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# south african Jewish Report

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## Terror attacks touch lives of SA *olim*

TALI FEINBERG

David Badar was cooking for Shabbat after Yom Ha'atzmaut (on 5 May) when he got a call that there had been a terrorist attack in his hometown of Elad. As a Hatzolah volunteer, he rushed to help. He was the first medic there. He found taxi driver Oren Ben Yiftach dead in his car in a scene that "is too difficult to describe".

But the worst was yet to come. As he ran into the local park, a boy came up to him and said, "There has been an attack – my father is dead." The child was the son of his best friend, Yonatan Habakuk. When Badar rushed to his friend, he had been so badly attacked with an axe and knife, that "there was nothing I could do. He showed no signs of life". A third victim, Boaz Gol, also died in one of the most gruesome terror attacks to take place in Israel. Three others were gravely injured. Badar worked until 05:00 helping the victims.

Meanwhile, Badar's father, South African *oleh* Joel Badar, "was walking to my kollel, which isn't far from the terror site. Suddenly three youngsters told me to turn back because there was a terrorist. Initially, I didn't believe them and continued on my way. However, after about five minutes or so, I heard sirens and saw police cars driving at high speed. I realised that maybe the youngsters were right and that there was a terrorist."

The three victims were murdered by two Palestinians from a town in the West Bank who came through a hole in the security barrier. According to Israeli media, Ben Yiftach knew his killers as he had driven

them before in his job as a taxi driver. This time, after he drove them into town, they murdered him. They then went on a rampage, injuring three and killing two more. Together, the victims leave behind 16 children who will now grow up without fathers.

"It's not easy to carry on with normal life," says the younger Badar. "I lost one of my best friends. His family is having a very difficult time. Yonatan was a car mechanic and a wonderful person."

"It was well known in Elad that if your car had a problem, you could always rely on Yonatan Habakuk to help, give honest advice, and reasonable prices," says his father. "If people didn't have money, they could pay when they could. Sometimes he just repaired for free. He was known as a *tzaddik*."

"I just went to the hospital to visit the injured," says the younger Badar. "One security guard is still seriously injured. I want to thank everyone who donates to Hatzolah, allowing us to respond to such situations."

Elad was built in the 1990s for the haredi and religious Zionist population. It's about 25km east of Tel Aviv. The elder Badar explains how he came to live there. "My family moved from South Africa [Germiston] to America in 1977. I made aliya in 1983. We lived in Herzlia for 16 years. My wife comes from Herzlia. I was never happy with the lack of religious observance in Herzlia and for many years, wanted to move to a more religious city. Jerusalem was unaffordable. My wife didn't like Bnei Brak, and Beit Shemesh was too far out.

"One day, my sister told me that she



saw an advert in the newspaper for a new religious *yishuv* [town], a place called Elad. I came to look and decided that this place would be great. After finally convincing my wife to leave Herzlia, we moved to Elad."

They have lived happily there ever since. "Elad is a small and peaceful place. Nobody thought that it would be on the terrorists' list. Now, things are pretty much back to normal. There are just lots of police which we never had previously."

The terrorists were caught in a forest on the outskirts of Elad on Sunday, 8 May. "Kol Hakavod to the police and security forces," says the elder Badar. "I would like to encourage all Jews in South Africa to make aliya. Israel is a great place to live. There's

a place for everyone here. Israel is our only real home."

The Elad attack brought to 19 the number of people killed in terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank since 22 March this year.


On Sunday evening, Yair Maimon was drinking tea on his patio in the West Bank settlement of Tekoa, when he saw an armed Palestinian climbing the security fence a few meters away. He told Israeli media that he quickly rushed his family inside and grabbed his M16 rifle, which he had as a civilian member of the settlement's security team.

"I shouted toward him, 'Stop! Who is that?' He mumbled something unclear and continued climbing. From that moment, we realised it was a terrorist

attack." Security camera footage showed the attacker then running into the town. Maimon saw the terrorist waving a knife, and shot him, killing him.

For South African *oleh* and Tekoa resident, Brenda Lemkus, the attempted attack brought back memories of another terror attack in which her daughter, Dalia Lemkus, was killed in late 2014. During that attack at a nearby bus stop, the terrorist first tried to ram his minivan into Lemkus and two others. When he failed to run them over, he left his car and attacked them with a knife, killing her.

Continued on page 3 >>




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Palestinian journalist shot and killed in Jenin

A veteran Palestinian journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, was shot and killed on Wednesday, 11 May, while reporting about an Israeli army operation in Jenin.

Abu Akleh, who was an American citizen, reported about Israel and Palestine for *Al Jazeera*.

Israeli and Palestinian authorities disputed the circumstances of her death, which came as Israeli soldiers were engaged in a raid in the West Bank city. Palestinian officials, other Palestinian reporters who were present at the scene, and *Al Jazeera* all said that Israeli forces had fired the shot. Meanwhile, the Israeli army and Israeli leaders, citing video they said was from the scene, said they thought she had been killed by Palestinians who mistook her for a soldier.

Video footage of the incident showed Abu Akleh wearing a vest that identified her as a member of the press, according to Israeli media. International law is meant to safeguard journalists.

Israeli officials said Palestinian leaders had declined an offer to investigate jointly; Palestinian leaders said no such offer had been made.

Abu Akleh's death is certain to escalate tension in the area, already high after a string of attacks against Israelis by Palestinian terrorists, including several from Jenin.

The Netanyahus wins Pulitzer Prize for fiction

The 2022 Pulitzer Prize in fiction went to *The Netanyahus*, a scathing, satirical novel by Brooklyn writer Joshua Cohen that imagines a visit by the family of the former Israeli prime minister to an American college town in the early 1960s.

The prize committee called the novel "a mordant, linguistically deft historical novel about the ambiguities of the Jewish-American experience, presenting

ideas and disputes as volatile as its tightly-wound plot".

Cohen, 41, based the novel on a real-life visit by Benzion Netanyahu, a historian and the father of Benjamin Netanyahu, to Cornell University, where the elder Netanyahu served as a professor of Judaic studies from 1971 to 1975. Cohen said the story of the Netanyahus' initial visit to the campus was related to him by the late literary critic Harold Bloom.

In the novel, the assimilated Jewish narrator hosts the family and bristles at Benzion's fiercely nationalist worldview.

Russian shelling damages Jewish cemetery in Ukraine

A Jewish cemetery in Hlukhiv, Ukraine, was reportedly shelled on Sunday in fighting close to the Russian border.

The cemetery, where about 1 500 Jews are buried, is the latest Jewish site to face damage amid the 10-week-old war that began when Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February.

Many of the Jews buried in the cemetery were victims of a 1918 pogrom. Among them are Samuel Nokhimovich Shumyatsky, an older brother of a well-known rabbi, and a shochet, or butcher, named Ber Izrailevich Barkan, according to Ukraine's *Kourier* news site.

Ukrainian Minister of Culture Oleksander Tkachenko said influential rabbis were also buried in the cemetery.

The pogrom in Hlukhiv, also known in Russian as Glukhov, was part of a series of such events perpetrated during the 1917-1923 Russian Revolution. State records speak of at least 105 victims, though reports in the media at the time spoke of several hundred fatalities.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Photo: Roberto Serra Iguana Press Getty Images

Joshua Cohen

Torah Thought

When emor isn't enough

This week's Torah portion, Emor, begins, "And G-d spoke to Moses, 'Emor – say to the kohanim priests, the sons of Aharon, *ve'amarta* (and tell them).'" The famous commentator, Rashi, expounds on the repeated word-root "*emor*" and says that the Torah is teaching us that "the adults should warn the children". In other words, not only do adults need to be careful to follow the Torah's laws, they should also warn and inspire children to do so.

The idea is that when it comes to Jewish education, it's not enough just to have *emor* (speech). It's also necessary to have *ve'amarta*. When a parent or teacher wants to impart a lesson to their child or students, it's not enough to think about the lesson or even to speak about it. The educator must be involved in hands-on, down-to-earth participation.

The sixth Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, risked his life for Jewish education, being imprisoned in Soviet gulags, given a death sentence later commuted to internal exile, until he was finally allowed to leave the Soviet Union. On one occasion, he quoted his father as saying, "Just as wearing tefillin every day is a *mitzvah* commanded by the Torah to every individual regardless of his standing in Torah, whether learned or simple, so too is it an absolute duty for every person to spend a half hour every day thinking about the Torah-education of children and to do everything in his power – and beyond his power – to inspire children to follow the path along which they are guided."

Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1762-1839), also known as the Chasam Sofer, was a brilliant scholar and well respected halachic codifier. Many people came to him seeking his halachic rulings and endorsements. Once, two people came to seek his approval – one to become a *shochet* and the other to become a

teacher of young children. The Chasam Sofer met the potential *shochet* first, asked him a few quick questions, and then gave his endorsement. When the Chasam Sofer admitted the potential teacher, he asked many in-depth questions and continued to meet him throughout the week.

One of the Chasam Sofer's students asked the Chasam Sofer, "Why were you so brief with the *shochet*, while you continue to have long meetings with the teacher? If the *shochet* invalidates the ritual slaughter of an animal with a minor inaccuracy, the animal is

rendered non-kosher. Eating such meat is a Biblical offence. Yet the teacher will simply read from a textbook to a small number of students each year."

The Chasam Sofer answered, "The *shochet's* job is to take the life of an animal. If he is G-d fearing, we can trust him in his duties. However, the teacher's job is to give life to his student. Being G-d fearing isn't enough. If he misuses his judgement, he could kill his student's potential forever."

Rabbi Pini Pink – Chabad Greenstone

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South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

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# Joburg's Charlotte Maxeke Hospital open, but not out of casualty

NICOLA MILTZ

It has been a long and painful recovery for the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH), ravaged by fire more than a year ago. With the road to a full comeback seemingly endless, Jewish healthcare workers just want to get on with the business of the day – saving lives.

“We’re used to being overworked,” said one anonymous doctor shunted to another overburdened public hospital after the fire in April last year.



cannot be contacted to return, and probably will deteriorate without being seen by a specialist and return only when their conditions reach an unbearable stage.

“The bigger story here is that even with one hospital ‘closed’ and the others chronically short-staffed and overburdened, the DOH has cut the number of posts, which has further decreased the doctor-patient ratio around the country. There are many doctors, myself included,

This week, the casualty unit at CMJAH was finally declared open, but the lifeblood of the hospital – its critical trauma and emergency unit – remains closed to walk-in patients.

“At the moment, there will be no walk-in patients into the accident and emergency unit. For now, it’s only open for the arranged transfer of patients who have been seen in other centres. This is a way to relieve pressure on other facilities,” Health Minister Dr Joe Phaahla said during a high-level walk about at the flagship hospital on Monday, 9 May.

He said the trauma and emergency unit would be reopened in phases, with completion of the rebuild scheduled for November 2023.

repair of the hospital. Angry cries of incompetence were levelled at the Gauteng Health Department (GHD) and the Gauteng department of infrastructure development, with the mammoth task of fixing the facility finally involving the National Department of Health (DOH).

The GHD is notorious for corruption scandals and poor service delivery, as seen in the personal protective equipment scandal which came to light during the COVID-19 epidemic. Infrastructural headaches and a serious lack of parking as well as infuriating vandalism, theft, and security concerns in general continued to stall progress.

repaired.

“This highlights the need for proper security. It appears that there are criminal syndicates that could still sabotage the re-opening of other hospital departments,” said Bloom.

“It’s vital that cast-iron guarantees are given that the deadlines are met for obstetrics and gynaecology to open in March next year, paediatrics in July, surgery in October, and internal medicine in November 2023.

struggling to find a permanent post,” she said.

Media reports haven’t depicted the situation at CMJAH accurately, she said, with the wrong impression created that the whole hospital had been closed since the fire.

“The hospital has been partially open for a while, only casualty was closed, and the hospital was closed to after-hours walk-ins. I don’t think the fire did much to work uncertainty, our jobs are quite sporadic at the best of times, and moving around comes with the job. However, there’s no question that the fire put more pressure on the other hospitals in Johannesburg. Sadly, it further delayed follow ups, scans, and procedures, some of which are essentially lifesaving in an already excessively overburdened system.

“Another big issue is that many patients were lost in the chaos. Many who missed appointments because of the previous closure have now been lost in the system,

who are sitting at home begging to work, while our colleagues are trying desperately to cover the shortfall and are ultimately drowning. The ones who are suffering the most are the patients. Our healthcare system has passed breaking point, we have reached the point where our current resources can no longer meet the needs of our population, especially after the havoc COVID-19 caused in terms of chronic follow ups, and the DOH seems only to be cutting resources further. Even with the CMJAH casualty fully operational, the healthcare system is in big trouble.”

Meanwhile, Phaahla said the hospital was 75% to 80% fully operational, with about 800 admitted patients, and was serving about 50 000 outpatients monthly.

Concerns remain that even as units and departments come back into full operation, there’s little talk about how to clear patient backlogs all adding to sinking staff morale at Joburg’s key public sector hospital.

The devastating fire still remains etched in the hearts and minds of those healthcare workers who were there on the night of 16 April 2021 when all hell broke loose.

“It was a night I’ll never forget,” said one doctor who spent 12 frantic hours trying to evacuate patients from smoke-filled wards.

“It was like a horror movie,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* at the time. It was nothing short of a miraculous, logistical feat as more than 800 patients were moved to other stretched medical facilities across the province, placing them under an enormous burden.

In the hazy aftermath, clinicians, from interns to heads of departments, nurses, and every healthcare worker from the top down have scrambled to make things work. Only just.

Delays, obfuscations, and ever-moving deadlines led to desperate pleas from doctors to expedite the

The re-opening of casualty was set back when the Central Processor Unit for the CT scanner was stolen, cables were cut, and copper pipes stolen. “This occurred in spite of R40 million a year spent on a security company and CCTV cameras to guard the hospital,” said Democratic Alliance Gauteng shadow MEC for health, Jack Bloom.

All these delays caused huge distress to staff and patients at other hospitals like Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital and Helen Joseph Hospital, which were bursting with extra patients.

Bloom bemoaned the fact that Helen Joseph casualty was “overwhelmed with patients who are squeezed into corridors and sit in chairs for long periods before being admitted”.

This week, he expressed disappointment that the accident and emergency unit at CMJAH wasn’t fully reopened mostly because the CT scanner hadn’t yet been

“The public and private sector need to work efficiently together to ensure that there aren’t further delays in getting the hospital departments up and running. If this doesn’t happen, hundreds of patients will continue to suffer at hospitals like Helen Joseph, which cannot cope with the flood of CMJAH patients,” Bloom said.

One Jewish doctor, who wishes to remain anonymous, left CMJAH at the end of last year when her contract expired and wasn’t renewed.

“I’m now one of the many unemployed healthcare workers

## Terror attacks touch lives of SA olim

>>>Continued from page 1

“I grew up in Highlands North, Johannesburg. I made aliya in 1984 as a newlywed, having married an ex-South African who had made aliya and was serving in the army,” she says. “We have six children, and moved from Gilo, Jerusalem, to Tekoa in 1999 when we outgrew our apartment.

“Dalia had completed her degree in occupational therapy at Haifa University. She chose to work with handicapped children. She was active in our synagogue and also in the local Yad Sarah branch which supplied medical equipment to those in need. She would *trempe* [hitchhike as is common

practice where we live] to and from work in Kiryat Gat. She was 26 years old when she was brutally murdered.”

After her death, they stayed in Tekoa. “This is our home, and the community is very supportive. We dedicated a community hall in her memory and called it Simchat Dalia. I’ve always felt safe, and still feel safe within and without Tekoa and in any other part of Israel.”

She lives very near to where the terrorist came into the settlement on Sunday. “It brought back memories of that awful day, although I live with those memories every

day.” She knows Maimon: “A neighbour with seven children and very brave. He’s very cool, calm, and collected and volunteers for Magen David Adom.”

Now, in Tekoa “they’re beefing up security after concluding an investigation of the event. The whole community joined in a thanksgiving ceremony the day after the attempted attack. I’m definitely going to continue to live in Tekoa. This is my home, and I feel safe.”

Also on Sunday, one person was injured in a stabbing incident outside Damascus Gate in Jerusalem.

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Jean Colman, 92

passed away in Sydney on 4 May 2022 surrounded by family. Jean was born in Scotland to John and Agnes McCulloch on 22 October 1929. She married Gerald Colman and moved to Johannesburg in 1955 where she lived until moving to Sydney. She is survived by sons David, Graeme and Robert, daughter-in-law Marian and grandchildren Isabel and Iain. The funeral was on 6 May in Sydney.

Anyone who wants to contact the family can email Robert.colman@hotmail.com

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Poison in parliament as anti-Israel rhetoric ramps up

TALI FEINBERG

about law expert and member of parliament (MP), Michael Bagraim, says he has noticed a dramatic increase in anti-Israel rhetoric across political parties in parliament. This has occurred in both casual and formal settings amongst politicians and parliamentarians. He says this rhetoric is so vitriolic and venomous, it has made him feel that he has to minimise his Zionist identity.

At the same time, Bagraim says politicians are careful to direct this at Israel – making it “the world’s whipping boy” – hiding what he feels is actually antisemitism. “The atmosphere against Israel [in parliament] is absolutely poisonous, and I strongly believe that it’s antisemitic,” he says.

Bagraim is a member of the portfolio committee on employment and labour (national assembly committees), an MP, and member of the Democratic Alliance (DA).

He has been in parliament for seven years, but has noticed this increase in anti-Israeli hate only in the past three years or so. “Everyone has always known I’m Jewish. Most people I interacted with on a daily basis treated me with respect. I had a good rapport with people across the board. I always made it my business to interact with everyone, joining various tables, and taking part in discussions.

“But at the end of my first five-year term, this started falling apart. Comments started being made about Israel in relation to everything. Everything was Israel’s fault. In the past, people would ask me what the Jewish community thought, but now they weren’t that keen to discuss that. I had a very strong feeling that the debate had changed, towards an undercover antisemitism. It was never blatant, but it has been bubbling since about three years ago.”



African National Congress MP Mandla Mandela

He says once the pandemic hit, “the anti-Israel sentiment became all-pervasive. It didn’t matter what the debate was.

“I feel it strongly, and it’s worse over the Zoom platform. It’s more vitriolic. It reached a crescendo with Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Whatever one says, they respond along the lines of, ‘Well what Israel does is worse. Why aren’t you attacking Israel?’”

Bagraim says that lately, many politicians have anti-Israel WhatsApp pictures or Zoom backgrounds. Just last week, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Alvin Botes had a background of people holding Palestinian flags and a sign saying, ‘Free Palestine’. He also sees many parliamentarians wearing Palestinian scarves.

“The WhatsApp pictures have appeared on more than a dozen occasions, across different parties. And it’s not just the ANC [African National Congress]. The ANC is the worst because it brings Israel into every debate. For example, I sit in on a lot of portfolio meetings on agriculture because of labour in agriculture. ANC MP Mandla Mandela chairs those meetings. He’s known to be vehemently anti-Israel. “Israel is mentioned more than any other country.



Labour law expert and Member of Parliament Michael Bagraim

Many comments are about ‘Israel and its people’. What they mean to say is ‘Jew’.”

If Bagraim suggests any Israeli innovation that could help South Africa, he says he’s immediately shut down by the backlash. “For example, an Israeli has developed a circumcision tool that can stop people dying, as they do here in their numbers every year. They say, ‘We will never use anything designed by Israelis.’ They would rather let people die.”

He believes one of the biggest issues

is that the ANC stays silent. “Though this hasn’t translated into antisemitic actions, it starts setting a tone – that it’s fine to attack Israel. And how easily can the jump be made from Israel to Jew?” he asks rhetorically.

He also notes that the recent meeting between the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the president won’t be reported besides for in the *SA Jewish Report*, while Ramaphosa’s interactions with other communities are reported in the parliamentary newspaper and other media outlets.

“I wouldn’t get too complacent,” he says. “Parliament is a litmus test, in which Ramaphosa’s trusted MPs and



Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Alvin Botes

cabinet members constantly attack Israel under his watchful eye.”

Says DA MP and shadow minister of international relations, Darren Bergman, “There’s a definite rise in antisemitism. The last time I raised it on this platform in a letter, some of our leaders tried to brush it under the carpet or act like it wasn’t true.

“However, you would need to be pretty tone deaf to the groundswell not to understand that peppered in the anti-Zionist protests is indifference between Israel and Jew. If you’re Jewish you’re Zionist, if you’re Zionist, you’re Jewish, and the slogans are becoming more and more inclusive of words such as ‘Hitler’ and ‘Holocaust,’” Bergman says.

“The government is tasked with protecting the rights of minorities and freedom of association. It has the power to stamp out hate speech or misinformation – like it was prepared to do in the case of COVID-19, yet it’s willing to perpetuate a lot of this behaviour. It’s so lost on what diplomacy is; it’s so firm on loyalty that it’s blind to justice and truth. It’s so divided internally, it cannot see fairness.

“No wonder people look at it and shake their heads, trying to ascertain why the government wouldn’t want Russia to withdraw immediately from Ukraine; or why it wouldn’t seek intervention in China and the persecution of the Rohingyas when it calls itself a champion of human rights. This is why our diplomats are putting South Africa on the international stage, but for the wrong reasons, and this is why South Africa will suffer in the future economically, socially, and politically.”

“The government’s persistent hostility towards Israel and how this can lead to increased anti-Jewish prejudice in general is indeed a serious issue,” says SAJBD chairperson Professor Karen Milner. “The Board has been forthright and vociferous in voicing its objections. This has been true in all our engagements with government, including in our meeting with President Ramaphosa. Recent instances include the failed attempt to prevent Miss SA from competing at Miss Universe in Eilat; its unsuccessful efforts to have Israel’s African Union accreditation withdrawn; and our unequivocal condemnation of Minister Pandor’s outrageous remarks equating Israel’s actions to those of Russia in Ukraine.

“We have also been able to find common ground and thereby foster positive working relationships, in spite of sharply differing over the Israel-Palestine question,” she says.



# SA chief rabbi urges Knesset to make Sunday part of Israel’s weekend

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein may well sway the decision-making process in Israel’s Knesset over whether Israel should change to a five-day working week, and which day would change.

Goldstein was called up to address an official Knesset committee on Tuesday, 10 May, about why he believed Sunday should be made a non-workday in Israel.

Naama Lazimi, a member of Knesset for the Labor Party who convened and chaired this parliamentary committee, called people mostly in Israel – to give input on different options for shortening the work week.

“MK Lazimi invited me because I met her a number of weeks ago to discuss this option,” says Goldstein, the founder of the Shabbat Project (or Shabbat Olamit as it is known in Israel).

Goldstein discussed with her an independent survey he commissioned and its findings because he had heard that she was working on issues it covered. “Then, when she convened this committee meeting, she invited me to share it from a kind of global Jewish perspective,” he says. He did this via Zoom from South Africa.

The option the chief rabbi proposed is to shorten working hours and make Sundays in Israel part of the weekend, much like in South Africa.

Goldstein commissioned a survey in Israel recently to gauge public attitudes not only towards the idea of creating a shorter work week, but also Shabbat in general.

“The survey particularly looked at this question about whether making Sundays a non-workday would help to reduce tension around Shabbat,” he says.

Tension arises, Goldstein says, “when there is only one day of the weekend and that one day is Shabbat”.

He explained that preserving the identity and sanctity of Shabbat in the public domain means that shopping and sport – which people don’t have time for during the week – can’t happen on a weekend.

“If people want to get things done that you can’t do during the work week and things are closed because of Shabbat, this leads to the conflict of choosing between giving people options on the weekend,” he says.

“For example, all sport has to take place on a Shabbat. It’s the only day of the weekend. Families who may not even be so religiously observant don’t want their kids to play sport on Shabbat because of the holiness of the day,” Goldstein says.

“So, the idea of a two-day weekend is that a lot of these things could happen on a Sunday and then the holiness of Shabbat will be preserved without reducing people’s

choices or imposing hardship on society,” he says. “You can then preserve Shabbat and at the same time, release the tension and all the fighting because now there’s a two-day weekend, so all needs can be taken care of in that context.”

The survey’s findings, which were released on 10 May 2022, demonstrated widespread support for a shorter work week, with 76% in favour of making Sunday part of the weekend.

GOLDSTEIN PROPOSES THAT THE WORK WEEK BECOMES FOUR-AND-A-HALF DAYS, WITH SUNDAY FORMING PART OF THE WEEKEND.

The survey indicated that should Sunday become part of the weekend, more than 50% of self-described *chilonim* (secular Jews) would spend more time at home resting and connecting with family on Shabbat.

The survey also shows that introducing Sunday as an extra weekend day would reduce tension and divisions within Israeli society around Shabbat. More than 90% of

respondents were concerned that tension around state and religion was undermining the unity of Israeli society, with 83% saying that establishing a Sunday weekend would reduce these tensions.

Presently, Israel has a five-and-a-half-day work week – from Sunday to Friday afternoon. The reason why the weekend in Israel is observed on Friday afternoon and Saturday is that Shabbat lasts from sunset on Friday to the fall of full darkness on Saturday.

Goldstein proposes that the work week becomes four-and-a-half days, with Sunday forming part of the weekend.

He’s calling for this option, he says, because “Shabbat needs to have an important place and role in Israeli society. I’ve seen through the Shabbos Project in Israel how people have a real yearning for Shabbos. But in Israel, often politics and division get in the way. What I’ve seen from this survey, and what I’ve seen through the activities of the Shabbos Project in Israel is that actually part of the problem is the practicality of having a weekend of only one day. Then,

everyone’s fighting over the same time.”

So, he believes the best solution would be to give Israelis time to have Shabbat and then on Sundays, time to do other things that people in South Africa and Western countries would do on a weekend.

Goldstein, who also addressed the Knesset committee several months ago regarding

the blocking of flights from the diaspora into Israel, says most of the other people addressing the Knesset during the meeting about shortening the work week were in parliament.

“All the other submissions that I heard were from a point of view of the economy, labour, and productivity, the trends globally towards a four-day work week, especially post COVID-19,” he says.

“I came from the point of view of unity within the society and making the space for Judaism and Shabbat in a way that won’t cause division.”

Goldstein says there’s now going to be a process of choosing the most suitable option and formulating legislation for it. “In the past in Israel, there have been various unsuccessful attempts to do this,” he says.

“Hopefully, this attempt will be successful. I made it clear in this meeting that I’m not an economist and I can’t pronounce on matters of the economy, productivity, and all of that. I’m just talking from a point of view of cohesion of society and making a space for Jewish values.”



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein addressing the Israeli Knesset via Zoom

# King David pupil makes International Bible Quiz history

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Jake Weinstein, a Grade 11 pupil at King David High School Linksfield, became one of the first South Africans to come in the top four in the history of the International Chidon HaTanach (Bible Quiz) in Jerusalem on Yom Ha’atzmaut on 5 May.

Gidon Fox of Yeshiva College came fourth in the Chidon HaTanach in 2016, in which 16 teens from Jewish communities around the world pit their knowledge of the Tanach against each other every year.

Weinstein is the first South African to achieve 100% in the Paul Abelman National Chidon HaTanach Bible Quiz before he and this quiz’s other top two – Grade 11 home-school student Chana Sussman and Grade 11 Yeshiva College student Gabriella Swartz – went to Israel to compete in the international competition.

“My goal was always to be in the top eight, but I always thought that making top four was unreachable for someone who does the Chidon in English,” said Weinstein, who had all his questions asked to him in Hebrew and answered in English.

Sussman made it through to the final eight places of the Chidon HaTanach and came in sixth place. Swartz placed in the top six in the final of the Diaspora Quiz, which is for the next tier of students who didn’t qualify for the Chidon HaTanach.

Rabbi Gary Braude, the Chidon advisor and teacher, helped prepare the South Africans for the competition.

When Weinstein was in Grade 8, he wanted to win



Jake Weinstein

his school’s Star of David award, which meant he had to participate in six school activities throughout the year. He did five sports and the Bible Quiz as a cultural activity.

Although he didn’t perform very well in the quiz in that first year, he went on to place first out of all the students in Johannesburg and Cape Town who participated in the Paul Abelman National Chidon HaTanach Bible Quiz, which consists of three tests each on about 80 *perakim* (chapters) of the Tanach.

The international syllabus covers 400 chapters. After a preliminary written test, the top 16 finalists are selected to

participate in the International Chidon HaTanach final quiz.

Sussman’s road to participating in this year’s Diaspora Quiz began as a 15-year-old, when her *shaliach* (emissary) introduced the Chidon HaTanach to her school. “I thought to myself that this isn’t going to be easy, but the knowledge I’ll be able to gain will last a lifetime,” she says. “At the end of this Tanach journey of mine, I can say that my thought process was true.”

Sussman says her principal, Morah Dina Goldfein, was the first one to tell her about the Chidon HaTanach and pushed her to participate in it. “Morah Goldfein was very supportive and gave me a ton of help and encouragement,” she says.

For two weeks, the finalists participated in the Chidon camp, organised by Israel’s education ministry. They toured biblical sites, and met President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. “We did get to see quite a bit of Israel,” says Sussman. “We were moving around constantly from place to place.”

The Chidon HaTanach was televised live in Israel and attended by Bennett, who asked a few questions, and members of the Knesset.

Yeshiva College alumnus Zeev (Warren) Schwartz, who came 12th in the Chidon HaTanach in 1982, was one of the six judges of this year’s Diaspora Quiz. “I was very proud as an ex-South African to see two finalists from South Africa in the Chidon HaTanach and one in the Diaspora Quiz. That brought back really wonderful memories because we were also two [finalists from South Africa] at the time,” he says.


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## Stand by me

There’s so much happening in our world, but when tragedy strikes too close to home, the rest becomes a blur.

There are a few people within our community who are going through some of the darkest days of their lives. Everything else has become insignificant compared to the pain they are experiencing.

You know, people say, may you have lots of problems because if you have many, they are small. If you have one massive one, the others seem to disappear. Such is the situation for a number of people in our community who are enduring extraordinarily tough and painful personal experiences.

Right now, we’re not at liberty to share their stories because we have to consider their needs and that of the community. Around the country and perhaps the world, people are saying *tehillim*. In two cases that I know of, the families are spreading *mitzvot* in the name of their loved ones.

I have a close relationship with a couple of people involved in one situation.

For much of this week, I hoped for some power to make things right, but couldn’t. I wanted to have the power to heal, but didn’t. I wanted to drop everything and go and fix what was wrong, but couldn’t. Such is the human condition.

As the days progressed, I realised that while I or we cannot fix the world and heal those who are ill, we can be there for people. We can perform a *mitzvah* without being asked.

I recall a tough time I went through over the past two years, and the reason I got through it was because I knew there were people who mattered deeply to me who cared. They were there for me, and would do anything in their power to support me.

Knowing that made each day brighter, and made the sun shine in the darkest hours.

It’s not enough just to say the words, but it is enough to really care and do what you can to help.

Help so often is about being a sounding board, a person there to hug, or that special person to offer a meal when there isn’t the wherewithal to consider the next one.

I’m so often astounded, as I have said so many times, that we have a community that reaches out to those in need and cares when nobody else seems to. What a gift!

During the worst of the pandemic, it was astonishing how many people supported those who were sick and their families. You didn’t have to ask – they were there.

Sometimes, you had never before met the person who reached out to help you. Was it a friend who you had never met or a guardian angel?

We live in a world of significant turmoil and we have things to worry about – economically, politically, racially... There’s no end to our problems!

However, when push comes to shove, it’s those interpersonal relationships and that one-on-one caring that will take us through the darkest times, no matter what they are.

Does that mean that we shut our eyes to the hardships or the information that will make us mad or fearful? Not at all!

We, on the *SA Jewish Report*, don’t believe in becoming ostriches and hiding our heads in the sand. If there’s a situation that’s uncomfortable or unpleasant, we should find a way to tell you because it could have an impact on all of us. We’re adults, and we don’t need someone to hide the truth from us. How else can we make informed decisions?

Rather know the situation and work with or deal with it than dig a hole and make as if it isn’t happening. I speak here of the rising antisemitism in parliament, which reflects the situation around the world, unfortunately.

It is as it is, but we dare not ignore it. We need to acknowledge it, and work with it.

But even then, a good deed goes a long, long way.

How often has Israel, for example, helped someone who is ill and needed special medical treatment? They may have been politically opposed to Israel, but that didn’t stop Israeli doctors doing all they could to save their life.

It’s about being human and seeing the humanity in others. This brings me to a tragedy that happened this week, when Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot and killed while reporting on an Israel army operation in Jenin refugee camp.

What makes me angry is that rather than understanding this loss and, as media, finding ways to pay tribute to this woman, political points are being scored by pointing accusatory fingers.

Instead of considering the person who was killed, it has become a blame game. Those against Israel have accused Israeli soldiers, but there’s no evidence to say it’s true. In all the ugliness and hatred, the humanity of this apparently brave and talented veteran journalist has been forgotten.

Sometimes it takes deep-set goodness and strength to stand above the noise, to ignore the anger, and do the right thing. That’s who we are.

When those we care about or don’t know very well are in a dark place, reach out and hold their hand. Yes, we would all like to change their situation. We would like to be magicians and make it all right, but invariably we can’t.

But we can be there for them and just give them the hug they need or the shoulder to cry on to get them to the next day or next hour.

I may be preaching to the converted, but if I can convince you to do something small for someone in need, I have done what I set out to do today.



## Lav(ro)v sometimes means having to say you’re sorry

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



As the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine drags on to its third month, Russia and Israel have been embroiled in a war of words. Russian President Vladimir Putin has (according to the Israelis anyway) apologised to Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett for comments made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Lavrov said that Adolf Hitler “had Jewish blood”, a falsehood that outraged Israel and Jewish communities worldwide. What prompted the odious comment, and why has Putin seemingly made a rare apology to Israel?

One of the main pretenses for Russia’s attack on Ukraine on 24 February was to “denazify” the Eastern European country. Russia depicted Ukraine’s government as Nazis, oppressing Russian-speakers in eastern Ukraine and indeed the entire state. Russia’s “special military operation” was to remove the yoke of Nazism from the population. Though there certainly are neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine, they are a tiny minority and not in the government of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Ukraine and the West have rightly shown this Nazism claim to be patently false, not least because Zelenskyy is Jewish. Lavrov was asserting that Zelenskyy being Jewish didn’t mean that the Ukrainians weren’t Nazis. Lavrov made the distasteful comments on Italian television. He added, “[That Zelenskyy is Jewish] means absolutely nothing. Wise Jewish people say that the most ardent antisemites are usually Jews.”

Bennett reacted, “Such lies are meant to blame the Jews themselves for the most terrible crimes in history and thus free the oppressors of the Jews from their responsibility. No war today is the Holocaust or is like the Holocaust.”

“In a flailing attempt to defend the indefensible, Lavrov resorts to resurrecting long-discredited theories about Hitler’s supposed Jewish origins,” David Saks, the associate director at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, told the *SA Jewish Report*. “And then he compounds the offence by claiming that Jews make the worst antisemites. Intimating that Jews are in part complicit in their own persecution diminishes the culpability of the perpetrators while scandalously and falsely saddling the victims with a share of the guilt, and as such constitutes an especially repulsive form of historical revisionism.

Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett during their meeting in Sochi Russia on 22 October 2021

“Lavrov is a seasoned communicator. The words he utters are always carefully calibrated and need to be understood as intentional,” Milton Shain, emeritus professor of historical studies at the University of Cape Town, told the *SA Jewish Report*. “Clearly, his nonsense about Hitler’s Jewish ancestry – empirically unsupported – is part of a wider propaganda campaign. The Russians are past masters at this. With the war going poorly for Putin, Moscow is



Photo: Getty Images

insisting that its military assault is designed to stop Ukrainian fascism and antisemitism.

“This trope fits in well with memories of World War II. It’s also an attempt to answer those countering Russian propaganda by reminding observers that President Zelenskyy is Jewish. Quick to respond, Lavrov tells us that this is meaningless since some Jews – usually identified as self-hating – have historically expressed anti-Jewish sentiments.

“Put simply, Lavrov is doing his best to discount the Jewishness of Zelenskyy as proof that Ukraine isn’t ruled by fascists and antisemites. Lavrov’s comments seem to have flopped in the West, although it’s difficult to know if they are similarly castigated in Russia,” Shain said.

Israel demanded that the Russians apologise and summoned the Russian ambassador to clarify these remarks, a demonstration of diplomatic displeasure.

After a call between the two leaders, Bennett’s

office released a statement last Thursday, which said “The two discussed Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov’s remarks. The prime minister accepted President Putin’s apology for Lavrov’s remarks, and thanked him for clarifying his attitude towards the Jewish people and the memory of the Holocaust.”

The Russian side’s statement doesn’t mention an apology. It reads, “The president of Russia recalled that of the six million Jews tortured in ghettos and concentration camps, killed by the Nazis during punitive operations, 40% were citizens of the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], and asked to convey wishes of health and well-being to the veterans living in Israel. Naftali Bennett, in turn, noted the decisive contribution of the Red Army to the victory over Nazism.”

Israel has attempted to play a mediation role in the conflict, as the country has close relations with Russia and Ukraine. Turkey has, however, emerged as the main mediator. But it’s also important for Israel to keep Russia onside as the two countries are active in war-torn Syria, where Israel regularly strikes terrorist targets. Tensions rose in 2018 when the Israelis accidentally shot down a Russian aircraft in Syria.

Ukrainian pleas for Israeli military support have fallen on deaf ears, with Israel instead, so far, providing bulletproof vests and helmets for medical personnel and establishing a field hospital.

Putin has long seen Israel as part of the Russian-speaking world, with more than one million *olim* from the former Soviet Union. It seems this apparent apology – or at least the conversation – was needed to mend bridges.

But on 9 May, Victory Day in Russia commemorating the end of World War II, Putin continued to paint the Ukrainians as Nazis. The apology hasn’t changed much of the bigger picture.

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



# Ann Harris makes aliya but remains connected to SA

TALI FEINBERG

It's always a celebration when someone makes aliya, but the South African Jewish community, the country, and sub-Saharan Africa will miss the irreplaceable presence of Ann Harris, who went to live in Israel at the beginning of May.

It's been 35 years since she and her husband, the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, landed in South Africa, changing the face of South African Jewry forever. Members of the community across the spectrum laud Harris' efforts to improve the community and wider society throughout those 35 years. She leaves a vast and unforgettable legacy on this southern tip of Africa, but will continue to share her expertise from Israel. No doubt, she will also contribute to the Jewish state.

"When one member of a couple excels, the other often lives in their shadow. That has never been the case with Ann," says Cape Town Jewish community leader Philip Krawitz. "Ann is an exceptional person in her own right, excelling in many fields."

"I met Ann and the late Rabbi Harris in the first week they arrived in South Africa," says close friend Marlene Bethlehem. "It was at the beginning of my career in the South African Jewish Board of Deputies [SAJBD], and they supported me enormously." Harris would eventually take up her own role at the Cape SAJBD, receiving the most votes on the public ballot in 2020.

"When Chief Rabbi Harris was invited to come to South Africa, he had to talk to Ann. She was a barrister and solicitor with a thriving practice in London. Their decision to come here with their two sons was the best thing that ever happened, especially for the time we were welcoming the new South

Africa. Ann was a very important part of it all," says Bethlehem.

Though she gave up her practice, she didn't give up her career or her contribution to jurisprudence. "She continued to be active in the civil-rights field," says Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, who works closely with her at the African Jewish Congress (AJC). "As a lawyer, she involved herself extensively in women's rights, including serving on the South African Law Commission's Committee on Jewish Divorce which was led by her late husband, and which led to the passage of the Divorce [Amendment] Act of 1996. [The Act allows South African courts to prevent a Jewish husband from obtaining a secular divorce without also providing a woman with a religious divorce.] For many years, she was extensively involved in the Wits Campus Law Clinic, including serving as chairperson of its governing committee and as acting director from 1993 to 1996."

"Ann is a highly respected lawyer and lecturer, locally and internationally," says Krawitz. "As a humanitarian, she has established an enviable reputation for her vision, passion, and commitment. Ann is never afraid to speak truth to power. At the SAJBD, she has been a moral bastion, always standing up against injustice. She has also been an important voice as a board member of the Cape Town Holocaust &

Genocide Centre. Her boundless energy is an inspiration to all. She's not just a talker, but a doer."

Bethlehem says Harris has many passions and hobbies including swimming and following the Premier League. They both have family in Manchester and discuss the Manchester United and Manchester City soccer scores weekly.

Harris left South Africa on Sunday, 8 May, Mother's Day. This is particularly symbolic as she's a mother figure not only to her own children and grandchildren, but to thousands of disadvantaged children across South Africa. She was the driving force behind the founding and vision of Afrika Tikkun (formerly Ma'Afrika Tikkun). The organisation is dedicated to investing in education, health, and social services for children, youth, and their families.

"Ann Harris, her husband, and my father, Bertie Lubner, were the founders of Afrika Tikkun. Ann remained on the board for many years after her

husband's passing, giving guidance on child care and ensuring the practise of Jewish values in the way we operated," says Afrika Tikkun Chief Executive Marc Lubner.

"She retired from the board about eight years ago, but remained involved as a friend to the organisation, often bringing Jewish organisations to visit our sites and ensuring ongoing positive public relations for the organisation. I anticipate that she will continue to do this regardless of where in the world she lives.

"We wish her safe travels. She will always have a home in the heart of Afrika Tikkun. She will forever be etched in the memories of all of us who were 'tutored' by her in the art of service to others."

Her impact reached beyond our borders into the entire southern African region. In paying tribute to her recently, Silberhaft said, "Lawyer, academic, social-justice activist, Jewish communal leader, human-rights advocate – these are just some of the areas in which Ann Harris has made her mark over the years, both in her native United Kingdom and in South Africa, the country that she made her own.

"Her influence hasn't been confined to these two countries. Over the years, she has increasingly involved herself in Jewish communities from Namibia in the west to Mauritius in the east, from Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique on South Africa's borders, to Zambia and Kenya in the north.

"Her involvement in African Jewish affairs has largely revolved around her long association with the AJC. Established in 1994 shortly after South Africa's transition, the AJC is a forum through which Jewish communities of sub-Saharan Africa can

maintain Jewish life in their regions. Ann has represented the AJC at a range of high-level international conferences and events, first as a member of the AJC executive, then as a vice-president, and then as president since 2014.

"Ann has stepped down from her role as president of the AJC," Silberhaft says. "Sam Levy of Mozambique has been elected as the new president, and Ann will remain vice-president. She will remain involved and is committed to continuing her role. She is a force to be reckoned with, and makes her presence felt wherever she goes."

Silberhaft has known her since she arrived in South Africa and would often travel alongside her and her husband to country towns and small southern African communities in his role as the SAJBD's country communities' rabbi. "She has a deep understanding of the challenges in southern African communities," he says. She's also passionate about country communities and was a resident of Hermanus in the Cape for many years.

Says Krawitz, "Ann is a world-class orator and her talks about the relationship between her late husband and the late President Nelson Mandela are legendary. Ann is realising the dream to live in her beloved state of Israel, but she will be greatly missed by all of us in South Africa who had the privilege of working with her."

While she wasn't born here, "Ann's approach to social upliftment combines idealism with a practical vision, infused and energised by the Jewish historical experience in South Africa," says Silberhaft. Wherever she is in the world, she will continue to be part of the South African Jewish community's story.



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# Terror-linked financing and Islamic State returnees ring alarm bells

NICOLA MILTZ

Terror financing is a reality in South Africa, as more and more evidence comes to light of Islamic State (IS) sympathisers and terror activists on home-grown soil involved in funding terror here and abroad.

“There’s definite cause for concern, but it’s hardly surprising,” said Professor Hussein Solomon from the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State.

“South Africa is a safe haven for terror-financing and terror-related activities because the South African government continues to turn a blind eye to this and our security services are incompetent and politicised,” he said.

This concern, coupled with the worrisome number of IS returnees to South Africa following the defeat of the caliphate in Syria has terror experts sounding loud alarm bells.

Unnerving reports by *TimesLive* suggest that the government has since 2019 been involved in a “secret programme” to repatriate family members and former IS operatives who pledged allegiance and fought for IS in Syria.

The exact number of returnees isn’t known, but it’s reported to be considerable.

According to *TimesLive*, hundreds of South Africans have been allowed to return with no threat of prosecution, provided with new identity documents, and a means to resettle.

This is allegedly with the nod of home affairs departments, the department of international affairs and cooperation, and the state security agency, say reports, much to the dismay of the South African Police Services.

“South Africa has been used as a safe house for people to lie low and a place to solicit funding from parts of a sympathetic Muslim community towards the global Islamist cause,” said Solomon.

The investigation also claimed IS-linked extremists were exploiting South Africa’s small-scale financial services to fund terror attacks across the continent by moving money through spaza shops in the informal sector. There is reportedly an international counter-terrorism investigation into how small-scale South African money transfer companies, used by foreigners to send money home, are exploited by IS supporters. Evidence points to international terror groups using South Africa’s informal financial sector to shuffle money into other African countries.

Concerns are being raised as to whether the South African government and its security agencies have the political will or, more importantly, the know-how and expertise to deal with local terror financing as well as the monitoring of returnees, their deradicalisation, and reintegration into society. A lack of police resources in monitoring these returnees is of high concern, say insiders.

“Our inept security services have largely been used to fight factional political battles, they aren’t adequately equipped to deal with this,” said Solomon, “For instance, is there a programme to deradicalise these returnees? We don’t know. Are they under surveillance for an extended period of time to ensure they don’t plan some sort of attack?”

IS sympathisers and terrorist cells operating in South Africa are thought to be financing the Mozambique insurgency in various ways, including through the proceeds of organised crime.

Terror expert Jasmin Opperman told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Terror financing is happening in South Africa. It might not be on the same grand scale as other countries, but it’s a concern nonetheless.”

“Money is moving. There are flows of money from South Africa, and it’s difficult to prove and ascertain where the money lands

up,” she said.

She said it was understood that financing occurred through various methods from informal online virtual payments to methods used by organised crime gangs.

She said extremists worked with organised crime syndicates and used their sophisticated money laundering systems.

Stephen Goldberg, the vice-chairperson of the Community Security Organisation (CSO) in Gauteng, told the *SA Jewish Report* that financial facilitation of terror in the country was “a real concern”.

“The infrastructure of terror financing is well-established and deeply rooted here. The combination of a sophisticated, well-functioning financial system with weaknesses in law enforcement and the lack of financial regulation makes South Africa a very attractive destination for terror-related activity,” he said.

“Unfortunately, this makes us more vulnerable. The United States [US] is putting pressure on the South African government to deal with terror-related money laundering and other forms of terror financing, and this pressure may be seen by extremists as the South African state acting against them, which they might respond to.



“It’s also extremely concerning that former IS operatives are being allowed to come back to South Africa without any consequences. These are people who have acted on terror ideology abroad and have returned with no apparent deradicalisation programmes in place.

“There are serious doubts as to whether the state has the capacity to monitor these people 24/7 and I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that some of them still hold radical views and might want to act on them.”

The Jewish community, Goldberg said, was in a fortunate position in that it had been building security infrastructure for many years.

“We have the CSO and a reasonably high level of security at all our installations. We continue to build on this, and must continue to be vigilant as a community.”

Earlier this year, US authorities identified four ISIS “financial facilitators” in South Africa.

The US exposed key ISIS and ISIS-M (Mozambique) supporters who raised revenue for ISIS and exploited South Africa’s financial system to facilitate funding for ISIS branches and networks across Africa.

Four men living in South Africa were identified by the US as allegedly being involved in terrorist activities across the country and on the wider African continent. Their names have been widely circulated.

The four have been sanctioned (blocked from doing

business in the US) by the US government for their alleged links to recruitment, kidnapping, extortion, and robberies committed to assist terrorist organisations financially.

They have been red flagged as using South Africa’s financial system to fundraise and facilitate funding for ISIS networks, according to OFAC (the Office of Foreign Assets Control).

It’s believed that the US is working with its African partners to try dismantle these illicit financial-support networks.

Jevon Greenblatt of the CSO said earlier this year, “The CSO has been warning about and preparing for the growing influence and mobilisation of ISIS in Africa and South Africa for a number of years. This evidence started emerging from before the arrest of the Thulsie Twins, and includes the numerous and often highly publicised incidents of foiled and successful attacks and criminal activity carried out by these cells within our borders.

“There’s also more than enough chatter and anecdotal evidence pointing to a strong link between cells in South Africa and the insurgency in Mozambique and elsewhere,” Greenblatt said.

“Remember, ISIS warned South Africa not to get involved in Mozambique. We don’t believe that this was an idle threat, but rather based on its confidence in the local infrastructure that exists that can be called upon to act when the time is right.”

The US said ISIS is attempting to expand its influence in Africa through large-scale operations “in areas where government control is limited”.

The question is whether South Africa can get a grip on these ISIS branches in Africa that rely on local fundraising schemes such as theft, extortion of local populations, and kidnapping for ransom, as well as financial support from the ISIS hierarchy. Time will tell.

## Amnesty International’s Israel report “a modern-day libel”

TALI FEINBERG

An Amnesty International (AI) report stating that Israel had practiced apartheid since its inception was heavily criticised upon its release in February this year. Now, Jerusalem-based watchdog NGO Monitor has released its own report in response, documenting in great detail how the Amnesty publication is fundamentally flawed.

NGO Monitor provides information and analysis, promotes accountability, and supports discussion of the reports and activities of nongovernment organisations (NGOs) claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

The NGO Monitor report’s author, independent Israeli scholar Salo Aizenberg, says AI uses “lies, distortions, omissions, and egregious double standards to construct a fraudulent and libellous narrative of Israeli ‘cruelty’. A careful examination of the text shows that Amnesty conducted almost no primary research. Rather, it’s bloated with cut-and-paste phrases. Quotes and conclusions are taken from third-party sources – notably other political NGOs that are part of the same libellous campaign against Israel.

“The footnotes are glaringly thin on primary documents, such as official Israeli government statistics, Palestinian documents, court documents, Knesset transcripts, and interviews from leading officials. Much of the data is obsolete [often more than a decade old].”

The Netherlands government has also rejected AI’s report. Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra said, “The cabinet doesn’t agree with Amnesty’s conclusion that there’s apartheid in Israel or the territories occupied by Israel.” He was writing to a group of legislators on 29 April.

Hoekstra said that calling Israel an apartheid state didn’t help to resolve the conflict and reach a two-state solution. “The Israeli branch of Amnesty International – which has generally been critical of its own government – has also distanced itself from the report, as it wouldn’t improve the situation on the ground.”

Meanwhile, Aizenberg says, “Amnesty asserted that Israel is and always has been an apartheid state. Statements by Amnesty officials and the report’s recommendations highlight that Amnesty’s objective is the end of Israel as a Jewish state.”

In preparing its response, NGO Monitor “examined and critically assessed every line of the Amnesty publication and closely read the sources and citations. We uncovered five categories of faults: errors, misrepresentations, omissions, double standards, and dead citations. This systematic review conclusively shows that Amnesty’s allegations have no substance or merit.”

Aizenberg’s response to AI is titled, “Amnesty International’s Cruel Assault on Israel: Systematic Lies, Errors, Omissions & Double Standards in Amnesty’s Apartheid Report.”

“Amnesty’s report is a particularly vicious stream of invective against Israel,” he says. “In its narrative, Israel is a

cruel state run by a long line of evil leaders since its inception who have done nothing but intentionally dominate and segregate another people.”

Aizenberg says one statement by Amnesty is telling, namely that Amnesty deliberately assesses Israel in a vacuum. The AI report says, “Amnesty International notes and clarifies that systems of oppression and domination will never be identical. Therefore, this report doesn’t seek to argue that, or assess whether, any system of oppression and domination as



perpetrated in Israel and the OPT [occupied territories] is, for instance, the same or analogous to the system of segregation, oppression, and domination as perpetrated in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.”

But Aizenberg responds, “How is it reasonable to argue that there’s no need to compare the first and only nation in history to be called apartheid, South Africa, to only the second country in history to be called apartheid? Amnesty insists that it applies rigorous international law to label Israel as apartheid, but ignores one of the most basic rules of legal analysis: precedent. Amnesty admits that it won’t even bother to examine precedent. The reason is obvious – precedent would show that the notion of apartheid in Israel is preposterous.”

NGO Monitor concludes, “After uncovering and compiling nearly 300 examples of flaws in the report, Amnesty has written a modern-day libel. This isn’t exaggeration or hyperbole. Based on its deliberately falsified narrative, Amnesty has accused every Jewish leader since 1948 and the institutions that comprise the state of Israel of numerous ‘inhumane’ acts. Amnesty also liberally uses the term ‘Jewish domination’ to refer to Israel’s policies. [This is] a concept which directly evokes antisemitic tropes of Jews seeking to wield power over others. When these accusations are made by relying on hundreds of deliberate factual errors and misrepresentations, mixed in with gross application of double standards, it’s akin to historical libels of the Jewish people.”

South African Zionist Federation Chairperson Rowan Polovin says, “Millions of South Africans who suffered, fought, and died under real apartheid should be angered and

insulted by Amnesty’s attempt to exploit their own history and make it a weapon against Israel. The AI report is a blatant fabrication that seeks to vilify Jews and undermine the legitimacy of self-determination for the Jewish people.

“Amnesty has invented its own definition of apartheid. This has no legal foundation or any actual historical relationship to the horrific South African experience. This is not new. Amnesty has a history of systematic discrimination towards Israel and Jews,” he says.

“Besides the many factual inaccuracies, this report uses antisemitic terminology like ‘Jewish domination’; calls Israel’s existence into question, accusing it of ‘state-owned segregation ... since 1948’; whitewashes deadly terrorism; and justifies boycotts, sanctions, and other hostile actions against Israel. The AI report ignores Palestinian intransigence, and that Hamas routinely calls for genocide. Like every other country, Israel’s existence isn’t open to question. We continue to promote peace in the region.”

Local organisation, the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI), advocates peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “AI’s report on human rights in Israel highlights the stark injustice of Israel’s occupation and the illegality of the de facto annexation of the territories,” says JDI Co-Chairperson Basil Dubb.

“Blanket condemnations of the Amnesty report, including from NGO Monitor, are concerning for their lack of engagement with the findings. JDI doesn’t endorse the entirety of the Amnesty report, nor do we use the controversial claim of apartheid to describe the Israel occupation or de facto annexation,” he says. “However, the focus shouldn’t be on the contentious use of the word ‘apartheid’ but what underlies those claims.

“Instead of blatant denial of the ills of continued occupation, we suggest using this provocative report and its findings as a catalyst for examining honestly the legal issues involved and the perpetuation of injustice it describes,” says Dubb. “Loving the historical Jewish homeland and desiring a safe place for Jews, and condemnation of policies that aren’t in line with its Declaration of Independence aren’t mutually exclusive.

“The Declaration of Independence promises ‘complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex,’” says Dubb. “Furthermore, Jewish law teaches us, ‘When strangers reside with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.’”



# Doctor breaks Backyard Ultra for childhood cancer

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Johannesburg doctor Jacov Lalou, 42, set a new South African Backyard Ultra record by running 38 consecutive laps of 6.7km each on Sunday, 1 May. Lalou achieved this 38-hour-long running challenge during the third edition of the Delta Backyard Ultra.

He began at 07:00 on Sunday, and ran for 38 hours, stopping for only 10 minutes between laps. He covered 254.6km in that time and raised tens of thousands of rands.

The Backyard Ultra, referred to as “the race that never ends”, is a form of ultramarathon race in which competitors must consecutively run the distance of 6 706m (6.7km) in less than one hour.

In his first Backyard Ultra, Lalou was able to take 10 minute breaks because it took him 50 minutes on average to complete each lap.

Lalou competed with more than 60 other runners in the race at Delta Park in Johannesburg. He was the last man running in the challenge. He took on the challenge to raise funds for CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation.

His reason for choosing CHOC wasn’t personal. “I’ve seen them at so many races. They obviously know what they are doing there, and it’s a great organisation,” he says.

You could spot those running to raise funds for CHOC because they were wearing cow kits – much like the one that Lalou sported, with a black and white running vest and running shorts.

Lalou broke a previous record of 33 laps in 33 hours.

The Delta Backyard Ultra is based on Big Dog’s Backyard Ultra, also known as Big’s Backyard Ultra, which is the original Backyard Ultra invented by Gary “Lazarus Lake” Cantrell of Bell Buckle, Tennessee,

in 2012.

Since then, Backyard Ultras have appeared across the globe, especially garnering popularity during the pandemic.

“You keep going until you’re the last man standing,” says Lalou. “You can only go as far as the second last remaining guy does. If that guy dropped out, for example, after 12 hours, then I wouldn’t have been able to test myself further. The whole race format is about testing your limits. It’s not necessarily about winning it.”

Other than the winner, all other entrants record a DNF (did not finish).

Every lap starts every hour on the hour. “If you miss the start even by a second, you get a DNF,” says Lalou. “It’s a very interesting psychological component to the race. We planned to be there for a while. We had the right setup for being there as long as we needed to be.”

Lalou says there isn’t really any specific training you can do for the Backyard Ultra. “You can do some trial runs of 6.7km every hour on your own, but I’ve just been doing endurance sports and events for quite a while. I’ve run about 100km in 24 hours. This time, a friend said to me, ‘You’re doing all these anyway, do it for a cause.’ This was the first time I’ve done any fundraising. I’m quite a quiet guy. I don’t like being in the limelight.”

Cheering him on was a large support crew. Lalou says he wouldn’t have been the last man standing without it. “A whole lot of guys from Glenhazel, where I live, were at the race with their kids to support for like eight hours. I had amazing support. My wife and my kids came. My mom came from Cape Town. Rabbi [Matthew] Tucker [from Sandton



Ultramarathon runner Dr Jacov Lalou

Photo: Kevin Boshoff

Shul] was there with his kids, and people were there for hours and hours to support.”

The reason this year’s Backyard Ultra started on a Sunday and not on a Saturday, as usual, was courtesy of a meeting Lalou had with the race

organiser last year. “We hit it off and he said this year, he was going to organise one for me specifically that didn’t go on Shabbos,” recalls Lalou, who had previously gone after Shabbos to support some Backyard Ultras.

Having previously completed Ironman

and with a silver medal in the 2014 Comrades Marathon to his name, Lalou knew there was a possibility of him being the last man standing. “I knew who my competition was, and I knew I could go far, but it was just a matter of if the muscles would allow it. You never know whether you’re going to get a little niggle, injury, or blisters, so we planned for everything that was under our control. Then, obviously, we just had to get there, do it, and take it hour by hour.”

He says there are different strategies to adopt for the Backyard Ultra. “You could rest longer or rest less. Every two laps, I went a bit faster just to get some extra things done. Otherwise, while I was out on the lap, I would take nutrition with me and have my nutrition the entire hour.”

- If you want to donate towards Lalou’s fundraising efforts for CHOC, you can email him on [donoharm18@gmail.com](mailto:donoharm18@gmail.com), or donate directly on [thecow.co.za](http://thecow.co.za). The reference is DBU.

## Jewish tradition ‘permits’ abortion – that’s not enough

OPINION

MICHAL RAUCHER — JTA



Israeli Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz last week responded to the draft United States Supreme Court opinion that would overturn Roe vs. Wade, saying, “A woman’s rights over her body are hers alone.”

It might seem odd that the Israeli health minister was commenting on American abortion law, but his response, contained in a tweet, addresses a theme common to the abortion discussion in Israel and America that I research as an ethicist and scholar of reproduction among Jews.

In the 1970s, the Israeli Knesset debated the legalisation of abortion. After several years of discussion, it ultimately passed a law that permitted abortion in certain circumstances: First, if a woman is younger than 17 or older than 40; second, when pregnancy results from rape, incest, or extra-marital relations; third, under the possibility that the baby will be born with a

physical or mental deformity; and fourth, when the continuation of the pregnancy could endanger a woman’s life or mental health. This law allows for certain abortions to be performed until the 39th week of pregnancy.

In one important way, the Israeli and American attitudes toward abortion are similar. They both reflect the fundamental assumption that abortion is wrong, and one must have a “good enough” reason to do something that’s otherwise wrong. This is called the justification approach to abortion. The justification approach to abortion also assumes that women were meant to be mothers. As a result, not wanting to be pregnant for nine months, give birth, or raise a child aren’t considered good enough reasons to get an abortion.

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# Superheroes of the Cape of Storms

TALI FEINBERG

They've seen people drown, and rescued people in gale force winds and on summer days. They've thrown themselves into icy oceans, taken ill sailors off ships, and even untangled whales from nets. They all have jobs, businesses, and family commitments, yet spend hours training and saving lives in a dangerous environment. They're members of the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI), keeping the coastline safe for everyone who ventures into the water.

Luke van Riet (34) is one of a number of Jewish volunteers who serve at NSRI stations up and down the Cape peninsula. The organisation operates around South Africa. One of his most harrowing experiences was rescuing people from a trawler that ran aground on Robben Island. "There was a mid-winter storm with massive seas, heavy rain, and dark skies. We evacuated all 18 crew safely at midnight."

Robyn Silverstone (38) has been volunteering for more than two decades. "I had exposure to the NSRI when I did the *gemilut chasidim* project [acts of loving kindness community service project] in Grade 10 at Herzlia. I did my 10 hours of community service and never left. Twenty-one years later, I'm still there."

She was part of the team that rescued people from one of the Cape's worst sea disasters in recent times, the capsizing of tourist boat Miroshga in 2012. "Casualties were trapped inside. After a lengthy, multi-resource operation, we were successfully able to extricate them from a small compartment," she says.

Gal Chiles (24) has always been passionate about the sea, and like Silverstone, he volunteered for the NSRI during his *gemilut chasidim* project and also never left. Now he heads up a team at the Table Bay station. Anyone who has walked into the busy Victoria & Alfred Waterfront would have noticed how the NSRI station is located in the middle of a busy port. It was when he was there doing some administration

that Chiles experienced his most intense call-out – rescuing people from a Robben Island ferry that was taking on water.

"The Thandi ferry was struggling in bad weather conditions and sharp swells. There were 68 people in distress. There was a look of terror on their faces. It was overwhelming, but our training kicked in. We safely evacuated everyone."

Silverstone was there, co-ordinating the evacuation. "A terrible sea state and a boat sinking with 68 people on board tends to cause a bit of stress, but thanks to our training and experience, we're well-prepared and calm when handling these life-threatening situations," she says.

Van Riet joined NSRI as a volunteer in 2007 after close to a decade of surf lifesaving. "The NSRI felt like the next step in emergency water rescue. I haven't looked back for 15 years."

Today, he's a station commander. "As with all well-run organisations, you start from the bottom and build a foundation," he says. "You start as a trainee and your immediate next goal is crewman. Once you are crew, which can take one to two years, you're able to respond to active operations known as call-outs. This is where the real training comes into play and life experience is built."

"After six years as crew and after attending courses, accumulating the required sea-going hours, and fulfilling criteria, I was examined and promoted to a coxswain. The coxswain is the skipper of the vessel and crew leader. You're in charge of operations or whenever the boat gets put to sea. The success of an operation is largely on your shoulders. In many ways, the safety of the crew is in your hands. You're entrusted with expensive assets and tasked with the impossible."

"Three years ago, I was elected as station commander for our rescue base. It's a very tiring, demanding, and important role in which there's no room for half measures and anything less than perfect. I'm responsible for all assets, the crews' well-being, and the continual development of the

organisation. We're donor-funded and therefore have a responsibility to respect every rand and cent, as well as be available to respond to any emergency within minutes, 24/7, 365 days a year."

They are called out "at night, in winter storms, in strong south easterly winds, and on peachy summer days", says Van Riet. "We generally attend to a drowning in progress, boat tows, missing kayakers, injuries along the coastline, divers in trouble, whale disentanglements, injured seals, beached whales ... the list goes on."

They're all driven by the joy of helping others. "Knowing that I and my crew are saving lives as volunteers definitely motivates me," says Silverstone. "A simple thank you from the casualties is also a huge motivator. *Gemilut chasidim* sits high on my radar."

"The goose bumps you get when you look into someone's eyes after you save their life, to know that without your intervention, their soul would be left at sea [is motivation]," says Van Riet. "Sadly, we can't always save our casualties. They succumb before we arrive, but we'll always try to retrieve them so the family can lay them to rest."

"What's better than making such a life-saving difference while developing the most incredible skills and passing your knowledge on to future volunteers so that the legacy can go on?" asks Van Riet.

"To see the look of desperation on someone's face and then see their relief that



Rescuing people from the Thandi Robben Island ferry



Robyn Silverstone in action

they know you're coming to help them is very meaningful," says Chiles. "It makes me want to keep coming back."

Being in the ocean is a powerful part of the experience. "We see lots of ocean life, and we're lucky to be surrounded by friendly dolphins and whales who tend to navigate towards us," says Silverstone. "The sea is a dangerous place and one has to respect it. It can change in a second, and if you're not prepared, there's a high probability of things turning south fast, but that's why we're there."

"Global warming is evident," says Van Riet. "The ferocity of storms has increased over the years. We have had to put measures in place to protect our base from larger storms each year. Sea life is taking a beating from over-fishing and an overbearing

human presence. More whales are being entangled in nets, and pollution is getting more concentrated along the coastline and in the deep."

They have all had to make sacrifices. "You need to be aware of your plans while on call and make sure that you're within 20 minutes of the station. Once, I had to run out on Rosh Hashanah," says Silverstone. "Losing family time, free time, and time away from work [is tough]," says Van Riet. "Once you reach the level of station commander, a lot falls to the side, as your priority is to ensure your station and crew are running at maximum capacity all the time without exception."

But they all feel part of a sea-rescue family which keeps each other going. "You trust each other so much. I know they will always have my back," says Chiles. "You develop serious friendships. I can't imagine the person I would be if I hadn't joined the NSRI. It has given me purpose. It was the best decision I ever made."

## Jewish tradition 'permits' abortion – that's not enough

>>Continued from page 9

In order to qualify for an abortion that's legal and paid for by the state, Israeli women have to sit in front of a committee and tell them why they are requesting an abortion. Although 98% of abortion requests are approved, the law reflects the belief that women cannot or should not make this decision on their own.

Consider the case of a pregnant 24-year-old married woman who is pregnant from consensual sex but doesn't want to be pregnant because of the potential harm to her career. Or a 35-year-old married haredi woman who has eight children and who simply cannot care for one more. In Israel, both of these women must lie or otherwise mislead the committee to get their abortions.

Horowitz opposes these committees and has been advocating to get rid of them, at least through the first trimester. He says women shouldn't need to give any reason for their request, and that nobody should have to determine whether their request is valid.

While we don't have these committees in America, we have heard a lot this month about the legislation that many states have developed, each providing different circumstances under which they would permit abortion.

Well-meaning Jewish groups often draw on rabbinic sources to claim that Judaism is supportive of abortion rights. Unfortunately here, too, we see the justification approach. Last week, in a statement, the Orthodox Union explained that it cannot support an "absolute ban" on abortion because Jewish law requires abortion when "carrying the pregnancy to term poses real risk to the life of the mother". This popular argument is commonly also heard among more progressive Jewish groups.

But when you hear that "Jewish law permits and sometimes requires abortion", you must also listen to the assumption underlying this statement: women don't have the bodily autonomy to make that decision on their own. Jewish law must permit it – and sometimes demands it, regardless of what a woman prefers. These statements, often used to express support for abortion rights, are ultimately stymied by the assumptions of rabbinic law, a system that doesn't support bodily autonomy or the ability to make decisions about one's own body.

The statement by the Orthodox Union goes even further. It also explicitly prohibits what the group and others call "abortion on demand" or abortion because someone doesn't want to be pregnant.



Photo: Stefani Reynolds AFP via Getty Images

A pro-choice activist holds a sign at a protest at the US Supreme Court, Washington, D.C. on 2 May 2022

By contrast, the Reform movement's Religious Action Center bases its position on reproductive rights on "the core belief that each person should have agency and autonomy over their own bodies". Other progressive Jewish groups, including the National Council of Jewish Women, have gone on record highlighting the value of bodily autonomy over reproduction, but too few. Some non-Orthodox rabbis even expressly forbid it.

Unless you support a person's right to bodily autonomy, you are supporting a system wherein someone else determines what you or anyone else can do with their bodies. It doesn't matter whether that person is a legislator, a judge, a contemporary rabbi, or one from 2 000 years ago. It doesn't matter whether that person would permit most abortions or even require some.

I believe in the same bodily autonomy argument that Horowitz makes. It may not be an argument rooted in Jewish law, but it's a Jewish argument – and it's time to make it.

• Michal Raucher is associate professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University and author of "Conceiving Agency: Reproductive Authority Among Haredi Women" (Indiana University Press).

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# Lufthansa apologises for expelling Hasidic Jews from flight

JACOB HENRY – JTA

Lufthansa apologised for kicking identifiably Jewish people off a flight from New York City to Budapest last week after some Hasidic individuals on the plane had reportedly not worn masks on the first leg of the flight.

Lufthansa said in a statement on Tuesday, 10 May, that it “regrets the circumstances surrounding the decision to exclude the affected passengers from the flight”.

The statement also said that the airline was still reviewing the incident, and regretted that “the large group was denied boarding rather than limiting it to the non-compliant guests”.

What Lufthansa referred to as a “group” were 100-plus Hasidic Jews, many of whom did know one another, flying to Hungary on a pilgrimage.

“Most people were flying as individuals,” passenger Usher Schik told the *New York Jewish Week* on Monday.

Lufthansa also apologised “not only for the inconvenience, but also for the offense caused and personal impact.”

The statement said that the German carrier had a “zero tolerance” policy for racism, antisemitism, and discrimination of any kind. “What transpired isn’t consistent with Lufthansa’s policies or values,” the statement said. “We will be engaging with the affected passengers to better understand their concerns and openly discuss how we may improve our customer service.”

In a video taken by a passenger, a Lufthansa supervisor in Frankfurt, Germany, where the first leg of the trip terminated, is seen explaining the expulsion by saying that

“everyone has to pay for a couple”, adding, “It’s Jews coming from JFK [John F. Kennedy International Airport]. Jewish people who were the mess, who made the problems.”

The passengers were also banned from purchasing another ticket to Budapest for 24 hours.

Yeshayah Steiner, a wonder-working rabbi who died in 1925 and is buried in a village in northeast Hungary. According to Dan’s Deals, an estimated 135 to 170 Jews were on the flight, 80% of whom wore visible Hasidic clothing.

According to a statement from Lufthansa,

not have been complying.

“If you feel you have to punish individuals who didn’t comply, that’s fine,” Schik said. “But you can’t just punish an entire race just because we all look alike.” Schik said there were multiple groups on the flight, and most people didn’t know each other.

like a Hasidic Jew.

Weingarten, who travelled in first class, said he wasn’t wearing a mask from JFK to Frankfurt, that nobody asked him to wear a mask, and the flight attendant wasn’t masked.

Eli Miesels, a Jewish man who wore a baseball cap and was able to board the plane to Budapest, told Dan’s Deals that the plane pulled away faster than he had ever seen. Miesels said the plane to Budapest took off with only 20 passengers but could hold more than 190.

Schik, too, said the captain left the gate “like it was a war zone”.

“He didn’t want to give anyone a chance to get people on the flight,” Schik said, pointing out that an attendant at the gate told him that the order to ban Jews from the next flight came from the captain of the plane.

He said he was “lucky” because he was able to rebook another flight to Budapest in spite of the 24-hour ban.

While in Budapest, he spoke to other Jews who flew to Vienna and took a bus to Hungary after being ejected from the Lufthansa flight.

Rabbi David Zwiebel of Agudath Israel of America, which represents Haredi Orthodox interests, wrote a letter to Lufthansa Chief Executive Carsten Spohr on Monday asking that he research the “disturbing accounts” about the flight.

“People were being punished simply because they shared ethnicity and religion with the alleged rule violators,” Zwiebel wrote.

Lufthansa didn’t respond to the *New York Jewish Week’s* request for comment.



Jewish passengers were greeted by the police once they arrived in Frankfurt

The video, first reported and shared by the discount travel website Dan’s Deals, was posted to YouTube and Instagram, where it sparked angry comparisons to the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust.

The video, blurred because it’s illegal to record someone without their consent in Germany, was taken down for violating YouTube and Instagram’s hate-speech policies. It’s still available on Twitter.

“YouTube just removed our video showing a Lufthansa supervisor blaming problems on #TheJews due to it ‘violating our hate-speech policy’. Don’t stay silent on #AntiSemitism!” the tweet said.

The Jewish travellers on their way to Budapest to visit the grave of Rabbi

there was a larger group of passengers that “refused to wear the legally mandated mask [medical mask] on board”.

“For legal reasons, we cannot disclose the number of guests involved in the incident,” the statement, obtained by Dan’s Deals, said. “Lufthansa will continue to abide by all legal requirements, including the mask mandate imposed by the German government and those of the countries served. We do so without prejudice and with the well-being of all our guests.”

Schik, told the *New York Jewish Week* that he was sitting in the front of the plane. He said he didn’t notice people not wearing their masks, but acknowledged that some passengers in the back of the plane might

Schik said that when he arrived in Frankfurt from JFK, passengers on the flight were greeted by dozens of police officers waiting at the gate.

“We’re talking about some of them with big rifles,” Schik said. “We were really hurt and bothered by that.”

Schik said he wasn’t allowed to board the Budapest flight because he looked Jewish and was dressed in Hasidic garb. “They pulled up my name and then once they saw me, they denied me because I’m Jewish,” he said. “That’s clearly profiling.”

According to Dan’s Deals, an individual named Max Weingarten was able to board the plane to Budapest because he was wearing a black polo shirt and didn’t look

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## Filling a void with an Afrikaans short film

**Terence Makapan, Gabriella Blumberg, Esther Badenhorst, and Jordy Sank winning the best short film award at kykNET's Silwerskermfees**

**TALI FEINBERG**

It's not often that two Jewish filmmakers win a prize at a prestigious Afrikaans film festival, but this was the case recently for Jordy Sank and Gabriella Blumberg of Sanktury Films. Hot on the heels of their globally acclaimed *I Am Here*, their short film *Leemtes en Leegheid* premiered at the kykNET's Silwerskermfees, where it won Best Short Film, Best Script, and the Audience Choice Award.

In this power duo, Sank co-wrote and directed the film, and Blumberg produced it. It all started when they entered their short film idea into the kykNET Silwerskerm short film competition.

"We were excited as our concept kept making it into the next round, then the next round, until it got shortlisted and was finally chosen as one of the 17 short films that they would develop and fund," says Sank.

The idea for the story came from spending so much time with the subject of their last project, *I Am Here*, "our award-winning documentary on the life of 98-year-old Holocaust survivor Ella Blumenthal. The main character in this story, Magdaleen, is in her later years and struggles to process the loss of her husband with whom she spent the majority of her life," he says.

"Magdaleen, a recluse in her 80s, is so stricken with grief and the loss of her husband that she creates an imaginary version of him to fill the void in her life. She feels as though she's drowning in waves of loss, and every day, she's battling to make her way to the surface. 'Leemtes en Leegheid' means 'voids and emptiness' which perfectly describes the despair and grief that Magdaleen experiences in this film. The English title of the film is 'A Void,'" says Sank.

Afrikaans isn't his first language, but he can understand a lot more than he can write. Writing a film in Afrikaans was a challenge, so "I paired up with an Afrikaans friend that I grew up with, Terence Makapan, who is a published playwright and phenomenal actor. We worked on the story and did all the first drafts in English. Closer to the end of the process, Terence translated it into Afrikaans. We worked with the actors during rehearsals to make sure that the dialogue flowed and was more nuanced for their performance."

Besides the actors, the crew was mostly English speaking, "so I thought initially that that would be the biggest challenge, but the team worked so well together," says Sank. "You could feel the brilliant performances without even needing to understand a

word. That's so true of the content we watch today. We're so accustomed to watching international films and series with subtitles, but you're still able to feel the depth and emotive performances even though you may not speak an iota of the language."

Their biggest challenges were budget and location. "As we shot this last year during COVID-19, there weren't many people that would let us film in their old-fashioned apartments, and the aesthetic of an 80-year-old's flat is incredibly specific," he says. "So we eventually found a blank canvas and through incredible production design, were able to create our granny's apartment."

Asked why this story was meaningful to them, Sank says, "The themes that we explore of ageing, love, and loss are universal. Ultimately, we all know what it's like to lose someone we love, even more so due to the pandemic. This story is an exploration of loss, loneliness, and acceptance, and we hope that our audience gains from watching Magdaleen's grief, and how she's able to attain catharsis."

"On a more personal note, I lost my grandfather at the beginning of last year, and the grief I felt was tremendous. Throughout making this film, I couldn't help but think of my grandfather and how my grandmother, similar to the character in this film, is figuring out how to continue with her life without him by her side. So I think I had a deeply rooted personal approach to the story, characters, and tone of the film."

Sank's other set of grandparents were both "Boerejode", hailing from Vredenburg and Beaufort West. "I grew up hearing their many stories of growing up in the country and their relationship with the Afrikaans community there. I believe my late grandfather would have been proud of me for making a film in a language he held so close to his heart."

The film premiered at the Silwerskermfees in Cape Town at the end of March 2021, where they won some of the top awards.



## Beware the ingathering of trusts into Israeli tax net

OPINION

MICHAEL KRANSDORFF AND LAURA SASSOON



There has been a dramatic change in the nature of aliya in the 21st century. No longer is Israel just seen as a refuge for the homeless and persecuted Jews of the world, today it has become an attractive haven for wealthy Jews seeking to protect their assets from foreign tax authorities.

According to New World Wealth's global migration review, over the past few years, Israel has consistently ranked in the top 10 migration destinations for high-net-worth individuals, with more than 1 000 dollar millionaires making aliya every year. Some notable billionaire *olim* include Australian Westfield shopping centre owner Sir Frank Lowy; former Chelsea football club owner Roman Abramovich; and Laurent Levy, the French founder of global eyewear chain The Optical Center.



While the Tel Aviv nightlife and Israel's vibrant start-up scene are attractive, Israel's favourable tax laws for *olim* have also been a big draw card. Israel legislated a 10-year tax exemption on all foreign income and capital gains for new and returning *olim* in 2007. Conveniently, no disclosure of foreign assets is required.

However, all good things come to an end, and many wealthy families, without proper tax planning, can be caught out after 10 years by Israel's extensive tax net. Nowhere is this more evident than with offshore trusts.

### History and purpose of trusts

The land of Israel and offshore trusts have had a long history. The law of trusts was first developed in the 12th century from the time of the Crusades as a means

for soldiers fighting in the holy land to protect their assets from being usurped while they were gone and to look after their wives and children. To this day, trusts are still widely used to protect one's assets from disgruntled spouses, creditors, and the tax man. Moreover, they provide people with the means of ensuring how their assets should be used after they have been given away for the benefit of designated beneficiaries.

### Trusts as a threat to the tax base

Over the past few decades, governments around the world have been honing in on trusts, seeing them as a threat to their tax base. This has led to tax authorities around the world designing different, wide reaching, anti-avoidance provisions targeting trusts. Israel is no straggler in this regard. Since 2014, its trust tax

African trust decides to make aliya. Some years later, the founder of the trust passes on. Even though he was never an Israeli tax resident, the trust is in South Africa, and the vast majority of the beneficiaries are South African, Israel's harsh trust tax laws deems this trust to be an Israeli resident trust. Consequently, all the income of the trust, not just the portion relating to the one Israeli beneficiary, will be taxable and reportable in Israel.

Depending on the jurisdiction of the trust, there may be a double tax agreement with Israel that can dampen the financial blow. However, the legal complexity of the trust structure and varying approaches of different jurisdictions to which parties to tax could result in additional tax even where a double tax agreement exists.

### Time to get your affairs in order

Israel's ten-year tax holiday for *olim* can provide some time to get your trusts in order. This tax relief also covers trusts. Where a foreign founder of the trust or foreign beneficiary makes aliya and consequently the trust becomes an Israeli resident trust, the trust won't be subject to Israeli tax on its non-Israeli source income for 10 years. However, determining when

the clock starts is complicated, owing to the movements of the multiple connected parties associated with the trust. In the case of only one party having been in Israel for more than 10 years, the 10-year tax holiday might not apply.

People with trusts where there are Israeli-related parties and connections should beware, plan ahead, and consult with a tax practitioner who can highlight the risks and navigate the pitfalls. Pre-emption is always better than rectifying costly mistakes.

• *Michael Kransdorff is a Harvard educated international tax practitioner, and Laura Sassoon is a chartered accountant and former senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. They run the Institute for International Tax and Finance.*

"It was extremely gratifying to see that the audience and jury were both equally moved by the film and that it resonated with both of them so deeply.

"We had people in the industry constantly coming up to us and telling us how they loved the short film. I was approached by South African actress Antoinette Louw, who raved about it. So we were incredibly well-received at the festival, and people were really drawn to our story."

Going to this prestigious Afrikaans festival, the pair felt nervous that "two non-Afrikaans-speaking Jews would stick out like a sore thumb, or that it would be difficult for us to be accepted."

"We saw ourselves as a 'dark horse', and didn't think we would win any awards, but it was prestigious enough just to be there," they say. "We were shocked when our film was called again and again and again. We were welcomed and accepted by the festival

and filmmaking community there beyond our wildest expectations."

Meanwhile, *I Am Here* is still making an impact around the globe. "It recently had its United States release in more than 85 theatres across the US and it screened throughout Australia as a part of the Jewish International Film Festival. We're working with the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on an educational pack to accompany the film for teachers and pupils," says Sank.

They continue to hit the ground running. "We're planning to pitch a few feature-film projects to broadcasters shortly," Sank says. "Along with our win for Best Short Film, we received a special prize from the NEVF [Nation Film and Video Foundation] of an all-expenses-paid trip to attend the Berlin International Film Festival's Co-Production Market next year, one of the top film festivals in the world. It's such an honour to

receive this and to be able to connect with filmmakers and content producers from around the world."

To young and budding Jewish filmmakers, Sank says, "There's so much richness in our incredible country and its many cultures, languages, and people. There are so many remarkable stories that need to be told, and that we can enrich with our own Jewish heritage and perspectives."

Blumberg, who was getting married at the time of this interview, says, "We have seen how this story of grief and isolation has resonated so widely, and we hope it brings comfort and closure to those who watch it. We're honoured that the film received such high recognition at Silwerskermfees, and we hope it travels to audiences around the world."

South African audiences can watch the film on DStv Now and Catch Up.



# Colonel Katz examines Jan Smuts and military ways

Johannesburg military historian **Colonel David Brock Katz** recently penned a book on General Jan Smuts. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to him about this mammoth task.

**Tell us a bit the background to writing and publishing the book, *General Jan Smuts and his First World War in Africa 1914-1917***

I'm privileged to be a team member via a research fellowship with the department of military science, a faculty at Stellenbosch University. *General Jan Smuts and his First World War in Africa 1914-1917* is just one of many publications that have emerged from the department in the past decade. Writing about South African military history is also a personal journey.

**What is it about war, history, and the military that fascinates you?**

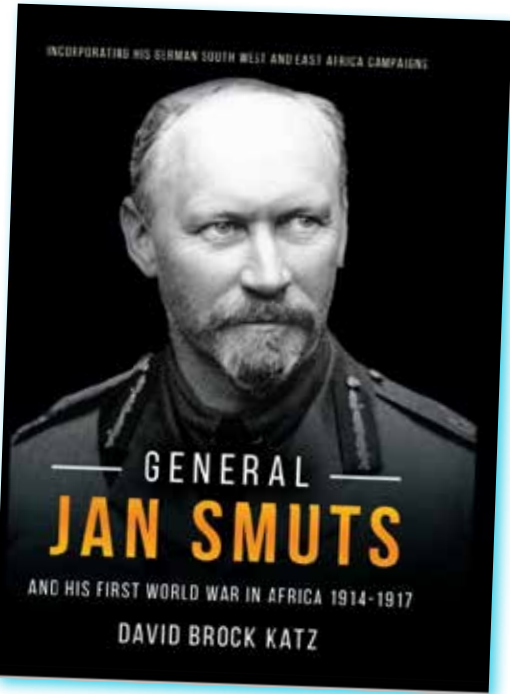
War is a fascinating combination of art and science, and I'm equally intrigued with both aspects. Certain individuals have the ability to overcome great odds, and have the ability to motivate those who follow them to achieve great deeds. In the absence of real war, the reading of history is the next best way for a soldier to learn his craft. It's my hope that my efforts to revitalise important aspects of South African history will be of utility to the young leaders of our South African National Defence Force (SANDF), as well as stimulating the interest of ordinary South Africans.

**You have written a book on South Africans versus Rommel and now Jan Smuts and his First World War in Africa. What drew you to these topics and characters?**

Not many South Africans, whether professional historians, history buffs, or even the military have an idea that South Africans have a particular way of war that has emerged from centuries of internecine conflict as well as battling it out with major European powers. Our way of war has also been shaped by our conflict with Eastern bloc doctrine as well as the merging of former enemies from the TBVC (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) armies, the SANDF, uMkhonto we Sizwe, and APLA (the Azanian People's Liberation Army). My books and academic publications are intended to identify our unique command style. I have used our campaigns in Africa in World War I and II as a lens with which to examine the manoeuvre doctrine emerging from various battles. The colourful characters of Rommel in World War II and Lettow-Vorbeck in World War I are particularly fascinating, especially regarding how the South Africans coped militarily against a first-class military power. My books identify a serious clash of military doctrine between the British and the South Africans who fought under them.

**What kind of research did you need to do to write such an information heavy book?**

Writing about Smuts presents its own unique set of challenges. Rather than too little information, there's a plethora of primary documents available for the researcher. Careful selection of relevant items requires long hours in dusty dark archives both here and in the United Kingdom. My first step was to acquire and read every secondary source on the military Smuts that has



been published. I then identified the gaps that existed in the knowledge about Smuts and his military exploits. My research thereafter was directed to filling in the gaps with primary evidence found in the archives and re-examining the secondary sources based on my findings. It's a slow, laborious but rewarding process that consumed six years of my life.

**Tell us a few fascinating things about Smuts that we may not know.**

In spite of much adverse criticism from certain sectors of the Afrikaans community and modern-day British historians, Smuts was an able general. He learned his soldiers craft under the tutelage of Koos de la Rey and Louis Botha in the Boer War and applied the South African doctrine of manoeuvre warfare to the campaigns he conducted in World War I in Africa. As such, he represents the continuity of a South African way of war as well as being the founding father of a united South African military in the newly formed Union Defence Force. Paying homage to his deep Boer roots, he was a general who led from the front, placing his life in danger on many occasions. He shared the privations of his men, much to the chagrin of the British officers he commanded in East Africa.

**After all is said and done, what's your opinion of Smuts?**

Smuts was an incredibly gifted individual of exceptional intelligence. He was also a deeply flawed character who could be ruthless and dismissive of those he felt were fools. His major failing was an inability or unwillingness to provide for the political aspirations of the majority black South Africans. He was at best paternalistic toward black South Africans while being at the forefront of initiatives on the world-stage for political freedoms that he neglected at home. However, there's no denying his incredible intellect and his abilities as a general.

**What audience do you believe would be interested in this book and why?**

The book will be interesting to those who wish to know where our military roots came from and where we're most probably heading.

**How does being Jewish factor in your research and this interest?**

It's a bit of a standing joke in family and military circles that in all likelihood I'm the last remaining serving Jew in the SANDF. To paraphrase a famous Jewish French historian, Marc Bloch, I'm vehemently Jewish in the presence of antisemites. On all

other occasions, I'm a patriot, and a proud South African. My studies and research have been conducted under the auspices of the SANDF, and therefore my life as an academic is inexorably intertwined with my military service.

My encounters with naked antisemitism in the military and in academia have thankfully been few, and I'm often surprised at the fundamental role Jewish soldiers, senior officers, and generals have played on both sides of a given conflict.

**How do you understand the crisis in Ukraine and in the Israeli Palestinian situation?**

It seems that the Russians have ignored or have been unable to apply some of the immutable concepts of warfare such as maintaining essential logistical lines and applying combined arms warfare. They are also woefully short of manpower, invading a country many times the size of Israel with an army only half the Israel Defense Forces.

The Russians have also underestimated the resolve of the Ukrainian army, Ukrainian citizens, and the support for Ukraine from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries.

Regarding Israel, the only long-term solution to the Palestinian problem is negotiated settlement.

There's no military solution, and the role of the IDF, a task that it has performed admirably well, is to provide the time and space for politicians to sit around the negotiating table.



Colonel David Brock Katz

**How does what has happened in our military past help us to navigate our way forward?**

The Union Defence Force under Smuts played an important part in mending the relations between Afrikaner and Englishmen. The SANDF has successfully combined former enemies into a truly unified defence force. The SANDF will continue to be an important vehicle in our own reconciliation and throughout the African continent through peace-enforcement.

## Letters

### SEEKING ANY INFO ON POET PETER BLUM AND FAMILY

In 1936, Paula Rosenberg (previously Blum, née Levi) arrived in Johannesburg from Stuttgart, Germany. She had with her an 11-year-old son, Peter Blum, who would later become an eminent Afrikaans-language poet, as well as her second husband, Willy, who had been a hero of the German air force in World War I, as well as his 13-year-old son, Ernst Willy. They lived in Melrose. Paula left Willy after three years. He had a flying school near Rustenburg.

Paula left South Africa at some point some years later, marrying Herman David in London in 1949. She died in London in 1975. When she left South Africa, she left behind her mother, Julie Levi, who passed away in 1958

while resident at Our Parents Home in Norwood. (I'm not sure when in the 1930s Julie came to South Africa; she presumably followed briskly in the wake of Paula, Willy, and sons.)

I'm researching Peter Blum with a view to writing a piece on him. If anyone who knew any of these people, has recollections of them, or – the holy grail – has any pictures of them, please contact me at [jeanmeiring@gmail.com](mailto:jeanmeiring@gmail.com) or on 072 115 8962. Any information, however tangential or menial it might appear, would be appreciated.

– Jean Meiring, Johannesburg

WHAT'S ON

Sunday 15 May

- Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre airs documentary Mel Brooks: Make a Noise. Time: 18:00. Contact René: 082 556 2321 or [hazel.rhcc@gmail.com](mailto:hazel.rhcc@gmail.com)
- Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts webinar, "Checkmate: making, playing and picturing chess in the Holocaust." Time: 20:00. Contact: 011 640 3100 or [dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za](mailto:dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za)
- The South African Zionist Federation hosts two webinars, "Higher education online expo" and "Aliya for seniors". Time: 10:00 and 17:00 respectively. Contact: 011 645 2666 or [info@israelcentre.co.za](mailto:info@israelcentre.co.za)

Monday 16 May

- Union of Jewish Women hosts Dr Penny Sapire, who will give a lecture on "Coping with COVID". Time: 10:00. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053

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# Yom Ha’atzmaut celebrations



King David Ariel



King David Pre-Primary School Victory Park



King David High School Victory Park



Yeshiva College Primary School



Sydenham Preschool



King David Primary School Victory Park

## UJW Friendship Club lunch is back

The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) was thrilled last week to host its first Friendship Club lunch since the start of the COVID-19 epidemic two and a half years ago. This club brings together lonely, elderly Jewish people for a three-course lunch, entertainment, and tea at the UJW’s house in Sandler Road, Percelia Estate. Volunteers collect and return guests. For many, this outing is their only opportunity to get out and socialise and, of course, eat a delicious lunch. Guests were entertained by Ezra Sher, who sang songs that they could hum along to.



Ezra Sher entertaining the guests

## Klerksdorp community raises funds for Ukraine survivors



Members of the Klerksdorp Jewish Community at the Flamwood Estates bridge club

The plus minus 20-strong Jewish community in Klerksdorp recently managed to raise R8 000 for food supplies for Holocaust survivors trapped in Ukraine. The community raised the money together with Christian friends in response to the call for assistance made by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein. “There’s hardly a Jewish person who didn’t lose someone during Hitler’s murderous regime. It’s heart breaking to think of survivors who have been through so much in need of food in their old age,” said a community member.

## Yeshiva desk upgrade turns tables for needy



Carol Cesman, Rob Long, and Levi Swimmer with the old Yeshiva College desks that are being donated to four needy schools

An upgrade at Yeshiva College High School turned into a win-win situation all round after four needy schools became the recipients of the school’s outgoing desks. After ordering 350 new desks, Yeshiva faced the question of what to do with its existing desks. The school called Glynne Wolman from The Angel Network, who put out feelers, and four schools, including Forest Town and three other schools in Soweto, became the recipients of the desks. They will make a meaningful difference to their school. Grade 6 children helped load the desks onto trucks.

## KDVP pupils get top Joburg Mini Council positions

King David Primary School Victory Park mini-councillors Maya Roth and Safriel Ndzingani were both inducted onto the Johannesburg Mini Council executive on Thursday, 5 May, at a ceremony at Crawford Sandton. Roth was appointed chief whip, and Ndzingani deputy mayor.



Maya Roth (Chief Whip) and Safriel Ndzingani (Deputy Mayor) were inducted into the Johannesburg Mini Council Executive last week

## Holocaust survivor wows Pretoria pupils

Polish Holocaust survivor Wanda Albinski held the pupils of Afrikaans Hoer Meisieskool spellbound last Friday morning (6 May) when a “question and answer” session turned into a 90-minute talk by Albinski, in which she hardly had time to catch her breath. The school’s history students mobbed her afterwards with requests to have photographs taken with her as she continued to pass on her important message of loving one another to each pupil. The students then all sang an Afrikaans song, *For you we will bring flowers*, as they presented her with beautiful bouquets and other gifts. Teacher Marthie Dawel said Albinski’s speech inspired them all, and head girl Megan Kruger said, “And still mankind does not learn.”



Diane Wolfson (Pretoria Council, SAJBD) introduces Wanda Albinski to representatives of Afrikaans Hoer Meisieskool

## Israel’s 74th brings WIZO face to face

Israel at 74 brought the WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organisation) Johannesburg executive and friends to the first face-to-face function since 2019, and what a change it was! Participants to the 5 May meet up were treated to a beautiful tea of Israeli food provided by the generosity

of wonderful kosher bakeries. WIZO Johannesburg Co-Chairperson Joceline Basserabie welcomed everyone and spoke about Israel’s importance and relevance to our lives, especially in the diaspora.



Anat Shevel, Joceline Basserabie, and Nava Gonen at WIZO’s Yom Ha’atzmaut event

The dynamic Ros Basserabie, having recently returned from a visit to Israel, regaled participants in her inimitable way about her self-development and the freedom and empowerment she experienced as a woman on the streets and on buses for the first time on her own. Walking through the Old City with a feeling of happiness and security; bargaining with proprietors with abandonment, her excitement was infectious and wonderful. Hostess Anat Shevel was thanked, and participants finished the morning with feelings of oneness in celebrating 74 years of the creation of *am Yisrael*.

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