

### 

Israel terror attacks reverberate beyond its borders vould be, but overall, our commitment to and love for and Islamic Jihad have 'top down' structures," says different level of radicalisation. It's exceptionall

or South African *oleh* Howard Sundy, moving to Israel was motivated by a feeling of coming home. But this week, that sense of security was rattled when a fellow *olah* who also lived in Netanya, Shirel Aboukrat, was killed in Hadera alongside her friend and colleague, Yazan Falah, from the Druze community. They were both Israel Border Police officers and 19 years old. They are two of 11 people from diverse backgrounds who have been murdered in eight days in three brutal terror attacks across Israel.

"I know the family, and have a lot of friends from shul who are friendly with her parents," says Sundy. "As an *oleh* who made Israel my home 36 years ago, it's a feeling of this is truly my home. The family left the life they had in France for the goal of feeling safe and living as Jews here in *eretz Yisrael*.

"Shirel completed her schooling at a *dati leumi* [national religious] school here in Israel. She decided to go to a combat unit and actively contribute to Israeli society and *am Yisrael's* security. She could have opted to do volunteer work and not be in a combat unit. Her mother, Devorah, was heartbroken but respected her daughter's decision. Shirel made the ultimate sacrifice." Sundy says many people he knows are now comforting the family as they sit shiva.

Tania Shalom Michaelian, who made aliya from Cape Town, also lives in Netanya. "My twin daughters just got released from the army. The pictures of Shirel shut me down completely. Every soldier becomes your own child when your kids are in the army," she says. Not only that, but one of her daughters is studying at Shenkar, a design, engineering, and art college close to where the Bnei Brak attack occurred. "She wasn't there as she left college early, but it brings things very close to home. On the one hand, it's scary, but on the other, we have to go on with our lives. Otherwise terrorism wins."

Batya Shmukler, who made aliya from Johannesburg, has children living in Be'er Sheva and Hadera, where terrorists killed seven people. "Our thoughts are with the families of the victims, wherever they may be," she says. "My kids are all fine and obviously concerned as anyone would be, but overall, our commitment to and love for Israel remains as strong as it ever was."

The South African Zionist Federation called on the South African government to condemn the senseless terror attacks in Israel. The organisation noted that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has condemned the attacks, and that the South African government should do so as well.

Meanwhile, a local security expert says that the incidents are even more concerning because two of them were committed in the name of Islamic State (ISIS). This is the first time that terrorism has been carried out by ISIS adherents in Israel. It brings a new, worrying threat to the Jewish state and to Jewish communities worldwide, including in South Africa. "Most terror organisations like Hamas, Hezbollah,

has 'from above', and individuals often carry them out on their own initiative, in 'lone wolf' attacks. These are much more difficult to identify and stop." Another difference is that two of these attackers – as well as the man who killed South African *oleh* Eli Kay

well as the man who killed South African *oleh* Eli Kay – are all citizens working and living in Israel. The Be'er Sheva attacker was from the Bedouin community and the Hadera attackers were Israeli Arabs. "It's not like Israel can close the borders to stop them. And they're exceptionally radical and determined, as we've seen with other ISIS attacks," says Greenblatt. "This is a

Community Security Organisation (CSO) director

of operations in Gauteng, Jevon Greenblatt. "Their

leadership decides who does what and when. But ISIS

is much more decentralised. Attacks are not planned

different level of radicalisation. It's exceptionally concerning, and Israel will need new security protocols to deal with it."

The other aspect of ISIS terror is that it's a vicious cycle, often inspiring new attacks in Israel and around the world. "Terrorists may have never met each other, but an attack in one part of the world can inspire another. It may give potential terrorists anywhere in the world – including South Africa – the motivation to target Jewish communities."

Delving into some history, Greenblatt says most attacks in Israel are perpetrated by Hamas and other groups, supported by Iran, that are traditionally aligned with the Shia sect of Islam. "Iran hates ISIS, so it's strange that ISIS seems to be growing within Israel. It's also strange that even though ISIS claimed responsibility for these attacks, Hamas and other groups are lauding them.

"Though ISIS has for years casually mentioned 'freeing Jerusalem', it's never taken an active interest in Israel until now," he says. "Somehow, it's now growing its influence and possibly recruiting and indoctrinating followers online and within some communities."

He notes that in two of the recent attacks, it was people who happened to be in the area who neutralised the attackers. Though this isn't a long-term solution, it shows that people can be proactive. "You can run, hide, or fight. In many cases, those who fight back survive the attack. Don't freeze, don't do nothing. Being vigilant is critical," he says.

One heroic police officer who fought back in Bnei Brak was 32-year-old Israel Police Staff Sergeant Major Amir Khoury, an Arab Israeli who served on the Bnei Brak police station's motorcyclist responders' team. He was part of a team of two motorcycle officers who caught up with the terrorist and killed him, ending the deadly shooting spree. Khoury later died, as he had been shot while pursuing the terrorist.

Continued on page 6>>



South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein met Israeli President Isaac Herzog on his first visit to Israel since the pandemic broke out. The two leaders discussed issues facing Israel and world Jewry, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities for South Africa's Jewish community and the shifting political landscape in the country. Goldstein paid tribute to Herzog for "his bold leadership in seeking to heal the fractures within Israeli society", and for "representing the Israeli and the Jewish people with such nobility and integrity on the world stage".

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### **2** SA JEWISH REPORT

### Russian-Jewish journalist's home desecrated

Earlier this month, Russian-Jewish journalist Alexei Venediktov was fined for speaking in Ukrainian on a radio show, a move many saw as an expression of solidarity with Ukraine during Russia's invasion.

Last week, he found a pig's head on his doorstep and an antisemitic slogan posted on his door.

Vandals wrote the German word "Judensau" on top of a gold trident symbol, a state symbol of Ukraine, on a poster put on the door to Venediktov's Moscow apartment. The Judensau is a Christian folk image dating back to the Middle Ages that depicts Jews sucking on the teats or peering into the anus of a pig.

On Telegram, Venediktov wrote, "The country that defeated fascism. Why not a Star of David on the door of my apartment? They decided to intimidate me and my family."

Venediktov is the former editor of The Echo of Moscow, one of Russia's last independent radio stations. It was shut down by Russian authorities on 1 March.

### Zemmour accused of denying Nazi crimes

Several French gay rights groups have accused Jewish presidential candidate Éric Zemmour of denying Nazi crimes, a criminal offense in France, for supporting the view that homosexuals weren't deported to concentration camps from French territory.

In a legal complaint, six groups highlighted a passage from his recent book, France Has Not Said Its Last Word, in which he endorses a view promoted by another right-wing French politician, Christian Vanneste, who said in 2012, "There's a famous myth on



the deportation of homosexuals ... In Germany there was persecution of homosexuals that led to the deportation of about 30 000 that didn't happen elsewhere. Except for three annexed regions, there were no deportations on sexual grounds in France."

31 March – 7 April 2022



Éric Zemmour announces his candidacy for the 2022 presidential election in a video broadcast on YouTube

Zemmour's campaign said the groups' complaint was "an instrumentalisation of the justice system" in connection with the presidential elections next month, perhaps because Zemmour was "the only candidate willing to fight their propaganda in our schools".

• All briefs supplied by JTA

### **Torah Thought**

### @ Chabad of the West Coast Miracles from (and for) a little city in Ukraine

"My family watched the Zoom with your rabbi in Ukraine, and my daughter got her whole class at Herzlia to write letters to the kids there. Please forward this to them."

Who would imagine that what happened in a little overseas city, in a Ukraine port, would be reverberating here in Cape Town and around the world

But that's exactly what happened 120 years ago this month, and again this week.

On the 11th of Nissan in the year 1902 (to be celebrated this year on Tuesday, 12 April 2022), a little boy was born to his parents who lived in the Ukrainian city of Nikolayev.

Over the past four weeks, the students and ambassadors of that little boy, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M Shneerson, have marshalled their resources, raised millions of dollars from across the globe, and evacuated more than 30 000 refugees from the terrifying war zone, all while many of them remained behind themselves to care for the sick and elderly.

While they haven't split the sea, the miracles that G-d is performing through them is a natural continuation of our first Exodus.

This Shabbat, we have the special Torah reading of Hachodesh, in which we read about Moshe's first marching orders directing him towards the most famous (and miraculous) evacuation in the history of mankind, with the defining words (for which this Shabbos is named): "Hachodesh" - (this month is the beginning) of a new supernatural channel that will define your new nation.

We recreate that reality daily by tapping into the domitable spirit of our soul and our willingness to pay the ultimate sacrifice for that.

entirely opposite nature.

As opposed to the Exodus, which relies on inspiration from above, parshas Tazriya opens with the most down-to-earth natural human experience - childbirth. This is a metaphor for the self-driven spiritual work of investing in ourselves and ultimately giving birth to a healthy, sustainable relationship with G-d (and the purpose for which He created us).

The juxtaposition of the special reading of Hachodesh's divinely Inspired Exodus theme on a Shabbat whose regular parsha actually emphasises the importance of

human initiative, reminds us that the synthesis of the contrasting

drives isn't just possible - it's imperative.

The Zhitomir orphans resettled in Israel, the Odesa refugees in Germany, and the Herzlia girl in Cape Town, all remind us that it's by bringing supernatural, miraculous energy into everyday experiences that the world is rapidly becoming a better place.

Like the vision of that little boy in Ukraine almost 120 years ago.

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There is a dispute whether one can light Shabbat candles in a place that is already lit-up with electric lights. 'turn the lights off and on for the sake of Sh







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But that's not the whole story, because the actual parsha of this week is of a very different, if not



then light the regular candles with a bracha".

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Proofreader Kim Hatchuel Advertising Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za • New business development manager Laura Kaufman laura@sajewishreport.co.za • Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • Distribution Sandy Furman Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd. Tel: 0860 525 200 • Board of Directors Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benjy Porter. • Advertisements and editorial copy do not neccessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980.



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### SA JEWISH REPORT 3

# **Desert indaba cements Arab-Israeli relations**



wo years ago, this would have been unimaginable. On 27 and 28 March, the foreign ministers of six states -Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United States (US) - met in Israel's dusty Negev Desert.

The six ministers gathered at Sde Boker, the kibbutz where Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, is buried, so the meeting was full of Zionist symbolism (although only the Israelis and Americans visited his gravesite). This gathering was put together in record time on the initiative of Yair Lapid, Israel's foreign minister. The meeting sent a strong signal to Iran and the world that the Middle East has changed irrevocably. Even a deadly ISIS (Islamic State)-inspired terror attack in Hadera timed to coincide with the summit - didn't detract from this historic encounter. All ministers present denounced the terror attack in Hadera. The Palestinians, however, feel increasingly marginalised and betrayed.

Six working groups were formed from the summit: security and counterterrorism; education; health; energy; tourism; and food and water. The countries said they would attempt to bring other states into the Abraham Accords. They discussed rising oil prices on the back of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and food security. They also talked about keeping Jerusalem calm with the upcoming and overlapping festivals of Ramadan, Pesach, and Easter.

Jordan, which has had a peace agreement with Israel since 1993, was noticeably absent. Some said it was because it was unable to send its foreign minister at short notice. Others said tensions have been brewing, with rumours of Israeli involvement in an attempted coup in Amman. It wouldn't have been proper protocol for King Abdullah II to meet foreign ministers. And anyway, he was visiting Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah for the first time in four years – a diplomatic snub, no doubt.



### **Delegates at the Negev Summit**

In one of the few policy initiatives to outlive the Trump administration, this highlevel gathering was built on the Abraham Accords. Signed on the White House Lawn in September 2020, they normalised Israel's relations with Bahrain and the UAE. Morocco and Sudan joined the accords thereafter.

The gathering occurred in the shadow of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, attacks on the UAE and Saudi Arabia by Tehran-backed Houthis, and the Biden administration's attempts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. These countries think the US is close to agreeing to what they see as a bad deal.

According to a report on Al Jazeera's website, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said, "We are here today because we genuinely, sincerely, and deeply believe in peace. Not that kind of passive peace where we turn our backs to each other and peacefully ignore each other."

According to the *Times of Israel*, at a joint press conference after the summit, Lapid said, "What we're doing here is making history, building a new regional architecture based on progress, technology, religious tolerance, security, and intelligence cooperation. This new architecture, the shared capabilities we're building, intimidates and deters our common enemies, first and



foremost Iran and its proxies."

"The meeting was significant because those attending agreed at short notice and willingly did so with full media coverage, not apprehensive of criticism, for example from Saudi Arabia," Professor Glen Segell, at the Ezri Center for Iran and Gulf States Research at the University of Haifa told the SA Jewish Report.

"This meeting was historic," said Professor Hussein Solomon, the head of the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free

State. "There was some feeling that the Abraham Accords were simply going to be symbolic, with an idealistic sounding name like that, but you saw economic cooperation and so on subsequently."

"In terms of the Negev Summit, you're talking about a defence alliance," Solomon said. "You're seeing the various Sunni powers coming together with Israel, saying maybe we need to co-operate on our own, even if there's a nominal nod towards Washington."

Paula Slier, a seasoned journalist on the Middle East, told the SA Jewish Report, "There's increasing concern that the US is withdrawing from international politics and certainly withdrawing from the region, so this was an opportunity to get the US more engaged and give the foreign ministers the opportunity to express their concerns directly to the US.

"It also showed that Israel doesn't need the US to bring it together with these kind of countries. Ironically, Israel can bring together the US and Arab countries." She cited US friction with the UAE over oil production, one of the issues discussed, as an example of this.

"For the Palestinians," Slier said, "and I think rightly so, the fact they weren't invited would highlight the difference between rhetoric and reality, their point being that the issue of the Palestinians was brought up at the summit, but the occupation continues. I've covered this a lot. There's a strong sense of betrayal, I think I'd even go so far as to say disgust, that these countries are normalising relations on the back of the Palestinians. So I think it's significant that the four Arab foreign ministers didn't visit the Palestinian

areas, maybe out of a sense of shame or guilt."

"WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE IS MAKING HISTORY, BUILDING A NEW **REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE BASED ON** PROGRESS, TECHNOLOGY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, SECURITY, AND INTELLIGENCE CO-OPERATION."

She said the Palestinians saw the focus on Iran as a way to "attract attention away from the occupation", and "essentially remove the Palestinian issue from the international agenda". The terror attack showed that "Israel's acceptance by some Arab states has effectively done little to resolve its primary challenge ... with the Palestinians. They are sending out a message of peace, but I wonder if it doesn't inflame tension on the street? Having this summit just before Ramadan when there's already a heightened tension in Israel visà-vis the Palestinians, maybe that's a bit short-sighted.

"What does it mean for the region?" Slier asked, "The most important thing is that it will become an annual, permanent regional forum, rotating between the different countries, but I would be hugely concerned about the message it gives to the Palestinians. They are feeling increasingly left out and there's concern that this may backfire."

If anyone doubted that the Middle East has changed, the Negev Summit should put that to rest.

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.





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# Parliament told: hate crime has grown

NICOLA MILTZ

ate crime, hate speech, and bias-motivated violence in South Africa have grown in recent years, Alana Baranov of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) told Parliament in the SAJBD's submissions on the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill on 29 March.

Baranov was making oral submissions to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Justice. She represents the SAJBD on the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG), a multisectoral network of civil society organisations that advocate for hate crimes awareness, education, monitoring, and legislation.

She said that in the two decades since the first democratic elections, South Africa had made significant progress in ensuring that freedom, dignity, and equality were respected and afforded to all. However, in stark contrast to the country's progressive policy and legislative guarantees of fundamental human rights, incidences of hate crimes, hate speech, and bias-motivated violence "have only grown in recent years".

The SAJBD is a founding member and current steering committee member of the HCWG.

Baranov began her presentation with a brief discussion on antisemitism and its history in South Africa, focusing on three key concerns regarding the Bill that were among those raised in the written submission to Parliament last year.

She said a working definition of what constitutes antisemitic behaviour might be "any malicious act aimed at Jewish people, organisations or property, where there is evidence that the act has antisemitic motivation or content, or that the victim was targeted because they are [or are believed to be] Jewish".

Such acts included assault, vandalism, threats, verbal abuse, graffiti, hate mail, boycott initiatives specifically aimed at South African Jews (including Jewish-owned or managed business enterprises) and the dissemination of overtly antisemitic literature.

"Antisemitism can also manifest under the guise of hostility to the state of Israel and/or to Zionism," she said.

"Anti-Zionism doesn't automatically amount to antisemitism, but in certain instances, it takes such extreme forms as to resonate strongly with traditional antisemitic tropes and stereotypes. Times of intensified conflict between Israel and its neighbours invariably see a sharp rise in antisemitic activity locally and internationally," she said.

Baranov told Parliament that there had been a steady upsurge in antisemitism around the world since the beginning of the century, with many countries with significant Jewish populations recording consistently higher numbers of attacks on an annual basis. Relative to these countries, "South Africa has low rates of antisemitism, both in terms of the number of incidents and their severity. About 60 incidents are recorded each year, mainly taking the form of verbal abuse or hate mail. Incidents involving physical violence, while not unknown, are rare."

However, even in South Africa, there has been an upward trend in the number of incidents recorded annually since 2000, she said.

Social media provides a platform for the propagation of hate speech, Baranov said. "No regulatory bodies exist to monitor, moderate, and take action against such abuse, and the nature of social media also enables perpetrators to publish offensive material anonymously."

She said a number of highly inflammatory attacks against the Jewish community, including incitement to violence, had been propagated on Facebook and Twitter.

Highlighting some key points from the Board's written submission last year, Baranov said that the success of legislation in achieving its purpose was "heavily reliant" on the effectiveness of statutory bodies, whose purpose was to address issues of racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance. These include the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Equality Courts, and media-regulation bodies like the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa. "Currently, these institutions are severely under-resourced in terms of qualified personnel available to deal with the volume of complaints received," she said, which has resulted in a large backlog of complaints and inordinately long waiting periods between the submission of a complaint and its eventual resolution.

31 March - 7 April 2022

"Sometimes, the resolution of a complaint is prolonged even further through the matter having to make its way through the courts, with no recourse to expediting the process," said Baranov. She cited two highly publicised cases as examples of overly prolonged matters before the SAHRC, namely the Bongani Masuku and Tony Ehrenreich cases, which took years. In order for the Bill to be effective in discouraging and penalising hate crimes and providing a remedy for the victims, the SAHRC, Equality Courts, and other regulatory authorities must be sufficiently staffed and resourced to enable complaints to be dealt with timeously, Baranov said.

She said adjudicating hate crimes, particularly when it involved hate speech, was "complex" and that it was imperative that all law enforcement officials and judicial officers were educated and trained regarding hate crimes and how to deal with them.

HAT

SEECH

"There is a serious lack of understanding about what constitutes a hate crime and what the appropriate response

should be," Baranov said.

She said it was difficult for the average South African to address complaints through the existing system since processes were often time consuming, expensive, and complex. Though the Equality Courts were set up to provide cost-free and reasonably swift remedies for those unable to approach the higher courts, in the SAJBD's experience, bringing

matters before it had required as much of an investment of time and expenditure as normal civil litigation. Even when cases were resolved, it required further follow up which was time consuming and expensive.

She said it was also important to educate the wider community about their rights and options, and how they could seek practical remedies through the public institutions and resources available.

In protecting South Africans from hate crimes and hate speech, she said there was a need to address the root cause of the problem and change hearts and minds on the issue of tolerance and diversity.

"How people view and relate to those who differ from them – by race, religion, sexual orientation, or in many other ways – is conditioned by the culture in which they are raised, and the environment in which they grow up and are educated. The challenge is to foster a culture of respect for and tolerance of difference at all levels of society, with particular focus on the youth," she said.

The SAJBD recommended strengthening current restorative justice programmes and the expansion of tolerance education, which must be regarded as a crucial component of the school syllabus.

Baranov told Parliament that hate crimes and hate speech damaged social cohesion and had no place in a country still healing from the wounds of its oppressive and racist past. She said the consequences of hate crimes and hate speech were "far reaching", and the Board hoped the Bill would be passed soon.

"The Bill would send a strong message that any form of prejudice is unacceptable in our society; assist the police and prosecutors in investigating, charging, and prosecuting hate crimes and hate speech; give courts meaningful sentencing guidelines; and allow for the effective recording of data so that we can better understand the nature and scope of the problem and create successful interventions."

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# Counting the cost of war

Ukrainian ambassador to South Africa, Liubov Abravitova, this week visited the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre to speak about the damage done to Holocaust memorials in Ukraine. She also debunked the myth of the "denazification" of Ukraine propagated by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Abravitova further discussed Russia's invasion of her country with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, and encouraged religious leaders to speak out about issues relating to human rights and democracy.





### Israeli doctors and Jewish groups help thousands of non-Jews across Ukraine

CNAAN LIPHSHIZ – JTA

sraeli physicians and Jewish groups are assisting thousands of non-Jews across Ukraine deal with the effects of the Russian invasion into that country.

Near Lviv in Ukraine's west, a field hospital set up this week by the Israeli government with physicians and nurses from the Schneider Children's Medical Center near Tel Aviv has treated at least 160 patients, most of them children, since it opened on Tuesday 29 March, according to the Jewish News of Ukraine website.

There are 66 beds and dozens of staff and volunteers working alongside the medical staff from the Schneider Center at Israel's Kohav Meir hospital - a name that means "shining star" in Hebrew but is also a reference to Golda Meir, an former Israeli prime minister who was born in

Kyiv and is seen as an inspiration by many Ukrainians.

Israel and the United States are among a handful of countries that have set up field hospitals in Ukraine. The Israeli one is set up to treat about 150 patients

daily, according to Israel Hayom.

In Dnipro, a city in eastern Ukraine with many Jews, the Jewish Medical Centre clinic, which was set up with the primary goal of treating members of that community, has shifted its focus, dispatching its staff of about 10 medical professionals across centres for internallydisplaced persons in Ukraine, the Jewish community of Dnipro wrote on its website last Thursday.

The Russian invasion, which began on 24 February, has resulted in thousands of casualties and a wave of refugees - about 3.5 million Ukrainians are estimated to have moved into the European Union alone - and many more internally displaced.

In Uman, a city in central Ukraine, local Jews set up an aid centre near the grave of Rabbi Nachman, an 18th-century luminary who inspired the Breslov Hasidic movement. Several



A staffer of the Israeli field hospital Kohav Meir plays with children outside the structure near Lviv, Ukraine

hundred Jews, most of them Israeli, had moved to Uman in recent vears amid an annual pilgrimage of about 30 000 Jews from all over the world to the gravesite.

The centre offers Most of the patients have issues unrelated clothing and other assistance as w vell free tea

# Stephan Welz & Co.

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A CHINESE JADE 'HORSE AND MONKEY' CARVING Estimate: R1 200 - 1 800 Sold for: R41 843

MAGGIE LAUBSER **BIRDS ON WATER** Estimate: R370 000 – 570 000 Sold for: R430 380



PABLO PICASSO (SPANISH 1881 - 1973): 'TAUREAU, MARLI AUX FEUILLES' MADOURA PLATE, A.R 394 Estimate: R50 000 - 60 000 Sold for: R83 685



CANTEEN OF SILVER FLATWARE FOR TWELVE Estimate: R60 000 - 70 000 Sold for: R83 685





**NELSON MAKAMO** PORTRAIT WITH GLASSES Estimate: R100 000 - 120 000 Sold for: R203 235



A GOLD CARTIER-STYLE LEOPARD NECKLACE Estimate: R42 000 - 52 000 Sold for: R65 752



to the fighting, but have lost access to medical treatment because of it.

The hospital's first patient was a 12-year-old girl with a heart problem who fled with her mother from Mariupol, a city devastated by Russian bombing. She arrived with a rapid pulse and chest pains, and her condition was stabilised at the field hospital, which operates outside of a school and partly under a sturdy white tent opposite a church in a town near Lviv, Yedioth Acharonoth reported on Wednesday.

Another, a two-year-old girl named Alisa, came in with a chronic skin condition that had worsened following weeks in which it wasn't treated. The physicians at the field hospital consulted experts at the Schneider Center in Israel using telemedicine video equipment to arrive at a diagnosis and treatment. The inspection was interrupted by sirens that sent patients and medical staff running toward the nearest shelter, the Israeli paper reported.

coffee, and shelter to internally-displaced persons, the Jewish News of Ukraine website also reported.

In Bila Tservka, a small city near Kyiv, the small Jewish community pooled their resources to buy and donate diapers, wet wipes, and hygiene products for mothers and children, as well as blankets and detergent, according to the Jewish News of Ukraine.

The Jewish community of Zaporizhzhia near Dnipro is also collecting products and medicines from its members for the general population. Before the invasion, Ukraine, which has a population of about 40 million people, had about 43 000 people who self-identified as Jews, according to a 2020 demographic study of European Jewry, and up to 200 000 people who are eligible to immigrate to Israel under its law of return for Jews and their relatives. At least 4 000 of that group have immigrated to Israel over the past month.

A NATIONAL CASH REGISTER -CLASS 300 Estimate: R800 – 1 200 Sold for: R7 995



A ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY MEDAL Estimate: R400 - 600 Sold for: R3 936

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### **6** SA JEWISH REPORT

### 31 March – 7 April 2022

# Jewish Report

# **Terror from within**

n just eight days, 11 people living in Israel have been brutally murdered in three separate terrorist attacks. If you consider that 13 Israelis were killed during the Gaza-Israel conflict in May last year when thousands of missiles were fired into Israel, this number is devastating.

It represents 11 different but beautiful souls who did nothing wrong other than being in the wrong place at the wrong time – first in Be'er Sheva, then in Hadera and then, on Tuesday night, in Bnei Brak.

Two of those who were murdered in Bnei Brak had recently arrived in Israel, having escaped the war in

Ukraine. The irony of the fact that they came to Israel to start a new life, away from fear, isn't lost on us.

Some who were killed were young, some older, some parents of little ones, one man left his wife who was about to give birth, but all didn't want to harm anyone. They were just getting on with life as they knew it when it was mercilessly cut short by people who just wanted to kill.

Those perpetrators, two of whom live in Israel, carry Israeli passports and even vote in elections, went out to kill Israeli citizens. They didn't stop to ask questions or give their views. They just killed whoever they could find.

One Israeli child on a bicycle was riding in Bnei Brak when the killer was shooting, and he sped up and managed to escape. It was a close shave. His loving family was saved the devastation of losing a child.

The terrifying thing is, though Israel pays top dollar to protect its skies from missiles, it's extremely difficult to protect the population from people legitimately living in the country.

And when Israel raises its defences against those in the country or in the West Bank and Gaza to ensure this doesn't happen again, the Israel haters will be out in full force to condemn the country for being heavy handed.

It will inevitably look and be heavy handed, but just how do you protect your people from an enemy within without coming down hard?

Now, at this point, it isn't clear if the three attacks were organised by one group of terrorists. However, the fundamentalist Islamic State terrorist organisation (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the first two, in Be'er Sheva and Hadera, in which the assailants were later killed. This was particularly unusual because attacks in Israel are usually motivated by Hamas and other West Bank or Gazan Palestinian groups. This is the first time, as I can recall, that ISIS has attacked within the borders of Israel. This, as you can read in our page one story, may have implications for us here in South Africa.

No organisation has yet claimed responsibility for the third attack, in Bnei Brak, in which five people were killed. However, the Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas, condemned the Bnei Brak attack, which is particularly unusual for him. This is in spite of there being much celebration in the West Bank in support of the killers.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who I understand is recovering from COVID-19, called an emergency meeting with top officials last night, saying that the country was gripped by "a wave of murderous Arab terrorism".

While all this is happening, there's no word from the South African government about the attacks. The government has simply ignored the first, second, and then third attack in Israel.

I guess the fact that most of the victims were Israeli and it all happened in Israel must mean it didn't happen in their eyes. Either that, or they simply don't care for Israeli loss of life. But, wait for Israel to retaliate – and it obviously will – and Israel will be condemned for it.

Am I too cynical? Or perhaps I misunderstand something. Maybe...

But perhaps our Israel haters are just waiting for Israel to do something to ensure there won't be another attack so they can condemn Israel yet again.

And yet again, they'll say their outbursts aren't in anyway antisemitic, just about Israel being inhumane etcetera. We have been there before and, I guess, we'll be there again, all in the name of safeguarding Israel from its enemies.

If these so called 'human-rights activists' really understood human rights, they would recognise that Israelis, too, have a right to life. They would understand that a gunman opening fire on passersby in the street isn't acknowledging human rights. So, why not condemn that person rather than those who go out to prevent it from happening again?

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine continues to rage, five weeks after Russia first invaded. There have been more than 1 151 Ukrainian civilian deaths, including 103 children, and 1 860 wounded.



# The sweet sound of a BDS-free symphony

he Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra concluded its Summer Symphony Season 2022 last week at the Linder Auditorium at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). The season combined the cream of South African musical talent with the best international performers. Among them was Ilya Friedberg, an Israeli pianist of global renown.

OPINION

By all accounts, concert-goers were treated to a stirring rendition of Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 4 in B flat major, op. 60, and went home satisfied by beautiful music and the opportunity to support the arts in a post-COVID-19 world.

The chance to listen to live music might not sound like something remarkable, but it is in our current environment. First, the concert happened during the annual so-called "Israel Apartheid Week" (IAW), an internationally supported anti-Israel hate fest that makes the targeting and boycotting of Israel a key part of its core mandate.

Moreover, the special focus of IAW 2022 was in fact the sphere of arts and culture, and what the organisers called "decolonising our minds against cultural appropriation and oppression".



Yet the Wits-based concert commenced mercifully free of the normal tendentious open letters, protests, and disruptions that tend to occur during such events for the crime of an Israeli performing.

The same story has been found of late on the sports field. On Sunday, 26 March, an Israeli rugby team known as Tel Aviv Heat competed in a curtain raiser against the "Loftus 200", which is part of the Blue Bulls franchise. Furthermore,

a couple of weeks ago, the South African tennis team played in the Davis Cup in the Israeli town of Ashdod.

**BENJI SHULM** 

Both sports events elicited nothing more than a whimper from our local Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) crowd.

It's positive to see open spaces for these events in South Africa, especially at places like Wits where there has been a long-running attempt to prevent Israeli cultural exchanges with South Africans, particularly for musicians.

In 2013, for example, BDS supporters stormed a concert at Wits being played by Israeli pianist Yossi Reshef. Later that year, BDS supporters chanted "shoot the Jew" outside the concert of an Israeli Jazz musician, Daniel Zamir.

The fact that we're now experiencing a BDS-free symphony should be welcomed, yet we mustn't be naïve. It surely won't be long again before some unfortunate cultural figure, such as Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane, will be caught in a vicious BDS cancel campaign.

What it does tell us, however, is that after two decades of relentless BDS pressure against Israeli cultural exchange, the average South African simply doesn't buy into the idea.

This is a notion borne out of social-science research. The (2017) University of Cape Town Kaplan Centre report noted that only 4% of all black South Africans living in major cities had even heard of the anti-Israel organisation. In spite of its phorevolutionary rhetoric, the BDS campaign remains an elitist phenomenon with limited appeal to the majority of South Africans.

Additionally, it tells us that the pernicious influence of BDS on institutions that are important to our community and our country can be rolled back with careful and consistent action and the right support.

The South African Zionist Federation, along with our partners at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, make the safety of campuses and our Jewish students a priority.

Working together with the South African Union of Jewish Students, hours of effort go into fighting anti-Israel sentiment on campuses. Our students have the right to express their identity and engage in open discussion without fear of harassment.

They should be applauded for their bravery in standing up for those rights in an often hostile environment. Likewise, the broader community of students and faculty should be able to engage with any cultural opportunity available to them.

It's only through these kinds of exchanges that understanding can be developed, and ultimately, a proper space for real dialogue can be created. It's by building bridges that we will find solutions not only to issues in the Middle East, but to the many challenges here in South Africa.

• Benji Shulman is the director of public policy for the South African Zionist Federation.

As we count down to Pesach, it's hard to ignore certain similarities between the Jewish exodus from Egypt and Ukrainians fleeing their country for survival.

Every year at our Pesach seders, we leave a seat and place at the table for the prophet, Elijah. We're told his arrival will be the beginning of the world's redemption, something we can agree would be welcome.

Back in the 1960s, when Jews in the former Soviet Union were prevented from making aliya, many Jews around the world would leave a second empty seat at their seder tables in honour of these "refuseniks". These "prisoners of Zion" as they were called, including Natan Sharansky, were later released, ending this campaign.

So, how about this year, saving a second seat at your table to acknowledge the 3.8 million Ukrainian refugees and 10 million people who have lost their homes due to the Russian invasion?

Join the *SA Jewish Report* in doing this. And don't forget to talk about what it means to you and your families.

While the Israeli government is calling on Israelis to invite new Ukrainian *olim* to their seder, we can bring them into our seder night in this way.

Don't forget to light a third Shabbos candle for Ukrainians as well.

Shabbat Shalom! Peta Krost Editor

### Israel terror attacks reverberate beyond its borders >>Continued from page 1

Greenblatt emphasises that with our community's security infrastructure, we can protect ourselves as individuals and institutions. "Terrorists look for 'soft' targets and aim for mass casualties. If we become a 'harder' target, it may very well deter them from trying in the first place."

"One attack is inspiring another, regardless of which terrorfaction members are carrying out these horrific acts," he adds. "There also seems to be competition between the various terror factions or adherents to carry out these attacks and claim responsibility."

He also says that sadly, terrorism has always been a threat and will continue to be one for the foreseeable future. "The concern is that these terrorists [who pledge allegiance to ISIS] are highly indoctrinated and determined individuals within Israel's borders. But it's also no different to the numerous attacks that Israel has experienced in the past. ISIS does, however, have a 'brand' of brutality, which attracts unhinged individuals with violent tendencies, and acts like this can be seen as inspirational. But it's a tiny minority, and most people in Israel – of all backgrounds – just want to get on with their lives."

This is reiterated by articles in Israel's media, which emphasise that ISIS adherents are a tiny minority and that joining the extremist group makes their lives very difficult. Many have been arrested, and even those who have been freed and want to change their lives for the better have struggled to get jobs, travel overseas, or be accepted by their families.

"The streets of Israel are packed with police and soldiers at the moment. The Shin Bet security agency and Israel Defense Forces have arrested at least 12 people with ISIS ties. Security forces will continue to adapt to this new threat," he says.

"Events in Israel often have far-reaching consequences," Greenblatt says. "Diaspora communities need to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity affecting the community to the CSO on 0861 800 018. This is out of an abundance of caution, and not based on any known threats to our community."

# Mitzvah campaign launched after young man's sudden passing

### TALI FEINBERG

hen Debbie Werner didn't hear from her 25-year-old son, Doron, on the Shabbat morning of Saturday, 19 March, she knew something was wrong. He had left his home town of Durban to study and settle in Cape Town, but they would always speak on Friday night and then again on Saturday morning before she went to shul.

"Not answering was completely out of character," says his father, Mark, who describes Doron as a devoted son, brother, and grandson. The domestic worker arrived and said she kept knocking and ringing the doorbell, but there was no answer. "I told CSO [the Community Security Organisation] to smash down the door if it needed to. I'm a positive person, but at this stage, I knew something could be very wrong."

says hundreds of people from all backgrounds attended the funeral, including Doron's Standard Bank colleagues who flew in especially. "He would bring everyone together. He would always be there if needed - for example to join our 'Ikeys minyan'. It was a clear priority for him.

"The world has lost a true gem," he says. "A mensch par excellence. A proud Jew. A courageous man who spoke up for truth. We have lost a brother. Doron was always there to celebrate Shabbat, always with a good joke for the table. Most of all, he was a good friend to so many of us, who are left better off for it.

"Doron's untimely passing has left a void in our world," he says, noting that many students approached him asking to do something to mark this loss and continue Doron's legacy. "We'll be launching a mitzvah campaign in

The family don't know the reason for his passing, but were told it may have been an aneurysm. They are still waiting for the results from the coroner. "I hope he didn't suffer, and I want to believe Hashem took him quickly," Mark says. The last time they spoke to Doron was on Friday evening before Shabbat. As always, he was in high spirits – excited about Shabbat dinner and meeting friends afterwards. He had just been promoted in his job, and truly had the world at his feet.

His friend, Avi Zieff, says, "he was with us for Shabbat dinner the night before he passed away. He was like a brother and mentor to me. When he moved from Durban in 2016 to study at UCT [the University of Cape Town], he was welcomed into our family. He came to us for Shabbat and yom tov dinners regularly before lockdown, and recently started coming again.

> He was always the life and soul of the Shabbat table. He was a people's person. He was doing so well in his job, where he was loved by all."

"He had huge integrity and was always genuine. What you see is what you get," says Doron's sister, Jenna. "He was an old soul, wise beyond his years." She and Doron were extremely close.

"He loved sport and cooking," says his father. "He had many friends from the Indian community as they all grew up together. When he died, they came and

said, 'Mr Werner, don't leave us out. We want to grieve with you.' I never realised how they saw him as their own family."

Says Zieff, "We hope his family will find much comfort in knowing that Doron touched many people's lives. Doron was a proud Jew, and if we can each take on one *mitzvah* in his memory, we can better ourselves and the people around us."

Mark says that when his son was born, Rabbi Pinchas Zekry came to the hospital and asked him what he was thinking of naming his son. He answered that he loved the name Doron, but didn't know exactly what it meant. The rabbi said it translated as 'gift from G-d'. "We just didn't know the gift would be so short-term," Mark says.

bris in March, his Barmitzvah in March, and he left us in March. That's a sign of a true *tzaddik*."

"Treasure your children," Mark says. "Enjoy every day. I enjoyed every moment with my son. I wish he was with us now. Don't

wait for tomorrow, because it might not come."

• To join the mitzvah campaign in Doron Werner's honour, visit www.doronslegacy.com. The website will be live soon.

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A friend found a locksmith, but when paramedics entered the apartment, they found Doron unresponsive. In spite of their best efforts to revive him, his family were told over the phone that their precious son and brother had passed away. Family, friends from all walks of life, colleagues, and the community are reeling at his sudden and untimely death.

"We're in shock. You're not supposed to bury your own child," says Mark, from Durban, where his son was buried. "I almost don't believe it. I keep expecting him to walk in the door. We thought we had plenty of time. Maybe Hashem felt that he had finished his mission here on earth and was

Doron's memory to continue his impact on the world."

Goldman says the ultimate way of fulfilling G-d's will is by doing *mitzvot* here on earth. "A soul cannot lay tefillin or give *tzedakah*. Only a body can do that. Mitzvot are behavioural and actionoriented. The Jewish response to death and tragedy is to do mitzvot in merit of the departed, and to act as their hands and feet in the world, which they can no longer do. This is also for the elevation of their soul."

People will be able to sign up on a website to commit to doing *mitzvot* that they may not have done in the past. "By pledging to do a *mitzvah*, they will fill this void with some light. It could be anything from putting on tefillin every day to saying [the prayer] Modeh Ani, to lighting Shabbat candles," says Goldman. "Anyone can take on a *mitzvah* that they realistically feel they can fulfil, and then please G-d, follow through."

needed on a higher level. But we never got to say goodbye."

Now, Chabad on Campus Cape Town (CoCCT), which was there for Doron to celebrate his Yiddishkeit as a student, has launched a "mitzvah campaign" in his honour. Rabbi Nissen Goldman of CoCCT

Just like he was there at the beginning of Doron's life, Zekry was there at the end too. "At the funeral, he gave the most beautiful eulogy, and said that Doron had his

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# There's no apartheid in Israel, says Arab beauty queen

NICOLA MILTZ

ormer Muslim beauty queen turned global interfaith activist, Sarah Idan, has left South African shores after a whirlwind trip as an ambassador for peace during the annual global Israel hate fest known as Israel Apartheid Week (IAW).

During her visit to the University of Cape Town (UCT), the former Miss Iraq encountered anti-Israel students who were visible during IAW. She described some of her brief exchanges with them as "heated".

Idan told the SA Jewish Report she had an argument with one Muslim student who was standing next to an "apartheid" wall holding a sign which read, "From the river to the sea Palestine will be free".

"She was a South African Muslim who told me she had learnt everything from her Arab Muslim friends, and that Israel was the same as when black South Africans lived under apartheid," said Idan.

"I told her I was an Arab myself, and that I'd been to Israel and it was nothing like apartheid which was imposed by one set of people on another in the same country. The Palestinians are self-governing, they're not ruled by the Israelis."

She asked the student if she understood the words on the poster, to which the student replied it meant "co-existence".

"I told her this was incorrect, it

was a line by the Palestine Liberation Organisation which seeks to remove Israel.

"After a long argument with her, and her attempt to defend Hamas [you know, Nelson Mandela was called a terrorist at one point], I asked her if she believed Israel had a right to exist and an end to the conflict, to which she finally replied, 'Yes."

Idan then told her to remove the poster because "it tells Jews and Israelis that you don't believe they should exist, and that she should look it up".

Speaking to members of the Jewish community last week, Idan said, "Zionism is believing that Israel has the right to exist", and that it's "unfair" that so many Muslims don't see this when Islam is the second largest religion in the world practiced in so many countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

"They are Muslim majority, so it's really unfair that this small piece of land [Israel] isn't allowed to be the Jewish state," she said.

During her stay in South Africa, Idan, the founder and chief executive of nongovernmental organisation Humanity Forward, visited schools in Johannesburg and Soweto and spoke to students on campus at UCT and at the University of the Witwatersrand. She talked about her extraordinary life experience first as a young girl living under the dictatorship of Saddam



Hussein, then as a refugees in Syria, During her stay, Idar and lastly as a human-rights activist defended Israel against

and lastly as a human-rights activistdefendefor peace in the Middle East. Idanby the arspoke about human rights, peacefulwas praceresolution to conflict, bullying,"I didiwomen's empowerment, gender-Israel],"Idhand did lange and functions ofIsrael],"Id

based violence, and freedom of speech. She said from her interactions

with people in the country, she had come to realise that anti-Zionists were "using the apartheid tragedy for their own agenda" which she found "unacceptable".

She began the Johannesburg leg of her trip with a visit to Sharpeville to commemorate Human Rights Day. During her stay, Idan persistently defended Israel against accusations by the anti-Israel lobby that Israel was practising apartheid.

"I didn't see any apartheid [in Israel],"Idan told Bafana Modise of the South African Friends of Israel, saying that what she witnessed there was co-existence between Arabs, Jews, and Christians.

She said Israeli Arabs held "high government positions" including as members of the Knesset and ambassadors to foreign countries.

She told Modise, "What amazes me is that people use this term [apartheid], but what happened in South Africa was done by the government to its own people. What we have in Israel is a war between two nations. "They're two different

nations. They're two different governments. How can you apply that term to the country? All Arabs who live in Israel have exactly the same rights as Israelis."

Idan enthralled different audiences around the country with her story about growing up under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. She said she knew what it was like to live under an oppressive regime where women's rights were severely curtailed.

"When American troops entered Iraq, my whole view of the West changed. I was taught to believe everything about the West was bad, but the US soldiers were sweet and kind," she said.

Idan told audiences that upon her return from Syria, where she spent several years as a refugee during the civil war, she couldn't wait to join the US military at 18, seeing it as her way out of Iraq, where she knew in her heart she "didn't feel she belonged". A few years after joining the military, she moved to the US, where she studied music. She told audiences that she entered beauty pageantry in order to "give a voice to the voiceless".

However, her life turned upside down after she posted a selfie with

Miss Israel, Adar Gandelsman, during the run-up to the 2017 Miss Universe pageant captioned, "Peace and love from Miss Iraq and Miss Israel #missuniverse."

The photograph set off a barrage of criticism.

She and her family faced death threats, and were forced to flee Iraq, becoming refugees once again. She was labelled a traitor and to this day, receives messages of hate. She hasn't returned and has had her citizenship revoked.

When she heard of Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane's plight last year for choosing to take part in the Miss Universe pageant in Israel, she said she had "flashbacks" of the time she was vilified and attacked by her own country. This prompted her to speak out publicly online, rallying to Mswane's defence.

Idan's experiences have inspired her to promote peace in the Middle East and beyond through her work with Humanity Forward.

"Encouraging peace between Israelis and Palestinians isn't a betrayal of the Arab cause," she said, "I see this as vital step to end conflict and suffering on both sides."

She has returned to Los Angeles, where she intends to continue to lobby for peace and dialogue.

At the time of going to press, Idan hadn't heard from Mandla Mandela, who she challenged last week to a conversation on the Middle East conflict.



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# Israeli town and school a refuge for Ukraine refugees

**CNAAN LIPHSHIZ – JTA** 

uring Veronika Maidanova's first two days attending school in Israel, the eight-year-old felt completely lost.

"Everyone spoke Hebrew and I didn't understand anything," she recalled, weeks after fleeing her native Ukraine for the safety – but unfamiliarity – of Israel.

Then her mother heard about a school focused on new immigrants where 90% of students speak Russian. She quickly enrolled Veronika in the Shuvu Renanim school in Nof Hagalil, a city of 41 000 in the Galilee where an estimated 60% of families speak Russian at home.

"She's really found her place, most of the students speak Russian, most of the teachers speak Russian, and there are already friendships starting to happen," Lena Maidanova said of her daughter. "It's a huge relief."

More than 600 Ukrainians have come to Nof Hagalil since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February, setting off a massive migration of Ukrainians to whatever country could give them safety. About 4 000 Jewish refugees have already arrived in Israel, with potentially tens of thousands more expected.

The Ukrainian children who have landed in Nof Hagalil and at Shuvu Renanim were living safe, stable lives just over a month ago. Now they have wound up in a foreign land, usually without their fathers because of Ukraine's ban on men younger than 60 leaving the country, and often after experiencing trauma during the war's early days and their flights from Ukraine.

"It's horrifying to see a student shuddering in fear whenever a door is slammed too hard or an ambulance wails by," said Sara Neder, who has been Shuvu Renanim's principal for 12 years.

Tetiana Denysenko, 36, stayed in Kyiv for as long as possible together with her 10-year-old son, Sasha, and his father in Kyiv.

"But it became impossible. The constant thud of bombs gave Sasha trauma, and we saw our happy boy changing before our eyes, one sleepless night at a time," she said. Ukrainian refugees Katja, left, and Ira Kapustenyenko watch a celebration at their new school in Nof Hagalil, Israel

So they left without Sasha's father, who expects to be conscripted into the military shortly.

Now, she and Sasha are staying in Nof Hagalil's posh Plaza Hotel, where the city is temporarily housing new immigrants for up to a month as they look for apartments to rent. Buses bring Sasha and other children back to the hotel from the Shuvu school each day, part of a sweeping effort to make the city welcoming for the new arrivals.

At school, the staff devote extra attention to the new arrivals to "try to make them feel as welcome and safe as possible", said Neder. The school hasn't offered dedicated trauma counselling, but the newcomers are "doing better than when they first arrived", she says.

That's in part because of Shuvu's experience educating children who have immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The school is part of a network of 75 schools serving 6 000 students in more than a dozen Israeli cities that was established in the early 1990s specifically with the aim of inculcating Jewish values in children from the former Soviet Union.

Shuvu's founder was Avraham Yaakov Pam, a Litvak rabbi from Brooklyn who was born in the former Soviet Union and who had lobbied for providing religious education to as many Jewish children as possible from the wave of mass immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Having been raised under communism, those children – and their parents – had not had access to Jewish education.

In recent years, as immigration from Russian-speaking

countries waned, the schools shifted to enrolling children from other countries as well as the children of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Now, the war in Ukraine is renewing the network's original mission.

Shuvu schools are able to choose whom they admit and what they teach because the schools occupy a category designed for haredi Orthodox schools that allows such institutions to receive state funding while departing from the standard Israeli curriculum.

Formally, Shuvu schools are classified as haredi by the Israeli education ministry, and they have some things in common with yeshivas attended by Orthodox Jews. Female staff members, if married, wear wigs, as is the convention in haredi Jewish communities. Among the students, the girls wear long skirts, and all the boys are supposed to cover their heads with kippahs. The network also accepts only children whose mothers are Jewish, in keeping with Orthodox Jewish law.

But the schools are different from traditional yeshivas in significant ways. "They aren't haredi schools because there are boys and girls in the same classrooms and we have students here whose parents don't keep Shabbat," Buterman said.

"Look, we don't force anything on anyone here," Neder said. "There's a dress code, sure, there are extra lessons on Judaism, but at the end of the day, we accept and love all our students the way they are."

Some of the parents of the children attending Shuvu attended synagogues - mainly affiliated with the Hasidic Chabad-Lubavitch movement – prior to their immigration to Israel. Others, however, send their children to Shuvu for reasons unrelated to the school's focus on Orthodox Judaism.

For a tuition of about \$62 a month (R907), parents at Shuvu get a school day two hours longer than state schools in classes 30% smaller than at public schools, as well as a warm meal and transport from their homes.

Many secular parents are convinced to send their kids to Shuvu because of these benefits, coupled with how hospitable the schools are to Russian speakers.

"Frankly we don't care too much about all the religious stuff, we don't keep Shabbat, my husband doesn't wear a kippah," said one mother, a woman who immigrated to Israel from Ukraine in 2010 and asked to be quoted anonymously because of her children's preferences. "But this school is just excellent, nothing comes close."

Shuvu Renanim does have some serious credentials in the scholastic excellence department.

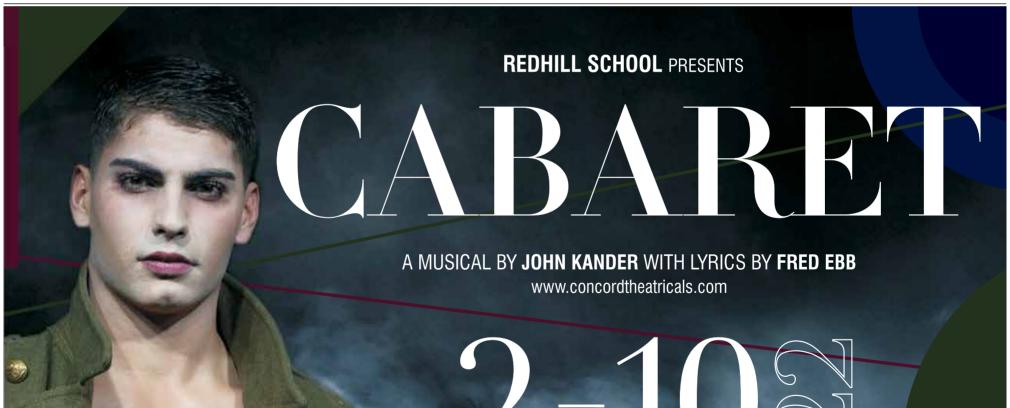
Last week, the Nof Hagalil school won a national maths and computers contest for the fourth straight year – a record that Neder, who doesn't speak Russian, attributes to "the work and study ethics of the homes of most of our students". Another Shuvu school from Petah Tikva also made it to the top-10 list.

The Nof Hagalil school's 16 refugees watched with interest as the other students celebrated this feat at a school event featuring balloons, loud music, and medals presented to the winning team by a beaming Neder, who came to the school on her day off for the party.

The Shuvu school is only part of the attraction of Nof Hagalil for Ukrainian refugees.

The Plaza Hotel and city centre offer a stunning view of Nazareth, the predominantly Arab neighbour city, and the lush forests of the Galilee, which have been shrouded in mist from unseasonably late rains this month. (Ira Kapustenyenko, a nine-year-old from Kyiv, said the view was "the best thing that's happened" to her since leaving Ukraine, where her twin sister Katja said about the early

Continued on page 15>>



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# Japan honours SA's under-the-radar superhero

### TALI FEINBERG

ow did a Jewish South African come to be honoured by the Emperor of Japan? Though Rescue South Africa (Rescue SA) Chief Executive Ian Scher prefers to stay out of the spotlight, he and his non-governmental organisation were recently bestowed with The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette on 22 March 2022. It's the highest award given to any non-Japanese citizen, excluding heads of state and royalty.

The award is a gesture of Japan's gratitude for Rescue SA's response to the Great North East Japanese Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011. It also acknowledges the humanitarian work that Rescue SA does worldwide and the capacity-building the organisation facilitates in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

"The fact that we're able to help our fellow man, save lives, and try help put communities back together is the real reward," said Scher in response to the news. "But Rescue SA humbly accepts this huge honour."

Scher's connection to the Land of the Rising Sun goes back to 2011, when he and his Rescue SA team headed into the eye of the storm to provide humanitarian assistance in the wake of the tsunami and earthquake disaster. "It was significant because this was the first time Africa was aiding Japan, instead of the other way around The Japanese saw no greater gesture of friendship than coming to their aid in their hour of greatest need. It was meaningful, and they appreciated it greatly."

Ten years later, Scher hasn't forgotten what he saw there. "The suffering and devastation is difficult to imagine. It was like a movie or a war zone. The normal mind can't visualise the scale of such natural disasters. Without overdramatising, it was total annihilation of what was there. And you're scrambling and picking your way through it, trying to find people's mortal remains or save lives. It was totally surreal."

They worked just outside the exclusion zone of the

Fukushima nuclear reactor explosion. "We're always cautious, and we do what we can to take mitigated and calculated risks," he says. At the same time, he acknowledges that the work is dangerous. Marion, his devoted

wife of 40 years, and their two adult children have watched him head off on every mission in his two decades of

heading up Rescue SA. eternally grateful.

"Ultimately this work is a team effort," says Scher. "Without a team, there's nothing I can really do. So I told the [Japanese] ambassador that I'm accepting the award on behalf of Rescue SA." He's humbly proud, and notes that the work they do is an opportunity not afforded to many. "To be able to return the mortal remains of someone to their family is a spiritual undertaking. And sometimes we're lucky enough to save lives. That's the real honour."

The award will be housed in a memorabilia room at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in Ggeberha, where Rescue SA's head office is located, along with a cache of 60 tons of rescue equipment which is used on an almost daily basis to train students from NMU. This is part of a four year BTech degree offered by NMU training the paramedics of tomorrow. The cache is arguably one of the most comprehensive emergency services equipment caches in sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition, the organisation trains all kinds of people in emergency and disaster response across the SADC region. For example, it works with mining companies to ensure they have their own well-trained emergency

The invasion of Ukraine has presented Europe with its greatest humanitarian crisis since World War II. We cannot sit back and do nothing.

### As Eli Wiesel said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference".

### UKAN make a difference in Ukraine

While we may feel that as individuals we are not able to offer any meaningful help to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, if we work together and combine our efforts, we can indeed make a significant difference.

Being so geographically far from Ukraine, the only way in which we as South Africans can offer aid, is by sending money to assist in the supplying of food and other essentials such as medicine as well as transport and accommodation for the thousands of displaced men, women and children



The Japanese Ambassador Maruyama presented Ian Scher hasn't taken a salary with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette They support him every step of the way, for which he's reluctant to ask for donations, knowing how much need there is in the world. However, he would always appreciate

generosity from anyone who can contribute Being at the scene of numerous natural disasters, Scher says he has seen the effects of climate change. "There's no

doubt that weather is becoming more extreme because of climate change. All over the world, from Australia to Europe, natural disasters are caused by weather. It's a worldwide phenomenon. We're turning out [going on aid missions] for flooding more than ever before, and it's becoming even more extreme. Madagascar has already had four cyclones this year. And when you see the effects - it's hectic."

Seeing pain, loss, and desperation on so many missions hasn't made him cynical. Rather, it has led him to appreciate every blessing, big and small. He loves what he does and wouldn't change it for the world. "Happiness isn't a place; it's a state of mind. When you see how hard things can be, it makes you more humble, and you realise that you should find happiness in the things that cost nothing," he says.

He will never stop, and jokes that even when he's ill, his wife just has to say 'earthquake' to make him jump out of bed. He's excited about the future, and envisions a project in which Rescue SA will train ordinary people to help themselves in the face of disasters. "For example, in two days, we can train people to do shore-based rescues in flood-prone areas. We'll help communities help themselves."

He's always thinking about improvement and continuity. And though he hopes to create a legacy, he emphasises that not everyone has to be an emergency responder to make a difference. "It's not what you do, but that you do something. In my opinion, helping an old lady to do her shopping is of the same value as heading into a disaster zone."

### Mannie Gien, a pharmacist who turned his values into alchemy TRIBUTE JARED GOLDBLATT

in two years. He's also

y grandfather, Mannie Gien, was a forwardthinking pharmacist who 50 years ago, started Springbok Pharmacy in Alberton, which is the largest independent pharmacy in the southern hemisphere.

He was the first pharmacist to discount medicine, which made him controversial among his peers and popular with his customers.

He was a true legend of a man who lived his life by three core principles: family, business, and Judaism.

He was a family man first and foremost. When he met my grandmother, Deborah, they knew they would create a multigenerational lineage. Today, they have 11 grandchildren. A Pesach was never missed and a chad gadya never not sung. Tradition was the only thing they had growing up, and both made sure their families participated

We're eternally grateful for the gift of family and tradition they gave us. We swore to carry on and protect the ways they showed us.

Mannie was a mighty businessman too. He ruled the pharmacy with an iron fist, taking nothing for granted and nothing for free. A rand earned was a rand cherished. Every move he made was calculated, risk and return. He knew how to operate.

His first love was the pharmacy, but his true love was the stock market. A trader in Panado knows the intrinsic value of a Naspers share. Once a trader, always a trader. I'll miss his calls where he would rattle off a list of the stocks he was researching and why he thought they were a good buy.

He was a Zionist who staunchly believed that the study of Torah and support of Israel was fundamental in creating a Jewish state dependent on no one. A home for Jews was a priority for Mannie, both in Israel and South Africa. He helped build what is Yeshiva Girls High School today by raising funds.



were given a physical substance and six hours to identify what it

was. Though Mannie's peers went on their way testing the substance by trial and error, tests after test, Mannie just sat there looking at the unidentified matter for 20 minutes.

Eventually, like the mad scientist he was, he decided he was going to put the substance in his mouth and almost immediately, he knew it was salt. He guickly scribbled it down on his pad and went to go hand in the paper. This took all of 30 minutes, and his professor knew that no candidate had ever managed to work this out so quickly. However, Mannie knew, and he passed that exam.



Mannie taught us that within every lew, there's a

Together with The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Ukrainian Embassy in South Africa, The Angel Network will be raising money to provide much needed aid to Ukraine.



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"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." - Helen Keller

It's no small feat for a young Jewish boy, born and raised in Rustenburg by immigrant parents, to even get to go to a university during the 1950s. Mannie was a bright, eager student who like so many of our grandparents, went to Rhodes University to study a BSc in pharmacy.

I'll never forget his stories about his university days. He was a large man. In a sea of Afrikaans-speaking rugby players who fought hard, Mannie stood shoulder to shoulder with all of them. He even managed to find himself playing in the front row. A place reserved only for the strongest of the bunch.

Mannie was unconventional in his ways, always looking for another path to yield a positive result. He and his brother, Jack, once found a way to make their own beer in a course handbook somewhere in the archives and managed to invent what we believe might be paint thinners today.

My favourite story of Mannie's university days came at his final exams to become a certified pharmacist. They flame that burns bright, the pintele Yid. It cannot be extinguished nor taken away. It burns bright and it burns forever. Our duty is to carry on creating the flame.

When Mannie came into the world, it was a tough place (especially for Jews) and unfortunately, when he left this world, it appears we're in a tough place once again.

However, something is different. We feel empowered with the love and care our grandparents had for us, a new generation where we share love not hatred. We have those old-school Rustenburg values and a bright future ahead.

He was a true family man, so proud of his children and grandchildren. He never stopped boasting about us. I used to get so embarrassed when he did it in front of me, but knowing it will never happen again breaks my heart. We can only try and be the people he knew we always were.

Mannie Gien died on 26 March. His funeral was on 29 March. He is survived by his wife, brother, three children, and 10 grandchildren.

Save a seat at your seder table for a Ukrainian refugee



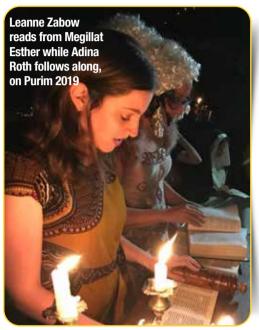
A project of the SA Jewish Report

# 'Jozi Minyan' expands Jewish life in Egoli

TALI FEINBERG

ohannesburg Jewish life is multifaceted and diverse, but there's always room to grow, especially when it comes to including women. This is why a group of Joburg Jews decided to create the Jozi Partnership Minyan (JPM), which abides by halacha while adding new dimensions to Shabbat, *chaggim*, and community.

"We are a community-led *minyan* committed to soulful singing and meaningful prayer; thoughtful Torah learning, engagement and dialogue; and the building of an inclusive, welcoming and diverse community," says local educator Adina Roth, one of the initiative's founders. "We don't see ourselves as a replacement of the many wonderful shuls in Joburg. Rather we see our community as a shul that people can visit in addition to their own shul."



The initiative came about when "in 2016, a group of 10 families got together with the idea of creating a community and a shul that reflected the warmth and beauty of a large, communal Shabbat", says Roth. "For 10 weeks, they met once a week and dreamed, sang, made music, and spoke about starting a shul that would be warm, inclusive, and a place for spiritual aliveness and community growth."

The families eventually decided on the model of a "partnership *minyan*", taking their inspiration from communities in London, New York, Melbourne, and Jerusalem. They decided to follow the practices and halachic norms of the Orthodox community Shira Chadashah, a partnership *minyan* in Jerusalem which has become popular and vibrant.

"Partnership *minyanim* are called that because they seek to create a partnership in building community

between men and women while still observing halacha or Jewish law," says Roth. "Orthodox Rabbi Daniel Sperber has written a book titled *Women and Men in Communal Prayer: Halakhic Perspectives*, which talks about partnership *minyanim*, explaining how it's possible for women to assume greater leadership roles in a shul service while still adhering to Jewish law.

"All partnership *minyanim* by definition have a *mechitzah*, and 10 men are counted in the *minyan*. But, women are able to lead certain parts of the service such as Kabbalat Shabbat and other parts of the service which don't require a *minyan*. Women can also have *aliyot* and *lein* from the Torah.

"Many people might love the shul they go to, but they might also want something that offers more participation for women, or they might enjoy the grassroots style of a partnership *minyan*," she says. "Partnership *minyanim* have become popular in the Anglo-Jewish world. Many members of the JPM go to other shuls and enjoy coming to the JPM for our monthly Shabbat services or for the special offerings that we create throughout the year."

"As a practicing Orthodox Jew, I feel comfortable at the JPM," says Ilanit Furman. "It offers members an Orthodox prayer setting with halachically sound practices such as separate seating, but with a distinctive male and female voice both in the leading of the service (according to halachic parameters) and in the sharing of Dvar Torah.

"At a JPM Friday night *minyan*, I can experience the joy of welcoming in the Shabbos with my family. I smile at my husband and sons across the *mechitza* as I join the voice of the female leader who leads the davening for Kabbalat Shabbat and then hands over to a male leader for Ma'ariv.

"The peace of Shabbos is brought in with the guided meditation that's led by a member of the community. I then sit back and gain learning of the parsha of the week as it's shared in a Dvar Torah given by either a male or female member of the community. This culminates in a communal Friday night Kiddush and dinner, where I sit with people from all walks of Jewish practice: young and old, singles, couples and families, and with diverse stories and choices. And while we eat and talk, we learn from each other."

"The JPM began with a monthly Friday night gathering in the Norwood area, allowing people to walk and come from different parts of Johannesburg," Roth says. "Often, after the service, people would stay for a *milchik* potluck dinner. People came from as far as Sandton or Troyeville and from Houghton, Killarney, Norwood, Oaklands, and Glenhazel.

"In addition to Shabbat, the JPM then organised a halachic reading of the Megillah where men and women chanted the Megillah for the community. This became a highlight of the year. We also organise Ma'ariv services for Rosh Hashanah; a very meaningful Kol Nidrei night; Chanukah lighting and party; Tu B'Shvat in the park; a musical jam for Chol Ha'Moed Succoth; and a dinner and Tikkun Leil for Shavuot.

"Music and spirituality are important to the community," she says. "We spend a long time choosing our tunes for the Friday night *minyan*, and we love to sing. We also have a short time in the service, before L'cha Dodi, where we meditate before beginning to welcome Shabbat.

"The JPM is organised and run by its members," Roth says. "Different members of the community give the D'var Torah, and the Friday nights are hosted at different homes. We welcome people from across the communal spectrum, different types of families including LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender], and different ages. All are welcome, and it's been wonderful to see people from Chabad to nonaffiliated attend our services."

Another of the *minyan's* founders, Nadia Levy, says 50 or more people attend their regular

Friday night *minyans*. On *chaggim*, there are often 100 participants or more. They get part of their funding from HaKhel, an incubator for grassroots Jewish communities worldwide. HaKhel works in partnership with Israel's ministry of diaspora affairs. JPM also asks members to pay an annual membership fee if they are able to do so.

Participant Marc Friedman, who also attends an Orthodox shul, says he finds the JPM's gatherings inspiring. "It's not a replacement for anybody's regular services, but gives us a chance to connect in a meaningful way, through music and gathering with diverse people."

Another participant, Leanne Zabow, says, "What's most meaningful is the sincere commitment to involving women within the bounds of halacha and the ideas around participation. As someone who loves to *lein* and loves the liturgy and Hebrew language, it's an opportunity to participate more rather than feel like a spectator."

### Artist explores nature post-pandemic

TALI FEINBERG

ape Town artist Claudia Gurwitz was motivated by the unprecedented hard lockdown in South Africa two years ago to take a "deep dive" into exploring nature in all its

detail. It was then that she recognised that so much of what we took for granted, including our access to the outdoors, had been taken away from us. This defining moment inspired her latest project.

"It was born during South Africa's lockdown and explores plant imagery. The series stems from the feeling of collective disharmony during the COVID-19 pandemic," she says ahead of a solo exhibition in Johannesburg. "We're intrinsically part of our natural world. When humanity feels unease, our environment, in turn, feels offbalance. This series, called *Adaptation*, alludes to a subtly distorted perspective of natural forms, reflective of an environment out of sync."

Gurwitz is an artist, mother, and yoga teacher. Her work is featured in collections such as Old Mutual, Spier Estate, the University of Cape Town, Qasar al Sarab Hotel in Abu Dhabi, and Nando's in the United Kingdom. "As a child, I was naturally drawn to art; creativity

"As a child, I was naturally drawn to art; creativity was my outlet. I always knew I would be an artist," she recalls. In a world full of visual content demanding our attention, from Instagram to Netflix, she still feels that art has an important role to play.

> "Art gives us the opportunity to see the world differently," she says. "It offers viewers the opportunity to pause and reflect. It inspires us to think out the box." This is exactly how she approached this latest series. "Photographs of random plants provide the source material for my painting. Through a process of deconstructing, cropping, and isolating my

> > subject matter, I reassemble and realign this imagery in fragments," she says. "These subtly uncomfortable combinations of reconstructed plant

Secret in My Garden ", "What a structure of the second structed plant matter disjoin these vital structures, redefining my plant imagery. In this way, I create a revised hyper-real landscape which is slightly unhinged; my 'interrupted' landscapes."

The paintings are large, but at the same time, they focus on the microscopic details of nature. "The overwhelming effect of COVID-19 on our psyches and lives warranted a larger experience and expression of my work," she says. "These larger canvases, depicting awe-inspiring structures, surround the viewer. On this scale, working in oils on canvas, I'm further able to expose the texture, movement, and intricate detail of form. "Attention to detail has always been vital to me," she says. "I have always observed the detail of structure and shapes in nature; the parts that make the whole. Through a micro-setting, I capture a magnified perspective of seemingly unremarkable plant matter, which I term 'micro-landscapes'. "It's in this detail that my painting exposes the sacred geometry of each form and explores the relationships between these structures. My work depicts the intrinsic unity that pervades nature - this gives the viewer a sense that even in our current reality, we live in a beautiful and orderly world." This will be Gurwitz' fourth solo exhibition, and the first time she has exhibited in Johannesburg.

### 31 March – 7 April 2022

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• "Adaptation", a solo exhibition of paintings by Claudia Gurwitz, will be on display at Lizamore & Associates, 3 Hetty Avenue, Fairland, Johannesburg, from 3 April to 3 May 2022.

# Johnny, Jesse, and Here & Now musical reflection

SAUL KAMIONSKY

e may be the son of South Africa's favourite "white Zulu", but Jesse Clegg is a musician and a showman in his own right.

The singer and songwriter will make this clear next month at the Teatro in Montecasino, when he takes

audiences on a journey through his solo music career, which has spanned more than a decade.

"It's a chance to establish where I'm at right now, and also a way to look to the future," Clegg told the *SA Jewish Report*. "There's a combination of past, present, and future in the show."

Here & Now will include many of Clegg's hit songs, including Use Me, Today, Breathing, Let It Burn, Speed of Light and his latest single, Waiting on the Outcome.

The latter is a song about family and loss. Clegg's famous father, Johnny, the award-winning singer known as *le Zoulou blanc* (the white Zulu) passed away in July 2019.

"I wrote the song towards the end of my father's life," says Clegg. "I was processing a world without someone I was very close to, someone who had been a part of my life for as long as I could remember, and suddenly having to confront reality without that person.

"For me, the song was a moment to be vulnerable, to find strength in that vulnerability, and to see the hard reality of what was unfolding, but also not to lose faith and optimism. That's the beauty of the power of music, to find a way to observe moments in life that are sometimes challenging, but in a way that can bring hope and allow people to connect to the experience."

Clegg spent the first six years of his life on tour with his father, who wanted to have his family with him. "By the time I was six, I had probably travelled to half the world," says Clegg. "It allowed me to experience what it was like to be a career musician – hotels, backstage, airports, and music festivals. It showed me the power of music to convey ideas, move people, and connect. It also showed me the other side – the hardship of being a musician, the constant travelling, the potential for your family to be split up for many months. That gave me respect for the craft because it's a difficult lifestyle and it requires a lot of discipline and focus to maintain."

Although Clegg's family was never very religious, they respected all religions and occasionally did Shabbos. Clegg and his brother, Jaron, both had Barmitzvahs.

"Coming from the Zulu culture, there was always this deep respect of age-old wisdom and age-old tradition," says Clegg. "It helps you understand what it means to be alive, what we're here to do as human beings on the earth." Being the son of a famous South African wasn't complicated, Clegg says, "I didn't have anything else to compare it to. For me, it was just my family. We were a close family. My parents were conscious of giving us a grounding and a moral outlook."

Clegg never felt pressured to follow his father's footsteps into the music industry.



"When I started playing the guitar and piano and started to write music for myself, it was a profound moment for me. I realised this wasn't just a technical act of playing an instrument. I could actually speak my truth and had a way to communicate my confusion, troubles, stress, and joy. That's what I fell in love with about music. I still studied a degree. Even in my twenties, I still had backup plans."

Clegg matriculated from Crawford College with six distinctions in 2006, before obtaining a Bachelor of Arts Law degree and an honours degree in English literature at the University of the Witwatersrand.

His break in the music industry came when, at the age of 19, his 2008 debut album, *When I Wake Up*, achieved platinum status in South Africa. "I wrote those first songs basically just in my bedroom on my acoustic guitar," says Clegg. "I recorded some basic demos, which eventually got signed by David Gresham Records. The album was a big success. For me, it was less about the success than it was about the realisation that what I had to offer was connecting with people."

Since then, he has released two more albums, had 15 number-one radio hits, been nominated for multiple awards, and has performed in different countries. "I've always worked hard to try and make the best music I can and constantly change myself. That's why I'm still here."

He's now recording his new album in Los Angeles. It usually takes him two to three years to write a full album. "The album may end up with 10 songs, but in that time, I probably write about 70 songs. As an artist, you're always on the journey towards something. The journey is so rewarding because you experiment and try to push your boundaries."

Stories he hears, movies he watches, books he reads, and current affairs all give him inspiration to create music.

"There's also just your own story and relationships. My music is very personal, so there were moments in my life when I needed to revaluate something or overcome a challenging experience. My new song is a great example of this."

Over the years, he's developed a comradeship and special bond with many fellow local and international artists. "As an artist, there are artists who inspire you. Those artists are often older than you like Arno Carstens, my father, and Hugh Masekela. Then there are artists who are your age, and you are in the same sort of place. You inspire each other in a different way. You teach them about their music, and they teach you about your music."

Nicholas Petricca from the critically acclaimed band Walk The Moon will be joining Clegg for his performance at the Teatro. "We've had a deep friendship for many years. He's someone who I look up to and collaborate with fairly often. He'll join me on stage for a couple of songs, so it's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate that relationship a little bit."

Clegg's advice to aspirant musicians is: "Focus on the songs, stay true to yourself, and be patient."

 His show, "Here & Now", will be at the Teatro at Montecasino on 22 and 23 April.

### Israeli town and school a refuge for Ukraine refugees

### >>Continued frompage 10

days of the war, "We were so afraid, we thought we'd die from fear.")

The newcomers are also welcome free of charge at the city's only heated pool, the country club, theatre halls, and other attractions for the whole year following their arrival, as per a decision by Nof Hagalil's mayor, Ronen Plot, himself a Russian speaker who was born in Moldova.

These perks, which are above and beyond what other cities are offering immigrants from Ukraine or anywhere else, are "about Zionism", said a city spokesperson, Orna Yosef Buhbut. "This is a Jewish city. We won't ignore the plight of Jewish people in order to balance the budget," she said.

The city's extreme hospitality has become a badge of pride for its residents. They have donated many tons of clothes and toys for the refugees, who pick them up at a makeshift handout point set up by the municipality in an underground parking lot.

"Let the record show that when the crucial hour came for our brethren, it was Nof Hagalil, not the cash-padded, high-tech crowd of Herzliya, that punched above its weight," said resident and falafel stand owner, Sammy Buari, whose parents came from Libya.

But the effort is taxing for the city, whose residents earn 20% less, on average, than the average Israeli. The absorption of about 15% of the Jewish refugees who have come so far to Israel is putting a dent in Nof Hagalil's budget, Buhbut said.

"Their circumstances are not like the *olim* who came before," she said. "They came with the clothes on their backs, with nothing, due to their hasty flight. Some didn't have enough underwear to change. We have to equip them with everything."

Buhbut says the spending makes sense for more than moral reasons.

"It's a sound investment," she said. "Many of the people who are coming here, albeit under tragic circumstances and with nothing but the clothes on their backs, are academic professionals. They're survivors, they're entrepreneurial. Give them five years, and they will integrate into the fabric of the health system, the high-tech scene, the local businesses." But whether the families will stay in Nof Hagalil for the long term remains a question. There are precious few attractions to the city beyond the view. A far cry from the bustling urban life of Kyiv and Odesa, Nof Hagalil is a sleepy small city whose first train connection to Haifa isn't planned to materialise for another four years. Its main claim to fame is that in 2019, it changed its name from Natzrat Ilit to avoid confusion with the name of the birthplace of Jesus.

"Mostly after school we sleep," said Jan Yermochin, a 12-year-old Jewish boy from Kyiv who arrived in Nof Hagalil earlier this month.

Like dozens of the newcomers from Ukraine, Yermochin, who hopes to one day be a banker, attended a Jewish school there – the Chabad-affiliated Simcha elementary in his case. Others went to public schools. Some grew up with some knowledge of Judaism, but others come from mixed marriages where faith never even came up. Very few speak Hebrew.

Lena Maidanova, the 33-year-old mother of two girls, one of whom is enrolled in Shuvu, thinks she will stay with them and her husband when he's allowed to leave Ukraine.

"This place looks nice, rent isn't too high," she said of Nof Hagalil. "Ultimately Israel is less comfortable than Ukraine for us parents, but for the children, I think growing up in Israel is more advantageous."

Others who have landed in Nof Hagalil say they aren't so sure. Katja and Ira Kapustenyenko said they would happily return to Kyiv, where they were being raised by their grandmother before the war, if they could.

"I don't think I'll ever be happy here. I won't have friends here. I want to go back," Katja said.

For many of Nof Hagalil's newest arrivals, the question of where they will ultimately live feels hard to consider right now, with the war still raging back in Ukraine.

"I have no idea what happens next," Tetiana Denysenko said. "With my husband, with Ukraine, with our home there. Our whole lives were turned upside down. For now, the only horizon we're seeing is the reunion of our family."



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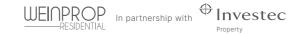
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TERRACE

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# Will Smith deserves Oscar for marriage

ill Smith did what every selfrespecting husband would do. Oscars host Chris Rock made a joke at the expense of Will's wife. Which wouldn't have been so bad, until Will laughed. After being caught finding the quip funny, he quickly assessed the situation and figured that he needed to do something dramatic to prevent the inevitable conversation on the way home.

A conversation every male knows is earth's version of hell.

It would go something like this. Silence. More silence. And then, "I can't believe you laughed," she would mumble almost as if to herself. She would continue to stare out of the window. And then there would be more silence.

Will would ultimately break, and in a strangled, desperate voice would respond, "I didn't!" A weak attempt to be shocked at the allegation. But he did laugh. It was filmed. Which means that there would be no getting out of it.

And so, to prevent the conversation on the drive home, Will Smith chose to walk onto the stage and slap comedian Chris Rock across the face. He didn't punch him but smacked him with an open hand. Next to pinching or pulling his hair, it was the least manly thing he could have done. But essentially, the most male. Because we'll do anything to get out of that conversation.

There's hardly a husband or boyfriend who hasn't been subject to this talk. Everyone tells you that we're born and we die alone, but no one tells men that the loneliest we will ever feel is late at night on the way home from an event where we have behaved unacceptably. Most of us, like Will Smith, would go so far as to risk giving up our hard-earned

# **INNER VOICE** Howard Feldman

Oscars to get out of it. And it would be worth it.

Chris Rock won't press charges. Of course, he won't. As a husband, he would be well placed to understand and appreciate the position that Will Smith found himself in. He laughed when he shouldn't have. And a price had to be paid. Rock would even have welcomed the slap, not just to help a friend out, because in a strange way, this could have altered the course of his own drive at the end of the evening. One that was likely to have been more stressful prior to the slap.

"I can't believe that you made fun of her alopecia," she would mutter under her breath as though to herself. "I'm a comedian," he would plead, desperate for absolution. And she would nod slowly as if to say, "but comedians are meant to be funny."

Instead, thanks to Smith, the Rocks' drive would be animated and almost festive. She would be outraged on her husband's behalf, livid with the bald woman, and horrified at the indignity of it all.

If viewed from a male perspective, the whole incident was pretty much a winwin.

No matter the consequences that follow or the debate that's likely to rage for weeks as to whether he behaved terribly or not, one thing is certainly clear. Will Smith showed mastery in marriage. He took it to the next level, and for that he deserves an award.

### ----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Another step forward for Hate Crimes Bill

ong in the pipeline, the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill took a further step towards promulgation this week with public hearings on the proposed legislation. Last October, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) put in a written submission on the Bill and on Tuesday, 29 March, was one of the organisations that made oral representation before the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services. Another organisation making a submission was the Hate Crimes Working Group, of which the Board is a founder and steering committee member. Alana Baranov, who presented on our behalf to the portfolio committee, represents us on this body, and was involved in the preparation of its submission.

The Board has involved itself with this issue from the beginning because when it comes to fulfilling our mandate of protecting the Jewish community and upholding its civil rights, anti-hate crimes legislation is of crucial importance. We're regularly called on to take action in terms of these laws, on occasion even at Constitutional Court level, and though the process is often long and arduous, these efforts have almost invariably been crowned by success. Indeed, from the adoption of our present Constitution onwards, the input of the SAJBD and the outcomes of the litigation it has engaged in have had a significant impact on South African law, particularly in the area of preventing hate speech.

In our submission, we sought, so far as possible, to give practical focus to how we saw the Bill being implemented successfully. One of the shortcomings of the present system that badly needs addressing, we said, was that the institutions responsible for addressing hate-crimes-related matters (including the South African Human Rights

### **ABOVE BOARD** Karen Milner

Commission and Equality Courts) are severely under-resourced. Another is that training and education is urgently needed about what constitutes hate crimes and hate speech for those required to implement those laws, particularly for law-enforcement workers on the ground and at Magistrates Court level.

### SAUJS sees off annual IAW challenge

"Healing over Hate" was the campaign theme adopted by Jewish students in response to this year's Israel Apartheid Week jamboree. As in previous years, the emphasis was on fostering education and debate with a view to finding solutions, as opposed to the black-and-white demonisation and delegitimisation tactics of the other side. Once again, as shown by the on-campus interaction between SAUJS and the general student body, the former approach resonated far more effectively with the average student. The Board supported SAUJS leadership throughout, including National Director Wendy Kahn and myself meeting the administration of the University of Pretoria to address certain concerns. Though there was the occasional unpleasant incident, these were fortunately rare. I commend our students for the dignified and constructive manner in which they responded to this latest propaganda stunt which has helped ensure that our university campuses continue to provide space for diversity of opinion and civil debate.

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

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

### Read the South African Jewish Report online www.sajewishreport.co.za

### Uphold Constitution, lawyer urges KDVP students



King David Victory Park High School head girl Megan Gruzd, lawyer Lwando Xaso, and deputy head Mandy Gruzd at the school's Human Rights Day assembly ing David Victory Park hosted Lwando Xaso, a lawyer, writer, speaker, promoter of constitutionalism, and an aspiring historian at assembly on Human Rights Day on 21 March. Xaso spoke about the importance of Human Rights Day to remember the South African struggle

### KDVP's new tuckshop not just about the "Sloppy Joe"

he King David Schools' Foundation hosted the Valkin family on Friday, 18 March, for the official opening of the new King David Victory Park (KDVP) tuckshop, which they donated in honour of their parents and grandparents, Connie and Balfour Valkin.

Fond memories of their days at KDVP are the reason Vanessa, Adam, and Gideon chose to give back to their alma mater, which is a vibrant campus with more than 750 students, all of whom will benefit from the magnificent new facility.

Vanessa recalled how the tuckshop was central to their school experience. "It wasn't only a space where we learnt social skills, but also deal making and negotiation, as you could arrive at school lunchless and penniless, but by the end of break, you had a Sloppy Joe burger, a cream soda, and a Caramello Bear," she said.

Saskia Gofman, the eldest Valkin grandchild who is a Grade 8 pupil at Herzlia in Cape Town, spoke about the importance to her family of having a Jewish education and passing on Jewish values.

### Matza ado about Pesach at Torah Academy orah Academy welcomed

Matza Man this week, part of the school's partnership with the Chevrah Kadisha. Over the next few waeeks, the school will prepare for Pesach by instilling the value of giving in students by helping the Chev collect Pesach food for those in our community in need.



Netanel Falkson, Levi Forman, Yoni Sacks, Eli Simpson, Eliya Smadja, Yoni Jaffe, Kievman Menachem Mendel, Rafa Orelowitz, Aaro Lipskar, Yisroel Meir Bilman, Binny Bauer, Moshe Jameson, Gavi Levit, Dov Pink, Gavi Kagan, and Kaleb du Toit welcome Matza Man to the school

JNF makes mark on conservation in Mamelodi tudents and staff at the Jewish National Fund pupils from about 40 schools in Mamelodi are given

our history, and the importance of our Constitution, whose principles she encouraged everyone to strive for.

### Former beauty queen discusses challenges of Iraqi women



ocial activist and former Miss Universe, Sarah Abdali dan, shared her extraordinary life story of triumph over oppression with pupils at Yeshiva College High School recently. Idan also outlined the brutal challenges which Iragi women continue to face, commended Israel's vibrant democracy, and stressed the need to fight misogyny, misinformation, and antisemitism.

The tuckshop was the brainchild of Jonathan Gimple (KDVP High School 1980), who saw the need for an upgraded facility where students could not only buy lunch, but also watch sport, network, and socialise. Designed by Jon Radford Architects and built by Bantry Construction, the tuckshop boasts a delicious and nutritional food offering, a meat, milk, and parev kitchen, coffee bar, and under cover seating area.



The Valkin family at theaKDVP tuckshop launch

(JNF) Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre in Mamelodi played host to two special guests last week: the Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky, and his wife, Elena Esteban Oleaga.

During their tour of the centre, the Belotsercovskys planted a spekboom tree, were entertained by students, and congratulated the JNF on its impact on the community of Mamelodi.

Opened by Ma Albertina Sisulu on 14 September 2004, the JNF Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre is committed to creating a culture of conservation in Mamelodi and southern Tshwane by being a model of best practice and through environmental

education programmes that inspire communities to take appropriate action.

Every year, more than 10 000 underprivileged

the opportunity to learn about natural science and the importance of the environment through the classes they attend at the centre. The centre is also responsible



trees - more than 30 000 in Mamelodi as part of a regular Arbour Month Greening Programme. And in 2021, it was designated a Science Centre, one of only 11 in the country and the only one situated in a township. Plans are now afoot for it to partner with a science and environmental training centre in Israel. JNF chairperson Michael Kransdorff said, "JNF SA, which is committed to partnering with the Israeli embassy, is engaging with municipalities and organisations nationally to introduce them to Israeli technology and help them solve water quality issues. This is particularly apposite during Human Rights month, as our Constitution identifies as a basic human right access to clean drinking water."

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# Gruelling Cape Epic pushes contestants to the limit

SAUL KAMIONSKY

hen riders readied themselves at the starting line ahead of the first stage of the eight-day Absa Cape Epic on 20 March, they knew they would be embarking on what's commonly acknowledged as the most brutal mountain bike stage race in the world.

On top of that, the course designed for this year's race was the toughest since the event started in 2004, the five South African participants told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Though this year's event ended with a death and the highest attrition rate to date, these five riders all managed to complete the race.

They traversed 681km and climbed 16 900m in the Western Cape in spite of the scorching heat, extreme wind, rough terrain, and various other challenges.

Craig Uria suffered some mechanical issues and Jodi Zulberg cracked her rib. Her fellow Cape Epic debutant, 65-year-old Isaac Borochowitz, hasn't endured anything harder than this race. His teammate, Julian Zetler, a four-time Cape Epic medallist, and ten-time Cape Epic medallist Leon Tobias say it was one of their toughest races.

Cheered on by fantastic support, the five 2022 Cape Epic medallists each formed part of one of the 359 two-person teams that finished the race out of 680 registered teams.

Zulberg and her cycling buddy, Richard Goodlace, concluded the race in 29th place in the mixed category.

A Johannesburg-based life coach and cognitive behavioural therapist, Zulberg hit a rock while descending a steep mountain on stage four of the Cape Epic. "It burst my back tyre, kicking me off the bike over the handlebars and I went flying down the mountain," she says.

Although she cracked her rib, she was full of adrenaline, so she felt no pain, gritted her teeth, and carried on riding until the end.



"The highlight of the race was the end," says Borochowitz, a Cape Town-based property developer who took up cycling two decades ago. "It's the relief, the satisfaction, and the enjoyment that you get from taking on a challenge like that at my age."

Borochowitz would never have turned down Zetler's request to follow up their Epic Israel participation with an attempt at the Cape Epic. "I'm hard-headed and stubborn, so don't tell me I can't do anything because you're going to lose," says Borochowitz.

Even so, he says there's "no way in hell" that he would have completed the Cape Epic if it wasn't for Zetler. "He was absolutely magnificent. He has Cape Epic experience. The last two days, and especially the last day, I battled a little bit up the hills. He even pushed my bike up one hill, and I walked. I had no more in the tank. The Cape Epic is designed to drain you mentally and physically."

For Zetler, a 53-year-old farmer in Stellenbosch, the highlight of the race was just finishing every day, not coming out of it injured or having fallen.



At the Cape Epic, they came 30th out of 56 teams in the Grand Masters category (50 years or older). "We're not on the level of Leon Tobias," says Zetler.

Tobias has competed in multiple Ironman events and the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii. He won his age group at the Durban Half Ironman in 2015, and represented South Africa as an Olympic distance age group triathlete for many years.

As he does every year for the Cape Epic, he undertook a seven-month training programme and participated in ito races

numerous mountain bike races. His advice? "All you've got to do is ride, and you've

got to ride a mountain bike and ride on rough terrain." He and his Cape Epic teammate, Ian Bryan, finished

in 11th position in the Grand Masters category. Having won the Masters category (40 years or older) last year, Uria and his teammate, Andrew Duvenage, came third this year, 53 seconds behind the winner.

"The field in that category this year was pretty

tough," says Uria, a Johannesburg-based chiropractor and seven-time Cape Epic medallist. "We ended up beating ex-Olympic champs and full-time professional athletes. The guys who won this year are probably two of the greatest ever on a mountain bike. They have won the most in the history of the race. They were rivals, and they came together to form a team. So, there was tough competition, especially for us just being working-class family guys who have day jobs."

Uria, who competed in wakeboarding after his school days, and Zulberg, were both very sporty when they were younger.

The latter had her own gym in her 20s before becoming a competitive runner, marathoner, and Comrades medallist. "Then I fractured my hip. My doctor said to me, 'Jodes, if you don't stop crosstraining, you're going to end up in a wheelchair.' That was when I started cycling and swimming. I participated in Ironman [events] all over the world. I won Ironman Israel and then stopped enjoying the swim."

She turned her focus to cycling, winning a gold and silver medal at the 2017 Maccabi Games and even completing Munga, a non-stop race for 1 000km from Bloemfontein to Cape Town. "In the Munga, you ride day and night through the desert on your own, whereas in the Cape Epic, you've got a lot of support," she says.

# Berman's Robben Island triple swim just preparation for 'the big one'

### SAUL KAMIONSKY

ohannesburg-born swimmer Jarrod Berman is proud to be the third documented swimmer to complete a Robben Island triple.

On 3 March this year, it took him six hours and 52 minutes to become the first person to swim the 23km distance in almost a decade.

He completed three lengths of the swim between Robben Island and Blouberg Beach, Cape Town.

According to the Cape Long Distance Swimming Association, the two other swimmers to achieve the feat are Steven Klugman in 2003 (six hours and 12 minutes) and Tyron Venter in 2012 (five hours and 56 minutes).

Berman swam the Robben Island triple just to get a long-distance swim under his belt in preparation for his ultimate goal, swimming 34km across False Bay at the end of this month.

**Jarrod Berman** 

Armed with swimming about 130km a month recently, Berman started at Robben Island at

06:00, just before the sun came up. "That was quite challenging," he says. "I've never experienced swimming in open water in the dark."

Even so, "It was a fascinating day," he says. "A bit of wildlife greeted me on the way. Some dolphins joined me when I left the island. Some seals came to say hello. I saw sunfish – a huge monster fish."

Having completed a double Robben Island swim in November last year, he found it daunting that when he got to Blouberg Beach, he had not one, but still two laps to go. "It's one thing to be physically fit, but this was a mental challenge," says Berman. "The Atlantic Ocean is wild. Sixteen degrees pretty much all along the way. When I turned around to go back to the island, the southwester was blowing. The current was guite strong. It took me an extra half an hour to get back than it did to get to the beach. You can see your time, so that was a challenge. You should have finished the lap, but you aren't getting there. It wasn't pleasant, but at the last turn, it was quite relieving. Getting to the beach was even better." The first person reportedly to experience the feeling of swimming from Robben Island to Cape Town was an escaped convict in 1690. In 1909, Henry Charteris Hooper became the first person to officially complete the swim. It took 17 years for someone else to follow in this South African-born amateur swimmer's footsteps. That was 15-year-old Peggy Duncan, who won the Robben Island race, having run away from her convent school in Johannesburg to

compete in the event.

As with most of his swims, Berman swam the Robben Island triple solo. "Around 2018, a group of us used to swim together. We all swim at very different paces. In that cold water, you don't want to stop and wait for someone. It's not fun."

A qualified electrical engineer now, who studied engineering after matriculating from Crawford College, Berman swam regularly in primary school.

"Then I stopped swimming until about 2017," he says. "I got back into it as I just thought, 'I want to swim Robben Island.' One thing led to another, and I haven't stopped swimming since the first one."

He has swum around Cape Point and 40km up and down a river. "With a few friends, we swam from Durban to Umhlanga one year. I don't even think 10 people have done that swim."

Berman trains six days a week in the Old Eds club's outdoor pool. "I train outside pretty much 12 months of the year. I haven't swum in a warm pool

for probably the past four years. It's the only way to prepare yourself for the cold." He wakes up at 04:00 each day to swim. He then fetches his kids and drops them at school before heading off to work. "My days are full these

heading off to work. "My days are full these days, so swimming is the only sport I do."

The English Channel swim has been in his sights for some time. It's roughly the same distance as swimming across False Bay. "The English Channel has been such a, 'You can go, you can't go. You can go, you can't go.' You've got to book about three years in advance. I was supposed to do it in 2020, then 'beautiful' COVID-19 hit, and they locked us down." His next challenge is to swim "the big one" - False Bay - at the end of this month. "Close to the end of last year, I decided I wanted to do it. The Robben Island triple wasn't really planned. It was just like a 'by the way'. I just wanted to get something in before I do the big one." After that, he might pursue swimming around the world. He might even consider swimming the Seven Seas. In 2014, well-known British-South African endurance swimmer, Lewis Pugh, became the first person to complete long-distance swims in each of the seven legendary waterways. However, Berman prefers not to plan too far ahead. "As it comes, so I'll do it," he says. "If I can get to Israel, I'll swim the Galilee. If I can get to New York one day, I would like to do some big swims there. If somebody says, 'Let's do this' and I've got the time to do it, I'll go do it."

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### SA JEWISH REPORT 19

# Fun and games in SA for Israel's rugby team

### SAUL KAMIONSKY

rom having a braai to spotting wildlife on a game ■ drive, Tel Aviv Heat's players enjoyed South Africa during the team's five-match tour in the country.

Some of them went to shul in Pretoria before having Shabbos dinner. "In Israel, we sit in the shul and afterwards we go to homes," says the Heat's Israeli lock, Misha Eli. "In South Africa, it's different because after the service, everyone was sitting and eating in the shul like this huge family. It was an amazing thing and not expected."

Says the Heat's captain, Renaldo Bothma, "The boys really loved coming to South Africa, being in camp,

exploring a bit of the country, and just seeing what the culture and the rugby are like. It was a good experience for all of them. The boys went around in Pretoria, looked at a couple of malls, and just saw how things were."

Additionally, the Heat spent a night at a lodge, and received invitations to watch a few Blue Bulls' games which, Bothma says, "were quite fun and unique for them".

On Friday, 25 March, the team had a golf day to raise awareness for Israel's first professional rugby team.

Israel has only two golf courses - one in Caesarea and another in Ga'ash. "It was fun for the boys to come out and see what golf is about," says Bothma, a 1.9m-tall loose forward. "I think it was just good publicity for the team."

Bothma believes the team could have performed better on the field.

After losing two games against Northam Rhinos in Limpopo, the Kevin Musikanth-coached side were beaten 35-7 and 47-10 by ABE MIDAS Naka Bulle in Pretoria

on Wednesday, 23 March 2022. Loftus 200 then beat the Heat 33-29 at Loftus Versfeld Stadium on Saturday, 26 March, in the curtain-raiser to the Blue Bulls' United Rugby Championship match against Welsh side Dragons Rugby.

"The results weren't great for us as a team, but we lacked some valuable time in terms of the number of sessions we were able to do," says Bothma. "It was such short notice. A lot of the guys obviously just flew in, and we had one or two days to prepare and then play. That's always going to be something tough for us as the Heat if we have these types of games. Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of having the boys together for, like, a month."

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Eli says South African rugby is tougher and more physical than it is in the Holy Land. "It's amazing rugby. It's a lot more real rugby. In Europe, it's more soft rugby," he says.

Eli recalls how he took up rugby 16 years ago. "For six months, my friend told me, 'Please come with me to the rugby.' I said, 'Bro, I don't know nothing about rugby.' I go for the first time. I'm standing in the middle just after kick-off. I just catch the ball. I run, pass through guys, and score a try and say, 'Alright, I think this is my game."

He says the game isn't popular in Israel, "but because of the Heat, the popularity will go up. The Heat is a professional club, which everyone wants to play for."

Eli grew tired of Israeli rugby and hung up his boots. Upon

becoming coach of the Israel national team in 2018, Musikanth motivated Eli to return to the sport.

"Please Misha, believe me, there's a difference," Musikanth told him at the time.

Looking back four years later, Eli says, "Wow, there is a

difference."

Musikanth says the Heat provides a unique sports opportunity for the development of rugby in Israel. "Our players are being exposed at the highest competitive level of rugby in one of the biggest cross-border club competitions in Europe [the European Super Cup]. Rugby Europe's plan is for the competition to grow. It's already televised and growing traction. For Israel to have a franchise in such a unique competition is amazing. We're a foundation member of the tournament. That means we're here to stay. I'm thrilled that our Israeli talented players are starting to respond with professional mindsets and the opportunity is there for them to see a pathway through rugby."

Eli and Musikanth now look forward to Israel's European Nations Cup encounter away to Slovenia on 2 April. They will then host Croatia before turning their attention to the Heat's Europe Super Cup semi-final against Portuguese-side Lusitanos in Lisbon on 16 April.

Says Musikanth, "It's imperative that the Jewish community around the world see the Tel Aviv Heat as our own sports team and get behind us as we endeavour to make positive changes in the region and over time, build up our playing and coaching resources to be able to perform and produce at the World Cup and the Olympic Games."

N E X T S T E P S Heritage and Beyond

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Having lived in Pretoria and played for South African teams such as the Sharks, Bothma found it easy to help his teammates acclimatise to the country. "I set up a session with boxing and stuff like that just to give them a bit of a different feel to what they are used to in Israel."

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