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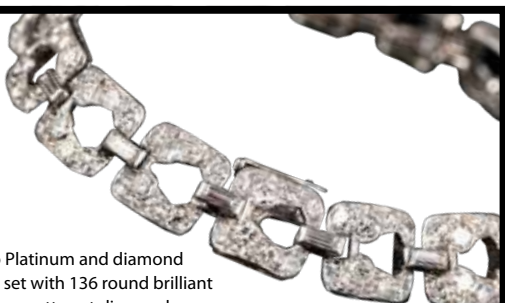
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South African Jewish Report

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Telfed launches medical degree for SA students in Israel

TALI FEINBERG

After a six-year behind-the-scenes journey, Telfed (the absorption organisation for South Africans in Israel) has launched a world first – a seven-year medical degree in English in Israel. The offering is a game changer for South African Jews who want to study medicine. They won't have to do community service, the degree is highly subsidised, and they can take it anywhere in the world – including returning to work as doctors in South Africa. "This programme has been six years in the making, but we finally signed on the dotted line," says Telfed Chief Executive Dorron Kline. "It starts with a three-year BSc pre-med degree in English at Ariel University. They

will then write an exam called the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), and go for an interview. Depending on their score and the interview, they will be able to commence four years of medical studies in English at the Medical School of International Health at Ben Gurion University (BGU). The Ariel University international pre-med academic programme will begin in September this year." Kline and previous Telfed Chief Executive Sid Shapiro pursued the idea because "we identified a need amongst South African Jewish students. With excellent matric grades, many of them couldn't get into medical studies at South African universities. Others were discouraged by the two years of community service requirement in very

remote areas. The Telfed initiative answers all of these issues and is an excellent aliya promotion project. A student who studies in Israel for seven years will most likely make aliya and live in Israel. "It's the first time that a seven-year medical degree in English is available in Israel for diaspora youth," says Kline. "We negotiated with three universities and several academic colleges for six years, looking for partners. After many meetings, they all told us that it was an impossible task. We didn't give up. I thank Orly Zuckerman of the Jewish Agency Aliya Division for bringing Ariel University on board. Last year, once Professor Izhak Michaelievski of Ariel University decided that it was feasible to start a pre-med degree in English, all the pieces

finally fell into place." Normally, such a degree at Ariel University is expensive, but Telfed managed to negotiate it down to 15 000 shekels (R68 163). "In addition, if the student makes aliya, we have negotiated with the student authority [in the Israel ministry of absorption] that all their tuition for the BSc will be paid for. So it's a free degree. In addition, they will be able to apply for Telfed scholarships of up to 10 000 shekels (R45 442). Even if they don't make aliya, they can still apply for Telfed SASI scholarships of 6 000 shekels (R27 265) a year. Finally, the first year of the degree is also recognised by the Masa programme. So even if the student doesn't make aliya, they can get a significant scholarship from Masa to cover their first year."

The four-year medical degree at BGU usually costs \$40 000 (R583 960) a year – out of reach for most families. "But Telfed has engaged with a very generous donor who has dedicated a \$1 million (R14.5 million) fund to help South African Jewish students to do this four-year section at BGU." The money has been set aside, but the details are still being finalised, which is why Telfed cannot name the donor at this stage. Kline says getting into the BSc pre-med isn't difficult, but the MCAT is a challenge. Even if students don't proceed to the medical degree, they will still have an excellent BSc. In addition, someone who already has a BSc can write the MCAT and possibly proceed straight to the four-year medical degree. If a student's Hebrew is good enough, they can do the four-year medical degree at other Israeli universities like Ariel, Bar Ilan, or Tel Aviv. Telfed also made a deal with the Israel Student Authority, which will normally fund either a student's undergraduate or master's degree if they make aliya, but not

both. However, "It has agreed to give 10 000 shekels (R45 442) for all seven years. This is something it has never done for anyone else, but it's doing it for South African students doing this medical degree," Kline says. "So if you make aliya or not, it's affordable." Though Telfed would love students to make aliya, they can return as doctors to South Africa or go anywhere else in the world. The degree will be open to the entire English speaking world, so it will be an international gathering of students. "However, we have brokered it for South African students and will be focusing on them," Kline says. He's working with Marc Lubner of the South African Friends of Ben Gurion University (SAFBGU), and they envision getting a few non-Jewish South African students a year to do the degree then return to South Africa as doctors. "The SAFBGU, whilst looking to support BGU, equally looks to benefit South Africa," says Lubner. He's also chairperson of the South Africa Israel Chamber of Commerce, which will play a role in screening candidates with a vision to returning top quality doctors to South Africa after their degree. Lubner paid tribute to Kline and his Telfed team for bringing the project to fruition. "The humanitarian spirit of my dad continues through this programme," he says, referring to the late, great philanthropist and businessman, Bertie Lubner. "It brings enormous amount of joy that his energy is still with us." Students will be able to live in dorms on campus or travel to campus. Though Ariel is in the West Bank, Kline emphasises that it's safe to live or travel there on the main highway, and the campus is extremely secure.

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End of an era

Business magnate Solly Krok outside the iconic Summer Place in Hyde Park, which he sold to a property consortium recently

See page 10



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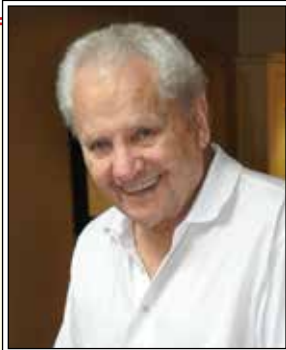
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“Hitler committed no crime” lecturer still in his post

TALI FEINBERG

One year after a University of Cape Town (UCT) political science lecturer claimed “Hitler committed no crime”, he remains firmly in his academic seat.

Dr Lwazi Lushaba uttered this statement on the eve of Yom Hashoah 2021 in a pre-recorded lecture addressing first-year students on the evolution of political science.

During the talk, Lushaba claimed that politics hadn’t been informed by the lived experiences of black people, and that it took “what Hitler did to white people” to have massacres recognised by political science.

“All Hitler did was to do to white people what white people had reserved for us – black people,” Lushaba said. “And so his crime, if he had a crime, was to do unto white people what white people have thought was right to do only to black people.” He went on to say that the Holocaust mustn’t be prioritised over other massacres.

While some students and academics were deeply upset and angered by this, others felt it was taken out of context. The Democratic Alliance (DA) was so incensed, it laid a complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission at the time.

The university established an evaluation panel that found the lecture was within the framework of academic freedom.

The panel maintained that this is the case particularly in the “full context of the lecture” and “within the context of a critique of Western humanist philosophy and its political consequences”. It said no action was necessary, according to UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola.

In response to questions from the *SA Jewish Report* about the matter after the university hadn’t released any comment in 12 months, Moholola said the university established the evaluation panel at the request of the vice-chancellor.

“The panel considered the full context in which the lecture in question was delivered, within the framework of academic freedom, and determined whether or not the transcript of the lecture in question constituted a *prima facie* case of antisemitism.

“The panel noted that Dr Lushaba’s words were open to other interpretations, particularly when not considered in the full context of the lecture,” said Moholola. “A report was concluded and shared

with the leadership of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies [SAJBD] and Dr Lushaba.”

Cape Board Chairperson Tzvi Brivik told the *SA Jewish Report*,

“The Board still asserts that these comments, while they may be protected by academic freedom in this instance, were deeply offensive to members of our community.

“We feel all academic institutions should create a safe environment for all their students, taking into account their emotional and physical well-being. This event, which we resolved with the university, created a significant amount of distress for Jewish students, to whom we offered counselling.”

He said that after students reported the comments to the Cape SAJBD, it engaged with the vice-chancellor of UCT, requesting a formal investigation be launched.

“UCT formed an evaluation panel which found that the comments made weren’t antisemitic and were protected by academic freedom given the context in which the statements were made. As this ruling was final and binding, the Board was unable to take further internal action against Dr Lushaba,” said Cape Board executive director, Daniel Bloch.

“We strongly condemn antisemitism and discrimination, including defamation and hate speech, and believe there’s no place for hate,” said Bloch. “We recognise the right of each individual to free speech and to express their own opinion, but we put forward the idea that our entire Western Cape community, especially those in positions of leadership, take up the challenge of becoming practitioners of careful, thoughtful, and deliberate positive communication.”

The DA is waiting for feedback from its complaint, however it says the commission has a huge backlog. When laying the complaint, DA Chief Whip Natasha Mazzone said, “The Holocaust was unequivocally a crime against humanity orchestrated by Hitler. The DA therefore strongly condemns the comments made by Lushaba. His comments were not only racist, offensive and vile, but also completely insensitive to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and the Jewish community as a whole.”

At the time the comments were made, the South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation’s Mary Kluk and Tali Nates said, “The Holocaust is one of the most horrific periods in the history

Continue on page 4>>

Torah Thought

Rabbi Dr David Nossel



Talk is cheep

What would you expect would lie at the centre of the five books of the Torah?

Something pretty central to Torah values? Perhaps the paragraph of the Shema, the command to love your fellow person as yourself, or maybe even the 10 commandments.

Instead, the middle of the Torah discusses the laws of *negaim* – a term which is difficult to translate, never mind understand. *Negaim* are spiritual lesions that afflict one’s body, one’s clothes, or one’s home. The Torah goes into considerable detail about these lesions, discussing the process of diagnosis and providing the required treatment. Strangely enough, it doesn’t explicitly reveal the underlying cause of this spiritual malady.

Enter the birds. In order for a person with *negaim* to be purified, the Torah requires a ritual process involving “two healthy, pure birds” (Vayikra/Leviticus 14:4). Rashi, the great commentator, comments on the adjective “pure”.

“The birds had to be pure and not impure since *negaim* result from negative speech which is an action of prattling words. Therefore, birds are needed to purify for they prattle incessantly with a chirping voice.”

There’s certainly a lot to be confused about here, but particularly confusing is how Rashi saw the word “pure” – first that *negaim* result from negative speech, “an action of prattling words”, and second, that only pure birds can correct this whilst impure birds cannot.

Is there possibly a message these *negaim* convey that’s a central Torah value and that lies at the heart of Jewish life? I think there is. It’s a well-established but sometimes forgotten one. The message

was taught to us by our founding forefather, Abraham, passed through the generations, reiterated in the Ethics of our Fathers, and it occupies the centre of the Torah.

The message is: talk is “cheep”.

Birds say much. They prattle incessantly. An impure bird makes out of prattling words an action in and of itself. A pure bird, however, turns prattling words into a call, a pre-action, a call to action.

Negative speech is when the speech becomes the action in and of itself.

Positive speech – Torah speech, Jewish speech – is when the speech is a precursor to action.

Abraham is praised for saying little and doing much. Our sages taught that “the expounding isn’t the main thing, action is”.

And so, at the centre of the Torah lies its central teaching: spiritual well-being, pure living, and Jewish values all come from prioritising not what we say, but what we do.

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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

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Refugees return for Pesach after miraculous exodus

TALI FEINBERG

Not many people would flee a war only when things were truly dire, then fly back into the humanitarian catastrophe to host a seder for refugees with nowhere else to go.

But Johannesburg-born Rebbetzin Rochi Levitansky and her family, who experienced their own real-life exodus as refugees on the run, plan to do just that in the next few days.

After a harrowing journey to Moldova, Romania, and then Israel, they are now in the safe haven of Jerusalem. But they haven't rested for a moment, often working through the night to help those who couldn't go.

And they will soon return to Europe, set up a safe place for refugees in Hungary, and host a Pesach seder for hundreds of Jews escaping Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine.

Levitansky, who grew up in Johannesburg, has been a Chabad *shlucha* (emissary) in Sumy, Ukraine, for 17 years. The city is just a half hour's drive from the Russian border. In the past month she, husband Rabbi Yechiel Levitansky, and their nine children have seen the horrors of war up close but also experienced many incredible miracles.

"We weren't planning to leave. It didn't enter our minds. We wanted to stay with our community. But when they started bombing civilians, we realised we needed to go. We asked people [from the community] to join us. We tried to organise a green [humanitarian] corridor. However, many were too frightened to leave."

Only a few agreed, and the Levitanskys started to make tentative plans. "The biggest issue was finding drivers. Many were frightened to make the journey. We found three drivers, but the night before we were due to go, they each called to cancel. We realised we were on our own."

In the first of many miracles, the Levitanskys had purchased a minivan a few weeks before the war. "We've gone 17 years without a car, but we bought this about seven weeks before the invasion. However it had never been driven because of the winter snow and ice. I hadn't driven a car in years, never mind on the back roads of Ukraine without having slept for a week and fleeing a war. But this was what we were going to do."

"We made our final decision to go. It was the most frightening day of my life. It was the first time since the war began that we shed a tear – or more than a tear! I've never seen my husband cry until then. I felt like I was in physical pain. We asked for a blessing for safety, and that our community shouldn't feel abandoned – that on the other side, we could help them even more."

Making decisions about what to pack was

heart breaking, but Levitansky strongly believes that she'll return, and therefore didn't need to take everything. Their children were reluctant to leave, and the only thing they insisted on bringing was coins from the Rebbe. The rest of the van was packed to capacity with food, documents including their ketubah, a small amount of clothing, and jerry cans with petrol that they were lucky to get through a contact – another miracle.

They left their keys with neighbours, which would allow people to use their bomb shelter and food supplies. Levitansky felt buoyed by a superhuman strength and an inordinate amount of calm as they began their journey. "We already hadn't slept for a week, but Hashem had given us this supernatural strength to be up all night talking to communities around the world, to work throughout the day, and then make this journey."

Every few minutes, they were stopped by blockades. Soldiers checked their passports, luggage, and car. They took turns driving for more than 31 hours. By some miracle, Google Maps still worked. "These roads were through forests, with huge potholes filled with water. Our car had lights that were meant for roads that are lit, so they weren't very bright. It was pitch dark and freezing. I was exhausted, I hadn't driven a car in years, but here I was doing it like I had driven in a war my whole life! Hashem gave me courage.



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thanked us and welcomed us."

They arrived at their destination an hour before Shabbos, and were even able to light candles and say the *brachot* over wine and challah. They spent Shabbos with hundreds of other refugees. The next day, they set off for Romania, a three-hour drive. But they then had to wait 10 hours at the border and they didn't have enough food with them. They spent another night in their van without having eaten the whole day.

In Romania, they were welcomed by Chabad *shluchim*, and immediately went to the kitchen to help cook for other refugees. The next day, they got on a charter plane to Israel. People sat wherever they could.

"We had spent a week travelling, and were welcomed to Israel in the middle of the night by other *shluchim*. It was so cold – it's never been

"We managed to organise a green corridor for a few hours a day. We're constantly calling our community to try to help them to flee. We're organising the delivery of food and medicine, and trying to ensure that refugees have what they need. It's a miracle that bank cards are still working. My husband managed to organise a blood transfusion for an ill man who couldn't get dialysis – even when blood is reserved for soldiers."

They were welcomed at Ben Gurion Airport, and now they are the ones who go there, often waiting for hours when planes are delayed so that refugees arriving in Israel are greeted with open arms.

While their exodus was harrowing, their children put things in perspective. As they arrived in Jerusalem, one daughter said, "Thanks for the best trip! That was the longest trip I've



"We wanted to complete our journey before Shabbos, and miraculously, made it across the border in 15 minutes. We immediately contacted our community to say there was a way to the border and we could help them map it out. A few agreed, but the next day, they were sent back as soldiers said it was too dangerous. They could try again only about four days after us."

She was astounded at the kindness of strangers – Jewish and not – who offered food, shelter, even money. "The response to Jews has always been to blame them in times of crisis or to make life difficult for Jewish refugees. But we didn't see that in Moldova and Ukraine. People

that cold in Israel in 100 years. I'm convinced Hashem did that because all the refugees were arriving in winter clothes."

It was when they arrived that Levitansky realised how little possessions they had, with their heaviest bag weighing 18kg. Most people take 20kg on holiday. However, they are truly grateful to be safe and in a place where they can continue to help.

"We were told to rest, but for the entire week after we arrived, we barely slept. My husband is American and we could have gone there, but it would waste precious time. Also, we need to be in the same time zone as Ukraine.

ever been on!" Another child said they wished they had brought their Chanukah gelt so they "could help save more people in Sumy".

For Levitansky, returning to Europe feels right. "Usually in Sumy on Purim, we help the entire community fulfil the *mitzvot* of the *chag*. Not doing so this year was difficult. Going back to help others celebrate Pesach is what we're craving. Seventeen years ago when we left for Ukraine, a doctor told my husband that though Sumy may not have the most modern medical facilities, 'the healthiest place for any person is where they are happy and have purpose'. We feel that doing this is the healthiest thing for us."

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Vile “Jew-baiting” meme disgusts antisemitism experts

NICOLA MILTZ

Antisemitism experts are disgusted by a meme posted on social media last week by local anti-Israel lobby group Africa4Palestine which compared Israel to Nazi Germany.

Africa4Palestine, which professes to be a human-rights advocacy group, posted the meme last Tuesday, 29 March, on Facebook and Twitter in the wake of a string of deadly Palestinian terrorist attacks which left Israel reeling.

Titled “a quick history guide”, the meme shows an Israeli flag on the top left hand side and the flag of Nazi Germany next to it on the right.

Underneath the two flags written in bold capital letters it reads, “History lesson: one of these flags represents the nation responsible for the mass murder of innocent civilians to clear way for living space of the chosen race. They have done this for the last seven decades without interference from the international community, claiming that their genocidal policies and systematic invasion of another’s land is ‘defensive’. The other flag belongs to Nazi Germany.”

According to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRM) Working Definition of Antisemitism – considered the gold standard in understanding antisemitism – a contemporary example of antisemitism is to compare contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

Claiming that the state of Israel behaves towards Palestinians like the Nazis did to the Jews is antisemitic. Portraying Jews to be Nazis and claiming that they are committing genocide against the Palestinians is antisemitic.

Local antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, Milton Shain, said that to compare the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the systematic and intentional murder of Jews at the hands of the Nazis was “simplistic and uninformed”.

“Africa4Palestine has every right to focus on the sufferings and aspirations of Palestinians, but in this post, it has demonstrated a crudity that has become its hallmark. This is propaganda at its most distasteful.”

Professor Karen Milner, the chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said equating Israel with Nazi Germany was an ugly antisemitic taunt and fully intended as such.

“In levelling it, Africa4Palestine is perfectly aware not only that the comparison is scandalously false and a distortion of history, but that it will be especially wounding and demeaning to Jews, the primary victims of Nazi tyranny,” she said.

“It would appear that Africa4Palestine, perhaps as a result of its frustration over its failure to make any headway in terms of promoting an anti-Israel boycott, is dispensing with the fiction that it’s a

‘human-rights organisation’ and revealing itself for what it is – a bigoted, extremist lobby bent on demonising and defaming the Jewish state to the maximum extent possible and quite willing to resort to in-your-face Jew-baiting in pursuit of that end,” said Milner.

The World Jewish Congress (WJC) said in January this year that drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to the Nazis was a form of Holocaust inversion and distortion.

“Comparing Israeli policy towards Palestinians with Nazi policy regarding Jews is an example of Holocaust inversion, where reality is inverted [the Israelis are cast as the ‘new’ Nazis and the Palestinians as the ‘new’ Jews], and an inversion of morality [the Holocaust is presented as a moral lesson for, or even a moral indictment of, ‘the Jews’].”

It said Holocaust inversion acted as a force against identifying the changing nature of contemporary antisemitism and creating a cohesive coalition against it. After all, who would want to defend modern-day Nazis?

One of the world’s foremost antisemitism experts, Professor Yehuda Bauer, told the *SA Jewish Report* this social media post wasn’t just dangerous, but blatant antisemitism.

“This is, of course, nothing new. Comparing Israeli policies with those of Nazi Germany is nonsense. Israel is no dictatorship, there are no concentration camps, no mass killings, but there is the struggle between two ethnic groups over a piece of land, with casualties on both sides. This is dangerous nonsense.”

Bauer is professor emeritus of history and Holocaust studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and academic advisor to Yad Vashem.

“These people deal only with Palestine-Israel. We haven’t heard from them regarding mass killings in Kashmir, Myanmar, China [the Uyghurs], and a host of other

places.

Only the Jews are of interest, so we’re dealing with antisemitism,” he said.

“This doesn’t mean that you have to agree with Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians, but you can express your dissent freely in Israel and in the occupied territories. I think one should not so much try and defend Israel, but attack the authors as antisemites who are a danger to South African society because they revive ethnic and ‘racial’ hatred by false accusations. They do, in fact, follow Nazi propaganda traditions, and this should be stated.”

Another international political scientist told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I don’t want to add value to this crap with my comment. This is just too disgusting.”

Africa4Palestine has consistently accused the West of double standards when it comes to the devastating war in Ukraine, bemoaning how the Palestinian cause has faded into the background as the West renders much-needed assistance to war-torn Ukraine.

Experts fear an uptick in vicious anti-Israel rhetoric during the month of Ramadan, with upcoming religious holy days for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, “It’s abhorrent and deeply hurtful for our Jewish community to endure these odious statements from the antisemitic Africa4Palestine organisation that deliberately and egregiously compares the horrors of the Nazis to Israeli actions in



order to insult and injure living Jewry alongside the memory of the Holocaust.”

He said the Facebook post went beyond a simple comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany. “Africa4Palestine is making a horrific attempt to whitewash the unspeakable actions of Nazi Germany, and we condemn this in the strongest terms.”

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a territorial and political one, whereas the Holocaust was the attempt to systematically annihilate European Jewry,” the WJC said. “In spite of the unfortunate outbreak of violence during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian population has grown by all metrics, and is projected to continue doing so. To compare this to the murder of millions of Jews during the Holocaust is preposterous and diminishes the pain of those who have suffered during the conflict.”

The WJC said further, “Following the creation of the state of Israel, Palestinians coined the term ‘Nakba’, Arabic for ‘catastrophe’, in an attempt to draw a comparison with the Holocaust, known in Hebrew as ‘the Shoah’, meaning ‘catastrophe’. This attempts to derail from the singularity of the Holocaust while simultaneously creating a false equivalency. Comparing the creation of the state of Israel to the systematic extermination of the Jews is at best inaccurate and deeply offensive to Jews around the world.”

The *SA Jewish Report* attempted to get comment from Africa4Palestine, but it didn’t respond by the time of publication.

“Hitler committed no crime” lecturer still in his post

>> Continued from page 2

of mankind. It’s deeply disturbing to hear reference to this painful history in a manner so laden with irony and cynicism without consideration of the damage and hurt that this flippant reference can cause.”

Now, Kluk said, “Although Dr Lushaba’s words were designed to shock students into understanding and recognising other horrors of the 20th century, they were offensive and hurtful. It would be extremely disappointing if he used the same technique again because such tactics disrespect all who have suffered.”

In his book *The Fall of the University of Cape Town: Africa’s leading university in decline*, Professor David Benatar devotes a chapter to exploring why Lushaba’s comments were so problematic.

Now, he said, “I agree that Dr Lushaba was exercising his rights to freedom of expression and academic freedom, and I don’t think that he should be subjected to any official sanction for what he said. However, that’s a separate question from the question whether what he said was factually correct or morally decent. His words were neither. As I argued at the time, looking at his comments in their context doesn’t exonerate them. It’s

a pity that UCT lacks either the capacity or the will to recognise this. It’s also a pity that UCT is only selectively interested in freedom of expression and academic freedom. The institution correctly invokes these principles in its defence of Dr Lushaba, but regularly [and wrongly] tramples over them on other occasions.”

The *SA Jewish Report* asked Lushaba if he would repeat his comments in his lectures this year but didn’t get a response.

Said Brivik, “If a Jewish student experiences hate speech or antisemitism, they must report the incident to the Cape Board via WhatsApp, text, or call using our #ReportHate Hotline, available from 08:00 to 17:00 weekdays on 079 994 5573, or fill in our #ReportHate tool: <https://bit.ly/3v3LObE>. We will investigate the matter with the help of our antisemitism and legal subcommittee and where necessary, engage with senior administration of the university, such as the vice-chancellor or registrar. We also encourage students to pursue the various dispute-resolution mechanisms on offer at their university, which includes contacting the class representative, student representative council, course convener, head of department, or dean.”

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Tefillin – *Our Spiritual Ties*

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Chief rabbi calls for help for Holocaust survivors trapped in Ukraine

NICOLA MILTZ

The chief rabbi of Kyiv, Ukraine, has reached out to Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein in a plea for help for the city's bereft Holocaust survivors to get them through Pesach.

Rabbi Yonatan Markovich and his wife, Elka, of the Kyiv Jewish Community, spoke to the chief rabbi and local rabbonim on a Zoom call a few days ago. They described the dire situation facing the elderly and infirm left behind in the city, most of them Holocaust survivors.

Markovich made a desperate plea to the South African Jewish community for help. The couple, who have served the Jewish community in Kyiv for 21 years, said their community had been "devastated" by the Russian war in Ukraine.

Goldstein is now appealing to South African Jewry to dig into their pockets to help this struggling community over Pesach.

"Rabbi Markovich asked me to appeal to our own community here in South Africa to assist them with Pesach supplies," said Goldstein.

"Among the needy he's assisting are more than 1 800 Holocaust survivors, this is particularly heartbreaking. It's almost inconceivable – here are people who have endured the horrors of the Holocaust, and now decades later, in their old age, frail and infirm, they don't have food for Pesach," he said.

"I told him during our Zoom call that he and his wife are heroes," Goldstein said. "They haven't abandoned their community in its hour of need. They are looking after people in a war zone, literally saving lives. Markovich replied that they weren't heroes, they were just doing what every person in their position would do. He was very humble."

In a heartfelt follow-up letter to the South African Jewish community, Markovich said, "Over the past five weeks, we have seen our community completely devastated by the senseless attacks on our city. All those in our community, men, women, and children, who were fit enough to flee and save their lives had done so already. The only ones remaining are the thousands of Holocaust survivors who cannot travel due to their age and frail health, a big percentage of whom are bed-ridden and in need of constant care. Also remaining are men with only Ukrainian passports between the ages of 18 and 60 who must stay behind to fight."

He said he and his wife had been working around the clock to provide food, medicine, and care for more than 2 000 individuals, many of them getting hot meals in their homes from volunteers who, he said, "go on bikes, on foot, and in cars, to deliver these items to keep these innocent and lonely Jewish lives alive".

The aim is to feed these people over the week of Pesach.

"We have many more Jews in Kyiv and the surrounding towns who, unfortunately, we don't have the capacity to feed and care for as the costs are now more than we can handle," Markovich said.

Goldstein is hoping to raise as much as possible to help these Holocaust survivors. "Rabbi Markovich told me that \$67 [R978] can buy a food package that will provide a recipient with all their needs throughout Pesach. He's also seeking to secure contributions for their post-Pesach needs and has approached other communities around the world to assist."

Goldstein asked the community to please "give whatever you can as every bit counts".

"The Russian invasion has caused suffering on a massive scale. We don't have the political power to end the war or solve the politics or stop the cruel human-rights abuses of the Russian army. But through the *mitzvah* of *zedakah*, the power of our giving, we can help alleviate suffering on the ground," he told the community in a letter.

Mindful of the precarious financial situation of South African Jews, he said, "There are, of course, those in our own community struggling to meet basic needs and without the means to celebrate Pesach. Our local communal welfare organisations are doing incredible work to ensure Jews don't go hungry and uncared for during Pesach and throughout the year. Here, too, for South African Jews, we should give generously."

Goldstein appealed to the community to "give generously, mindful of the famous declaration of compassion for the needy with which we begin the seder – 'whoever is hungry, let them come and eat!'"

"Real individual liberty begins with being free from the shackles of hunger and poverty, and the declaration reminds us that our own freedom isn't complete without

giving it to others. Now is our opportunity to put this call into action and ensure those who are hungry and most vulnerable have what they need this Pesach."

Rabbi Eitan Ash, one of the local rabbonim on the Zoom call with Markovich, said his shul was setting up sporting initiatives to help raise funds, such as a half Ironman race called Tri For Ukraine, where participants could do one or more of the challenges.

"It was absolutely amazing to be on the phone with Rabbi Markovich and his wife. They are truly dedicated to helping this aging community of Holocaust survivors in Kyiv. Their heartbreaking story brings the horrors of this war right into our homes, and this is one way we can help – by raising money to help feed these people over Pesach."

Markovich said whatever the South African Jewish



Photographs sent by Rabbi Yonatan Markovich of some of the people he is trying to feed in Kyiv

community did to help get food to as many people as possible, "would be a huge lifeline to these precious souls".

"We can assure you that each one of the Jews would be most overjoyed



to be able to celebrate Pesach," he said.

"We thank you and the entire South African Jewish community for your willingness to help with this massive show of Jewish unity and love of a fellow Jew. Just imagine for a moment the relief and smiles these *yidden* in Ukraine will have this erev Pesach when they open their door to see a volunteer with a box full of Pesach food," he said.

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Danlee.co.za 03/10/2022PA

Anger and fear growing in Israel

OPINION

Two Israeli fears have come to pass. The rioting and demonstrations of last April and May in mixed Jewish-Arab cities is seemingly back. As are attacks by West Bank Palestinians who appear to be copying lone-wolf actions carried out by Israeli Arabs. But there's one more element now in the mix.

Two of the three perpetrators who killed 11 people within a span of eight days late last month were supporters of Islamic State (IS) and had served jail time for being in contact with IS operatives abroad. Several media outlets affiliated with the organisation have in recent weeks been running campaigns encouraging IS supporters to carry out terrorist attacks against Israelis. They were quick to claim responsibility for the attacks and praise the perpetrators.

The Israeli military estimates that about 200 Israeli Arab citizens identify with IS and at least 20 of them are capable of carrying out attacks. Authorities are worried about possible IS sleeper cells around the country.

I was already reporting on the rise of IS in Israel 10 years ago. In 2015, I interviewed the father of a 19-year-old Israeli Arab, Muhammad Said Ismail Musallam, who was identified in a shocking online video, dressed in an orange jumpsuit and confessing to being a spy for Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. Moments later, he was shot by a boy who appears no



Israeli police officers and rescue forces are seen at the scene of a shooting attack in Bnei Brak, 29 March 2022

Photo: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90

older than about 12.

His distraught father admitted to me that his son had travelled to Syria but said that the claims of him being a spy were groundless. The last time his son had phoned was to beg him to wire money urgently to him. I interviewed the family in their apartment in an ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood in Jerusalem. When I enquired why they lived there, they said it was cheap and why not?

A year later, I tried to interview the sister of an Israeli Arab man alleged to be fighting in Syria for IS. She asked us to leave the property and not air the story for fear that she, a student at the Hebrew University, and her family would be targeted. All she would say is that they hadn't heard from him for a long time.

Over the years, a few dozen Israeli citizens are known to have travelled to Syria, Iraq, and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula to join the ranks of IS there. Several of them have been killed in fighting, while the rest are reportedly being slated for arrest as soon as they attempt to make it back to Israel.

Until now, the group hasn't been particularly active in Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza, and in spite of growing concern, there's little evidence of growing support for it. It's important not to overplay its role in the recent attacks. Many experts fear that what we're witnessing is more a case of lone-wolf initiatives than an uptick in IS activities in the country. The Israeli government has asked the public to refrain from uploading videos from

the scenes of attacks on social media to prevent copycats.

As Ramadan gets underway, this is always a tense time in Israel. The country is bracing for more incidents, with Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi reportedly telling commanders that the military should be ready to remain on heightened alert for the next month or more.

Contributing to the tension is a lack of Palestinian leadership that leads to individuals taking action on their own. Tensions never really abated since last year's violence and even in February, police were still arresting people associated with those attacks. There are suggestions that the security reinforcements recently employed are part of plans drawn up after last year's uprising

and that the response this time will be more violent.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has called for "civilian volunteers" to defend the Jewish state. He was presumably trying to echo Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has urged Ukrainian civilians to fight the invading Russian army. Bennett may hope that in the current international climate, his comments will evoke little criticism. But Palestinian leaders have taken note and warned that he's playing with fire. In recent months, there has been a rise in attacks by right-wing armed settler groups and in the past few days, such Jews have attacked Palestinians in at least three separate incidents, hospitalising several of them.

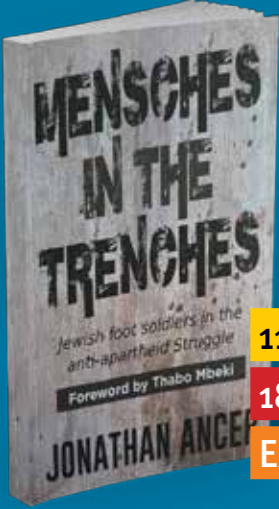
A former Israeli police officer was also found to have set up an organised armed Jewish group to operate in the West Bank. Though the police distanced itself from the group, officials haven't worked to prevent it. The anger on the Palestinian street and concern on the Israeli one is growing, and it seems just a matter of time before the next deadly attack. • Paula Slir is the Middle East bureau chief of RT, the founder and chief executive of Newshound Media International, and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.



PAULA SLIR

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End of season for Summer Place

TALI FEINBERG

When the well-known Johannesburg businessman and philanthropist, Solly Krok, first heard that the iconic Johannesburg property, Summer Place, was going on auction in 1994, he didn't tell a soul he was going to bid for it.

"I was alone when I bought it, and I was alone when it was sold last week," he says. "It's been a 28-year saga!"

Indeed, though Krok made the decision to buy it alone, the venue has been the opposite of lonely, providing a space for people to come together to celebrate milestones, hold events, and gather for conferences. For the Jewish community in particular, it has been a centre point for celebrations and *simchas*.

The property was originally developed for "oil baron" Marino Chiavelli in 1984.

"He was an absolute perfectionist. I witnessed expensive Italian tiles being ripped up because they were literally millimetres too low," says Elmarie Dell (Myburgh), who managed the estate for him.

"To think he never lived in the main house," she says. "The media refers to the 'cottage' where he lived, but the 'cottage' is a three-bedroom house. The gardens were far more colourful and beautiful back then. He loved his huge rose garden. It was very special. There were 15 gardeners to take care of every detail.

"When he was abroad, we had lots of fun. While at home, we were all on our best behaviour!" she says. "We used to have either sole or kingklip for lunch every single day. By Friday, I would tell him that I had had enough of fish and he would agree that the chef could make anything for lunch, but it had to be roast chicken, fillet, or prawns. His definition of 'anything'.

"We met interesting people from government to negotiate oil deals," she says. "Chiavelli always insisted on toasting a glass of pink champagne after a deal and the meetings usually ended at 15:00 or 16:00. They always declined, and I would continue to open a bottle because Chiavelli didn't take no for an answer. He simply ignored them."

"Do I ever want to be as wealthy as that? Never. You never know who really cares about you. I always told him the truth. That's probably why we used to fight like brother and sister, although he needed it in a world where everyone just agreed with him."

Krok came into the picture when, he recalls, "One day, I saw an advert promoting the auction. Intrigued, I decided to attend on my own. It had a mystique about it." Later, after he won the auction, Nelson Mandela phoned him, asking him to give the property to the ANC [African National Congress]. He declined.

The 93-year-old Krok says the condition of the sale was that the property would be auctioned off in three offerings. "Offer one was the parking lot. The second was the house plus the statue by [well-known South African sculptor] Danie de Jager. The third was the aggregate of the first two bids as a starting bid. A further condition was that the winning bidder would be subject to a three-week confirmation acceptance by the trustees of the estate."

He decided not to bid until he knew the aggregate of the first two bids. "Representing a Dubai buyer

were three gentlemen dressed in black with top hats accompanied by a man holding a large screen with an aerial to communicate with the Dubai bidder. It was a forerunner of the cell phone.

"The third bid commenced at R5.6 million with bids of one hundred thousand reaching R6.2 million. I decided to enter the fray. Slowly, the bidding pattern started to change, with active bidders dropping out. I dropped to R50 000 bids and with the total at R6.5 million, I was declared the winner."



Elmarie Dell with two staff members at Summer Place

Krok didn't wait for the contents and furniture sale. He was in a hurry to tell the news to his twin brother, Abe. "The media surrounded me like a hungry pack of wolves. I eluded them, but when I arrived to tell Abe, I was surprised to see that he had been bombarded by phone calls and had already heard the news," he says.

In the three-week wait for confirmation, overtures were made by the losing bidders looking for a deal. "I got a call from my attorneys to say they had had a bid of R12.5 million from attorneys representing a client. I had until 17:00 on Friday to increase the counter-bid. I was shocked as I had won the auction fair and square. I didn't sleep. The next day at about 16:00, I jokingly instructed my attorneys to up the offer by R100. To my surprise, they reported back that the bidder hadn't upped the R100 increase, with the comment that they 'don't want to play ping pong with Solly Krok'. The rest is history."

Krok turned it into the successful venue it has been for the past few decades. Its other Jewish connection is that it housed Chabad Hyde Park shul, headed up by the pioneering Rabbi Mendel and Mashi Lipskar. Krok says he's proud to have supported such a special shul, and it's probably his favourite memory of Summer Place.

Shai and Jessica Friedland were probably the last Jewish couple to get married there before the recent sale. "The venue appealed to us for a number of reasons.

It's unique and elegant. We loved the fact that there were a number of beautiful outdoor spaces that we could choose to locate our chuppah as well the fact that we could have an indoor reception on the same property. Everything could happen there: getting ready, photos, particular

Jewish ceremonial customs [the groom's *tish*, *kabbalat panim*, *bedekkin*, and the chuppah] and reception.

"In essence, Summer Place could accommodate everything we wanted as well as capture the beauty we were looking for on our special day.

"Summer Place has a special energy, particularly for the Jewish community. It has been a top choice for many couples for many years, and we hope it can one day continue to be a beautiful space for Jewish couples in the future."

At the on-site auction on 30 March, Summer Place sold for R129 million to a consortium of local property developers that operate in the hospitality space. The sale is subject to final confirmation. Excluded from the sale is the large De Jager sculpture.

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Hate speech that touched a lawyer's heart

When **Advocate Christiaan Bester** took on the South African Human Rights Commission's (SAHRC's) hate-speech case against the Congress of South African Trade Union's (Cosatu's) Bongani Masuku in 2009, he didn't realise the impact it would have on him. The SAHRC had ordered Masuku to apologise to the Jewish community, but he wouldn't. So, Bester and Advocate Mmusi Seape, with a team of lawyers from Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr (CDH), took Masuku to the South Gauteng Equality Court. This then went to the Appeal Court, and then the Constitutional Court. Bester spoke to Jewish communal leaders and lawyers about his experience.

"This case was a homecoming of sorts. When I was six years old, in the autumn of 1984, my parents moved into an old double story house in the leafy suburb of Greenside, constructed just before World War II that had been sold to us by an elderly Jewish family whose children had recently settled abroad. I was the only Afrikaans kid on the block, and at first had some difficulty in adjusting to our new neighbourhood.

"It was, however, the Jewish boys of our neighbourhood who took me under their wing, spending their holidays playing cricket and tennis with me, and sharing their afternoons with me on our BMX bicycles exploring the suburbs of Greenside and Emmarentia. Some years later, when my father died unexpectedly, those same boys came to our house and stayed with me the whole night as I tried to come to terms with the sudden loss of a parent. Some of those friendships endure to this day, in spite of most of the boys having long since moved out, making cities like Toronto and Tel Aviv their homes, because you never forget how people made you feel.

"More than 30 years later, you gave me the opportunity to repay their kindness because this case directly confronted the question of whether or not there's still a place under the South African sun for the people of the very same Greenside Jewish community who embraced me as an outsider all those years ago, a community that continues to enrich our society greatly in ways many fail to appreciate and who make up part of the fabric that is our carefully stitched together constitutional democracy.

"Justice Sisi Khampepe, writing for the Constitutional Court, concluded as follows in the Masuku judgment: 'This imposes the obligation on Mr Masuku to tender an unconditional apology to the Jewish community in respect of the first statement. And so it is that he who expressed the harmful words that led to these proceedings, and undoubtedly a great deal of emotional suffering for the Jewish community, must find the words to make amends.'

"And so, I'm hopeful that the Constitutional Court's judgment will send the message that, whatever criticism might be levelled against Israel by those who disagree with its policies, hate speech against South Africans Jews has no place in our society.

"The outcome in this case wouldn't have been possible without the assistance of a talented group of professionals, each an example of South Africa at its best. Mmusi Seape was in the trenches with me from day one. His advice and wise counsel proved an invaluable asset to me during the trial. His pen produced an exceptional set of heads of argument in the winter of 2019 as we readied

ourselves for a hearing before the Constitutional Court. Burton Meyer and his team at CDH ensured that all our operational needs were met from the start in conducting this litigation, whether in Pritchard Street, Bloemfontein, or Braamfontein. The SAHRC showed enormous courage to take on this case at a time when the winds of resistance were blowing strongly against the protection of the South African Jewish community.

"Finally, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies ensured that we were well-nourished and resourced during the trial. They made available world-class experts in their respective fields in the form of Dr David Hirsh of the University of London and Professor Gregory Stanton, the founder of Genocide Watch. Their evidence was central to the Equality Court's findings against Masuku, and they were ultimately vindicated by the Constitutional Court judgment.

"This case was, as I said, a homecoming of sorts. It was also an education. In the beginning, I had little understanding of the threat posed by words that, to me, as an outsider, seemed rooted in a faraway place, of no immediate relevance to South Africa. But, as I immersed myself in the lead-up to the trial in the literature of conflict and hate, in the literature of community, the faraway became the nearby. Two months before the Constitutional Court hearing, in the middle of 2019, my family and I undertook a journey to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps.

"It was a warm summer's day when we visited Auschwitz, and it had recently rained. On the other side of the barbed-wire fence line, constructed by the Nazis to prevent their victims from escaping, a small flock of white storks were feeding on crickets and grasshoppers in the



Advocate Christiaan Bester

stands of long green grass. Those same birds migrate to the eastern lowveld of South Africa each summer, where I have frequently observed them in the vast expanse of the Mopani savannahs of the northern Kruger. It made me realise that Auschwitz isn't a world removed.

"The experience of South Africans Jews doesn't occur in some isolated setting, detached from increasing antisemitism across the world. No matter how far away from you it seems, hate cannot be allowed to fester, whether in a kosher supermarket in a Paris suburb or outside a synagogue in Orange Grove. It's only ever a bird flight away.

"The next day, the sun stayed low. Rain lashed our hotel window in the old city of Krakow. And so, sitting down behind an old wooden desk, I wrote the ending of our heads of argument that Mmusi had prepared for the Constitutional Court hearing. I had to. Because, though the law might be driven by facts and precedents, it's sometimes not complete without feelings."

Telfed launches medical degree for SA students in Israel >>Continued from page 1

He notes that Ariel has a warm community. Rabbi Hillel Maizels, the son of the renowned late Rabbi Desmond Maizels, is the Ashkenazi rabbi of the city. His wife, Dr Yael Maizels, is a lecturer in the BSc pre-med programme. Kline recalls that the late Rabbi Maizels planned to study medicine and even did some of the degree, but eventually joined the rabbinate. Now, South African Jewish students can continue that path not taken, with his own daughter-in-law teaching them.

"This is the only programme of its kind in Israel," says Maizels, who will teach anatomy. "It's a basic course for anyone interested in medicine or anything health related like physical therapy or nursing. I always say that to understand how the body works, you need a map and language, and that's anatomy."

Along with being a lecturer, the mother of five children, and a rabbi's wife, Maizels is a cutting-edge scientist and researcher. At the moment, she is focusing on the new field of personalised oncology. She looks forward to connecting with South African students and welcoming them not only as a lecturer, but as someone who can support them.

"We're excited. It's been a long road, and now there's a lot of anticipation," says Kline. "The programme will be launched officially in May after Yom Ha'atzmaut, with members of the Jewish Agency, government ministries, Telfed, and the universities."

Students can email auinternational@ariel.ac.il for information on how to apply. Telfed will release more information shortly.

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Kyiv atrocities raise ghost of Babyn Yar

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Imagine having your house blown up, civilians killed in your neighbourhood, and the organisation you work for attacked.

Russian soldiers made this the reality of the Ukrainian-based Ruslan Kavatsiuk, the deputy director of the recently attacked Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center in Kyiv.

"I learned yesterday evening that my house was blown up and burnt down with everything we own, including the car," said Kavatsiuk on 30 March 2022.

He was speaking at a webinar titled, "Voices from the front line: the relevance of Holocaust sites in the war against Ukraine", organised by the Base and the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

"It's clear that Russians cannot win this war militarily against armed forces in Ukraine," said Kavatsiuk. "Now they attack civilians, like in my hometown, right next to Kyiv. Russians have killed many civilians. Civilians were killed in their cars. Sometimes only women were in the cars with children trying to leave the place of occupation."

Kavatsiuk said Ukraine wasn't very different to other countries in central Eastern Europe. "It's a democratic country of 40 million people, and by territory, a little bit larger than France. Yet, our democratic country was attacked full scale by the Russian Federation."

He said the last time Ukraine was bombarded this way was in World War II. "Right now, Russia is repeating that under a false, historical, so-to-say narrative that Ukrainians are some kind of Nazis and Russians are some kind of liberators of the free world and free people."

All Holocaust institutions view this narrative as misleading and false, said Kavatsiuk.

The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center has shifted from memorialisation and education to activism in the weeks since Ukraine was invaded. The same can be said for two Polish organisations – the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków and the Taube Centre for Jewish Life & Learning Foundation in Warsaw.

"We've seen crying people, we've seen tears, we've seen the emotions of our Ukrainian colleagues who had families back in Ukraine," said Jakub Nowakowski, the director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, which has four Ukrainian employees, one of whom is fighting against the Russians.

"Because of those connections, those friends, those colleagues, it was natural that we needed to help them," said Nowakowski. "We started helping their families. We started to do whatever we could right away, whether it was collecting medicine or food supplies. Colleagues of ours still have their families in Ukraine. We've been able to send those products and supplies directly to the people in need."

On 28 March, the museum opened a day care centre run by Ukrainian refugees. "Since then, we've been bringing kids to the centre," said Nowakowski. "They come from all of Ukraine and from very different backgrounds. Some come from cities, some come from villages, some have beautiful houses. All of them miss their fathers who are fighting. All of them miss their homes."

Nowakowski emphasised the danger of being indifferent. "We just try to do whatever we can to help."

For many decades, the Jews of Poland were on the receiving end of relief, said Helise Lieberman, the director of the Taube Centre for Jewish Life & Learning Foundation. "We're now the ones responsible for giving. There has been a transformation, which we need to live up to. That includes how we educate, memorialise, incorporate, integrate, challenge narratives, make the world open up beyond the headlines and beyond those big letters at the top of your internet feed. What we're seeing is that there's evil and there's good. We would all like to be in a place where we do good."

After Russia invaded Ukraine, the Taube Centre quickly joined the Warsaw Jewish community to create a crisis-management team. It brought together all the Jewish organisations in Warsaw and



The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center

tasked a group of people with responding as quickly as possible.

"We're working with international organisations and our partners like Galicia Jewish Museum, and those in Warsaw and around the country," said Lieberman. "We're also supporting the JCC

[Jewish Community Center], thinking of children's programmes. We're working to bring much-needed goods to places that aren't near major cities. They have little access."

The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center is situated at the biggest mass grave of World War II.

There, Nazi SS Squads carried out massacres in the early 1940s, beginning with the killing of more than 33 000 Jews in September 1941.

At some point thereafter, the site faded into oblivion. "The Soviet Union tried to erase the memory of Babyn Yar and the Jews who were killed there," said Kavatsiuk. "It's now a place of memory, of memory of about two and a half million Eastern European Jews who were killed."

This summer, the centre planned to open the first museum in Babyn Yar. It would tell the story of the September 1941 massacre.

"Unfortunately, due to the attack in Kyiv, we have now had to suspend our plans to open that museum space," said Kavatsiuk. "Some of the men in our team are now serving in the armed forces. Two of our historians were from Kharkiv. Their houses were blown up like mine. Now, one of them is in Germany, the other west of Ukraine. They continue their research, and we continue to research the names of the victims. We have established a humanitarian project to help Holocaust survivors, evacuate some of them, and help them with medicine, food, and water. In Kyiv in the area next to Babyn Yar, we established a programme to help disabled and elderly people."



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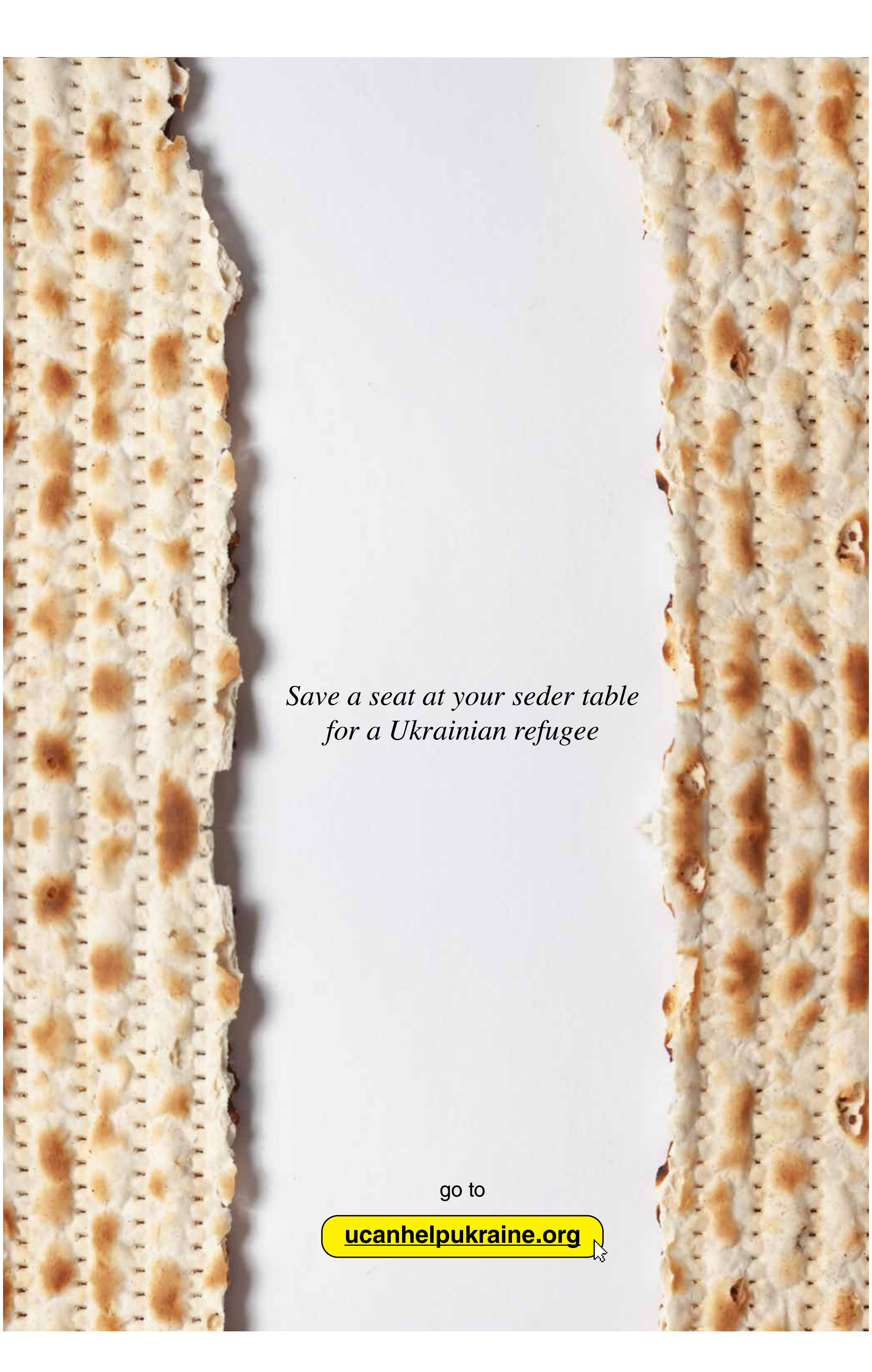


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“Crazy” innovator helps Wits make quantum leap into the future

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“People think innovators must be geniuses – super-intelligent people with phenomenal memories. Absolute nonsense,” said South African-born and University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) educated innovator and entrepreneur, Dr David Fine, last Thursday, 31 March.



Dr David Fine

“Other people believe that innovators are childhood prodigies. Again, total nonsense. Take me as an example. I failed first grade, and I did very poorly at school. Yet, later on, I learned how to innovate.” Fine may well not have been a top scholar, but he looks back at his years at Wits with gratitude. So much so, he recently donated \$3-million (R43.7 million) to his alma mater. Fine was heeding Wits’ call to help establish an ecosystem for researcher-led

innovation at the university. The idea of assisting in solving some of Africa’s biggest challenges and advancing the public good appealed to him. The money will be used to establish the Angela and David Fine Chair in Innovation. Speaking at a webinar about “innovators as problem solvers and setting the direction for Wits in its second century”, Fine said he hoped the chair would put Wits at the forefront of innovation in the global South. Wits vice-chancellor and principal, Professor Zeblon Vilakazi, said in the webinar, “Thanks to David and Angela Fine, this university has taken a quantum leap into the future with the establishment of the chair. “It’s a very generous donation into an endowment fund to support innovation at Wits and to create a long-lasting legacy of upliftment, forward-thinking, and relevance.” This year, as Wits is celebrating its centenary, it has identified innovation as one of its major strategic thrusts. Fine, now retired, is passionate about inspiring a new generation of innovative problem solvers. He graduated from Wits with an honour’s degree in chemistry in 1964. Numerous members of his family, including Rivonia trialist Arthur Goldreich, were anti-apartheid activists. Not only did they become enemies of the state for their opposition to the system, but Fine’s sister, *Sunday Times* reporter Hazel Fine, was also a marked person. Around 1970, Fine fled the country.

He got his PhD from Leeds University in the United Kingdom before leaving for the United States to run the Combustion Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In response to the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie in Scotland, Fine developed the first airport sniffers that could detect traces of plastic explosive residue in passenger luggage. After working at Thermo Electron (now Thermo Fisher) for 28 years, he formed two companies of his own – CyTerra in 2000 and Vero-BioTech in 2006. In the field of analytical chemistry, Fine developed a way to detect traces of chronic nitrosamine, chemical compounds associated with numerous cancer sites. He also developed a handheld detector for finding buried landmines. Fine said there were many misconceptions about innovators, including that they needed to be highly knowledgeable about their subject. “That couldn’t be more incorrect,” he said. “The more the person knows about their narrow little subject, the more brainwashed they are. They know so much, they’ve got nowhere to turn. They can’t innovate.” We’re all born with the innate ability to innovate, he said. “Five-year-old kids playing in a sandbox are innovating and playing imaginary games, with toys, locks, and paints. Every one of us innovates every day in our daily lives. We cook using new recipes, we select what clothes to wear, we decorate our homes.” According to Fine, when innovators look at a new topic, they should read about it for a couple of days just to understand the problem. “Then stop. Go and think about how to solve the problem. You’re not an expert, but you can solve it. You may find half a dozen possible solutions.” Fine cited Buddhist monk Shunryū Suzuki, who said, “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s, there are few.” Once you have found solutions, you become the expert. “In

innovating, one of the key things you have to do is grasp the key fact of a problem. Focus on it, and solve it.” To train himself to do this, Fine would read a paper or watch a movie and then summarise it in just a couple of paragraphs. He once asked one of his brightest engineers to summarise two pages of an interesting paper he had seen. “His summary of the two pages was ten pages,” recalled Fine. “He couldn’t prioritise. Everything they did, he thought, ‘Well, maybe they didn’t consider this and that’. He’s very good at writing papers, but as an innovator, he couldn’t innovate.” This made Fine realise that there are two kinds of scientists, those who publish and extend knowledge, and those who innovate. He said the latter scientists are scarce, and South Africa needs more of them. Emphasising that innovators need to be correct, Fine said he verified the results of his experiments. “I would check the recalibration, get chemicals from two supply houses, check every equation and formula. I would repeat the entire experiment with different apparatus if I could. If it was important enough, I did it myself over a long weekend.” He said that when people question your innovations, you should be able to sit back knowing “you’re right, and they’re wrong”. “When you come along as an innovator and you propose something which is counter to [scientific belief], or you have actually got something working which is counter to that, or you’ve got data which is counter to that, people get instinctively negative,” Fine said. In 1975, Fine was notified that his contract with the US National Institutes of Health was being cancelled. He was told he was “incompetent and stupid” because one of the reagents he added to a sample wasn’t approved. When it was soon realised that he had found the solution, he got his contract back. “I’ve been called incompetent, stupid, crazy, an ignoramus, charlatan, trickster, a son of a bitch. That’s happened to me not once, but more than a dozen times. It happens when you disrupt the very powerful egos of people who have made it to the top in their field.”

KDL pupil appointed junior mayor of Joburg

SAUL KAMIONSKY

King David High School Linksfield Grade 11 pupil Ricci Waksman is going places and she’s not even finished high school. Waksman was inducted as co-mayor of the Johannesburg Junior Council on 17 March. “I hope to make an impact on communities by helping the council’s events and projects run as best as they can and to show the people we help that they matter and there’s a place for them and people who care for them in the world,” Waksman told the *SA Jewish Report*. She will lead the council together with Thando Kambule from St Johns. Established in 1928, the council is a prominent youth-led non-profit organisation. Its young leaders aim to have a positive impact on the lives of others and mobilise Joburg youth to create tangible change. Waksman has been at King David since Grade R, and will be co-mayor for one year before the next mayors are voted in. After that, she will assist her successors. When she was in Grade 10, Waksman was chosen by previous councillors and the teachers involved to be one of the two students to represent the school on the council during 2022. “Once I was part of the council, we got a little bit involved and all

got to know each other,” she says. “Then the 80 students from the 40 schools in Joburg that make up the council had elections to vote for the two co-mayors and other executive positions. I was voted in as mayor by my peers on the council from all different schools.” The students voted for someone who could lead well and who would benefit the council as much as possible. “Luckily, I was the person they thought would do so,” says Waksman. As co-mayor, she oversees the council and helps to plan its projects and initiatives. “The council is divided into five committees – advocacy, arts and culture, environment, sports and recreation, and outreach,” she says. “Each committee individually runs its own projects and initiatives. Then there are council-wide projects and initiatives. As mayor, it’s my job to oversee the planning and assist with the planning of all of these events.” Waksman is an academic achiever, and is involved in first-aid at the school. “I’m one of the seniors in our first-aid team and am involved on the sidelines at all sports practices and matches. I help if someone gets hurt. I’m also very involved in public speaking at the school. I still love dancing and other cultural activities like that.” She says her biggest achievement at school so far is receiving colours for various things such as academics, first-aid, public speaking, and dancing.



Ricci Waksman

Farewell to a supportive dad

TRIBUTE

JACK BLOOM



My father, Hymie Bloom, passed away on Sunday evening, 27 March, at the age of 93. He was born in Wales in 1928, the youngest of 10 children, and grew up in Portsmouth, England, during the depression years and World War II. Their house was bombed, and his formal education was severely disrupted. He was bullied by antisemites at school, and also experienced Jew-hatred when he served as a flight mechanic in the British Royal Air Force. A colleague didn’t know he was Jewish and said to him that he wanted to go to Palestine to kill Jews. In South Africa, he married my mother, Tzippa, 65 years ago and had three children. My parents were surprised by my involvement in politics, starting as a student when I canvassed for the Progressive Federal Party, but they were always supportive. My father exhausted himself putting up posters for my first election in 1988 when I lost a Johannesburg council seat by a mere 28 votes. He always tried to be active and positive. In his mid-40s, he taught himself Hebrew by learning with me when I did my Barmitzvah. He



Hymie Bloom

went for singing lessons and appeared in various opera productions. For many years, he was a member of the Johannesburg Jewish Male Choir, and sang in shuls all over Johannesburg. With his dignified white hair, he was a familiar figure in the choir with my beloved late brother, Ivor. Although not formally religious, he built a home sukkah when we lived in Doornfontein in the 1960s when hardly anyone else did so. He always put family first, and was so proud of his eight grandchildren, five of whom live with my sister, Caryn, in Israel. During the *shiva* mourning period, I was heartened by the messages of the lives he touched with his cheeriness and willingness to help others. I’m reminded of Ethics of the Fathers (1.15) where Shammai says, “Greet every person with a pleasant countenance.” Hymie’s health deteriorated in the past two months, and he passed away peacefully at home. • Jack Bloom is the Gauteng Democratic Alliance Health MEC.

KDVP lights up the stage with beloved Broadway offerings

REVIEW

Marvelling at the singing talent of the students at King David High School Victory Park (KDVP), enjoying well-known characters like Shrek, and laughing at the jokes of Yente from *Fiddler on the Roof* sounds like fun. It sure was as we were taken on a journey through the Broadway and Hollywood classics as part of the audience of KDVP’s production, *Ticket to Broadway* (31 March to 6 April).

Some of the songs and monologues we love from Broadway musicals and favourite movies managed to find their way into this melange of talent on show during the performance, directed by Renos Spanoudes, the school’s head of arts and culture and dramatic arts.



Sam Bonner (left) and Keren Katzew (right), with Meah Radford behind

Photos: Yael Gordon

Each one of the 25 songs and 10 monologues was from a different play or movie, chosen by the students, and performed in one of the five themed sections of the show – defiance, love, possibility, hope, and time.

The audience was startled at the ear-splitting sound made every time Miss Trunchbull, the extremely cruel headmistress in *Matilda*, smacked her old-fashioned teacher’s stick on the stage.

They listened to an emotive monologue from Lady Macbeth, standing on an elevated platform.

Actors stood on desks during the rendition of *Hard-Knock Life*, and cleaned the same type of desks during a song from the musical, *Waitress*.

The lighting was hugely effective, even when portraying the importance of making the most of every minute and not spending too much time on electronics. At that point, the lights were turned off, with actors using the flashlights on their cell phones.

What with a cast of 57 and others working backstage and in visual design, it was one of the biggest casts Spanoudes has directed at KDVP. “This was probably the biggest team I have worked with in the past decade,” he says.

For all those on stage, the format allowed them to realise their dream of performing a certain scene.

“If you did a published musical, you could never highlight so many students,” says Spanoudes, an internationally acclaimed actor, playwright, and director. “To celebrate theatre and mark the return to performing, I chose a format which gave more people an opportunity to perform.”

Twenty girls from the school wanted to perform a scene from

Hairspray, so Spanoudes found a way in which he could make that dream come true.

“There were other instances where just one or two individuals wanted to perform a certain piece,” he says. “I searched for monologues according to the requests or the dreams that the kids expressed. There was method in my madness in terms of a golden thread. For example, *Pappa Can You Hear Me?* from Yentl is followed by Oliver, who is an orphan.”

The costumes were made as close to those in the original international performances as possible. For example, when matric student Keren Katzew, the students representative council’s head of arts and culture, sang *Mother Knows*



Ayal Krawitz (left), Benji Weiss (centre), and Sam Bonner (right)

SAUL KAMIONSKY



earlier this year. Cloete worked with Spanoudes in school productions, being in charge of sound and lighting.

Those involved put their all into the production, with practices after school every day from Monday to Thursday until 19:30. “Towards the end, we did take initiative,” Lipman says. “We would do rehearsals during breaks, before school, and on Sundays.”

Cabaret isn’t your average school play

Jewish educator **Joseph Gerassi** directed *Cabaret*, on stage at Redhill School this week. It wasn’t by chance. He chose a play that tackles the issue of antisemitism in pre-World War II Germany. The SA Jewish Report asked him some questions.

What made you choose to do *Cabaret* as the school’s production this year?

Two reasons. First, when choosing a school musical, I always look at the talent amongst the students and then choose a play that will be able to show off this talent. I knew I had the right students to play the challenging roles in *Cabaret*, roles that would challenge them as well as allow them to shine. Second, it’s important not only to do fun musicals, but to choose musicals from time to time that have important messages for the audience and which challenge students’ thinking about the world around them. *Cabaret* certainly did both.

What are the lessons one can learn from the play as Jewish people and about Jewish people?

At its core, *Cabaret* is a devastating critique of apathy and a clever and terrifying look at totalitarianism. The story takes place not too long before Hitler comes to power in Germany. The horror gains momentum around them, as too many characters stay locked in denial or self-interest. It’s a stark reminder to Jewish communities around the world that given the right circumstances, good people can get caught up in some very bad things and often, as Jews, we’re at the receiving end. Though this production is set in the 1930s, we’re witnessing similar occurrences



Mukona Nangammbi and Matthew Spira

of antisemitism today, and it’s a stark reminder to us to always be aware and prepared.

This week, the school dedicated a whole day to discussion of *Cabaret*. Why?

At Redhill, we deal with issues of diversity and inclusion in our formal curriculum as well as through our recently established Centre for Dialogue and Conflict Resolution. We strive to provide an environment that embodies and promotes the core principles enshrined in our Constitution, promoting respect for all persons by encouraging dialogue to combat ignorance. One of the ways we do this with our students is by having various days throughout the year in which we invite experts to speak to students and facilitate workshops to educate and challenge students on issues which confront them and our society. Monday was just one of these days, set aside for dialogue and debate on the confronting themes presented in *Cabaret*

One of the issues discussed was having Jewish people play Nazis, or black people playing roles that were traditionally played by white people. What did the students think of this?

After the lectures and workshops on campus, students came away with an understanding that these issues, especially in the world we’re living in today, aren’t easy to deal with and context plays a large part when trying to answer these difficult questions. The fact that these issues were raised and debated and the fact that our students were challenged, even if they couldn’t agree unanimously, is testament to the unique learning experience at Redhill.

• *Joseph Gerassi is executive head of Redhill School in Sandton and the winner of the Absa Jewish Achiever Professional Excellence Award 2019.*

What significance does this play have for the world right now?

Although *Cabaret* was written in 1966 about 1930s Berlin, the issues presented in the musical are as pertinent today as



Some of the cast of *Cabaret*

they were then. *Cabaret* is a cautionary tale about being aware of what’s happening around you, which resonates with us today as much as it did in the 1930s. Given the rise of totalitarianism, racism, homophobia, gender-based violence, and an ever-increasing surge of antisemitism, we can all learn lessons from *Cabaret*.

One of the main themes of the play is antisemitism. How did you approach this with your students?

As with all the themes in the play - gender, racial profiling, inclusiveness, fear of the other etc, we spent many hours discussing the themes with the cast. It was important for them to understand the complicated and challenging issues within the musical to be able to play the characters authentically.



Mikah Smith and Nicolas Hattingh

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Singing the praises of SA’s unsung *mensch*es

South African journalist and author, **Jonathan Ancer**, has just brought out a book, *Mensch*es in the Trenches, which documents the “Jewish foot soldiers in the anti-apartheid struggle”. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to him.

How did you get involved and why?

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies commissioned me to write the book. It was an opportunity for me to do what I love – uncovering and documenting important aspects of our history and the remarkable people who played a role in the country’s freedom. I was also curious to find out what motivated these people to get involved in the fight for human rights.

What was the reason for the project?

The project’s primary purpose was to record and celebrate the contributions made by unsung Jewish South Africans who stood up to injustice, and to remember activists who are in danger of being forgotten.

Describe your research process.

I interviewed the “mensch” or, if they were no longer alive, their family members. I augmented these interviews with information from documents, press clippings, books, and archival material.

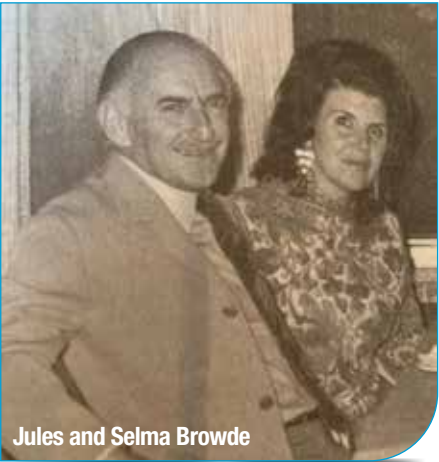
How did you decide who went where?

I divided the book into sections based on broad themes that were more or less chronological. From the torchbearers, trailblazers, and trade unionists in the first half of the 20th century to the conscientious objectors and student activists in the 1980s and 1990s. In between, there were playwrights, lawyers, journalists, educationalists, rabbis, a book seller, a businessman, an archaeologist, and an architect.

How did you select the people you wrote about? What criteria did you use?

The selection was always going to be difficult because many Jews played a role in the fight against apartheid in one way or another. We had a small committee that consulted people and put forward names, but it soon became apparent that we would never be able to include everyone, and we realised we shouldn’t even try.

If we included everyone, we would have



Jules and Selma Browde

ended up with a phone book that just listed people’s names – and we still would have left people out. We had to draw a line at some point otherwise this project would have gone on and on.

There have been so many Jews involved in the struggle in some way or another. Some obvious ones have been left out. Why?

Precisely because they were obvious. Though some of these obvious people play a cameo role in the book, we didn’t want to rehash the stories of the well-known Jewish activists. The Slovos, Bernsteins, and Goldbergs are part of the country’s political record, but Jack Isacowitz, who fought for equality and was banned and jailed for his activism, isn’t.

We wanted to focus on activists like Ivan Schlapobersky, who made their contribution under the radar and out of the public eye. Ivan hid anti-apartheid fugitives, and would have faced a hefty prison sentence if he’d been caught.

Then there’s advocate Denis Kuny, who personified the pursuit of justice for 60 years. He was involved in momentous political trials, but he also defended untold ordinary people charged with a range of petty offences (like pass-law breaches) and not so petty offences (like high treason).

What did this project mean to you?

A great deal. I started working on the book soon after coronavirus decided to hitchhike around the world. It was a dark time, with

lockdowns, political upheaval, and economic doom-and-gloom, but this project gave me an opportunity to escape from all that and meet a range of extraordinary people, people who bring light into the darkness. It was hugely inspiring. I was moved by their courage and humbled by their sacrifices.

What were your biggest lessons?

Although our newspapers are filled with stories about corrupt politicians, I learnt that there are many ordinary people who are principled and ethical. I also had an opportunity to learn about my own family history when I researched Solly Sachs, one of the most successful trade unionists in South Africa.

My grandfather, Chaim Ancer, was a member of the Garment Workers Union, which was led by Solly. This gave me insight into my grandfather’s life when he arrived in South Africa a century ago, which I found very meaningful.

Which of your characters most impressed you and why?

They’re all impressive, but if I had to choose, I would say that the identical twins, Norman and Leon Levy, made a huge impact on me. They began their political activities as schoolboys and campaigned for freedom and equality all their lives. They stood in the dock with Nelson Mandela in the Treason Trial, and lived a life of protest, picket lines, interrogation, torture, solitary confinement, jail, exile and, eventually, democracy.

I interviewed them when they had just turned 90, and they were filled with humility and humour. If there were more people like the Levy twins in the world, the world would be a much better place. Sadly, Norman died just before the book was published.

Who is this book is aimed at?

At first glance, it might seem that *Mensch*es in the Trenches is of interest only to Jewish South Africans but I believe it’s got a much wider audience. Anyone interested in history and politics will be fascinated to learn about these colourful characters and the role they played in the fight for liberation. Through the eyes of the people profiled, the book provides fresh perspectives on the country’s history.



Weekly Mail editors Anton Harber and Irwin Manoim

What do you want the readers to gain from this book?

To remember generations of courageous people, to reflect on the sacrifices they made, and to be inspired to become *mensch*es themselves. The world needs more *mensch*es to fight against the tide of corruption and greed.

COVID podcast in the past – for now

HOWARD FELDMAN

As useful as numbers might be, they often disguise the real story. When we’re told that globally, more than 6.1 million people died from COVID-19, our rational brain tells us that it’s a high number and we ought to be moved by it.

But when we hear a story of a young man or woman who appeared healthy but succumbed to the virus leaving behind a grieving family, we feel without a moment’s thought.

Which is why the statistics as they relate to the Synthesis Sunday COVID Podcast with Dr Anton Meyberg only tell a fraction of the story. It might be that more than a half a million people watched the podcasts, that there were more than 90 episodes over two years, and that in excess of 270 hours were spent in preparation, recording, editing, and distributing it, but that isn’t the half of it.

The real story isn’t ours. It doesn’t belong to Synthesis, to Meyberg, or to me. But to the people who sought answers, who wanted to become as knowledgeable about COVID-19 and its impact, and who trusted us week after week to give them the information they needed.

When I approached physician pulmonologist Meyberg two years ago, he was sceptical. For the most part, doctors aren’t comfortable in the public domain. Add to that the fact that it was at the beginning of the pandemic, and there was a distinct information void. And that any interview would require honesty and vulnerability in acknowledging how little was known. Testament to that was the changing advice, such as going from no value in wearing a mask to masks being one of the most critical aspects of prevention.

We recorded the first podcast from the studio in Rosebank but

immediately thereafter, moved to virtual recordings as the country went into lockdown. This became critical as many a Sunday, Meyberg would have to record from hospital having just exited the COVID-19 wards.

His demeanour those weeks told us the stories he couldn’t, and there were times when I would tell him to change his scrubs because the colour of his countenance looked as grey as his shirt.

There were unspeakably dark, cold days when death after death threatened to overwhelm him and others in the medical space and when we had no idea that warmer days would ever arrive. Those were the tough recordings. Our role was to inform and guide, and we couldn’t lose sight of that.

Father’s Day, when Meyberg couldn’t see his family and we recorded a message from his children, reduced us all to tears. Tears that we all shed because each of us was forced to endure unspeakable but different hardships. Listeners comforted us. Each Saturday evening, we invited questions and each week, we were awarded hundreds in response. The enquiries guided us and indicated what people needed to know, and gave us a sense of what others were experiencing.

And after each recording, because we had promised answers, we were hounded and badgered and nagged until we could send the link that they were waiting for.

On Sunday, 3 April, we recorded the last of the series. Although COVID-19 isn’t over, it’s time for us to learn to live with it. And although we still need to be aware of the virus, we made the decision that our job is complete. For now.

Although I’m told over and over how the Sunday COVID podcast helped people, the reality is that I, too, was a recipient. Above all, it was a constant reminder that across the country and indeed across the world, no matter our nationality or religion, we are indeed a global community that cares, worries, and ultimately is in search of answers.



Dr Anton Meyberg, Marco Martins, and Howard Feldman

Joburgers welcomed back to The Wilds

A grey and rainy Sunday in Joburg on 3 April didn’t dampen the spirits of an intrepid group of hikers who joined the Jewish National Fund – SA (JNF-SA) for a “Walk on The Wilds side”.

The diverse crowd, which included kids, parents, grandparents, and a few dogs, were impressed by the lush serenity of the gardens. Even in bad weather, this is a beautiful place. Many wondered why they hadn’t visited before (a few remarked that they hadn’t been there since the 1960s, and some said they’d never set foot inside, in spite of living just down the road).

Once shunned as a crime hotspot, The Wilds has undergone a profound transformation over the past few years and is once again a safe and thriving green space in the heart of our concrete jungle. This turnaround is largely thanks to the

work of local artist and community activist, James Delaney, who spoke to the group.

In what began as a personal campaign, James and a team of dedicated volunteers have worked wonders – clearing the paths, replanting the flower beds, installing delightful artworks, and generally making the park accessible to visitors again. Now, in collaboration with Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo and the well-supported Friends of the Wilds Facebook page (with close to 10 000 members), The Wilds has resumed its place as the pride of Joburg.

JNF-SA Chairperson Michael Kransdorff thanked the Community Security Organisation for keeping everyone safe, JNF-SA Director Bev Schneider for organising the event, and Cayla Urdang for coming up with the idea. Watch the JNF-SA Facebook page for more details.



Artist and community activist James Delaney welcomes the group to The Wilds

World ORT acts to help Ukraine

It’s the morning of 24 February 2022, and the lives of many who are waking up on this bitter, freezing day will never be the same. “War is a messy thing, and I find myself dealing with situations I have never encountered before,” said David Benish, the head of World ORT’s representative office in the former Soviet Union, in a recent meeting held with the organisation’s National Directors Forum.

“But we are learning every day, and find ourselves accustomed to assisting refugees fleeing to our country,” says Plamen Petrov, the national director of ORT Bulgaria, who is assisting with food parcels, accommodation, schooling, and work placement.

“This is the biggest crisis the ORT

network has experienced since World War II,” reiterated Dan Green, the director general and chief executive of World ORT. ORT, a global education network driven by Jewish values, was established in 1880 in



An ORT school in Ukraine before the war

Russia to assist the Jewish community with rehabilitation initiatives. It is now once again adjusting to a situation of turmoil over and above its efforts to provide social support to the thousands of students and hundreds of staff members and teachers of ORT schools in Ukraine.

In some places, like Kyiv and Odesa, 50% to 75% have fled, and the provision of food parcels, accommodation solutions, and other assistance is a priority. In addition to assisting ORT’s beneficiaries, help has been extended to sending ambulances to rescue the elderly and their families.

- South Africans can help the situation by donating any amount to ORT’s tireless efforts. Go to: <https://ort.org/en/ukraine-emergency-appeal>.

Just let it go

It's not easy to let go. But if we have learned anything from planning a wedding in another country, during a pandemic, with a Yemenite future daughter-in-law across a language and cultural divide with different levels of religious observance and vastly different customs, it's that we need to do just that.

Just let it go.

Imagine telling a guy who spends three hours a day, five days a week on radio, aside from podcasts and other presentations, that there will be no speeches at the wedding. And that he's expected not to go within 10m of a microphone. And telling the same guy who wakes up at 04:00 each morning that the buses back to Jerusalem will be at either midnight or 02:30. And that the chuppah is scheduled to start at 20:30, but that most likely it won't be before 21:00, give or take an hour or two.

There's not enough Xanax in the world to calm a Jewish South African down.

Retinue colours? My wife asked expectedly on one of the numerous Zoom calls. Our future daughter-in-law and existing son exchange glances. "Whatever anyone wants. Your choice. Why would we tell people what to wear"? The question seems to puzzle them. "How's it going with your dress?" the South African mother of the groom enquires. "I bought it. Vintage. I love it!" And promptly sends the family, including the groom, a picture. The concept of him not seeing her dress is as baffling as dictating that pale people wear yellow.

Why would that even be a thing?

When the couple realised quite how out of our depth

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



we were, they did what any 2022 twenty-somethings would do. They prepared a PowerPoint presentation called "The 101 guide to Israeli/Yemenite weddings." We were invited to an evening that might have felt a bit "special needs", but we appreciated it, nevertheless.

Rule one: no matter what you wear to the wedding, you will feel either overdressed or underdressed. People will arrive in ties and bowties or jeans and T-shirts. And no one will feel that they got it right. The lesson? Wear what you want, be who you are, and enjoy. But don't for a moment think that anyone feels more appropriately dressed than you do.

Rule two: the *bedekin*, where in traditional Ashkenazi terms, the groom sees his bride for the first time, when he lowers the veil over her and then is marched to the chuppah by his parents, isn't quite the same. The couple will have seen each other, mingled with guests, and even had a photo or three. When the chuppah begins, he is indeed marched down the aisle by his parents but then after his bride is ushered halfway down by hers, he leaves the chuppah and walks to her where he sees her for the first time in, like, 30 minutes. He lowers her veil, and then together, they walk back to the chuppah. Although not our custom, there is something rather beautiful about this that somehow speaks to me.

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As for the henna party, I still remain clueless. Which is all the more reason that we need to let it go.

So far, this is all theory. Next week this time we would have, please G-d, enjoyed the henna party, celebrated the *shabbat chattan*, and after the wedding, at which I won't speak, have taken either the midnight or 02:30 bus back to Jerusalem.

The lack of control doesn't sit easily for me. But whereas there are many unknowns, what's known are the things that count. We adore our future daughter-in-law. She is kind and she makes my son happy. And her family are warm and caring and can't do enough to make us feel comfortable. We might have made the choice to let everything else go, but that's something we'll hold on to.

Alex gets new library, thanks to King David donors

King David school children and staff, joined by the King David Schools' Foundation and Feed SA, on 31 March launched the Kacev Family Library at the Twala Centre (Alexandra Development Centre) for the use of the Alexandra community.

The Kacev Family Library is a 12-metre insulated container which was remodelled, electrified, carpeted, and filled with furniture and book-shelves, all thanks to generous donors to the King David Schools' Foundation. Living the King David values of *chesed* and community, the shelves were filled to the top with books generously donated and sorted by King David primary school students.

The project honours Rabbi Craig and Yael Kacev's contribution to Jewish education in South Africa. The couple are well known for their love of books, passion for learning, and understanding that reading and education are key to social upliftment.

The launch was a showcase of local talent, with guests entertained by a field brass band, marimbas, and dancing. Speakers expressed gratitude for the library and the partnership with King David, saying it would assist in uplifting the community. King David alumni Jarred Wood (King David High School Victory Park 2021), a 24-year-old cancer survivor, spoke about his journey to getting a matric certificate, and encouraged others not to give up in spite of any challenges they might face.

Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, spoke about the value of education and how King David schools envisage the Kacev Family Library to be a warm, inviting space for the children of Alexandra to spend time reading, using their imagination, and enhancing their education.

The Kacev Family Library will be curated and managed by Lawrence Ruele, personal assistant and apprentice of well-known Alexandra philanthropist Linda Twala. Ruele is also vice-president of the We Love Alexandra Community Makeover Project.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Masuku victory and superb lawyers

Thirteen years of litigation and the innumerable meetings, communication, and general back and forth that went into it is surely time enough to devote to any legal matter, but even so, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) case against Bongani Masuku wouldn't have been complete without appropriately acknowledging the superb team of lawyers who made victory possible.

Last Tuesday evening, an event was held to pay tribute to those lawyers, in particular advocates Christiaan Bester, Mmusi Seape, Carol Steinberg, and Wim Trengove, together with the legal teams from Edward Nathan Sonnenberg and Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr. Also attending was the chief executive of the South African Human Rights Commission and senior leadership and professional staff of the Board, who had likewise all been intrinsically involved in the Masuku case as it made its way through the courts.

It was moving for us to listen to Bester as he shared his personal story of boyhood friendships with young members of our community and how much he learned about the history and impact of antisemitism through involvement in the case. One of his comments that resonated particularly was that events occurring in South Africa shouldn't be seen as isolated, localised occurrences but part of a broader global trend in which antisemitism is on the rise everywhere. "No matter how far away from you it seems, hate cannot be allowed to fester, whether in a kosher supermarket in a Paris suburb, or outside a synagogue in Orange Grove," Bester said, and that, indeed, was what motivated the Board to take on this matter in the

first place and thereafter follow it through to the end.

It was also enlightening to listen to Steinberg's insightful comments about the significance of the judgment in legal terms and what it had to say about the position of the Jewish community specifically. In essence, we are undoubtedly vulnerable to antisemitic attacks from various quarters, but can feel encouraged that the institutions put in place under the Constitution to protect us as well as other vulnerable communities are proving to be effective.

Upcoming *Mensches in the Trenches* book launch

Last month, I wrote about *Mensches in the Trenches*, a new book about some of the unsung Jewish stalwarts of the anti-apartheid struggle that has been brought out under the auspices of the SAJBD. At that time, preparations to launch and publicise the book were still being made. I'm now happy to report that the first of these launches will be taking place this coming Monday evening at Exclusive

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Books, Rosebank. A highlight of the event will be Judge Albie Sachs reminiscing about his father, the celebrated trade unionist leader Solly Sachs, who is one of the "*mensches*" who features in the book. Those interested in joining us for the occasion should RSVP to events@exclusivebooks.co.za. Please note that due to COVID-19 protocols, places are limited so booking is essential.

• 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

Torah Academy students excel at international Chidon

Torah Academy students once again excelled in the international Chidon game show on Sunday, 3 April. Chidon is a programme in which students from around the world learn all 613 *mitzvos* in depth over a five-year period, culminating in written tests. Fifty Torah Academy students did exceedingly well in all five written tests and on the show. The school held an award ceremony on Monday, 4 April, in which each student was awarded plaques, medals, certificates, and magnificent prizes.



Chana Grinshtein

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