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SA rabbi's son escapes NYC shooting by hair's breadth

When Johannesburg Rabbi Yossi Chaikin heard that there had been a shooting at a subway station in Brooklyn, New York, on Tuesday, 22 April, he went online to read about it.

"I assumed it would have been in Manhattan. When I saw it was in Sunset Park I went cold, as my son, Mendel Chaikin, used to work there, very near that train station," he says.

"He has changed jobs, a bit further down the same subway line. He went a bit earlier than usual today [12 April] as he had a 09:00 appointment and didn't want to be late. It turned out that his train went through 36th St Station [where the shooting occurred] literally minutes before it happened."

Mendel is a married father of seven and business consultant living in Crown Heights, a neighbourhood of Brooklyn. One in four people in Brooklyn are Jewish, so the attack was in an area with a large Jewish population. According to an article written in 2018, “there are more Jews right now in Brooklyn than anywhere else in the world, including the city of Tel Aviv”.

According to American media, several children were among the dozens who were injured during the major shooting incident, when the suspect fired at least 33 shots and used smoke grenades on the train. Juvenile victims, including a 12-year-old, were transported to Maimonides Hospital in varying conditions following the attack that injured 29 people. The children were reportedly on their way to school when the attack occurred, officials say. The suspect was still at large at the time of going to print.

"There were many rumours and a real state of panic as initially, the report was about a few unidentified/inactive bombs in the station, and people feared it was a multi-scene attack. This is a city that still has the trauma of 9/11, and so people are very worried, naturally. The fear of additional bombs was removed, and trains got back to work after an hour but with people still avoiding the subway given the information that the shooter is still roaming free, which is still true as far as I know.

"Especially within the Israeli community here in New York, the memories of what happened in Tel Aviv last week are very fresh," says Rabin. "So there was a lot of texting the family and WhatsApping each other the entire day. Now, in the afternoon [of Tuesday, 12 April], it feels like the city is getting back to action, with trains running again and people out on the streets. But this is certainly the talk of the day, and people are still confused about the motive and asking what the city is going to do about it."



subway anymore because I work from home and walk/ bike so much," she says. "Nonetheless it's scary because the subway is the lifeline of the city. America has a mental health and gun crisis, yet the only way it knows how to 'fix' these problems is by increasing the police presence, which doesn't really do anything.

Two years ago, Joburg-born, Brooklyn-based musician and music therapist, Jon Samson, took home a Grammy for Best Children's Music Album. Now, he had to mark himself as "safe" on Facebook as the attack hit close to home – literally.

sank. Ramping up security measures and tightening gun regulations may help, but won't get to the root of this predicament. We need to ask ourselves how these atrocities could ever be possible, and what they say about the systems we have in place.

"This is no time to judge New York for being violent or dismiss what happens in another part of the world we think has nothing to do with us," says Samson. "As devastating as this atrocity is, it has served as another example of how resilient and united people can be. Instead of fleeing, even while gas remained in the air, the unharmed passengers remained to help those who were wounded. As grief-stricken and terrified as I am, I'm now also reminded of the resilience that we possess."



Happy Pesach
from our family to yours

Shattered but strong after Tel Aviv terror attack

TALI FEINBERG

Johannesburg resident Kim Fine and her family went from enjoying a carefree evening out in the Namal (port) area of Tel Aviv last Thursday evening (7 April), to hiding from terrorists in a ladies' dressing room in a clothing shop for two hours.

She and her husband, Peter, live in Johannesburg and were in Israel to visit their 18 and 24-year-old children for Pesach when they happened to find themselves too close to the terrorist attack.

"We heard a siren, and people just started running and rushing in all directions. Apparently the shooter from Dizengoff went there. We happened to be standing outside a ladies' clothing shop and the owner opened the shop and about 10 to 15 of us rushed inside. We spent almost two hours in the dark standing in the ladies change rooms. I said *tehillim*.

"After almost two hours, things looked quiet, and we left to get a taxi but none were available. Tel Aviv had shut down. We managed to hail one, and he drove at high speed to get out of Tel Aviv. We're staying in Ra'anana. The highway was insane. What struck me was

children up in Canada before making aliya as a family to Israel.

She says that from now on, she'll have a daily reminder of how this attack came to close to home – literally. She walks her dog on a quiet street near her apartment. On that street, she now sees the back windscreen of a parked car is shattered. A bullet hole is clearly visible where the terrorist shot at Israelis who had been enjoying a night out just minutes before.

Sack recalls, "On Thursday we were at a bar close to Rabin Square, about a five-minute walk away from where the attack happened. Thursday night at 21:00 is exactly when the weekend starts, and people were out in their numbers."

When patrons around her started getting calls about the terrorist, three women had panic attacks. Sack and others stayed and calmed them down, which she says helped her to stay calm. She and her friend then walked to her boyfriend's sister's nearby apartment where they stayed until 02:00.

It was there that she saw her own home on TV as police and the army searched for the terrorist. Eventually she headed home, escorted by police and

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another terror attack down the road. I felt a wave of anxiety. The mood immediately shifted – even though we weren't in it, it was a stone's throw away.

"Yesterday, my fiancé and I went to the site and lit candles to pay our respects," she says. "It was awful and surreal. It's a place I go to on a weekly basis, and to think that in seconds, everything can change from calm to

a half away. We heard the shooting. I had a friend who was at Dizengoff mall and was locked in there for four hours. Another friend was two restaurants away. Everyone knew someone that was there, because

When things like this happen, obviously it's scary, but Israel is one big family



The memorial at the bar after the attack

how Israelis came together. It was so shocking how one person could cause such chaos. *Baruch Hashem* we got home safely."

Ma'ayan Sack often frequents the bar where the attack happened because she lives close by. "I go there all the time. I live in another quiet road off Dizengoff [Israelis Street]. That night, I was out with a friend, and we saw the police search my apartment block [for the terrorist] on TV. The terrorist ran onto my street."

Sack's parents are South African, and brought their

the army, as the terrorist was still at large.

"It was a hectic night," she says. "Many other people were being escorted home in the early hours of the morning." Walking her dog the next day, she saw the car with the shattered window and a bullet hole in the gate of an apartment block.

South African paralympic swimmer Shireen Sapiro now lives in Tel Aviv with her fiancé. "We were all at the Telfed building in Tel Aviv having a braai. All of a sudden, we got notifications that there had been



A car shattered by a bullet shot by the terrorist

carnage. But I will continue living life as best I can."

Lior Witz made aliya from Cape Town and now lives in Tel Aviv. "I live pretty close, and literally all of my friends were stranded until the early hours of the morning. The general feeling is total heartbreak and complete devastation. I was at my cousin's cooking for Shabbos, and we had taken a bus to the grocery store. It took us over an hour in what should have taken 10 minutes to get home because the city was gridlocked.

"My friends had to walk through the broken glass in the streets as they were going to a next-door bar for a birthday, and were in the centre of it," she says.

"Another cousin was actually next door to it and is a doctor, so went to help at the scene. We have all visited the site to pay our respects. It's been very difficult, feeling terrified walking in the streets that give us so much joy and independence, and to feel robbed of that. I go to that bar a lot with friends. It could have been us."

Samuel Hyde was sitting at a nearby bar with another friend from South Africa. "I was about a kilometre and

it's Dizengoff, and its Thursday night. But within two minutes [of the shooting], it was a ghost town. It was like what the streets looked like during hard lockdown. Everyone felt the same trauma and shock."

Sack says she won't let the attack affect her. "When we first moved to Israel from Canada in 2005, it was very hard. I felt like I didn't fit in. Today, it's my home. I would never live anywhere else. I will raise my children here one day. When things like this happen, obviously it's scary, but Israel is one big family. That's what gives us the strength to carry on. People I haven't spoken to in years called to check on me because they know I live on that street.

"We could easily let this affect us, but on Friday, Tel Aviv was back to being busy, showing the world that we're not scared. It's my neighbourhood, and I love it here. This is my home, and I won't let anyone ruin that for me."

Community Security Organisation (CSO) head of operations in Gauteng, Jevon Greenblatt, says he doesn't think this attack represents a change in the status quo, but "there's no doubt that one attack inspires another".

He notes that Hamas doesn't want war with Israel at the moment, even though it glorifies these horrific acts and claims that some of the lone wolf attackers are its members.

"We are on a heightened alert due to the situation in Israel as there's always a chance that radicalised individuals around the world will be inspired to emulate these acts, but it's also important to note that increasing our security levels around the *chaggim* is the norm," he says.

"We urge everyone to be vigilant. Please report any suspicious activity or incidents affecting the community to the CSO on 0861 800 018. This is out of an abundance of caution and not based on any known threats to our community."

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4 SA JEWISH REPORT

Belgian car shop refuses Jews over Israel's stance on Ukraine

The owner of a car-repair shop in Belgium said he wouldn't serve Jewish clients to protest Israel's position in Russia's war on Ukraine.

The Forum of Jewish Organisations, a group representing Flemish-speaking Belgian Jews, said it would take legal action against Ludo Eyckmans, the owner of the shop in Stabroek near Antwerp. Denying service to individuals based on their faith, race, or sexual orientation is illegal in Belgium.

"As of today, our Jewish clients are no longer welcome for maintenance of their cars or solving electronic problems," Eyckmans wrote in an email that he sent to Belgian media last week, according to the Jewish group. He cited Israel's "failure to recognise war crimes" by Russia's army in Ukraine.

The Forum of Jewish Organisations wrote to Eyckmans to say that Jews in Belgium don't determine Israeli foreign policy, according to a spokesperson for the group, Hans Knoop. Eyckmans didn't reply to requests for comment.

Canada to outlaw Holocaust denial

Canada is to outlaw Holocaust denial, a move that has the backing of the governing Liberal Party government coalition and the opposition Conservative Party.

Coalition officials cast the change as consistent with existing Canadian laws criminalising incitement to hatred and the promotion of genocide.

"There's no place for antisemitism and Holocaust denial in Canada," Marco Mendicino, the public safety minister, told CTV. "That's why we've pledged to prohibit the wilful promotion of antisemitism through condoning, denying,

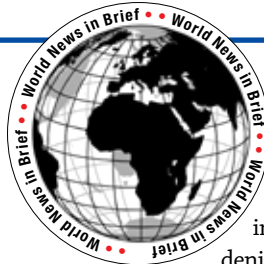


Photo: Iranian Leader Press Office/Handout/
Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



Biden rejects removal of Iranian Revolutionary Guard from terror list

The graduation ceremony of Imam Hussein Military University in Tehran, 3 October 2021

United States (US) President Joe Biden is rejecting Iran's demand that the US remove the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) from the US list of foreign terrorist organisations, a move that has officials pessimistic about the prospects of a US re-entry into the Iran nuclear deal.

Iran wants the terrorist designation removed from its military branch as a condition of the US re-entry into the deal.

Former President Donald Trump added the IRG to the terrorist list in 2019, and Biden's decision to stick with the designation is a rare area of agreement with his predecessor's foreign policy.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Torah Thought

Rabbi Ryan Goldstein,
West Street Shul



A stressful visitor on erev Pesach

Pesach is an interesting and stressful time of the Jewish year. There are so many unique *mitzvot* that have to be performed, so much food that has to be cooked and eaten (which is never really such a problem), and many guests to entertain.

The good news is that this pre-Pesach stress isn't new to us. Many of us can recall how our parents and grandparents slaved away in the kitchen. And many of us remember how many times we were chased out of the very same kitchen when we were only trying to help (yeah right). In fact, this stress is encoded into our DNA, and actually goes back generations to when the Jews were preparing to make their way out of Egypt. They had a lot more stress. Picture it: it was just before the last plague – the death of the first born – when Hashem commanded the Jews to smear the blood of the slaughtered lamb on their doorposts. The reason for this commandment was, as the Torah tells us, for the Angel of Death to be able to identify that the house belonged to a Jew and Passover (pun intended) the house.

This explanation adds even more stress to our Pesach, since in the Haggadah, it says, numerous times, that Hashem in His Glory, smote (I think that means killed) all the Egyptian first born – alone – without the help of a messenger, seraph, or angel. If that was the case, why did we have to wipe that blood on our doorposts? Why, if Hashem was doing the job solo? Hashem, who knows the inner thoughts of every individual, surely knew where the Jews and Egyptians lived? Also, why does the Torah make reference to the presence of the Angel of Death? Pesach is stressful enough.

The answer is that every day, the Angel of Death has his list of people to bring to the next world by

the command of Hashem. The last plague was no exception. Hashem commanded the Jews to wipe blood on their doorposts to stop the Angel of Death's usual routine. Hashem didn't want any Jew dying on that night, even by natural causes, so that the Egyptians wouldn't be able to say that the Jews suffered the same plague. This answers our question: the Torah is talking

about the daily job of the Angel of Death, while the Haggadah is talking about the final plague that was sent on the Egyptians.

Our question is answered, and now at least we have one less stress to worry about.

Chag Sameach!

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Many of the laws of lighting candles on yom tov are the same as for Shabbat.

Even though there are different *minhagim* about the order of lighting candles on Friday night, on *erev yom tov* the custom is to say the *bracha* before lighting the *yom tov* candles.



Many *poskim* advise that the women not say *Shehechianu* at the time of lighting candles, but rather to wait to hear it during the kiddush.

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Be grateful, and give what you can

We have so much to be grateful for. That may sound like such a trite thing to say when there’s still coronavirus around us after two years of us living with it – and some weren’t so lucky.

There’s a war in Ukraine, where people are dying every day or being forced to leave everything behind to become refugees.

In Israel, 14 innocent people have been killed in four terrorist attacks since 22 March. Then there are dangerous floods in KwaZulu-Natal, the impact of which isn’t yet known, but at least 250 people have died and countless homes have been destroyed or severely damaged.

And then on Tuesday morning in Brooklyn, New York City, there was an attack in the subway. A man set off two smoke cannisters before shooting 10 people. Another 13 people were injured either through smoke inhalation or trying to escape.

So, saying we have so much to be grateful for does seem a little ironic, considering all of this.

However, think about your own life right now and look around at what you have – love, friends, family, a roof over your head, enough money to get by. Most of us have at least some of those to bring us joy.

And in each of our stories about these events, the people we write about are those who also feel fairly grateful because they survived to tell the tale. And that sometimes is a miracle.

This week, I couldn’t help contemplating the abject fear of not knowing where your loved ones were when an attack happened near to their home or where they were on holiday.

As a mom, I like to keep my children as close as possible, but as they get older, that isn’t possible. We cannot have that kind of control. However, on finding out that they are all well and unharmed, again there’s that feeling of gratitude.

And, as we sit down on Friday and Saturday night to our seders and consider what the Jews of Egypt went through, it comes back to that same feeling.

I totally resonated with the chief rabbi in his Pesach message about this festival being about gratitude (as I’m sure you would have realised by now).

And even if there are no big things to be grateful for, those small things that make us smile are huge.

Now, I know, we all look at the world in our own way. And my reasons to be grateful may not resonate with you. You might well see only darkness and plagues in the world. You may believe that you can’t feel gratitude in light of all that’s happening because so many people are being harmed.

I understand that, but being grateful means that we have something to offer this world. It means we aren’t depleted and devastated, and we can do something to help others because we’re not empty.

I look around me and I see a good home, a beautiful family and friends I love, and a career I’m excited to wake up to every day. Of course, there’s much I would love to have to further fill my cup, but I’m happy with what I have.

And this enables me to help others, to give a helping hand wherever I can. Pesach is also about helping those less fortunate than you in some way. It’s about recognising what you have and what you can give.

One of the consistent things I have noticed of late is how many organisations and people are asking for help, especially money. It’s no surprise because the world isn’t easy for anyone right now. Those organisations are asking not for themselves, but for the good of others, like the Jews in Ukraine, those whose homes were devastated in the flood, etcetera.

There’s so much need. How do you choose? Whose need is stronger? And if you don’t have much, how much should you give?

These are all relevant questions, but the truth is, nobody can answer them for you, they are personal decisions. Can I say that I believe you should give what you can safely do without? I don’t believe anyone can prescribe who you should or shouldn’t give to, or when.

I know there are many Jewish people right here who simply cannot afford food for Pesach and battle just to feed their families every day. Organisations like the Chev, Yad Aharon, and others are doing their absolute best to help those people, but times are tough, and they too are battling to raise funds.

But giving money isn’t the only way to help. Giving of your time, knowledge, and experience can be as big a *mitzvah*. Helping one person in a small way that makes his or her life just a little easier is undoubtedly worthwhile.

I know when a little deed is done for me, it gives me something extra to be grateful for – something to smile about. Just noticing someone’s beautiful smile and telling them, makes a difference. Lending someone a book to read when they want one is a help. And when someone does you a kindness, your instinct – well mine, anyway – is to reach out to someone else and do something for them.

So, when you invite someone who doesn’t have a seder to attend to yours, you’re doing just that. In fact, this is a *mitzvah* we are called upon to do at this time of year.

So, reach out. Be kind. Be generous. Be willing to help.

In our bumper Pesach edition this week, we have done our best to bring you festival wisdom from some of our greatest minds. There’s lots to read and think about over this period.

We have also brought home the reality of what happened last Thursday night in Tel Aviv. We tap into the flooding in KwaZulu-Natal, and the attack in Brooklyn this week.

Amazingly, there are South African Jews wherever you look.

I wish you all a *chag Pesach sameach* and Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost

Editor

PS: We won’t be publishing over Pesach. Our next edition comes out on 28 April.



Is the COVID-19 pandemic over?

OPINION

PROFESSOR BARRY SCHOUB



In the well over two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have gone through lockdowns, punitive economic restrictions, and irksome impositions on our physical and social lives.

Not surprisingly, the population and the community are rapidly becoming COVID-19 fatigued. It’s time for a reality check where we are with the pandemic.

Reassurances that the status of the pandemic is greatly improving have come from two sources, and they have been latched onto to provide much-sought-after comfort.

The one is that the level of immunity in the population, from both vaccination and past infection, appears to be very high. The second is the advent of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, now a much tamer version of the virus than its predecessors.

Thankfully, what we saw in the earlier stages of the pandemic – hospitals barely coping with the mass of severely ill and dying individuals – is now a painful memory.



For two long years we longed for parties like this (2019), without masks or social distancing

And yet, we all know that COVID-19 infection and illness hasn’t disappeared. The plague is still pretty much alive in the community and celebratory functions are still all but guaranteed to be superspreading events. Fortunately, the great majority of current COVID-19 illnesses are now mild.

Where are we with the pandemic? Is it, indeed, burning itself out and are we now in the last throes of its grip? Do we still need to wear masks and practice social distancing? What are our expectations for the future?

On the positive side, there’s little doubt that widespread population immunity has played a significant role in the mildness of the Omicron-driven fourth wave. There’s also a great deal of scientific evidence that the Omicron variant is intrinsically significantly milder than its predecessor variants. This has certainly been supported by a

number of scientific studies, both in animals and in the laboratory.

However, can these two encouraging signs bring us comfort that we’re out of the woods? Realistically, we do need to look at the other side of the coin.

First, there are some doubts and concerns about the effectiveness of the demonstrated immunity. What was shown quite graphically with Omicron is the ease with which this virus could scythe through the widespread immunity of the population and even overcome the protective immunity of highly vaccinated individuals.

Clearly, the rapidly mutating coronavirus can quite speedily and very effectively acquire the ability to evade the immune defences of individuals, albeit causing mild or even silent infections. (It’s quite apparent that many in the community are still falling prey to Omicron infection.)

It is, of course, too early to assess the durability of immunity. Nevertheless, there are accumulating signs that it may well wane, even in the medium term.

Second, many people are comforted by a common narrative that viruses evolve towards becoming more transmissible, (infectious), together with causing less severe disease, (less virulent). It would certainly appear to be in the virus’ “interest” to do so – to keep the host as healthy as possible in order to spread more widely. According to this narrative, Omicron could certainly be the harbinger of the virus marching on its evolutionary pathway towards a less severe and more transmissible end-product. Hopefully this

will indeed turn out to be the case.

Unfortunately, however, this rosy narrative, while it has been demonstrated in some animal models, lacks any supporting evidence in the case of human viruses. In fact, Omicron is the only variant of concern which dropped its virulence when it became more transmissible. All the preceding variants of concern, while progressively becoming more transmissible, didn’t reduce in virulence.

The reality is that it does appear that transmissibility and virulence are two independent and unrelated properties of the virus. The advent of a rather tame Omicron virus was, in all probability, simply a fortuitous lucky coincidence

Where does that leave us?

There’s clearly a pervasive air of complacency in the general population and in the community. Two of the highest risk environments, celebratory functions and shuls, are too often being treated with carefree abandon. Mask wearing is being totally abandoned in all-too-many closed indoor

environments, in spite of it being against the law.

Furthermore, this mindset that the pandemic is now all but over and precautions are no longer necessary does little to address the worrying apathy and indifference to vaccination and booster doses.

It needs to be made clear that there will undoubtedly be a fifth wave, and perhaps even more after that. There will also be new variants, and we have seen that we cannot be immunologically and virologically comforted that the virus won’t evolve a new variant which could combine the immune evading capabilities of an Omicron with the virulence of a Delta.

If we abandon precautions, we promote greater virus circulation even if the infections themselves may be mild, or in most cases even silent.

It’s these silent transmissions through the community which may initiate a chain of transmission which could eventually land up at the doorstep of a vulnerable elderly or otherwise compromised individual.

Most importantly, every effort should be made to keep the transmission of this virus as low as possible in order to minimise the opportunities for it to mutate and evolve into more

threatening variants.

Unfortunately, let’s be clear, we cannot at this stage say that the pandemic is over. What we do now and the precautions we continue to take, could well affect the COVID-19 future we face in the short to medium term.

There will be an end to the pandemic. Perhaps it will come from a new generation of more broadly effective vaccines. It could be advances in preventative drugs or other instruments of coping with a pandemic. Perhaps the virus will run out of genetic space to evolve more threatening variants.

But, for now, it’s too premature to throw caution to the wind.

• Barry Schoub is professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand and was the founding director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases. He chairs the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 Vaccines. This article is written in his private capacity. He reports no conflicts of interest.



KZN community calls for ‘lifeboat’ amidst extreme flooding

TALI FEINBERG

The Durban Jewish community is caught up in a Biblical scenario not unlike the plagues in the Pesach story, as flooding plagues their province.

Not only that, but the chemical spill that has affected the health of residents since the July 2021 unrest continues to be a threat in the wake of the floods.

Knowing that this natural disaster will have an impact on the area for a long time to come, the community is calling for support so that it can help its members and those around it who are affected the most.

“Part of our house flooded last night [Monday, 11 April],” says mother of four and South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) political and social liaison Alana Baranov. “We were up mopping our garage and playroom area until 01:00, and our patio and veranda area was covered in water. Schools were closed, including Akiva College, the Jewish school in Umhlanga which my kids attend.

“We had to take a different route to the airport this morning [Tuesday, 12 April] as the N2 was closed, there were mudslides, and parts of the road submerged on the M4,” she says. She and her family were going to Johannesburg for Pesach. “What we experienced was nothing compared to the devastation and loss of property in the informal settlements and more rural areas,” she says.

One of her biggest fears is the continuing effects of the UPL Cornubia catastrophe – a chemical warehouse that was set alight during the July 2021 unrest and consequently spread chemicals into the surrounding environment. “It’s less than a kilometre from our home and my daughter’s school, and is very concerning. We were all so sick from the chemical fire during the July unrest, and now the chemicals are being spread again,” she says, referring to reports that a dam containing the pollution has now burst because of the flooding.

“The ecological, environmental, and human cost of the UPL disaster should be national news,” says Baranov. “It’s been an ongoing [disaster] since July 2021. Symptoms from the toxic fumes included tight chests and irritating coughs, sore throats, red irritated eyes, and body rashes. Residents in our area also noticed that their pets were sick, and our little family dog wheezed for a few days.”

SAJBD KwaZulu-Natal Council President Susan Abro says, “KZN has been really badly affected. The north, south, and inland have suffered incredible damage. People’s homes have been washed away – I’m talking apartments, informal homes, everywhere. Thank G-d our community affiliates aren’t badly affected. [Jewish Aged Home] Beth Shalom is fine, as is Jewel House [a home for Jewish adults with special needs].

“Beth Shalom was largely unaffected in terms of damage. The main challenge is being short staffed,” says the home’s president, Solly Berchowitz. “Those at the home have stepped up to ensure residents receive the necessary care. Thank G-d, I’ve been unaffected. Durbanites are resilient and mobilise quickly to help those in need. We have certainly been tested over the past few years, but in the true Durban spirit, we will rebuild again.”

“Everybody in the Jewish community is affected in some way or

another,” Abro says. “In my own building, there’s no water and the electricity is intermittent. The municipal water pipes have been affected, and they are unable to locate the breaks or leaks because the roads are closed and inaccessible.

“The greater community has suffered,” she says. “There hasn’t just been 300mm of rain but also winds that were so strong that the rain was horizontal. Roads have collapsed, informal settlements have collapsed, there’s going to be a death toll. It’s going to take some time to actually see the full extent of this disaster.”

Ian Scher of Rescue South Africa says he has sent a small team to assist. They drove for 12 hours from Port Elizabeth with inflatable boats and other equipment. “They are swift water rescue practitioners and will go wherever there’s a need,” he says. “They will meet the SAPS [police] team at Port Shepstone and be deployed by them.”

According to local media, an estimated 250 people had died in the floods by the afternoon of Wednesday, 13 April. Some families have lost more than one family member. President Cyril Ramaphosa was due to visit the province on Wednesday as the scale of the devastation became apparent.

The presidency said Ramaphosa’s visit would “offer support to affected communities and assess the response of government and civil society to this critical situation. This is a tragic toll of the force of nature, and this situation calls for an effective response by government in partnership with communities. This situation calls on us to come together as a nation and offer assistance to those who desperately need our care and support.”

Says Abro, “As far as the Jewish community is concerned, people have had walls collapsing on their cars, and some people have had to dig through mud in their homes. I can assure you that our loss is nothing compared to that of the wider population. All I can say about the community and its institutions is thank G-d the vulnerable people are fine and will be taken care of. We’re going to need to look to everyone to help the poor and needy in the wake of this disaster.”

This is why the KZN Council has launched an urgent appeal. “As we come together in our homes to celebrate Pesach, please spare a thought for those in our community and the greater KZN community who have been severely affected by the devastating floods,” Abro says.

“People cannot travel to work, and some are unable to leave their homes. Some have even lost their homes and possessions. The KZN Council is obliged, once again, to prevail upon the generosity of the KZN Jewish community to help those whose need is greater than many of ours.”

They have called for the donation of bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, towels, diapers, brooms, mops, shovels, work gloves, rubber boots, buckets, toiletries, and batteries.

“If you wish to contribute funds instead of items, the KZN Council will ensure those funds are responsibly dispersed to the appropriate members of the greater community,” says Abro. “Contributions can be made to: UCF, Standard Bank, Acc No: 050779036, Branch Code: 040127, Ref: Flood/ Name + Surname, email: accounts@djc.co.za. A section 18a certificate will be provided in return.”

“Everybody in the Jewish community is affected in some way or another.”

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Pandor lambasted over “outrageous” Ukraine/Palestine comparison

NICOLA MILTZ

The department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) has been criticised for citing the Israel-Palestine conflict in the same breath as Ukraine, and ironically, urging the international community to be consistent in its approach.

Dirco has steadfastly maintained its neutral stance on the Russian war against Ukraine in spite of the number of fatalities, devastation, and horrific accounts of suffering that continue unabated.

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor last week said that though South Africa didn't condone Russia's "military intervention", it maintained its independent, non-aligned views on the conflict in Ukraine, holding the view that negotiations and diplomacy would end the conflict.

Speaking during the 2022 Heads of Mission conference in Pretoria, she told media that there needed to be consistency in the approach of the international community to countries that violate international law, and she cited Israel as an example of the world failing to respond in the same way as it had to Ukraine by imposing sanctions, isolation, and a divestment campaign.

"One of our concerns is the seeming lack of balanced evidence in the United Nations today. When Israel launched sustained offensive military operations against the Gaza strip, killing hundreds, flattening homes, burying civilians under the rubble, and devastating the already dilapidated infrastructure in such a small and densely populated area, the world failed to respond in the same way as it has on Ukraine. That

military aggression isn't met with sanctions, isolation, and a divestment campaign."

In response to Pandor's comments, former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Arthur Lenk, lashed out on Twitter saying, "Sigh. What a nonsense, fake comparison. Unless I missed news of Ukrainian rocket attacks aimed towards Russian civilians, shooting up bars and markets in Moscow/St Petersburg, and advanced warnings of impending bombings in Mariupol and Kharkiv."

He later tweeted, "Does SA government actually have any foreign policy independent of its knee-jerk, unnuanced, irrelevant views on Palestine?"

After initially flip flopping on Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, Pandor, stressed that dialogue, mediation, and diplomacy was the only way to end the conflict, saying, "We have resisted becoming embroiled in the politics of confrontation and aggression that has been advocated by the powerful countries. Instead, we have promoted peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and negotiation."

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council. The resolution received a two-thirds majority in the 193-member General Assembly with 93 countries voting in favour, 24 against, and 58 abstaining. South Africa abstained. This was the third resolution since 2 March 2022 tabled on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly to which South Africa has abstained.

Political commentator Daniel Silke told the *SA Jewish Report* Pandor was "comparing apples with pears".

"An unprovoked attack on a sovereign country combined with massive human

atrocities and the negation of Ukraine as an independent entity by Russia is in no way comparable to Israel defending itself against ongoing terror threats emanating from the Palestinian territories or from the West

Deputies lambasted Pandor, accusing her of attempting to justify South Africa's "morally bankrupt stance" on Ukraine by resorting to her "usual knee-jerk Israel bashing".

It accused Pandor of making "outrageous"

minister's stance and that of the government she represents appears to be intentionally provocative and discriminatory. Whereas South Africa has consistently had nothing to say about other far more devastating conflicts around the world, it has been singularly hostile towards Israel – issuing condemnatory statements, issuing demarche orders to Israeli diplomats, recalling South African ambassadors for consultation, and embarking on downgrades of its embassy."

By contrast, the Board said Dirco's response to the devastation wrought against Ukraine had been to join Russian diplomats in public celebrations of diplomatic relations.

"At the UN, South Africa supports any resolution to demonise the Jewish state, but cannot bring itself to align itself with the great majority of nations that have voted against Russia's lawless aggression. As for Minister Pandor's claim that South Africa seeks to mediate in global conflicts, this rings distinctly hollow in view of its policy of boycott and disengagement when it comes to Israel.

"Just as the minister cannot bring herself to acknowledge the devastation and human suffering inflicted on the Ukrainian people, so has she never concerned herself with the right to safety and security of Israeli citizens. It's frankly shocking to note, moreover, that her latest diatribe has come at a time when Israel has been subjected to a wave of deadly terrorist attacks. Needless to say, South Africa has had nothing to say in response to these atrocities. It's only when Israel responds to attacks that this country finds its voice."

Dirco responded with "no comment" when approached by the *SA Jewish Report*.



Bank," he said.

Silke said the government was "feeling the heat by virtue of its non-interventionist stance as the atrocities and human-rights abuses become more evident day after day. The silence from South Africa on this matter and in particular its failure to make contact with the Ukrainian head of state in Kyiv becomes more and more embarrassing in terms of being on the right side of history."

To mitigate this, he said, Pandor was making reference to Israel and the Palestinian question.

Steven Gruzd, who heads the Russia-Africa Project at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg, said equating the situation in Ukraine with the Palestinians seemed like an attempt to keep the latter in the news as the world's attention was fixed on the former.

The South African Jewish Board of comparisons between the devastation that Russia was wreaking on Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The comparison Pandor presumes to draw is as logically absurd as it's factually baseless. No possible parallels exist between Israel defending its citizens against rocket fire and terror attacks and Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against a sovereign country."

The Board said Pandor sought to explain South Africa's failure to condemn the Russian invasion and human suffering by stating that, "South Africa does not take sides" and prioritising its role as mediator.

"Viewed against her unreflectingly condemnatory, one-sided stance on Israel, this display of hypocrisy would be laughable were it not so damaging and destructive," the Board said.

"When it comes to the Jewish state, the

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland.

Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important things is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved!

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago)are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

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Scapegoating of foreign nationals culminates in Diepsloot murder

NICOLA MILTZ

Johannesburg mother of two, Romy Saltz Petersen, from refugee and asylum non-profit organisation Afrika Awake, was at home with her children when her fears of an outbreak of xenophobic attacks in Diepsloot were realised.

She had felt a deep sense of foreboding for days as stories of protests, social disorder, and mayhem in the densely populated township north of the city filtered through to her on the news and from her people on the ground.

The Diepsloot community had been protesting against crime and poor policing of immigration laws in the wake of a number of murders. Residents claimed their complaints fall on deaf ears and that undocumented foreign nationals had driven up crime.



“I knew something really bad was going to happen,” Petersen said this week. She was right.

Father of four, Elvis Nyathi, 43, was savagely killed allegedly by an unidentified mob in Diepsloot extension 1 on Wednesday, 6 April, after failing to produce his identity document. His crime? He was a foreign national, a Zimbabwean with a job in a seemingly lawless, poverty-stricken area beset with unemployment, crime, and anti-foreigner sentiment.

According to reports, recent Diepsloot killings fuelled rising anger against African migrants, especially Zimbabweans.

Nyathi was beaten to death and set alight 20m from his home. His terrified wife, who was also beaten, and their children have fled the area.

“I was horrified when I saw footage of his burnt remains,” said Petersen, who upon hearing of Nyathi’s death, immediately contacted her colleague, Bianca Gewer, who then set about contacting one of their social activists on the ground to investigate.

“I have no words to describe the pain, sadness, and anger I feel that 14 years since the first xenophobic attacks in 2008 rocked the country, innocent people are still being killed, beaten, and burnt alive by hateful mobs,” said Petersen.

“He was dragged out of his house, beaten, tied up, and burnt alive, and no one even tried to pour water over him. What a way to go,” she lamented.

“The worst part is that there are never any arrests following these crimes, in spite of there being multiple eyewitnesses. There’s no justice for the victims, many of whom remain nameless. There’s no dignity,” she said.

Afrika Awake is a registered non-profit organisation focused on assisting refugees and asylum seekers living in South Africa. Many battle to have their paperwork renewed at the home affairs department, especially during COVID-19, when offices were closed.

“When they can’t have their documents renewed, many fear for their lives and find it impossible to work and earn a living,” said Petersen.

The grassroots organisation, which usually acts when a need arises, also helps displaced victims of xenophobia and implements social-cohesion initiatives. It relies heavily on

donations from the public especially at times of upheaval related to xenophobic attacks.

“There’s no support for the families left behind to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives. We sent a small donation to help Elvis’s family to move out of the area to feel safe until they decide what their next move will be. They are beyond traumatised.”

Independent social activist Nobuhle Virgie, who is affiliated to Afrika Awake and other groups such as the Africans in Diaspora Forum, rushed to the victim’s family the morning after the incident. “I witnessed scenes of shock and tears,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Petersen said political figures condemn attacks on foreigners but at the same time, their anti-immigrant rhetoric fuels the country’s bubbling xenophobia.

Movements, such as Dudula are illegally forcing people in townships suspected to be undocumented foreign nationals to show their papers, stoking xenophobia, say community activists.

Some calm has been restored in Diepsloot after a stakeholders meeting attended by Police Minister Bheki Cele, Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, Gauteng Premier David Makhura, and newly appointed Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola last Friday, 8 April.

Residents demanded more police vehicles and increased police visibility.

They demanded that undocumented foreigners leave the area, and the killers be arrested and put in prison.

Cele told residents that the police station had received 16 vehicles, and more than 100 law enforcement officers. He also said more than 50 illegal immigrants had been arrested and that police wouldn’t leave the area until an assessment in three months’ time, showed that the situation had improved.

However, many foreign nationals in the area continue to live in fear as vigilante groups have been harassing people for a long time.

President Cyril Ramaphosa appealed for calm and denounced foreign national ID checks, saying it was reminiscent of apartheid.

“In the end, it will lead to xenophobia, the consequences of which we have lived through in previous years. We don’t want to go back there because, in the main, the people of South Africa aren’t xenophobic,” he wrote in his newsletter this week.

“We acknowledge many communities are frustrated by the apparent inability of police to deal with criminals. However, acts of lawlessness directed at foreign nationals, whether they are documented or undocumented, cannot be tolerated,” Ramaphosa said.

The South African Human Rights Commission called for swift action against criminality in Diepsloot, and warned against residents taking the law into their own hands.

“The brutal murder of Elvis Nyathi is a tragic and outrageous act of vigilantism. The commission is deeply concerned about vulnerable groups, especially foreign nationals, being scapegoated for the prevalence of social ills within communities,” the commission said.

Meanwhile, Gauteng Premier David Makhura has warned residents not to engage in work that should be carried out by law enforcement.

The United Nations has condemned the murder of Nyathi and all xenophobic acts in South Africa.

While we sit down to our seders and cast our mind to the Ukrainian refugees scattered throughout Europe, we should also be thinking of the refugees, asylum seekers, and foreigners in this country who fear for their lives.

Nyathi’s murder is under investigation. No arrests have been made.



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What’s the JSC got against David Unterhalter?



JEREMY GORDIN

At the beginning of October 2021, the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) was forced to rerun its April 2021 Constitutional Court (Concourt) interviews after the Council for the Advancement of the SA Constitution legally challenged “the lawfulness and rationality” of the April proceedings.

In plain English, what happened in April was that potential Concourt justices had been bullied, asked inappropriate questions, and then were excluded from the shortlist on specious grounds.

The JSC went ahead with round two – producing exactly the same shortlist as it had in April – and in December last year, two candidates were chosen by President Cyril Ramaphosa to fill two vacancies at the Concourt.

However, Gauteng High Court Judge David Unterhalter – having been excluded from the shortlist for the Concourt bench in April 2021 – was again excluded.

Then, at the begin of February this year, we witnessed the JSC interviews for the post of the country's chief justice (CJ). This, as we might recall, was a circus beyond all circuses, a toxic mess.

However, in March this year, Ramaphosa appointed Justice Raymond Zondo as CJ, and during the last few days – during which the JSC held interviews to fill (more) missing posts on the Concourt – one assumed that the positive influence of CJ Zondo, as well as the replacement of certain firebrand commissioners, would help make proceedings more, er, courteous.

Not so. Along came the interview of (now acting Justice) David Unterhalter for a post on the Concourt bench – and the commission seemed to revert to

its earlier incarnation. On Wednesday last week “Unterhalter SC was excluded from nomination for appointment to the Constitutional Court by majority vote”. And so, there has been among the Unterhalter supporters – which include most senior law folk – some very serious shock-horror.

Part of the reason for this is as follows. There are two vacancies on the Concourt at present. Now, the Constitution expressly states that the JSC must prepare a list of nominees with three names more than the number of appointments to be made and submit this list to the president. This meant that the JSC needed to submit five names to Ramaphosa.

As it happens, only five candidates applied: Judge Fayeeza Kathree-Setiloane, Advocate Alan Dodson, Judge Mahube Molemela, Judge David Unterhalter, and Judge Owen Rogers. After the interviews held last Tuesday, the JSC deliberated and then announced that it had submitted only four names – Kathree-Setiloane, Dodson, Molemela, and Rogers – which means that only one vacancy can be filled. Which means that the JSC is going to have to do this all over again, pretty soon.

What this also means is that the JSC has just clearly told Unterhalter not just that it thought there were better candidates, as before, but now also that he was a complete nonstarter; he need not bother to darken its door again. Full stop. End of story.

This is, by the way, as good a time as any to interpolate that, whatever else they might say, junior and senior law folks of all ranks and sizes will tell you that Unterhalter is in his main field (constitutional law) one of the cleverest and most highly competent practitioners around – and that to leave him off the shortlist just for the heck of it is simply outrageous.

Unterhalter's major apparent *blaps* seemed to be when he conceded on Tuesday that he was part of the Concourt quorum that signed off on another

judge's dismissal of an application for leave to appeal after he had been one of two judges who denied the same applicant's leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA).

Unterhalter apologised. He said it had been simple human error that caused him not to realise that he'd seen the matter while acting at the SCA – and therefore he hadn't recused himself while acting at the Concourt.

The issue was raised by commissioner Mvuzo Ntyesie, an attorney, who apparently “found” copies of both rulings, and the Economic Freedom Fighter's Julius Malema quickly joined in the fray, arguing that Unterhalter's lapse was so heinous that Unterhalter surely couldn't be allowed to sit on the Concourt.

Two points. The first is that Ntyesie's “discovery” of the two rulings and the rapid climbing-in on the issue thereafter by Malema reeks of an orchestrated plan to whack Unterhalter. If you want to beat a dog, you'll always find a stick.

The second is that a senior and very experienced law person told me that literally scores of such denied petitions come across judges' desks and that it's virtually impossible to remember them all.

The big question (for me) is: Who dug up Unterhalter's “mistake”, who leaked it, and why?

Anyway, the JSC has found that Unterhalter is not “appropriately qualified” for the Concourt – a trifle odd, given that those who know say he was the number-one candidate in terms of constitutional expertise. The JSC has also found that Unterhalter isn't an appropriate person for a Concourt post – yet he's a high court judge and an acting member of the SCA and Concourt.

Why has this happened? Based on the above “evidence”, and on interviews with seven or eight “major players”, I'll go with the following:

There's clearly an “anybody but Unterhalter” vendetta pertaining at the JSC. Why?

One, notwithstanding Unterhalter's attempts to evade such labels, he's considered a “clever white liberal”

Continued on page 15>>



Judge David Unterhalter

Palestinian leadership fans the flames of terror

STEVEN GRUZD

Israel has been gripped by a wave of deadly terrorist attacks over the past fortnight. Fourteen people were killed and scores injured in four separate incidents in Be'er Sheva, Bnei Brak, Hadera, and Tel Aviv. Responsibility rests squarely with the Palestinian leadership and its calls for “popular resistance” – which is code for murdering Israelis.

So said South-African-born Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Maurice Hirsch, who analysed this lethal violence in a webinar hosted by the South African Zionist Federation on 6 April. He was chief military prosecutor for Judea and Samaria, and specialised in terrorism cases. He joined Palestinian Media Watch, an organisation that monitors developments among Palestinians, in 2017.

Hirsch provided the backdrop for these incidents. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was created by the Oslo Accords in 1993 as a proto government to run the day-to-day lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The PA is largely made up of the Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. It's run by the deeply unpopular 86-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, and has held elections

only twice in the past 25 years, the last one for president was in 2005. Hamas won parliamentary elections in 2006, and took over running Gaza. Hamas and the PA compete to show who is more extremist and who really represents the Palestinians, according to Hirsch.

“Palestinians in Gaza and in Judea and Samaria have become sick of Abbas and Fatah,” Hirsch said. “He has a 73% disapproval rate. They are sick of his cronyism, his putting his people in senior positions to get rich. If elections were held today, Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh or Marwan Barghouti – who is serving five life sentences – would both be preferred to Abbas.”

Abbas was pressured by the United States and Europeans to hold elections, which he called for May 2021, but they are now postponed indefinitely. Hirsch noted that a lot of European and US funding to the PA had dried up, partly due to hate being propagated in Palestinian textbooks and the policy of paying money to terrorists' families, termed “pay for slay”.

A loss of 90% of aid funding to the PA has severely weakened Abbas. He has thus turned to encouraging terrorist attacks as a tactic to regain popular support. Recent polls indicate high support for violence in the

Palestinian population. Hirsch said there were 10 to 30 terror attacks thwarted in Israel every day.

He said the incitement of violence was a deliberate strategic choice by Abbas. “He uses soft language calling for ‘popular resistance’. This isn't for peaceful marches. This is to get up and kill Israelis. And the PA are the ostensible moderates.

“The Israeli security establishment has believed that Fatah is ‘the lesser of two evils’ for 25 years, and to change that would be too destabilising, and so they can't get rid of the PA, they support the dictatorship of Abbas.”

At the funeral of six members of Fatah's armed wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigade, Abbas's message was to pay

Israel back double for these killings. This lead directly to the recent attacks, Hirsch said.

He accused the new Israeli government under Prime Minister Naftali Bennett of being soft on Hamas in Gaza. Hamas has only one goal: “annihilate Israel”. It has been rebuilding support after the rocket fire on Israel in May 2021 triggered Operation Guardian of the Walls. Of Israeli Arabs – those who are citizens of Israel – he said many were becoming more and more integrated into Israeli society, for instance by volunteering for army service. Their leadership, though, has insisted that they are Palestinians and has attempted to radicalise them.

It's worrying that in two of the attacks, ISIS (Islamic State) claimed responsibility – a growing trend. “Palestinians see the Abraham Accords [in which Israel normalised relations with several Arab states] as a disaster. The region is moving on, and the Palestinians no longer have a right to veto it.

“The month of Ramadan has been used to incite violence, whipping up religious gusto to kill ‘infidels’,” Hirsch said. “They renew the false claim that Israel wants to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.”

Hirsch claimed that since Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005 “it has brought nothing but more hostility. Giving land to the Palestinians will only increase areas for terrorism.”

He also noted that there are about 200 000 illegal weapons in the Israeli Arab community, heightening the danger posed to Israelis. Hirsch said the government wasn't doing enough to seize these weapons.

“When Abbas dies, there will be tremendous upheaval, even a bloodbath, as others clamour to control the PA” and the resources it gives access to.

The moderator, Simon Anstey, asked whether this was the cusp a “third intifada”. Hirsch replied that “there wasn't a second intifada – translated as a ‘popular uprising’. What we saw from 2000 to 2005 was suicide bombers. It was all out terror. We must watch our terminology and combat that narrative. And if we show weakness, they will continue to escalate.”

He ended by saying that the African National Congress leadership was disgracing the memory of apartheid by comparing Israel to apartheid South Africa. “Nelson Mandela wouldn't agree with those who want to murder Jews just because they are Jews. He believed in the existence of Israel.”



Maurice Hirsch

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Farewell to a true Blend of all things good

TALI FEINBERG

He was a real all-rounder, full of life, and dedicated to the well-being of others, and his sudden death has left family, friends, and the community reeling. Local business and cycling legend, Steven Blend, passed away suddenly at the age of 65, just a few weeks after his son's wedding.

"He was in Germany for treatment for pancreatic cancer," says his good friend and *SA Jewish Report* chairperson, Howard Sackstein. "It went well. He was due to be released from hospital the day he died. We chatted on WhatsApp the day before. He was looking forward to coming home."

Blend's strength and positivity in all aspects of life means that his passing is even more devastating to friends around the world who saw him as a symbol of loyalty and stability no matter what.

He was born on 23 September 1956 and grew up in Emmarentia, Johannesburg, attending Emmarentia Primary School and Greenside High School. "He studied to be a chartered accountant at Wits University together with his wife, Zoe, as beloved classmates endeared to each other as seen only in fairy tales," says his friend, Anthony Chait. "In fact, his lifelong devoted marriage to the forever radiant Zoe has been just as enchanting."

"He served his accountancy articles with Tuffias Shapiro. One of the firm's clients was Taki Xenopoulos of Fontana roast chicken outlets fame, who spotted Steve's early entrepreneurial talent. Business ran deeply in his veins and he teamed up from time to time with likeminded members of the Jewish community. This includes Ian Fuhr (the founder of Sorbet nail and beauty stores), architect Jonathan Gimpel (who turned the Atlas bread factory into Atlas Studios), and the New York-based serial entrepreneur Alan Clingman.

"He was my dearest friend and business partner for the past 35 years," says Clingman, speaking from New

York. "We met when our wives were both pregnant and attended the same antenatal class. And our families, including his three sons, and my son and daughter, have been friends ever since."

"We immigrated to the United States a few years after we met, and Steve took over running my South African business. Since then, we have had many mutual investments. One of them is in partnership with the Chinese government, which resulted in an

Steven Blend

invitation to the Great Hall of the People [which isn't open to the public], for a contract signing session. Steve was a *mensch*, with an enormous heart."

Says Chait, "Steve always had time for everything, especially his three sons, Justin, Darren, and Greg. Later in their business careers, his sons were unstintingly mentored by him. He presided as a judge for many years at the Jewish Achiever Awards (JAA)

under the auspices of the *SA Jewish Report*."

Sackstein says it was Blend who convinced Absa to sponsor the JAA awards, and it has done so ever since.

"His grandchildren were the apple of his eye," says Chait. "On 10 April, looking forward to his imminent departure from hospital in Germany, he posted pictures on Facebook of Darren and his family in Sydney at a picnic. Twenty-four hours later, Steve was dead."

Now, family and friends are reflecting on a lifetime of memories that ended too soon. On 25 September 2019, Blend wrote a tongue-in-cheek letter to Sun City's management which he shared on Facebook: "Dear Sun City management, I thought it may be appropriate to let you know our story about Sun City and its 40th birthday. On 9 December 1979, my wife and I got married, and I booked us a four-night honeymoon at the then unknown Sun City Hotel.

"In those days nobody knew where Sun City was ... or even how to get there! After a five-hour drive from Joburg we arrived at the old 'main hotel', and judging by the reception, we may have been its very first guests! It took them ages to find our reservation and to allocate us a room as the hotel was still under construction!

"Eventually, we were given a room. However as they were still building, we couldn't sleep due to the construction noise in the next-door rooms. I complained the next morning and we were given a new room that night, but alas, the same problem: banging and building the whole night! Needless to say, we checked out to go elsewhere.

"The staff and management were most apologetic and we were promised a complimentary stay to make up for our inconvenience, which to this day has never been done! Happily, I can say that like Sun City, we

have enjoyed a wonderful marriage over the past 40 years notwithstanding the 'bumpy' start and Sun City, too, has prospered tremendously! Perhaps at your 40th birthday, you could fulfil your promise and invite us back to finish our honeymoon?"

Blend excitedly reported back, "I'm delighted to advise all fans of Sun City that unbelievably, its management has honoured a 40-year-old undertaking to make good a promise made by its original management when we left the hotel halfway through our honeymoon in 1979. This week, we received a voucher for a two-night stay on our anniversary to make up for our inconvenience back then. This must be a record for great customer service."

It was this kind of faith in humanity and childlike delight in life that drew people to Blend and kept them there. His true passion was cycling, where he made many friends and made a difference.

"Stevie Blend and I met many years ago on an Israel cycle tour to raise money for children that have been through trauma," says his friend, Mark Kruger. "He then decided to do something similar locally, and founded the 361 Hatzolah Cycle Tour in 2015. There have since been eight tours."

"There are no words to describe the passing of our beloved friend, Steven," says Leon Kramer. "As treasurer of our cycling club for 10 years, he helped to make it into one of the most successful cycling clubs in South Africa. He never left a struggling rider, encouraging them to keep going so they never felt alone. He took on the hard work of organising our successful overseas cycling trips. He may have worn a helmet, but he also wore the crown of a king."

"Blend wasn't just his name," says Chait. "Steve was the closest one would ever find in a single human being to the most perfect blend of passion and aplomb, humility and modesty, kindness and generosity, with liberal doses of success and absolute *joie de vivre*."





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"Do not be afraid" – life lessons from the Rebbe

SAUL KAMIONSKY

"The Nazis hunted down Jews in hate. The Rebbe taught us to search for and seek out every single Jew in love."

This was a life lesson that the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (former chief rabbi of Britain) gleaned from the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. It was one of so many phenomenal lessons rabbis and others learned from this unique and great man whose 120th anniversary was marked on 12 April this year.

Rabbi Yossi Goldman, life rabbi emeritus of Sydenham Shul and president of the South African Rabbinical Association, says "the Rebbe taught never to write off a single Jew, even if they ate pork chops on Yom Kippur".



Rabbi Yossi Goldman with Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson

"In my 46 years as a rabbi in South Africa, I have seen countless Jews who claimed to be non-believers or were completely cynical about their faith. But with a little love and attention, they are today committed, practising Jews who are raising beautiful Jewish families," Goldman says.

In 1976, Goldman and his wife, Rebbetzin Rochel, were privileged to be sent to South Africa by the Rebbe to head up the very first Chabad House in Johannesburg. Ten years later, Sydenham Shul invited the duo to become its spiritual leaders.

"I consulted the Rebbe and he encouraged us to make the move," recalls Goldman. "Sydenham Shul isn't a Chabad organisation, but the Rebbe loved every Jew. It wasn't about building his movement but about caring for every Jew regardless of their background or orientation."

Goldman says the Rebbe didn't just believe in G-d. "He believed in every Jew. He changed the Jewish world for the better, for which we should all be eternally grateful."

The Ukrainian-born Rebbe (1902-1994) was the seventh leader in the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty. During his time as the leader of the Lubavitch movement, Lubavitch institutions and activities became bigger in magnitude and Lubavitch centres or Chabad Houses were opened in many countries across the globe.

In the United States, Judaism, the Torah and Chassidic teachings were bolstered and disseminated through the establishment of three central Lubavitch organisations under the Rebbe's leadership. Scholars soon recognised the Rebbe's genius in his notations to numerous Chassidic and kabbalistic treatises.

Today, there are more than 4 000 *shluchim* (emissaries) of the Rebbe around the world. More than 60 of them reside in South Africa.

The *SA Jewish Report* also spoke to Rabbi Koppel Bacher, and Rabbi Mendel Lipskar and his wife, Rebbetzin Mashi, about the lessons they learned from their interactions with the Rebbe.

Do not be afraid

On 11 February 1990, the same morning that Nelson Mandela was released from Victor Verster prison, rabbis heading to South Africa from New York were receiving charity from the Rebbe to donate to Africa, recalls Bacher.

Suddenly, the Rebbe turned to Bacher and said in Hebrew, "You asked what message you can take there? Tell them not to be afraid. *Moshiach* is coming soon. It will be good until he comes, and afterwards even better."

Bacher later wrote to the Rebbe about his feelings

about the situation in South Africa. "People were very worried," he recalls.

However, "the Rebbe's repeated reassurances to us that South Africa would be a good place for Jews for all time went a long way to saving our community from complete disintegration," says Goldman.

Have a warm home

Lipskar and his wife, Mashi, were sent by the Rebbe as the first Chabad emissaries to South Africa just more than 50 years ago.

"Before we were married, we had the incredible privilege of having a private audience with the Rebbe," recounts Lipskar. "He gave us his blessings, and one of the blessings he gave us is that we should have a warm home."

The Rebbe told them, "See to it that you should make others warm, and it will naturally be warm for yourselves as well."

Lipskar and his wife have always tried to implement this lesson.

They have never viewed others as congregants. "They became part of our family, and they see us as part of their family wherever they are in the world," says Lipskar. "This is how we have to look at others. It wasn't simply about *teshuvah*, that we are going to teach you about Torah and *mitzvot* and tell you how to behave. No, we were going to open

our homes and hearts and make you part of who we are. Today, we see others have themselves opened their homes and hearts. It has this incredible ripple effect, which is continuous."

Pack every day full

Just after the beginning of the Jewish New Year 5749, on 19 September 1988, the Rebbe launched another of his major initiatives. Telling the group of Chabad supporters in attendance that he was "an old friend" and referring to his advanced age, he quipped, "I'm not as old as it says on my passport. If you carry out what I'm requesting now, it will be a sign that you don't perceive me as an old Jew, but as a young man with young ideas."

Explaining this, Mashi says, "You have a young person with a lot of wisdom and experience, and an old person who hasn't really maximised his time or hasn't studied. He isn't able to show for the passage of time, and the Rebbe's teaching is, 'Pack every day full.' You have a new day. You have new opportunities. G-d brings you people. He will bring you whatever you need. It's like a partnership with G-d. You put us here on earth, you want us to connect to people and bring light and joy to your world. We are in, and he does his part."

Jewish education must be the call of the hour
What was the Rebbe's single most talked about subject? In Goldman's opinion, it was *chinuch* – Jewish education. "We're fighting a war against assimilation," he says. "Jewish education must be the call of the hour. Even in Israel, this battle is being waged, and it won't be won by legislation, but by education."

Shortly after coming to South Africa in February 1972, Lipskar met somebody who had finished university, but hadn't yet decided what he was going to do.

"My husband started studying with him every day and found other guys as well," recalls Mashi. "In the early 1970s, we were in Berea and my husband had a *shiur* on Tuesday nights with university students. These were hippies. These were searchers. These were people looking to the east."

Says Lipskar, "These were the children of the 1960s and 1970s with long hair, looking for alternative lifestyles."

These university students, a few of whom were non-Jews, came and sat with Lipskar in Berea. "They loved it and they called friends gradually," says Mashi. "That nucleus makes up the grandparents in our community today who have kids who served in Chabad."



We at African Friends of Sheba Medical Center, like much of the world, have followed the war in Ukraine with a mixture of sorrow and disbelief. But rather than remaining on the sidelines, Sheba Medical Center was moved to act, mobilizing its staff to send Israel's first ever civilian field hospital to a warzone.



Yoel Har-Even, Director of Sheba Global and one of the heads of the Ukrainian field hospital, reflected on this mission. "My grandparents

left Ukraine after the Holocaust, carrying all that they owned in their hands. I returned to the land of my ancestors to assist a people in dire need of help—as a Jew, as an Israeli, and primarily, as a medical professional. Setting up a field hospital is no easy task, but Israel has honed its skills in providing the highest level of medical care in the toughest of places."



This Pesach, as we remember the exodus from Egypt, we also think of those leaving their homes and loved ones behind in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world and rededicate ourselves to helping those in need, wherever and whenever.

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Let’s live with the spirit of “dayenu”

OPINION

A few days ago, I came across the Unity Haggadah, published in 2020, with contributions from our community’s rabbis and rebbetzins. It was our first Pesach in lockdown, and at that time, I wrote in the introduction to the book: “This is going to be a Pesach like no other. This year, we will be having seders on our own. We won’t be having friends and extended family around the table.”

As I reread these words today, I’m struck again by the sense of the trauma we’ve all been through over the past two years. At the same time, I also feel overwhelmed with gratitude to Hashem that this Pesach, we will again be able to have family and friends around the table. We will again be able to go to shul and connect with our community. Before COVID-19, these were things we took for granted.

Gratitude is the art of taking nothing for granted. Our sages explain that it’s the foundation of good character and *derech erez* – basic decency. Without gratitude, many of the essential pillars of Judaism fall away – honouring parents and appreciating our family, building a loving relationship with G-d, treating those around us with kindness and respect.

Pesach is a festival of gratitude. The entire seder night is about reflecting on the fact that as Jews, we owe everything to Hashem. He gave us the fundamental gift of freedom. And as we say in the Haggadah, “If He had not redeemed us, we would still be enslaved.” And so, at the seder, we take a moment to thank Hashem for our freedom. We thank Him, also, for all that He gave us in the wake of our wondrous liberation from Egypt: the gift of our Torah heritage, the source of the values that make us who we are and frame how we live every day.

There is perhaps one word in the Haggadah that captures the spirit of gratitude – “*dayenu*”. It’s often translated as, “It would have been enough for us.” And yet, this cannot be its essential meaning because each clause within the passage refers to a blessing that’s incomplete without the other blessings mentioned. My



The Goldstein family learning together

wife, Gina, once shared her insight with us at one of our seders – that “*dayenu*” really means, “This would have been enough for us *because it’s all we deserved.*” In other words, Hashem gave us more blessings than we could ever have expected because they were more than we deserved.

And that’s the essence of gratitude. It’s the very opposite of expectation and entitlement. It’s the ability to appreciate everything as an unearned gift and to realise that we’re owed nothing. This is the gratitude we need to show to our loved ones; our parents, our spouses, our children. We don’t deserve their kindness. We didn’t earn it. We cannot take them for granted. We need to appreciate all that they do for us, and express our gratitude to them with a full heart.

This Pesach, let us all – husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, grandchildren and grandparents – say, “*dayenu*” to each other – “Whatever you’ve given me is more than I deserve – it’s a gift, and I’m so grateful to you.”

This Pesach, let’s reflect, with gratitude to Hashem, on the fact that the pandemic has lifted. Let’s feel gratitude to Hashem for our incredible, divine heritage that we

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



have shared together at seder tables for thousands of years, for our miraculous birth as a nation, and for the timeless Torah values that have guided us and moulded us as a people and as individuals.

Let’s also give thanks to Hashem for the blessings of freedom that we enjoy in South Africa, and for the gift of a strong, independent state of Israel – privileges many generations of Jews before us didn’t enjoy.

This Pesach, let’s say “*dayenu*” to each other for the blessings of sharing and creating our South African Jewish community together – a community that’s so vibrant and supportive and has an incredible network of shuls and communal organisations that is the envy of communities throughout the world.

As we sing at our seder tables this Pesach, let’s resolve to live every day of our lives with the spirit of “*dayenu*”, which will liberate us from feeling entitled so that we can truly appreciate the people in our lives, savour the good, be grateful for our blessings, and, in doing so, open ourselves to true happiness. Gina and I wish you all a joyous and kosher Pesach!

What’s the JSC got against David Unterhalter?

>>Continued from page 10

connected to the Democratic Alliance (and previously to former DA leader Tony Leon in particular).

Two, Unterhalter is Jewish – which isn’t of itself considered a sin – but to be Jewish is to be connected with Israel and Israel has become completely bad news. It doesn’t help that Unterhalter resigned from the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

Three, Unterhalter is considered too clever. This attribute is frowned upon in circles where mediocrity is king. Jeremy Gauntlett and Geoff Budlender, to take but two examples, suffered the same fate – probably for the same reason.

What of the future? The JSC decision could be

reviewable by a court – if someone wants to go down that route – and Ramaphosa could kick the matter back to the JSC.

But I wouldn’t hold my breath waiting for Ramaphosa to do that. Even if he does, I wouldn’t, if I were Unterhalter, go anywhere near the JSC again. Who needs to suffer this sort of stupidity and prejudice repeatedly?

- *Jeremy Gordin is a senior journalist who writes a column for Politicsweb and was author of ‘Zuma: a Biography’.*
- *This article, in its longer format, was first printed on politicsweb.co.za.*

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Wandering Jews find home in unusual places

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Aarhus. Valencia. Ho Chi Minh City. Jersey. Whether it started out as a desire for something different, a journey for love, a gap year, or a way to stay close to family, these South African expats have found happiness off the beaten track.

Adam Gordon was active in the apartheid struggle in the 1980s and early 1990s – both as a student and then as a journalist. Grateful for these experiences but seeking something different, he moved to Israel in 1993. He later lived in countries including the United States, France, England, and Wales – with a three-year stint back in Johannesburg along the way.

“Sometimes the wind blows, and you just end up somewhere, it’s not all a matter of choice,” he says.

Today, he’s a professor in the academic faculty at world-renowned Aarhus University in Denmark, where he lives with his wife and three children. “We moved because of Brexit – we were living in the United Kingdom, and wanted to use our European Union relocation rights before we lost them,” he says.

“Living overseas changes you. There’s a level of enrichment that you can’t replace or get any other way. It has its struggles, but you reach a point where you have a layering with a three-dimensional perspective on choices, particularly those made at a social and cultural level. There

are fewer fixed points around how people do things.”

This is also true of the Jewish communities Gordon has encountered around the world. “Obviously, there’s a core and the fact that this core continues to exist is part of the miracle of Judaism,” he says. “Yet many things are done differently, and you can’t experience that by living in just one place.” While there are some Jews and a Chabadnik doing outreach, Jewish life in Aarhus is minimal, he says.

Unlike South Africa, Denmark is quite regulated.

There are rules and people obey them, bringing a certain kind of peace. “It doesn’t, however, have the kind of sass and creativity of Johannesburg, where people are constantly improvising and making it happen despite the challenges.”

Sivan Strous has also lived in numerous countries outside South Africa. “My Argentine husband and I met in Israel on a kibbutz ulpan programme,” she recalls.

“His family was living in São Paulo, Brazil, at the time, so we joined them there after the ulpan.” The couple soon moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where they lived for 17 years.

This adjustment was incredibly hard, Strous admits. “Argentina is very different to South

Sivan Strous with her husband Laureano and their daughters Gal and Hanna in Denia, Spain



Africa in terms of language, culture, and lifestyle. I missed my friends and family, and I couldn’t communicate. It took about two years before I felt more comfortable with living there, largely because I began working for a predominantly English-speaking company.” Yet she ultimately became fluent in Spanish, and now has two bilingual daughters.

The family recently moved to Valencia in Spain. “We’ve gone to Europe often and I loved the idea of living there, especially in a place near the beach from where we’d be able to travel around more easily,” says Strous. “Spain and Argentina are very similar, so there isn’t a culture shock and I already speak the language, so the move hasn’t been too challenging.”

She is, however, saddened by the lack of Jewish life in Valencia. “In Buenos Aires, the girls went to a Jewish school, we belonged to a Jewish club, and it was good to have that sense of community.” Yet, Strous and her family look forward to spending some *chaggin* in London, where her brother and his family live.

Nathan Caminsky’s life also went in an unexpected direction. Rather than following friends pursuing post-matric programmes in Israel, he was inspired by his father, who took a gap year to work and travel. While doing online research one night, he was offered a job teaching English in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Grabbing the opportunity to live in Asia, Caminsky moved six weeks later. Four years on, he’s still in Vietnam, and running his own small business recruiting English teachers from English-speaking countries around the world.

“I fell in love with Vietnam,” he says. “It’s not a first choice for many people but the way of life is special and unique.” Though safety and efficiency are just some of the perks of life there, it’s the warmth of the Vietnamese people that really resonates.

Caminsky remembers when he first arrived in the city and was afraid to cross the road amidst the thousands of motorbikes that regularly disregard traffic lights. “Seeing my fear, a very elderly Vietnamese lady came and took my arm. She didn’t say anything, she just walked me across the road. The people

here are incredible.”

Having rarely attended shul in South Africa, Caminsky has become a Shabbat regular at the local Chabad. “When you arrive in a foreign country, it’s all fun and games,” he says. “Then you realise that you need a community, and as a Jew, the first thing that resonates with you are Jewish people.” There are between 250 and 300 Jews in Vietnam – most of whom are Israeli and American – and about 15 regular shul goers.

Though adjusting to adulthood almost

overnight when he moved was a challenge, it’s one that made Caminsky who he is today. “I was just out of high school and suddenly, I was alone in a foreign country having to fend for myself. Your environment shapes you and living here, having more responsibilities and starting a business, has made me grow. It’s been the best decision of my life.”

“Obviously, there’s a core and the fact that this core continues to exist is part of the miracle of Judaism.”

Mike Kushner and his wife Jess – both lawyers – left Cape Town to join his parents in England in 2019. Kushner’s father later joined a dental practice in Jersey, the biggest of the Channel Islands. Falling in love with the island during a visit, Mike and Jess followed a year ago. “We’re happy and settled. It’s a fantastic place,” says Kushner.

Just less than 120km², Jersey is located between the French and English coast. It’s a British crown dependency that functions as an independent county – something that defines the spirit of its people.

Occupied by the Nazis in World War II, Jersey faced significant hardship, and its Jewish community was largely decimated. “There’s widespread awareness of the Holocaust here, perhaps more so than in other countries because it was very personal,” says Kushner.

Jersey also has strong financial links with South Africa, so there’s a significant expat community. While the Jewish population numbers only about 100, this should rise

as more Jewish South Africans in the financial sector are drawn to the island.

“We have a fully Orthodox shul with a warm community and weekly Saturday morning services, as well as a full *yom tov* offering,” Kushner says. “I’m not a rabbi, but I take the services and we get a *minyan* at

least once a month when we host a big *brocha*.” This Purim, the shul had its first megillah reading in more than 30 years.

Though Kushner grew up in a religious home, he drifted away slightly over the years. “Now being part of a warm community where my wife and I feel really grounded and welcomed, we’ve reconnected to a more observant Judaism.”

Mike and Jess Kushner in Jersey



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The uneasy road between the drowned and the saved



RABBI DR RAPHAEL ZARUM

The Exodus is an unforgettable story, but why does there have to be so much bloodshed?

Though the ten plagues hit hard, it was the parting of the Red Sea which finally finished off the Egyptian menace. The event occurred seven days after our ancestors left Egypt, so we now read this story on the seventh day of Pesach every year. The Torah says, “The waters returned, covering the chariots, the cavalry, and the whole Egyptian army that had followed the Israelites into the sea.” (Exodus 14:28). Why did Pharaoh’s forces all have to drown?

To make matters worse, Moses and the Israelites sang a triumphant song of gratitude to G-d for annihilating their enemies. “*G-d is a Man of War (Ish Milchamah)*.” (Exodus 15:3). I know of no more masculine and militaristic phrase in the whole Bible. Why is this *shirat hayam* (song of the sea) so violent and ruthless? Where is G-d’s compassion and mercy?

Our traditional commentaries were sensitive to the loss of life that was incurred. The Talmud says that on seeing the Egyptians drowning, the angels were about to break into song, when G-d silenced them declaring, “How dare you sing for joy when my creatures are dying.” (Megillah 10b and Sanhedrin 39b). The question is, if G-d thought it correct to stop the angels from singing, why were our ancestors allowed to do so? Maybe, rather than cold callousness, it was an emotional release. After centuries of slavery and a terrifying week on the run, it may have been that the Israelites were giving voice to deep feelings of relief for finally being redeemed.

On the other hand, the Talmud also teaches that our personal elation should never make us forget the misfortunes afflicting others (Berachot 31a). The medieval Tosafot commentary gives this as the source for the custom of breaking a glass at the end of a wedding ceremony. And that’s why we spill out drops of wine on seder night, to remind us that our cup of deliverance and celebration cannot be full when others still have to suffer (Orach Chaim 473:7). Similarly, we recite only “half Hallel” on the last six days of Pesach as our praise of G-d is curtailed by the memory of

those that were killed (Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 490).

Then again, the medieval commentator, Rashi, translates *Ish Milchama* as a *Master of War*, indicating that G-d is an expert warmonger. On the other hand, he explains that the second half of the verse “*and G-d is his name*” uses the four-letter intimate name for G-d, which implies that G-d retains mercy and care for the rest of the world even while destroying wrongdoers.

When DreamWorks made the film *Prince of Egypt* in



1998, it realised that it wasn’t politically correct to have the Israelites singing and dancing for joy at the death of their foes, so they had them start to sing the *shira* as soon as they left Egypt. *There can be miracles if you believe* became a hit single. The movie version of the song had a few select lines in the original Hebrew, but they carefully avoided any mention of violence. Instead, we hear of G-d’s power, “Who is like you, G-d, among the mighty?” (Exodus 15:11), and also of G-d’s kindness, “In your loving kindness, you led the people you redeemed.” (ibid 15:13).

So it seems that our tradition is really in two minds about all this. King Solomon himself wrote in his book of Proverbs, “When the wicked perish, there is singing,” (11:10), but later remarked, “When your enemy falls, do not rejoice.” (24:17). Which is correct?

I suggest that we’re charged with living consciously with

this dichotomy. If we’re not pleased that evil has been punished, then we don’t value justice. Conversely, if we’re not sad at the loss of life, then our humanity is diminished. In 2011, when I was sent video footage of the death of Muammar Gaddafi, the deposed tyrannical leader of Libya, I chose not to watch it. I didn’t need to see him brutality beaten and shot repeatedly. And yet, I didn’t mourn his passing for a moment.

Wrongdoers must pay fully for their crimes. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, “Whoever is compassionate when they should be cruel will ultimately be cruel when they should be compassionate.” (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:16). Nevertheless, according to the prophet Ezekiel, G-d says, “I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that they should turn from their course and live.” (Ezekiel 33:11).

As we watch in horror at the ongoing fighting in Ukraine, we hope to G-d for an end to the hostilities. And when it comes, which it will, there will be joy in the streets, even as those that committed war crimes will be brought to justice and punished.

Maybe the dramatic image of the sea splitting can act as a suitable metaphor for the divided way we feel about punishing evil. The two shores of the sea represent the two sides of the story: justice on one side, compassion on the other. And we must pass through the middle, preserving and valuing life, yet not drowning in violence and hate. The middle path between justice and compassion is a difficult one to tread and at any moment, we can be washed away.

“The Israelites went through the sea on dry land, with a wall of water to their right and left.” (Exodus 14:29). We’re meant to follow the path of our ancestors and of G-d. Maimonides called this middle path, “The path of the wise.” (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Character 1:4). Tread carefully, and make sure not to get too wet.

• Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum is dean of the London School of Jewish Studies, and the Rabbi Sacks Chair of Modern Jewish Thought established by the Zandan family. See www.lsjs.ac.uk

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Life is like a

OPINION

Come Seder night, how many millions of Jews will be looking much more forward to the kneidlach than the matzah itself? Frankly, I don't blame them. Matzah tastes like cardboard and a kneidel in hot chicken soup is undeniably delicious.

I'll come back to our friendly matzah ball in a moment, but first let me ask you another Pesach question. At the seder, we first hold up the matzah and declare, "This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate back in Egypt." We recall the harsh slavery and broken morsels the Egyptians fed their Jewish slaves. Later in the Haggadah, though, we raise the matzah and explain that we eat matzah "because the dough of our fathers had no time to rise before the Holy One redeemed them".

So what is it? Is matzah a symbol of slavery or of freedom? Does matzah represent bondage or redemption?

Well, the simple answer is both. First, we were slaves and then we became free.

But it speaks to us personally too. One fellow will eat matzah on Pesach and complain about how hard and tasteless it is.



He is re-experiencing the bondage of old. But another will taste the freedom. Believe it or not, some people love matzah, especially with a little avocado smeared on top.

There's a simple but powerful message here. Life is what you make of it.

How many times do we see two people with the exact same set of circumstances, and one enjoys success while the other

fails miserably? King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes that "there's no bread for the wise", meaning that clever people don't necessarily always succeed in life. Indeed, we have all seen many wise people who struggled financially and many ordinary, simple individuals who have achieved great success.

Today, we know very well that EQ

(emotional intelligence) is more important than IQ. Our attitude always determines our altitude. Whether we'll fly or flounder depends more on how we approach and deal with our own situations than the actual situation itself.

And this leads me to my profound philosophical discovery. "Life is Like a kneidel!" We've all tasted a variety of kneidels over the years. Some were a big hit at the seder table while others were a disaster. One woman's kneidel is big, soft, and fluffy – great on the plate and pleasing to the palate – while another's is small, hard, and as tasteless as the matzah itself.

or even criticise. But the observation is clearly instructive.

My own father was the sole survivor of his entire family from Poland. Thank G-d, he rebuilt his family, leaving well over 80 great-grandchildren when he passed away. Many survivors lost their faith. Again, we cannot condemn them. Who knows how we would have responded were we in their shoes, G-d forbid? I once asked my father why he never lost his faith. He answered that he saw and felt the hand of G-d plucking him out of danger and to safety time and again. His journey of survival took him from Poland to Vilna; to Moscow; Vladivostok; then Kobe in Japan; and Shanghai in China before finally reaching the United States after the war. He said it would have been impossible for him to be oblivious to the countless miracles he experienced.

Indeed, life is like a kneidel. Life is what we make of it. And the choice is ours. Some of us will complain about how difficult it is to prepare for such a demanding *yom tov* and how hard it is to observe Pesach. And others will celebrate this *chag* as a wonderful, joyous opportunity to leave indelible impressions on our children and grandchildren for generations to come.

May we all use our opportunities wisely. May we see the positive in every circumstance. May we choose to live constructive lives, choosing freedom over bondage and redemption over exile.

I wish you *chag kosher v'sameach* – a joyous and kosher Pesach.



RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

Towards a time when we know no war

OPINION

Long lines of refugees fleeing in the bitter winter cold, stooped by fear of an unknown future, their faces bearing the unspeakable suffering of having left family, homes, and possessions behind. The images we have been exposed to in the past few weeks have filled us with pain and utter helplessness.

They have also evoked an unavoidable feeling of déjà vu. We cannot help but think back to the many displaced persons who migrated, both east and west, as they fled the advancing Germans ahead of what would be the absolute decimation of those who hadn't been fortunate enough to get away. Or of survivors, now homeless, trekking across war-torn Europe in search of a better future. These could just as well be photographs from 70 or 80 years ago, coloured by modern technology. The look of terror in the eyes is the same, the small bags of hastily thrown together essentials similar.

Ahead of Pesach, I take the Haggadot down to prepare for the seder, and start paging through my favourite one nostalgically. There's an illustration that resonates. A long column of Hebrews, marching out of Egypt into the desert and the unknown. The line in the drawing seems to be stretching for miles; literally hundreds of thousands of former slaves, running to freedom.

They, too, left in a hurry. So fast that, as we know, there was no time for the dough they had prepared to rise, hence the matzah for the week. They wouldn't spend another day in the land of their oppression. This Exodus, however, was triumphant and joyful in every way. As we read in the Haggadah, "G-d took us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm." There was uncertainty, but no panic. They felt the revealed protection of Hashem with them.

I turn a couple more pages, and there's the famous *Vehi Sheamada* song. The point at which we lift our glass of wine and declare, "Although many had tried to overcome and destroy us,

Hashem saved us from their hands." I think back to the many expulsions, pogroms, forced conversions, auto-da-fés, and mass executions over the centuries. We suffered bitterly, but Hashem made sure his nation overcame every time. And the greatest victory is that we sit and sing that song, seder after seder, for thousands of years.

Towards the end of the Haggadah, I come across another illustration, this one prophetic in nature. For Pesach marks not only the deliverance of the past but also the ultimate redemption of the future. Just as the Jews sat down in Egypt the night before the Exodus for a pre-departure celebration, we also sit at our seders, rejoicing in anticipation of the ultimate Messianic redemption.

This final redemption will be more triumphant and even more miraculous than the first. It seems like the miracles from back then will pale into insignificance when compared to what's in store. To quote the prophet, "A time is coming – declares Hashem – when it shall no more be said, 'As the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,' but rather, 'As Hashem lives, who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel from the northland and from all the lands to which I have banished them' and they shall dwell upon their own soil." (Jeremiah 23).

This will be a time when "They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not take up sword against nation, they shall never again know war." (Isaiah 2). It will be a time when the haunting images of haggard refugees will belong squarely in the realm of history. This Pesach, I will spend much of my seder exploring how we can make this a reality.

Chag Pesach kosher vesameach!

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at The Oxford Synagogue Centre and chairperson of the Rabbinical Association of South Africa.



RABBI YOSSI CHAIKIN

And this leads me to my profound philosophical discovery. "Life is Like a kneidel!" We've all tasted a variety of kneidels over the years. Some were a big hit at the seder table while others were a disaster. One woman's kneidel is big, soft, and fluffy – great on the plate and pleasing to the palate – while another's is small, hard, and as tasteless as the matzah itself.

Both chefs used the identical ingredients, but some rise, and some sink; some are delicious, and some are dangerous.

So is matzah the bread of affliction or the food of freedom? The choice is ours.

We have seen Holocaust survivors who rebuilt their lives and families, while others wallowed in misery and bitterness for the rest of their lives. They had ample justification, and it's not for us to condemn

• Rabbi Yossi Goldman is the life rabbi emeritus at Sydenham Shul and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.



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How to be the life of the seder

OPINION

One of my teachers, Rabbi David Aaron, tells the story of a seminar he once ran teaching people new depths of meaning for our ancient traditions. It was (as anyone familiar with Aaron’s teachings won’t be surprised to hear) uplifting and inspiring, and left all present with fresh wonder and appreciation for Judaism. One of the people present commented, “Rabbi, you have shown me that Jewish prayer can be so meaningful and special. But I don’t think that even you can convince me that the Pesach seder could be interesting!” Of course, the continuation of this course resulted in her concession on that point, but the story itself speaks to an unfortunate reality in which this cherished tradition can become a barrier to the enjoyment of the seder rather than the greatest expression of it.

I remember in my youth (and I didn’t grow up religious) hearing from one of my primary school Jewish Studies teachers that her family read the entire Haggadah every Pesach – without skipping! I

was torn between my admiration for her sheer tenacity and my shock that all this time, I had been taught by a religious fanatic. Of course, somewhere along my religious journey, I too became such a fanatic, and now joyously read, sing, and discuss the Haggadah each year, but I often think of the duality of the seder experience – how for some the Haggadah is a concession to tradition, a duty to perform which invokes memory of our bondage in Egypt by recreating it, with us as the slaves of nostalgia and the expectations of previous generations. For others, it’s a highlight of the year, a time to recall and appreciate the blessings and love that Hashem has showered upon us and our ancestors, a time to connect with generations past and generations yet to come through our Jewish history and heritage.

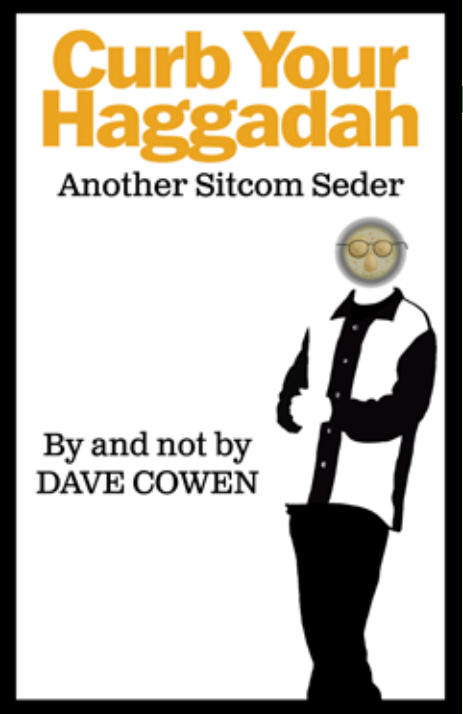
As a rabbi and teacher, the question I ask myself is, how can we get from the one to the other? I’d like to suggest a few ways I found for myself that may interest you or help you too.

Become a teacher: one of the great messages of the seder night

is that we are, each of us, teachers and storytellers. If there’s one thing that I lament in our current system of Jewish education, it’s the way in which we entrust the primary Jewish education of our children to others (as excellent as they may be). In my mind, I strike a sharp contrast between taking my car to the mechanic for a service and taking my child to school for an education, although I must confess that the difference isn’t always that clear. It’s a great pity that due to our work commitments, busy lives, and sometimes our own limitations in knowledge and teaching, we’re not our children’s primary Jewish educators.

But one night a year, that all changes. On the seder night, we’re the ones who pass down to future generations our most important story of all, the story of the Exodus that made us, the Jewish people. Whether we’re telling our children, grandchildren, parents, friends, or even just ourselves – on seder night, we must embrace the opportunity and responsibility to teach, and this sense of purpose invests the seder with new urgency and life.

New understandings: my father-in-law always tells me about a Chassidic rebbe who instructed his followers to use a new



Haggadah every Pesach – with new commentaries. We live in an era of unprecedented Jewish publication, and there’s a delightful cornucopia of new explanations of the Haggadah released every year. Buy or borrow a different one, spend a couple of hours before the seder extracting insights, and share them at the table. One of my greatest Pesach pleasures is learning new things about the Exodus from Egypt every year. Torah truly is endless, and our generation has so many talented educators who offer marvellous fresh perspectives.

Activities and props: the seder need not simply be reading through the book, or even discussing, or singing (although those are both excellent things to do!) Many schools now send

RABBI SAM THURGOOD

home activities and props for children to use for the seder, which add a wonderful energy and involve them integrally. Plague of darkness? Wear dark glasses or put on a blindfold. Plague of frogs? Scatter plastic frogs all over the table. Include food in the meal reminiscent of aspects of the seder story (no, not frogs legs, those aren’t kosher, but if you can get hold of kosher locusts, go for it!). Make them a discussion item during dinner itself. Have the table décor also represent aspects of the story (how about a blue tablecloth with a beige runner – the splitting of the sea – with Lego people in the centre crossing it?). Additionally, there are seder songs, seder plays, seder poems, or more – take a look and incorporate some!

Yes, the seder is long, but it’s not as long as the longest movie you’ve ever watched. It’s a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with our greatest story and the core of our identity as a people. A chance to sing Hallel, the same prayer that we say in shul on every festival and on Rosh Chodesh, but how often do we have a chance to sing it together as a family? The seder night is an exalted evening; one which I look forward to every year, and I hope you will too.

• Rabbi Sam Thurgood is the rabbi at Beit Midrash Morasha @ Arthur’s Road in Cape Town.

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It may be tough, but Pesach sets you free

OPINION

It's not like anyone should be able to point fingers. This year, with Easter Friday, Ramadan, and Passover all happening on the self-same day, it's pretty much atheists and vegans who have a free pass. Which is ironic, given that Pesach is the festival of freedom. The rest of us are either fasting, eating too much, or searching under the flower beds for decorated eggs.

Between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, this Friday has most of the world busy with something.

It's all wild. And fun. Unless you're one of the those fasting. In which case, it probably isn't – until sunset. But then, nor is cleaning the kitchen until the oven bleeds, washing curtains that have never seen a croissant, or tin foiling already boiled counter tops, just in case.

Ironically, in many cases the less observant, although curtailed, do so without recognising that they are. Social norms, fashion, political viewpoints, and a left-versus-right outlook often dictate a view and behaviour as much as religious adherence. Only without the knowledge that this is the case.

Take vegans for instance. Their rules include an obligation to confess their status within minutes of meeting people. It includes loudly proclaiming their faith at every meal. Facebook status must include the description, and every alternative post contain at



Howard Feldman

least one of direct “grateful” description of a meal that served something green. Vegans might think they are free from the shackles of the devout, but they are more in chains than Tibetan monks.

Which is all the more reason to make peace with our rituals, to embrace our faith, and to celebrate the hell of the festivals that G-d has given us. Pesach might not be an easy festival for those armed with a blowtorch and Handy Andy. But I'm certain that much like Muslims during the month of Ramadan, like Christians on Easter, and like vegans at a braai, I wouldn't have it any other way.



Observant people have too much time on their hands. Either that or they have realised that the rules, limitations, guidance, and rituals provide a sense of freedom that those who live without it don't have. Which, once again, is something that should make no sense. And yet ask anyone who has chosen to do so, and they will confirm that it does.

Observant Muslims often describe the magnificence of the holy month of Ramadan. That it's a time of charity, prayer, and kindness, and that as the month draws to a close, these rituals elevate spirituality. For Christians, Easter speaks of sacrifice, miraculous events, and affirmation of faith. And for Jews, the festival of Passover is one of the nation building, freedom, and renewal.



For all the observant it might be hard work in a physical sense, but the reward clearly makes it worthwhile.

Religious people know that they live their life with the limitations of their faith. They're acutely aware that they are curtailed and that they have agreed to adhere to a system that is larger than themselves.

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Modern Exodus gives Passover new meaning

NICOLA MILTZ

In these unfathomable times filled with devastation, Ukrainian Jewish and other refugees will make an appearance at every Pesach seder worldwide as their exodus from their war-torn homeland gives Pesach new meaning.

Jews dashing for freedom sadly isn't an unprecedented scene. But the Ukraine scenario is unique as mega logistics are put in place to create *sederim* for vast numbers of displaced people in far flung places at hotels, resorts, people's homes, and refugee centres.

For 21 years, the community of the Chabad-affiliated Kyiv Jewish Centre has celebrated Pesach together or at least nearby in the same city. This year, it will commemorate the Jews' exodus from Egypt in spiritual pockets dotted throughout Europe and Israel. They may be in shelters or in private homes belonging to strangers they have just met or in specially set up refugee centres, but eat matzah and kneidlach they will.

After speaking to Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein last week about a Pesach appeal for Kyiv's remaining Holocaust survivors,

Kyiv Chief Rabbi Yonatan Markovich and his wife, Inna, have worked around the clock with dozens of dedicated Chabad *shluchim* (emissaries) in a frenzied spirit of unity.

From the Markovich's temporary home in Tel Aviv, they have pulled out all the stops to try and help their own battered community mark this year's Passover – a big deal annually.

"This is the first time we'll be separated," Inna said.

The couple will be hosting a seder in Tel Aviv for about 100 refugees from Kyiv. The number of people increases every day, she said. Over the past couple of weeks, with huge help, they have arranged for these refugees in Israel to be accommodated over Shabbos, but are now focusing their efforts on reuniting those who managed to flee their homes in the beleaguered capital city to be together over the week of Pesach.

"For at least some of them, we want it to feel a little bit like home in Kyiv," she said. For those left behind in Kyiv, the couple, with help from the community and Chabad, have secured three additional locations where members of their community will be able to gather and partake in a traditional seder.

Before they were forced to flee, the



Photo courtesy of Pinchas Salzman

Jews from Ukraine arrive at a Jewish community centre in Chisinau, Moldova couple turned their synagogue's basement into a shelter crammed with 50 beds and several tons of food, as well as water and fuel. Dozens of people have taken shelter there since the start of the war.

"There will be another seder for about 50 more people at our Jewish school, and 30 people will have a seder at our kindergarten for autistic children," Inna told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

"Since there's a curfew, those who arrive for a seder won't be able to travel home afterwards, so they will stay overnight and

be together," she said. The elderly, infirm and Holocaust survivors have had food sent to them, and will receive Passover hampers, generously donated.

Johannesburg-born rebbetzin, Rochi Levitansky, a Chabad *shlucha* (emissary) from Sumy, Ukraine, and her family experienced their own real-life miraculous exodus as refugees on the run. They made it out of Ukraine in the nick of time after travelling 31 hours to get to Moldova and then to the safety of Israel. Their harrowing escape hasn't stopped her and her husband,

Rabbi Yechiel Levitansky, from reuniting their special community which has been displaced in several parts of Europe and Ukraine.

At the time of going to print, the couple and their large family were headed for Warsaw, Poland, to try to gather as many refugees from their Sumy community together.

"It's so important for us to bring them back together, for their morale and spiritual well-being. They have been through so much, and will be relieved and grateful to know that by us being there, they're loved and supported," said Rochi this week.

At first, the couple were going to host a large seder in Hungary for other refugees at a resort, but after consideration, they felt it more important to try to piece together families from their community in Sumy.

For those left behind, she said hundreds of "seder bags" had been made which include everything one needs to conduct a seder including, wine, matzah, a seder plate with goodies, and food.

"During COVID-19, we put together these seder bags which were helpful for our community stuck at home. We have

Continued on page 23>>

Festival cookbook feeds the soul

Jewish cookbooks abound and so do special Pesach editions, but this year, Linksfield Shul put together a Pesach cookbook with a difference. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to **Bernice Berson** who led the project.

What inspired the idea for a shul Pesach cookbook?

It was created to raise funds for the Linksfield Natan Chesed Fund, which enables us to help our community members who have *simchas* or are facing illness and crisis. Our *chesed* committee makes a difference to their lives.

What's different about this cookbook?

Each recipe we collected was dedicated to the loving memory of a family member. This book is about sharing tradition, keeping our strong Jewish roots, legacy, and memories alive, and passing on our stories and recipes to the next generation.

The book is titled *Uplifting the Neshama, Food for the Soul*. Why?

Each dedication is offered as an aliya for the special *neshamas* (souls) who are no longer with us and whose legacy plays out in our hearts and the food on our plate. This is what makes this book so much more meaningful and unique.

Who was involved in its creation, and what did they do, or did you make use of professionals?

One of our members assisted in typing recipes, and I started to get orders in place and see what traditional recipes were missing. A young graphic designer, Jodi Horne, worked with me, mostly at night and on Sundays. Danyell Nestadt was a tremendous support in sharing her ideas, and she contributed a beautiful article about her family tradition of making Pesach wine.

We spent many hours going back and forth with the design for the front page. After researching many images, I came across a beautiful art piece of a family sitting around the seder table, which depicts the theme of our book. We contacted the artist in New York, Lynne Feldman, who felt honoured that we chose her artwork for our front cover. She said, "I think of each work of art as a puzzle that has never been solved before. My task is to find the perfect way to put it all together."

The inside image was designed by my sister-in-law, Cara Garnitz. It's an image of a young girl looking up at

a giant Haggadah with the words "*L'dor va-dor*" (From generation to generation). Each content page is designed to remind us of our generation using bobba and zaida's cutlery and crockery and huge soup pots handed down.

How many copies have you sold and to whom?

Since launching on Friday, 1 April, the response has been overwhelming. As of today, we have sold just more than 500 copies. We advertised first to the Linksfield community through my ladies' *chesed* group, Rabbi Avtzon's shiurs and WhatsApp groups, email, and Facebook.

Once people got their first copy, I had orders from all social-media platforms. In addition, books have been sent to the Cape Town Jewish Museum gift shop and Selwyn Segal gift shop, and we have donated a few books to some seniors in our community.

What kind of response have you had?

The reviews and feedback have been humbling. Many



have truly understood and appreciated the heart and soul of the book. Thank you to our beautiful community for your support.

Jewish news travels fast. Books have already travelled to Sydney, Melbourne, Israel, and the United States, and there are many more requests from Canada and Manchester.

People speak of the book "pulling at their heartstrings". Why

They see the honour we give our ancestors and the charm of the past, and it resonates deeply. We are our memories.

What does this project mean to you?

There's no word for history in Judaism that can be read as his-story. It's our story. I have always been passionate about my family story and understand who I am based on where I come from. So, this project was my way of honouring the people that brought me and the world we live in into being.

My late dad's *yahrzeit* falls on the third day of Pesach. This project was very much a tribute to him. It was also through this meaningful project that I discovered my paternal great grandparents' place of birth after searching for many years. My late grandfather and his brother left Dagda in Latvia to escape the war, and unfortunately the remaining family were murdered.

You say this project far exceeded your expectations. What do you mean by this?

We originally printed 200 copies. Within a day, I ordered another 200, and then more. I was hoping for it to touch a few people. Instead, it has touched hundreds, and I know that we will have many more editions in the future. It's beautiful to see how the stories have resonated as much – if not more – than the recipes.

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Telling the story to our children essential to our survival

OPINION

In all of Jewish tradition, no holiday has an educational and emotional bond with our children like Pesach. The Torah specifically highlights that not only are we to remember our exodus from Egypt, we need to tell the story to our children.

The focus of the biblical narrative is on children, perhaps more so than anywhere else in our national history.

This is, of course, not by chance.

The Exodus and Pesach story aren't just the most identifiable storylines of the Jewish people, they are the events which created our very peoplehood.

As a nation that so emphasises family, we can begin to understand why so much attention was given to ensuring that children are at the centre of all aspects of the holiday and its traditions. The Torah recalls that before the actual Exodus took place, Pharaoh indicated that he would allow only the men to go free. Moshe immediately refuted that suggestion, responding, *"Uv'naareinu, uv'zkeyneynu nelech"* (With our youth and our elders we shall go free). The connection between parent and child is part of our ethos.

As any parent can attest, this understanding, while deeply beautiful and central to our existence, also represents a challenge. For educating the next generation is by no means an easy task and seemingly becomes more and more difficult as time goes on and the world becomes more modernised.

The ramifications of success or failure in this regard are tremendous – and in fact have a direct impact on the very future of our peoplehood. For if we fail to create that bond and convey the centrality of our national past to our current identity, we could tragically lose our children's connection with their heritage. And a child whose Jewish education falters can quickly become a child who loses interest in their faith and our ability to preserve that bond could be lost.

This challenge is, of course, not only a practical one. It might not be so difficult if we were required only to tell

Modern Exodus gives Passover new meaning

>>>Continued from page 22

extended this idea this year for those unable to travel to communal *sederim*," she said.

Chabad-Lubavitch's Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, directed by Rabbi Mayer Stambler, has prepared more than 50 000 seder kits, replete with *shmurah* matzah, grape juice, bitter herbs, Haggadah booklets, and everything else needed to celebrate the festival of freedom.

Rabbi Eli Wolff, who works at the Kfar Chabad command centre that's co-ordinating much of the humanitarian work in and around Ukraine, says the kits are a modified version of what has been sent out for the past two years when COVID-19 lockdowns largely shut down the grand communal seders that for decades were a hallmark of the Passover holiday.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused more than 4.2 million people to flee to neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, Moldova, and elsewhere.

The war against Ukrainian civilians and attacks on cities has caused an additional 6.5 million or more people to become internally displaced. They left their homes, but moved within Ukraine to other areas where they hope to be safer.

Countless Jewish organisations large and small from around the world have helped with refugees as the humanitarian crisis unfolds, bringing people together this week for the Passover holidays. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) will reach thousands of Ukrainian Jews in the country as well as in refugee centres in neighbouring countries.

The JDC has shipped more than two tons of matzah, more than 400 bottles of grape juice, and more than 700 pounds (318kg) of kosher-for-Passover food for use by refugees in Poland, Moldova, Hungary, and Romania. The organisation will also host a series of communal seders, in partnership with local Jewish communities, for refugees in those countries. The JDC will also provide Hebrew and Russian-language Haggadot for refugees attending these seders.

Jewish aid organisations say that there were up to 200 000 Jews living in Ukraine at the time of the invasion. The estimates tend to vary widely depending on how Jewish communities define who is Jewish.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy is the only Jewish president in the world outside Israel. He said it was important not to



the story of the Exodus, and hope for the best. But the commandment isn't just to teach our children passively, but to do our utmost to ensure a real connection to that which occurred to our people in generations past; to understand the importance of being a Jew. A child's

decision to continue on the path of religious observance or to embrace tradition is so very dependent on their understanding of their roots.

But if Jewish history has taught us anything, it's that we have never taken the easy way out. Those traditions

and a common identity have allowed us to survive and thrive in the face of obstacles that many might have thought completely insurmountable.

Indeed, Pesach demands that we don't seek the easy way out. We owe it to ourselves and our children to work harder

and invest more so as to show them the beauty that exists in our past and in those traditions. Anything less threatens not only our spiritual survival but sadly, our national survival as well.

I urge every parent and educator to recognise the beauty and power of the Pesach story. To focus on the importance and relevance of the story to our people today, just as it was when the Jewish people left Egypt all those years ago. Prioritise the message of *vehigadta levincha* (telling it to your children) even if it comes at the expense of other holiday preparations.

As you sit at the seder with your children and grandchildren, may we all be blessed to share the emotion, tradition, beauty, and power of the Pesach story for us and for generations to come.

Chag Pesach kasher v'sameach
• Rabbi David Stav is the founder and chairperson of Tzohar Rabbinical Organisation in Israel.



RABBI DAVID STAV

YOM HASHOAH 2022



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11:55 I reading of the names

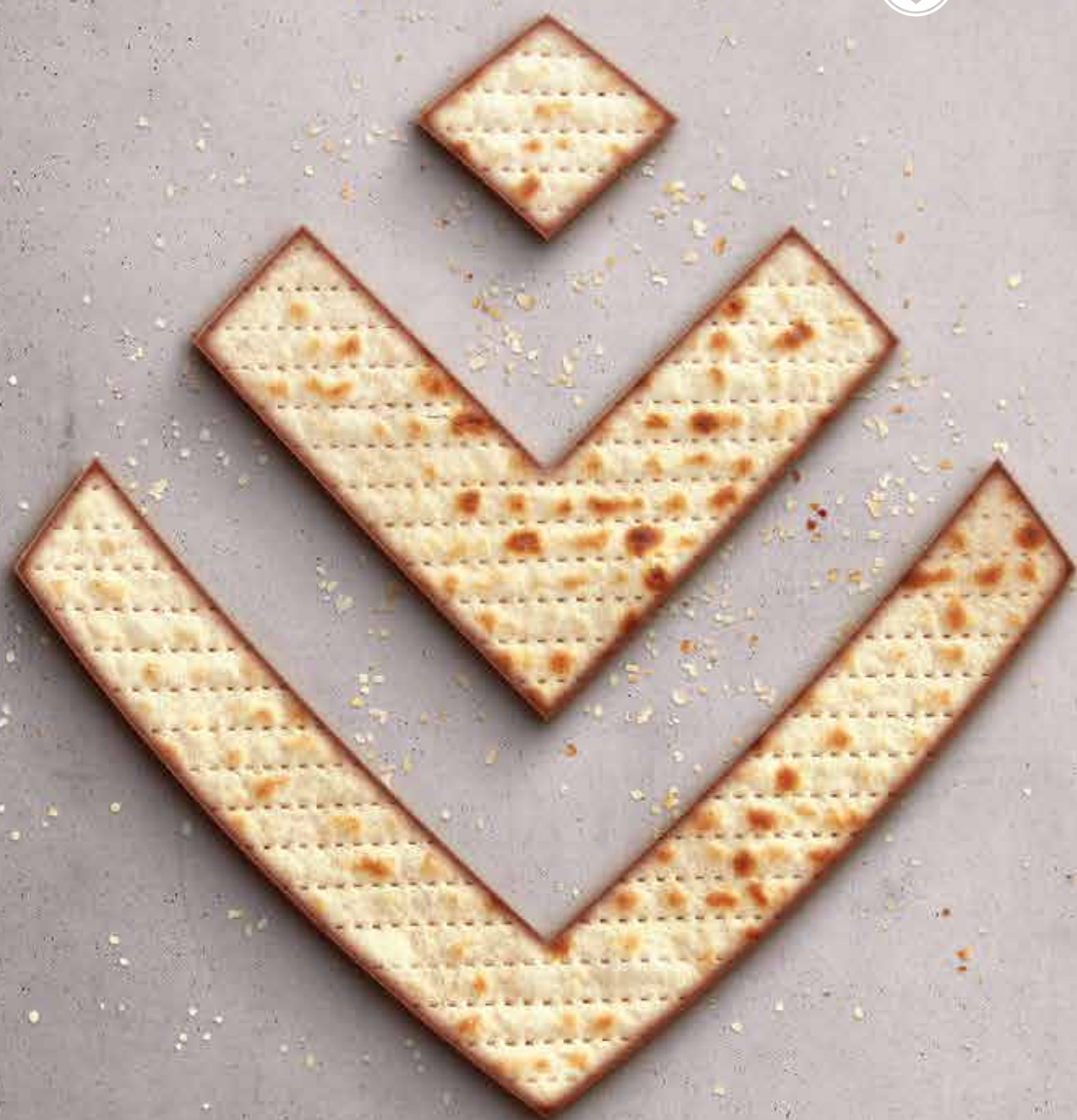
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Walls versus windows on path to freedom

OPINION

ADINA ROTH



When the beautiful cosmos blooms peak in the Delta and the leaves start to brown and fall from the trees, we know that Pesach is coming. It feels humbling to consider that two years ago, we were in a nationwide lockdown and marked the holiday of Pesach alone in our homes, not knowing what would come of our world.

Last year, with the emerging vaccine and the Delta wave looming on our winter horizon, we marked the holiday with cautious hope, spending some time with family members outside, carefully, responsibly. The Pesach of 2022 again feels different. Many of us have had the milder Omicron variant, and while we still sanitise, eat outside where necessary, and stay away from people if we have any symptoms, Pesach 2022 feels markedly different.

The pandemic put the world into a kind of narrow place, a *meitzar* for two years. Shul, family gatherings, and simchas were dealt a blow by the terror of an airborne disease. And so, this Passover feels like a renewed Exodus. We're being liberated from the strain, constraints, fear, and anxiety of the past two years. The question, however, is what next? The COVID-19 pandemic has been a defining moment for our times. But just as Noah left the ark and had to re-envision life on planet earth, we too are invited to ponder what kind of lives we want to live in a post-pandemic world and what kind of selves we want to be.

Our ancient sages also explored the question of how to inhabit newfound freedom. The pivotal moment of the Israelites' freedom began when the waters of the Sea of Reeds split and the Jewish people crossed over on dry land. We're told in Exodus, "The waters were for them a wall, on their right and on their left." In a midrashic work called Pesikta d'Rav

Kahana, there's a debate about what these watery walls looked like. Rabbi Yochanan said the walls looked like a well-sealed lattice, an impervious and opaque net, so as to keep the waters out. A wave of high waters towering over people could be a



terrifying spectre. Yochanan renders the waters safe, imagining them as a wall that's impenetrable and sturdy. In a very unusual move, instead of a rabbi sparring with Yochanan, a female "sprite" enters the walls of the bet midrash. There's at least 1 500 years difference between her and Yochanan as the woman who sits alongside him is Serach, the daughter of Asher, and granddaughter of Jacob. Serach responds to Yochanan, "I was there, and the walls looked like shining/transparent windows." As Yochanan and Serach contemplate the moment the Israelites begin their walk to freedom, they imagine the early footsteps of freedom in different ways.

What does freedom look like? For Yochanan,

freedom looks like an impervious wall: there's something terrifying about the water and so as the people walk to freedom, there are strong walls to keep the people on the inside safe and the outside where it belongs. Serach sees windows instead of walls, which enables her to see that which is outside. Her sense of freedom is enhanced by what she sees beyond her own experience. And Serach's windows are shining, she sees light in the water, a kind of luminescence. For her, freedom is more than just safety from the Egyptians and the waters. Freedom is also about the courage to look to the water, the light, and the enormous fluidity of life that lies beyond.

This year, as we mark our celebration of freedom, we might be inclined to sing triumphant songs about how the pandemic is over and connect it to our leaving Egypt all those years ago. I would venture to call that the way of Yochanan. For him, we would look to our particular Jewish story and reinforce safety nets between us and the outside world. In Yochanan's view, freedom still requires walls, physical and metaphorical. Freedom is focused on our personal story and where we are, but we don't look beyond ourselves. We're grateful to be out of Egypt, feel triumph that we have won, and revel in a feeling of safety.

Walls may have their place, and yet from the Berlin wall to the "almost" wall between the United States and Mexico, we might wonder whether walls allow for our highest freedoms. In South Africa, walls are an interesting motif. They make us feel safe and at the same time, are a constant reminder of the fact

that we're not fully free and that we live in isolated communities, disconnected from each other.

An alternate way to experience freedom is the way of Serach *bat* Asher. As she walked to freedom, hers was the way of shining windows. A window lets the outside in. As Serach saw windows that connected her to the vast ocean of life, she included the Jewish story and extended beyond it.

If we were to look outside our "windows" and beyond our personal stories this year, we would see so much that's still not free in our world: we would see the suffering of people in Ukraine; the plight of millions of refugees traveling the paths of our planet, displaced and looking for home. We might see the worsening poverty of our own fellow South Africans; the terrifying spectre of climate change and global warming. We would see Israelis who are suffering another round of terror; and more.

After a two-year pandemic, we might feel too fatigued to extend ourselves to see humanity through our windows. Like Yochanan, we might choose to rely on impervious walls and turn inward, to ourselves and our loved ones. Yet, if we turn the walls into windows, we have the opportunity to connect our Pesach story both to the suffering and the magnificence of our global village. If there's one thing we've learned from this pandemic, it's that humans and animals alike share an indivisible fate on planet earth. The arc of our Jewish stories interweaves with the story of humanity. Our courage to see windows, not walls, is the path to true and full freedom and is the type of compassion upon which our very survival on this planet depends.

• *Adina Roth is a clinical psychologist in private practice and a teacher of Jewish Studies. She runs an independent Barmitzvah and Batmitzvah programme in Johannesburg, and teaches Tanach to adults.*



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Making your mark on the seder plate

TALI FEINBERG

The seder plate takes centre stage on our Pesach tables, playing a crucial role in bringing the story of the Exodus to life. But did you ever stop to think that you could add items to the plate – foods that symbolise something important to you and represent the reality of our modern world? The Passover story is about freedom, and many Jews around the world have taken to adding items to protest forms of slavery or oppression in the 21st century.

This year, with refugees fleeing the brutal invasion of Ukraine, this becomes even more relevant and poignant. Olives have been introduced to the seder plate to symbolise the hope for peace (as they come from the olive branch), and placing olives on the seder plate this year brings to the fore the tragedy of the man-made catastrophe playing out in Europe.

As one Jewish resource says, “The Jewish community in Ukraine isn’t reclining tonight. They aren’t recounting the story of slavery, plagues, and ultimately finding freedom. Instead, they are the ones that are running or fighting for their lives. Instead of counting plagues, they are counting their dead. There’s literally no time for their bread to rise. Our people have been here before. The tragedy of lives ruined and the trauma that will live on for generations is heavy in the air, like smoke from the bombs are fires that burn nearby.”

The tradition of adding to the seder plate isn’t new, and some seder plates are now being made with extra spaces for such additions. “We put an orange on our seder plate,” says local Jewish educator Adina Roth. She explains that this originated with people who wanted to represent the struggles of living freely as a LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) person, but has since come to represent all forms of oppression. It’s commonly added to seder plates around the world.

Over the past two years, many Jews have made additions to their seder plates to symbolise the loss of life and freedom during the pandemic. Roth asked her students what they would put on it, “so we could know we were in the age of pandemic and therefore in a particular type of restriction”, she says. Placing something on the plate that represents the millions of lives lost is a powerful way of honouring them.

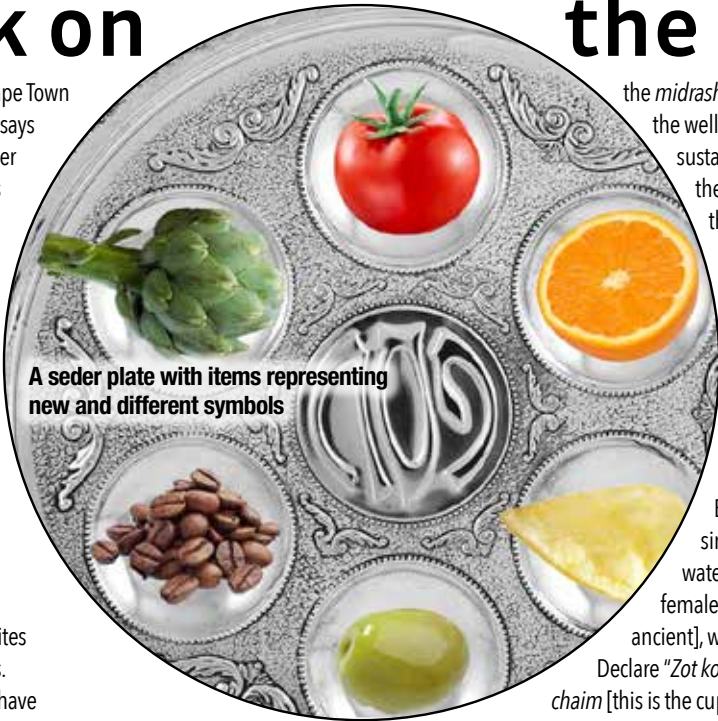
Roth also asks her students “what they would put on the seder plate to tell the South African story, which is its own freedom story”.

As Roth demonstrates, this is an opportunity for children and teenagers to play a vital role in the seder, and to be included in a discussion about what freedom means to them.

Rabbi Greg Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation says placing “Miriam’s cup” on the seder table is one way of honouring this heroine who is often forgotten in the sweeping drama of the Exodus.

“There would be no Moses without Miriam,” he points out. “It was she who watched him down the Nile River and negotiated with Pharaoh’s daughter to get Yocheved, his mother, to be his wet-nurse. It’s none other than Miriam that our tradition understands was responsible for the entire supply of water in the desert as the Israelites wandered through the wilderness.

“So here’s a custom that many have started to include on their seder tables,” he says. “Decorate a beautiful cup for Miriam and give it a place of honour at the centre



A seder plate with items representing new and different symbols

of the table. At a suitable moment in the evening, tell a few Miriam tales and explain

the *midrash* that Miriam provided the well of water that sustained the Israelites in their 40-year trek around the Sinai Peninsula.

“Ask everyone to pour a little bit of water from their own glasses in turn into Miriam’s cup in celebration of the unsung female heroines of the Exodus and of women since. As they pour the water, let them name a female ancestor [recent or ancient], who has inspired them. Declare “*Zot kos Miriam, kos mayyim chaim* [this is the cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters]” and place it next to Elijah’s cup on the table.”

There are many other creative additions

to the seder plate. People have added chocolate, coffee, or cocoa beans to draw attention to forced child labour in the chocolate and coffee industries.

Some who feel comfortable adding potatoes have added them to represent the continuous exodus of Jews from oppressive regions. This is because when Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel via Operation Solomon in 1991, they were so ill and emaciated, they couldn’t stomach a substantial meal. Instead, doctors fed them boiled potatoes and rice. It’s become customary to place boiled potatoes alongside the green vegetable – *karpas* – that we dip in salt water.

Roth says many South African Jews don’t know about the possibility of adding to the seder plate. But she believes it’s something that people can find incredibly meaningful, and can help participants of all ages become more involved and invested in the seder.

The fine art of knitting and Jewish resilience

TANYA SINGER – JTA

Every Passover for the past 75 years, Helena Weinstock Weinrauch, a 97-year-old Holocaust survivor, has worn a vibrant blue hand-knit sweater to the first seder, which her neighbour hosts in her Upper West Side apartment building.

The sweater is a chic, 1940s number with fluffy angora sleeves, a sparkling metallic blue bodice and a delicate, scalloped V-neck. But this is no ordinary fashion statement. The sweater was knitted by Helena’s friend, Ann Rothman, who stayed alive during the Holocaust by knitting for Nazi wives while a prisoner in the Lodz Ghetto.

Rothman was motivated to survive and, as Weinrauch tells it, “She became known in the ghetto. She was so good at knitting that she knitted coats for the wives of the German people and it became known that Ann can knit skirts, a blouse – anything you want, she can knit it.”

When I first met Weinrauch in person in December 2021, I was struck by her classic, old Hollywood-like glamor, her storytelling, and her pride in the many sweaters her friend had knit for her throughout their decades of friendship.

When she spoke of her brilliant blue Passover sweater – which she treats as a ritual object – she seemed to sparkle like its bright blue bodice. When neighbours or other seder-goers in her building noticed her unusual sweater, she’d say, “It’s the Passover sweater,” as if everyone has one.

After meeting Weinrauch, I was convinced that she was onto something: Everyone should have a Passover sweater – and not just because it’s beautiful and festive. For Weinrauch, the sweater holds the power of remembrance, freedom, and connection.

And she’s far from the only one to make the connection between crafting, resilience, and religious observance. In her 2020 book *Painted Pomegranates and Needlepoint Rabbis*, Jodi Eichler-Levine, Berman Professor of Jewish

Civilization at Lehigh University, draws upon ethnography to study the power of craft for the Jewish people. “If we look at Judaism as an ever-evolving process, then Jewish crafts – which are all about process – can help us to see how many vital Jewish practices take place outside of synagogues,” she told me. She also reflects on the power of crafted objects, describing them as “talismans of safety and resilience”.

As Eichler-Levine notes, “Crafting is an act of generative resilience that fosters the survival of both giver and recipient.”

These words resonate with me deeply on a personal level. Knitting became central to my healing after my 13-year-old son underwent brain surgery in January 2017. I left my career behind and assumed the role of full-time mother of a child in constant pain. Over the course of his long recovery, knitting, I realised, was the key to stitching myself and my family back together.

After a long, three-month period of recovery, my son returned to school. Shortly afterwards, I read a story about Weinrauch in *Moment Magazine*. It struck a nerve. It combined my passions for all things Jewish, knitting, and the incredible juxtaposition of the two, igniting within me a drive to know more. I wondered how women knit to stay alive, what other knitted objects I might find. I launched a project, Knitting Hope, which aims to share the ways knitting or knitted objects helped women to resist, remember those they lost, and find renewal after the horrors of the Holocaust.

I knew, straight away, that Weinrauch’s Passover sweater would be an important knitting project to share with the fledgling community of knitters, survivors, and supporters that I was building. Weinrauch’s life, after all, is a lesson in resilience: She survived a three-day-long interrogation by the Gestapo, three concentration camps, the Death March from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, and near-death starvation. Her parents, sister, and 16 other family members

didn’t.

But Weinrauch didn’t just survive the horrors of the Holocaust – she built a life filled with love and beauty. When the war ended, she was nursed back to health in Sweden, which took thousands of Jewish refugees. “The Swedish people restored my faith in humanity,” she said, adding that she’ll “never forget their humanity”.

Not one to wallow after the death of her daughter, Arlene, and husband, Joseph, in 2013, when a flier from a local dance studio landed in her mailbox, Weinrauch, then 88, decided to learn ballroom dancing – which enabled her to feel joy in moving to music. These days, her closets overflow with beautiful, beaded gowns, and every room in her apartment features photos of her beaming at ballroom dance events. “As long as I can walk, I will dance,” she quips.

In hopes of preserving other aspects of her incredible story – and, of course, that fabulous sweater – I reached out to Chicago-based knitwear designer Alix Kramer and asked her to develop a knitting pattern as a homage to the Passover sweater. She said yes.

“As a Jewish knitwear designer, Jewish advocacy has always been a passion, especially when it comes to carving out space in the vast knitting community for Jewish patterns to thrive,” she told me. “I knew immediately that this could be a ‘pattern to launch a thousand ships’, so to speak. The idea of a blue sweater revolution, with blue sweaters at every seder to symbolise resistance, hope, and community, was what ultimately called me to the project.”

The Dayenu pattern, as we’ve named it, created as a contemporary homage to Weinrauch’s original sweater, is now available on the popular knitting site Ravelry and on Payhip. The cost is \$10 (R145), and 20% of pattern sales will be donated to Kavod, an organisation that provides emergency aid like food and medicine to Holocaust survivors.

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The moreish, the merrier

LAUREN BOOKLIN

Chocolate chip cookies

I served these with ice-cream last Friday night. My family gobbled them up, and no one believed me when I said they were Pesachdik. There's a kosher for Pesach *dulce de leche* sauce on the shelves. I don't believe you can get a yummiier dessert than a scoop of ice-cream sandwiched between two biscuits topped with a drizzle of *dulce de leche*.



Ingredients

- ❖ 2¾ cups almond flour
- ❖ 2 tsp Pesach baking powder
- ❖ ¼ tsp salt
- ❖ ⅔ cup of oil
- ❖ 1 cup of sugar
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 1 tsp vanilla essence
- ❖ 1 cup chocolate chips

Method

- ❖ Preheat your oven to 170 degrees centigrade, and line two baking sheets with baking paper.
- ❖ Combine almond flour, baking powder,

and salt in a bowl. Whisk oil and sugar together very well. Add the egg and vanilla essence. Add in the dry ingredients, and mix until combined. Finally, stir in the chocolate chips.

- ❖ Roll into 4cm balls and space them 4cm apart on the baking sheet. Bake for 15-18 minutes until they are lightly golden. Allow the biscuits to cool on the baking sheet before lifting them.

Cauliballs with sweet chilli sauce

These can be made dairy by adding a quarter of a cup of grated Parmesan cheese. They are totally moreish, and I didn't miss my carbs for one second.

Ingredients

- ❖ 650g cauliflower (or stalks)
- ❖ 1 onion
- ❖ 1 clove of garlic
- ❖ 2 Tbsp parsley
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ❖ 1 tsp salt
- ❖ ¼ tsp black pepper
- ❖ ½ tsp paprika
- ❖ ¾ cups of almond flour

Method

- ❖ Preheat oven to 200 degrees centigrade.
- ❖ Line a large baking sheet with baking paper, and grease lightly with olive oil.
- ❖ Boil the cauliflower for 12-15 minutes until soft. Mash with a fork or preferably in a food processor. (Don't moosh it, it must be slightly chunky). Chop the onion, parsley, and garlic, and add this to the cauliflower together with the other ingredients.
- ❖ With damp hands, shape into 4cm balls. Bake



Cauliballs with sweet chilli sauce

- for 15 minutes.
- ❖ After 15 minutes, drizzle lightly with olive oil and return them to the oven for another 15-18 minutes.
- ❖ Allow them to remain on the tray for a few minutes and then lift them off carefully with a spatula

Sweet chilli dipping sauce

Ingredients

- ❖ 12 red chillies seeded
- ❖ 3 long red peppers
- ❖ 2 cloves of garlic
- ❖ 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ❖ 1 cup sugar
- ❖ 1 cup vinegar
- ❖ ¼ tsp ginger
- ❖ ¼ tsp paprika
- ❖ ½ tsp salt

Method

Place all the ingredients in your food processor and blitz until smooth. Pour into a pot and heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Gradually bring to the boil, and stir until syrupy.

Cooing over (chocolate) salmon salad

SHARON GLASS

Hot smoked salmon salad with quinoa and lemon dressing

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 small packet butter or cos lettuce
- ❖ ½ cup quinoa, cooked for about 20 minutes
- ❖ 250g hot smoked salmon or smoked salmon, broken into pieces or strips
- ❖ 1 packet asparagus, blanched and cut into pieces
- ❖ ½ English cucumber, ribboned
- ❖ 3-4 spring onions, sliced on the diagonal
- ❖ 1 avocado, fanned
- ❖ ⅓ cup hazelnuts or other nuts toasted and coarsely chopped
- onion sprinkles or toasted desiccated coconut

Method

- ❖ Arrange the lettuce on a platter. Sprinkle the quinoa over the lettuce. Arrange the remaining ingredients in sections on top of the quinoa and lettuce except for the hazelnuts. Sprinkle those on just before serving.
- ❖ Spoon over dressing just before serving.

Dressing

- ❖ ½ cup olive oil
- ❖ 2 Tbsp lemon rind
- ❖ ⅓ cup lemon juice



Hot smoked salmon salad

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crepes and sumptuous

- ❖ 3 Tbsp Italian parsley, chopped
 - ❖ ½ tsp minced garlic
 - ❖ pinch chilli
 - ❖ salt and pepper

Whisk all ingredients together. Set aside until ready to use. Serves 4-6
- together until smooth.

 - ❖ Heat a frying pan and spray with non-stick spray or rub with coconut oil.
 - ❖ Pour some batter into the pan when very hot, and make very thin crepes.

Makes about 10.

Chocolate Pesach crepe slices

Crepes Ingredients

- ❖ ¼ cup coconut flour – process the desiccated coconut until it's fine
- ❖ ¾ cup potato flour or starch
- ❖ 2 tsp baking powder
- ❖ 1 cup water or milk
- ❖ 2 Tbsp sunflower oil or coconut oil
- ❖ 4 jumbo eggs
- ❖ pinch of salt

Method

- ❖ Whisk or blend everything

Filling Ingredients

- ❖ 250g dark chocolate, melted
- ❖ 1 Tbsp oil, or
- ❖ Elite pareve chocolate spread
- ❖ Cinnamon sugar
- ❖ Icing sugar

Method

- ❖ Lay the crepes on a board – about four to six at a time.
- ❖ Melt the chocolate, and add the oil. Then spread over the crepes. Roll them up.
- ❖ Cut them into 2cm slices and place cut side up in an oiled ovenproof dish. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar and bake for about 10 minutes

in a preheated 160 degrees centigrade oven. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with icing sugar before serving. Serve warm.

- ❖ Crepes can be made up to two days before and refrigerated.

Makes 8-10 crepes.



Going green and ginger for the holidays

So often on Pesach we want to eat some of our favourite dishes or cakes from the rest of the year. Here's **Romi Rabinowitz's** Pesachdike green goddess salad and ginger cake. The green goddess salad is so healthy and fresh, you'll make this to accompany meals all year round. Chag Pesach Sameach.

Green Goddess Salad

Ingredients

- ❖ 1 green cabbage shredded (or iceberg lettuce)
- ❖ 3 cucumbers thinly sliced or diced
- ❖ 1 bunch of spring onions, chopped

Dressing

- ❖ Blend together the following ingredients in a food processor:
- ❖ Juice of two lemons
- ❖ ¼ cup olive oil
- ❖ 2 Tbsp vinegar
- ❖ 1 small shallot or half a red onion
- ❖ ½ cup chives
- ❖ ¼ cup cashews or almonds
- ❖ 1 cup torn fresh basil
- ❖ 1 cup fresh spinach
- ❖ (If making a milk meal, add ½ cup parmesan cheese, if it's a meat meal, leave it out)
- ❖ 1 tsp salt

Method

- ❖ Put all your salad ingredients into your serving bowl and pour over the dressing.
- ❖ Toss together mixing very well.
- ❖ Serve and enjoy!

Ginger Cake

My fresh ginger cake is a Pesach staple, and always delicious. A beautiful option for a dessert at the seder or a tea-time treat during the week. Your guests will be amazed that it's Pesachdik.

Ingredients

- ❖ 5 eggs
- ❖ 1 cup sugar
- ❖ 5 Tbsp Orley Whip or milk
- ❖ 4 Tbsp margarine or butter
- ❖ 1 Tbsp syrup
- ❖ 1 tsp ginger
- ❖ 5 Tbsp cake meal
- ❖ 3 Tbsp potato flour

Method

- ❖ Beat eggs and sugar together until creamy, add cake meal and potato flour.
- ❖ Bring margarine or butter, Orley whip or milk and syrup to the boil. Simmer until melted.
- ❖ Add into egg mixture and mix by hand. Add ginger. Pour into lined loaf tin. Bake at 180 degrees centigrade for about 25 minutes.



MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland. Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important thing is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

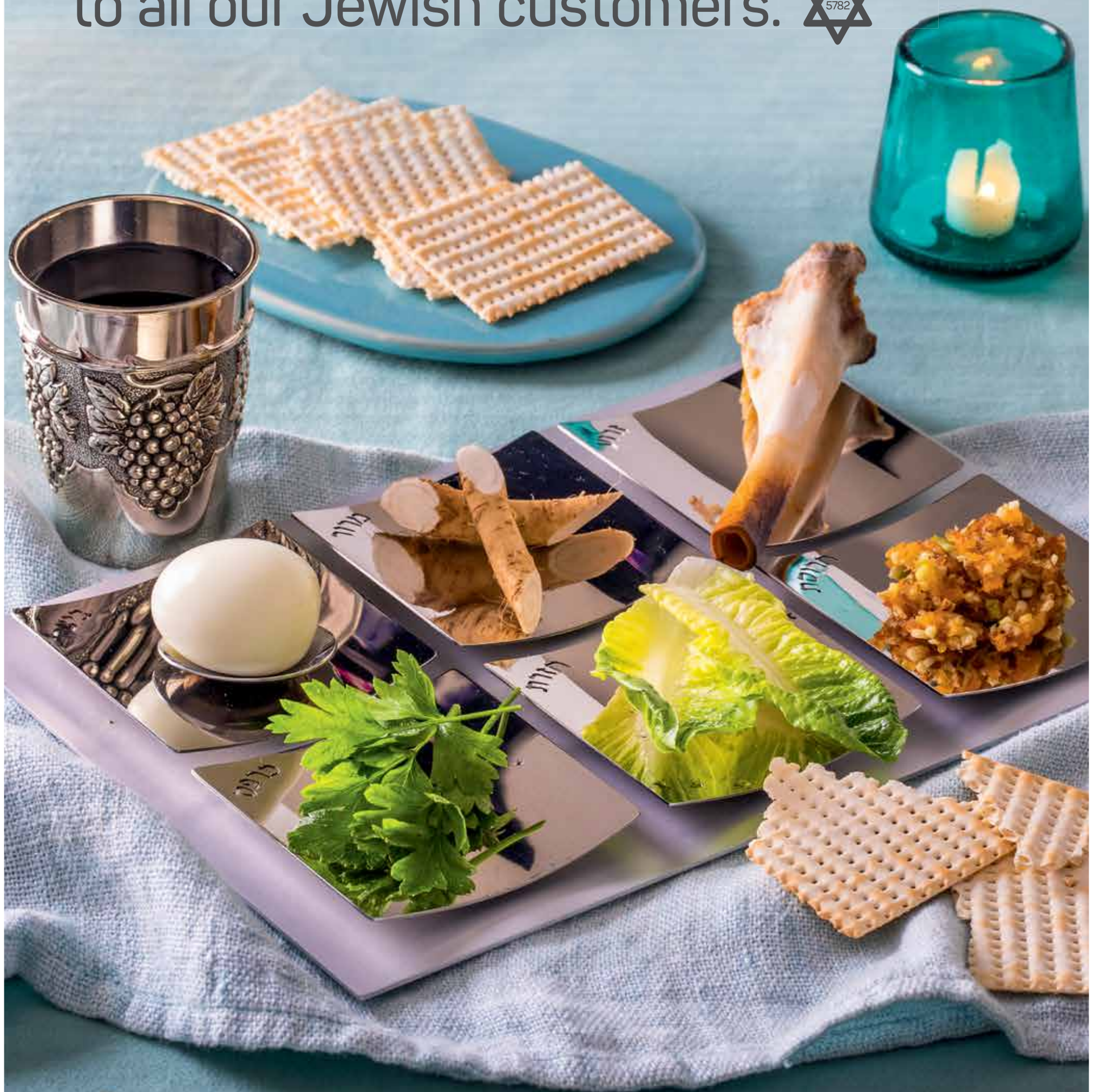
application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

Chag Sameach

to all our Jewish customers. 



Captivating artworks set us free

As we're gearing up for Pesach in a world where COVID-19 is becoming part of our day-to-day lives and the war in Ukraine continues, we asked Jewish schools to get creative kids to work on their vision for a cover for our Pesach 2022 edition. We got some fabulous work.

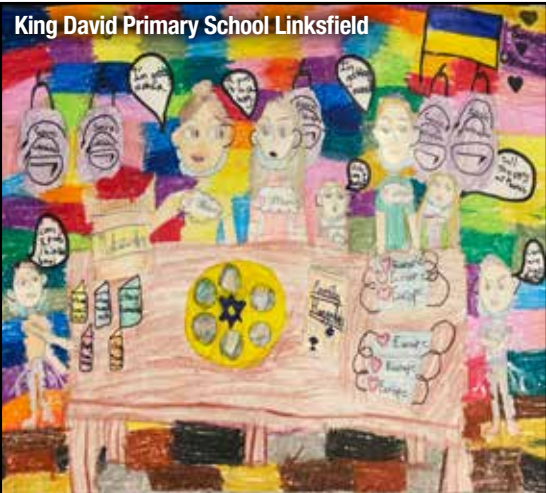
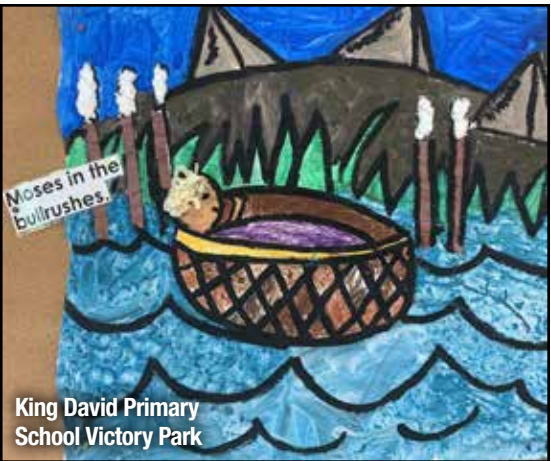
We were unanimous about the winner. Tvi Bronstein and Aharon Zwick from Torah Academy said so much in their artwork, which captured people trying to escape COVID-19 and the war in Eastern Europe in a way that's clearly reminiscent of Jews fleeing Egypt in the time of Moses.

Our second choice was Sydenham Pre-

Primary School, which created a joyous rendition of a full family Pesach seder – like we haven't been able to have for two years – without forgetting the coronavirus germs and the Ukrainian flag and flower to remind us of the war.

In third position, we have King David Pre-Primary School Victory Park, with a golden pharaoh with creative coronavirus germs hovering all around him.

We have put all the schools' beautiful creations up for you to see. We're so proud of all of our young artists! Thank you for your effort, and *chag Pesach sameach* – editor.



Why is this chicken different from all the other chickens?

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Commencing 2023 the new Principal will:

- Be a strong educator with demonstrated leadership experience
- Promote and advocate for the College, its students, families and community, driving excellence in both Jewish and General Studies
- Have a growth mindset and strive for excellence

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Persecution, pestilence, flight – too many similarities

OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY



So, here we are again ... running away. Two years ago, we all ran into our houses; we shut down our lives; we isolated; and we huddled in fear as an invisible enemy, unseen to the naked eye, started chasing after us.

The upheaval was enormous, the cost of lives unfathomable, and the fear and anxiety was debilitating.

And just when we're about to start believing that maybe things can go back to normal, we start running away again. This time the enemy is visible, and now we just watch our TV screens as four million people are displaced – families, loved ones, all become refugees in a matter of a month. It would be so easy to say that this has nothing to do with us, but slowly, the tsunami of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is making waves everywhere. Inflation has blown its top, energy and food prices have gone crazy and again, we live anxiously, worrying about what tomorrow will bring.

Nothing in this world is haphazard or coincidental. The world for COVID-19 in Hebrew is *ko-ro-na*; the word for Ukraine in Hebrew is *Uk-ray-n*. Any student of the Hebrew language knows that to understand a word, one must investigate the three-lettered root of the word, known as the *shoresh*.

How crazy is it that corona and Ukraine both have the *shoresh koof-raish-nun* קרן (keren). What's keren? It can mean horn, ray, or light.

Let's be honest, the COVID-19 and Ukrainian crises haven't been a walk in the park. A ray of light? Nah. And whose horn is blowing? The belligerent Vladimir Putin? The desperate Volodymyr Zelenskyy?

Let's travel back in time to the year 2448. The Jews



Ukrainian refugees crossing the border to safety

have been enslaved for 210 years. Their suffering has reached a crescendo, and they can no longer take the pain and anguish of slavery. Moses gets dispatched to redeem the slaves from the hands of Pharaoh. We all know the story ... things got worse, not better! Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and the civilised Egyptian culture was thrown into turmoil. Plague after plague, calamity after calamity hit the country.

Eventually, the Jews were told to isolate in their houses, "for the Angel of Death will visit upon the country". The final blow of the hammer came down. As the first-born Egyptian corpses lay strewn everywhere, Pharaoh himself came running in the middle of the night (in his pyjamas!) and said, "Leave!" And the Children of Israel ran in such haste, they didn't even have

time to bake their bread.

To me, there's something happening here. It's kind of *déjà vu*. Then again, it's not just a feeling. We're taught in Micha 7:15 that "וְהָיָה יְמִיךָ, וְאֵלֶיךָ וּנְאֻרָא, סִדְרָא, וְרָאָה" (*Just like in the days of going out of Egypt, I will show you wonders.*)

We're promised that the prototype of Egyptian exile and consequent redemption will once again happen in our time as we herald in an era of Mashiach, which promises redemption from all that's negative in the world. It will be a time when we'll live in

government will turn to heresy, and no one will be qualified to give rebuke. The wisdom of scholars will deteriorate, people who fear sin will be despised, and truth will not be found. Young people will shame their elders, old men having to stand up for the young."

Gosh, sounds like a surprisingly good description of 2022. Governments are corrupt; inflation has gone crazy wholesome, strong leadership is nowhere to be found; believers in morality and integrity are indeed, despised and mocked; children are chutzpadik; and will "The Truth" please stand up? You're nowhere to be found!

So, here's a sobering, but powerful idea. It's the end of the quote from the statement of the Talmud (Sotah 49B) quoted above: "There is no one upon whom we can rely except for our Father in heaven."

There you have it. Simple! That's our ray of light, our horn. Spread the message.

The birthing of Mashiach is coming with contractions that are painful. But there's a reward at the end of it all – the birth of a beautiful world filled with the light of G-d, and garnished with health, wealth, happiness, and peace. Just trust our Father in heaven (and don't rely on your government, your money, your education ... or anything else, for that matter).

Our Father in heaven is waiting for us, trust in Him alone, and then, this Pesach, we'll hopefully individually and collectively move from exile to redemption.

Chag Sameach, a kosher and happy Pesach to everyone!

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

Freedom seder celebrates *Mensches in the Trenches*

STEVEN GRUZZ

In South Africa, April is Freedom Month, celebrating the election on 27 April 1994 that ushered in democracy. This year, Pesach, Easter, and Ramadan all occur in April, providing an ideal opportunity to reflect on what freedom means for South African Jews, Christians, Muslims, and beyond.

On 12 April, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) did just that, hosting a Freedom Seder at The Empire in Parktown, with a spectacular view of the Brixton Tower and western Johannesburg at sunset. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, this is the first time in three years that the SAJBD was able to hold this special seder. More than 100 people attended from the Jewish community, government, political parties, other religious organisations, foreign embassies, and the media.

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn said, "Pesach is usually in March, which is Human Rights Month. It was so important to be able hold the seder again this year,

especially in Freedom Month."

SAJBD Vice-President Mary Kluk explained *Ha-Lachma*, the Aramaic prayer that intones, "Whoever is hungry, let him eat, whoever is needy, let him come celebrate Pesach." She highlighted that the SAJBD had facilitated the transfer of more than R20 million to "people who felt forgotten" in South Africa during the pandemic, in all nine provinces, and more than R500 000 for relief in Ukraine.

Rabbi David Hasdan emphasised the "experiential learning" imbedded in the seder, which appeals to all our senses. He stressed the importance of the seder taking place in the home, "the building block of education", as parents pass down the story of the Exodus and the values it explores to their children.

He held up a piece of matzah baked in Ukraine, "the breadbasket of the world", and urged participants to think about the chaos once again engulfing Europe.

Each attendee received a 12-page customised haggadah explaining the traditions of the seder. The four questions, the *Ma Nishtana*, were sung, and the

delicious seder meal.

In his address, Dr Sydney Mufamadi, national security advisor to President Cyril Ramaphosa, reflected on the new book,



Dr Sydney Mufamadi

Mensches in the Trenches: Jewish foot soldiers in the Anti-apartheid Struggle, written by Jonathan Ancer. "It spotlights the history of some Jewish South Africans involved in the struggle for democratic change in South Africa," he said. "Their forebears lived in the ghettos of Europe; my forebears lived in the ghettos of South Africa, in the townships, the native

symbolism of matzah, maror, and charoset were explained – unleavened bread baked in haste before leaving Egypt, the bitterness of slavery, and the mortar holding slaves' bricks together. We each also got our own seder plate, with matzah, boiled egg, bitter herbs (not bitter in the slightest), and charoset, and a

reserves, the homelands."

Mufamadi spoke of how these heroes were hounded by the apartheid regime and its security police. They faced banning orders, arrest, and exile. "They had a shared fundamental antipathy to injustice," he said, noting how he was groomed for service to his country by

some of them.

"We owe it to their memory to mobilise in defence of democracy," Mufamadi said. "A reset is urgently necessary, and it can't be the sole project of the political class. Rebuilding South Africa is a permanent work in progress. It requires all hands on deck."

On what he termed "the Russia-Ukraine debacle" he said South Africa's position was "misrepresented" and that it desperately wanted a settlement to the conflict and robust debate to flourish. He said South Africa valued "pluri-vocal discourse" on international affairs. "We can't have a world order built on the basis of exclusion," Mufamadi said.

In the words of social activist Leonard Fein quoted in the special haggadah, "For all the reversals and all the stumbling-blocks, for all the blood and all the hurt, hope still dances within us. That's who we are and that's what the seder is about. For the slaves do become free and the tyrants are destroyed. Once it was by miracles, today it's by defiance and devotion."



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Pesach, Easter, and Ramadan – we’re all connected

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



This year, Pesach and Easter fall on the same weekend. It’s also during the month of Ramadan. So the three Abrahamic faiths are all marking holy time together. What do they have in common, what’s different, and what should we take away from this coinciding of dates?

First, let’s start with the mood. Ramadan is serious – it’s daily fasting, introspection, striving with oneself to be a better person. Think an “Elul and high holy days” mood. Easter seems to outsiders to be upbeat, with the Easter egg hunts and all, but actually, it marks the close of the 40-day Lent period, a time like Ramadan of abstinence and repentance. Even though it’s called “Good Friday”, the first day of Easter is actually the day Christians commemorate Jesus’s death. And Easter Sunday, when it’s believed that Jesus rose again, isn’t marked with celebration and lots of food and wine, it’s actually spent in Church with lots of meaningful prayer time.

Here’s where Judaism differs to its siblings this time around. Pesach is upbeat and celebratory right the way through because we were taken out from slavery and rescued from the oppression of Pharoah. We have seder night, tell stories, and fill up on good food and wine, (lots of it, four cups for everyone), and spend the week on semi-holiday.

Speaking of food, there are some important connections and differences here too. Ramadan is a daytime fast, but come sundown, there’s lots to eat. And it starts traditionally with dates. Dates are a symbol of springtime and many Jews, especially Sefardim, include dates in their traditional charoset recipes. Christians, as we said, get Easter eggs, which sound a lot more fun than a boiled egg in salt water (which is surprisingly tasty after a long chunk of seder reading and easier on the palette than the not-so-tasty Hillel sandwich), but there’s of course that common egg-theme of spring, hope, and rebirth to both. They get chocolate bunnies, which is pretty cool, and neither the Muslims nor the Jews have rabbits in sight, but it’s the Jews and the Muslims that have the most food restriction – for Muslims, a month of fasting, and for us, no pizza or bagels and instead perforated cardboard for a week. *Lechem oni*, the bread of affliction. Compensated by the prize for the *afikomen*, which seems to rise radically in Pesach-inflation each year. And then there’s the year that Uncle Abe forgot where he hid the matzah, and everyone got roped into the hunt. Reminiscent of Easter egg hunts after all.

Which brings us to the hunt for *chameitz*. On the night before seder night, Jews get out their candles, feathers, and spoons and look for the last bits of *chameitz* that have been craftily hid in the kitchen and lounge. For kids, this is the best part, but here’s a big tip. Make a note of where you hid those pesky pieces of *chameitz*. Inevitably, there’s that last-minute panic when nine out of 10 pieces are found and no-one remembers where the 10th is. The big difference to an Easter egg hunt is that we don’t get to eat those found pieces of *chameitz*. We throw them on the braai the next morning with the accompanying Aramaic declaration of annulment, and head off to get the seder ready.

At the seder, we re-tell the story of the Exodus in an interesting and roundabout way with songs and tangential *midrashim* about how Rabbi Akiva thinks it wasn’t just 10 but 50 plagues, and how Rabbi Elazar’s hair went grey. But Islam is equally interested in the events of the Exodus. The Qur’an mentions Moses more than any other prophet (by the way, Moses isn’t mentioned at all in the telling of the Exodus in the Haggadah) and has multiple narratives of his story including repeated descriptions of the Exodus from Egypt and the wanderings of the Israelites



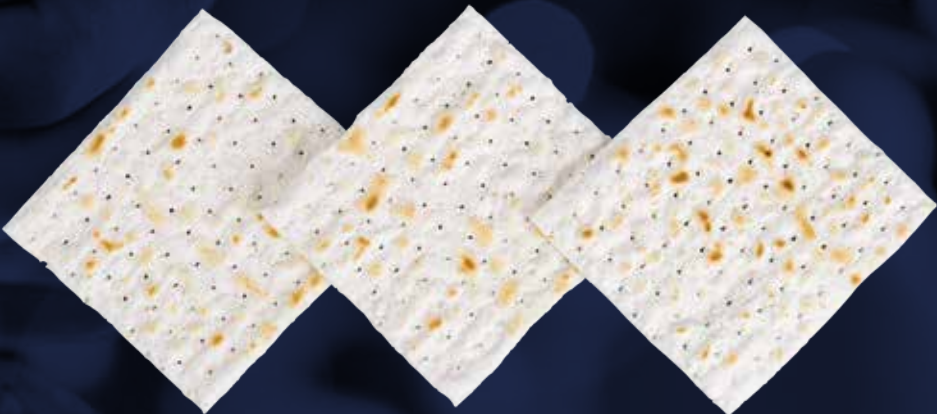
in the desert. And even though there’s much debate about this among scholars, many believe that Jesus’s Last Supper was, in fact, a Pesach seder.


So many interconnecting similarities and differences remind us that we’re all children of Avraham, and this month especially, we should find ways to connect to each other and wish blessings for the holy days ahead.

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is part of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.

From our family to yours

Wishing you a Chag Pesach Sameach.



 CAPITAL APPRECIATION

Dayenu and the anatomy of gratitude

OPINION **RABBA SARA HURWITZ**



“Anatomy of Gratitude” is Brother David Steindl-Rast, a 90-year-old Benedictine monk’s formulation of how to be grateful, a practice increasingly explored by scientists and physicians as a key to joy and wellness. I was intrigued. The phrase put into words the way I have always thought about gratitude in Judaism as a full-bodied experience. We don’t just say thank you to Hashem, it’s embedded into every formal prayer service. And we don’t just say words, we bend our bodies at the waist as we say “*Modim anachnu lach*” (Thank you, G-d.) I always imagined that we feel such an overwhelming sense of gratitude that it bubbles up inside us, swirling towards the surface, causing our bodies to bow, spilling out our gratitude directly to the Almighty.

This, I believe, is the intent of the song, Dayenu. A highlight of my seder, Dayenu is the crowning moment of the maggid section, a 15-stanza song of praise to Hashem. The first five stanzas expound on our gratitude to G-d for taking us out of Egypt, the next five outline the miracles bestowed on us in the *midbar* (the wilderness), and the final five are an expression of gratitude for the ritual and spiritual staples in our lives – the Torah, Israel, and the building of the Beit Hamikdash. As we sing each stanza



of Dayenu, the song is also meant to evoke a full-bodied experience. In fact, the Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on the Haggadah, teaches that the 15 stanzas of Dayenu are parallel to the 15 steps of the Beit Hamikdash that the Leviim ascended each day as they sang the Songs of Ascents, songs of praise and gratitude to G-d. As we sing each stanza of Dayenu, perhaps we’re meant to cultivate within ourselves a complete and utter sensation that we might not be sitting at this seder, surrounded by these particular people, were it not for G-d’s grace.

This message of *hakarat hatov* (deep gratitude) is central to our understanding of the Pesach experience. The Midrash (Shemot Rabba 1:8) explains that when the Torah tells us that a *melech chadash* (a new king) arose in Egypt after Yosef’s death, it wasn’t a different Pharaoh, but the same one who had forgotten all that Yosef had done for him. Pharaoh’s gratitude had dissipated, and this set off the events that led to our slavery. The Midrash teaches, “One who has no gratitude is comparable to one who negates the existence of G-d.” Each year, we must utilise gratitude as the tool to bring a sense of Godliness into the world. How do we do that?

Steindl-Rast offers a simple methodology for this kind of full-bodied gratitude: stop, look, go. In the bustle of our busy lives, it’s hard to pause and take stock of all our blessings. The seder night calls on us to hit the pause button – to just sit and reflect. Then, we are asked to look, to notice how the stories of our past have constructed the world we inhabit today. But stopping and looking aren’t enough. We cannot just sit and relish the goodness that has been bestowed on us. We must go. We must acknowledge the blessings that *Hakodeh Baruch Hu* (the holy one, blessed be he) has given us, and pass them on to others. We must commit to opening our doors to strangers and those who have less than us. We must go out and learn (*tze u’le’mad*) what our ancestors have written for us. Just as we praise Hashem, we must praise and acknowledge with gratitude all those who have helped us on our journey.

The sections of praise throughout the Hagaddah including Dayenu are meant to be sung out loud in joyous praise to the Almighty. The Gemara in Pesachim (85b) explains that the Korban Pesach meal, the seder in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, consisted of a tiny portion: “There was [only] as much as an olive of the Passover-offering

EACH YEAR, WE MUST
UTILISE GRATITUDE AS THE TOOL
TO BRING A SENSE OF GODLINESS
INTO THE WORLD.

to eat.” One tiny morsel of food doesn’t sound celebratory. But the Gemara goes on, “Yet Hallel split the roofs!”

Praising G-d through song is the ultimate response to difficult and challenging times. We can acknowledge the hardships that surround us like war, terror attacks, and loved ones who are healing. By sitting at the seder, no matter whether we’re eating a feast or a simple meal, we sing. We raise the roof in praise of Hashem with our words, offering hope, optimism, and joy.

On this Pesach, I’m particularly grateful for my health and for the health of my family. I’m grateful that we have food and shelter. I’m grateful to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for the many blessings that have brought me here today. Dayenu!

• *Rabba Sara Hurwitz is the cofounder and president of Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy. She also serves on the rabbinic staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.*

A night different from all others over past two years

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

In 2020, just as we were ready to celebrate Pesach, the time of our freedom, COVID-19 ensured that freedom as we knew it was a thing of the past.

No shul. No big seders. No extended family. Falling during South Africa’s hard lockdown, Pesach 2020 was unlike anything we’d ever experienced. Being with family who lived in different cities or countries was impossible, and even those who stayed minutes away from each other were forced to be apart.

Although 2021 came with fewer COVID-19 restrictions, it still lacked the true freedom that the festival commemorates.

This Pesach, we’ll celebrate not just our liberation from Egypt, but also a return to larger seders surrounded by loved ones from around the world. It will be difficult not to notice the freedom we have won back.

Based in London, Liane and Warren Hetz and their two children always try to come back to Johannesburg to celebrate seders with their families. They have felt the lack of family over Pesach acutely since COVID-19 struck.

“Over the past two years, our seders have been small and vastly different from the large gatherings we would usually have with our family and friends in South Africa,” says Liane. “We still made the seders fun for our children, but there was a sense that something was missing – that feeling of being apart is always greater over *yom tov*.”



Sarah Berger (centre) with family from Israel, Zimbabwe, and Cape Town celebrating her gran’s 88th birthday in Cape Town in 2020

“I’ve always had fond childhood memories of big family seders spent with my cousins, singing *Ma’Nishtana* and playing games while searching for the afikomen,” she says. “It’s important to me that my children get to create their own family memories.”

Sarah Berger has also missed big family *yom tov* celebrations. “In 2020, our seders were just my husband, myself, and our two-month-old sleeping daughter. We live in Joburg but had booked to go to my parents in Cape Town. Then we were locked down. In Pesach 2021, we were fortunate to be able to go to Cape Town, but our seders were still small – it was just the three of us and my parents. Though those seders were simple compared to what we’re used to, they were



Rabbi Avi Kievman and his daughter Sara Rosa at The Pesach Retreat

special in their own way.”

Though the COVID-19 “plague” is still a reality this Pesach, it’s one that we’ve largely learned to live with. With that comes a welcome return to large family seders, visits from loved ones living abroad, and Pesach getaways that allow us to immerse ourselves fully in holiday traditions.

“Thank G-d, this year there’s a return to normality across the board,” says Rabbi Ari Kievman of Sandton Central Shul. “That’s not to negate that there are people, particularly seniors, who are lonely and who aren’t going to be with others, so it’s important to uplift their spirit, something we’re doing before

Pesach with visits from volunteers. Yet, I’m in touch with a lot of people and that’s the message I’m hearing – they’re having a lot more guests at their seders.”

There are also numerous expats flying into South Africa to celebrate with their families. Indeed, Berger is thrilled that her brother and sister-in-law, Adam and Tali Shapiro, and their three children, who live in Ramat Beit Shemesh in Israel, will be joining her family for Pesach this year. Though they did manage to see Adam and his family when they flew to Cape Town in December 2020, they have missed celebrating *yom tov* together. They’re excited about a return to large family seders.

“We’re going to be at my brother’s in-laws for the first seder and my parents will also be here from Cape Town, so it will probably be big and loud like ‘the good old days’ – much more like we’re used to,” says Berger. “I’m looking forward to my daughter being able to play with her cousins

and interact with her aunt and uncle whom she only met as a baby, and also to see my parents with four of their five grandchildren.”

For the Hetz’s, who are travelling to Johannesburg this Pesach, it’s also about celebrating a return to tradition and *yom tov* with family, some of whom they haven’t seen for almost three years. “I’ve missed all the family being together, the joy of seeing the little cousins forming their special bonds,” says Liane. “I’m looking forward to my mom’s chopped herring! Some of our family members are coming up from Cape Town, and this will be the first time the grandparents will be with all their grandchildren in three and a half years, so it will be extra special.”

Not only are friends and extended families celebrating together, Kievman’s own *yom tov* getaway, The Pesach Retreat, which he runs together with his wife, Batya, to benefit Chabad seniors programmes, was already fully booked a month ago. Considering they had to cancel the retreat in 2020 and operate at limited capacity in 2021, it’s a welcome return to how things used to be.

About 300 guests are expected to take over the Hunter’s Rest Resort in Rustenburg for a week filled with delicious food, lectures, workshops, entertainment, and activities. COVID-19 regulations are still in place and guests will have seders in “pods” with their families and others with whom they wish to connect. Yet there’s flexibility around this and a sense of true liberation, in keeping with the spirit of the *chag*.

“Pesach is meant to be an experience where you get to taste freedom, experience some luxury and have a meaningful personal experience,” says Kievman. “The ultimate freedom we look for is personal liberation, achieving a new goal, striving towards something that you haven’t been able to attain. Pesach isn’t just ‘his’-tory, the story of Moses, it has to be our story, our experience, which is what we try to facilitate at the retreat.”



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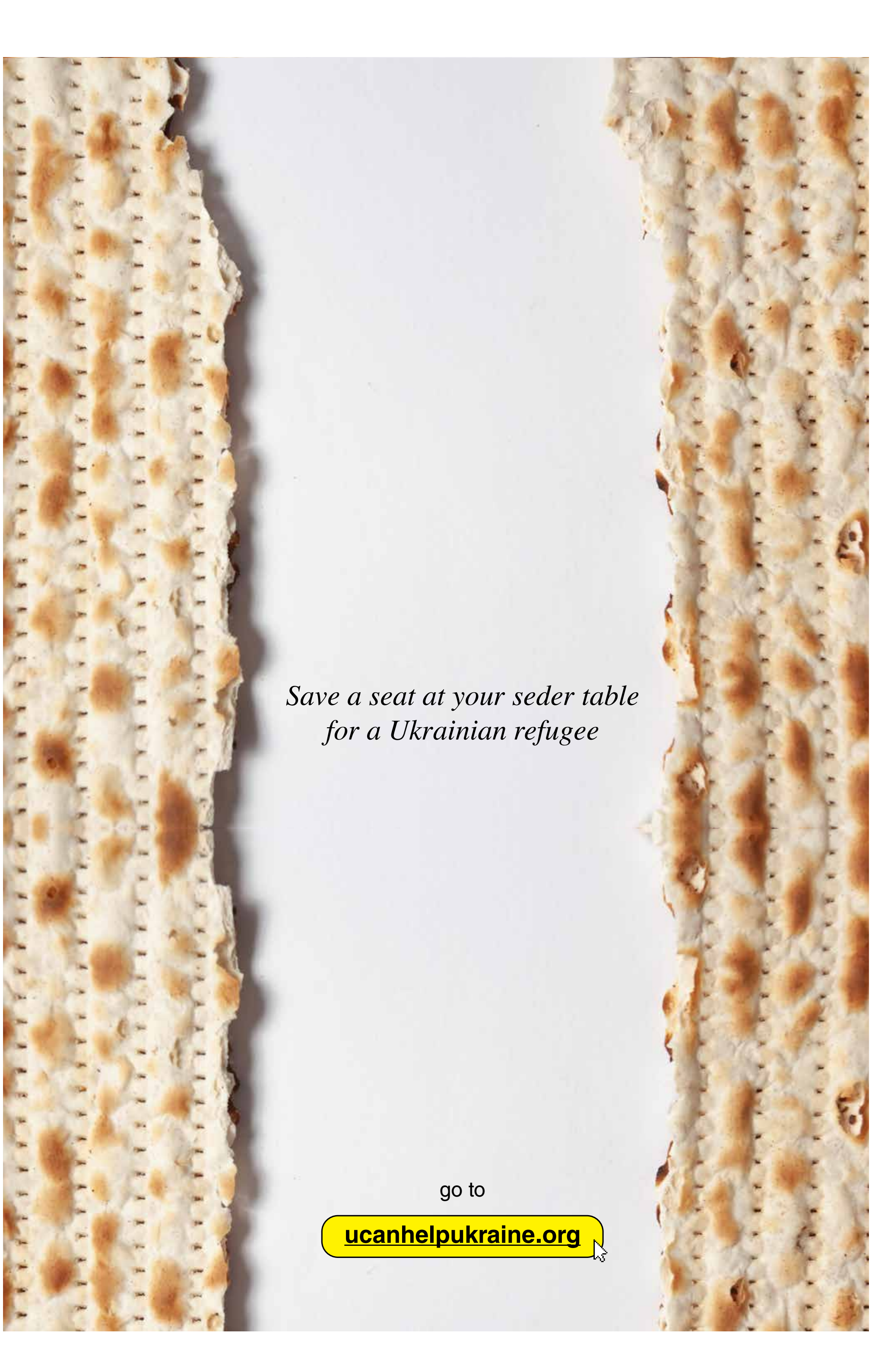
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Sky high Pesach prices spur innovative shopping strategies

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

The talk at the local supermarket, on social media, and at parent pick-ups is that many people are so stressed by high Pesach prices, they might even consider not keeping a 100% kosher *chag* this year. Yet, there's no need to abandon Pesach – it's all about smart shopping, planning, going back to basics, and asking for help when you need it.

Though the food we eat on Pesach may not rise, that unfortunately doesn't apply to the prices we pay for them. From matzah to matzah meal – if you can find it – to meat, chicken, jam, and much more, there's no denying that Pesach prices have increased exponentially this year.

Jody Eberlin, marketing and food projects manager at Yad Aharon & Michael, South Africa's largest Jewish food fund, agrees. Yad Aharon supplies 680 families with kosher food throughout the year, but during its Pesach campaign, it helps an additional 20 families.

"They make up what we call our 'specials list' – families or individuals who can manage during the year but not over Pesach because food is so expensive," she says. "All 700 families receive Pesach hampers, not only for their seders, but also for all of the eight days." Hampers are made up of Pesach essentials including matzah, matzah meal, eggs, chicken, meat, fish, and so on. The only real "treats" are crisps and syrup.

"This year, we've had to spend half a million rand more than we did on the same foods last year," says Eberlin. "Obviously, we're talking very big quantities, but that still suggests significant increases." This has naturally intensified the need for donations – yet while the community's generosity is astounding, with families having to increase their own Pesach budgets, there's less left over for *tzedakah*.

Yet, Yad Aharon is here to help, says Eberlin. "People

can approach us anonymously and we also offer tops-ups and urgent assistance over *chol hamoed* [the weekdays of the festival] for families who aren't coping. Finances should never be a reason not to observe Pesach." Community organisations including Yad Aharon and the Chevrah Kadisha ensure that this doesn't happen.

If you can afford Pesach products and are just feeling more strain than usual this year, there are other options. Shani Smith suggests a simpler approach by following Chabad traditions. "As a Chabadnik, I keep a very strict Pesach in which I don't buy store-bought products and only use fresh ingredients," she says. "It's simple, healthy, back to basics, and certainly very humbling! That's the message of Pesach in and of itself."

From farm fresh fruit and roast vegetables to roast chicken made with herb oil rubs, to eggs for breakfast, it's all about wholesome goodness, she says. "There's no need to buy all the expensive imported products, and it's amazing what you can do! Mint pineapple and apple slush, berry granita, fresh oranges, and grapefruits for dessert. We bond as a family, preparing fresh salads in the kitchen. It's such a wonderful learning opportunity for the kids as they become little "MasterChefs", peeling, and chopping, tasting and frying with you. My girls are expert mayonnaise makers, which we turn into our own salad dressings."

It's about being innovative, she says. For example, to make matzah meal, you can finely grind matzah in a food processor. "If we stop stressing so much and reduce our anxiety about Pesach, our children will pick up on our enthusiasm and enjoyment," says Smith. "In today's times, people just need a dose of positivity and motivation to know that it's achievable."

Saving money on Pesach is also about being practical. "I have always planned my meals and Pesach, and the seders are no different," says housekeeping

management specialist, Adrienne Bogatie. "Meal planning saves you a fortune."

The seder meals need not be massive feasts, she says. "In Israel, it's common just to have the egg and saltwater, and then soup and kneidlach after the last compulsory piece of matzah is eaten and before the afikomen. We have the egg and saltwater, the soup, one protein [meat or chicken], two veg, and then sorbet – which saves money on expensive parev cream substitutes – and fresh fruit."

Family lunches are generally made up of leftovers. "During the week, there are baked potatoes with toppings like cheese or cream, tuna salad, grilled chicken and salad. I make pickled cucumbers and mushrooms, mayonnaise, and pasta sauce to use instead of store-bought tomato sauce." Tomato soup, butternut soup, baby marrow soup, and potato soups are all very filling and easy to make, she says.

Bogatie also suggests exchanging skills and resources with friends. "If you have a friend who is really good at Pesach baking, ask them to make you some biscuits instead of going out to buy them," she says. Then, you, in turn, can provide your speciality dish. If guests cannot bring food to a meal, ask them to bring drinks to save on those costs.

In terms of sharing resources with friends or family, some have also taken to splitting their Pesach groceries



Rochi Silke shops for Pesach

and associated costs. "For the past two years, my wife and I have shared some of the kosher-for-Pesach items we have bought such as sugar, six-packs of Coke, coffee, tea, spices, lemon juice, and sweetener with my parents and in-laws," says Dovid Katz*.

"We have a standard shopping list that we made a few years ago to help ease the stress of Pesach shopping. From that, we make a list of goods that are easy to share and won't be fully used over Pesach.

"People are starting to realise that it's silly to buy a whole new jar of coffee or a whole new bag of sugar or salt when they are going to use only a small amount of it," he says. "Especially since most stores don't accept returns for Pesach items, most of which will probably have gone off by next year, and you land up being stuck with them if you bought too much."

*Name has been changed.

Growing up in Iran, I thought the whole country celebrated Passover

AYLIN SEDIGHI-GABBAIZADEH – JTA

Growing up in Iran, I never truly appreciated the difference between spring-cleaning, New Year's, and getting ready for Passover. The Jewish holiday takes place almost simultaneously with the Persian New Year, known as Nowruz.

Nowruz (A New Day), which marks the beginning of spring, is Iran's most festive and colourful holiday. Persians, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, and even Bahais all purchase new clothes, make traditional cookies, and engage in 12 days of celebrations.

These celebrations include setting a special table, known as a haft-seen, that consists of various items signifying renewal, luck, and blessings. The seven Ss, as they are known, would take their ceremonial places on the same number of plates: sabzeh (a green plate of grown wheat); seeb (red apples); samanoo (a wheat-based dish); senjed (a fruit of the lotus tree); seer (garlic); serkeh (vinegar); and sekkeh (coins laid in water). No table would be complete without swimming goldfish, an elaborate mirror to reflect joy to the viewer, hand-painted eggs, and a holy book.

Where our Muslim neighbours placed a Quran on their haft-seen table, we placed a Torah or a siddur. Where our Muslim neighbours sprouted wheat, we grew lentils.

For years, I believed Passover to be the beginning of the Jewish calendar because it was synonymous with all things new and a promise of starting afresh, given the mild climate of the country by the time the holiday came around – cherry blossoms were in bloom and the aroma of jasmine filled our noses.

Just as the entire country went into full spring-cleaning mode for the national holiday, Jews scoured their homes of forbidden *hametz*. In our home, all the closets would be emptied and reorganised. All the rugs would be taken into the yard and washed in hot, soapy water. I knew Passover was close when my grandmother dug out her larger-than-life-size iron pot and started the process of kashering every item in her kitchen.

Given that there were no kosher-for-Passover shops (or even kosher shops), every cake and cookie had to be made from scratch, a task that entailed the washing, drying, and blending of all the nuts. The week before the holiday, the aroma of roasted nuts would fill the house, and the sweet smell of



Aylin Sedighi-Gabbaizadeh as a child in Iran, and in the background is a traditional haft-seen table

Photo: Courtesy of the author; Flickr Commons

homemade cookies couldn't summon the holiday fast enough. Given the lack of kosher products, we hardly consumed any dairy for eight days, our diet consisting of eggs, meat, and, according to Iranian Jewish custom, rice.

Over time, our entire extended family fled to Israel and the United States. My immediate family was the last of our clan to finally pick up and leave, in September 1990.

The story of Iran's ancient Jewish community unfolds over more than 2 700 years. Today, there are fewer than 10 000 Jews left in Iran.

Every year, as I put away one set of

dishes and bring out my Passover ware, I feel a pang of guilt at how easy it is to get ready for the holiday compared with what my mother and grandmother had to do in Iran. But I'm forever grateful for the freedom that I have been granted here, and to celebrate this most auspicious holiday alongside so many of our people.

• Aylin Sedighi-Gabbaizadeh is a writer who is working on her historical-fiction novel about the lives and trials of women and children in old Iran. Her articles have appeared on Kveller.com, The Jerusalem Post and aish.com. Her website is aylinsedighigabb.com.

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New Beginnings brings back a sense of *joie de vivre*

NICOLA MILTZ

When well-known radio personality, inspirational speaker, and writer, Roslyn Basserabie, lost her beloved husband in a Vespa scooter accident last year, it upended her world. But Basserabie is no stranger to crisis and upheaval, and coupled with her indomitable spirit and resilience, she has been able to transform her grief into a will to live.

As a new widow – “a horrible word” – Basserabie knew her late husband of 46 years, Dennis, would want her to continue to live life fully and inspire others in a similar position to do the same.

When she met Jessie Kay, the co-founder of Nechama Bereavement Services in Umhlanga last year, Kay was visibly moved by Ros’ positivity and *joie de vivre* in spite of living with grief and having recently lost the love of her life.

“I remember how Ros marvelled at the sea, the blue sky, and the seagulls,” said Kay, “Even with her pain, she was still able to find joy in nature and the small things.” Basserabie’s resilience and exuberance reminded Kay of an idea she had been toying with for a while.

“I thought of my peers in similar life positions who found themselves living alone, and was inspired by Ros’ outlook to act,” said Kay. Her idea was to find a way to motivate people who lived alone to embrace life and actively seek joy again.

Since that meeting at the seaside, the two women have found common ground and purpose. Together, they recently launched a social group called “New Beginnings” for people who find themselves living alone after the loss of a partner.

“It isn’t a dating service or a charity, nor is it the new Tinder or a grief counselling service,” says Basserabie.

“New Beginnings aims to create a thriving, vibrant group of women – although men have shown an interest – who have lost their partners and have become widows. We want to ignite their lives after loss, whether recent or long ago,” she said.

Basserabie’s motto is, c With this in mind, New Beginnings plans to organise a variety of activities from outings to the theatre, movies, hikes, walks, and tours.

They have been blown away by the number of people who have shown an interest in joining and the number who arrived at the first and second meetings last month.

“It has pressed a button in the community,” said Kay, “We know this group will grow, the problem is how fast.” There’s already a mailing list of 215 people, and more than 65 people attended the meetings.

“It meets a need in the community, especially after two and a half years of isolation caused by COVID-19. People need to get out of their homes and gardens, learn to socialise again, and meet new friends,” said Kay, a social worker who has spent the great part of her working life in grief counselling. “New Beginnings is for people who



Roslyn Basserabie and Jessie Kay want to make the most of their life. It’s a much-needed platform for like-minded people to meet and rekindle their passion for living after loss.”

Kay is the grandmother of the late Eli Kay, who was murdered by a Palestinian terrorist last year in Jerusalem.

“I had the idea of a social group before he tragically passed, but when I returned from Israel, I found it hard to summon the energy to get it off the ground.” She knows her grandson would’ve encouraged her to do it. “I know he would’ve said, ‘Go for it, gran!’.”

Basserabie said she felt her late husband’s presence daily. “I feel him around me like a guiding, gentle, protective murmur. I don’t feel alone,” she said, although when she retires for the night after a long day, she’s alone. “I’m not lonely, there’s a difference, but it’s me and the four walls. I want to live my gift of life with purpose and meaningfulness. That’s the only way to live in spite of the knocks that come our way.”

“While my late husband lives on in so many of the breaths I take,

sadness” isn’t easy, “but it’s a must if one wants to go forward with

joyful anticipation and the ability to glean pleasure from life,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

With New Beginnings, the pair wish to create a place in the community for men and women who are single to meet and participate in interesting and entertaining activities.

“It aims to provide companionship, and a platform to perhaps develop relationships in a safe, convivial environment,” said Basserabie.

“COVID-19 and lockdown helped to fester aloneness and even worse, loneliness,” she said.

Many became “house huggers”. “There are those who have the privilege of caring families, support systems, and many friends, but in so many cases, they still have to return home to face the furniture and walls – alone,” said Basserabie.

“At night, single women are reluctant to go out and drive on their own, so they forfeit the

enjoyment of attending places and activities and are trapped in a way that they weren’t when their husbands or partners were with them,” she said.

New Beginnings will hold monthly meetings with inspiring speakers and refreshments.

In a Facebook post, Basserabie said she looked back on a “rich, magnanimous relationship” with her husband, which had given her the “opportunity to hope, positivity, and excitement in living”.

“My Denny has prepared me optimally for my new life ahead and because of it, I don’t feel lonely, abandoned or fearful. I feel empowered and hopeful,” she wrote.

New Beginnings needs volunteers, donors, and a secretary. For those wishing to get involved in this life-fulfilling endeavour, contact Roz Basserabie, 082 568 6016, or Jessie Kay, 082 449 3147. The next meeting is on Sunday 1 May at Pine Street Shul at 10:00.

Keeping calm on KLM – the highs and lows of an air hostess in the 60s

SAUL KAMIONSKY

It’s not often that you find a nice South African Jewish girl who works as an air hostess, but back in the late-1950s and 1960s, Alicia Slier was the first South African flight attendant to work for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

Some of the things she witnessed and experienced 11km in the air make for fascinating tales.

Once, when she and her fellow cabin crew members were preparing for landing, the pilot died of a heart attack. Another time, this Waverley Girls High alumnus helped an elderly lady who refused to disembark the aeroplane.

While flying across the Atlantic Ocean from Curaçao, a “hell of a noise” erupted in the aircraft, with people calling for a doctor or something. “I came rushing and the next thing, a person had a baby in his arms,” says Slier. “The woman next to him had given birth. In Dutch – Papiamentu is the language they speak in Curaçao and is very similar to Dutch – all she apparently said was, ‘The baby is coming.’

“There wasn’t a doctor on board, so we couldn’t cut the cord. We knew what to do if it came to a baby. We would radio and get a doctor, but there wasn’t supposed to be a baby born. As the baby was born in mid-air, we don’t even know today what citizenship it holds.”

When the aeroplane landed in Amsterdam, the doctors came running up to the woman and cut the cord. “The baby wasn’t even crying,” recalls Slier. “The woman got up from the seat, walked to the exit, and turned around and said to the crew, ‘*Dank u wel!*’ [Thank you very much.]”

After matriculating in 1956, Slier started studying at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). “I did a BA (Bachelor of Arts) Languages – Afrikaans, French and Italian,” she says. “I had studied French at school. I thought I would teach, maybe, history and Afrikaans. I went for one year to Wits and the next year, I had a gap year.”

She travelled overseas for three months. “In October and November of that year, I was back in South Africa and wasn’t doing anything. By pure fluke, I bumped into a Hungarian guy who worked for KLM. He told me they were looking for a ground hostess, somebody who could speak languages.”

Being proficient in French, Italian, and Afrikaans, Slier went for an interview and was offered a job at the flag carrier of the Netherlands on the condition that she learnt German.

“I got one of these books about how to teach yourself German. I

taught myself in a way that if you spoke German to me, I knew what you were talking about.”

Starting when she was 19, she was a ground hostess for three and a half years at KLM. “I was working at the airport. I used to talk to the crews everywhere. By that time, I picked up a lot of Dutch and spoke a decent Dutch, so I sent the papers that I would love to fly as a flight attendant.”

When she got the nod, she was 22 and a half. “My dad thought it was wonderful. My mother was horrified. I presume that like the other South African mothers, she wanted me to get married. That was the furthest thing from my mind.”

At the time, in about 1962, “KLM was very prestigious and one of the top airlines,” says Slier. “I got a flat in Amsterdam. It was glorious and beautiful. I shared it with a colleague.”

After flying for six months in Europe, Slier became an international flight attendant who was generally part of a crew of about seven men and two women. “That was for the following five years and 10 months. I flew up until 1967. I had the best time of my life.”

Around 1970, she had a flight from Amsterdam to Vancouver. “It was full of all old Hollanders who were going to see their families in Canada. They hadn’t seen their children for 20, 25 years.”

In 1948, a few years after the end of World War II, there was a lot of unemployment in Holland. “Families or young people were encouraged to emigrate, and they all went to live in Canada,” says Slier.

When the aeroplane touched down in Vancouver, all the passengers disembarked except for one elderly lady. “She wouldn’t leave her seat,” recounts Slier. “She sat there crying. I went up to her and in Dutch, I said, ‘What is the matter?’ She said, ‘I have been sick the whole flight.’ She had been vomiting in the paper bag. She had brought up all her false teeth and they had been thrown away. She had no teeth in her mouth. She hadn’t seen her son for about 30

years. She said, ‘He can’t see me like this.’”

Slier disembarked the plane, crossed the tarmac, and saw the lady’s son waiting.

He told Slier, “You go back, and you tell my mother that we want to see her. Teeth or no teeth, we still love her.”

If this story is heart-warming, another of Slier’s experiences is heart-wrenching.


“Just before we were about to land in Tokyo, our captain had a heart attack at the controls. We, the crew, had all been on the beach together in Thailand, running away from crabs, and the next day, at the controls, he had a heart attack and died.”

Slier’s three children are Paula, 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; Jack Philip, a trader who spends his time in Johannesburg and Shanghai; and Hayley, an air hostess for British Airways.



Alicia Slier back in her flight attendant days

“For those who are living, life is to be lived.”



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“Mom of Boys” keeps it real

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Unapologetically a “real mom” – of four boys between the ages of five and 12 – Casey Shevel is all about authenticity. In her hilarious book, *Mom of Boys*, she gets down to the bare bones of what it takes to be a mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, dating coach, and matchmaker in an increasingly frenetic world, sharing ingenious parenting hacks and go-to recipes along the way.

“You know those moms. They don’t just drive, they speed into the school parking lot, and then their car jolts to a stop. They’re generally wearing camo and sunglasses – they’re ready for combat. The door opens, the music is blaring, the bags get thrown out, and then the kids get thrown out too.” That’s how Shevel jokingly described a typical mom of boys at one of her multiple book launches last week.

Not just focused on one topic, *Mom of Boys* encapsulates Shevel’s experiences and reflections on life, from finding a life partner, to weight loss, to managing and feeding a home full of boys, to the pressures and immense gifts that come with parenting.

The book is inspired by Shevel’s passion for people. “I love people, and I’m such an empath that I can’t actually step away from the pain of others, which is often to my detriment,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*. “But when I see that there’s something wrong, I want to make it right. This book was a part of that.”

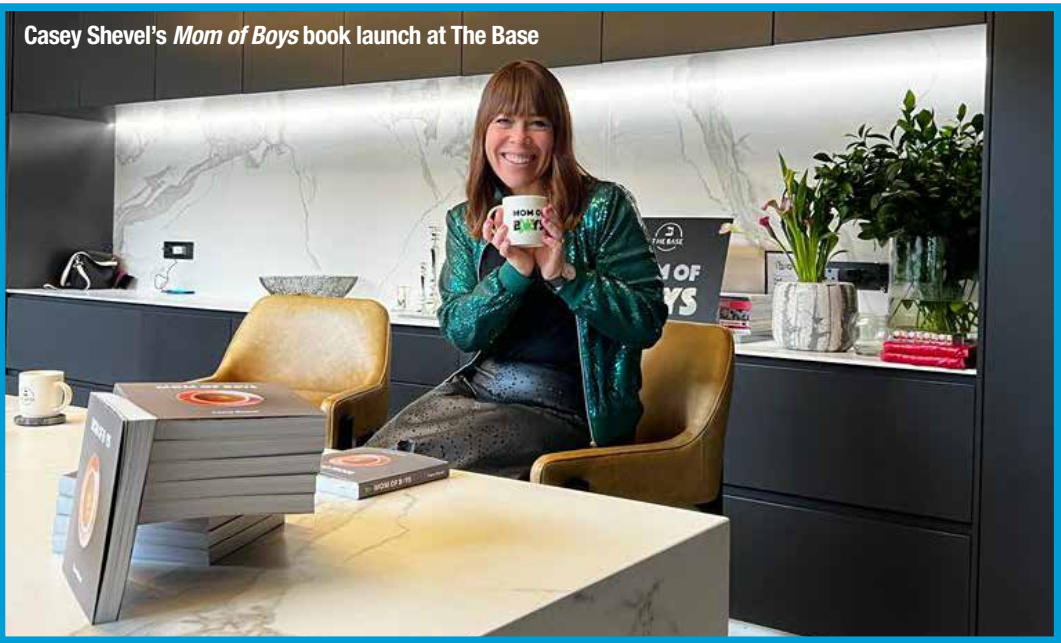
Yet, says Shevel, the writing process was a gift, allowing her to shift her focus on others to herself. Ironically, by giving herself the time to write each day – a process she loved – she was able to create something that turned out to be much bigger than herself.

“There’s a misunderstanding of people, such a judgemental mentality in terms of how we see each other and mostly how we see ourselves. I wanted to let people feel like they’re off the hook, that it’s ok. We’re all struggling in some way, and we’ve just got to provide support and make things easier for each other.”

Through her book, Shevel hopes to open up conversation about the pressures we all face in a world where perfection has become the holy grail. “What women are expected to be is beyond unrealistic,” she says. “An incredible homemaker, amazing mom, head of the PTA, successful at work, always looking great. How are we supposed to tick all of those boxes?”

It’s a topic she hopes her book will open up, being a launchpad for speaking engagements aimed at uplifting, sharing laughs, and talking openly with women, giving them the space to feel less isolated.

Through being the mom of four – particularly boisterous – boys, Shevel has learned to release her own perfectionist tendencies. “I love beautiful things and aesthetics, and believe that things need to look a certain way, but I’ve got to let go to a certain extent,” she says. “You’ve got to pick your battles: decide what the non-negotiables are and let go of the rest. It’s a lesson. That’s what our children are there for, to push our boundaries and make us grow. And



my kids really make me grow!”

Though the book is about far more than parenting boys, it does reflect on the unique challenges that come with the role. “The hardest part is actually having the physical capacity to look after these boys,” says Shevel. “Boys are very physical and physically demanding. My days are full, mad, and on the go. They literally don’t stop for a second.”

Yet, the rewards of parenting boys are endless too. “I love the way that boys love you. When your boys say something nice about you, like when they say, ‘Mom you look beautiful’, you know it’s really genuine and not something that would come so

naturally to them – that’s special.”

Parenting coach Laura Markovitz says that regardless of whether or not we are challenged by children of a different gender to our own, we need to make space for our kids to develop their own identities. “As with most things parenting-related, a good combination of empathy, connection, and boundaries goes a long way,” she says. “We want to raise children who are comfortable and in touch with who they are, not who we think they should be – no matter how difficult that sometimes may be.”

Shevel agrees, saying it all comes back to living an authentic life. “Our children learn just from watching us,” she says. That’s why it’s so important

From Solly to Albie – a life of activism and inspiration

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Many youngsters in the early 1940s dreamt of flying a Spitfire and shooting down lots of Messerschmitts. It was the time of World War II. One such kid received a postcard from his father on his sixth birthday. It read, “Congratulations on your sixth birthday. May you grow up to be a soldier in the fight for liberation.”

This kid was Albie Sachs, and the message was from his dad, Solly. The story is told in *Mensches in the Trenches*, a new book written by South African journalist and author, Jonathan Ancer.

Though Sachs would go on to be an anti-apartheid activist and a Constitutional Court judge, it’s his late father who is featured as one of the *mensches* in the book. Sachs spoke to the author about his dad at Exclusive Books in Rosebank on 11 April.

Sachs’ father was one of the most successful trade unionists in South Africa, and was involved in the Communist Youth League.

The book documents the Jewish foot soldiers in the anti-apartheid struggle. It’s the vision of Mohale Selebi, who saw the importance of such a book many years ago.

“From a very early age, I was involved in the youth movements, in the underground in civic activities, and so on,” said Selebi, the nephew of the late Jackie Selebi, the former National Commissioner of the South African Police Service. “During that time, I got to meet many comrades – white, black, and Indian. It dawned on me as I was getting involved in the struggle that many of the white comrades who I met were Jewish. That is something that has stuck with me for many years. Hence, the idea about the book.”

A few years ago, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) heeded Selebi’s nagging and embarked on a ground-breaking project to document the stories of some unsung Jewish heroes, commissioning Ancer.

Ancer started working on it soon after the arrival of coronavirus. “I started to find these stories and speak to these people – Norman and Leon Levy, for example,” said Ancer. “I suddenly became inspired by their courage. That’s what I hope the book will achieve. It could inspire people to

be courageous, to stand up against injustice, and to become *mensches*.”

The late advocate Denis Kuny is one of the *mensches* featured in the book. “He really typifies what a *mensch* is,” said Ancer. “When I phoned to make contact with him and I explained what the purpose of the book was, he didn’t feel he that fitted the profile of a *mensch*. That just typifies his contribution. He was modest. He never sought the



limelight. But there he was in the trenches for 60 years. “Sadly, Dennis died just a few months ago. A couple of people died before the book was published after I had interviewed them – such as Norman Levy and Percy Tucker. I think that goes to show the importance of documenting our stories.”

Professor Karen Milner, the chairperson of the SAJBD, described the book as “most wonderful”. “I read it on the plane, and I was sort of wiping tears from my eyes. It will lift your spirit, it will make you cry, and it’s a true memorial to some of the unsung heroes of our community who did what was right at a time when it was difficult to do things that were right.”

One of the stories in the book that stood out for Milner was about the King David school bus.

A young activist called Michael Schneider, a member of the African Resistance Movement, was asked by the African National Congress (ANC) to take a bunch of nurses to Tanzania.

“It was the ANC’s present to Tanzania, which was just

to be true to ourselves – we teach our children to do the same. “If anyone can detect inauthenticity, it’s your kids. They’ll call you out in a second if they see anything that’s untoward.”

Shevel also works to dispel the misconception that every mom of boys must be longing to have a girl – something she encounters regularly. Joking that she’d probably have twin boys if she and her husband did in fact “try for a girl”, Shevel says she’s a born boy mom. “Everyone just assumes that I’m dying to go to ballet concerts and all I want is to dress my children in tutus, but that really was never me.”

Yet for some moms – and dads – an idealised dream of having a little princess to take care of is hard to release. “It’s vital to remember that it’s always ok to have any feeling that arises in such cases,” says Markovitz. “It’s useful first to respect and make space for whatever it is you feel, be it excitement, disappointment, sadness, or joy. If we’re more in touch with what we feel, then we’re better placed to respond to what’s thrown our way. We’re also better able to separate what’s other people’s stuff and what’s our own.”

Regardless of how many kids you have, what their genders are, and how people expect you to parent your brood, having the freedom to admit that you’re sometimes not coping is key to your mental well-being. It’s being honest, not taking yourself too seriously, releasing expectations, and asking for help that in fact makes you a better parent. As Shevel writes in her book, “I’m a mom who loves her kids to the moon and back [and occasionally considers sending them there for a short stay].” Many a parent can undoubtedly relate.

celebrating its independence,” said Ancer. “So, he decided he would take the King David school bus. He checked it out on a Friday, and he took these nurses across the border. Then he returned the bus on Monday morning without anybody having noticed the role that a King David school bus played in the downfall of apartheid.”

For Ancer, writing the book gave him an opportunity to speak to his father about Sachs’s dad. “My father told me that his father, Chaim, loved and adored Solly and looked up to him. When your [Sachs’] father was banned, and then unbanned himself, and led a march to the Johannesburg City Hall, my father was there. My grandfather took him. It was a very special chapter to write.”

Sachs described the chapter as “a lovely one”. His parents separated when he and his late brother, Johnny, were very young.

“I would have been about three or four-years-old living in Clifton, Cape Town, and I’m told, ‘Your father is visiting Cape Town,’” recounted Sachs. “So, he wasn’t daddy. He was ‘father’. It was only when he was in exile and I went to London and stayed

with him that I would call him ‘daddy’.” Sachs described his dad as passionate and fiery. “He described himself as ugly,” said Sachs. “Helen Joseph, in one of her autobiographical works, said, ‘Solly was the ugliest man I’ve ever known.’ That confirmed the fact that they had an affair. You could only say that about somebody you were very close to.”

In the end, Joseph said she couldn’t measure up to Solly. She said she wasn’t epic enough, and she was fighting against a lover she couldn’t compete with, a lover Solly had never met.

“Her name was Olive Schreiner. He was passionate about Schreiner, the great writer,” said Sachs. “Somehow, Schreiner was the woman who spoke in a passionate language, tone, and spirit and defied what’s expected of women. That made her very attractive to my dad.”

Sachs said the traits he took from his father were his humour, passion, idealism, and ability to turn things around. “He’s very proud of me, and I’m very proud of him,” said Sachs.

SAUL KAMIONSKY

So says South African-born London resident, Evan Feldman, who recently rode 400km in Israel in two days. He was one of the 20 foreign guests who joined the 150 wounded soldiers in Iron Brother 2022 on 29 and 30 March.

An advertisement for Pick n Pay's 'asap!' service, specifically for Passover. The background is a soft-focus image of a plate with matzah (unleavened bread) and small blue flowers. On the left, a smartphone displays the 'asap!' app interface, which includes the text 'Pick n Pay asap!', 'DOWNLOAD THE APP', and instructions to download on the App Store or Google Play. To the right of the phone is a QR code. Above the phone, a yellow circular badge contains the text 'R75 OFF', 'USE PROMO CODE "/>

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Celebrating our freedom, past and present

South Africa’s inaugural fully democratic, multiracial elections commenced on 27 April 1994, and since then, April has come to be regarded as Freedom Month in this country. Reflecting the spirit of the times, the theme of freedom was at the forefront of two public events held by the Board this week.

The first was the Johannesburg launch at Exclusive Books, Rosebank, of *Mensches in the Trenches*, recently published under the auspices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. As explained in previous columns, *Mensches* relates the stories of a wide range of “ordinary” Jewish community members who, largely out of the public eye and generally in practical everyday ways, were involved in various aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The event enabled us to pay tribute to some of those from our community whose names are today all but forgotten but who over many years and in multiple ways rendered outstanding services to the cause of justice in this country. The keynote address by Judge Albie Sachs was one of the highlights of the evening. Sachs, in his own right a distinguished veteran of the liberation struggle, has addressed many Jewish communal gatherings over the decades since the democratic transition, but this was the first time his focus was

on the role played by his father, legendary trade unionist Solly Sachs. As ever, the insights he provided were moving and thought-provoking.

Mogale Selebi, another anti-apartheid veteran, spoke about how many of those who assisted and worked with him during those years were Jewish, and how this had motivated him to approach the Board with the idea of a book written on the subject. Mogale was involved in the early stages of producing the book, which was eventually taken on and completed by Jonathan Ancer. As emcee, I had the opportunity of engaging with Jonathan and the other speakers, and it was a memorable evening for all concerned. To listen to Judge Sachs and the other speakers, see our Facebook page.

The second freedom-themed event taking place this week was a Freedom Seder, the first such event to be held in-person since the COVID-19 lockdown. Though the core themes of Passover concern the story of the Jewish people specifically, they have universal resonance, hence Freedom Seders provide an effective vehicle for sharing the lessons and values of our Jewish heritage with our fellow South Africans.

Dr Sydney Mufamadi, a leading anti-apartheid activist who served

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



as a cabinet minister from 1994 to 2008, was the guest speaker. The event was combined with a second launch of our *Mensches* book, and I was again able to engage in conversation with and pose questions to Ancer and Selebi on its purpose and contents.

In celebrating the attainment of our freedom, we also remember those around the world who continue to be deprived of theirs. As the Russian invasion proceeds into its third month, we think in particular of the people of Ukraine. As reported elsewhere in this issue, the Board this week issued an unusually strong statement criticising Department of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Naledi Pandor for scandalously comparing Russia’s lawless acts of aggression with Israel’s actions vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

As we prepare to join family and friends in rejoicing in our heritage and passing on those traditions on to the next generation, I wish everyone a *chag Pesach kasher v’sameach*.

• 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

A column of WIZO South Africa

Congrats and salutations to WIZO leaders

A special thanks and mazeltov to the outgoing and the incoming chairpersons of WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) Cape Town, as well as the incoming treasurer of WIZO Johannesburg.

Janene Currie, I thank you for your years of faithfulness and dedication. You have served WIZO Cape Town as chairperson with all your heart, and we so appreciate all that you have accomplished.

Hila Zetler, as you take on the role of chairperson of WIZO Cape Town, I wish you every success and much joy and fulfilment in your position. I know that you have much to contribute, and I’m confident that you will do a great job.

Andrea Wainer, you are a tremendous asset to our organisation, and I congratulate you on officially assuming the role of treasurer of WIZO Johannesburg. You have already given so much of your time and effort, and I thank you




WIZO
South Africa
Shelley Trope-Friedman
President, WIZO South Africa

for your continued commitment.

A hearty mazeltov is also extended to WIZO Johannesburg on a hugely successful Charidy Drive that brought in a tremendous amount of funds for WIZO. These funds will be used to improve and continue our Neve WIZO Houses of Safety project in Israel. Neve WIZO consists of five family homes for children who have been removed from their homes by court order, providing them with all the love and rehabilitative care that they need.

As president, I’m inspired by all our WIZO ladies! Our WIZO South Africa projects in Israel truly save lives and give hope to the hopeless, and I commend our WIZO women for their hard work in assisting troubled children, abused women, and Ukrainian refugees in Israel.

On behalf of WIZO South Africa, I wish all readers a *chag Pesach sameach*! May we all discover real freedom in all aspects of our lives.

This column paid for by WIZO SA



“The message of Passover remains as powerful as ever. Freedom is won not on the battlefield but in the classroom and the home. Teach your children the history of freedom if you want them never to lose it.”
- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

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A henna’va party after all

Last week, I mentioned that my son was marrying a Yemenite girl and that we had no idea what to expect from the henna party. And that whereas we might be letting go of a lot of our preconceived notions of weddings and celebrations, we were still holding on to what was important. I might have thought I knew what I was talking about, but in truth, I had no idea.

Because no sooner had we arrived at the party than our son had an allergic reaction to something, went into anaphylactic shock, and was rushed by Magen David Adom to the closest major hospital where his life was saved.

Talk about things that are important. In what has to be the most “ashkenaz” move ever, he had apparently eaten a banana a few moments before

we arrived at the party. When we tried to hug him hello, he mentioned that something was wrong, and that he was having some sort of reaction.

His eyes were already streaming, and his body began to itch. Welts started to appear all over his torso and arms. It took a few minutes for his tongue to swell, by which time the paramedics were on the way. They took one look at him, got him into the intensive-care ambulance, and started to work on him.

Although I attempted to be the one to go with him in the ambulance, it took about a minute for my wife to throw me out the back and climb in herself, giving me strict instructions to make sure that I represented the

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



family at the function.

It was pretty solid thinking in that I would undoubtedly have suffered from FOMO (fear of missing out) and would have tried to convince them to put in a quick “tracheostomy” so that we could get back to the party. Failing that, I’ve seen enough movies to know that an orange Bic pen is all we would need if things got a bit hairy.

Three hours later, legal waivers having been signed, an epi pen in his pocket, he did return, looking even more pale than when he left.

What had he missed? The most incredible food, dancing, and energy. But the warmth and the celebration that he returned to was indescribable, as once again, we were reminded about what was important.

As was the whole country. Because at the very same time that Ben was fighting the ultimate battle, so too were innocent civilians in Tel Aviv. A few kilometres away, while some were dancing and others eating, and a few were battling to breathe, a terror attack was taking place.

As I waited for information on my son, news of the shootings started to filter through. At the emergency room, my wife watched in horror as the staff readied themselves for what was to follow.

On Shabbat morning, as is tradition ahead of a wedding, Ben was called up to the Torah. In this case, not only did he intone the “normal” prayer, he added a blessing of gratitude for someone who has survived an ordeal that might have, but for the grace of G-d, ended differently.

Ben and Yuval are married. The wedding was magnificent, the Shabbat was wonderful and meaningful, and the henna party although fantastic, wasn’t what we expected. For so many reasons. All of them reasons we can be grateful for.

Torah Academy in full Pesach prep

From packing their bags to relive the Exodus from Egypt to learning how to make their own matzah, Torah Academy Nursery School is in full swing for Pesach.



Torah Academy’s Ari Wineberg

designed to, if you’ll pardon the expression, “Make Japan great again” (at science and technology).

Brenner and Dorfan were two of three scientists to receive the Order of the Rising Sun for their contribution to OIST. The third recipient was the American physicist and Nobel laureate Jerome Friedman (1st class).

Brenner has been further honoured. There’s now a statue of him in the grounds of OIST. When he passed away in 2019, there was a memorial tribute for him.

It should be pointed out that OIST’s language medium is English, and half the students are foreign, ranging from Bangladeshi to Belarussian, to Afro-French.

Hence Brenner, Dorfan, and Friedman didn’t just give Japan the world’s best scientific research institution, rather they gave the world its best scientific research institution.

– David P Kramer, Johannesburg

Letters

BOYKIES ARE “BIG IN JAPAN”

In response to your report on 31 March about Ian Scher being awarded the Order of the Rising Sun (4th class), first, a hearty mazeltov to Scher for the honour. Second, I refer to the opening line “How did a Jewish South African come to be honoured by the emperor of Japan?” – as if this is the first or only time this has happened.

I’m pleased to point out that in August 2017, Sydney Brenner, the famous molecular biologist and Nobel laureate, and Jonathan Dorfan, a University of Cape Town physics graduate and the former head of Stanford’s SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, were awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, 1st and 2nd class, respectively. They received the award for their role in the establishment of the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST). OIST is Japan’s flagship institute of scientific research, designed to put the country at the forefront of global scientific research. It’s

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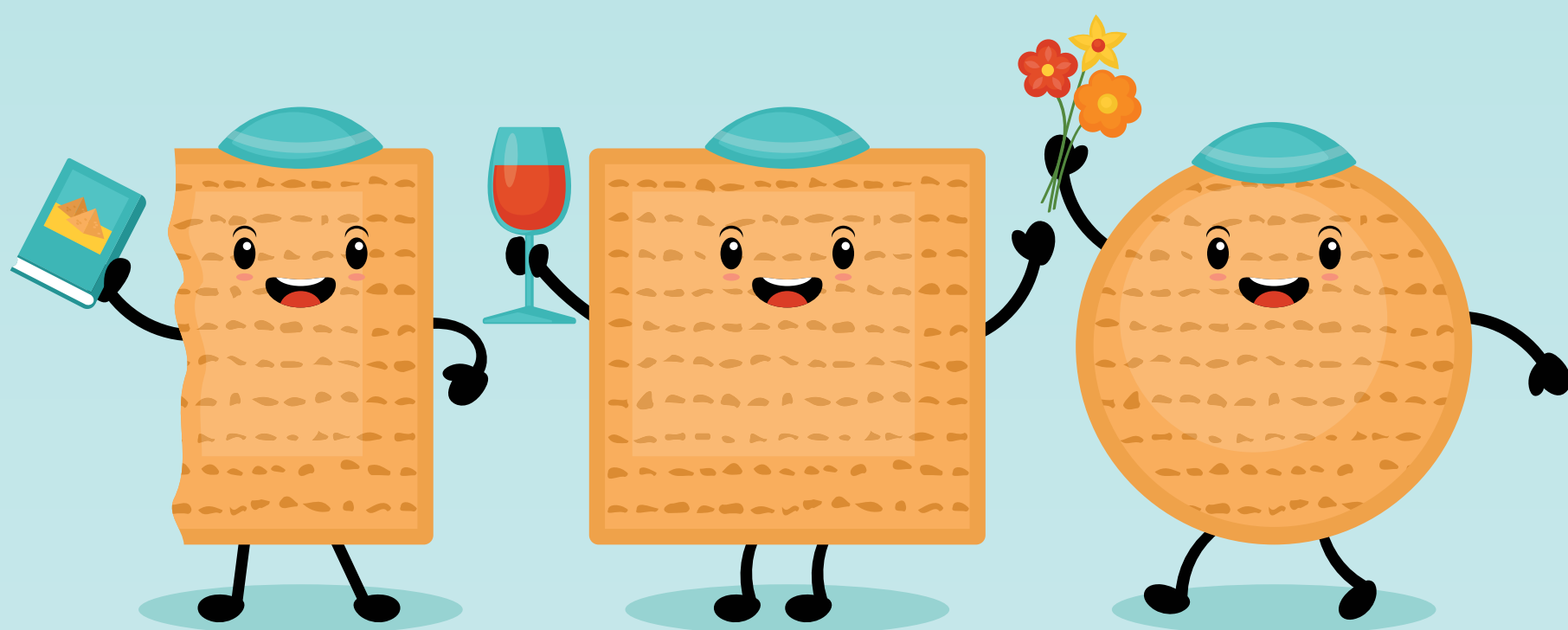
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