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South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

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ANC puts the 'bill' into anti-Israel billboard

TALI FEINBERG

Virulently anti-Israel organisation Africa4Palestine (A4P) has once again got the ruling party to help foot the bill for an anti-Israel billboard on a busy Johannesburg highway.

Logos for A4P, the African National Congress (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and the South African Communist Party (SACP) are proudly displayed under the words "Israeli theft of Palestinian land". Alongside are maps of a supposedly shrinking Palestine.

"It's clear that the ANC is searching for issues for which it can find some sort of support base given increasing criticism of the ANC domestically," says local political analyst Daniel Silke. "This is an example of a fairly desperate style of politics from the ANC – to use billboards for a foreign policy issue that has little resonance in South Africa when the average South African is battling to put food on the table. The ANC should be devoting its attention to urgent domestic matters that can upend its power in 2024."

As for the graphics on the billboard, Gideon Shimoni, professor emeritus of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an expert on the history of Zionism, says it's "a well-known propaganda tool and an insidious falsification, totally

devoid of historical context, which violates any rational comprehension of causality. Both the noun 'theft' and the adjective 'Palestinian' are obtuse distortions of truth and reality. Imagine a series of maps [say in North America or central Europe] displaying changed borders of any territory over historical time, devoid of all historical context and causality, and tendentiously branding the entire process of change 'theft'."

An industry insider, speaking anonymously, says the billboard would cost about R18 000 a month. The production cost would be about R3 000 as a once-off. They would probably "walk" the campaign every two weeks [take it off site and shift it to another area after two weeks].

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, says, "The billboard is the promotion of a trope. This series of maps is riddled with misrepresentations and omissions. The maps have become an iconic feature of Palestinian propaganda for some years and something of an industry, available for purchase, even on tea

towels and mugs. Their occasional use by the media has sometimes resulted in a correction or deletion. In a perverse way, they have become a Palestinian propaganda icon. They are visually dramatic while being dishonest and without context.

"The map is propaganda intended to demonise Israel out of existence," she says. "We know that Africa4Palestine, which is the result of a schism in BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions)-SA, has as its main goal the eradication of the Jewish state. It's also the first named sponsor of the billboard. What is truly disturbing, however, is that the other three sponsors are the tripartite alliance – the ANC, the SACP, and COSATU. Many statements and actions by these parties, singly or as government, support the Palestinian cause completely. They have shown no interest in hearing the Israeli side of anything that happens between Israel and the Palestinians. Their knowledge of the history of the region is woeful, if not completely absent.

"This is probably the hangover from the ANC's and SACP's role as a proxy for the Soviet Union in the Cold War. It would be surprising if they had any knowledge that the claim that 'Israel is an apartheid state' was a carefully crafted piece of Soviet propaganda in a programme to demonise Israel, to take attention away from the relentless antisemitism of the Soviet state.

"Members of the alliance would probably argue that they're acting in their individual capacity and not on behalf of the government. But really, they are the government. These parties are entitled to put up such a billboard as the principle of freedom of speech is important, even if the message is distasteful. However, the response to the billboard is also an exercise

in free speech."

Benji Shulman, South African Zionist Federation director of public policy, says, "The maps aren't historically accurate and are fundamentally false. They conveniently misrepresent the actual ownership patterns of the land and the multiple wars of aggression led by the surrounding Arab states which led to the current ceasefire lines and borders. Historical fact is being lost to propaganda.

"Africa4Palestine has a pattern of distorting historical truth using billboards among other platforms. Recently, it displayed an image comparing former President Nelson Mandela and Ayatollah Khomeini on a highly disturbing billboard. Comparing Khomeini, a brutal, fundamentalist dictator, with Nelson Mandela, an icon for peace and a world-renowned statesman, is offensive, and has no credibility. While Africa4Palestine is spending money on billboards, Israel is improving the lives of South African citizens."

Local political analyst Ralph Mathekga says "taking a billboard is a new level. I don't think the ANC is in a position to tell anyone anything, not at this moment when the party is in tatters."

The SA Jewish Report approached the ANC, the SACP, A4P, and COSATU for comment. Only COSATU responded. Asked why it had put money into this with so many other pressing needs in the country, COSATU spokesperson Sizwe Pamla said, "We did this for the same reason that poor people from around the world sacrificed their meagre resources to fight apartheid in South Africa. Crimes against humanity demand condemnation from all properly adjusted people."

Asked what this means for the large majority of South African Jews who are

Continued on page 3>>

EDITORIAL The apology we could never make

PETA KROST

The SA Jewish Report is in the news

this week for supposedly having been "expelled" from the Press Council for not obeying an order it gave us to apologise to the SA BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions) Coalition for calling it antisemitic.

This is something we could never do.

Though it may be difficult for those outside the community to understand, there's no way we can in good faith apologise to this organisation, known throughout the Jewish world for being antisemitic.

Almost every week, we publish stories in this newspaper that give evidence of just how far the Israel haters (either as the SA BDS Coalition, Africa4Palestine, or other iterations of the anti-Israel lobby), will push the bounds of antisemitism.

There are often clear jibes at Jews, but more often than not, it's blatant hatred for the Jewish State, which can do no right and only evil in their eyes. Now, Israel may not be an angelic country, but no country is. Nor is it all bad, but according to these folk, it is.

Continued on page 6>>



The Africa4Palestine billboard on William Nicol Drive in Sandton, Johannesburg

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AUTO AFRICA

Cooper’s prosthesis in *Maestro* puts noses out of joint

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

As Netflix released the first stills from the set of *Maestro*, Bradley Cooper’s upcoming biopic film about Leonard Bernstein, there was one thing most fans could agree on.

Cooper looked utterly unrecognisable, especially in one image as an elderly version of the iconic Jewish conductor.

But as legions of angry social media users pointed out on Monday, 30 May, part of Cooper’s transformation involved a prosthetic nose, something that many found to be antisemitic – especially since Cooper isn’t Jewish.

“There’s no reason to believe that the decision to wear a fake nose is a deliberately antisemitic act,” wrote James Hirsh, a co-host of the *Menschwarmers* podcast about Jewish athletes, in the *Canadian Jewish News*. “Cooper is presumably interested in exploring the life of a great composer whom he admires. A number of Jews are involved in the production. And the prosthesis arguably helps with the resemblance.

“But this is Cooper’s third time portraying a historical figure on screen,” Hirsh said. “No prosthetics were used to play *American Sniper*’s Chris Kyle or *Licorice Pizza*’s Jon Peters. He didn’t use them to play the Elephant Man on Broadway.”

Hirsh was far from alone in calling out the prosthetic. Even though actors frequently adapt their bodies while playing historical figures, conversations about how many non-Jews play Jewish characters in Hollywood – and on what scale that should be allowed – have circulated for years.

But the “Jewface” debate received a boost last year,

especially after non-Jewish actress Kathryn Hahn was cast as the outspokenly Jewish comedy pioneer Joan Rivers (in a series that was eventually dropped). Comedian Sarah Silverman made headlines by berating the casting, saying “Right now, representation f***ing matters,” on an episode of her podcast.

The Bernstein biopic discourse has been particularly charged since 2018, when Cooper and Steven Spielberg – who was first slated to direct *Maestro*, before it became Cooper’s directorial follow-up to his 2016 hit remake of *A Star Is Born* – beat out the actor-director team of Jake

Gyllenhaal and Cary Fukunaga in securing the music rights from Bernstein’s estate.

In talking about the Bernstein sweepstakes in an interview last year, Gyllenhaal – who like Spielberg is Jewish – mentioned Bernstein’s Jewishness in admitting defeat.

“Sticking your neck out, hoping to get to tell the stories you love and that have been in your heart for a very long time is something to be proud of. And that story, that idea of playing one of the most pre-eminent Jewish artists in America and his struggle with his identity was in my heart 20 odd years, but sometimes those things don’t work out,” he told *Deadline*.

Some fans resurfaced the possibility of a Bernstein played by Gyllenhaal in their swipes at the on-set images of Cooper.

Production on *Maestro*, which co-stars Carey Mulligan as Bernstein’s wife, Felicia Montealegre, started this month. The film will probably be released in 2023.



Bradley Cooper as Leonard Bernstein on the set of *Maestro*

Photo: Netflix

Torah Thought

Rabbi Ryan Goldstein
– West Street Shul



Three million Jews, but one heart

“And they came to the Sinai Desert, and they encamped in the wilderness, and there Israel camped before the mountain.”

The festival of Shavuot celebrates receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai. The exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Red Sea, and the many tests in the desert, culminated in the arrival of more than three million Jews to the foot of this historic mountain.

Let’s try to picture the scene in our minds – remember the days before coronavirus? Think of a visiting star who has come to South Africa to perform, and seats are limited to the select few who bother to camp outside hours before the performance. Think of the poor old people trying to get to their seats before being knocked down by excited youth. Think of the peak-hour traffic you have to sit in just to make it on time. Think of the squashing, the shouting, and ultimately the anger. And at this concert, there are only a couple of thousand people. Can we even begin to imagine the total chaos at the foot of Mount Sinai? Three million Jews!

Interestingly though, the Torah uses the singular verb for encamped – *vayichan* instead of *vayachanu*. Our sages explain that at Mount Sinai, there was so much peace and love for one another, the Jews were “like one person with one heart”.

Receiving Torah can work only when all Jews are unified and there’s harmony and peace among us. Perhaps that’s why the

zodiac sign for the month in which Shavuot falls (Sivan) is Gemini-twins, siblings who love each other as much as they love themselves.

Let’s remember that the problems and shortcomings we see in our friend and the *faribles*

we have with family members may very well be a mirror image of our own faults and downfall. Let’s take the lesson of Shavuot’s unity, and strive to love our fellow Jew.

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Hanna Green: a lingering light and legacy

TALI FEINBEG

When 18-year-old Hanna Green delivered the keynote address at cancer-support organisation the DL Link's fundraising dinner three weeks ago, she held the attention of everyone in the room. Graceful, eloquent, witty and humble, she epitomised the promise of youth.

But the next day, she was rushed to hospital, part of a relentless two-year journey with cancer. And just three weeks later, she was gone, cut done by a heartless disease that extinguished the brightest of lights too soon. She was laid to rest on 31 May 2022.

"Hanna was diagnosed with embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma on her mom's birthday, 4 December 2020. At the time, she was in Grade 11 at King David Linksfield," says Terri Friedland of the DL Link. An only child with loving parents and grandparents, "she went into remission in July 2021. In between, she had chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. She was in her matric year, and I'll never forget that she would have the most hectic treatment and then go home and study. She got As for every prelim she did."

It was that drive, ambition, and talent that made Green stand out. "She was an all-rounder and could have done anything", says Friedland. At the DL Link dinner, Green shared that she wanted to study medicine, quipping, "Yes, I'm yet another wannabe doctor." But that dream wasn't to be.

"She was re-diagnosed in September 2021," says Friedland. "The cancer came back with a vengeance. She was still okay, and was able to go to her matric dance. But she wasn't able to write her final matric exams. She was supposed to write them now. She was receiving treatment the whole time. When she spoke at the dinner, I never imagined in a million years that she would be gone so soon."

In her speech, Green said, "The DL Link saved not only me, but my family. A cancer diagnosis is isolating and lonely. Not because you lack a support system, but because of the simple difference that this is happening to you, in your body, under your own skin. Possibly the most heart wrenching discovery was that it wasn't just me hit by this disease, but also my family. Their lives were also flipped upside down. My boyfriend, my parents, and my grandparents – who in their old age had to watch their little 'mamela' miss out on the *simchas* they waited their whole lives to see." It was upon realising this that she and her family decided to reach out to the DL Link for support.

She described how she went from being a stoic and strong child to being vulnerable and needing care – a tough transition. When the DL Link reached out in support, "I couldn't conceptualise why they were so eager to get me anything my heart desired. These weren't people I had known my whole life or watched me grow up. Terri said simply, 'It's because you deserve it.' That's what the DL Link stands for. It's a family, riding on your journey with you."

"It's small treats on *yomtavim*, and the innocent excitement when the doorbell rings, knowing it's something just for me. It's knowing that there's always someone thinking of me. It's Shabbat meals when my family is too tired to cook after caring for me during chemo sessions. It's rehab after treatments. All of it is an opportunity to escape this nightmare, and a sense of community and asylum from this disease that causes so many to lose so much. No one is unaffected by cancer. The DL Link allows us to break the chain of



Hanna Green before her matric dance last year

hopelessness and struggle to find light, community, and shared strength."

Likewise, the DL Link was there for Green over the past few weeks, getting her a tablet to keep boredom at bay while she was in hospital and so that she could study and watch Netflix. It was there for the entire rollercoaster ride, even during the moments when no one wanted to look down.

"Hanna wasn't just a spark. She was a flame," says Friedland. "She had such knowledge and wisdom, way beyond her years. Even when she couldn't write her own matric exams, she would tutor others. She had such a fierce, strong attitude. But it was her time –

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there was nothing anyone could have done."

At her funeral, Rabbi Yehuda Stern said her Hebrew name was Chaya, which means "life" and "18". "Even with such ambition, she completed what she needed to do in 18 years," says Friedland. "All day, all over the world, people said *tehillim* for her on a group created by the DL Link. It gave her wings, and allowed her to go up peacefully. She passed away in her sleep."

Now, Green's family and friends are left behind to pick up the pieces. "Her mom was her biggest supporter. They were the absolute best of friends. She had an incredible support system and cheerleaders at every angle," says Friedland.

"We helped organise Hanna's matric dance experience, including her make-up, her dress, a Bentley and Rolls Royce, and a family photo shoot." In her speech, Green said, "It was a dream I never thought was possible. Just forgetting about the world

and being a queen for the day, quite literally."

Her make-up artist for the day, Chanel Michaeli says, "Hanna's beauty shone through. It was an honour to be part of her journey and help create special memories."

The DL Link's founder, Michelle Goodman, says, "My own daughter, Devorah Leah, lost her life at 33, but she won the battle for so many others. We've now helped more than 850 warriors and their families. And anyone can be part of that. For example, generous donors provided Hanna's matric dance transport and hotel stay. A simple phone call can make a dream come true and provide hope and beauty for those who need it." She says Friedland became Green's "closest buddy", which was "beautiful to see, especially because so many of Hanna's friends are away in Israel".

With all her positivity, Goodman says, "This work is hard. I was a wreck [after Hanna passed]. But I realised that what we can control is our assistance. We do what we can to make a difference. The rest is up to Hashem."

Though other cancer warriors may feel despondent, Friedland says "we can strengthen each other. Part of our work is linking people to each other. Often we find courage and strength in one another."

To the community, she says, "Chaya means life. We need to be grateful for what we have. You never know when it's your time. In down moments, find the fire within you."

Finally, she says, "At the dinner, none of the 400 guests [besides her parents] knew Hanna. By the end of her speech, she had everyone on their feet, applauding. That was Hanna. She deserved to be known."

ANC puts the ‘bill’ into anti-Israel billboard

>>>Continued from page 1

Zionists, and if they still have a place in South Africa, Pamla said, "It means that we disagree with their belief that the Palestinian land belongs to Israel, but they can feel at home here. No one will do any harm to them. We will tell them our views, and they can disagree with us. They can rest assured that in this country, no one will do what the Zionist regime is doing to Palestinians."

"We spend money on the causes that are close to workers' hearts. We gave R500 000 to flood victims on 1 May, and donated R350 000 worth of goods to Cuban people," Pamla said. "We don't have a lot of money, but

the little we have is shared with other suffering human beings around the world. We're wired like that."

"Questions have to be asked which formation of the ANC approved that particular billboard, and if so, does it have the approval of the national leadership of the ANC, is it a provincial issue, or is it one or other body that provided backing for the billboard," says Silke. "The ANC hopes that this kind of message will win it support in some quarters, but I think it's a misplaced and misguided type of messaging that really doesn't serve the domestic interests of the ANC at all."

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Welkom cemetery walled off to avoid encroachment

TALI FEINBERG

Jewish cemeteries are usually clearly separated from the wider population, but recently, the Small Jewish Communities Association (SJCA) noticed that 15 local people had been buried on land allocated for the Jewish community in Welkom in the Free State. The community no longer functions, but 120 Jews are buried there, including eight children. The SJCA therefore built a perimeter wall around both the Jewish cemetery and the separate section for Jewish children.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Livingstone, Zambia, where he is upgrading the Jewish museum and cemetery, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the national director and spiritual leader of the SJCA said, "The Jewish cemetery was allocated a site for more than 1 000 graves, but occupies only about 110 graves. Children are in a different section. A couple of months ago, our garden service went to clean up and noticed that there were 15 new graves of locals buried on the boundary of our cemetery. We realised that the only solution to avoid encroachment on our Jewish graves was to put a perimeter wall around them, which we've been doing to many of our cemeteries around the country.

"The reason for the wall is to be a demarcation," he says. "It's not to keep people out. It's a 900cm height concrete palisade. It's see-through, so the police can drive past, and vagrants can't sleep inside and hide behind a solid wall. The reason we don't use metal fencing is that metal gets stolen.

"Since the 1950s, the grounds were well-looked after by the local Jewish community. The community was very responsible when it closed, and it left money with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, which is now with the SJCA, for the maintenance of the cemetery," says Silberhaft. "We took a decision that we would draw from that money to build the wall around the cemetery. We've written the municipality a letter to say that it can have all the unused land for burial."

Silberhaft says a local man by the name of Werner van Wyk looks after the Jewish cemeteries in Welkom and the neighbouring Odendaalsrus town. "He runs a maintenance company for properties and loves Zion and Jews. Odendaalsrus was also allocated an area of 500 graves, and occupied only about five graves. So, there too, we put walls around the various sections, and he monitors the cemeteries and looks after them. He gets paid from the funds set aside from the community.

"What's interesting is that he's going around finding Jews in the town that have drifted away, embraced other religions, and so on. There are very few – not even a handful – but he's making the effort to try and bring them back to their roots." He says there's one Jew left in Welkom, but she doesn't live there permanently.

Van Wyk says looking after the cemetery has been "life changing, sacred, and spiritual". It has also led him to "rediscover the history of Welkom and the important role that the Jewish community played in it."

Silberhaft describes the community as being vibrant at its height of about 45 families. It existed for only half a century. "What's interesting about Welkom is that it had the shortest lifespan in any South African country community. The first Jews arrived in 1948, as opposed to other country communities in the Free State who arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s."

According to the memorial stone at the cemetery recording the community's history, the first communal seder in Welkom was held at the home of Harold (Smoky) and Myra Simon in 1951. Smoky passed away in March 2022 in Israel, just short of his 102nd birthday. He was one of the founders and architects of the Israeli Air Force (IAF), the chairperson of World Machal for many years, and a successful businessman. Myra had served as a meteorologist in the South African

Air Force, and she contributed her skills to the IAF in its early days. In 1952, the Welkom Hebrew Congregation, Welkom Chevrah Kadisha Benevolent Society, Welkom Union of Jewish Women, and the Women's Zionist League were all established.

The Welkom Jewish cemetery was consecrated on 21 June 1953 by Rabbi Shalom Coleman, who was the "chief minister of Bloemfontein". Coleman now lives in Perth and will turn 104 in December 2022. He was a rabbi in Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein.

The Welkom synagogue and communal hall were consecrated in 1957 by Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz. He was the spiritual leader of the South African Jewish community from 1945 to 1961, professor of Hebrew at the University of the Witwatersrand, and head of the Johannesburg Beth Din. He was also an outspoken critic of the South African government's apartheid policies. Retiring in 1961, he settled in Israel. In 1976, he was a deputy mayor of Jerusalem.



Photo: Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft

During its existence, the community also established a ladies guild, Zionist society, a *shechita*, a Talmud Torah, Hebrew and Tanach classes for adults, a Magen David Adom branch, a Maccabi Goldfields Golf Association, a minister's residence, a Jewish ex-service league, and a Habonim branch, amongst many other initiatives.

The shul and communal hall were sold in 2011. In 2021, "the time-worn holy scriptures of the Welkom Hebrew Congregation" were buried, according to the memorial stone. "This marks the end of a once prominent and thriving Jewish community that worked towards the betterment of the town and strove to improve the lives of all its residents."

For now, the memories live on. "I'll always be grateful that in 1957, my parents relocated [from Joburg] to Welkom. Growing up in a country community was a gift," says communal leader Moonyeen Castle (nee Green), who now lives in Cape Town.

"There was a growing Jewish community at that time as well as a good number of Jewish children," she says. "It was decided that I would attend St Agnes Convent which was thought to be a good school. Many of the Jewish boys went to Christian Brothers. Our school went from Sub A to matric, and in each standard there were a small number of Jewish children. Believe it or not, once a week the rabbi was invited to give the girls Jewish religious instruction. I was made head girl in matric, and there were Jewish prefects.

"It was a wonderful sense of freedom – you could ride on your bike everywhere. Socially, we had a good time. There were get-togethers and parties and we would go to the one local cinema and watch movies. We also learned respect for our elders, sometimes from the Afrikaans children who called adults 'oom' and 'tannie'. Our parents were also called 'auntie' or 'uncle' as a sign of respect."

On Facebook, many former residents who have relatives buried in the cemetery said they were grateful that their loved ones' final resting places were being looked after.

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Ambassador reflects on Israel’s place in the world

STEVEN GRUZO

“There are a lot of attempts to spread disinformation about Israel,” said Eli Belotsercovsky, Israel’s ambassador to South Africa. “Some is out of ignorance, but a lot is done intentionally. There’s a consistent trend to generate emotional commitment while avoiding the facts. This is propaganda by a small but vocal minority that tries to discredit Israel.”



Belotsercovsky made these remarks in a webinar hosted by the University of the Free State on 31 May, titled “Israel’s place in Africa, the Middle East, and the global stage.”

The moderator, Professor Hussein Solomon, characterised relations between South Africa and Israel as “frosty”. Belotsercovsky said he hoped South Africa would appoint an ambassador to Israel soon. Pretoria recalled its ambassador in 2018 in the wake of violence on the Gaza border, and this post has been vacant ever since. He said economic relations were “flourishing”, and that about a third of Israel’s trade with Africa was with South Africa alone. “There are many people-to-people relations,” Belotsercovsky said, remarking that there was important two-way tourism, “but we would like to see more co-operation on the government-to-government level.” He also visualises many areas for deeper collaboration with South Africa, including agriculture, water, cyber security, and healthcare.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is “a major challenge, and for us it’s

obvious there’s a need for compromise”, Belotsercovsky said. “There’s a lively, ongoing debate about the extent of this compromise in Israel. But I don’t see [the Palestinians] having the will to compromise.”

He noted, nevertheless, that there had been numerous meetings with the Palestinian Authority at ministerial level. About 80 000 workers cross daily into Israel from the West Bank and 12 000

come from Gaza. Israel has vaccinated 150 000 Palestinians against COVID-19.

“We want the Palestinians to prosper and to reach an agreement – this is the biggest challenge for us,” he said. “We really need to get to the stage of negotiations with the moderate section in Palestinian society. The Palestinians are divided. They last held elections in 2007. We still see a lot of incitement and hatred towards Israel.” He said the terrorist Hamas regime in Gaza rejected any attempt to reach agreement with Israel, and that possibly working with allies in the Arab world could change this if they used their leverage with the Palestinians.

The Abraham Accords, which normalised Israel’s relations with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates “show a positive dynamic in the Arab world”. The ambassador also commended burgeoning ties with

Africa, including through the training of thousands of African students in Israel and the granting of observer status at the African Union to Israel. The Jewish state now has diplomatic relations with 46 of the 55 African countries. Many severed ties after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, but these have been restored since the 1990s. He noted that former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a strong strategic interest in Africa. “Relations now are very vibrant, ongoing, and we look to strengthen them.”

Although the Abraham Accords seem to have lost steam after Donald Trump left the White House, the ambassador said he hoped they would expand to more countries and remarked on warming contacts with Saudi Arabia.

But he admitted “there’s still a way to go” with Arab countries. “Demonisation of Israel is still very strong. It’s time to put aside demagogic slogans that criminalise connections to Israel,” he said, referring to a law passed to this effect in Iraq. Iran is still a major source of destabilisation in the region.

On Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the ambassador stressed Israel’s strong relations with both countries, and that it had attempted to mediate in the crisis. “But very quickly, we didn’t see the basis for our involvement at this time to end the conflict,” he said. Nevertheless, Israel has supplied humanitarian aid to Ukraine, set up a hospital, and accepted thousands of Ukrainian refugees.

Finally, turning to local Israeli politics, he characterised the current administration as a “rainbow coalition”, established with a small majority after four elections, and that it had defied predictions and lasted longer than anyone expected. “But Israel politics is very unpredictable,” Belotsercovsky cautioned. “It’s a vibrant democracy with new developments all the time.”

Observers will continue to watch Israel’s role on the world stage with interest.

“We want the Palestinians to prosper and to reach an agreement – this is the biggest challenge for us.”

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The belief that having too little information about one’s Lithuanian ancestry will make it impossible to apply for Lithuanian citizenship by descent is a typical myth spread by the younger generation. Young people are often somewhat embarrassed that they aren’t fully

aware of their ancestral roots – where their ancestors came from and when. Generally, their knowledge is limited to the information that someone, such as a grandparent or great-grandparent, was from Lithuania.

I encourage senior generations to share their family story with their grandchildren and great grandchildren, even if they don’t ask any questions yet. Share your family story before it’s too late. Our ancestors and our family story are alive as long as we remember them. Make your descendants proud of the courage and persistence their ancestors had, and the value of the inheritance they gave for future generations.

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Wouldn't trust the ANC to sit the right way on a toilet seat



HOWARD SACKSTEIN

OPINION

Before becoming famous for his role as *Mr Bean*, British comedian Rowan Atkinson commanded the stage as a stand-up comic. During one of his most notorious skits, Atkinson said of his future son-in-law, "Either this man is suffering from serious brain damage, or the new vacuum cleaner's arrived."

As I read the African National Congress' (ANC) policy discussion documents released in anticipation of its policy conference scheduled for July 2022, I was reminded of Atkinson's prophetic words.

Though many of the ANC's cadres were trained behind the iron curtain and were products of oppressive communist indoctrination, one would imagine that by now they might have an inkling that the world has changed. The policy document appears tone deaf to the world of 2022.

On a positive note, in a rare moment of self-reflection, the ANC recognises both its waning influence on the African continent and the impact that many of its policies have had on South Africa's status in the world.

The 188-page Umrabulo Policy Discussion Papers 2022, "outline the ANC's strategic approach to policies and how it shapes and impacts our transformation agenda".

With a forward penned by the party president, Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC describes its foreign policy as being "in pursuit of progressive internationalism in a changing world", if ever there was an example of communist nomenclature, this may be it.

Says the ANC, "The United Nations (UN) and its associated institutions remain the legitimate platform for reversing challenges to multilateralism, but it too needs transformation in order to strengthen its management." No mention is made of the R118 million paid by the department of international relations in a scam purchase of land for South Africa's delegation to the UN.

The policy document seems stuck somewhere in the cold-war era and bemoans "the spread of right-wing extremism that has displaced social democratic and centrist forces in Western Europe and North America". President Joe Biden will love the description of himself. I presume they may think that Donald Trump is still president.

Says the ANC, "The right-wing movements reject

globalism because it constrains their ability to impose their will on the international system, undermines multilateralism and co-operation, and weakens the principle of sovereign equality among states." These are ironic words given the ANC's support for an expansionist, colonial Russia that has invaded its sovereign neighbour, Ukraine.

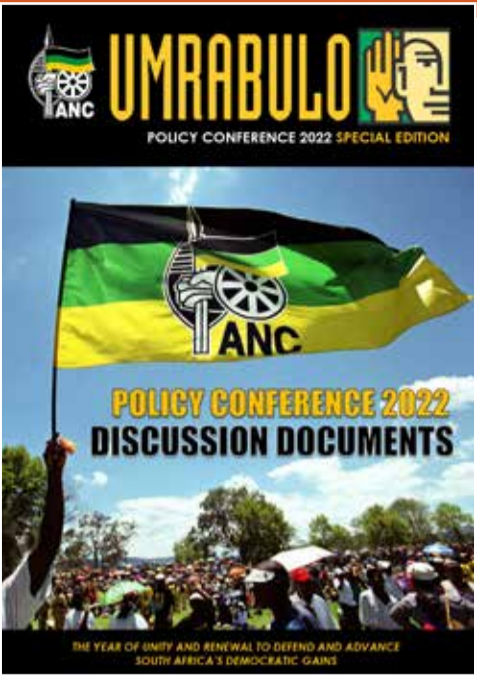
In one of the most entertaining lines in the document, we read, "the United States (US) manifested in this penchant for power games unilateralism and masculine politics". I believe this may be a line from Dale Carnegie's self-help book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. One wonders how the Americans feel about this description in light of the \$75 million (R1.1 billion) in assistance given by the US to South Africa to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic, including ventilators and vaccines, besides the \$7.25 billion (R112 billion) in AIDS relief gifted to the country since 2004. Talking about gift horses and mouths.

Referring to the Middle East, still bemoaning the American invasion of Iraq 19 years ago, the ANC says, "The Middle East region is still suffering the devastating effects of the regime-change agendas of the United States and its allies particularly in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, and Yemen." No mention is made of the brutal Russian involvement in the Syrian civil war, which cost the lives of a reported 494 438 people. Potentially having sanctioned Russian oligarchs as the largest donors to the ANC may have somewhat created a moral blind spot for the party.

There's little doubt that the ANC has witnessed its position and influence on the African continent evaporate in favour of Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, and Nigeria. While Morocco takes its standard beating from the ANC, much is also said of its favourite whipping boy, Israel.

"South African foreign policy actors will have to contend with the interrelated diplomacies of Morocco, Israel, and France interacting with some of the Gulf States in navigating a changing African and international strategic landscape."

The Abraham Accords, which normalised relations between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, and Morocco, appears to have taken the wind



from the ANC's sails.

"The struggle for the self-determination of the peoples of Western Sahara remains incomplete, and is facing new challenges with Morocco's attempts to drive a wedge in the AU away from its unity in support of UN resolutions calling for a peaceful resolution to the issue on the basis of the right of self-determination for the Saharawi people. The Morocco issue, like the growing role of Israel in African affairs, signals a waning influence of progressive African states including South Africa in African affairs. This fuels the perception that South Africa's sway in Africa has declined, its role in championing the progressive African agenda on the continent is seen as having weakened."

One cannot forget the progressiveness of the ANC in May 2021, when its ailing Deputy Secretary General, Jessie Duarte addressed 100 supporters outside the Israeli Embassy in Pretoria shouting, "They [Israel] have to wake up. Now! If we don't stop this imperialism in Israel, one day they will move into Africa and start dispossessing our land. They will become the next imperialists of the world. They are getting ready for this." Rowan Atkinson would have had a field day.

Israel's growing relationship with Africa, which peaked in the 1960s under Prime Minister Golda Meir, appears to be a "red flag" for the ANC. Today, Israel has diplomatic relations with 42 of the 44 sub-Saharan African states that aren't members of the Arab League. It enjoys particularly close relations with those countries that South Africa sees as its main rivals for leadership of the African continent. It's generally believed that the scandal-ridden visit by the ANC to Zimbabwe, breaking all COVID-19 protocols in September 2020, was an attempt by the ruling party to discourage Zimbabwe from re-establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. The ANC was later ordered to re-pay R105 545 of taxpayer's money wasted on the trip.

The policy document speaks of "the ever-growing aggressiveness of Israel [with the support of its US ally] manifested through its support of terrorist groups in Syria; its increasingly brazen transgressions of international law, agreements, and UN resolutions, particularly in relation to the Palestinians, and its total disregard for the territorial integrity of Lebanon and Syria".

The ANC acknowledges that its desire to downgrade relations with Israel has come at a cost to South Africa, speaking of the "implications of this resolution on our diplomatic capital".

Most bewildering is a comment in the policy document about "the annexation of the Jordan Valley by Israel, which is illegal in international law, the United Nations Charter, and the Rome Statute."

I'm sure that news of this annexation of the Jordan Valley will come as a great but very pleasant surprise to Israel.

Viewing the world through red-tinted glasses is one thing, but how does the ANC get the facts so wrong? In the immortal words of Rowan Atkinson in the same father of the bride speech:

"There comes a time when [the taxpayer] who paid the for the damn thing is allowed to speak a word or two of his own. I wouldn't trust any of you to sit the right way on a toilet seat."

• *Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report.*

The apology we could never make

>>>Continued from page 1

So, this week, all those who hate us and the Jewish State are celebrating a so-called victory over us for getting our come-uppance.

But this isn't a victory for anyone. It's a sad day when what I always believed was an unbiased organisation couldn't see that it was being used by the Israel-hating lobby in a political battle against us.

When I first started as editor of this newspaper, I requested that we become members of the Press Council because I believed – and still do – that it's important to have a body to ensure that we're 100% journalistically sound.

And had the Press Council ever come to us with a complaint about defamation or not getting two sides to a story, or other issues pertaining to our professionalism, we would have apologised on the front page without a problem. We believe people make mistakes, and we own up to ours. More than that, I believe we don't make mistakes, they make us, because we learn and grow from them.

However, in this case, we weren't being asked to own up to journalistic errors that the Press Council found us guilty of. No, we were effectively ordered to make a political statement that goes against everything we stand for.

We tried our best to explain this, and asked for a hearing so we could bring in experts. We asked to meet with the council's chairperson. Unfortunately, we were never given the opportunity.

So, after much consultation and discussion on the part of the *SA Jewish Report* board, lawyers, and our team, we did the only thing we believed we could do, and that was to resign. This was done at least six months ago.

However, apparently, there's a clause in the Constitution of the Press Council that I hadn't read when we signed up that said we had to give at least three year's notice of our intention to resign from this voluntary organisation. How voluntary is it if you're locked in for at least three years when you don't feel you can trust its judgement?

If you read just a few of our haters' comments and their gloating over their "win" this week, it doesn't take much to recognise that this is all about politics, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the nitty gritty of journalism.

But somehow, this seems to have passed the Press Council by, and that makes me very sad. Deciding to leave wasn't an easy decision to make. It wasn't something we did lightly or took pride in, but we had no choice.

Let me take you through how we got to this point.

In October 2020, the *SA Jewish Report* ran a story inside the newspaper (as opposed to on the front page as the Press Council and the complainant insisted) about a cartoon that for us and at least one world expert was clearly antisemitic. It depicted a fat, greedy man shovelling money into his month. It was much like so many other traditional antisemitic tropes used by the Nazis.

The caption that went with it was, "Greedy bosses connect to apartheid Israel. Blood curdling milk (and cheese, yoghurt, etc.) Every reason to boycott Clover! Change your brand."

The cartoon was used to turn people against Clover, which had been bought out by a



A complaint about our story on this cartoon led us to the Press Council

our interactions over these two issues went on for a year and a half.

In the end, we would gladly have apologised for not putting inverted commas in a quote in the head or addressing something incorrectly, but we wouldn't be forced to apologise to the SA BDS Coalition for calling it antisemitic. Not now, not ever.

Unfortunately what fell into the Press Council's lap was a political fight and had

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predominantly Israeli-owned consortium.

The Press Council complaint was brought by Hassan Lorgat, a unionist who was a member of BDS South Africa, not an office bearer.

His complaint was voluminous, trying every trick he could to try and get us to apologise for calling BDS antisemitic.

The next complaint was much the same, from the same man and the same organisation that gave its stamp of approval for him to fight their fight.

I'm summarising this a great deal because nothing to do with journalism as such. Had we had the opportunity to stand before it and bring our own experts, we would at least have had a chance of explaining our perspective. But we weren't given this courtesy, in spite of requesting it.

Many people out there may see BDS as an organisation that defends the rights of the Palestinians. If that were the case, I would have more sympathy, but as I see it, its main goal is to make sure that anything Israel does is demonised. That's not human rights activism, that's hatred for the Jewish State.

You just have to listen to some of utterances that come out of the mouth of Mandla Mandela, who speaks on its behalf, to know how it feels about us and the Jewish State.

We despise all forms of racism, and antisemitism is just that. Anti-Israel hatred is just a form of antisemitism and racism. Instead of openly hating Jews, these organisations hate the Jewish State and anyone who supports it.

Do I think the Press Council is biased? I cannot unequivocally say I do, but I do believe it was used by Lorgat and the BDS Coalition to fight their fight against us. This is extraordinarily disappointing as I believe in the need for an independent ombud who wouldn't be swayed by politics and racial hatred. Unfortunately, we realised six months ago that this wasn't to be for us.

However, as a newspaper for this community, we will continue to bring you the best possible news that's relevant to our community ... no matter what!

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

A milligram of prevention worth a kilogram of cure

OPINION

Once again, our team of doctors find ourselves treating scores of patients with flu, or influenza A, to be more precise. The patients are acutely unwell, and the treatment is limited. Thankfully, the average recovery is good.

While I'm not anxious about a June spike of influenza cases across our community because it's a phenomenon we see annually, my mind keeps drifting to the year that we didn't see a single case of influenza in winter in Johannesburg. The winter of 2020, four months after the COVID-19 pandemic arrived on our shores, had absolutely no flu – a novel experience for every doctor.

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly taught the medical world humility. With its hi-tech diagnostic techniques, advanced life-support knowledge, and developed treatment modalities, it was left dumbstruck by a simple meniscal zoonotic virus – a clear lesson that G-d runs the world, not mankind. As much as this requires us to put our lives into the hands of the divine and simply trust, there are equally strong lessons emerging from COVID-19 of a preventative-medicine mindset.

The Commonwealth Fund in the United States (US) released a study in April 2022 stating that COVID-19 vaccinations up until March 2022 had prevented 2.2 million deaths, 17 million hospitalisations, and 66.1 million additional infections in the US. This is in a country that has had one million deaths and 4.8 million hospital admissions. These numbers are formidable.

In spite of the ongoing pushback by anti-vaxxers, the data speaks clearly that vaccines save lives. It's a feather in the cap for preventative medicine. In 2020, our COVID-19-threatened community embraced the concept of vaccination against various diseases, and almost all of us elected to have flu shots. The 2020 flu shots, coupled



with masks and social distancing, "eradicated" flu that year. Lives were saved, and significant suffering was prevented.

I'm astounded to see that two years later, flu-vaccination rates in this same community are probably down to where they were pre-pandemic, and the disease burden of influenza is right back up. So, my mind delves into other areas of primary care preventative medicine and the health-seeking behaviour we employ (or choose not to) regarding its offering.

The Healthcare Cost Institute estimated childhood immunisation to have initially dropped 60%, mammograms 80%, and colonoscopies 90% in the first 18 months of COVID-19. As the threat from COVID-19 has settled, these numbers have improved, but we're nowhere near pre-pandemic levels of preventative screening.

Even pre-pandemic levels left much to be desired. Anecdotally, my practice has seen several patients with serious diseases recently that could have been prevented had the patient engaged in appropriate proactive preventative checks.

So, what are the preventative checks in a post-

COVID-19 world that we need to take seriously?

Blood pressure. Hypertension is the number one cause of cardiovascular related deaths in the world. It takes two minutes to have your blood pressure checked. All adults over 18 old should check it annually.

Lipid panel. One in six people have high cholesterol, which contributes greatly to strokes and heart attacks. Testing is a simple blood test, ideally a full lipid panel not just a total cholesterol. All adults over 18 should have this done annually.

Fasting glucose. There are 550 million people with diabetes worldwide. Two hundred and forty million are undiagnosed. Often the initial years of diabetes are asymptomatic. Untreated diabetes causes heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure,

blindness, and amputations. A simply fasting finger prick will raise appropriate red flags and expose the need for treatment. All adults over 18 should have this done annually.

STDs and HIV. One in every seven South Africans is HIV positive. HIV infection is fully controllable for a long and healthy life. All teenagers and adults at risk should be tested annually.

Pap smears. This is a simple vaginal (cervical) test which can be done at a GP. When this test is sent off to the laboratory for HPV (human papilloma virus) testing as well, it's highly effective at diagnosing precancerous conditions and high-risk states. All women two years after becoming sexually active or from the age of 21 until the age of 65 every 18-24 months.

BMI (body mass index). This is a calculation of your weight for your height (kg/m²). The World Health Organisation estimates that 2.8 million people die a year simply from being overweight. You need a tape measure and a scale to calculate. All people annually.

Mammograms. One in 28 women in South Africa are at risk of breast cancer. Your doctor should teach you how to self-examine your breasts monthly from adolescence.

All women annually over 40, and individuals with family history over 30 years old. High-risk individuals annually.

Bone density scans. Recommended for men and women, but particularly postmenopausal women over 65. All individuals over 65 every two years if initial scores are low.

PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen). A simple blood test for males 45-70 years old to detect early prostate cancer. In higher-risk individuals, this needs to be accompanied by a rectal finger exam. Males over 45 annually.

Colonoscopies and gastroscopies. A day procedure under sedation, done in a hospital. All individuals 45-75 years old every five years.

Stool occult blood. A lab stool test to identify individuals at risk of colon cancer who may not be able to access scopes or in between scopes. All individuals over 45.

Skin mole checking. To detect early signs of skin cancers. You should check your skin for new, unusual moles and if any doubt, consult your doctor. Where available, dermatology mole mapping every three years. All individuals between 20-40 years old every three years, and over 40 annually.

ECG. A simple tracing of your heart that's effective in detecting ischaemia, arrhythmias, and some structural heart changes. Where available, every two years from 45. One childhood screening ECG where available.

Few people are committed to every one of these checks on this list. I have encountered several patients who are scrupulous about some of them and neglectful about others, who unfortunately became ill unnecessarily. Read the list again, and speak to your doctor if you're not fully screened.

Let's reflect on the past 2.5 years, and realise that we haven't become wonderful at curing COVID-19, but we have become wonderful at preventing it: let's employ preventative medicine into each of our lives.

• Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg.



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Pearl Sanborn



Joburg faces a dearth of kosher upmarket aged homes

NICOLA MILTZ

Johannesburg, which has the largest number of Jewish elderly residents in the country, has no kosher, privately-run Jewish retirement homes, creating a definite need.

There are two kosher aged homes expertly and communally-run by the Chevrah Kadisha which successfully cater to the needs of the aged, namely Sandringham Gardens and Golden Acres Apartments. However, many seniors who find themselves looking for kosher, privately-run retirement accommodation, with that “extra little something” are sadly disappointed when their search yields no results.

The city is dotted with some superb private facilities, from mid to upmarket, but none of them offer kosher dining or that *haimish*, home-from-home Jewish experience. With the result that some seniors lose out on the kosher dining experience in their later years. A retirement home similar to the much loved, communally-run, Jewish Accommodation for Fellow Aged (Jaffa) in Pretoria is sadly lacking in Johannesburg, say many in the field of caring for the aged.

The recent announcement of the closure of the Chev’s Our Parents Home (OPH) in Orchards has opened a gaping hole in this area for seniors looking for kosher but privately-run, modern and stylish, yet affordable, community living.

“One of the biggest challenges facing seniors is finding affordable retirement accommodation which is in close proximity to their families,” said Rabbi Shaun Wingrin of SOS for the Aged (SOSA).

SOSA is a Jewish organisation assisting over 60s in the community primarily living in multi-denominational (private) retirement homes across Johannesburg since 2012.

“I’m often asked to suggest a private, kosher facility to retire to. Sadly, I tell them none exist!”

“The closest offering we had was OPH, which isn’t private. It was well known that it was turned into a full fee-paying communal facility some years back, and the non-full fee-paying residents were generally transferred to Sandringham Gardens.”

Rabbi Ari Kievman, the director of Chabad Seniors, agrees that there’s a need.

“Absolutely, there’s a definite need in the community for a fully kosher, upscale, private retirement facility in Johannesburg. It’s about time this happened,” he said.

“I work with seniors every day, and I’m hearing this. Every day, we provide a kosher meal for seniors at Chabad House in Savoy. They come here to listen to a shiur and enjoy a delicious, fresh lunch all free of charge. We also provide kosher food parcels every Shabbos for more than 100 seniors in a project which began during COVID-19.”

He said he was working with some facilities to help them transition to being kosher because of this growing need.

“I’m working with Willowbrook in Sandton, and there are others considering this in the near future,” he said.

The question is why private homes haven’t gone down this road before.

According to Rabbi Wingrin, private facilities factor food into their running costs, and many of these homes are pricy to begin with.

He believes OPH is the ideal location for a future, privately-run establishment nestled in a leafy suburb and relatively close to friends and family.

“There are no privately-run homes offering residents a fully kosher board option. OPH has the correctly fitted out kitchens and is close to the heart of the Jewish community,” he said.

“It remains a wonderful, communal piece of real

estate set in a relatively quiet area with a number of very functional facilities on the site, including wonderful gardens, a kosher kitchen, shul, and much more.

“It lends itself perfectly to a private retirement home, possibly rented and run by a company already in the private retirement hospitality industry. This offers a solution for the growing number of middle income over 60s looking for private retirement accommodation that offers a kosher option.”

Its location is favourable to about 40% of the Jewish community who live outside of the *shtetl* area, based on analysis of statistical data SOSA did some years back, Wingrin said.

SOSA reaches out to about six multi-denominational private facilities which have Jewish residents. “With foresight, our community can tap into this popular market by renting out this site to an established and successful developer in the private retirement business on a long-term basis, with the proviso that a fully kosher option be made available. The rental income would cover the cost of maintaining the site and also provide income for the running costs of our charitable facilities. This way, the community retains ownership of this beautiful site to cater for current and future needs.”

The Chevrah Kadisha is first and foremost focused on the immediate needs of the existing residents of OPH, who are being taken care of during this transition period. It’s understood that the potential commercial aspects of the property will be addressed at a later stage.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, who served the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation for many years, said he had often been approached by congregants seeking kosher retirement accommodation.

“I’ve definitely had many people who would have preferred a private place that was kosher,” he said.

Asked what many opted for and what was available to them after a lifetime of being kosher, he said, “Unfortunately many have stopped being kosher. So sad.”

One Sandton woman who preferred to remain anonymous said there was a serious need in the community for a small, private kosher-care facility.

“When I was looking for my mom, who has kept kosher most of her life, this wasn’t available. In the end, we chose care over kosher, and she’s in a small, intimate, private home where she has full-time care.

“Ideally, we would have preferred a kosher place for her but we didn’t have the choice as we felt she was more suited to a smaller, less-institutionalised residence. Golden Acres is fabulous, but it’s independent living and requires your own caregivers, which becomes expensive especially if you still have to do your own shopping and cooking.”

Many Jewish elderly residents have opted for private retirement homes over the offerings of the Chev for myriad reasons, including some resistance to the required hefty, non-refundable lump sum needed to secure an apartment, because some want to be able to leave an inheritance. The Chev has added a rental option for this reason. A private retirement approach includes a life-rights option, which can be sold after death. There is the belief that the quality of food and dining experience overall is superior at a private facility because it’s not reliant on communal funds. Also, modern communal dining facilities are attractive, especially for seniors who are visited by their families from overseas. Many of these visitors, who are kosher, might be able to stay for a Shabbos or *yom tov* meal if the place was kosher, said Rabbi Wingrin.

“The Chev has incredible experience running an excellent charitable old-aged home, and our community is hugely blessed. Some people prefer a private option, and I believe the private retirement options should be left to experts in the hospitality industry,” he said.

“Hundreds of Jewish people have chosen to live at other private retirement homes, some just up the road like Elphin Lodge or a suburb two away like Randjeslaagte. Sadly, it’s logistically near impossible to provide kosher meals three times a day at the various non-kosher facilities. I’m not sure there’s a caterer who could do this and where would the food be heated up and stored?” he asked.

“For most of these people, this is their “last stop”, and choosing to go kosher at this stage of their lives is the correct thing to do,” he said, adding he was hopeful that potential investors and developers would heed the call.

ADVERTORIAL

Landmark auction of works by Irma Stern

On the centenary of Irma Stern's debut solo exhibition in South Africa and the half-century of the opening of the UCT Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town, Strauss & Co is proud to be hosting a single-artist auction entirely devoted to this illustrious artist.

Titled *Irma Stern: Time | Line, Works from the Irma Stern Trust Collection and other properties* it takes place Wednesday, 8 June 2022 at Welgemeend Manor House in Cape Town, and will be run as a live virtual auction. This landmark sale will feature 140 works encompassing many of the artist's major themes and interests.



Wood Carriers
R 150 000 - 200 000

housed in the much-loved Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town, an enormously important cultural institution that houses and displays a collection of Irma Stern's artworks and artefacts.”

Income derived from the sale will strengthen the Irma Stern Trust Collection for the future by preserving the collection and making it accessible by developing the existing Irma Stern Trust website into an important research resource.

Irma Stern lived in Cape Town for nearly a half century. Following her death in 1966, and in pursuance of the terms of her will, Stern's entire collection of artworks and her personal collection of artefacts were placed in trust. The trustees of the Irma Stern Trust, Syfrets Trust, now Nedgroup Trust, were further instructed to make a selection from this collection and arrange for the resulting collection to be permanently or temporarily housed and displayed.



Woman in Black Dress
R 2 500 000 - 3 500 000

The contents of *Irma Stern: Time | Line* will be presented chronologically, and feature works made in every decade from 1920 until the artist's death in 1966. Stern's consistent focus on women is evident in a number of important oils. They include *Psychic: An Old Malay Woman* (estimate R7 million to 9 million), a 1941 portrait of a Cape Muslim sitter from Stern's golden period. Stern's 1929 portrait of Roza van Gelderen (1890–1976) portrays a charismatic educator and cultural figure who was also a life-long friend of the artist and important model (estimate R4 million to 6 million). Van Gelderen was born into a prestigious Dutch-Jewish family who immigrated to Durban in 1897. In 1903, she settled with her family in Cape Town and eventually qualified as an educator. She became the first Jewish principal of a government school in Cape Town, the non-denominational Central Girls' School. A freethinker, her circle included leftists, feminists, and émigrés, many of them Jewish, notably the Latvian-born trade unionist and suffragette Ray Alexander Simons. Van Gelderen, depicted wearing a sari, remained loyal to Stern until the end.



Portrait of a Woman in a Sari: Roza
R 4 000 000 - 6 000 000

commanded the artist's attention throughout her career (estimate R1.5 million to 2.5 million).

Irma Stern: Time | Line opens with seven lithographs from the artist's print portfolio, *Visionen (Visions)*, published in 1920 by the Berlin-based Hesperiden Verlag. It's bookended with a number of lively drawings of beach revellers made in 1965. Notable individual lots in this sale include an outstanding terracotta vase in a female form from 1951 (estimate R40 000 to R60 000) from the Shill Collection, a gouache titled *Mother and Child, Congo* from Stern's first trip to the Belgium Congo in 1942 (estimate R200 000 to 300 000), as well as a sought-after copy of Stern's limited edition artists' book *Congo*, published in 1943 (estimate R20 000 to R30 000). The sale offers excellent value for starter collectors, with estimates for works on paper beginning at R10 000.

Irma Stern: Time | Line is supported by a detailed print catalogue (also available to download at www.straussart.co.za), exhibition, and education programme. The public is invited to view works at a special preview exhibition at Welgemeend Manor House (2 to 8 June 2022). Dr Kathy Wheeler, the curator of the Irma Stern Trust Collection, will be in conversation with Strauss & Co senior art specialist Matthew Partridge on Saturday, 4 June 2022 at 10:00 followed by a walkabout with Strauss & Co specialists at 11:00.

Strauss & Co

For more information, contact Strauss & Co at
021 683 6560, ct@straussart.co.za or go to www.straussart.co.za



Vase in Female Form
R 40 000 - 60 000

“Irma Stern: Time | Line is a continuation of Strauss & Co's longstanding commitment to support the activities of the Irma Stern Trust in realising the artist's wish to promote art within and outside South Africa,” says Kirsty Colledge, department head of Strauss & Co's Cape Town Art Department.

“The auction includes 124 artworks from the Irma Stern Trust Collection including an important portrait of her close friend and supporter, Roza van Gelderen, executed in 1929. Proceeds from the sale of these works will benefit the Irma Stern Trust Collection,



Woman Carrying Pot
R 400 000 - 600 000

Surrogacy spurs religious debate

GILLIAN KLAWANKSY

Surrogacy is becoming increasingly commonplace, offering couples with fertility challenges a miraculous way to welcome much-longed-for children. Yet when it comes to Jewish law, establishing maternity – and the child’s religion – isn’t always so clearcut.

“We’re not giving up; we’ll just find another way,” clinical psychologist Dorianne Weil (Dr D) told a doctor when he informed her and her now-late husband that they had to come to terms with not being able to have a baby. It was this tenacity and unwavering belief that culminated in the birth of their twins, Jemma-Claire and Dean, 25 years ago.

Though the doctor in question cited a multitude of statistics, the Weils’ story was about far more than numbers. Yet it did begin with them. After 18 in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatments and seven lost pregnancies, Dorianne invited a visiting fertility specialist from the United States (US) onto her 702 radio show.

He was amazed at how she related to listeners who called in to share their fertility struggles. “I knew about the waiting, the stress, the dreams, and the challenges it can bring to the couple or how it can bring you together.”

After the show, she told the specialist her story, and he insisted that she come to San Francisco. So, the Weils travelled to the US and tried multiple IVF treatments. Though each attempt was unsuccessful, they managed to freeze 11 embryos in the process. In the knowledge that carrying a baby wasn’t possible, they discovered a California-based parenting centre that offered strictly regulated surrogacy.

Here they found their surrogate – a woman who had five kids of her own and couldn’t imagine what it must be like not to be able to have children. “She saw surrogacy as the ultimate gift,” says Dorianne. Implanted with five of the Weils’ embryos, the surrogate fell pregnant with twins.

The Weils temporarily moved to San Francisco in preparation for the birth, which they almost missed because it came unexpectedly early. Yet they made it just as the caesarean was taking place.

“They brought out a boy and a girl,” Weil says, recalling the emotion of meeting her babies. “They were newly born, still covered by vernix. I had a pinback button in my bag that said, ‘Today I’m a dad.’ I pinned that on my husband, and he cried and said two things, ‘Today we’re a family,’ and, ‘I never thought we’d see the day.’ And I said, ‘I always knew we would.’”

In Judaism, surrogacy has given rise to much debate. “This isn’t just a personal question that the couple have, there’s something much bigger at stake here,” said Rabbi Gidon Fox. The founder and rabbinic administrator at SHIFRA, which offers halachic fertility treatment counselling

and supervision, Fox discussed the halacha surrounding fertility and surrogacy at a recent Hatzolah webinar.

“Whatever will be ruled for this couple has implications for others,” he said. “This relates to the integrity of the Jewish world.” That’s because this arrangement raises questions about whether the surrogate mother, who carries and gives birth to the child, or the biological mother, who provides the egg, determines the religion of the child.

Historically, there was no issue when it came to determining the mother of a child. Yet with the evolution of medical science, there’s now much debate amongst halachic authorities. Fox explains this using the example of a mother who carries a donor egg.

“To those halachic authorities that hold that the critical determination of Jewish identity is the birth mother, this child is Jewish. To those who hold that the genetic-material donor is the mother, this child isn’t Jewish. Yet, what will happen later when this child wants to get married? One of these groups would allow it and the other wouldn’t.”

“Though each side of the argument holds their perspective to be correct, a third point of view is that this matter cannot be definitively adjudicated,” said Fox. “To avoid issues down the line, conversion is done if either party isn’t Jewish.”

In the case of the Weils, their twins were therefore converted because their surrogate mother wasn’t Jewish even though they, the biological parents, were. Though the conversion was a lengthy process demanding that they themselves learn with a rabbi for a number of years, the Weils wanted to comply perfectly. “We didn’t want any problems with Barmitzvahs, weddings, or anything at all,” says Dorianne.

When both the donor and the surrogate are Jewish, there’s no question surrounding the child’s Jewishness. Yet, another concern then arises – the potential of a brother unknowingly marrying a sister.

“Generally, those who require a Jewish donor or surrogate want her to be unmarried, yet she may already have her own children,” said Fox, “who would be this child’s sibling.”

That’s why it’s so important for rabbinic authorities to be involved in the surrogacy process to keep good records and circumvent future dilemmas. Fox argues that halachic involvement in surrogacy is critical, regardless of whether or not authorities are comfortable with the process.

“Just washing our hands of it won’t prevent it from happening. It’s an unbelievable test for someone not to be able to have children, and people will understandably go to whatever lengths necessary to become parents. It’s critical for us to oversee the process as the custodians are the ones to protect the integrity of the Jewish community and of this child.”

When Tracy and Dale Balkin decided to expand their family via surrogacy, they consulted medical and legal professionals, women who had been through the surrogacy experience, and rabbis. “The Jewish aspect was challenging,” admits Tracy. “Yet, we were blessed to find a Jewish surrogate which negated one difficult aspect of having to convert the babies. The eggs were my own and genetically, our twin girls [now seven] are 100% mine and my husband’s.”

Having experienced a high-risk pregnancy with her first child, a son who was born prematurely, Tracy subsequently suffered numerous miscarriages, the final one being

life threatening. “We were told that I would never be able to conceive or carry another child,” she said. Surrogacy and adoption were their only options. Being open-minded when exploring these avenues and having a strong family support system was vital, she said.

Tracy stresses the importance of being open about fertility struggles. “Once you talk, you find answers, guidance, and support. It’s nothing to be ashamed of. Childbirth is a miracle, and having a beautiful healthy baby is what matters most. Deciding to go ahead doesn’t mean you’ll automatically find a willing and able woman to carry your child though.”

The Balkins believe that speaking about their journey led them to their surrogate

and had a ripple effect. “My husband told someone what we were going through – we had initially found a surrogate who changed her mind – and just that one conversation was the catalyst we needed,” said Tracy. “We met our surrogate the next day. Shortly after our girls were born, the person to whom my husband spoke, who introduced us to our surrogate, had twin girls.”

Tracy and Dorianne believe it’s important to be open with their kids. Their children have always known and embraced their miraculous birth stories. “For our twins, it’s their ‘normal,’” says Tracy. “They’ve met the surrogate, and to them, she’s an amazing woman who gave



Dale and Tracy Balkin with their children Alexa, Jamie, and Kira

them life. But I’m their mom, and they’ve never questioned that. Emotionally, it was challenging, but in the grand scheme of things, it’s nine months versus a lifetime with your precious child.”

The remarkable life of Sergio Bergman

STEVEN GRUZD

Sergio Bergman, a qualified scientist, became the first rabbi appointed as a government minister in Argentina. He is a close friend of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, better known to the world as Pope Francis.

Rabbi Bergman, the president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), was in Johannesburg as the guest of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism for its biennial conference, held over the weekend.

Bergman’s grandparents escaped the Holocaust, emigrating to Argentina in 1929 from Lodz in Poland. Bergman was born in Buenos Aires in 1962. He celebrated his Barmitzvah at the city’s Emanuel Reform Synagogue. Argentina, with about 250 000 Jews, houses the largest Jewish community in Latin America.

“We Jews are part of the Argentinian mosaic,” he said. “It’s a country built by emigrants who were welcomed from all over the world. We are a very creative and active community.”

But Argentina is a country of contrasts and contradictions, Bergman said. It offered refuge for Jews from war-torn Europe, but was also a safe haven for fleeing Nazis. “It’s a rich country full of poor people,” he said, endowed with natural resources but struggling to develop fully. “We need strong and active citizens, not just inhabitants.”

Bergman studied biochemistry and pharmacology, and worked in this field. “I loved my profession, but I had a vocation too. Something was calling me from when I was very young,” he said. He was a scientist by day and a student by night. He credits his wife, Gabriella, for encouraging him to pursue his rabbinical studies. He laughed as he explained how his father-in-law said that “becoming a rabbi isn’t a profession for a nice Jewish boy”.

“I went to Israel in the middle of the Gulf War in 1991,” Bergman said. “People told me I was crazy!” He studied at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem on a scholarship, and went on to receive three master’s degrees, in education, Jewish Studies, and Hebrew literature from Israeli institutions.

Two deadly suicide bombings in Buenos Aires – of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and the AMIA (Asociación



Rabbi Sergio Bergman

Mutual Israelita Argentina) Jewish Community Centre in 1994 – shaped Bergman’s life and strengthened his Jewish identity. He was supposed to have a meeting at AMIA on the Monday morning that it was attacked, but cancelled it as his third child, Talia, had just been born. “I then had to be at the morgue for people to identify the bodies. I will never forget this in my life.”

Young people in his community wanted to do something meaningful in the face of this horror. They pushed him to lead a weekly protest outside parliament, shaming the government with a timeline of how many weeks it was since these two bombings with no arrests. “I did this every Monday for two-and-a-half years,” said Bergman. “We started with 20 people and then it became mass public demonstrations. We blew a shofar in the public square. This made me into a social activist.”

Bergman was mentored by the future Pope Francis, forming a strong friendship with him after attending a meeting to confront Argentina’s political, economic, and social crisis in 2001. “He taught me to respect differences and serve society. That’s real power. He’s a master of communication through symbols.” Bergman still maintains correspondence with the pontiff, who likes to hand-write his letters but now dictates them to his secretary.

Bergman was the first rabbi elected as a congressman in the country, which he cites as evidence of the integration of the Jewish community into Argentine society. He then went on to serve as minister of the environment and sustainable development in President Mauricio Macri’s cabinet from 2015 to 2019. “We lost the next election, which wasn’t really my fault,” he joked mischievously.

“Being minister of environment was my most rabbinical work, the peak of my rabbinical career. I could put *tikkun olam* into action. I felt like Noah building his ark and being laughed at by his neighbours. The flood has now come.” He’s most proud that six national parks were proclaimed during his tenure.

Bergman now steers the WUPJ, “with 1 200 congregations in 50 countries and seven regions”.

“We seek to serve the Jewish people and humankind. We pioneered the empowerment of women, long before #MeToo. It’s 50 years since female rabbis were ordained in the United States. Now there are also many women in leadership positions in Jewish communities, even in Orthodox communities.”

We need to distinguish Jewish spirituality from politics, which is about power, Bergman said. “Orthodox Judaism doesn’t always respect and accept diversity,” he said, “I prefer not to use energy on internal divisions. I want to welcome those Jews who feel they don’t belong, they should come back home. I’m against assimilation, but I support integration. To ‘reform’ is an action, it’s an ongoing process.”

He said he was inspired by the stories of Jews in the struggle after visiting the Apartheid Museum. “I have learned a lot from this visit, from local leadership and the very welcoming community. We as Jews need to clearly define what value we can add to the world. Today, we need to be resilient, flexible, and open-minded, especially post-COVID-19. It’s a catalyst for change. It’s very Jewish, from every bad thing to make a good one. I feel at home here – South Africa is similar to South America.”

His key message is that Jewish South Africans have much to contribute to the wider society, and they should be proud of all aspects of their identity.

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Fighting strategies from bully and bullied 40 years on

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Having been a bully and someone who was bullied, Clinton Fein and Bryan Schimmel are on a mission to use their experience to eradicate bullying from schools and get children to understand what’s behind it.

Fein bullied Schimmel, an award-winning music director, arranger, and orchestrator, when they were pupils at King David High School Linksfield (KDHSL), so it’s fitting that 40 years after matriculating (in 1982), they launched their project at the same school.

Today, they have reconciled and are good friends, but they realise that bullying hasn’t gone away.

“When [KDHSL Principal] Lorraine Srage had the foresight to reach out to us after she saw the article about us in the *SA Jewish Report* [in March 2022], we knew that there would be no place better to launch this presentation than at King David Linksfield,” said Fein, a writer, activist, and artist.

Wanting to provide a roadmap for bullies and the bullied, they offered their perspective on this topic during their presentation at the school on 26 May. The following day, they spoke at the school’s assembly. “Why are a bully and his victim sharing the same stage four decades after the fact?”

asked Schimmel. “It’s highly unusual, if not unique. But our school story isn’t. In fact, it’s more common than you think.”

“What makes a bully a bully?” asked Fein. “How can we heal from the damage internalised years after being bullied, or even prevent the all-too-frequent teen suicides and mass shootings?”

If we don’t examine bullying through a lens of empathy and understanding, the consequences can be dire if not deadly, said Fein. “As we saw in Texas this week, there was a report in *The Washington Post* that the gunman who murdered 19 children and two schoolteachers was bullied on the basis of a speech impediment and other reasons.”

“Coincidentally, I also have a speech impediment,” said Schimmel. As a student at King David primary and high schools, he was a nerd, loner, and teacher’s pet, he said. “The only time I played soccer was in mandatory PT class. I did score one goal – for the opposing team.”

Fein, on the other hand, was sporty, and had quite a dominant personality. Coming from a divorced home with parents and step parents who were forever at each other’s throats, he attended HA Jack Primary School during his earlier years. “When I was about 11 years old, I realised that I was attracted to boys,” said Fein. “It was the worst realisation of my life because I had grown up to believe that it was shameful and wrong, so I had to suppress it at all costs.”

He did this by pretending to be straight, and dating the prettiest girl in the school.

“We all had secrets going into high school,” said Schimmel. “I had my first sexual encounter with somebody in Grade 8. Finally, I understood what being different was all about.”

Before King David, Fein went to Highlands North Boys High School, where bullying was rampant. “I played rugby, deliberately got into

fights, and embraced toxic masculinity,” he recalled.

During all his years at KDHSL, Schimmel found himself in the same class as his worst bully, whose name was David. “I would take constant abuse and I didn’t have the know-how, smarts, or self-confidence to fight back. They were the most popular boys in school. Just when I thought things couldn’t get any worse, you arrived,” said Schimmel, turning to Fein. “I remember the look on your face every time you punched me and every time you made me feel like shit.”

Schimmel asked, “Of all the students in the school, why me?”

Fein responded, “It wasn’t about you. By aggressively bullying you and mercilessly mocking and making fun of you, I could hide in plain sight.”

One day, Schimmel found the courage to do something that seems unthinkable. “I was mildly obsessed with one of the popular boys, whose name was Gary Allen. I wrote him a

note, and asked him if he would meet me at second break behind the hall.”

When that moment arrived, “Gary appeared like a knight in shining armour,” recalled Schimmel. “His caring eyes were looking at me with such kindness and compassion. I knew I had found an ally amongst all the boys I feared.”

With Allen in his corner, the bullying calmed down.

At some point after matriculating, Schimmel went to

New York, but spiralled into drug addiction and self-harm, and returned to South Africa to heal.

Fein’s journey saw him live in New York, travel Europe, and then settle in Los Angeles. He eventually came out to his friends and family. He worked in the film industry before taking on the United States government and US Navy over the constitutionality of the Communications Decency Act. He won.

In 2019, Alain Soriano, a mutual school friend of Fein and Schimmel told the latter, “Clinton is back in the country. You should meet.”

Hearing the story from Schimmel’s perspective made Fein understand how his behaviour had scarred Schimmel. “It was devastating for me to hear, and I’m just truly, truly sorry,” said Fein.

“I forgive you,” responded Schimmel.

Forgiving Fein wasn’t about letting him off the hook or okaying his behaviour. “It was about freedom and closure for me,” said Schimmel.

Bullying is inevitable, said Schimmel, so we must work towards a paradigm of harm reduction.

“That begins by recognising unhealthy competitiveness, the flaunting of privilege, peer and parental pressure, and the words young people are exposed to about the state of the country and the world,” said Fein. “All of these things are scenarios that create a victim mentality.”

Understand that hurt people hurt people, said Fein and Schimmel. “Tap into why somebody has brought a bullying mentality and attitude into school,” said the latter.

Parents, students, and teachers need to recognise bullying in all its forms, said Fein, and then learn how to manage it. “This begins with healthy, constructive dialogue which creates an environment that’s tolerant and empathetic.”



SAUL KAMIONSKY

“No matter how your morning starts off, when you get on a bike, you get a real sense of freedom and it certainly makes me feel like a kid again,” says Dylan Solomon, a social rider who has completed the Cape Argus and the KAP sani2c.

“Cycling is a great form of exercise, and besides buying or renting a bicycle, it doesn’t cost you much,” says avid cyclist Ariel Katzen. “It’s also a great way to explore your city and grab a coffee on the way.”

The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to South African cycling enthusiasts for World Bicycle Day on 3 June. The day draws attention to the benefits of using a bicycle – a simple, affordable, clean, environmentally fit, and sustainable means of transportation.

The day is the brainchild of Polish-American Professor Leszek Sibilski, whose academic project exploring the role of bicycles in development led to a massive advocacy effort to have the United Nations designate a day to celebrate and promote bicycle use across the globe. He succeeded. On 12 April 2018, all 193 United Nations member states adopted a General Assembly resolution which declared 3 June World Bicycle Day.

Just before the arrival of COVID-19, Katzen attempted the Cape Town Cycle Tour with a friend. “We didn’t train for it besides my normal cycling routine,” he says. “It was tough, the hills were hard, it poured with rain, and a baboon tried to stop us, but we never gave up. We stopped after about 55km as we ran out of time and were forced onto a bus.”

While growing up, Katzen was always into anything with wheels and his favourite was his bicycle. “Living in Cape Town, I was blessed to grow up in Sea Point and be able to cycle on the promenade and pavement, even when it was banned!”

Katzen remembers seeing his brother cycling, “so when I was old enough, probably about four or five, I got my first bicycle from Baby City. My brother taught me how to ride into our house by riding around in circles, knocking into the walls on the way.”

Neil Vardi and Ben Diner took up cycling later in life. They each contacted Johannesburg cycling club Capri Wheelers. Diner did so to add some variety to his training regime and Vardi did so to improve his fitness levels.

“I was really into gym,” the latter says. “I was one of those ‘put-on-muscle’ guys and had a huge upper body. One day, I ran up a flight of steps, felt like I was out of breath, and said, ‘I think I’m so fit, but actually I’m not.’ At that time, my brother was told to get a bicycle to help his knee. I took that bike and rode it. I was shocking, but I liked the feeling in my legs afterwards, so I got my own bike, and here we are 36 years later.”

Diner also struggled initially. “During the first time I cycled with Capri Wheelers, we cycled to the airport, which is about only a 55km cycle. I came home and I was starving, exhausted, and basically hooked.”

Herschel Jawitz, who has completed two KAP sani2c races, a few 94.7s, and a few 180km rides as part of Ironman, says, “I’ve always been a runner but decided to take up riding to take some of the stress and pounding off my legs that you get from running.”

Shaun Matisonn has been an avid cyclist since his school years. “My father has been cycling for more than 70 years and remains an avid cyclist to this day. He got me into cycling,” he says.

Matisonn has cycled around the world. “The memorable events are riding the mountains of the Tour de France, participating in the annual Hatzolah Cycle Tour, and the Ironman triathlon course in Port Elizabeth.”

Vardi has cycled in Europe, most of the races in Gauteng, and multi-stage races. “I have won my age group a couple of times,” he says. “My biggest accomplishment is meeting my wife at Capri Wheelers. We were the first couple that met at Capri Wheelers and married.”

Solomon, looking forward to riding Wines2Whales in the Western Cape this year, has cycled on and off throughout his life. “I started riding BMX when I was about six, and progressed to road riding when I was 14 with my dad,” he says.

Usually, Solomon rides once a week on a Sunday. “The main aim is to get a coffee with friends,” he says. “If there’s an event coming up, then training needs to be stepped up. I’m nervous about riding on the road with all the bad driving we have in Joburg, so I ride my mountain bike only off-road or train indoors.”

During the week, Vardi tends to ride indoors. “On the weekends, weather permitting, I go with a group or sometimes by myself up Chapman’s Peak or down to Noordhoek. I have six bicycles – one machine, a mountain bike, and four road bikes.”

Katzen tries to cycle whenever he has time. “Sometimes



daily, sometimes a few times a week,” he says. “My favourite route is from Sea Point to Bakoven or Sea Point to the Waterfront.”

Matisonn and Jawitz cycle five and four times a week respectively. “During the week, I cycle indoors on the Zwift platform, enthusiastically racing other cyclists

from around the world,” says Matisonn. “Then I enjoy a long ride outdoors on a Sunday.”

Jawitz rides indoors and outdoors. “Sometimes on the road and sometimes mountain biking, so I keep it varied.”

A member of Capri Wheelers for about 10 years, Diner participates in a few spinning classes, and cycles by himself and with the club. “Every year, we do the Argus and the 94.7,” he says.

If people want to take up cycling, they should first join a spinning class at their local gym, says Diner. “It’s an amazing way of getting your endorphins going, and a great workout. If you find you start enjoying that, then cycling could be for you. It’s a lot less intense than the spinning work, but you get a longer endurance workout.”

Matisonn says cycling is a real pleasure with extraordinary health benefits. “I would encourage anyone to get on their bike indoors or on the road and enjoy this wonderful sport.”

“Cycling is for everyone, and you can do as much or little as you like,” says Solomon. “If you have never ridden, any bike shop will have someone who will teach you. If you are unfit, get an E-bike and then you can beat all your friends up the hills.”

Vardi advises people to start slowly. “Don’t bite off more than you can chew because if you do that, you’re going to associate it with pain. It should be about enjoyment.”

“Riding is a great non-impact way to stay fit and spend time outdoors, especially in summer,” says Jawitz. “Our country offers some of the best riding in the world. Key advice: be safe on the roads, ride single file, and take it as if the car hasn’t seen you. Happy riding!”



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A long life is only the beginning of the blessing



RABBI LEVI AVTZON

"I wish you a long life!" What a heart-warming wish.

It's one of the beautiful customs of our community, albeit one that's expressed in times of grief and sorrow.

Growing up in the United States, I never heard it. Instead, people awkwardly tried to acknowledge the loss without a way to articulate compassion.

At the heart of this wish is an implied conviction that living a long life is a blessing, and therefore the wish of *arichut yamim* (a long life) is an aspirational and worthy one.

And yet, one must ask if the wish for a long life is just a part of a blessing?

Let me explain.

There's a Chassidic tale about an individual who came to visit his illustrious rebbe and teacher. His rebbe turns to him, and wishes him a long life with many years. To which he responds, "As long as they aren't years of living like a lowlife."

In other words, what this fellow understood is that a long life is only the beginning of the blessing. When we fill our lives with meaning, purpose, and goodness, our lives truly become a blessing for ourselves and those around us.

What he wanted was a "long life full of intention, G-dliness, love, productivity, and growth". A mere extension of days on this planet – living without having a life – wasn't a blessing in his eyes.

There's profundity and wisdom in his argument.

The Torah tells us about our patriarch, Abraham, that "he was getting older and had lived many days". The obvious question



is the redundancy of that statement, for if one is getting older, does that not imply that he had lived many days?

Not necessarily. One can be old in passport years but young in impact years. And vice versa, some people may, unfortunately, live shorter lives, yet their days are full.

Abraham had both. He lived a long life, which is a gift from G-d. And he lived a full life – the gift that we gift ourselves.

A long and a full life is a worthy wish indeed.

In the words of a special prayer "*Yehi Ratzon*" that's said in many communities on Shabbat before a new Hebrew month (like last week, for example, when we blessed this magnificent new month of Sivan):

"May it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d ... that you give us a long life –
A life of peace;
A life of goodness;
A life of blessing;
A life of sustenance;
A life of physical health;
A life marked by awe of heaven and fear of sin;
A life in which there is no shame of humiliation;
A life of wealth and respect;
A life in which we have a love of Torah and awe of heaven;
A life in which our hearts' desires will be fulfilled for the good.
Amen, selah."

As you can see, in this prayer, we don't

merely beseech G-d for a long material life, we also ask for a life marked by *sheyeish bahem* (awe of heaven) – we ask for it twice – fear from sin, and love of Torah.

A meaningless life is one of the most tragic of all human experiences.

In his bestseller *Man's Search for Meaning*, the legendary Viktor Frankl articulated this powerfully. The title speaks for itself. A meaningful life isn't just a nice bonus, it's indispensable to walking this earth on two feet.

I share all this as this weekend, we will, once again, celebrate the incredible *chag* (holiday) of Shavuot, in which we commemorate the specific date when, 3 334 years ago, G-d introduced us to a meaningful life.

At Mount Sinai, our ancestors stood (and, according to our sages, so did the souls of all descendants, aka you and I), and the Almighty came down and taught the nation the Ten Commandments, our holy Torah. Then, for the next 120 days, he instructed Moses on the Torah's logic, laws, and mysteries, who then shared it with the nation over the 40-year sojourn in the desert.

Just two months prior, the Hebrews had still been enslaved people under the tyranny of Pharaoh. Now, here they stood, 50 days after the exodus, and their creator introduced them to some of the most transformative ideas of all time:

That living without meaning isn't living;
That freedom without responsibility is another form of slavery – to one's own worst impulses and peer pressure;
That removing the yoke of slavery is only the first step on the long road to freedom.

Only when we adopt a moral code and a purposeful life can we activate the freedom within us;

That man's search for meaning is at the core of what it means to be human. We begin to actualise our humanity only when we start the search for meaning. It's as fundamental a necessity as food, drink, and a roof over one's head.

On the holiday of Shavuot, the creator injected meaning into a life begging for more. He provided the manual for navigating life.

If we could paraphrase, G-d told us:

"Dear human, I created you. I manufactured you with a hunger for more. Deep inside of you, I injected a soul, a piece of divinity. I formed you in My image. That's why you'll never be content with a life of materialism and pleasures you share with animals. You will always have this niggling feeling that there's more to this life. I hope you'll quench this thirst by opening up this manual I created for you. It's called Torah. Believe me when I tell you, you couldn't ask for more. It's yours.

Take it;
Love it;
Learn it;
Live it!"

Life was no longer an endless void of hollow angst. Life was given a "why".

Wishing you, your loved ones, and all of *am Yisrael*: *chag sameach! Gut yom tov!* May we receive and internalise the Torah with joy. See you in shul!

• Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the rabbi of Linksfield Shul.

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30
1923 to 1964 = R5
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To logo or not to logo:
why Shavuot is special



OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

“Everything in life is luck,” Donald Trump is reputed to have once said with uncharacteristic humility.

And for a change, the great rabbis of Talmudic times agreed. “Everything depends on luck (*mazel*),” they said, “even the Torah scroll in the Holy Ark.” And it’s absolutely true – some Sifrei Torah get lucky and are used regularly. Others, for reasons unknown even to the shammas of the shul, get relegated to the back of the Aron Kodesh, and are rarely used, if ever. Some people have more *mazel* than others and, yes, even some Torahs enjoy more *mazel* than their neighbours.

thinker, Samson Raphael Hirsch, suggests that for something as special as Shavuot, the holiday which represents the giving of the Torah, in other words the very foundation of Judaism, a mere symbol would be utterly inadequate. What are Jews without Torah? What is Judaism without Torah? To reduce Torah to a symbol is to violate its sanctity. The only way to represent Torah is to live by it. Torah is measured by substance not by symbols. Can Torah be contained or encapsulated in a mere logo or emblem?

In the language of the Chassidic masters, the Torah is higher than mere symbolism; it’s beyond depiction or embodiment. It’s not only wisdom or law. The giving of the Torah wasn’t merely an event or a historical experience. Torah is the very essence of everything.

So, when we need to remember the exodus or the



And so, it would appear, is the case with our Jewish holidays. All our festivals evoke anticipation, excitement, and splendour. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, and Sukkot all come wrapped in festive symbols that fire our imaginations. The shofar, the sacred fast, the little huts we build, and the lulav and etrog we buy, matzah, maror, and the whole seder experience – they all constitute so much of the imagery we have deep inside our childhood memories. Nor are Chanukah and Purim short on symbols – kindling menorahs, latkes, masks, and hamantashen are only some of many. It’s these vivid symbols that stimulate our eager anticipation of beautiful and meaningful holiday celebrations today.

But what about Shavuot? Doesn’t it seem somewhat orphaned and bereft of imagery? Shavuot is one of the three pilgrim festivals, right up there with Pesach and Sukkot. Yet, it doesn’t command our attention or observance nearly as much as the other two. In fact, it once happened that I was walking to shul on Shavuot morning, and a congregant stopped to offer me a lift! He simply had no idea that that it was *yom tov*!

Some of our greatest spiritual leaders have been small in size but giants in stature. They were humble, unassuming, and pious.

Where is there a strong symbol for Shavuot? What prominent image do we hold aloft to represent the season of the giving of the Torah? Yes, there are the ten commandments, but they are studied and observed all year long too. Why do all the other festivals seem to have specific signs, vivid emblems, or icons to capture our attention and Shavuot doesn’t?

The 19th century German rabbi and

miraculous protective cover G-d provided us in the wilderness, we do things to keep that memory alive and to help us relive those experiences. But Torah isn’t limited to memories. Remembering Sinai, the ten commandments, and the thunder and lightning, isn’t good enough. The only way we can plug into Torah is by living it. There are no shortcuts. We need to study Torah, learn its ways, and live by it.

That’s why the great Torah teachers through the centuries haven’t necessarily been outwardly charismatic, at least not in the popular sense. Nor have they needed to be tall, handsome, larger-than-life personalities. Some of our greatest spiritual leaders have been small in size but giants in stature. They were humble, unassuming, and pious. It wasn’t their powerful baritones or striking features which attracted the people, but their nobility of character that commanded respect. Sure, their deep wisdom was an outstanding quality but, more importantly, it was their flawless behaviour that made them stand out. Those who were academically brilliant at Talmud but whose conduct didn’t match their scholarship didn’t become the Torah leaders of their generation. The truly great ones who stood out were those who became “Torah personalities”, who lived by Torah, whose every breathing moment was permeated with a Torah lifestyle. The genuine Torah leaders of history weren’t seeking fame or fortune. They hired no publicists to mount public-relations campaigns. They would have had no use for social media had it been around then. They were men of truth and, intuitively, the people flocked to them.

The same holds true to this day, because Torah is truth, and truth must be lived truthfully and consistently, otherwise it’s a lie.

So, Shavuot has no dominant symbol. Torah is too powerful, too awesome, and too sacred to be slickly packaged or labelled with a logo. Torah is truth. And truth cannot be marketed. It can only be lived.

• Rabbi Yossy Goldman is life rabbi emeritus at Sydenham Shul and the president of the SA Rabbinical Association.

Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



There’s a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn’t necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we’re looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn’t exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn’t exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendents of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won’t be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I’m well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws.

I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

My next trip will be around June, July 2022

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Frangelicas takes the cake in heated contest

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“You would get this on an aeroplane.” “This must be served at Diepsloot prison.” “It tastes like Swiss roll.” “This is a mushy pudding.” “It tastes like blintz dough.”

These were some of the judges’ quirkiest and meanest retorts during the *SA Jewish Report’s* Shavuot Cheesecake Tasting Competition on 30 May.

It’s customary to eat dairy food on the first day of Shavuot because the Torah was given on Shabbat, so no cattle could be slaughtered nor utensils koshered during that time. Cheesecake is one of the favourite delicacies at this time of year. The cheesecakes in the



The panel of judges deliberating on the different cheesecakes



Photos: Debbie Yazbek

huge difference. I wish it had a crunchy, crispy base. That would be really nice to break the sweetness, but it’s definitely original.”

Helen said, “You can taste the Tennis Biscuits, which is nice. I liked the little bit of coconut.”

A few judges thought it didn’t look like they expected a cheesecake to look.

“When I first saw it, I thought, ‘Oh, this is exciting,’” said Heidi. “I liked the look of the crumble on the top. It looked like I wanted to taste it.”

Liat agreed, adding that the texture was creamy.

“It looks amazing,” said Diamond. “I would totally take that off the shelves.”

Mervyn replied, “I would take it off the shelf, but I wouldn’t take it off as a cheesecake.”

Diamond also spoke glowingly about Tiberius’ cheesecake.

“I like this one,” she said. “The texture is very creamy. I like the overall taste. If it had a

topping, it would change the whole cake.”

Tiberius’ cheesecake had a firm filling but the judges didn’t believe it had a unique taste.

Kosher Central’s cheesecake had a lot of vanilla essence. “Quite good,” said Helen. “It’s creamy.”

Mervyn said, “It’s the best base we have had overall. It’s sweet, and has a bit of a crunch.”

Said Sackstein, “This, for me, has been by far the best. I thought it was light, not stodgy or heavy. Maybe a little too much vanilla essence. It had almost a gooey, toffee sort of something which added great flavour to break the cheesecake. That was fantastic. It was original because of this.”

Heidi said, “I like this very much as well. I like the taste, the lightness. It has been beaten well.”

Diamond said, “This is the second-best on my list. I liked the texture and consistency. It’s delicious, the texture is light and fluffy.”

	Texture and consistency	Originality	Overall taste	Overall score
Frangelicas Score	7,3	6,8	7,8	7,3
Michelos Score	5,3	4,2	6,1	5,2
Feigels Score	4,6	3,5	4,8	4,3
Shulas Score	6	7	5,7	6,2
Tiberius Score	5,3	4,7	5,7	5,2
Kosher Central Score	7,7	6,7	7,5	7,2



Dina Diamond

The judges looked at texture and consistency, originality, and overall taste. Each category was given a mark out of 10. Frangelicas won based on general consensus and the fact that it scored slightly higher on overall taste than the runner up, Kosher Central.

competition came from six eateries in Johannesburg, and were evaluated by five judges – Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report*; *SA Jewish Report* board member Dina Diamond; Mervyn Aaron, one of the founders of Turn ‘n Tender; Helen Aaron, the owner of a duck product distribution company; renowned baker Heidi Feldman; and Liat Feldman, the owner of Lilicious bakery.

The judges had to be quite tough in choosing their favourites. They weren’t told who had baked which cheesecake until the end of the evening. “This was the most boring thing I’ve eaten in a while. I nearly fell asleep while eating it,” was another churlish retort, “There’s no way I could get through that piece,” was another.



First up was Frangelicas’ cheesecake, served in the shape of a cupcake. “I love the lemon flavour and the zing,” said Diamond.

The judges enjoyed the cream cheese on top. “The topping was a bit sour, which is quite original,” said Liat.

Helen, a foodie who loves cheesecake and bakes challah every Friday, liked how Frangelicas used lemon in its cheesecake and put a bit of sour cream on top. “This approach is nice because it takes away the sweetness,” she said.

The judges liked the creamy filling in Michelos’ cheesecake. “The consistency was quite good,” said Mervyn.

Although a few judges concurred that they may have eaten a similar-tasting cheesecake before, Diamond said, “If this was served at a function, I would eat it.”

Tasting similar to Michelos’ but with a firmer base was Feigels’ cheesecake, served on plates.

Sackstein, a foodie, awarded Feigels “an eight or nine” because he thought the plating was “lovely”. “They put in effort, and I appreciate that,” he said. “The texture and consistency were good, but the base I would hope never to meet in a dark alley.”

Sackstein also had positive words for Shulas’ cheesecake. “It has lemon rind, which makes a

Kingdoms rise and fall, but cheesecake rules on

OPINION

DR CARRON ZINMAN



For as long as I can remember, I have been one of the many cheesecake fans. I have been collecting recipes for many years and bought a cheesecake recipe book from Macy’s in New York as a memento in 1989.

My eyes are still drawn to cheesecake recipes and over the years, I have used any opportunity to try out new ones on my unwitting guests.

Cheesecakes are by no means a new invention and have been made in various forms for literally thousands of years. The earliest recorded cheesecake was on Samos in Greece more than 4 000 years ago. Cheesecake was a popular dish in ancient Greece, and was considered to be a good source of energy. In fact, small cheesecakes were served to athletes during the first Olympic Games held in 776 AD.

Athenaeus is credited with writing the first recorded recipe for cheesecake dating back to 230 AD. The constituents, listed as cheese, honey, and wheat flour were mixed together and heated in a brass pan. It was cooled down and then served.

With the Roman conquest of Greece, the secret recipe fell into Roman hands along with the other spoils of war. They modified the ingredients adding eggs, and baked it under a hot brick, serving it warm. Sometimes it was baked in pastry. Marus Cato is credited with recording the oldest Roman cheesecake recipe in the first century BC. Cheesecakes were often used as offerings to the gods in their temples.

As the conquering Roman armies expanded, cheesecake was introduced to Great Britain and Western Europe in 1 000 AD. Each country experimented with ways to put their unique spin on cheesecakes, and recipes started taking on different cultural shapes. In 1545, the first cookbook was printed describing cheesecake as a flour-based sweet food.

It was only in the 18th century that cheesecake

would look like something we recognise today. In 1872, American dairymen achieved a technological breakthrough that ushered in the modern age of cheesecake. While trying to replicate a popular French cheese called Neufchatel, they accidentally hit on a formula for a rich and creamy unripened cheese that they named cream cheese. Three years later, cream cheese was packaged in foil and distributed to stores under the Philadelphia Cream Cheese brand.

The classic New York cheesecake is a pure, unadulterated cheesecake with no fancy ingredients added to it or served on top or on the side. It was very popular in New York in the 1900s. In 1929,



Arnold Reuben claimed that his family developed the first cream-cheese cake recipe. Legend goes that he was invited to a dinner party where his hostess served a cheese pie that he was so taken with that he experimented with various ingredients using her recipe until he came up with the much beloved New York style cheesecake.

Not to be outdone, other places in America put their unique stamp on the cheesecake – Chicago added sour cream to make it creamier; Philadelphia serves a lighter, creamier cheesecake with toppings; and St Louis has a butter cake sandwiching the cheesecake filling. Further afield, the Italians use Ricotta, the Greeks use Feta, and the Japanese use corn-starch and egg whites.

The only consistent ingredient is cheese, and even

that varies. Whereas my daughters have found one recipe they think is “the perfect cheesecake”, I’ve not settled on a single recipe. I have recipes for both sweet and savoury cheesecakes. They can be bake or no-bake cheesecakes. In my time, I have made Rice Krispies bases and crumb crusts that are sometimes put into the deep freeze or baked in the oven. I have sampled cheesecakes with pastry bases, cake-like layers on the bottom or the top or both, and even cheesecakes sandwiched in phyllo pastry.

Traditional cheese cakes are rich and velvety with so many variations that one can never run out of recipes. I have added chocolate – white, milk, and dark so that

the entire cheesecake is chocolate or the chocolate is swirled through the cheese mixture, or even that there are concentric alternating white and dark chocolate-flavoured rings. I have recently been given a recipe with condensed milk in the mixture. I have swirled raspberries through the cheesecake, and have made berry coulis toppings. I have mixed in mandarin pieces, and even have a recipe for a banana cheesecake. I have topped it with sour cream or crème fraîche, fruit or chocolate, nuts or biscuit crumbs.

One strives for a perfectly smooth cheesecake and in an attempt to achieve this, I have tried spraying the tin and using a water bath to prevent cracking. But cracks are easily disguised with toppings that can be baked on or poured over, adding to the flavour.

The trick to telling when your cake is baked enough is the wobble test – it must wobble but not ripple! Cheesecakes are best left in the oven to cool down slowly, and can be left overnight and out the fridge until served the next day. This results in a soft cheesecake – if you want it to be firmer, refrigerate it overnight.

When I sent this article to my daughter to proofread, she thought I was heading down the avenue of concluding that cheesecakes are like people – there are many variations with differing purposes and generally all good! She was right.

• Dr Carron Zinman is a pulmonologist at the Linksfeld Clinic, and a passionate cheesecake enthusiast.

OPINION

RABBI YOSSI CHAIKIN



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- *Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at Oxford Shul, and the chairperson of the SA Rabbinical Association.*

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Why Megillat Ruth is more than a Cinderella story



REBBETZIN AVIVA THURGOOD

Megillat Ruth is only four chapters long, but we read it every year on Shavuot, the festival celebrating the giving and receiving of the Torah. The act of our acceptance of G-d’s laws is essentially what makes us the Jewish people, and so we have to wonder why this seemingly simple Cinderella-type story is read at such an auspicious time. When we move beyond the simple words and begin to explore the many layers of complexity within, we begin to understand exactly why this book is so important, the timeless lessons it holds, and that the messages it shares are for then, now, and always.

Rabbi Zeira asks (in summary) that if the Megilla doesn’t contain laws of impurity or purity, or prohibitions, or what’s permissible, why was it written? He answers that’s it’s to teach us how good the reward is for those who show kindness. (Ruth Rabba 2:14)

Ruth is one of the most famous converts in Tanach. The Midrash reveals that she was the daughter of Eglon, and therefore a Moabite princess accustomed to a life of riches and comfort. When her husband, Machlon, dies and she’s left with nothing, she chooses to “cleave – *davka bah*” to her mother-in-law and return with Naomi to Beit Lechem. Beautifully, the word used for their return is *shuv* (turning) and an obvious question is how Ruth can return to Israel when she’s never been there before. The commentaries suggest that this could be the point of her conversion.



her mother-in-law instructs her to do, the actual doing is a different order to the instruction. Ruth takes ownership of her life, her destiny. She taps into a part of herself that she left behind when becoming a Jewess, but this allows her to be a much greater version of herself, in fact it’s on the threshing floor that Ruth identifies herself to Boaz as Ruth – previously she described herself as a *nocri*, meaning a foreigner. Ruth’s ancestor had seduced Lot in a cave after the destruction of Sodom. The two sisters, believing that the world had been destroyed, in a warped act of kindness get their father drunk and sleep with him. The sons born from this become the nation’s Moav and Amon. But there’s a key difference to the two seduction stories. In the case of Lot’s daughters, Lot is drunk. In the story of Ruth, she lays down next to the sleeping Boaz, uncovers him, and waits for him to wake up. There’s no deception, Ruth says, “I am Ruth.”

instructing Ruth not to go to another field, to stay close to his maidens while harvesting, and he reassures her that his servants have been ordered not to molest her. Ruth’s act of selflessness is illogical and makes no sense unless we understand that giving up everything to look after her mother-in-law is exactly who she was. The first 14 verses of the Megilla talk about Ruth and Orpah interchangeably, there’s nothing that makes them stand out until Orpah kisses Naomi, and Ruth responds by cleaving to her. This action changes the course of her history, and ultimately our own.

who is alive, even if it’s unconscious, we might be giving so that they owe us. But helping those who can never repay us is the ultimate kindness.

There’s certainly something special about Ruth. When observing the goings on of his field, Boaz makes enquiries about who she is, and the commentaries debate what character trait it is that makes Boaz notice her. Is it her beauty, her intelligence, her grace and modesty, her knowledge of the intricate laws of *shmita*, *leket*, and *payah*, or is it simply that she was wearing the clothes of a Moabitess? When Boaz speaks to her, he relays the special things he’s heard about her, her kindness to Naomi, and the subtle textual link of her to Avraham. Boaz says, “You left your father and mother and the land of your birth and went to a people you had not known.” Avraham in Parshat Lech Lecha is commanded by G-d, “Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” Our forefather was known for his kindness, and so this subtle textual link that Ruth is a female Avraham is powerful indeed.

Naomi comes up with a plan to seduce Boaz on the threshing floor after the barley harvest. It’s interesting to note that although Ruth does everything

The healing that Ruth brings goes far beyond her ancestor. The Megilla begins the story describing where the Jewish people are at. It’s the time of the judges, and there’s a terrible famine. Famine in Tanach is generally viewed as a punishment and a sign that the world isn’t in a healthy space. The time of the Judges was a period after the leadership of Yehoshua and before kingship. It was a time of terrible turmoil, persecution of the vulnerable, and immorality. There was little justice, and the Jewish people had become “Moav like”, a nation known for their selfishness and immorality. Enters Ruth, a Moabitess who through her courage, selflessness, and, of course, kindness, reminds the Jewish people what they have forgotten and gives them the opportunity to heal and return in her descendant, the greatest king we ever had, David Hamelech.

Every year, when we read the Megilla, we should take courage in the bravery of Ruth, be inspired by her bold actions, and find ways where we too can bring more kindness into the world. Chag Sameach!

• Aviva Thurgood is the rebbetzin of Beit Midrash Morasha in Cape Town, a practicing physiotherapist, and a proud mother of four.

Ruth’s act of selflessness is illogical and makes no sense unless we understand that giving up everything to look after her mother-in-law is exactly who she was.

Ruth’s cleaving to her mother-in-law is described as an incredible act of kindness. We have to remember that then, if a woman didn’t have a father, husband, son, or brother to protect and provide for her, she had nothing financially and was incredibly vulnerable. We see proof of this in the words that Boaz says on meeting her in chapter two, verses eight and nine,

will do *chesed* with you, just as you have done with the dead and with me.” The commentaries explain that this kindness was arranging the burial shrouds, paying for the burials (Naomi was penniless), and remaining with their mother-in-law even though their reason for connection was gone. We’re aware that the greatest form of kindness is to those who have passed. When giving to someone

Scrumptious Shavuot spread

When Shavuot comes around, we’re always looking for the tastiest milchik recipes to spoil our families. **Lauren Boolkin** provides two delicious recipes for this occasion.

TIRAMISU

Ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 500g mascarpone cheese
- 300g castor sugar
- ¼ cup Kahlua
- 2-3 packets ladyfinger biscuits (or ready sponge cake)
- 2 cups strong coffee
- 160g grated chocolate

Method

Separate the eggs. Cream the egg yolks with the castor sugar until the sugar is dissolved. (You can feel it’s dissolved by rubbing a small amount between your fingers.) Add the Kahlua and mascarpone cheese, and beat again just until blended. Transfer the mixture to another bowl, and wash and dry your beater well. Beat the egg whites until stiff, and gently fold them into your yolk mixture. Dip the ladyfinger biscuits into the coffee without



Tiramisu

allowing them to get soggy. Line your dish with ladyfingers (20cm by 20cm works well), and then top with the cheese mixture. Add another layer of biscuit, and cover with the remaining cheese mixture. Garnish with grated chocolate, and refrigerate overnight.

SPINACH AND FETA PASTA

Ingredients

- 2 packets spinach
- 1 onion
- ½ cup grated Tussers cheese plus additional for topping
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup yoghurt
- 1 packet spiral noodles (fusilli)
- 1 ¼ cups crumbled feta cheese
- 2 Tbsp melted butter
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- ¼ tsp grated nutmeg (optional)

Method

Boil the noodles, and then rinse under cold water. Chop the onion, and fry it gently on a low heat for a long time until translucent. Wash the spinach, and place in a large pot. There should be sufficient water on the spinach to bring it to the boil. Once it bubbles, place the spinach in a strainer and squeeze out all the water with the back of a



wooden spoon. (I use my hands, they work better.) Chop finely.

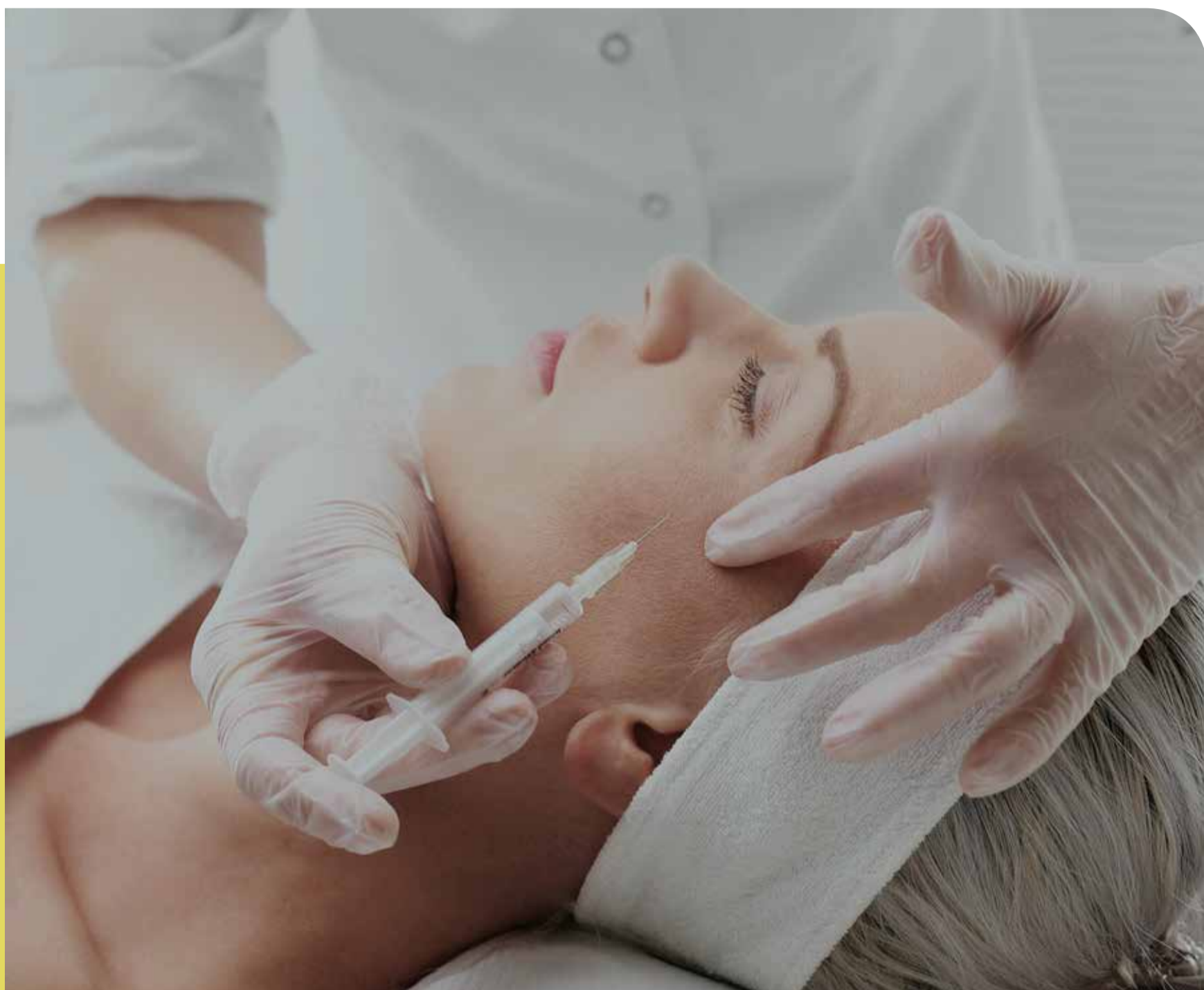
In a large bowl, mix the feta, Tussers, yoghurt, lightly beaten eggs, cooked onion, and spices. Add the chopped spinach and drained pasta.

Mix well and place in a greased casserole dish. Sprinkle additional Tussers on top.

This pasta may be frozen at this point or baked in a 180-degree oven for 30 minutes.



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Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



There's a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn't necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we're looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn't exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn't exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The



descendents of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won't be eligible. In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated. For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I'm well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws. I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

My next trip will be around June, July 2022
Contact me on

WhatsApp: +48 783 953 223
Email: adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com

Bottles and barricades, but no battle on Yom Yerushalayim



OPINION AND PHOTOGRAPHY ILAN OSSENDRYVER

What was expected to be a day of battle in the raising of the Israeli and Palestinian flags wasn't a battle as such. There were hundreds of Israeli flags, and the one Palestinian flag clinging to a drone flying above the houses of Jerusalem was removed.

Hamas and the Palestinian leadership apparently had urged their people to rise up, and promised a huge countering of the annual Jerusalem Day march that commemorates the unification of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War.

But the expected clashes didn't occur.

A few dozen East Jerusalem residents began to throw bottles and other low-key missiles at the Jews carrying flags on their annual march through the Old City of Jerusalem.

There was some altercations between Jews and Arabs. While some of Palestinians yelled "Death to the Jews", there were also some Jews calling "Death to the Arabs".

At one point in the day, there seemed to be more police and press than actual flag-bearing participants. One Palestinian journalist complained that



the police had barricaded the streets so tightly to prevent clashes, that in the end, the clashes that he wanted to record never happened. That is, apart from some visuals of Palestinian demonstrators being arrested after throwing bottles at Jewish marchers.

A kilometre away from the tension in the Old City, in central downtown Jerusalem, the atmosphere was just the opposite. Jews and Arabs went about their daily lives, eating and shopping, this time among the young Israelis coming from all over the country, who were dancing with the Israeli flag hoisted proudly, telling the world that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel and the Jewish people.

• Ilan Ossendryver is the SA Jewish Report photographer who happened to be in Jerusalem on Yom Yerushalayim (29 May).



Sci-Bono powerhouse turns attention to JNF environmental education

SAUL KAMIONSKY

He was one of the brains behind Sci-Bono Discovery Centre in Johannesburg, and has been knighted by the French government. Now, David Kramer, a Johannesburg-based educator, has taken on the role of chief executive of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre in Mamelodi.

“Since my retirement from formal work in 2019, I’ve been working with a number of NGOs [non-governmental organisations] in education and development,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “This seemed like as good a cause as any. It seemed like a good idea to use my experience in NGOs and in education to help the centre out.

“Somehow, my name was suggested by somebody. They phoned me, and we sat down and had a conversation. There seemed to be a fit, and I agreed to an initial term of six months. We’ll see what happens after that.”

Kramer succeeds Riaan Visser, who is emigrating to London, and the custom-designed environmental discovery science centre is “very excited to have David on board”, says Michael Kransdorff, the chairperson of JNF South Africa.

Kramer helped build the Sci-Bono Discovery Centre in Johannesburg and in 2011, became a Knight of the National Order of Merit of France for his work not only with South Africa and France, but also in science.

The Walter Sisulu centre offers environmental education. It consists of an auditorium and four educational-themed rooms concentrated on waste, energy, water, and biodiversity. It’s surrounded by a reticulated wetland and a demonstration food and medicinal plant garden, showcasing indigenous plants.

The centre is designed to use green technology such as passive solar orientation, thermal comfort, water harvesting and saving, and natural and energy-efficient lighting.

The JNF established the centre in Mamelodi in the 1990s as an environmental science centre, “at the request of President Nelson Mandela at the time”, Kransdorff said. “The JNF asked how it could help after the transition, and he asked that we do something in Mamelodi because it was a neglected township and there wasn’t a lot of money invested there. So, the JNF partnered with the education department to set up an environmental centre where pupils from many schools in Mamelodi can learn about science and the environment.”

Kramer believes the centre has done some remarkable work. “I’m hoping to be able to maintain the momentum and hopefully to be able to grow the centre to a slightly higher-impact centre than it has been over the past year or two during the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said.

Helping the centre recover from the pandemic is his first priority. His second is to return the centre to its former level of activity. “Number three is to grow the level of activity and make sure it has a higher impact on the education development of young people in Mamelodi,” Kramer said.

Raised and schooled in the Free State, Kramer graduated with Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Education degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand. “Then I went to London and trained at the Royal Society of Arts in teaching English as a foreign language.”

After working for one of the big insurance companies in South Africa, he left the country for all sorts of reasons, mainly political. “I came back to the country in 1984, and decided not to go back into formal business. I have been involved with educational NGOs since then. I spent 20 years or so with an organisation called Protec [Programme for Technological Careers], which works to provide maths and science support for kids in disadvantaged communities. In 2004, I was asked to help set up the Sci-Bono Discovery Centre, which I helped to build as chief executive from 2014 to 2016. I then left Sci-Bono and took on the position of deputy director-general for ICT [Information Communication Technology] in the Gauteng department of e-government, and I was the provincial CIO [chief information officer] until I retired in 2019.”

Kramer’s skills, and experience don’t just lie

in maths, science, and the technological education of young people, but also in digital transformation and the adoption of new technologies by teachers and pupils. “I’m an informal educator at heart, and have been for the past 40 years or so,” he said.

Of the centre, Kramer said, “We’re looking at



strengthening the contribution to school education and seeing how we can help young people in Mamelodi schools improve their achievement in mathematics with physical and natural sciences. We hope to be able to work a lot more with schools in some of the mainstream curriculum-support activities, and possibly also to start working more closely with teachers in the sciences and strengthening our relationship with the district office of the Gauteng education department.”

Last year, the centre was accredited as a Level 1 Science Centre by the department of science and innovation. “We’re the only one in the township,” Kransdorff said. “We have exhibits, instructors, and educators which teach children about water, recycling, biofuels, natural sciences, and different plants.

“There’s a need in South Africa for maths and science education. It’s such a glaring gap, so we have plans to expand the centre under David’s leadership. It’s also an opportunity to showcase Israel as the world leader in water, technology, and science. There’s a real possibility for us to work with our partners in Israel to showcase and bring Israeli technology to South Africa.”

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Dreaded leaf blower stalks our suburbs

Fundamental to Jewish thought is the idea that everything was created for a reason. Even seemingly unnecessary and annoying insects have a purpose, and are all part of an ecosystem that’s in fine balance, all of whom contribute to the harmony of G-d’s world.

Except for the leaf blower. Designed by the devil, and manufactured in hell. Possibly like kale chips. But that’s not for now.

There’s a special place in purgatory reserved for the person who conceived and birthed the leaf blower. Never has a more useless device been inflicted upon the world, and never one more irritating. It’s the curse of Zoom callers, the nemesis of asthmatics, and the plague of mothers trying to call their children to dinner. To this day, the leaf blower continues to drive a wedge between neighbours, and is the spark that ignites body corporates.

A product of the Star Chamber, the leaf blower is one of the few devices that has contributed little positive to the world. Quite the opposite. It has turned regular gardeners into sociopaths and encouraged psychopathic tendencies in otherwise passive and calm home dwellers. The leaf blower is known to elevate stress to such high levels that marriages have crumbled and pets have been beaten.

It might be true that the leaf blower doesn’t kill people, and that it’s the leaf-blower operators who do. But armed with a device so powerful and designed so cleverly to spread misery, is it little wonder that it causes the harm it does? Simple blower training includes identifying if someone is on a business call, where to blow the dust accurately towards an asthma sufferer, and how to time the deafening sound just when

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



mothers are calling their children. These are easily taught. The advanced course includes ensuring that windows are open and the phone is ringing before powering up the device.

In my research, I uncovered a remarkable fact. Although leaf blowers exist in great numbers all over suburban Johannesburg, no one can recall ever purchasing one. Homeowners canvassed seemed to accept their presence as they do seasonal flu or herpes, but no one admitted to ever buying one.

So devious are the operators, that even with the fuel price trading at levels previously unknown, the leaf blower always seems to be supplied, filled, and ready to rumble. It might sound like a conspiracy theory, but I invite you to ask yourself the following: who bought the leaf blower for your home, who supplies the petrol, and who armed the gardener with one? Every battery in the house runs to empty. Every globe has a life span, charcoal gets finished, and gas consumed. But the leaf blower always works. Every. Thursday. At. 16:00.

The leaf blower, I contend, isn’t of this world.

South Africans often lament the state of the country. Eskom, they say, has a terrible impact on our quality of life. Potholes, others will say, or crime, or the cost of living. Whereas all might be true, I contend that without the leaf blower every Thursday or Wednesday as the case might be, as the clock strikes the dreaded hour, our country would be a much happier place. Even with kale chips.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Pernicious playing of anti-Israel card

Last week, the SowetanLIVE reported on workshops for pupils conducted by the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre (DHGC) in Howick.

In the article, those interviewed expressed concern about the inflammatory language that characterises much of the xenophobic rhetoric in South Africa today in which African refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are blamed for the country's problems. Such “othering” language and scapegoating, they pointed out, was reminiscent of how the Nazis went about vilifying Jews and other minorities they wished to persecute in the period leading up to World War II, and this prepared the ground for the unspeakable atrocities they were later to commit.

The article led to an intemperate attack on the DHGC in one of the weekend papers in which more than half of the response was devoted to vilifying Israel, even though this had nothing whatsoever to do with the subject under discussion. In doing so, the writer clearly intimated that in order to express a view on human-rights issues pertaining to their country, Jews must first sign on to the radical anti-Israel agenda. It amounted to cynically playing the anti-Israel card to smear and delegitimise a Jewish communal organisation, and that’s not something we can accept.

In our response, we stated that aside from presuming to impose conditions on our community's fundamental right of freedom of expression, it fed into the classic antisemitic canard that Jews are not truly South African but should rather be regarded as part of a global and foreign Jewish entity. We further pointed out that holding a Jewish organisation accountable for what other Jews on another continent were allegedly guilty of was racist and discriminatory, reinforcing toxic notions of collective guilt in which people are judged and condemned not on the basis of who they are, but as members of an impugned group.

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Mensches in the Trenches’ Israel launch

Last week, I was part of a Jewish leadership delegation to Israel. This will be the subject of next week’s column, but one of the highlights was the launch in Ra’anana, under the joint auspices of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Telfed, of our book *Mensches in the Trenches* on Jewish anti-apartheid activists.

I had the opportunity to interview Paul and Nicholas Goldreich about their father, Arthur, a celebrated figure in the annals of the freedom struggle. They gave us many fascinating insights about growing up on Liliesleaf Farm, the legendary headquarters of the underground armed wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in Rivonia. I also spoke to Rabbi David Benjamin, who shared his memories of his father, Rabbi Meyer (Sonny) Benjamin, and his opposition to apartheid while serving as a rabbi in Cape Town.

In my opening remarks, I emphasised how the book, far from being a heavy read, was moving, heart-warming, and even funny on occasion – a tribute to author Jonathan Ancer. It tells very human stories about big and small kindnesses performed by members of our community on behalf of the oppressed, and the price they paid for this. The amazing courage they showed was what really stood out for me, and made the book inspirational reading. I strongly encourage everyone to read it for themselves.

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

Streets alive with love of Jerusalem

The streets of Glenhazel were on Sunday, 29 May, filled with Yeshiva College Girls High students showing their love for Jerusalem by participating in a 3.5km run or walk challenge. The challenge was organised by the school's Israel committee, which partnered with Hatzolah's Jozi 2 Jerusalem cycle.



Yeshiva College Girls High students on Yom Yerushalayim

Mizrachi head honours Yom Yerushalayim

Rabbi Doron Perez, the executive chairperson of the Mizrachi World Movement, was keynote speaker at Mizrachi South Africa's Yom Yerushalayim breakfast at Schaefflers Nursery in Johannesburg on Sunday, 29 May.



Rabbi Doron Perez

The event, celebrated after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, honoured Yom Yerushalayim and connected the community to Jerusalem, Israel, and Zionism through a festive and inspirational itinerary. The introduction was made by Mizrachi South Africa Chairperson Ilan Kaplan. The breakfast was preceded by festive communal davening at Yeshiva Mizrachi Shul.

Policeman’s recovery brings Torah Academy full circle

Lebogang Legodi, a police officer, was brought to Milpark Hospital last week in critical condition and rushed to surgery.

When he woke from his coma and saw trauma surgeon Dr Reuven Jacks, he asked if he knew of a school by the name of Torah Academy, to which Dr Jacks replied that he was an alumnus of the school.

Legodi told Jacks that he had participated in Cyalive with the school, and had fond memories of

the trip.

Cyalive is an annual outreach programme in which teenagers from Torah Academy and other schools cycle from Johannesburg to Durban. It aims to build bridges and form bonds among young South Africans, inspire *ubuntu*, and optimism for the future of South Africa. It also raises funds for much-needed education projects, highlights the importance of road safety – especially for cyclists – and encourages leadership, personal challenge, and self-confidence.

Torah Academy Boys High last week went to visit Legodi to give him *chizuk* (emotional support) during his recovery, along with the school's managing director and dean, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan.

The meeting with Legodi joins a beautiful circle for the school, which is excited to be able to resume Cyalive this year after a break induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Yossi Liberow, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, Lebogang Legodi, Dr Reuven Jacks, Yair Barouchi, Sholom Bluming, and Rabbi Motti Hadar

Chabad Yeshiva hosts siyum at new campus

The Rabbinical College of South Africa on 19 May hosted a *siyum* (completion of a unit of Torah study) at its new campus in Sandringham, attended by about 70 people, including prominent rabbis, businessmen, and high school students.

The *siyum* was in honour of the completion of the entire book of Mishne Torah of the Rambam after a year of study.

The campaign to study the Rambam was initiated in 1984 by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to improve unity amongst Jews and because it's the only Jewish work of its kind to cover all the laws of the Torah.

Rabbi Auerbach, Rabbi Avtzon, and Rabbi Chaikin were guest speakers at the event, co-ordinated and hosted by Yeshiva *shluchim* (emissaries).



Yossi Myer and Yossi Brown studying Rambam

Grandparents pay special visit to Ariel

King David Ariel had the pleasure of welcoming grandparents and special guests to the school on Thursday, 26 May, where they read the PJ Library Shavout book with their grandchildren, and then did a Shavuot craft activity.



Mila Marks reading with her grandparents Cliff and Sharon Livingstone

Tuesday 7 June	Thursday 9 June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre presents webinar series “The rise of open and hidden Nazism: Polish Jewish reckonings with danger and powerlessness in the 1930s”. Time: 19:00. Contact: dawi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100• Union of Jewish Women presents Brain Boost – a brain stimulation group. Time: 10:00. Entry: R100. Contact: 011 648 1053 or admin@ujw.co.za	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ORT Jet presents “Building a culture that guarantees success in the new world of work” with Evan Kagan. Time 09:00 to 10:00. Entry: free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za• South African Zionist Federation hosts aliya Q&A webinar. Time: 19:00. Contact 011 645 2666 or info@israelcentre.co.za
Wednesday 8 June	Sunday 12 June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ORT Jet presents “Video shooting and editing on your mobile” with Mike Said. Time 10:00 to 11:30. Entry: free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Jewish National Fund hosts a Gin & Jazz evening. Time: 17:30. Entry: R180. Contact: 011 645 2579 or b.schneider@jnfsa.co.za• SAZF hosts aliya online expo. Time: 10:00 to 16:00. Contact 011 645 2666 or info@israelcentre.co.za



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HOMETOWNPHARMACY@PROPHARM.CO.ZA

21⁹⁹

GEFFEN CANDLE MEMORIAL 48HR GLASS

52⁹⁹

SUNLIGHT DISHWASHING POWDER AUTO REGULAR 1KG

AVAILABLE AT KW Checkers CAUTENG & CT

29⁹⁹

LANCEWOOD COTTAGE CHEESE FAT FREE, ORIGINAL & CREAMED 250G EACH

142⁹⁹

FORMAGGIO PARMIGIANO REGGIANO 200G

96⁹⁹

CLOVER CHEESE CHEDDAR OR TUSSELS 800G EACH

24⁹⁹

NESTLE AERO SLAB CHOCOLATE ASSTD FLAVOURS 135G EACH

69⁹⁹

I&J YANKEE CLIPPERS 800G

114⁴⁹

TELMA BEEF OR CHICKEN FLAVOUR 400G EACH

64⁹⁹

TENDERCHICK GRADE A WHOLE P/KG

59⁹⁹

OSEM SOUP ALMOND FAM MINI CROUTON 400G

48⁹⁹

MR MIN CLEANER MULTI SURFACE ASSTD SCENTS 400ML EACH

KOSHER AT EVERYDAY PRICES

CONCIERGE SHOPPING SERVICE
orders@kosherworld.co.za

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown. KosherWorld is available at selected Checkers stores. We reserve the right to limit quantities. While stocks last. E&OE.

Offers valid till 8 JUNE 2022 or while stocks last

1 Long Avenue, Glenhazel
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