social media, their marketing platform. Though the majority have sold in Melbourne, some

have been sold in a Sydney-based shop. Another talented ex-South African, meanwhile, made an exclusive range of girl dolls that are being sold at La Luna Boutique in Vacluse, Sydney, for the same cause.

Daniels and Fisher have loved seeing photos from parents and grandparents sharing the joy on the faces of their kids enjoying their new companion. Daniels is waiting for a new batch of dolls, and hopes to keep the kitchen going.

"I'm passionate about helping South Africa," says Fisher. "I travel there a lot and volunteer if I can. I work very closely on different projects. I love helping. I love Africa."

• If you want to buy a doll, donate, or get involved in helping others, message Louise Fisher on her Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/louise.r.fisher>



**Dolls from the Fund-A-Doll campaign**

**Israel hatred sours drawn-out Clover strike**

>>Continued from page 2

representatives.

"Clover management has said trading conditions are difficult with poor economic growth, rising costs, and subdued consumer spending. For these reasons, a review of all aspects of Clover's business was undertaken, which led to the difficult decision to restructure," Gon said.

"GIWUSA has objected to Milco's involvement in Clover since 2019 'in solidarity with oppressed people of Palestine'. The demands probably come more from the unions than the employees, because of the intensely anti-Israel stance taken by the federation they belong to, the South African Federation of Trade Unions.

"The DTIC [Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition] approved the takeover of Clover by Milco, and has no authority to interfere with the ownership or otherwise of the company.

"The anti-Israeli position is standard fare, but the two-month long strike is more puzzling in that not only will wages be lost over the period of the strike, it could aggravate trading conditions and result in more retrenchments.

"On the other hand, one can understand the desperate need to keep as many jobs in this punishing climate. The need to keep the company in existence is, however, paramount," Gon said.

More rolling mass action is expected.

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# Shirley Valentine gets the show on the road

Shirley Valentine is coming to Montecasino Theatre from 26 January. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to director **Gina Shmukler** about the show, long delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Tell us a little about your theatrical experience and the past two years?

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the theatre industry. I'm exceptionally fortunate that I direct corporate theatre, which has sustained me over the past two years. We have made theatre in the virtual space – basically TV for corporates.

## What made you choose to direct Shirley Valentine now?

I was approached by VR Theatrical to direct. We were in rehearsals for Shirley Valentine when COVID-19 hit in March 2020. In February last year, we staged it for the first time at The Etienne Rousseau Theatre in Sasolburg. At that point, theatres were allowed an audience of only 50 people. We played to 50 people in a 456-seater theatre. I remember crying when the first audience entered. Theatre has its own power of connection.

The set, props, and wardrobe were packed for Montecasino as we imagined we would be opening shortly afterwards. Another year passed ... and here we are.

## What is it about this play that appeals to you in general and as a woman?

Its humanity is what appeals to me. Shirley is alone in a marriage that has lost its love and connection. She's honest about her aloneness as she talks to her "wall" and later her "rock". Playwright Willy Russell captures the complexity of relationships, infusing the story with heart, humour, and love. Isolation has become real through the pandemic. We have all experienced the loss of community and connection, and what that means. Shirley's journey takes her to the point where she falls in love with the idea of living. She discovers what it is to be alive.

## Her journey is one about finding and learning to love the most important person in her life. Please explain this, and why it's an important lesson for all of us?

Shirley has been holding onto a dream, "to sit at the edge of the sea and drink wine in a country where the grapes are grown". It's this dream which she believes will nourish her and lead her to happiness. And yet as she sits there, nothing changes. She realises we take ourselves with us, so while she lives that dream, her inner world doesn't shift. She confronts what she calls her "wasted life". It's from this point that she begins to grow and fall in love with herself again.

## For some, Shirley Valentine is a sad soul who is lost and so desperate, she talks to walls. For others, she's a heroine. What is she to you, and why?

She's a woman who fell in love with her husband, got married and had two kids, and had dreams that life and domesticity interfered with. And she got lost along the way. For me, she's a woman of great courage and humour, who at the age of 42, redefines what matters to her and then lives by it.

## What were you looking for in the actress to play Shirley? What does Natasha Sutherland bring to the role?

When I was auditioning for Shirley, I knew that technically, I needed someone who had real "theatre chops" as a one-person play requires great stamina and guts (to say the least). I hadn't yet decided my vision for the play, but when Natasha auditioned, she brought something so real, so compelling, so contemporary, that I knew she was probably my Shirley. Theatre runs in Natasha's veins, and it's been a gift to work on a well-written play with an extraordinary actress and person.

## Why bring a fantasy of a Greek island holiday to our theatres when we have been starved of travel for almost two years?

Doesn't theatre give us the chance to dream, to be taken to unexpected places emotionally and imaginatively?

Last July, we filmed a virtual event in the Market Theatre and as I sat there, I was struck by what theatre offers me. A chance to get out of my head, to travel through music or the spoken word to unexpected places within myself, and a window to dream.

## What do you believe our theatre audiences are looking for now?

Heart. Connection. Community. To laugh and share collectively.

## So many theatre personae have been starved of work as a result of the pandemic. How do you believe this should be remedied?

Looking to government and our minister of arts and culture isn't an option right now.

I have thought so many times who I would dedicate the run of Shirley to and to be honest, there has been so much death in our industry. Artists have suffered with limited work, no medical aid, they have no food, and have lost

their homes. It's very sore!

Nothing replaces the visceral power of the human story shared in a living, breathing environment such as the theatre. My wish would be more investment in the arts from corporates.

Shirley often says, "It's funny that..." For me, it's funny that businesses are eager to invest so much in their corporate social investment work when theatre has such a role to play in our society. When we can, let's all exhale and rebuild our South African theatre industry, but for now, you can start by booking tickets to see Shirley Valentine, which runs from 26 January to 12 February in Joburg at the Pieter Toerien Theatre at Montecasino.

Natasha Sutherland in Shirley Valentine



# COVID-19 won't disappear, but it may get milder

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Israeli Professor Manfred Green is optimistic that we are in the latter stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, although he admits we're not getting rid of coronavirus so easily.

"We need to prepare for a much wider spread with possible new variants. That's the possibility," said Green, a professor of epidemiology at Haifa University. "We are watching out for these new variants. It's still a major health threat, but we could be seeing the beginning of a milder epidemic."

Green, the founding director of the Israel Centre for Disease Control and a University of Cape Town alumnus, was speaking on 18 January at a Telfed-organised webinar titled, "The COVID-19 Pandemic: when will it ever end?"

Based on what we have seen from pandemics in the past, coronavirus should lose some of its virulence as it spreads, he said. "That's not unusual. Pandemics eventually end, although I'm not going to go into the Black Death or something which could go on for many years. I'm talking about in recent times."

"We know now that because of the variants in the current pandemic, people who have been sick from the one virus can actually get sick again from the other virus. In other words, if you got sick from Delta and recovered from it, and you get infected by Omicron, you can get sick, usually with a milder disease because you have some memory. But it's still not enough to prevent the disease entirely. So, one of the problems is how we are going to deal with the disease. Because of these variants, it's not something that will go away quickly."

Vaccinated people can transmit the disease because, as Green explained, "You produce

antibodies in your blood, but not where the virus actually enters the body." The virus, he said, can get into the nose and throat. It then replicates, which doesn't infect the vaccinated person, but can pass the disease onto others.

"The big question we're asking ourselves is whether this disease will become seasonal like flu," said Green. "If that happens, it will no longer be an all-year-round phenomenon. It will exist for a couple of months of the year, and hopefully will be much milder."

He described the possibility of the normality of pre-COVID-19 life returning at the end of the pandemic as "very unlikely".

"We probably need to get used to living with what we call a 'new normal' and living with COVID-19 as another flu-like seasonal disease," he said. "If there's

He said the best new vaccines would be ones such as an intranasal vaccine because they produce antibodies where the virus goes into your body. "Those are the most effective, similar to the oral polio vaccine, which produces antibodies in the gut, where the virus usually enters the body."

Vaccine hesitancy is making controlling the pandemic more difficult, Green said. "People who aren't vaccinated are actually giving the virus the opportunity to spread widely and mutate."

"The vaccines are effective, even though we may need to give multiple doses. We shouldn't be too concerned about giving multiple doses. The new treatments look very promising. We need the co-operation and compliance of the public. The bottom line is that we [in Israel] aren't facing a

Green gave some interesting facts about COVID-19. "There are seven coronaviruses that have infected humans. The coronavirus comes from animals. In this case, it might have come from a bat. Seven coronaviruses have changed enough to infect humans. Four of those cause a common cold."

"Some of them are caused by other coronaviruses, one being SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] in 2003. Probably because that disease was so severe and we were able to isolate patients very quickly, the actual virus disappeared. It's very unusual, but it did. One causes MERS [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome], which is seen mainly in camels but does cross over to humans. That has pretty much been limited to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. For some reason, it hasn't spread very widely."

Although the current pandemic has had a much lower mortality rate than the 1918 influenza pandemic, there weren't the same kind of facilities and medications in the early stages of the 20th century.

Green believes the two pandemics resemble each other in many respects. "The Influenza virus became endemic and less lethal, and it's still with us," he said. "The same influenza we have today, which we call the H3N2 and the H1N1, is basically the great-grandchild of the 1918 virus. It's the same virus. It has just mutated. In other words, COVID-19 may develop into a virus which will hopefully produce milder disease, become seasonal, and remain pretty much indefinitely."



People during the COVID-19 pandemic



People during the 1918 influenza pandemic

an effective vaccine, an acceptable level of morbidity and mortality, and what we call tolerable moderate restrictions during the season, I would think we would still want to suggest, if it was seasonal, maybe use masks. I would think it would be a good idea to use masks in closed spaces in the winter months."

national disaster, as some would say.

"The pandemic or epidemic in Israel has now reached the stage where it's very difficult to control the spread. It's such an infectious virus. All of you have probably experienced the fact that you've done everything you thought was right, yet you got infected. What we're trying to do now is basically smooth out the numbers and make sure hospitals aren't overwhelmed."



Professor Manfred Green

# TIME TO PLAN YOUR FUTURE IN CYPRUS

**"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." – Chinese proverb**

**A**lthough vaccine rollouts are taking place worldwide, coronavirus is affecting global travel and some countries are still enforcing lockdowns, mandatory testing, and restrictions. It seems that this is going to be our way of life for a while to come.

It's the perfect time to take a breath, do some reflection, and start working on a plan for your and your family's future in Cyprus.

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term. There is demand;

5. Cyprus is a popular tourist destination, so owning an investment property will reap an attractive offshore income;
6. Cyprus has been voted one of the safest countries in the world, so your personal safety and property investment is assured; and
7. The discovery and imminent exploration of natural gas is already having a positive impact on foreign investment and infrastructural development. Billions of euros are pouring into the economy.

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# Planting trees to commemorate Tu B'Shvat



## Letters

### RABBINATE'S SILENCE ALLOWS ABUSERS TO FLOURISH

A few years ago, I read in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) about a schism in a small American synagogue, and saw red. Rabbi XYZ had recently joined this congregation as a member after a stint in prison. Half of the shul objected to having him in the shul and having their children near him, the other half felt that he had served his sentence, and should be forgiven and welcomed back.

I was incensed. In 1989, the Cape Town synagogue to which I belonged had sent the same Rabbi XYZ packing after discovering that he had been sexually abusing their children. He had arrived some months before from New York, with glowing references about his abilities and his vast Talmudic knowledge. The New York rabbis who had composed those references knew what they were doing, and knew what he had done, and thought South Africa would be far enough away to avoid exposure. Our chief rabbi then ensured that no other South African synagogue would employ him, in spite of those references.

The implication of the JTA article was that for more than 20 years afterwards, Rabbi XYZ had moved from shul to shul in America, accompanied by glowing references from rabbis who thought it more important to keep quiet and take care of their own than to protect children from a known sexual predator until finally, some principled congregational leaders ignored *mesira* (reporting the

conduct of another Jew to a non-rabbinic authority), and he was charged and sentenced to prison.

The Catholic Church has been rightfully condemned for protecting sexual abusers in its fold. Unfortunately, hiding behind the notion of *lashon harah* (derogatory speech about a person) and the unwillingness to admit wrongdoing among their colleagues, our rabbinate often does the same. Surely it should be as important to protect our children as it is to protect the reputation of rabbinical rascals?

When the scandal about Chaim Walder broke, many Israeli Haredi authorities chose to attack the journalists who had exposed him and caution against the harm of gossip, rather than focus on the pain of the victims and the culture of silence that had shielded the sexual perpetrator for years.

We are grateful to the SA Jewish Report for not conforming to the culture of silence, and for its willingness to publish articles like those from Rabbi Thurgood, Rozanne Sack, and Wendy Hendler, and to organisations like Koleinu SA, which take action to ensure that monsters like Rabbi XYZ will be exposed in South Africa and victims of abuse will be protected and supported.

- Mary Katz, Cape Town

### ANTISEMITES DON'T DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN JEWS, NEITHER SHOULD WE

I learnt about what was going on at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, in the United States (US) late on Saturday, 15 January, from a Facebook post made by one of the rabbis at Temple Israel in Cape Town, of which I'm a member.

What became clear as the nightmare played itself out over hours – for us through the night in real time, for others, after Shabbat ended and they became aware of what was going on – is that the people of Israel, the global Jewish community, were with Rabbi Cytron-Walker and his three congregants as their captivity wore on. Jews of every denomination felt this in their gut. They shared each other's posts of prayer and then release. This is who we are. This is *am Yisrael!*

Let's remember this as we move onward. Let's remember as we collectively pray for the healing of the four who endured the horror as hostages many kilometres away (in our case and that of others who are outside of the US), or not so far away – that we are all bonded as a people. That

our differences of prayer style and interpretation didn't matter over the hours of their captivity.

It didn't matter if we called ourselves reform, conservative, orthodox, reconstructionist, renewal, or secular – terrorism and antisemitism know no boundary and don't discriminate unequally. What mattered is that our people were once again victimised at the hands of a madman. We're better together than divided, and we must learn from this. We cannot help the world to heal in our quest for *tikkun olam* if we don't repair these rifts within.

We cannot afford to come together over victimisation only, we must come together over the love of each other, and respect for each other. All who call themselves Jews felt the anguish experienced by Congregation Beth Israel. No one checked pedigree.

Congregation Beth Israel literally means the house of the people Israel – and that's what we are – *am Yisrael* – the Jewish people. It's also how we must act.

- Nancy Krisch, Cape Town

### LOOKING FOR BESSIE

I'm seeking the whereabouts of Bessie Taurog, a junior primary school teacher and art teacher at King David Primary School Linksfield in the 1960s.

Please help me to find out what became of her. Email [arnoldjlevy@gmail.com](mailto:arnoldjlevy@gmail.com).

- Arnold Levy

# Pass the potatoes over the violence

Some years ago, for no reason that I can clearly remember, there was a spate of "drive-by" shootings. What started as horrific and shocking headline news, soon retreated into the latter pages of the daily newspapers.

It was during this time that I recall reading a *Madam & Eve* cartoon in *The Star* newspaper. If memory serves me, it went something like this: Madam and Eve are having dinner, when there's a burst of gunfire. Windows shatter, the table is upended, and they find themselves taking cover to save their lives. It's during this fracas that Eve turns to Madam and says, "Do you think we're becoming desensitised to this?" Madam, looks at her and in response says, "I don't think so Eve. Please pass the potatoes."

That is what I felt when I heard of the hostage situation at the synagogue in Texas during Shabbat last week. I wanted to be shocked and for it to have an emotional impact. And yet, if I was eating carbs, I could easily have asked for the potatoes.

The lack of outrage was reflected across many media outlets. *Business Insider* lead with the headline "The Texas synagogue hostage-taker was on the phone to his kids when he was shot dead, his brother says." In spite of the qualification that this was according to his brother, the headline shows a clear attempt to humanise the "hostage taker" and illustrate that he's a father, whose dying act was in the service of parenthood.

It doesn't focus on the victims, who spent 10 hours not sure if they would survive, and doesn't give credit

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



to the fact that the act was in fact focused on the release of his sister, a vehement outspoken antisemite who is serving a life sentence for terrorism. Rather, the picture created is that of a family man, cut down while chatting to his children.

Is it little wonder we prefer potatoes!

Columnist Bari Weiss explains it brilliantly. Her theory is that in order for there to be an appropriate public reaction, both the perpetrator and the victims need to be acceptable. White, right-wing Nazis make the "perfect" terrorists, whilst non-religious, non-Hassidic, secular Jews make the perfect victims. If either one of those aren't present, then there will be an attempt to play down the incident. Which is why the "hostage-taker" was referred to as a Brit, a father, a brother, anyone but an Islamist.

She puts it this way. "It's not difficult to gin up outrage these days, yet you won't find celebrities or sports stars or influencers making #colleyville or #antisemitism go viral. Meanwhile, the members of our so-called intelligentsia are claiming the real victims aren't those innocent Jews held hostage, but Muslims who could face Islamophobia-inspired violence."

It's worth monitoring our own reaction. Because we too fall prey to what we read and how incidents are reported. If we're not vigilant, we'll soon find ourselves in a cartoon, under fire asking for the potatoes.

# A Jew betrayed Anne Frank's family, cold-case concludes

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

A team of researchers say they have identified the person who betrayed Anne Frank and her family to the Nazis 80 years ago: a Jewish notary forced to work for the Nazis.

The man identified by a cold-case team that has been working for six years to identify the persons responsible for the discovery of the Franks by Nazi authorities in occupied Amsterdam was Arnold van den Bergh, a notary and a member of the Jewish Council, which the Nazis established to better control Dutch Jews.



Photo: Sjoerd van der Wal/Getty Images

Dutch and the Nazis received the letter from Otto Frank in 1963, but its existence wasn't widely known, the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* reported.

Frank had said in the past that his family had been betrayed by Jews, the newspaper reported, but never publicly named Van den Bergh.

The Jewish notary survived the Holocaust, making him part of a small minority of Dutch Jews to survive, and died in 1950.

Over the years, researchers have presented various hypotheses on who may have betrayed the Franks to the Nazis, though there hasn't been consensus on any of the suspects.

A 2015 book identified Nelly Voskuil, a niece of Dutch resistance activist Elisabeth "Bep" Voskuil, as the person who likely betrayed the Franks. The book alleged that Voskuil was a Nazi collaborator who may have revealed the whereabouts of the hideout where her sister was helping the Franks hide.

In 2016, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, a museum devoted to the memory of the family, published a study alleging that the raid in 1944 on their house may have been over illegal

trade in food rations and other issues, and not the result of betrayal.

The cold-case team cannot ascertain with certainty that Van den Bergh betrayed the Franks, but did say that the theory involving him is the only one backed by evidence.

A handful of leading Dutch Jews said the investigation's conclusion shouldn't be trusted, and might even be inappropriate.

In a column published on 17 January in the conservative Dutch newspaper *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, Dutch Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs said the accusation was "unethical" because it wasn't certain that Van den Bergh committed the acts attributed to him and he was unable to defend himself.

Ronny Naftaniel, the chairperson of the Central Jewish Organisation of Dutch Jews, wrote on Facebook, "The assertion that Otto Frank knew about it but said nothing seems like speculation."

Meanwhile, Bart van der Boom, a Leiden University historian who has written extensively about the Jewish Council, dismissed the findings as "libellous nonsense".

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Getting on board with 2022

In memoriam: George Szemere

I start this week's column with a tribute to Holocaust survivor George (Stern) Szemere, who passed away in Johannesburg last week. George was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1940, at the start of World War II. In the final year of the war, his father was one of those taken by the Arrow Cross to the Danube River, told to jump into the icy water, and then shot. George went into hiding with his mother and sister, and survived. In 1958, he left Hungary and subsequently settled in South Africa where he married.

Shirley Beagle, who assists Holocaust survivors with claims under various compensatory and hardship funds, only discovered George fairly recently. Just before the holidays, he was admitted to Helen Joseph Hospital and Shirley was concerned with his welfare. Through our network of Jewish Community Service doctors, we found Jewish doctors to monitor and visit him. I attended his funeral over the weekend. In spite of it being very small, it was dignified and moving.

How Lalela boosted a nation's spirits

Coming near the end of another trying year, Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane's success at the Miss Universe pageant in Haifa, Israel, came as a much-needed boost to national morale. Mswane represented our country with grace and courage, and was rewarded by being placed third out of 80 participants.

However, perhaps even more impressive was how she stood her ground not only in the face of an extraordinarily vicious campaign of bullying, intimidation, and invective on the part of the local Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement, but also the opposition of high-ranking government members. All manner of pressure was brought to bear on her to withdraw from the event, but in the end, her right to choose and the wishes of the majority of South Africans prevailed. The Jewish community supported Mswane throughout this process, and it was a pleasure for our

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

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



leadership, together with hundreds of other South Africans, to be part of the enthusiastic crowd at OR Tambo International Airport welcoming her home.

Latest COVID-19 guidelines

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has taken the lead in convening regular meetings of the national communal leadership to discuss issues, share information and best practice, and plan and co-ordinate our response. To ensure that decisions are based on reliable and up-to-date information, we have included medical and other experts in the discussions. On Sunday, a Zoom meeting was held to brief communal leaders on the medical and legal considerations regarding mandatory vaccination. Professor Barry Schoub and Neil Kirby from Werksmans Attorneys set out the scientific and legal framework for the question. Based on this information, each organisation will assess the situation from their perspective and decide how to proceed. A recording of the meeting is available. I encourage those seeking information to write to [midweekcovidupdate@gmail.com](mailto:midweekcovidupdate@gmail.com).

Solidarity with Beit Yisrael Shul in Colleyville, Texas

On behalf of South African Jewry, the SAJBD sent messages to Jewish communal organisations in America and to the American Embassy expressing our support after four members of the shul were taken hostage by a gunman in an antisemitic attack. We are immensely thankful that they all escaped unharmed.

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

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# A Jewish guide to the 2022 Australian Open

EMILY BURACK – JTA

The Novak Djokovic COVID-19 scandal may be stealing the headlines ahead of the Australian Open, which starts next week, but there are several Jewish players looking to win big at the year's first Grand Slam.

Here they are:

## Men's singles tournament

Diego Schwartzman, seeded no. 13, is looking to make it past the fourth round of the Australian Open for the first time in his career. Last year, he lost in a surprising upset in the third round to Aslan Karatsev (more on him below). Schwartzman is coming off a strong showing at the start of the season. He notched his first win ever against a top-five player on hard courts, beating Stefanos

of their match-ups). Still, I have faith – Schwartzman has taken down bigger players before.

Denis Shapovalov is also coming in strong. With fellow Canadian Félix Auger-Aliassime, he helped Canada win the 2022 ATP Cup, defeating Spain in the finals. Shapovalov, seeded no. 14, was born in Tel Aviv to a Ukrainian Jewish mom and Russian Orthodox Christian dad, and he often wears a cross when he plays. But his mom (who is also his coach) considers him Jewish. Though he was born in Israel, his family moved to Canada before his first birthday. Last year, he made it to only the third round of the Australian Open.

At the 2021 Australian Open, Russian-Israeli Aslan Karatsev had a historic run. For Karatsev, who has Jewish heritage and lived in Israel for nearly a decade, it was his first appearance in a Grand Slam tournament – he had to play in the preceding qualifying tournament just to

make the draw. But he made it all the way to the semi-finals before losing to eventual winner Djokovic. His ranking rose from 253 to 15 last year. He's seeded no. 18 this year, with a possible third round match-up against Rafael Nadal. Karatsev's paternal grandfather is a

Russian Jew, and he still says Israel feels like home. He made aliyah when he was three, speaks fluent Hebrew, holds Israeli citizenship, and his mom and sister still live in Holon, Israel.



Madison Brengle, Aslan Karatsev, Camila Giorgi, Diego Schwartzman, Elina Svitolina, and Denis Shapovalov

Tsitsipas 6-7(5), 6-3, 6-3. He has a tough draw, however, as he could face American John Isner in the third round (Isner has won their only meeting), and no. 2 seed Daniil Medvedev in the fourth round (Medvedev has won all six

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## Women's singles tournament

Does Elina have a path to victory? OK, before we dive into Elina Svitolina, she has unconfirmed Jewish heritage. She's Ukrainian, and many articles identify her parents as Jewish, but she has never commented on the issue. Make of that what you will (she's Jew-ish?). The women's field has been wide-open for the past few years, with many first-time Grand Slam winners. Will Svitolina add her name to that list this year? She's seeded no. 15 at the Open, and will probably go up against former world no. 1 and two-time Australian Open winner Victoria Azarenka in the third round.

In her tenth try, can Camila make it past the third round?

Italian Jewish star Camila Giorgi made her professional debut on the women's tour back in 2006 (at just 16!). She's now set to play in her tenth Australian Open. She's never made it past the third round before, but last year was a big year for Giorgi: She claimed her first WTA 1000 event, winning the 2021 Canada Masters. Seeded no. 30, she has a tough third-round match-up, set to face world no. 1 Ash Barty. But let's end with a fun fact about the Jewish athlete: her favourite book is *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Unseeded American Madison Brengle is ranked no. 59 in the world. The 35-year-old made it to the fourth round of the Australian Open back in 2015, and she has played in the tournament (either the main tournament or the qualifying rounds) since 2007. The Jewish player from Dover, Delaware, faces world no. 102, Ukrainian Dayana Yastremska, in her first round, and Brengle has won their only meeting. If she wins next week, she's up against powerhouse Naomi Osaka, reigning Australian Open champ, in Round 2. The last time Osaka and Brengle played was back in 2013, when Brengle won 6-2 6-2. Obviously, a lot has changed in the past nine years, but we never rule out a Jewish player pulling off a stunning upset.

## Other tennis Jews of note

Israeli veteran Dudi Sela lost in the qualifiers, as did American Jewish player Jamie Loeb. Loeb's fellow Jewish New Yorker, Noah Rubin, isn't in Australia, instead playing on the ATP Challenger tour in Brazil. As of writing, it's unclear if Canadian Jewish doubles champ Sharon Fichman is playing in Australia this year – she reached the Open's doubles quarterfinals last year.

# KosherWorld

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