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# south african Jewish Report

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## Rev Frank Chikane continues to “fixate” on the Jewish State

NICOLA MILTZ

It took a mere four days in Israel last month for anti-apartheid stalwart Reverend Frank Chikane to conclude that the decades-old conflict in the Jewish State was “worse than apartheid”. In a scathing, one-sided, highly publicised attack on the Jewish State, Chikane said there were “worse things happening there than apartheid” and publicly lambasted Israel for its treatment of Arab Israelis and Palestinians. He did so on his return from a Palestine solidarity faith visit, which his delegation claimed “uncovered the full extent of the 55 years of illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel”. Chikane, a long-time anti-Israel campaigner, is a moderator of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and the World Council of Churches (WCC), and former vice-president and general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). The South African delegation, which visited the community of Sheikh Jarrah and one other, said it saw “the blatant apartheid in the laws and enforcement of the illegal occupation”, finding the system to be more than apartheid “where at least there were civilian courts rather than military courts and military rules”. Chikane accused the world of ignorance or turning a blind eye to the conflict, saying it was “racist and hypocritical” in how it responded with sanctions and pressure on Russia over the war in Ukraine, as opposed to its response to the Palestinian conflict. This isn’t the first time that Chikane has come out in force against Israel, aligning himself with controversial reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch accusing Israel of “stepping over the line” by engaging in ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Sharing his observations on Radio 702 last week, he said Europe needed to get over its guilt over the Holocaust. “Europe needs to get over the guilt of the killing of Jews” he said, “because it’s this guilt which is allowing

Palestinians to be killed,” he said. Chikane claimed that he met the “prime minister of Palestine, the foreign minister, and chief of justice; and human-rights organisations in Israel and Palestine”. He said the delegation concluded that what it saw was “an institutionalised, systematic legal system that makes sure that it discriminates against Palestinians and Arab Israelis, executed as a military operation”. Chikane, who was last week nominated for the position of inspector-general of intelligence by the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence, made no mention of the innocent Israelis killed in recent terror attacks. He said the delegation had requested meetings with the Israeli embassy, but hadn’t had a response. However, it is understood that any request was not received before they left. Terrence Corrigan, project manager at the Institute of Race Relations, said the SACC and the WCC had long been energetic critics of Israel. “In the main, I don’t ascribe this to Christian theology, but rather to a sort of ‘anticolonial’ politics. Bear in mind that many Christian institutions don’t now focus primarily on supernatural matters, but are deeply invested in politics and the here-and-now – although they do bring a religious worldview in which stark dichotomies exist – good and evil. In this case, Palestinians are good, Israelis evil,” Corrigan said. “There’s a good deal of hypocrisy in the focus on Israel, but not, say, on the persecution of the Church in China or North Korea, or the lack of political and civil rights in Cuba.” He said Chikane’s comments reflected a particularly South African frame of analysis. “Apartheid was South Africa’s trauma, and it’s the lens through which many of our most prominent citizens see the world. Where discrimination exists – or is perceived to exist – ‘apartheid’ is a handy, morally weighty descriptor. “This does a disservice both to South Africa’s own experience and to those of people elsewhere. Apartheid was a system unique to South Africa at a particular time. Many other people around the world suffer persecution

## Winning magic

**Ryan Jammy in action during a lineout**

**See story on page 16**



Photo: Nadine Surmany

on any number of grounds. As dreadful as this may be – and it’s often dreadful – it’s not apartheid. “But even trying to apply apartheid as a conceptual category would fail, given that Israeli Arabs aren’t defined by skin colour, they are accorded citizenship of the State, with rights to vote and the use of public facilities. One may be deeply critical of the Israeli State and of Israeli society, but it’s not apartheid.” “The South African parochialism has another expression – this is the idea that South Africa’s transition is a template for a solution there. This is nonsense. South Africa has no significant history of politicised religious divisions, nor of resolving competing territorial claims.” Anglican church minister, Reverend John Atkinson said that “a visit to Israel where you don’t meet Israelis reinforces the opinion that Chikane expressed last year”. “His statement about Europe and the killing of Jews betrays the fact that he does not have a clue never mind about what the Nazis did, but how the Church historically

is very much part of creating that environment. “What’s happening in Israel and the disputed territories isn’t comparable to the Holocaust in any shape or form. He conveniently forgets that the history of those sins goes back centuries in the European communities of the Christian brothers and sisters he has in mind. This insensitivity to the sins of one’s own religion seems to be a hallmark of anti-Israel activists in the church.” Pamela Ngubane of the South African Friends of Israel, said the delegation wasn’t on a “fact-finding mission”, but simply an “Israel-bashing mission”. “The families of the 19 innocent civilians murdered in terror attacks in Israel this year weren’t visited. The communities of Sderot, who have endured a constant barrage of rockets originating in Gaza, weren’t engaged with. In fact, no constructive meetings promoting peace

**Continued on page 6>>**



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AUTO AFRICA

Sandler’s Batmitzvah bash goes celluloid

Last month, Adam Sandler threw his daughter a star-studded Batmitzvah party. Now, it looks like his production company is making a Batmitzvah-themed film.

The casting site *Backstage* has posted a call for an in-the-works adaptation of *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah*, a 2005 young adult novel by Fiona Rosenbloom.

Whether Sandler will have a role in the middle-school-set story hasn’t yet been revealed, but his Happy Madison Productions company is behind the film.

In the novel, teenager Stacy Friedman is determined to host the best Batmitzvah ever in the face of middle-school drama and competing love interests.



Jewish man beaten while campaigning in France

A group of men violently assaulted a Jewish man while he was putting up campaign posters for his wife who is running for a legislative seat in Strasbourg, France, the victim told police.

Initially, two men who approached Liron Rozenhaft, 41, on Thursday, 2 June, and called him a “dirty Jew” after reading the name of his wife, Audrey Rozenhaft, on the posters, *Le Parisien* reported. She’s running as a candidate for the centre-right Republicans party in elections scheduled for 23 June.

Rozenhaft said that the two men pulled down the

posters and followed him elsewhere on a scooter. Several other men followed in pursuit. He said he told the men that France “is still a democracy”.

In a Facebook post, Audrey Rozenhaft wrote that he was left unconscious, and said authorities had allowed “an explosion crime and violence” in the area.

“Jewface” critic joins controversial Maestro cast

She popularised the term “Jewface” to describe non-Jewish actors playing Jewish roles, and kicked off a heated cultural conversation in the process. Now, Jewish actor and comedian Sarah Silverman is joining the cast of a movie that casts non-Jew Bradley Cooper as widely influential Jewish conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein – with a prosthetic nose to boot.

*Deadline* reported that Silverman had joined *Maestro*, an upcoming Netflix biopic of Bernstein starring, written by, and directed by Cooper (and co-written by Jewish screenwriter Josh Singer).

Israeli heirs to Top Gun sue Paramount

The widow and son of the Israeli author whose 1983 magazine article inspired the original *Top Gun* film are suing Paramount Pictures for copyright infringement over the newly released sequel, *Top Gun: Maverick*.

A complaint filed in a Los Angeles federal court on Monday, 6 June, argues that Paramount failed to reacquire the rights to Ehud Yonay’s California magazine piece after the rights reverted to his heirs, Shosh and Yuval Yonay, in 2020.

The Yonays, who live in Israel, claim that Paramount was notified of the copyright termination in 2018 and 2022. Paramount argues that the sequel was “sufficiently completed” by 24 January 2020, the date the copyright reversal went into effect.

*Top Gun: Maverick* has become one of the summer’s top blockbusters, grossing more than \$550 million (R8.4 billion) globally since its United States debut on 27 May. The Yonays are seeking unspecified damages including profit from the film as well as an injunction preventing its further distribution.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Torah Thought

12/12 to Torah for keeping up the suspense

Many consider the end of this week’s parsha, the longest in the Pentateuch, to be boring and repetitive. Truth be told, of the portion’s 176 verses, there is a sequence of 72 verses that consist of 12 virtually similar paragraphs repeated. They describe the inauguration ceremony of the Tabernacle. For 12 days, leaders of the tribes brought offerings on behalf of their constituents. The content of the offerings were identical, as were the vessels used to bring them. Hence, 12 sequences of six identical verses, except for the date and the names, detailing the gifts.

Repetitive indeed, but only boring if you read it wrong. The offering of all 12 princes was identical by agreement. They decided that they wouldn’t try to outdo one another. This is very noble, but runs contrary to human nature. One-upmanship is natural because humans are competitive beings. It thus wasn’t an easy decision.

Resolutions are easy to make, but more difficult to abide by. Thus, we read in great detail about day one, when Nachshon, the head of Judah, brings his offering. What will happen on the second day, when it’s the turn of Netanel, the prince of Yissachar? Will he resist the temptation to outdo, just a little, the previous day’s offering? Will he add just an extra small gift, vary the size of the vessels, or increase the number of animals? We concentrate as we read on to the second paragraph of the 12. In detail, the Torah lists his offering. And we are relieved when we find out that he didn’t succumb.

The same tension continues to build as we read on, paragraph after paragraph. With each successive passage, we wonder whether the prince will have the strength of character that his predecessor displayed,

and not deviate from the agreement. The Torah describes the details of the gifts and we pay close attention, waiting with bated breath. One after the other, we discover that Eliav, Elitzur, and Shlumieli, followed by the next six tribal leaders, all stick to the plan.

Finally, we get to day 12, and there remains only one leader, Achira from the tribe of Naftali. The suspense mounts as we realise that the temptation for him is huge. What will stop him from improving, ever so slightly, on what the 11 tribes have done before him?

He could easily rationalise that he has had to wait all this time and that in exchange for being last, he can justify a little special extra. After all, he’s last, and nobody can do better after him. The suspense, which has been mounting on each successive day, reaches its peak as we wonder whether he too will be able to resist.

With relief, we discover that Achira has also risen to the challenge, scoring a collective 12/12 for the princes! Only now, we can relax.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin  
– Oxford Shul



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On Saturday night we take leave of Shabbat over a cup of wine. This act connects Shabbat with the rest of the week. When the boundaries between the holy and the ordinary are blurred, the holy is no longer holy and the ordinary is left with nothing to uplift it. By defining the separation of Shabbat from the workday week, the relationship between the two is also established, where the six days of daily life feed into the sanctity of Shabbat.

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# Commentator calls Holocaust education ‘brainwashing’

TALI FEINBERG

“Ignoble and ill-intentioned”, “brainwashing”, “racist content” that “creeps through a syllabus” and “grand lies fed to impressionable children” are some of the phrases that Madoda Sitshange used to describe Holocaust education in this country in an article published on 29 May under the “analysis” section of the *Sunday Independent*.

The study of the Holocaust was mandated by the department of basic education in 2007 as a required curriculum in all South African high schools. Three Holocaust & Genocide Centres – in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town – support this Holocaust education through teacher training, educational programmes for pupils, and the development of classroom material.

According to the *Sunday Independent*, Sitshange is an “independent consultant”. Online profiles also show that he has a master of social work and has been a consultant at the Adopt-a-School Foundation.

Sitshange spent most of his article raging that Israeli policies should be included in Holocaust education, and blatantly compared Israel to the Nazis. Much of this was riddled with factual inaccuracies. According to the widely-adopted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism, drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis is antisemitic.

He also argued that organisations like Operation Dudula weren’t xenophobic. Earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa called Operation Dudula a “vigilante-like force”. “Dudula” means “to push back” in Zulu. The organisation blames migrant workers for the country’s crime and high unemployment rate. Migrants from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia and other African countries have been targeted by the organisation.

Sitshange then said that [according to Holocaust education] “any protester is portrayed as devoid of all sensibilities and sensitivities that they are on the verge of committing a Holocaust, and rub salt in the wound by teaching school children from the township that their own parents are wanton

murderers”. “What’s the response of Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga when local community organisations are equated to Nazis, and a free pass is given to the Ariel Sharons of this world?” he asked. “It’s grossly insensitive that the same children from the townships that are most affected by the negative impact of open borders and the mismanagement of immigration have their plight intensified with an association with an imaginary genocide.”

He also implied that Jews ignored the views of underprivileged people. “For many critics of community organisations like Abahlali baseMjondolo, Operation Dudula, etc. who live in affluent, gated complexes and work in air-conditioned offices, a sincere belief in the legitimacy of black organisations looks less like the culture of protest than like the culture of psychosis. Protesting people in townships are simply mad. Experts offering the explanation from the highest of motives are more convincing, and underprivileged folks cannot be taken seriously. A view that’s an alternative to the expert explanation isn’t merely counter-normative, but crazy,” he wrote.

Sitshange was responding to an article first published in *SowetanLIVE*, which described the work of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre (DHGC).



An education programme for Grade 9 pupils at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre

A pupil at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre education workshop at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site

That article’s original headline was “SA’s xenophobic attacks bear similarities to Holocaust, say experts.” It was published on 20 May, and written by Lwazi Hlangu. South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Associate Director David Saks later said the headline was “misleading” as “those DHGC spokespeople quoted don’t in fact compare xenophobic attacks in South Africa to



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the Holocaust”. The *SowetanLIVE* article reported that “Holocaust experts in SA have sounded the alarm over similarities between the rise of xenophobic sentiment in the country and genocides throughout history.” It quoted Claudia Blythe, the education manager at the DHGC, as saying, “There’s a very natural connection between learning about the Holocaust, thinking about our own country’s past, and confronting this epidemic in our country at the moment which is xenophobia.” Blythe was speaking to *SowetanLIVE* at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site in Howick just outside Pietermaritzburg, where the centre was conducting a series of workshops for different schools in the area.

“The DHGC was in no way making a direct comparison between the deplorable Operation Dudula in South Africa and the mass extermination of six million Jews by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust,” says DHGC Director Mary Kluk. “Unfortunately, we felt that this impression was given to readers by the *SowetanLIVE* article headline, and we have since engaged with the editors of this publication who have agreed to change the headline. *SowetanLIVE*’s new headline reads: “Genocides don’t start with violence but hateful rhetoric – experts.” “The DHGC is first and foremost a place of remembrance for the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust and all other victims of Nazism, but also engages in public-outreach programmes about contemporary human-rights abuses and genocide,” says social justice liaison at the DHGC, Alana Baranov.

“The key message of our workshop for pupils in the Howick area was that genocide and hate crimes don’t start with acts of physical harm but with hateful words and othering,” says Kluk. “The language used in xenophobic rhetoric in South Africa today, which blames all of South Africa’s social ills on African refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, bears some similarities to the ‘othering’ language

and scapegoating that the Nazis used against Jews and other minorities they persecuted in Germany in the early years of power. “These acts of othering paved the way for further atrocities to occur. Our centre works to raise awareness of the lessons of the past, from the Holocaust to the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda, and even apartheid. Discrimination and hateful words must be addressed before they turn into hate crimes and other acts of violence, even crimes against humanity. Our work helps pupils understand what can happen if prejudice and hatred is left to go unchecked,” says Baranov.

The SAJBD wrote to IOL News (the publisher of Sitshange’s article) requesting a right of reply, which was published as a letter to the editor on 7 June, but it hasn’t been published yet. In this response, Saks wrote, amongst other points, “It’s evident from Sitshange’s response that he hasn’t properly read the piece he’s responding to, but rather appears to have based his reply entirely on its (admittedly ill-chosen) headline. He devotes more than half of his article to ranting against Israel. Since that subject self-evidently has nothing to do with the issues at hand, one can only conclude that his reason for doing so is that the DHGC is a Jewish organisation, and on a number of levels, that’s simply unacceptable.”

“By refusing to engage with the points raised by the DHGC and instead responding with an extended piece of irrelevant anti-Israel vitriol, Sitshange clearly intimates that before they can presume to express a view on human-rights issues pertaining to their own country, Jews must first sign on to the radical anti-Israel agenda he espouses.

“Apart from imposing outrageous conditions on the right of Jews to exercise their freedom of expression, this feeds into one of the staples of antisemitic bigotry, namely that Jews aren’t truly South African but should be regarded rather as part and parcel of a greater, global Jewish entity. This is both discriminatory and racist. It’s likewise racist and discriminatory to hold a Holocaust & Genocide Centre accountable for what Jews on another continent are alleged to be doing.”

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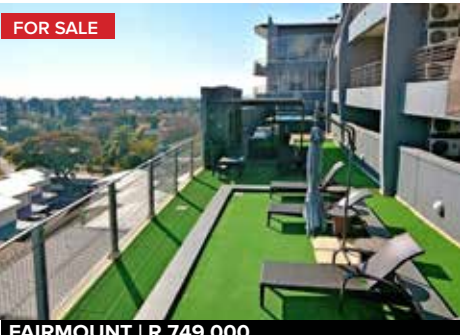
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# Meyer Kahn: the “boytjie from Brits” who became a business legend

NICOLA MILTZ

A week before business icon and the former chief executive and chairperson of SA Breweries (SAB), Meyer Kahn, passed away on 2 June, he imparted one of his classic, true-to-form one-liners, “Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. But wisdom is knowing not to put it in the fruit salad.”

It was typical Kahn, one of South Africa’s most successful multinational businessmen, who never missed an opportunity to simplify highly complex business and life issues with one or more of his clever sayings.

“Keep it simple,” he would say, often seemingly brash but always razor-sharp and insightful, said friends this week.

Kahn, a beloved family man and true patriot as well as an international business leader, passed away on Thursday after a short illness. He was 82.

Humble in life and in death, it was his wish to be buried near his parents resting place in the Pretoria Jewish Cemetery, surrounded by his closest family and friends, without fanfare or fuss. This is in spite of being offered a well-deserved spot in the section reserved for those who have displayed exceptional commitment to the community and humanity at Westpark Cemetery.

“He was a simple man who loved simple pleasures, an ordinary boy from Brits who went on to do extraordinary things,” said Rabbi David Masinter, who regarded him as a mentor and studied with him every Friday afternoon on Zoom.

“I’ve never met anyone who happily rubbed shoulders with everybody. He drank whiskey with presidents and kings, and beer from polystyrene cups with the person on the street. He had no airs and graces,” said Masinter this week.

Born on 29 June 1939, Jacob Meyer Kahn and his late brother, Raymond, grew up in Brits. He was arguably best known as the head of SABMiller (formerly SAB).

Kahn obtained a Bachelor of Law degree and MBA from the University of Pretoria, and an honorary doctorate in commerce from the University of the Witwatersrand. In 2000, he was presented with the South African Police Star for Outstanding Service.

He entered the business world as a junior manager with OK Bazaars, and steadily worked his way through the ranks becoming chief executive of OK Group.

He joined SAB in 1966, spending 46 years there, and was instrumental in the company’s global expansion. Together with an expert local team, he created the most successful industrial company ever to go beyond South Africa’s borders, said experts this week.

Kahn served on the boards of 16 listed companies and as trustee of numerous organisations.

At the pinnacle of his career and at the behest of the late President Nelson Mandela, he commenced a two-year sabbatical secondment to the South African Police Service as its chief executive in 1997. He reportedly donated his entire police salary to the police widows and orphan fund.

He was known as the “Boydtjie from Brits” who never lost the common touch, and described as “gregarious”, “larger than life”, yet curiously reserved, private, and a little shy. He was a keen golfer, a passionate Springbok rugby supporter, a definite beer and whiskey lover, and enjoyed the odd cigar.

It was widely joked that if he saw anyone drinking a non-SAB brand of beer at the golf club or in business circles, he would deliberately drop

his car keys into the glass of beer, apologetically, but happily ordering the drinker a replacement SAB beer, said close friend Michael “Motty” Sacks, the chairperson of Capital Appreciation Limited.

Kahn received numerous prestigious business awards throughout his career, including the Jewish Achievers Lifetime Achievement Award.

He served on the board of Netcare for 17 years. Fellow Netcare board member and friend, advocate Kgomotso Moroka said, “I got to know Meyer as a university student through my parents who were anti-apartheid activists. He was committed to fighting apartheid in the most practical way possible through upliftment and training. More than anything, he was forthright and spoke his mind, and was impassioned about what he believed in,” Moroka said.

Dr Richard Friedland, group chief executive of Netcare and a close friend of Kahn said, “He was my mentor, and a rock to me.

“I recall turning to Meyer when I was dealing with a business problem, needing his wisdom and advice. After listening to me he asked, ‘Richard are you standing in your office?’ To which I replied I was. He then asked if I could do him a favour and look out the window, look at the sky, and see if the sun was shining, to which I replied it was. He then said “goodbye”, and that was that.

“From this, I learned the meaning of perspective from him, and that the crisis wasn’t the end of the world, the sun would still shine, I just needed to get on with the problem and fix it. He trusted management to do that.

“Meyer could see the big picture. He had no fear or favour, and told the truth, whether it was offensive or not. You could bring a problem to him, and within a millisecond he could hone into what the solution was,” said Friedland.

Sacks, who was also the co-founder and executive chairperson of the Netcare Hospital Group, said, “I first met Meyer during our December summer holiday in 1985 at the Beacon Isle Hotel in Plettenberg Bay. This was a regular holiday destination for both our families.”

Together, Sacks and Kahn acquired a cash shell on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), and initiated the acquisition of Medscheme, which today is the largest medical administrator in South Africa.

“In 2015, as the first JSE-listed special purpose acquisition company, Meyer was the automatic choice for non-executive director for Capital Appreciation Limited. His contribution to the company, through his strategic thinking, marketing skills, sound direction, guidance, and advice, was typically Meyer, always superior and creatively instructive,” Sacks said.

Masinter approached Kahn in 1988 when Chabad was going through financial turbulence. “Chabad was fighting for its survival, and Kahn immediately rose to the challenge,” Masinter said.

So began the Chabad Miracle Drive with Kahn as its chairperson, a charity that continues to help the Jewish community and communities at large.

“Pirkei Avot is that part of Jewish law that teaches you how to be a *mensch*,” Masinter said. “Meyer Kahn was the embodiment of the principles of Pirkei Avot and in my view, because of his wisdom, empathy, and humility, he could have written many of them.”

Kahn is survived by his wife Lynette, daughters Deanne and Hayley, their husbands, his grandchildren, and extended family.



Meyer Kahn

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

# Berksie in the Morn – he did it his way!



TRIBUTE

RINA BROOMBERG

This week, we bid farewell to a South African broadcast icon and a special friend, not only for me, but for millions whose lives he touched through his many years on radio – John Berks (Berkowitz).

John and I joined Radio 702 in the same year – John behind the microphone and me behind the desk in management. And so began a friendship that spanned four decades.

John Berks (also affectionately known as Berksie, Long John Berks, LJB, or just Berks) had already earned his place as one of South Africa’s favourite sons when he joined the fledgling Radio 702 on 1 October 1981. With “Berksie in the Morn”, 702 skyrocketed to success, and life would never be the same again for the then “PWV”.

After dropping out of school in Standard 8 (Grade 10), John started his working life as a factory hand in his hometown, Klerksdorp. He moved on to become a delivery boy for the local newspaper before becoming a reporter with the *Germiston Advocate*. After several initial rejections, his radio career began in 1964 when he was employed as a disc jockey on LM Radio. He subsequently joined Swazi Music Radio, Radio 5, and Capital, not forgetting his legendary fun calls on Springbok Radio.

John Berks’s broadcasting career was nothing short of sensational and at the same time, he managed to raise his two children to become fine young adults. Lance and Sherise, having grown up in an unusual set of circumstances with such a high-profile and controversial father, are living examples of their father’s deeply-rooted values which didn’t necessarily fit his controversial public image. When all is said and done, John Berks was just an old-fashioned guy with a rigid set of traditional values (especially when it came to his kids).

With the irreverent Berksie came his cast of characters: Gertjie; Poppy; Jan Sweetbak; Mrs Goldberg; Charles Fortune; Colin du Plessis and the many others who may have served the show at any given moment. The mornings came alive with his brilliant imitations, exercises, rail reports, fun calls, his irrepressible humour (“What a boykie!”), his warmth (reminiscing with blue-rinse ladies or ageing ducktails), his rudeness (cutting callers off who weren’t to his liking – “You bozo, you!”), his unpredictable competitions which could range from anything from singing families to recreating Old Macdonald’s Farm live on the radio with gullible and/or sporting listeners.

“Love him or hate him, but never miss him” was painted on buses driving around Johannesburg. Berksie found his way into the intimacy of our bedrooms, our bathrooms, our living rooms, our motor cars, our offices, and above all, into our hearts and minds.

He made us laugh, he made us cry, he made us cringe, and he made us think. Long after the day was well underway, we would continue to muse over Berksie’s morning offerings – “Did you hear what John Berks said this morning?”

“What’s John Berks really like?” was a frequently asked question. Having worked with him for so many years and supposedly his boss – as if Berksie could have a boss(!) – what was Berksie really like? He was a remarkable man. He was at once public property yet an enigmatic loner, highly skilled at drawing people to him like a magnet, yet he remained reclusive. He was a deeply emotional and charitable being, yet had a public image of being blunt and miserly. As his fellow broadcaster and one of his closest friends Gary Edwards recalls, “While one of his most endearing qualities was to make people laugh, John was also notoriously tight with money. While other staff members at the radio

station ordered takeaways from the local cafe, John would have someone buy him a half-loaf of bread to which he added fish paste. He was awkward at social gatherings, always trying to avoid a handshake, and arriving late and leaving early. But these human quirks were more than compensated by his generosity of spirit, and he was responsible for creating opportunities for many others, myself included.”

In fact John had an uncanny knack for recognising talent. Along with Gary Edwards, he also had a hand in many other broadcasting careers, including Stan Katz, John Robbie, Gareth Cliff, Jeremy Mansfield, and many more.

The story of John Berks is a significant one. He was a unique human being with an extraordinary gift for being able to reach into peoples’ hearts through their ears with his compelling voice. He was a gifted observer and orator of life (as well as having an astonishing ability to get grown-ups to make animal noises on the radio!).

He was also a leader. John Berks had the courage and vision to forge ahead where others trembled with trepidation. He pushed the boundaries in our historically restricted country, in which choice in entertainment was notably impoverished. He left his distinctive footprint across the airwaves, which enabled fellow broadcasters and radio managers to build the paths upon which so many have subsequently travelled. As well as his unique brand of humour and ability to evoke the intensity of reaction he did, he was the one primarily responsible for the introduction and subsequent success of talk radio in South Africa. As Gary Edwards said, “Not bad for a kid from Klerksdorp!”

Issie Kirsh, broadcast pioneer, founder of Radio 702, and friend of John for more than 50 years, sums it up beautifully: “John was a legend in his own time. He was the perfect example of how a man should lead his life.

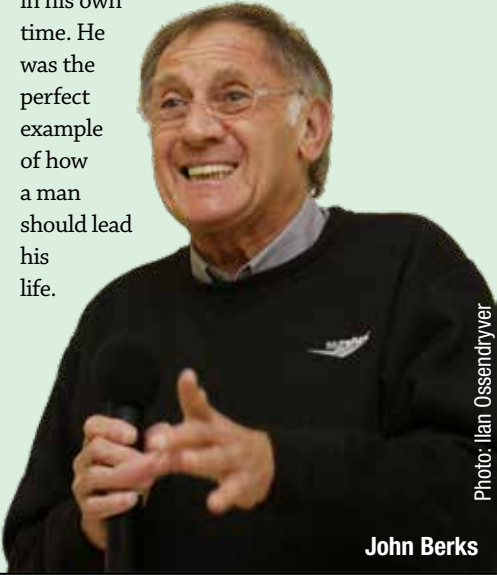
What a boykie!

John was the kindest, most sensitive, and endearing person you could ever be blessed to meet. He will be sorely missed by his family and by many friends who loved him so dearly.”

In a nutshell: John Berks – beloved partner of Manda, devoted father of Sherise and Lance, doting grandfather of Joshua, Tia, Benjamin, Mia, and Jesse, treasured brother and uncle of Cynette and Rhona and their families, special friend of just a handful of people whom he allowed into his inner sanctum and, of course, broadcaster extraordinaire whose memory will remain indelibly imprinted on the hearts of countless people who worked with him and grew up listening to him – what a boykie!

Berksie – you did it your way! Thank you for the memories, my friend.

• Rina Broomberg is the former station manager and later managing director of 702, and is co-founder of CliffCentral.com



John Berks

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver



# The much-abused conflict

OPINION

AMBASSADOR ELI BELOTSERCOVSKY

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has accompanied us for 74 years. It's notorious in its complexity and by the number of failed attempts to solve it. It's also widely publicised, and more often than not, in black and white. Unlike normal conflict in which there are two or sometimes more sides, this conflict, as presented by the media, seems to have apparently only one side while the other is described solely as a victim. This description is never challenged as it seems to be politically incorrect to question the weaker side. Dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to be the most favoured past-time of many so-called human-rights organisations. For example, the United Nations Human Rights Council. This "esteemed" organisation includes 47 states, many of whom have at best a purely coincidental connection to human rights. Nevertheless, between 2006 and 2017, at least half of the council resolutions were dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict and were staunchly anti-Israeli. Amnesty International published a new report on Israel on 1 February 2022. In this document, the organisation claims that the mere fact that Israel is a Jewish state is already a war crime and expression of racism. On the other hand, in 2015, when Amnesty International was asked to conduct a campaign against antisemitism in Britain, it categorically refused. From a human-rights organisation, Amnesty has become a propaganda tool. The same goes for a number of other organisations. The other interesting characteristic of this conflict are the numerous committees of investigation or fact-finding missions. The common trait of all these is that the results of the investigations or the facts that these missions are allegedly trying to find are already known to the members of the committees or the missions well in advance. The mandate of these committees is

limited only to one side and therefore, by definition, they cannot be objective. The personalities involved are also known for their solid and staunch opinions and therefore, there's no chance of an unbiased approach.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO SEE REDEMPTION FOR THE SINS OF THE COLONIALISM BY SACRIFICING THE JEWISH STATE ON THE ALTAR OF INDIGENOUS EMPOWERMENT.

These missions exploit the fact that Israel is a free and democratic country. So, they can arrive whenever they want to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories without any hindrance. There, they can meet people who share the same views and then return to their countries, spreading the same demagogic

propaganda. Only because of the freedom they had to visit can they use their mission to the areas to reinforce their dogma. Unfortunately, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict channels the frustrations of potential liberation fighters who seek an appropriate good-versus-bad battle into which to get immersed. On the other hand, there are also those who see redemption for the sins of the colonialism by sacrificing the Jewish State on the altar of indigenous empowerment. Both groups present a simplistic, distorted perception of a victim to generate an emotional identification with the weak. This presentation has no space for any factual analysis, but rather strives to conceal facts so as to prevent a creation of any possible alternative narrative. This means they continue to prevent any dissonance and a new dogma by concealing fact. The question, of course, is how do these reports, missions, and committees help

the cause of peace? How much time, energy, and money was spent to produce these documents, and where do they take us? The clear answer is nowhere. Unfortunately, they serve only to preach to hatred of Israel. The main victim of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the truth. It becomes a convertible currency that's easily traded and transformed to fit the political expediences of those who seek to gain out of the suffering of the people on both sides. These merchants trade with altruistic slogans and emotional appeals, but at the end of the day, they couldn't care less about the people they supposedly represent. The only way out of the conflict is by talking to each other, understanding the other side, and finding a compromise that will provide our people a better future.

• Eli Belotsercovsky is the Israeli ambassador to South Africa.



# Israel-Africa rollercoaster accelerates in Paris

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD

On 31 May 2022, Paris hosted a high-level meeting highlighting and promoting Israel's growing relations with African countries. Israel has much to offer the African continent, in the agricultural, innovation, and security sectors. Africa can offer Israel trading opportunities and diplomatic support. This meeting underscored progress and potential. The event was even attended by ministers or former ministers from countries that don't formally recognise Israel such as Mali and the autonomous region of Somaliland. There are no indications that it was attended by the South African government, which is notoriously wary of both the French and Israelis. Israel's foreign minister, Yair Lapid, said via video link, "We will co-operate to deliver food security for millions. We will co-ordinate in the fight against terrorism to ensure peace and stability. We will collaborate in high-tech to create opportunities for millions of Israelis and Africans alike. We will cultivate deeper diplomatic ties to cement our historic and deeply-rooted partnership." The event, titled "Israel back in Africa? Challenges and opportunities," was organised by the Israeli embassy



Israel's foreign minister, Yair Lapid

in France and the Paris office of the American Jewish Committee. Attendees included African and French diplomats, journalists, and businesspersons. Paris was chosen as a venue as it's a centre for Africa watchers and media interested in Africa. Israel's relations with Africa have been like a rollercoaster. Strong ties were apparent in the 1950s, and by the 1960s, Israel had more than 30 embassies on the continent. Then came the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and under pressure from the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), African states broke off diplomatic relations en masse. Only four kept their formal ties with Israel: Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, and Swaziland (now eSwatini). Since the Oslo Accords in 1993, relations have been gradually restored, and today, Israel is recognised by 44 of Africa's 55 states. The latest on the list is Chad. Israel opened an embassy in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2019, bringing the total of current Israeli embassies in Africa to 13. Two African countries are parties to the Abraham Accords signed in the dying days of the Donald Trump administration in 2020 – Morocco and Sudan. Civil strife in Sudan has meant that not much progress has been made on that front, but Israel-Morocco relations are booming after years of

clandestine co-operation. In May 2022, the countries signed 13 memoranda of understanding across a range of economic sectors. Two-way tourism is flourishing, with 200 000 Israeli visitors expected in Morocco this year, a fourfold increase from before the accords. There are 10 direct flights per week. Israel's i24 satellite television channel is opening bureaux in Rabat and Casablanca. Morocco is holding off on opening an embassy in Israel until its controversial occupation of Western Sahara is recognised. However, this relationship illustrates just what can happen with a bit of imagination and political will. The Abraham Accords have lost steam with the departure from power of Trump and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, however. More countries were said to be on the verge of joining – most notably Saudi Arabia – but this hasn't materialised in the Biden administration. Nevertheless, Israel was able to host a successful Negev Summit in March this year, with foreign ministers and senior officials from six Muslim states that recognise Israel – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Israel has just signed a wide-ranging free trade agreement with the UAE, which is expected to generate \$3 billion (R46.3 billion) in three years' time. So, Israel is focused on deepening existing relations rather than broadening the accords to other states for now. As an indicator of growing support in Africa, last year, Israel was granted observer status at the African Union (AU). It had had this access before the OAU transformed into the AU in 2002, but it was then revoked under the insistence of Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. When states like

South Africa, Namibia, and Algeria raised objections this time, a final decision was deferred until February 2023 at the next AU summit, with a multi-state committee investigating the issue. Africa is a house divided; the continent has been split down the middle by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Half of the countries have condemned the invasion at the United Nations General Assembly, and the other half have abstained or absented themselves from voting. Israel may be able to build on these divisions as it seeks to shore up African diplomatic support and chip away at the erstwhile reflexive anti-Israel sentiment in the African bloc. As important as the Paris conference was, it's no substitute for a heads-of-state meeting between Israel and Africa. Plans were well advanced to hold such a summit in Lomé, Togo, in 2017, but it was postponed indefinitely due to a combination of unrest in Togo and pressure from countries like Algeria, South Africa, and the Palestinians to scupper the summit. With new pragmatism on display, relations with Israel are increasingly based on interests not ideology. African countries are showing, more and more, that they can hold strong views on the Palestinian issue, but still trade and engage with Israel in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner. South Africa should be taking notes.

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



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Two sides drowned out by noise

The anti-Israel hatred is getting louder and louder in South Africa, and it’s disconcerting to say the least.

In most cases, when something goes on and on, people switch off and stop thinking about it. Generally though, ignoring things doesn’t really help.

Crime is one of those issues that goes on and on in South Africa, seemingly getting worse not better. This week, the latest crime statistics were released, and we were told there was a 22% increase in the number of murders in the first three months of this year. This means that 6 083 people were killed, and the 22% rise equals 1 107 lives lost.

The number of children and women being murdered has skyrocketed by 37.2% and 70.5% respectively.

This is shocking, but where’s the uproar? Where are the activists on the street demanding justice? What’s the government doing about it? Where’s the anger and frustration?

Have people simply got tired of the constant battering of crime and nothing being done about it, and have accepted it?

Then, we have the war in Ukraine, which has been raging since 24 February. Almost two and a half months later, is anybody you know talking about this war?

So, no matter how painful the events or concerns, people appear to have only so much tolerance, and their memories are short.

I go back to the issue that, while certainly not more important than crime and the war in Ukraine, is personal for our community. That is the increasing anti-Israel noise.

I call it noise because if I say there’s an increase in anti-Israel sentiment, it implies that more and more people are supporting this cause, which I don’t believe to be true.

What I believe is that the so-called human-rights activists are creating more strategies and finding new ways to make their noise heard.

The unfortunate thing for them is that it does come across as noise, not much more. The only real issue for us, and it becomes more and more blatant every week, is that the ruling party and government are right behind them. The African National Congress (ANC) and government are somehow blinded by the anti-Israel lobby and their long-time friendship with the Palestinians. So much so, that they refuse to see that there are two very clear sides, and not just one side that’s wrong.

At the beginning of this month, a hugely respected and loved ANC stalwart, Reverend Frank Chikane, came back from a brief visit to the Middle East. He spent much time in the Palestinian areas and with Palestinian activists, hearing their side of the two-way dilemma.

Chikane is a highly educated person of great esteem, not just for being a man of the cloth and a leader. His experiences during apartheid have given him iconic status. During those days, former Police Minister Adriaan Vlok and Police Chief Johan van der Merwe were involved in an attempted assassination on Chikane by lacing his underwear with poison, almost killing him. The Reverend later humbly accepted Vlok’s apology by allowing him to wash his feet.

Chikane was an advisor to former President Thabo Mbeki and consulted to Jacob Zuma and Kgalema Motlanthe, thereby elevating his reputation before even considering his work in the church.

It’s so unfortunate that this great man didn’t make sure to find out the whole picture, and was once again given a one-sided view. I say that with respect, because I have no doubt that the people he met had awful stories to tell. Only, the Israeli-Palestinian issue is complicated, and there’s no clear-cut solution that will lead to peace.

Isn’t it obvious that no ordinary Israeli or Palestinian wants to keep fighting or hating. Surely, no open-minded person wants their loved ones to be living in a warzone or have to serve in an army? Too many lives have been lost. Too many families have been destroyed. Too much blood has been spilt, and too much pain has been felt to want this to continue.

I agree that there are many different political perspectives in Israel and in the diaspora. And there certainly is hatred, but there’s never going to be understanding or a solution if only one side of the story is told.

Making comparisons with apartheid, the war in Ukraine, and xenophobia isn’t helpful. It only adds to the hatred and noise.

It would be so much more helpful if learned and respected folk like Chikane went to Israel, spoke to people on all sides, and got a true reflection of what the problems were. Perhaps, just perhaps, he could then become part of the solution, not someone simply adding to the hatred.

He could then come back and share the real situation and bring the full picture to bear on the debate and discussion. This way, all South Africans within the ANC and those who have simply become distrustful of Israel because of the rhetoric could really dig into the issues. Perhaps, just perhaps, we might find a peaceful solution and become part of the answer, not exacerbate the problem.

The problem is that he would have to go there with an open mind, truly willing to hear all sides. While there’s no doubt that Chikane has the capacity for this, does he have the will?

**Shabbat shalom!**  
**Peta Krost**  
**Editor**



Bennett clings to political survival



OPINION

PAULA SLIER

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s reputation is as divided among Israelis today as it was a year ago when he scraped together a surprising government coalition.

Winning only seven (which soon became six) seats in the 2021 election, the right-wing Zionist leader cobbled together a cross-partisan alliance of right-wing, centrist, and leftist parties. It included Islamists representing Israel’s 21% Arab minority, many of whom identify with the Palestinians.

The new coalition partners had very little in common other than an overpowering urgency that “anyone but Bibi” (Benjamin Netanyahu) should run the country.

Things haven’t changed much 365 days later. The refrain is the basic strain that holds Bennett’s tenuous government together. Predictions that it won’t survive are as rife now as they were when former Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was ousted from a record 12-year reign.

One of the few things Israelis agree on is surprise that Bennett lasted this long and conviction that his time is running out. His coalition is in fact weaker today than it was last June, and controls only 60 out of 120 seats in parliament after a legislator from his own party quit in April citing sectarian disputes. This has left Bennett vulnerable to no-confidence motions and having to rely on disarray among the opposition to survive.

According to a recent opinion poll, if elections were held today in Israel, Netanyahu would win 59 parliamentary seats compared to Bennett’s 55. What’s more, 46% of Israelis believe that Netanyahu is best suited to be prime minister, whereas only 21% favour Bennett.



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

Many within his traditional right-wing support base felt, and continue to feel, betrayed by his move to join centrists and leftists. A common belief is that he saw this as his best chance to become prime minister, and hoped he would impress detractors enough to be revoted into power. Unsurprisingly, this hasn’t happened.

Marking the one-year anniversary, Bennett published last Friday an unusual open letter to the Israeli public in which he called for support for the sake of stability and a properly functioning government. He wrote that Israelis must choose between moving forward or collapsing. Justifying his coalition, he penned, “We stood just days away from a fifth election cycle that would have taken the country apart and then I made one of the most difficult and most Zionist decisions of my life: to establish a government to save Israel from the chaos and have it function again. To connect to people with different opinions than my own to save the country.”

From the start, Bennett framed his coalition as bringing political stability to Israel after an unprecedented series of inconclusive elections. But his letter highlighted his fear of a coalition

breakdown and the spectre of more elections and a challenge from Netanyahu, all looming large on the horizon. Netanyahu has repeatedly lashed out at Bennett for working with the Islamist party, Ra’am, claiming that it supports terror while conveniently forgetting that he himself was widely reported to have sought an alliance with it a year ago.

Bennett’s governing coalition has lurched from one crisis to another. The most recent was its failure to muster a majority to renew legislation extending Israeli law to citizens living in the West Bank for another five years. If the regulations aren’t renewed by the end of this month, they will lapse, depriving settlers of voting rights, professional licenses, and the protection of Israeli criminal law. As the regulations are vital to the daily routine of settlers in the West Bank, supporting them is considered a right-wing agenda. Their failure means Bennett has let down his ideological base, while the Islamist Ra’am party will never be able to support Israel’s policy in the West Bank. This is the eternal coalition infighting that Bennett cannot escape.

Other crises have included reports of extravagant expenditure at his private home in Ra’anana that functions informally as his official residence, and a payment of 50 billion shekels (R230.5 billion) to Ra’am leader MK Mansour Abbas to invest in Arab society. The prime minister has been trying to stave off a new nuclear deal with Iran and claims victory because it hasn’t happened. But it’s too early to celebrate. Talks with Iran are paused, not abandoned. Bennett’s also tried to discourage Washington from placing a consulate for the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Jerusalem, which could have reopened the

conversation about re-dividing the capital. The issue remains up in the air, with a Biden administration enthusiastic about improving relations with the PA.

A fair amount of the last year saw Bennett also battling the international COVID-19 pandemic. A feather in his cap is that Israel has managed to ease almost all restrictions, allowing the economy and society to return to normal while facilitating a boom in tourism.

Bennett’s anniversary comes at an important diplomatic juncture. He’s due to host American president Joe Biden soon – perhaps later this month – to strategise on Iran and discuss a possible warming of Israel’s ties with Saudi Arabia. This would be a huge achievement for Bennett but arises more from an American thirst for Saudi oil as a result of global sanctions on Russia than any concern for Israel’s security issues.

Bennett and his top cabinet ministers have made an effort to get along with the Arab world and have met often with Egyptian President Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah. The government recruited President Yitzhak Herzog, a seasoned and polished diplomat, to reset relations with Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan, which remain challenging at best. Erdogan’s goal is widely believed to show the Muslim world that he still has a voice in Jerusalem, and there’s little doubt that he’ll use every opportunity to condemn Israel for real and imagined sins.

Historically, Israeli governments have lasted an average of about two-and-a-half years, so at the one-year juncture it might be a little too soon to determine how Bennett’s reign as prime minister will go down in history books. Perhaps his biggest achievement so far is simply having survived.

• *Paula Slier is the Middle East bureau chief of RT, the founder and chief executive of Newshound Media International, and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.*

Rev Frank Chikane continues to “fixate” on the Jewish State

>>Continued from page 1

and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians happened at all.

“It’s evident that this tour had no interest in peace nor in finding a constructive solution to the decades-long conflict. Chikane has had a long-running campaign of hate and delegitimisation against the Jewish State.”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies reiterated that if South Africans wanted to make a true contribution to peace between Israel and Palestine, they would need to engage with both parties.

“The so-called ‘fact-finding’ mission cannot be successful without them even attempting to understand the experiences and concerns of both sides in the conflict. Furthermore, a three-day visit with pre-determined conclusions cannot be construed as

an attempt to really understand the situation and make any form of contribution,” said National Director Wendy Kahn.

“We continue to encourage all peace-loving South Africans who want a resolution to this conflict, be it our government, civil society, or interfaith groups, to focus on bringing the parties together rather than further polarising them,” she said.

“Chikane’s fixations on the Jewish State are alarming, and make no contribution to achieving peace in the region,” Kahn said.

Though Chikane claimed that the delegation listened to both sides of the conflict, during his press conference last week, he admitted that it hadn’t met Israeli representatives in spite of requesting that meetings be set up by the Israeli embassy. He wasn’t available for comment.

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**Benny Lau** (Jerusalem)

## Returning the Torah to the People

Benny served as the senior rabbi of the Ramban Synagogue in Jerusalem. He currently leads the team behind '929', an Israeli social initiative aimed at creating discourse amongst all sectors of society based on the relevance of the 929 chapters of the Tanach. Sessions include: **Halakhah and Modern Society**



**Gil Hovav** (Tel Aviv)

## Israel's Favourite Chef

Gil hails from one of the most respected lineages: great-grandson of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, reviver of the Hebrew language; grandson of Itamar Ben-Avi, modern Hebrew journalism pioneer; and son of Moshe & Drora Hovav, "founding members" of Israel's modern day public radio. Sessions include: **Wartime Cooking in Jerusalem**



**Miriam Camerini** (Milan)

## An Artistic Adventure

Theatre director, writer, singer and actress, Miriam bridges theatre and Jewish text study. Miriam is a rabbinical student at Beit-Midrash Har'El, one of the first Orthodox yeshivas to ordain women. Sessions include: **Monsieur Chouchani: In Search of a Master**



**Yair Rosenberg** (New York)

## Politics, Religion, and Trolling Antisemites

Yair is a contributor at The Atlantic, where he writes 'Deep Shtetl'. He has covered everything from national elections in America and Israel, to observant Jews in baseball, to the translation of Harry Potter into Yiddish. Sessions include: **Turning the Tables on Online Anti-Semitism**



**Hannah Gaventa** (London)

## Judaism & International Development

Hannah is a development practitioner working in post-disaster resilience and climate adaptation; the Portfolio Manager for the UK Government Skills for Prosperity Programme, and on World Jewish Relief's Programme Allocation Board. Sessions include: **Judaism and the ethics of humanitarian work: are good intentions enough?**



**Jordan B. Gorfinkel** (Ohio)

## Moses & Superman

Gorf is a veteran Batman creator working in comics & TV. Writer of the #1 bestselling Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel. He draws JewishCartoon.com & pioneered professional Jewish a cappella with his group Kol Zimra. Sessions include: **What Superheroes Teach Us About Judaism**



**Roni Mikel-Arieli** (Jerusalem)

## Intersections between Holocaust memory, Jewish History & African studies

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Author of Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State: Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy. Sessions include: **Reading the Diary of Anne Frank on Robben Island**



**Ran Bar-Yoshafat** (Jerusalem)

## Countering Anti-Israel Bias at the UN

Deputy Director of Kohelet Policy Forum, a think tank striving to secure Israel's future as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and to broaden individual liberty and free-market principles in Israel. Sessions include: **2022 Vision: Israel's Image in the World**



**Anat Hoffman** (Haifa)

## Women of the Wall

Anat serves as the Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center. She is at the forefront of the effort to advance religious pluralism in Israel. She has led the struggle against gender segregation in the public domain. Sessions include: **Does the Jewish State Treat All Jews Equally?**

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# ANC placates Joburg conference with Palestinian ambassador

TALI FEINBERG

Though South Africa has many concerns for the African National Congress (ANC) to focus on, it chose the Palestinian ambassador to South Africa to give the opening address at its Greater Johannesburg Regional Conference on Friday, 3 June.

“This is another example of the ANC trying to find issues on which its own membership is more united than divided,” says political analyst Daniel Silke about Ambassador Hanan Jarrar addressing the 15th regional conference. “There’s such fragmentation, contestation for power, personality clashes, and policy clashes within the ANC that perhaps the one area it can agree on is the issue of Israel/Palestine. It carries sympathy, there’s a revolutionary empathy, it ticks all the boxes for the ANC at a time when the party is extremely divided and at each other’s throats.”

A regional conference allows the party to elect regional leaders.

However, most of these conferences have descended into chaos. In Ekurhuleni the previous weekend, delegates attacked each other with bricks and chairs, leading ANC provincial chairperson in Gauteng, David Makhura, to describe that conference as “a war zone”. At the greater Johannesburg conference, Makhura said, “This conference is to prepare for war, the battle of the 2024 elections. There’s no time to fight among ourselves. We have to prioritise. The issues on the ground are critical.”

Instead, the party focused on the Israeli-Palestinian issue with Jarrar.

“This is almost a rallying

cry for the ANC internally, to give plenty of airtime to the Palestinian question,” Silke says. “It’s a ‘safe’ issue for the ANC – a foreign policy issue and fundamentally, most of the ANC factions agree with the importance given to it. It prevents the party, to some degree, from looking inwards. It can rather look

outwards to something its members agree upon.”

Asked if he thought the ANC would ever invite both Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors to address the party for a more balanced discussion, Silke says, “Never say never!” However, he notes that if South Africa continues to isolate

airline hijackings that killed more than 20 US citizens”. The PFLP is also responsible for numerous terror attacks against Israeli civilians. In recent interviews, Khaled continues to promote the view that the Palestinian national movement should use armed struggle to achieve its goals.



Palestinian ambassador to South Africa, Hanan Jarrar

The 15th Regional Executive Committe of the ANC in Greater Johannesburg

## Classic antisemitism in the corridors of court

TALI FEINBERG

“You Jew! You Jews! Go home Jews, you Jews are stealing again,” was the antisemitic abuse hurled at a Jewish entrepreneur in the corridors of the Western Cape High Court in January 2022. This is according to an affidavit he signed with a commissioner of oaths on 26 May 2022. He asks not to be named because he fears for his safety after receiving death threats.

On 20 January 2022, he attended the hearing of the interdict application brought by the Observatory Civic Association (OCA) and the Goringhaicona Khoi Khoi Indigenous Traditional Council. The entrepreneur is leading a controversial property development in which Amazon would be the anchor tenant. Opposition to the development is based on ecological concerns as well as demands by some Khoi and San that it’s sacred land. Other “first nations” people support the development.

“During a lunch interval at these proceedings and in the corridors of the Western Cape High Court, Chief Aùtshumao Mackie, a member of the Western Cape Khoisan legislative council, directed a tirade of abuse at me when he exclaimed loudly and in the presence of representatives of the applicants as well as Western Cape High Court security: ‘You Jew! You Jews! Go home Jews, you Jews are stealing again,’” said the entrepreneur in his affidavit.

In a separate text message that was shared widely on WhatsApp, Mackie criticised the First Nation Collective (FNC), which supports the development. He said that “selfishness, self-enrichment, and greed are the basis of establishing the FNC. The person at the centre of this distasteful saga is the Jew [the Jewish entrepreneur], whose parents are originally from Lithuania.”

But the encounter at court didn’t end there. “I was shocked and deeply offended by this unprovoked antisemitic outburst by Chief Mackie. I immediately approached the chairperson of the OCA [who the *SA Jewish Report* has chosen not to name here], who was present during the altercation, and asked him to intervene to stop Chief Mackie from abusing me this way. The chairperson of the OCA was unperturbed, and without hesitation and loudly informed me, ‘You deserve it,’” according to the affidavit.

Some of the applicants were present during the altercation, including the entrepreneur’s personal security attendant, who confirmed the incident in his own affidavit.

However, responding to questions from the *SA Jewish Report*, the chairperson if the OCA said, “The allegations about me and the OCA are entirely without foundation. The OCA and our campaign have never subscribed to nor tolerated any form of racial discrimination or bigotry.

“As for the claim that I responded to the incident that he ‘deserved it’, I have no idea why he makes such a claim since I certainly didn’t say that. I can recall the incident, but since I wasn’t present until

the very tail end of the incident, I couldn’t or wouldn’t have made the statement he claims as I didn’t know what it was about. I can remember that I didn’t respond at all, contrary to what he claimed.

“As a public health professional, a university academic who teaches human rights, an expert who has served on national and international ethics committees, and as a former religious objector to military conscription during apartheid based on my Jewish beliefs, I think my record demonstrates that I would never tolerate antisemitic comments.

“As for Chief Mackie, he was at court to support the case. He isn’t a member of the OCA. I have no idea what Chief Mackie actually said or why he said what he said. I don’t speak for Khoi leaders, nor do they speak for me.”

Concluding his affidavit, the entrepreneur said, “Whatever these individuals felt about these issues, they had no right whatsoever to make antisemitic slurs about me or my ethnic/religious group. This was especially so in circumstances where the representatives of the legal parties and certain members of the public were already inflamed emotionally and where there was a risk of matters getting out of control.

“The type of prejudicial trope that Chief Mackie employed has been used discriminatorily against my community, without any justification whatsoever, for hundreds of years, and is deeply offensive to me and my community. It amounts to hate speech, and

offends both my and my community’s constitutional rights.”

He has taken the affidavit to the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). The body told the *SA Jewish Report*, “We’re aware of the matter and are investigating. We have no comment at this stage.”

The entrepreneur told the *SA Jewish Report* that he welcomed debate and objections to a development, which he saw as healthy. “The plans for this development have been redrawn 274 times,” he said. However he couldn’t accept antisemitism. “I want to stay in South Africa and continue to build this country, but how can I allow my kids a future like that?”

The entrepreneur’s lawyer, Michael Bagraim, said the affidavit had been taken to the SAJBD, but he was also considering approaching the Equality Court. “I have had several other complaints arising out of the labour sphere where unions have turned antisemitic when they couldn’t get their way,” he said. “It’s an unfortunate trend in South Africa today. In no less than six wage negotiations over the past three months, the unions have referred to the employers as ‘stingy Jews’, ‘trying to Jew us’ etc. It’s not unprecedented in South Africa, but seems to be more virulent.”

The *SA Jewish Report* used every avenue to get comment from Chief Mackie, including asking his close colleagues to assist multiple times, but the request was ignored.



Screenshot of Chief Aùtshumao Mackie

Israel, the country itself will “increasingly be isolated in this stance, both in Africa and on the global stage”.

Local political analyst Steven Gruzd says inviting both ambassadors would be highly unlikely for the ANC. “Inviting the Palestinian ambassador isn’t a surprise, but it smacks a bit of desperation to try to win votes and popularise the Palestinian cause when so much else is going wrong in South Africa – corruption, low-growth economy, and scandals. There is, of course, a long-standing affinity with the Palestinian struggle, but this just seems a bit out of place and quite absurd. Of all the speakers that they could have got, it’s interesting that they chose the Palestinian ambassador. In a context of so much else going wrong, it seems like a distraction.”

A third local political analyst, Ralph Mathekga, says, “I would imagine for an embattled party such as the ANC, and taking into consideration the troubled Gauteng region, showing solidarity with Palestine gets the party to look resolute in confronting what it considers an unfair system. Yet the reality is that the party is receding from power and there isn’t much left, except for a great history.”

The Palestinian ambassador equated South Africa and the ANC with the Palestinians. “A strong ANC is a strong South Africa, and a strong South Africa is a strong Palestine,” she said.

Jarrar said she looked forward to the city of Johannesburg one day being back in the hands of the ANC. “The ANC has called for renaming Sandton Drive after Leila Khaled, a member of the Popular Front Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). We hope to see this coming into reality soon,” she said.

Khaled played a role in the hijacking of two civilian airlines in 1969 and 1970. In 1997, the PFLP was designated a terrorist organisation by the United States department of state, which cites the group as having carried out “large-scale international attacks in the 1960s and 1970s, including

Chris Vondo, the head of the ANC political school and former member of the mayoral committee in Johannesburg, encouraged the ambassador to “mobilise the international community in finding solutions for Palestine to win its struggle for self-determination”.

Dada Morero, the outgoing treasurer of the greater Johannesburg region, said that Israel was “more extreme than the South African apartheid experience” and “the people of Palestine have been denied their rights to exist in their own land. It must be noted that the struggle of the people of Palestine isn’t a struggle against Jews, but a struggle for a peaceful and just existence and coexistence.”

But South African Jewish Board of Deputies national director, Wendy Kahn, notes, “If the ANC Johannesburg branch truly wanted peace, it would have engaged with the Palestinian and Israeli ambassadors. As South African-born professor emeritus of Middle Eastern history at Tel Aviv University, Professor Asher Susser, says, ‘You can’t clap with one hand.’”

South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Rowan Polovin says, “It’s unfortunate that the ANC has allowed its foreign policy to be dictated by Palestinian extremists. The ANC’s decision to invite Palestinian Ambassador Hanan Jarrar to its regional conference shows that its politics are misaligned with reality and the needs of the voting public. The result of these antics will lead to further internal chaos in a party that continues to lose power.

“The Johannesburg region, for the ANC in particular, has been a hotbed of anti-Israel activity. Instead of deplorable projects like attempting to rename Sandton Drive ‘Leila Khaled Drive’, the party should focus on improving service delivery and quality of life for the residents of Johannesburg.”



# Creating kindness with Miracle Drive

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Set amidst motorbikes and artworks, the 32nd Chabad Miracle Drive celebrated creativity while cementing the organisation's commitment to making the world a better place.

This year's event at the World of Yamaha in Sandton on 2 June was a smaller, more informal affair than the Drive's pre-COVID-19 gala dinners.

Opening the evening, Miracle Drive founder and Director Rabbi David Masinter paid tribute to Miracle Drive president, renowned businessman, and philanthropist, Meyer Kahn, who had passed away that day. "We started Miracle Drive 32 years ago together with none other than the legendary Meyer Kahn," he said. "I spent a half an hour with him every week, up until this last Friday. Nothing was a fuss, he was larger than life, he transformed the world, and working with him

was an absolute privilege."

In the spirit of transforming the world, Masinter highlighted three Miracle Drive projects, including a new drive aimed at ensuring that parents spend more time with their children. "Tragically, statistics show that the average South African northern-suburbs parent is spending just a few minutes a week with their kids," he said. He encouraged people to ask themselves how much time they really spend with their kids away from smartphones and other distractions.

He also discussed the "Grow Your Life" programme, which teaches children in the broader South African community entrepreneurship and reading skills. "We cannot live in a country where 20 million people are living in squalor and it's got nothing to do with us," he said. "This year, we're going to get to 7 000 children in a very real way, and next year, we'll get to 10 000."

In addition to this, Chabad aims to uplift

10 000 children through its celebrated "Be Kind" initiative. "The way we bring mashiach is just simply through acts of goodness and kindness," Masinter said. "We stand at a time where a country is using nuclear energy to invade another country. Let's use the atomic energy within us to make the world a better place."

Representatives from sponsors including Balwin Properties, Standard Bank, and Yamaha all expressed pride at making a difference through their association with Miracle Drive. Balwin Properties will be giving away Miracle Drive's grand prize – a R1 million apartment – in November this year, and Yamaha will give away a piano valued at R125 000.

Mistress of ceremonies Elana Afrika-Brendenkamp, and Chabad ambassador for changing our world for good, also highlighted Miracle Drive's "Art of Kindness" project, which empowers "ordinary people

who with their hands create extraordinary things". Artworks created through this programme were up for sale throughout the venue.

World-famous Israeli sand artist Ilana Yahav provided the evening's entertainment. In a show that blended music, storytelling, and live sand art done on a glass table and projected onto a screen, she transported the audience along a journey through love, loss, and miracles.

Yahav told her own captivating story. "I was married when I was 20 and became pregnant immediately," she said. But, the



Rabbi David Masinter (right) paid tribute to Meyer Kahn who passed away on the same day as the event this week

Yom Kippur War shattered her peace when her beloved husband, Itzik, left to fight.

"On the second day of the war, there was a knock on my door. I was always scared of that knock on the door in the middle of the night, but never could I have imagined the reality of sitting shiva, the desperation."

Yet in a miraculous turn of events, Yahav realised that her husband may have survived the plane crash thought to have taken his life. A friend who had also lost her husband in the crash called one day to tell her that a relative in Australia had seen a news report of the war in Syria. "In the report, the relative saw a Phantom plane falling down and she wasn't sure, but she thought she'd seen two parachutes. A wave of hope rushed over me.

"Months passed, and we wavered between hope and desperation. One day, I went to buy a newspaper, and I saw Itzik on the front page of a French magazine! He was dressed in Syrian uniform, and he had a strange look in his eyes. Two days later, I gave birth to my son, and I called him "Dror", which means freedom in Hebrew."

Captured in Syria, interrogated, and kept in a tiny dark cell for months, Itzik finally had hope when his captors brought him outside. Here, international journalists took the pictures that ultimately found their way to his wife. "After eight months, Itzik came back, and he met his baby son, Dror. And over the years, we had three more children – we had a wonderful life." Dror later became a pilot in the same squadron as his father. "I'm in the same place, my foot stuck to the ground, my eyes to the skies above, and in my heart, the same prayer echoes," said Yahav.

"If you come to Israel, in the street, you can hear the whisper from each and every heart," said Yahav. "Try to imagine how the world could be – no war, no hatred, a world filled with tolerance, compassion, and love."

It's this dream that inspires the Miracle Drive to continue on the path of creating a better world.

# SA businessman knighted by the Queen

SAUL KAMIONSKY

It isn't often that South African businessmen are knighted by the Queen of England, but then Cape Town-born Sir Bradley Fried, the chairperson of the Court of the Bank of England, isn't your average man.

Fried, who chairs the 5 000-strong British bank that boasts a trillion Pound balance sheet, has been awarded a knighthood for public service in Queen Elizabeth II's 2022 Birthday Honours list, published on 1 June.

Fried received a letter from Downing Street about six weeks ago informing him that the Queen would be granting him the knighthood and it would be announced on the Jubilee long weekend, 2 to 5 June.

In the next few months, Fried will be attending an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in London. "I'm delighted that my mother, Joan, will be flying in from Cape Town to attend," he says. "It is, however, of great sadness to me that my beloved father, Louis, who passed away a few years ago, won't be there. Endlessly supportive of his three children, he would have loved it."

Fried grew up in Claremont in Cape Town and attended The Grove Primary School and Westerford High School before graduating with a bachelor's degree in commerce, awarded with distinction, from the University of Cape Town.

He says his Jewish identity is "absolutely pivotal" to who he is. "My heritage, in common with many of your readers, is predominantly Lithuanian – with the addition of a Jerusalem-originated grandfather. Some of my most important

life lessons were learned in my early years, growing up in the warmth of the Cape Town community and being part of the incredible Habonim family. Those experiences taught me the central ideas of being accountable and responsible for one another. The community leaders of those years were great role models, and they remain so."

Fried started his career as a chartered accountant trainee at Arthur Andersen in Cape Town. "I left South Africa on New Year's Eve, 1990, to study and build my career," he says. "First, I travelled for a while, and then I went on to study for an MBA [Master's Degree in Business Administration] at the Wharton Business School at the University of Pennsylvania."

Fried then joined the management consultants McKinsey & Company in New York. "I became a partner in its financial services practice, and was then hired to run Investec Bank in the United Kingdom (UK). We moved to London to do that."

In 2009, amid the global financial crisis, he started to work with Her Majesty's Treasury in the UK. "That led me to apply to join the Bank of England's board of directors, known ever since the bank was founded in 1694 as the

'court'. I was appointed chair of the court in 2018."

The court exists to ensure monetary and financial stability in the UK, and reports through its board (the court) to parliament.

"In addition, we set interest rates for the country, run the currency, and manage the payment system – processing about £700 billion [R13.5 trillion] a day," says Fried. "I chair the court, and ensure that the bank fulfils its mandate and that, to the best of our ability, we deliver our mission of keeping the financial system stable in the UK."

Fried has played a vital role in supporting the bank through the COVID-19 pandemic, helping it to play its part in the national economic response.

"When COVID-19 hit, the country shut down rapidly, and the economy declined dramatically," he says. "There was a response across Western markets to ensure that globally, all remained stable, and the bank was critical to this response. We needed to ensure that a health crisis didn't become a financial crisis. This was the fundamental challenge of central banks around the world."

Fried has also pioneered a major overhaul of the bank's approach to diversity and inclusion, culminating in a landmark court report on ethnicity in the bank.

The bank aside, Fried is the co-founder of private equity business Grovepoint, founded in 2010 with his childhood friend, Leon Blitz,



Sir Bradley Fried

from Cape Town. "This business was backed by Investec and by Natie Kirsh," says Fried. "The Kirsh family, as well as Stephen Koseff and Bernard Kantor of Investec, have been central to my past 23 years."

Fried says the biggest highlight has been the opportunity to work with some of the world's great leaders and teachers, many of whom are South African. "Natie, Stephen, and Bernard, together with some extraordinary mentors in the United States and the UK, have taught me great lessons. In addition, I have known both of my business partners, Leon Blitz and Gary Narunsky, for 50 years – and I'm 56. They grew up with me in Cape Town, and their presence is a constant reminder that it's important to understand the value of things rather than the cost of them."

Fried visits South Africa every year. "My mother, Joan, and my brother, Greg, and his family, still live in Cape Town. My wife, Lauren, spearheads some amazing social-impact projects in Cape Town. My sons, Daniel and David, regard Cape Town as a warm and loving home."

Some years ago, Fried and his family visited the Habonim campsite for the 60th-anniversary of Habonim in Onrus in the Western Cape. "I met my wife at Habonim camp, and it was a complete joy to take our sons to the place where such incredible relationships and memories were formed," he says. "When things get really tough in the world and tension starts to increase for some utterly awful reason, I shut my eyes for a very brief moment and imagine that if I wish and wish really hard, I'll be back on the Habonim camp bus heading to Onrus."

## GENESIS SHIURS WITH RABBI CARLEBACH HOW TO CELEBRATE FATHER'S DAY MONTH FROM A TORAH VIEWPOINT



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# Antisemitism envoy calls for Jewish community to face tough questions

TALI FEINBERG

She's an actress, an author, producer, keynote speaker, and mother who has just added one more role to her resume: special envoy for combating antisemitism and the delegitimisation of Israel. Noa Tishby is certainly a force to be reckoned with, and she's bringing her knowledge, wisdom, and expertise to the social-media platforms where the debate about Israel is its most intense.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from California, she says it's vital for Jewish communities to address the tough questions. If discussion of Israel's complex history and politics isn't explored in-depth in safe communal spaces, then young people will be confronted with these questions in emotional, inflammatory moments on campus or other environments, where misinformation is often spread. Meanwhile, she's taking on this task in an accessible, relaxed manner that's clearly gaining attention. She has 258 477 followers on Instagram, and 133 937 followers on Twitter, and counting.

“THE THING ABOUT ANTISEMITISM IS THAT UNLIKE A LOT OF OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION, IT’S NOT NECESSARILY A ‘LOOKING DOWN’, IT’S ALSO SOMETIMES ‘LOOKING UP’.

In a recent Instagram reel, she explored the double standards after the tragic death of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh: “Here are some facts you may not know. The international federation of journalists, the IFJ, conducted a report on the number of deaths of journalists in war zones between 1990 and 2020. According to the report, 2 658 journalists have been killed in that period of time. Three hundred and forty were killed in Iraq, 178 were killed in Mexico, 160 in the Philippines, 138 in Pakistan, and 116 in India. Twelve of those cases were *Al Jazeera* journalists. Seven of them were killed in Syria, one in Yemen, one in Libya, and the case from last week. Each one of these deaths is horrific, but you can't name the other 2 657 journalists, you can name only the one which was killed in clashes between Palestinian terrorists and the Israeli army.

“In any of the other deaths, we didn't see such vitriolic, hateful, horrific reactions and rhetoric as we've seen shown by the international community, social media, celebrities, and the United Nations towards Israel. This is what we call a double standard. It's rooted purely in sometimes subconscious antisemitism – anti-Jewish racism. So please, just think about that for a minute as well, okay. And rest in peace,



Noa Tishby

Shireen.” Born and raised in Israel, she divides her time between Los Angeles and Tel Aviv. Asked why she took on this role, she says, “This is the first time Israel has had a special envoy for combating antisemitism and delegitimation. The new Israeli government and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid have realised the importance of a position to fight antisemitism which, as we know, is growing by the minute. “So I couldn't say no, even though it's an overwhelming proposition. I joke that I'm destined to fail, in some sense, because antisemitism has been around for thousands of years. It's the oldest form of discrimination and hate and is still practised today, and there's no world in which I – or anybody else – is going to end it. Our job is to be the bearer of knowledge, to fight this hate, and make sure that the next generation deals with less of it. Obviously, it's a huge undertaking, but I still want to make a difference.”

The most uplifting aspects have been “seeing the amount of work being done to fight antisemitism throughout Jewish and non-Jewish communities all around the world. I've been finding a lot of new allies and people – Jews and non-Jews – who are fighting the fight, and I'm honoured to be in the trenches with them.”

Her ultimate vision for Israel is for it to “keep thriving, and to be accepted as a nation among nations, which is what the founders of Zionism hoped for. This means stop with the double standards, stop with the bias. That's my hope.”

She emphasises that antisemitism is ever evolving. “It's not purely an 'old school' type of hate,” she says. “The thing about antisemitism is that unlike a lot of other forms of discrimination, it's not necessarily a 'looking down', it's also sometimes 'looking up'. So, the Jews can be perceived as 'the worst of humanity' but also as 'the best of humanity' and 'therefore we're going to hate them'. It can also take the form of conspiracy theories. In every generation, it evolves into something different.

“My friend, the author Yossi Klein Halevi, identified this. He identified that 'the Jew' has been used throughout society and in every generation to describe whatever it is that's loathsome in society at that moment in time. So, in the days of Communism, the Jew was the 'capitalist pig'; in Nazism, the Jew was the ultimate race polluter; in early Christianity, the Jew was the 'Christ killer'. Today, what's the worst of humanity in polite society? It's racism, colonialism, and apartheid. And lo and behold, who's blamed for these loathsome qualities? It's the Jewish State. This is how antisemitism has evolved and how it manifests today.”

On top of her other ventures, Tishby is an accomplished writer and author.

In 2021, she published her first book, titled *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth*. United States Congressman Ritchie Torres says the book is “a powerful antidote to the widespread misunderstanding and wilful misrepresentation that often obscures the truth about Israel. Much like the book itself, Noa is a fearless truth teller in an age of fashionable lies.”

“Heartfelt, funny, and genuine – for anyone confused by the furious debates about Israel, time spent with Noa's book feels less like a college class than like drinks with a smart and

passionate friend,” writes *New York Times* contributor and author Matti Friedman.

“I wrote my book to provide what I feel is the first fun, simple guide to understanding Israel, its history, and its people,” says Tishby. “It gives a clear, concise, easy-to-digest explanation of what Israel is. I know a lot of people have benefitted from it, whether they are Israel experts or not at all. People who know nothing about Israel enjoy it, and people who know a lot still enjoy it. I encourage everybody to read it and learn to answer the tough questions.

“The BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement isn't about peace and justice. It will pretend it is, but it's cloaking its dagger. BDS is about dismantling the state of Israel. We need to ask it how many more countries it would like to dismantle. That puts it on the spot, because it's targeting the Jewish State and no other. We need to expose it for what it is: an antisemitic hate movement.”

Finally, she says, “I've heard incredible things about the South African Jewish community and look forward to visiting one day.”

## SA's own 'rocket scientist' reaches for the stars

TALI FEINBERG

When Daniel Frohlich studied aeronautical engineering at Wits (the University of the Witwatersrand), he needed to do an internship as part of his second year. Deciding to do it in California where his friend lived, he walked into a tiny start-up that had just 15 employees. Young, naïve, and with nothing to lose, he asked for an internship. That company was SpaceX, which designs, makes, and has launched the world's most advanced rockets and spacecraft. Frohlich was its first intern.

The King David Schools alumnus' journey has followed a similar trajectory to the now famous company and its founder, Elon Musk. “I always dreamed of going to space,” Frohlich told the *SA Jewish Report* from his home in Las Vegas. “I've lived my wildest dreams working at SpaceX and then working on more down-to-earth things at the Boring Company. After a seven-year 'sabbatical' I'm going back to SpaceX to work as a build engineer on Starship. This is the vehicle which will take humans back to the moon and on to Mars one day.”

He has even spent time with the eccentric and controversial Musk. “He's intense and focused. His singular goal is getting to Mars. Anything that doesn't get him closer towards that goal, he doesn't have time for. He's obviously super smart, so it's a bit intimidating talking to him, but we've had some times where he let loose, and he's actually full of jokes and really funny. Physically, he's a big guy, so he has a real presence.”

So how did Frohlich get to this point? In 2003, he moved to the United States to finish his BS Aerospace Engineering at the University of Southern California (USC), after which he pursued an MS Astronautical Engineering, focusing on rocket propulsion and orbital mechanics. He graduated from USC in 2007. The master of ceremonies was none other than Neil Armstrong.

After graduating, he worked at SpaceX for almost eight years, starting as a structures manufacturing engineer working on the Dragon spacecraft. His first project was to get the primary structure of the vehicle built, but he had a hand in almost every other structural component that went into the vehicle. He then became the manager of the Dragon

Structures Manufacturing Engineering team, which was responsible for all of the parts of the spacecraft. He then worked on redesigning the capsule to be waterproof so that it could be fully reusable.

In 2018, he joined Musk's other venture, the Boring Company, which creates transportation, utility, and freight tunnels to solve traffic problems and enable rapid point-to-point transportation. As production engineer, he helped get the first one mile (1.6km)-long tunnel built in Los Angeles, led the effort to construct the extraction shaft to pull the machine out of the ground, and then had an elevator installed in it for lowering

strong at the same time, so few years to give you wings to fly, show you the stars to guide your ship by.”

His advice to anyone wanting to follow a similar path is “just go for it. Don't waste any time, just start taking shots. Reach out to anyone you know, and even people you don't, and tell them what you're trying to do. Make connections. Be prepared to work very hard. Get involved in as many hands-on projects as you possibly can. Build things! Creating things (physically like bridges or radio-control cars) or digitally (like software programmes) is how you turn theory into something real. Don't just be academic (book smart). Whenever I interviewed

people for a job at SpaceX or the Boring Company, it wasn't all about your GPA (how many distinctions you got). I was more interested in what else you did in your spare time, what projects you got involved in, and what things you've made of which you're proud.”

Asked if his upbringing in the South African Jewish community had an impact on him, he says, “It sure did. My family and community gave me the confidence to leave home and give my dreams a shot. I have good memories

of my time at King David Victory Park. I learned some very valuable lessons which I still remember to this day, such as from Meneer Ludtke, when he said 'better the devil you know than the devil you don't know'.

“More importantly, I remember being taught always to 'manage expectations'. I think this is one of the most important lessons I carry to this day. These days, when I find myself at the bottom of a large shaft which will one day be an awesome underground station, looking at the different layers of sand and stone and marvelling at how much water there is underground in this desert, I think of geography class with Mrs Wilsher (I hope she'd be proud!).

“The Jewish community in South Africa is super special,” he says. “The Jewish community in Vegas is also very close and special. We shouldn't take that for granted.”



Photo supplied by Daniel Frohlich

Daniel Frohlich with his children at Starbase, Texas

cars into the tunnel. In 2019, he moved with the company to Las Vegas.

At the Boring Company, “We finished the underground tunnel system, and then I worked on the operations side of things required to run it efficiently. The Vegas Loop is running and is expanding. A tunnel connecting to Resorts World [the newest hotel on the strip] was just completed last month,” he says.

Not every kid gets to say their dad is a rocket scientist, and it's clear that Frohlich enjoys sharing his exciting work with his young children. His son's middle name is Apollo, and on 28 May, he tweeted a photograph of himself and his kids at Starbase, Texas, with starships in the background.

Alongside, he tweeted lyrics from the late Johnny Clegg's song *Cruel Crazy Beautiful World*: “When I feel your small body close to mine, I feel weak and



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**Sports Director, Maccabi WP:** Saul Jackson  
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**Medical Team:** Dr Brad Gelbart; Dr Ethel Barsky; Daniel Sauer (manager)  
Physios: Adam Speechly; Anthony Mofsowitz; Darryn Edinburg; Jason Cohen; Johan van Wyk (rugby); Petra Zikmann; Shira Kruger

### CHESS

**OPEN:** Jacob Berman  
**JUNIOR:** Gabriel Jacobson

### CRICKET

**JUNIORS**  
**Convenor:** Joanne Tankle  
**Coach:** Matthew Townshend  
**Captain:** Joshua Jacobs  
**Vice-captain:** David Teeger  
Benjamin Bernstein  
Benjamin Stone  
Dean Hackner  
Dovi Porter  
Ethan Greenstein  
Ethan Werb  
Giyan Sulcas  
Jacob Sacks  
Jamie Gronemann  
Jamie Meyersfeld  
Jordan Gamsy  
Jordan Meyers  
Nathan Beswick

**OPENS**  
**Coach:** Barney Girnun  
**Manager:** Riley Freeman  
**Captain:** Matt Rosen  
Adam Lazarus  
Benjamin Lazarus  
Benji Schaffer  
Benji Gruskin  
Daniel Poulton  
Gabriel Gad  
Gavin Kaplan  
Joshua Lang  
Lee Gruskin  
Saul Anstey  
Wayne Josselsohn  
Yoni Fingleson

### CYCLING

**JUNIOR:** Ryan Isserow

### FOOTBALL

**U16 TEAM**  
**Convenor:** Darryn Edinburg  
**Head Coach:** Miguel Dos Santos  
**Coach:** Peter Twigg  
**Captain:** Lupemba Fisher  
**Vice-captains:** Seth Sklar; Daniel Waisman  
Adam Selikow  
Alexand Franco  
Daniel Miller  
Eitan Lewis  
Gavriel Ben-David  
Jacob Lever  
Joshua Bayhack  
Joshua Uria  
Judd Suckerman  
Jude Orbach  
Mathew Freed  
Noah Brasg  
Sammy Kotzin

### FUTSAL

**Convenor:** Saul Jackson

**U16 TEAM**  
**Co-Coaches:** Dylan Greenberg; Zach Israel  
**Captain:** Daniel Bieber  
**Vice-captain:** Judd Jocum  
Adam Merris  
Daniel Sha'altiel  
Jamie Palmer  
Jesse Katz  
Judd Kilborn  
Kai Seeff  
Liam Chin  
Troy Chilchik  
Zachary Valkin  
Zack Musikanth

**U18 TEAM**  
**Coach:** Reon Siyaya  
**Manager:** Jade Spiro  
**Captain:** Ben Vogelmann  
**Vice-captain:** Nicholas Arelisky  
Ben Isserow  
Ben Levy  
Daniel Nathan  
Jared Mandelstam  
Justin Cohen  
Leo Letschert  
Sam Cohen  
Samual Selikow  
Yonatan Kuti-Alexander

**OPENS**  
**Coach:** Reon Siyaya  
**Captain:** Jordan Arelisky  
**Vice-captains:** Aaron Isserow; Brad Reingold  
Adam Gorin  
Benjamin Sulcas  
Gadi Cohen  
Jamie Sulcas  
Justin Lazarus  
Keir Scherzer  
Shai Feldman  
Shane Silverman  
Zach Brivik

### GOLF

**Convenors:** Daniel Egdes; Simone Cohen  
**MASTER:** Moshe Duek

### KARATE

**OPENS**  
Greg Cohen; Noah Maisel

### MACCABI MAN

**OPEN**  
Trevor Garvin

### NETBALL

**Manager:** Carla Kassel

**U16 TEAM**  
**Coach:** Roxanne Goddard  
**Captain:** Morgan Noach  
**Vice-captain:** Ariella Gnesin  
Alexandra Barak  
Amy Vogelmann  
Anna Lieberman  
Eliya Ossin  
Ella Rosmarin  
Gila Smith  
Hannah Nomis McKerr  
Lara Mervis  
Leilah Jankelowitz  
Mia Nomis McKerr

### U18 TEAM

**Coach:** Tiffany Waner  
**Captain:** Danielle Novick  
**Vice-captain:** Samantha Sher  
Gabriella Bailey  
Hannah Gnesin  
Indya Fuchs  
Katya Golan  
Laila Dave  
Tali Pimstein  
Tayla Harcombe

### PADEL

**OPENS**  
Elian Wiener & Rob Sulcas (Convenors)  
Aaron Marks & Jesse Nathan  
Adrian Jacobs & Brad Stephens

### RUGBY

**OPENS**  
**Convenor:** Brad Berger  
**Manager:** Anton Chait  
**Coach:** Robbie Fleck  
**Assistant Coach:** Gary Gold  
**Captain 15's:** Hacjivah Dayimani  
**Vice-captain 15's:** Jordan Chait  
**Captain 7's:** Tom Walker  
Aston Silver  
Bradley Van Niekerk  
Brandon Sweet  
Brent Shone  
David Geffen  
Dean Gordon  
Dylan Coll  
Dylan Hirschowitz  
Jake Rosen  
Jared Sichel  
Jay Reiback  
Jayson Hirshovitz  
Joshua Pimstein  
Judd Silverman  
Kian Davis  
Kiernan Rabie  
Kym Hirshovitz  
Nicholas Zille  
Richard Bryant  
Shauli Asayag  
Stephan Annandale  
Thomas Berman

### SURFING

**OPENS**  
Katie Goldreich; Levi Kruyer

### SWIMMING

**JUNIORS**  
**Convenor:** Gila Carrol  
**Coach:** Mia Russell  
**Boys' Captain:** Michael Hendler  
**Boys' Vice-captain:** Ethan Mazor  
**Girls' Captain:** Ashley Henegan  
**Girls' Vice-captain:** Thea Moodley  
Abby Novos  
Aryeh Froom  
Benjamin Garb  
Cameryn Suckerman  
Dalya Swartz  
Dylan Bloch  
Estella Mann  
Ethan Feinberg  
Ethan Lunt  
Gabriel Spiro  
Gabriella Smith  
Gal Marks  
Jaime Diamond  
Lior Hyman  
Noah Arelisky  
Rachel Smith  
Sienna Wilensky  
Taine Lunt  
Tali Smookler  
Taylor Henegan

### OPENS

Ava Rathner  
Chad Mayer  
Chloe Gershuny  
Hannah Robertson  
Matthew Carrol  
Shane Feinberg  
Tristan Goldstein  
Zack Waters  
Zak Rachelson

### MASTERS

Clifford Garrun  
David Letschert

### TABLE TENNIS

**JUNIOR**  
Keira Sorour

### TENNIS

**JUNIORS**  
**Coach:** Josh Luck  
**Boys' Captain:** Jared Marcow  
**Girls' Captain:** Mikayla Plitt  
Aiden Goralsky  
Alexa Reubenson  
Daniel Goralsky  
Daniel Markman  
Ethan Grusin  
Jaymie Goldberg  
Leora Joffe  
Levi Sweidan  
Rebecca Widan  
Samuel Froom  
Sara Joffe  
Teagan Goldsmith  
Zack Rogoff

### MASTERS

Jacqui Boyd  
Philip Froom

### TRACK AND FIELD

**JUNIOR**  
Tali Kamener

**OPENS**  
Adam Lipschitz, Noah Ditz

### WATER POLO

**U18 TEAM**  
**Convenor:** Jane Letschert  
**Coach:** Mathew Jacobson  
**Co-captains:** Benjamin Scher; Caine Letschert  
Aaron Levin  
Adam Lieberman  
Ben Reiback  
Bryce Herbert  
Jonathan Bregman-Frangos  
Jordan Osrin  
Matt Whitesman  
Oliver Ditz  
Pierre Du Plessis  
Samuel Berchowitz  
Seth Varkel

### WEIGHTLIFTING

**OPENS**  
Greg Surmany; Keegan Cohen; Reegan Finkel



# Mazeltov, Your Majesty

OPINION

This weekend, the answer to a question that has baffled many for 70 years was finally revealed with the help of a very famous bear – what does the Queen carry in her ever present Launer handbag?

Her Majesty taking tea with Paddington Bear, complete with marmalade – or is that Ma’amalade? – sandwiches, as the lovable bear thanked the monarch for her extraordinary 70 years of unparalleled service during this past weekend’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations, brought two great British icons together.

Though we may know that Her Maj carries around a marmalade sandwich, probably lipstick, and some device that signals courtiers to remove her from a trio of erstwhile family members, not many know about the relationship between the royal family and Jews.

The Queen has faced intense criticism over the years for never visiting Israel. What many don’t realise is that foreign trips are made at the behest of the British Foreign Office wanting to deploy the soft diplomacy and convening power that royalty has.

Respected historian Andrew Roberts once said that the British government had a de facto ban in place on state visits by Queen Elizabeth II to Israel. “The true reason of course, is that the FO [Foreign Office] has a ban on official royal visits to Israel, which is even more powerful for its being unwritten and unacknowledged. As an act of delegitimisation of Israel, this effective boycott is quite as serious as other similar acts, such as the academic boycott, and is the direct fault of the FO Arabists. It’s therefore no coincidence that although the Queen has made more than 250 official overseas visits to 129 different countries during her reign, she has ever been to Israel on an official visit,” Roberts told attendees at a gala dinner in London.



Queen Elizabeth II and Paddington Bear

Photo: Screenshot from YouTube

Another little-known fact is that the Queen hired an Orthodox Jewish mohel to circumcise her son, Prince Charles. The tradition of British monarchs hiring mohels goes back centuries.

Even though the Queen has never visited Israel, she has had strong ties with the Jewish community and has met Holocaust survivors on many occasions.

One such meeting was at an event marking 60 years of liberation of Bergen Belsen. The late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks who was present, later recounted, “When the time came for her to leave, she stayed. And stayed. One of her attendants said that he had never known her to linger so long after her scheduled departure. She gave each survivor – it was a large group – her focused, unhurried attention. She stood with each until they had finished telling their personal story.”

Though the Foreign Office forbade royal visits to Israel, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh visited in a private capacity several times for a very honourable reason. His mother, Princess Alice, who is buried in Jerusalem,

has been honoured by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Amongst the Nations for saving the lives of a Jewish family during the Holocaust.

But it’s the two future kings and their wives that have really built strong ties with Israel.

Prince Charles, once ridiculed for his propensity to prefer conversing with plants than politicians and famously intellectual, has said that he prefers to regard himself as the defender of faiths rather than of “the faith”, that being the Church of England, which the monarch heads. To this end, he works hard to

promote coexistence. The Prince of Wales counted Lord Sacks as a close friend, and lamented his passing.

Prince Charles is patron of World Jewish Relief as well as the Holocaust Memorial Trust, a patronage that once belonged to the Queen. He’s also patron of the Jewish Museum, JLGB for Jewish youth across Great Britain, and numerous others. To coincide with International Holocaust Memorial Day, the Prince commissioned portraits to be painted of several Holocaust survivors accompanied by a documentary on the BBC. The Prince has made several official visits to Israel, including for the funeral of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. He gave a notable private donation to The Peres Centre for Peace. His wife, the Duchess of Cornwall, visited Auschwitz, representing the Queen.

Camilla is also known to enjoy a hora or two. During her visit to Jewish Care’s Brenner Centre in East London to celebrate the organisation’s 80th anniversary, the duchess danced with delighted residents.

Prince William was the next king in waiting to visit Israel. The Prince struck all the right notes visiting the Kotel, Yad Vashem, the grave of his late great-grandmother, met young innovators, took a stroll with Eurovision sensation Neta, and even played volleyball on the beach and football with young Israelis and Arabs – all without breaking a princely sweat. The Prince also proved that he could navigate some tough political terrain, shuttling between Israeli and Palestinians leaders without going “there”. Royals are above politics.

On a state visit to Poland, Prince William and his wife, the Duchess of Cambridge, visited Stutthof Concentration Camp. It would be a life changing experience for the duchess.

Since this seminal meeting, the duchess has dedicated herself to Holocaust education and has taken photographs of survivors for the Imperial War Museum’s exhibition, included them in her book *Hold Still*, engaged with survivors and young educators via Zoom, met with Windermere child survivors, attended Holocaust Memorial Day events, and more.

Though the history of the royal family, Jews, and Israel may have had its awkward moments in recent history, it looks like the future is extremely positive. Just in time to lift a glass of the best kosher champagne and toast to Her Majesty, the Queen, on the remarkable achievement of 70 years on the throne. Mazeltov, Ma’am, ad 120!

*\*\*A fascinator may have been worn for the writing of this article!*

• *Rolene Marks is World WIZO executive for public diplomacy and hasbara, the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum, and a wannabe royal correspondent.*

# The amazing tale of the Union of Jewish Women

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The late President Nelson Mandela called them “an amazing group of women” because of the work they had been doing in the townships since 1994.

But that’s just the tip of the iceberg for the Union of Jewish Women (UJW), which celebrated its 90th anniversary last year.

In 1931, it started as a small group of women who were committed to making a difference in the South African Jewish community.

Today, the UJW has about 1 500 members and boasts branches in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban, Gqeberha, and East London. It’s the only women’s organisation in South Africa that works for Jewish and outreach communities, says National President Bev Goldman.

A couple of years after its formation in Cape Town, the UJW became a formal organisation based on three pillars – Judaism, feminism, and broad humanity. “The women became involved in communal affairs and education – not only Jewish education but in outreach communities,” says Goldman.

“Right from the beginning, the members of the union were involved in outreach projects across the country. With an enormous amount of poverty and in areas where there wasn’t sufficient education or medical treatment, the union got involved in fighting for women’s rights and improving the situation for everybody.”

The UJW became a force to be reckoned with, says Goldman. Its action resulted in South African Jewish women voting for shul committees for the first time, in 1933.

“In 1936, the union had its first national conference,” Goldman says. “In 1940, Jewish women were allowed to join the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. By 1941, there were 52 branches of the union across the country. In those days, there were many

little country and rural communities, and the Jewish women in those communities were encouraged to become part of the union. They started their own branches. Suddenly, within 10 years, all the little towns had a branch of the union. They made a huge impact.”

Goldman became a member of the UJW in the 1970s before becoming part of the executive in about 2006. “Then I joined manco, [the management committee of the of the UJW], and my mentor at that time was Lynne Raphaely,” recalls Goldman. “I admired what she was doing for the union. Because of her, I decided to become more active in it. The rest is history. Here I am today as national president, which is a huge privilege and honour. It’s something I never imagined in my wildest dreams.”

“While I was sitting at the table, I chatted to a few of the women and thought, ‘I would love to get involved.’ So, I joined a group and the executive at the same time.”

Kallmann says one of the UJW’s biggest achievements is the Kensington crèche in Cape Town it has been managing for 80 years. “In 1942, the union opened a crèche there. We raise funds for it, help manage the staff, and provide food and teachers in collaboration with other organisations.”

What also stands out for Kallmann is how the UJW has responded to crises. “For example, in the 1940s, the union was very involved in the war effort. It got involved in the South African war appeal.”

The UJW has also invested itself in the education of girls and women. “In Cape Town, for example, the Hebrew School

in building schools, employing teachers, and providing bursaries, especially for underprivileged women, to study nursing and teaching. It brought teachers from King David Schools in Johannesburg to the townships to teach early childhood education methods.”

The UJW is also involved in adult education, especially for its members – a seminar it had on inherited diseases resulted in the formation of the South African Inherited Diseases Association, says Kallmann.

Two of the union’s groups which strike a chord for Kallmann are its Simcha Group, which runs an aftercare facility in Khayelitsha, and its Constantia Group, which provides meals and teddy bears for children who appear in cases of abuse.

About 1 397km away, Johannesburg UJW’s flagship project, Kosher Mobile Meals, cooks and delivers food to more than 100 elderly Jewish people 365 days of the year. “In some cases, the only human connection some of these elderly people have is with the volunteer who delivers the meals,” says Goldman.

Recently, the UJW made a substantial donation towards the Jewish National Fund-Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael’s efforts to shelter and educate Ukrainian orphans in Israel.

Many women have shone through the UJW. “All the presidents have been wonderful, each one of them having left a fantastic legacy, particularly the late Miriam Stein,” says Goldman. “According to women in the International Council of Jewish Women, she was the most active and incredible president of the union. Another former president, Ray Wolder, a city councillor in Johannesburg, was responsible for bringing the Israeli hippy kindergarten education programme into South Africa. Then, of course, the founder of the union, Toni Saphra. Without her, there probably wouldn’t have been a union. She was completely dedicated to ensuring that Jewish women had a voice.”

According to Kallmann, another particular heroine was Sallie Kussel, the UJW’s national organiser from the 1940s until the 1960s. “She literally built the union. She would go to every town and village and recruit Jewish women to be part of the union. There was also an amazing woman called Pearl Mandelstam, the national president of the union, who did a huge amount to grow the union and work with other organisations to do good, but also to show that Jewish women were doing good work in the general community.”

In addition, “Our volunteers are phenomenal,” says Goldman. “They are the ones who keep us going all the time.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UJW provided food for hundreds of thousands of children, particularly in rural areas, and educational packs for kids who couldn’t go to school, says Goldman. “We empower women and give them skills which will enable them to be self-sufficient.”

“Bags for New Beginnings” is a current major UJW project. “We fill baby bags with everything a new-born baby needs for its first month of life,” says Goldman. “They are distributed to provincial and national hospitals that have indigent mothers giving birth.”

Moreover, “We are working towards Mandela Day and Mitzvah Day,” says Goldman. “We will give toothbrushes and toothpaste to children in many schools. In one of the Mandela Day projects, we provided school shoes for quite a few thousand children who had never had their own pair of shoes.”

During its 90th year, the UJW invited all of its over-80-year-old members to a breakfast. “A few of them spoke about their experiences in the union and what the union means to them,” says Kallmann. “Our women support each other. The union creates many friendships and has friendship clubs, where people get together and do activities like knitting. It helps connect people who would otherwise be quite lonely.”



Kensington Creche in Cape Town, opened in 1942

In 2010, the UJW had a vacant seat at a table at a women’s event. “The fundraiser and project manager asked me if I wanted to join, and I did,” recalls Karen Kallmann, the chairperson of the UJW’s Cape Town Branch.

Association was conceptualised, funded, and run by the union for a long time until those organisations got funding from the department of education in the late 1970s,” says Kallmann. “The union was involved



# A Century of community

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## “As They Made Us” a drama familiar to Jewish families

ANDREW LAPIN – JTA

Mayim Bialik has become arguably the most visible Jewish face on TV thanks to her gig hosting *Jeopardy!* and her presence on ever-present *The Big Bang Theory* reruns. But for her latest project, *As They Made Us*, Bialik stepped behind the camera to write and direct a semi-autobiographical, low-key melodrama about a Jewish family encountering death and dysfunction.

Will it have tearjerker moments? Well, it's produced by Chicken Soup for the Soul (via its film distribution arm, Screen Media).

Dianna Agron of *Glee* fame plays Abigail, a divorced mother and full-time print magazine writer who is somehow still able to afford a sparkling house. The generic Jewish publication that employs her, titled *The Modern Jew* (no joke), must pay quite well, although her mother, Barbara, (Candice Bergen) demands to know why she doesn't yet have a cover story.

Barbara is like that, needling and poking in her adult daughter's life like many a Jewish mother, spreading ill will about others while blind to the troubles at her own doorstep: namely, that her husband, Eugene, (Dustin Hoffman, alternating between his cuddly and abrasive personas) has a degenerative illness. "He's gotta eat more!" an in-denial Barbara yells at the doctor trying to convince her he needs hospice care. "Maybe if you gave him an enema he would make room for more food."

This is a family story, so the drama focuses on interpersonal dynamics and long-held grudges. There are many flashbacks to Abigail's younger days living under her parents' roof, where we see that her father, a failed novelist who always regretted settling down with

a family, was often physically abusive to his children. Bialik, who had the cast and crew recognise the Sabbath while on set, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's sister publication, *Kveller*, that she wrote the script in the aftermath of her own father's death, shortly before Passover in 2015.

Bialik casts her *Big Bang Theory* co-star, Simon Helberg, as Abby's brother, Nathan, a hipster academic who, owing to his childhood trauma, has avoided his parents his entire adult life, leaving Abby to clean up their messes. We assume at first that Nathan's central anger lies with their father for his explosive outbursts,

but in fact it becomes clear that their mom's endless insults did the more lasting damage: "His wreckage was tangible. Hers was so insidious and disturbing."

Judaism becomes a quiet stabilising force in the story, with Abby pushing her kids to say the Shema prayer every night before bed even as her world crumbles around her, and Agron's character wearing Bialik's own Star of David necklace throughout the film. (The household appears not to keep kosher, but there are hand-drawn menorahs taped on the walls.) When grief enters the story in its third act, the Shema comes out again – as does a Yiddish song, "Voz geven iz geven un nito," that has been a lullaby in multiple generations of Bialik's family.

We never learn why Abby got divorced, although we can gather that her parents didn't exactly model a healthy marriage for her. In this and other ways, the subtleties of the film's family dynamics can be quiet as a whisper. Bialik admits that one aspect of the family's tension, the fact that Abigail is more religiously observant than her parents, goes largely unaddressed in the film, telling *Kveller*, "That's a whole other movie." Still, the one we have will probably feel familiar to many a Jewish family that has encountered grief and strife.



Photo: Screen Media

Simon Helberg, Candice Bergen, Dustin Hoffman, Mayim Bialik and Dianna Agron on the set of *As They Made Us*

## Yeshiva packs 70 bags for new mothers

Yeshiva College Primary School and the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) combined forces for a bag packing marathon on 31 May to supply basic necessities for new mothers.



The collection by the school's *chesed* and outreach committee is part of Bags for New Beginnings, a programme run by the UJW's Bev Cohen to assist new mothers.

The collection was made in the name of Livia Bat

Yishai, the six-week-old baby of primary school teacher Diasha Gershuni, who passed away on 2 May.

The school divided up what was needed for the packs into different grades, and the generosity of parents and children was beyond what anyone could have imagined – even the knitting needles came out!

The school collected nappies, vests, babygrows, soaps for mother and baby, beanies, socks, baby cups, and more. The packing of these bags marked the *shloshim* for Livia, a significant day in mourning. Together they packed 70 bulging bags ready to be distributed to clinics in Soweto. Junior children wrote cards for each bag, and coloured them in.

According to Tehillim Psalm 90, the number 70 represents a full life lived. Seventy years and 70 bags in the name of a pure soul who left this world too early. As Cohen said in her short message to Grade 6 students, "It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."

## Yeshiva nets netball league prize

Yeshiva College's Under 10 netball team won the District 9 League last weekend, in which more than 50 schools participated. Well done to the girls and coaches!



Yeshiva College Under-10 netball girls

## KDVP Primary gets festive on Yom Yerushalayim

King David Primary School Victory Park hosted a Yom Yerushalayim Fest on Sunday, 29 May. There was a play pen for bunny rabbits, camel rides, a silent disco, various stalls at a *shuk*, and fun inflatable rides for the children.



Georgia Koffler and Olivia Freed from King David Ariel with Ruby Fine and Lexi Abrahams from King David Primary School Victory Park

## Special women at WIZO's 108th AGM

Batya Bricker, author of the *Goodbye Golda*, was guest speaker at the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg's 108th annual general meeting on Thursday, 2 June. Bricker spoke about the special women featured in her book.



Batya Bricker

The AGM also featured messages from World

WIZO President Esther Mor, and WIZO South Africa President Shelley Trope-Friedman.

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy for the South African Zionist Federation, spoke about the valuable work that WIZO does, and thanked its members for continuing the Zionist dream. Bev Goldman, the national president Union of Jewish Women, representing the combined Jewish women's organisations, brought a message of hope and optimism.

## Elphin Lodge welcomes aroma of challah baking

Elphin Lodge in Lyndhurst held a challah bake on Wednesday, 1 June, a first for the village.

Eighty-four participants of all ages joined the bake, organised by the Elphin shul committee, and hosted and sponsored by Robyn Smookler.



## Benevolence with *bikkurim*

Prior to Shavuot, Jewish schools collected *bikkurim*, which were donated to Yad Aharon & Michael and distributed to Jewish families in need of food, ensuring them a plentiful *chag*!



Sydenham Nursery School children giving *bikkurim*

### Sunday 12 June

- SAZF hosts aliya online expo. Time: 10:00 to 16:00. Contact: 011 645 2666 or info@israelcentre.co.za

### Monday 13 June

- Union of Jewish Women presents David Shapiro – Eskom, COVID-19, Russia, and the petrol price: Will happy times ever return? Time: 10:00. Entry: R40. Contact: 011 648 1053 or admin@ujw.co.za

### Tuesday 14 June

- 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

- ORT Jet presents webinar The Business and Self-Reflection Lab with Brent Spilkin. Time 09:30 to 10:30. Entry: free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

### Thursday 16 June

- Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre presents webinar series Jewish writing during the Holocaust: the Jewish world at ground zero. Time: 19:00. Contact: dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100
- Elphin Lodge shul community hosts musical concert with Debbie Mizrahi. Time: 10:00. Entry: R50. Contact: Marian 082 586 3664 or Howard 082 550 4522



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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Touching base in Israel

Shortly before Shavuot, a joint South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD)-South African Zionist Federation delegation went on a six-day visit to Israel. Zev Krengel, David Kuming, Ruby Ichikowitz, Wendy Kahn (SAZF), and I attended from the SAJBD while the SAZF was represented by its chairperson, Rowan Polovin. This being the first time in more than two years that our leadership was able to travel to Israel, the focus of the trip was on reconnecting with the government and other key figures in the administrative and communal spheres. It was an important opportunity for us to brief our Israeli partners about what has been happening in South Africa, and in turn to be updated on current issues and developments pertaining to Israel and global Jewry.

One of the highlights of the visit was meeting President Bougie Herzog, a good friend of our community of many years standing, at Bet Hanasi. Other political engagements included meeting Foreign Affairs Minister Yair Lapid, Knesset Speaker Mickey Levy, Religious Services Minister Matan Kahana, and MKs Ruth Wasserman Lande, Tzachi Hanegbi, and Nir Barkat. Outside of the political sphere, we also met the chief executives of ELAL, the Jewish Agency, and Innovation Africa, a non-profit organisation that brings Israeli solar, agricultural, and water technology to African villages.

It was a special privilege for us to be hosted by Holocaust survivor Rena Quint at her home. Nine years ago, we brought Rena out to be the keynote speaker for Yom Hashoah in Johannesburg and Durban, and she spoke warmly about her experiences with our community during that time. As recounted in last week’s column, we also partnered with Telfed in holding a successful

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

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

launch of our book, *Mensches in the Trenches*. After the lengthy isolation we had to endure during COVID-19, it was an uplifting experience for all of us to be back in the Jewish State and have personal contact once again with our supporters and colleagues. With the lockdown era now hopefully behind us, we look forward to maintaining and building on these ties as in previous years.

### University exams

On a year-to-year basis, the SAJBD is called upon to help address problems of university exams being set on Shabbat or *yom tov*. In recent weeks, we have been engaging extensively with the University of Johannesburg on behalf of students whose exams were set on Shavuot. Happily, it was possible in the end to reach an accommodation that wouldn’t prejudice the students in any way. We continue to work with the University of South Africa over other scheduling clashes that have been brought to our attention. The SAJBD will always exert itself to the utmost to assist religiously observant Jewish students and has an excellent track record of resolving such difficulties by working with the academic institutions concerned. To represent our students effectively, however, we need to be informed of any problems as timeously as possible. We therefore urge those with scheduling clashes who haven’t yet informed the Board to do so as soon as possible by writing to [sajbd@sajbd.org](mailto:sajbd@sajbd.org).

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



# The folly of focusing on the future

“Tell me,” She asked casually, as though inquiring about the time, “Is there a future for our children in South Africa?” I was late for shul on the second night of the festival of Shavuot and being late for anything isn’t something I’m comfortable with. I had walked past the family in the street at a time when they were obviously debating the issue that many are grappling with.

It took me a second to understand that it was no coincidence that I had walked by at that moment and that I needed to give it my attention. G-d, I figured, would understand my lack of punctuality. Whether my German ancestors would be as forgiving wasn’t clear, but I thought I would take that chance.

“Future for our children? Definitely not,” was my answer to her question. “But that doesn’t mean that you can’t raise them in a fantastic community, provide them with a brilliant education, and assist them to become kind, contributing, and successful humans. All while you, the parents, live with purpose and contribute to something greater than yourselves.”

Personally, I couldn’t imagine a better reason to hang around.

As Jews, we know this. When we build outside of Israel, we build in quicksand. The structures sink, our shuls get repurposed, and the community ebbs and flows and then moves north. The buildings are important only for housing a place for learning and growth and for furthering the goal of education and of community building. Understanding that brings us a step closer to answering the age-old question.

Our obsession with future generations

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



perplexes me. The expectation that we can consider the circumstances of those so far in the distance is one that I fail to understand. Instead of focusing on the foundations and the ground floors, we try and imagine 30 stories up without having any idea what that might look like.

Put another way, if we can lead productive and contributing lives as Jews, which means having both an internal community and greater community focus, and if we’re able to raise solid, G-d-fearing children, then why would we be concerned that there might be a mistake of geography? Why not do what we’re able to, and let G-d take care of the rest?

If leaving South Africa allows the factors to align in Israel or anywhere else, then that might well be the best decision. But to try make it based on a hypothetical future not only makes the decision impossible, but causes us to focus on the wrong things.

To me the answer is simple. Accept that there’s no future for the next generations. Then focus on what gives meaning, how best we can contribute. Geography, while a wonderful subject for matric, is the wrong focus. As is a future that contains more unknown factors than we can imagine.

To give our children the best chance at a successful future it’s imperative that we focus on the present.

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1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



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1923 to 1964 = R5  
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**SAUL KAMIONSKY**

When these two KDHSL teams lifted their respective trophies last week, it marked the first-ever pieces of silverware the school has won in

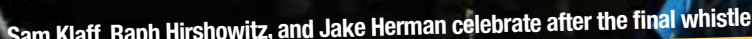
KDHSL has competed in the tournament for about seven or eight years. This year, the school played 11 matches comprising group stages and knockout rounds against large co-educational schools, including Rand Park High School, Krugersdorp High School, Fourways High School, and Bryanston High.

In the final, the first XI consisted

“This meant we needed to get good coaching staff involved for all age

After this defeat, the team's "preparation and everything changed", said Miller. "We started preparing more intensely for a

A King Edward VII School alumnus and a law graduate who represented South Africa at the Maccabi Games in 2013 and 2017, Jordaan says, “When I was at Northcliff prior to COVID-19, we dominated thoroughly and developed a big rivalry with King David. The last time King David Linksfield was in the final, I was coaching Northcliff, and we won. At the end of last year, there was an opportunity to take over the reins at Linksfield. Having coached against it for quite a while, I saw there was tremendous potential and jumped at the opportunity to try and create something that I and the school could be proud of.”



"We really have been on a quest to improve rugby at King David," says Srage. "We have a director of rugby, we have physiotherapists who work with us. Our children can use our high-performance centre, and all those things are paving off."

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