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‘We’ve got this!’ says CAP chief after hostage rescue

NICOLA MILTZ

Gary Bress was minding his own business while waiting his turn to cross a busy intersection where the traffic lights weren't working. It was 13:15 last Thursday, 9 June in Marlboro, Sandton, near the Gautrain station. Bress, who works for ChaiFM, was on his way to Sandton to meet a friend.

The next thing, he was surrounded by armed men. Before he knew it, he was bound, blindfolded, and shoved into the back of his rented Suzuki and being driven to who knows where. They grabbed his cell phone and switched off his location apps.

This was the beginning of a 10-hour ordeal for Bress, 37, and his close family, in which he would be held for ransom, not knowing if he would live to tell the tale.

Unbeknown to the assailants, a cell phone belonging to Bress' niece was left lying somewhere in the car, which would be the device that would bring Community Active Protection (CAP) and the police closer to finding the kidnapped man.

It had a family tracking application that enabled the crime fighting team to pinpoint the vicinity of where the Johannesburg man was being held.

The assailants had dumped the vehicle on the side of a road somewhere in Daveyton, Ekurhuleni, near Benoni.

Bress was then taken to a shack in an informal settlement in the township, where he was tied up and kept blindfolded for hours.

"First, they tried to access my online bank account on my cell phone and when they realised the one account had no money, they called my sister demanding cash for my release," Bress told the *SA Jewish Report* this week from the comfort of his home.

They gave him 20 seconds to call his sister, Robyn Bress, 44.

When Robyn got the call at work, she thought it was a joke at first when he said. 'Robyn, I've been kidnapped!'

She told the *SA Jewish Report*, "I thought it was some kind of sick joke until I heard the men telling me that I would never see my brother again unless I paid them R20 000."

A frantic and panic-stricken Robyn sprang into



Gary Bress (middle) and his sister, Robyn, with Lloyd Broude who helped her deal with the kidnappers

action, first calling her mother and then CAP and the Community Security Organisation.

CAP raced to fetch her, and took her to its headquarters to embark on their urgent mission of finding and bringing home her brother.

In no time, a war room and crime-specific joint operation was set up. CAP, together with a multitask team comprising the Provincial Serious and Violent Crimes Unit of the South African Police Services (SAPS), a specialised hostage negotiating team, crime intelligence, and various tactical teams hastily mobilised a search for the missing man.

"Relationships we have built up over years with the SAPS helped us to fast-track and mobilise the search," said CAP Chief Executive Mark van Jaarsveld.

CAP officials agreed that it was like finding a needle in a haystack, but they were instrumental in rescuing Bress alive and unharmed from a locked shack at the back of a dwelling several hours after the kidnapping.

Using a sophisticated network of informants and

technology, CAP and police were able to identify the area where Bress was last located roughly as Daveyton. They placed the victim's dumped vehicle under observation while undercover surveillance and operational tactical teams continued to work the area.

A reward was offered for information, and news of this spread fast. Tactical teams were able to hone in on the area located as a number of shacks within a relatively short distance from the vehicle.

Bress' sister, with help and guidance from CAP Solutions Director Lloyd Broude, continued to negotiate with the kidnappers.

"CAP was beyond amazing," she said. "Lloyd made me feel at ease, and helped me stay calm to focus on what was important – getting my brother back in one piece."

Meanwhile news of Bress' disappearance reached far and wide, and community members prayed for his safe return on WhatsApp groups.

Following intense detective work and a major team effort involving tasked informants, CAP Chief Operating

Officer Sean Jammy said the environment was "locked down to monitor-vehicle movements at entrances", which were kept under surveillance as the team continued to search.

Bress was finally tracked down between 22:00 and 23:00.

"When I finally saw a familiar face from the community, I knew I was safe," a relieved Bress told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

"I have no idea how I remained calm throughout the ordeal," he said. "I switched into a mode of speaking to them as if they were my friends, showing them respect the whole time, knowing that I needed to listen and comply with everything they said," he said.

"Time didn't exist, but it felt like the longest day of my life."

On the whole, he said the kidnappers were calm, getting agitated only when Robyn's phone was busy or when they tried to obtain Bress' passwords to his email addresses which he claimed he didn't know.

Around nightfall, when the temperature began to drop, Bress was left alone in the shack, and he found himself quietly praying.

"I prayed and prayed," he said.

He grew fearful when he heard loud noises outside and the door being stormed, not knowing what was happening. Once he recognised Van Jaarsveld's face he felt "pure relief".

Bress was reunited with his family at CAP headquarters. They embraced each other with tears of "deep gratitude", and were attended to by Hatzolah.

Robyn said that during the ordeal, she felt "anxious". However, she said, "Now I feel enormous relief that he was unharmed and returned after the most agonising 10 hours. I cannot believe this happened. It felt like a movie."

Police made two arrests at the scene, and more are expected to follow as the case is still under investigation.

"It was a significant team with a positive outcome. At the end of the day, it's awesome to know we've got this," said Jammy.

Continued on page 4>>

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A4P threatens ill Bieber with anarchy

TALI FEINBERG

People around the world have rallied in support of 28-year-old Canadian pop star Justin Bieber, who bravely announced on 10 June that he is suffering from facial paralysis. However, extremist organisation Africa4Palestine (A4P) chose the moment to threaten him, saying it would "cancel" him if he didn't cancel his upcoming performance in Tel Aviv.

"Africa4Palestine youth activists have purchased a large number of tickets, and promise to disrupt his upcoming 'Justice World Tour' concerts taking place in Cape Town on 28 September 2022 at the DHL Stadium and in Johannesburg on 1 October 2022 at the FNB Stadium," it threatened. "We call on Justin to cancel his performance in Israel or face a serious backlash."

A4P tried to get Bieber to cancel his Israel concert when it was first announced last year, but these efforts failed. Terrorist organisation Hamas also called on him to cancel, but he ignored them. Bieber is to perform in Israel on 13 October 2022. He has already cancelled some international concerts because of his illness, but at this point, his South African and Israeli events are set to go ahead. This will be his third time performing in the Jewish state. He had concerts in Tel Aviv in 2011 and later 2017, filling a venue of 50 000 people.

At the end of May, Israeli media announced that Bieber and British soccer player David Beckham would also attend the upcoming Barmitzvah of the son of businessman, Shaul Nakash, in Israel.

A4P's latest demands were accompanied by a poster with the word "apartheid" spelled incorrectly. Its statement was supported by online trolls, coming out with ugly comments like "Don't worry, the Palestinians' G-d did this to Justin"; "Half of the paralysed face is a sign from G-d?"; and "He has been cancelled by almighty G-d by himself." Bieber was diagnosed with Ramsay Hunt syndrome, a rare neurological disorder which has caused half of his face to be paralysed.



Following its statement, A4P wrote another post, sharing an image of a ticket, saying "one of the many tickets booked by activists who will #cancelBieber if he does not do the right thing and cancel his apartheid [sic] Israel concert! Activists continue to book so they can protest."

Amidst their posts about Bieber, A4P shared two images comparing Israel to the Nazis. 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.

Meanwhile, experts say that "cancel culture" is a dangerous form of bullying. According to Felicity Harrison at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, cancel culture is "a form of McCarthyism. [It] has led to a situation in which the practice of ostracism has become punitive rather than rehabilitative. Social media has replaced

the angry mob with pitchforks, using hashtags and cyberbullying instead. Cancel culture has had the effect of hardening racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes. This is a concern in all societies, and, I would argue, even more so in South Africa."

Benji Shulman, South African Zionist Federation director of public policy, points out that "Justin Bieber, along with most people, has probably never heard of the antisemitic BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement, which is desperately trying to leverage a famous celebrity for its own hateful agenda."

This was echoed by Australian rapper Iggy Azalea, who performed at the Tel Aviv Gay Pride Festival on 10 June. When asked about BDS, Azalea stated, "BDS? What is it? Cause I don't know much, but I'm really happy to come and see for myself."

Continued on page 5>>

Torah Thought

Rabbi Julia Margolis – Beit Luria Progressive Shul



Journeying without fear

The Torah portion, Shlach, describes the mission of the 12 Israelite spies sent to explore the land of Israel and report back to the nation. All except for Joshua and Caleb return with pessimistic reports. Among the frightened reflections, they share tales of seeing "giants", who trigger within the 10 spies a sense of weakness. Intimidated by these strange people, the spies' first reaction is one of self-doubt. In the face of a perceived threat, these men view themselves as small and helpless. In our battle, too, we're faced with challenges that often appear beyond our capacity to change. And yet, we also know that our strength begins in believing in our own abilities and having faith that together, we can overcome any obstacles.

We're mortal creatures, we have a beginning and an end. In between, we have life. Life is like a marriage, we stay in it because it works and we love it, or because we're afraid of the unknown alternative, or because we hope it will get better, or because we care about other people and live our lives for others, or a combination of any or all of these. There's another final reason: we believe our lives aren't ours, but belong to a divine being, and we're duty-bound to wake up tomorrow and serve and have faith in G-d.

To truly love someone is to grow together, not to idealise them as if they are the person you knew many years ago in the optimism of youth. What's true for human partners is also true for the relationship between us and G-d. I believe that true love is love with open eyes and the determination to go through whatever life brings together.

Personal change and growth can be so scary, that sometimes people would rather be stuck in something worse than go forward into the future. We might think

of a person stuck in a bad work situation, an abusive relationship, an addiction, or unhealthy grief. Even though it's "Egypt", a place of real personal unhappiness, sometimes it's more comfortable than the hard personal choices that G-d lays before us.

For the Israelites, there really wasn't a choice: they had to go forward into their destiny as a nation in spite of the hardships. They might have complained along the way and pined for the comfortable spiritual paralysis of servitude, but their journey was laid out

for them. Perhaps the fact that they moved forward in spite of their fears, complaints, and doubts, can be an inspiration for each of us to do the same. No matter how good the past seems in our memory or how scary the future might be, ultimately we must move forward, embrace our destiny, and appreciate the blessings of the present. Perception shapes reality.

May we all believe in ourselves and spread this to others.
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The kiddush in shul on a Friday night does not take the place of the obligation to recite kiddush at the Friday night meal. If for whatever reason there is no wine at home, kiddush may be recited over the challah; the blessing over bread is substituted for the blessing over wine. In this case, the ritual hand-washing normally performed prior to consuming the challah is done before the recitation of kiddush. *one hour ahead of SA time

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Suspected rapist arrested after Koleinu SA pushes case

NICOLA MILTZ

It took the bravery of one alleged rape victim and two determined Jewish gender-abuse activists to bring to book a surf-school instructor who has allegedly been tormenting women for years.

Ryan Halkett, 41, is alleged to have assaulted at least four female foreign tourists and one local woman at his once popular international surf school in the whale-watching town of Hermanus in the Western Cape.

Halkett, the owner of The Hermanus Surf School and Lodge, appeared in the Hermanus Magistrates Court last Thursday, 9 June, on charges of rape and sexual assault and was released on bail of R1 000. The Hermanus police reportedly arrested him at the lodge and searched the premises for several hours.

With the right support and the right channelling of cases to the right people, there can be effective handling of cases to a successful prosecution and final outcome

The arrest follows months of tireless effort by Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler and Rozanne Sack of Koleinu SA, a non-profit organisation which assists victims of abuse in the community.

Halkett’s alleged abuse was brought to their attention last year, when a young member of the community, herself a near victim of Halkett’s inappropriate behaviour, contacted the organisation raising her concerns. She informed them about alleged rape victims she knew of, and was advised to get them to contact Koleinu SA as soon as possible.

So began a months-long endeavour to try to stop this man from allegedly preying on more young women travellers, they said this week. “We felt so strongly that young unsuspecting women and tourists from all over the world needed to be made aware of this man,” said Hendler.

Together with other abuse and legal experts in the community, including attorney Ian Levitt, they slowly built a case. They heard and recorded several accounts by young female tourists, mostly from abroad, detailing how Halkett allegedly sexually exploited, assaulted, or raped them at the lodge while hosting them.

In September 2021, a *Daily Maverick* exposé outlined the ordeal of two of the women, both of whom had been travelling alone in South Africa.

The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to one of them, a woman from Florida, who is a model and

graphic designer. She claimed that Halkett raped her in his van in 2014 when she was 20. Still traumatised, in 2021, she began contacting other travellers who had stayed at the surf lodge via Instagram, explaining her ordeal and asking whether they had a similar experience.

Hendler and Sack implored other local women to come forward in a bid to expose the instructor and lay formal charges against him as both victims were unable to lay criminal charges from abroad. Since no formal charges had been laid, his name couldn’t be made public.

A third victim, this time from Germany, read articles online and came forward outlining a similar experience. “We now had three victims but were still stuck in terms of what we could do legally,” said Sack.

Koleinu SA continued to work with the victims, gathering information and helping to support them in coming forward.

“However, we came up against some stumbling blocks mainly because of them being outside of the country and therefore unable to lay criminal charges. We hit a few barriers along the way because of this, and were forced to explore other legal avenues,” she said.



Ryan Halkett

Photo: Facebook

“We realised early on that we were dealing with a career offender who needed to be stopped. He had a similar modus operandi with each of his victims, and in spite of being exposed in the media, allegedly continued to assault somebody else,” said Sack.

They had a breakthrough in the case a couple of months ago, when an international

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student at a Cape Town university contacted Koleinu SA with her story.

“She contacted the organisation two weeks after her assault, and Koleinu SA has been there to support her throughout. She agreed to press criminal charges,” said Sack.

It’s understood that another victim came forward this week with a similar story and has reported it to the police, bringing to five the number of known victims.

“We are heartbroken that there are other victims – this is exactly what we have been trying to prevent,” Hendler said.

Police spokesperson Frederick van Wyk reportedly said, “The alleged accused was involved in several rape and sexual assault cases that happened between 2014 and 2022 at his surf shop school in Hermanus. According to reports, the victims were all females from foreign countries who attended his surf school at different times and alleged that the accused

made them drunk and raped them at his place.”

Since the case was opened, it has taken a relatively short time for the arrest to take place, which Hendler said was encouraging.

Koleinu SA implores all victims of abuse in the community to lay charges formally with a statutory body or the police as this is the only way to secure justice.

“People come to us with their story, but are unwilling to take it further with an actual signed statement with a statutory body.

By reporting through the correct channels, a whole basket of services is opened and available, which will get the person or family

the help they need,” she said.

“As far as our community goes, we lag far behind when it comes to reporting crimes of this nature. Our community has a shocking track record on reporting.

“In this particular case, the victims haven’t been hamstrung by a community passing judgement on them. They have faced none of the added obstacles that victims sometimes experience in the community such as being wrongfully judged. The trauma that victims experience when they aren’t believed can be much worse than the assault itself, and profoundly damaging.”

Hendler said it made “absolutely no sense” given the number of sexual-abuse cases being reported to Koleinu SA on a weekly basis that there was no reporting.

“We are so frustrated by this, especially when we look at how this Hermanus case is swiftly progressing,” said Hendler.

“With the right support and the right channelling of cases to the right people, there can be effective handling of cases to a successful prosecution and final outcome,” she said.

It’s hoped the other victims in the Hermanus case will be added as co-complainants.

One of the victims said this week, “It’s so important that organisations like Koleinu SA exist. I’m thankful that there are people like the kind-hearted Wendy and Rozanne, who dedicate a huge part of their free time to help others fight for justice and give their energy to clear situations that are often just an example of structural societal problems. I always felt understood and taken seriously in my situation, they never put pressure on us in any way, and checked whether there was agreement on our side in providing information or how to move on with the next steps. Koleinu SA has provided huge support in a very careful way, and I would encourage any victim of abuse to contact it.”

Halkett has vehemently denied all charges against him. He hasn’t responded to calls for comment.

The case is still under investigation. Halkett is due back in court on 13 July.

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Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship

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

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

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

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

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



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

descendants of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won't be eligible.

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

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

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Only thing certain is mega change ahead, David Shapiro

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Nobody in the world knows if happy times will ever return, said David Shapiro, esteemed South African stockbroker, market commentator, and former deputy chairperson at Sasfin Securities.

"Analysts, commentators, economists, and central bankers are battling to understand what's happening and how things are going to play out," he said. "We haven't had a situation like this before. There's no playbook. You can't go back to the old textbooks. They don't work because of the uniqueness of what we've gone through. We had COVID-19, and now we have the war in Russia, lockdowns in China, and other issues."

Shapiro, in his thirtieth year on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and a multiple Raging Bull Award-winning fund manager, was speaking about the factors affecting the economy during his talk at the Union of Jewish Women House in Johannesburg on 13 June.

He said there was still plenty of capital, investment, and innovation across the globe, and encouraged by the continual advancement in technology, he was looking forward to an "exciting" future. "I think we're going into a 10-year period of major investment globally, massive development, and huge changes in the way that the economies work."

Shapiro envisions changes in the way business is conducted. "Computers are starting to think like humans," he said. "This means that business is going to become a lot easier. You can start typing a sentence and the computer will finish it for you in better phraseology than you could have used, or you could put a few notes in, and it will compose a song."

He said that with the emergence of 5G, phenomenal things could be achieved. "You can't have autonomous vehicles without 5G. You'll be able to have an operation in South Africa with a surgeon in another country."

Shapiro also spoke about the introduction of electric vehicles, "not in South Africa, unless you want to keep a generator in your boot", he said to laughter from the audience. "But globally, people don't want to drive fossil-fuel road vehicles anymore. They want electric vehicles."

"With the war in Ukraine and the reliance of Europe on fuel from Russia, the problem is that you can't replace it elsewhere. There's just not enough resource at the moment because there hasn't been new investment. That's why petrol and fuel prices, amongst other things, have just rocketed, and will continue to do so."

"That's not going to change. I don't think the world is going to go back to reinvesting in fossil fuels. We're going to continue with renewables – solar power, wind power, and various other means of creating energy."

Shapiro said South Africa was a blessed country with many natural resources. "We just can't make use of it, and most of that is political."

In South Africa, many obstacles stand in the way of building factories, Shapiro said. "When you want to invest, they say, 'We're going to tell you who your partners are going to be, where you can buy your wood, and where you buy your stationery.' You create so many rules and obstacles, and nothing takes place."

When COVID-19 arrived, hospitals were unprepared, the vaccine rollout was sluggish, and there was no global co-operation to formulate policy to address the disease, said Shapiro. "That's part of the reason why health is going to attract an enormous amount of money."

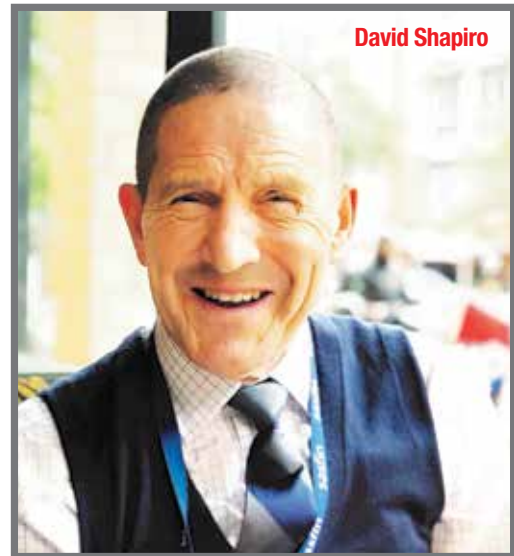
People are revenge buying, he said. "Having been locked up for so long, they're just letting go, starting to spend, and wanting to do things. Zara has announced staggering numbers of people who are getting out of their tracksuits and just going out and buying pink and canary-coloured clothes. What's also astonishing is that luxury sales are still staggering. If you want to go into an LVMH [Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton] store in certain countries, you actually have to make a booking."

Concern about inflation dominates the headlines, said Shapiro. "We haven't had inflation since the 1970s and 1980s. It's hard to understand where we are with regard to inflation at the moment. But people are struggling, and we're facing price increases which we haven't experienced globally. What brought this about is that when we came into 2022, we expected things to be tough. We weren't planning for a good year. I didn't expect the markets to do anything. We had some very good years in 2020 and 2021. The markets were very strong, driven by low interest rates, which central banks had to implement, and by stimulus measures to overcome COVID-19."

"Now, governments and central banks are trying to reverse their balance sheets to try and get life back to normal. What we didn't know was that Putin was going to invade Ukraine. That completely messed everything up. The strange thing is that neither Ukraine nor Russia are big economies in the global context, but they were big producers of food, energy, sunflowers, wheat, and maize. Now, Ukraine can't get maize and wheat out of its ports, so the price of goods goes up."

Shapiro said the biggest problem by far was Europe's reliance on Russia for gas and energy. "If you ban those imports, it will cause destruction. That's what we are battling with at the moment."

He said a "rethinking of associations" would be an offshoot of the war. "You don't want to deal with Russia anymore. You don't want to deal with China. You want to confine your dealings with authoritarian countries. You want to deal with like-minded people."



David Shapiro

'We've got this!' says CAP chief after hostage rescue

>>>Continued from page 1

"Though incidents such as this occur extremely rarely, we understand people's fear, and have some practical tips on how to protect yourself," he said.

For starters, CAP has developed a personal safety app (the CAP app), which allows members to insert their destination and expected time of arrival. If they don't check in as scheduled, the CAP team can be notified. This, combined with other smartphone apps such as Life360 and applying common sense such as checking in with friends and family, are a practical way to create comfort.

CAP was established in 2006 to counter all threats of violent crime against our communities. "We set out with the vision of developing a world-class, professionally run communal organisation with real expertise housed within our structures to answer any call, act swiftly, and achieve a positive outcome when there's a need. We're grateful to Hashem and our communities for blessing us with the tools we need to do the work we do," Jammy said.

If you suspect any foul play, please contact CAP immediately on 0861 227 227.

Cars waiting to cross into Romania at the border crossing in Solotvyno, Ukraine, 24 February 2022

Photo: Andreea Campeanu/Getty Images

Ukrainian Jews still holding out for better days

TALI FEINBERG

It's been just more than 100 days since Russia invaded Ukraine, bringing fear, chaos, and loss to millions who just wanted a peaceful life. One of those was South African filmmaker and entrepreneur Ronnie Apteker, who found his "happy place" in Kyiv. His beautiful apartment, which he calls "The Nest" was where he was raising his baby son with his Ukrainian wife. But all that changed when he and his family fled the war with just the clothes on their backs and the will to live.

They made it to Poland, and eventually came to Johannesburg, where Apteker's brother lives. Writing on his blog on 15 May 2022, he said, "When we arrived in Johannesburg, we were in such a state of shock. It's hard to describe what we're going through and I hope no one ever has to deal with something like this, but the trauma is non-stop and this war isn't letting up. All we want is to return to Kyiv soon and help rebuild. There's going to be a lot of pain and a lot to do.

"The war has caused all kinds of problems and challenges for everyone in Ukraine. Work projects cancelled or postponed, unplanned costs, money going to help others in need, and so on. Luckily my family and I are still okay, but we have had a few folk reach out to us and offer us financial help. I'm grateful to these kind friends. The thing my brother and his family gave us, which is way beyond money, is laughter, warmth, support, their loving home, care, time, patience, and much more."

Writing on his blog on 12 May, he described struggling with insomnia. "The nights aren't easy. Too much time online reading news and just staring at stories and images on the net, trying to comprehend how this can be happening. Aren't we meant to living in civilised times where things like invading other countries doesn't happen anymore? Who sends in tanks to terrorise innocent people and destroy their homes? Who does this, in this day and age? Russians do this. And their leader is an evil, small, coward of a man."

On 25 May, he wrote, "It was three months ago today that we left Kyiv, shocked and scared. We're now in a holiday resort in South Africa [staying in a holiday home], but we're not on holiday. We're still in a state of shock but we're not scared any more. We're unsure, though, about the future and for now, it feels like we're treading water. And that can be exhausting.

"I was born in South Africa, and I love it here. But my soul was restless and in Kyiv, I found a magical world that was my happy place. I'm grateful that as I write this, we're comfortable and safe. Every day I count my blessings. But all we want is to return to Kyiv." Meanwhile, Ilya Bezrucho has been able to return to Kyiv from

"I'M GRATEFUL THAT AS I WRITE THIS, WE'RE COMFORTABLE AND SAFE. EVERY DAY I COUNT MY BLESSINGS. BUT ALL WE WANT IS TO RETURN TO KYIV."

Lviv, where he stayed for three months after the invasion began. His wife and son are in Israel and he doesn't know when he will see them again.

Asked if it's safe in Ukraine's capital, he says, "Kyiv is armed and dangerous. It's a city prepared for war. There are barricades and anti-tank hedges on the roadsides, a lack of fuel, and a lot of military men in the streets. Ukraine isn't safe in any place right now, but I feel at home. I cannot leave the country due to the law, and I've got a business here and staff. We actually just reopened."

Sana Nelina has remained in her hometown of Odesa since the invasion began. Her elderly father has also remained in a town nearby. "My dad is safe. He's still in Mykolayiv, which is a frontline city under hard shelling and rocket attack almost day and night," she told the SA Jewish Report.

"Local citizens still live without pure water in their houses. They have water technically, but for drinking they need to buy it or to take it from volunteers. Almost half of the locals resettled to the other cities of Ukraine or to European countries. Odesa is under threat of rockets from the sea because there are several Russian warships and at least one submarine in the Black Sea area.

"The price of everyday needs and food has almost doubled," she says. "There's a shortage of fuel and gas due to bombed oil and gas storage. We have no salt because the Russians bombed our salt mining enterprise. Lots of people have lost their jobs. Here in the south, the sea ports are blocked by Russia. Everybody is tired of living in a war, but we understand that we can't give up. We need to win back our occupied territories and free the

Ukrainian people from the horrors which Russian invaders cause our country. It's hard to describe what they do – the filtration camps, torture of civilians and military, and lots of propaganda, because in most occupied cities they have blocked Ukrainian internet and mobile providers."

She says she can leave but "actually I don't want to leave my Odesa. The only way I think I will leave is if Russians occupy the city. I have a sister in Germany, so maybe I would go there. It wouldn't be easy. The closest borders to Europe are Moldova and Romania. It means six customs controls and hundreds of roadblocks along the way. I would need to evacuate my dad and his dog from Mykolayiv to Odesa, and then take my pets, and only then would we go to the border with Moldova. Those who have done it say it takes about two to three days in the best-case scenario."

She says not as many people are fleeing as at the beginning of the war. "Actually, lots of people are trying to come back to the more or less safe areas of the country. We have no choice but to hold the line and be together until victory. The world is standing with us, and we definitely feel this support even when we think we have been forgotten by the global communities. Thank you for caring about us. It matters."



Justin Bieber

A4P threatens ill Bieber with anarchy

>>Continued from page 2

"I'm excited to experience something new." Future acts making their way to Israel this year include American band OneRepublic and comedian Nikki Glaser.

"This boycott desperation, along with many other attempts, is likely to fail," says Shulman. "Justin Bieber will still go to Israel, as he has done in the past. The failure of BDS' cultural boycotts is nothing new. Think of the time it attempted to prevent Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane from competing in Israel at the Miss Universe pageant, and failed spectacularly. Not only did Lalela go to Israel last year, she was placed second runner-up, making South Africa proud.

"Should Justin Bieber cancel his concert in Israel and in South Africa, it would be due to health concerns. No doubt, BDS will claim victory over Bieber's cancellation, completely disregarding the true cause," he says.

"The BDS's modus operandi is to lie repeatedly and make such fallacious claims," says Shulman. "A case-in-point is when some contestants of the Miss Universe pageant withdrew from the contest, not because of some ill-conceived bullying tactic of a boycott, but rather due to COVID-19-related concerns and restrictions. The

BDS, however, was quick to claim it was their 'persuasion' that did it. The media were supplied with the correct facts, putting an end to the organisation's fake news.

"Cultural events are extremely important in today's globalised world, especially for promoting peace and engagement. BDS, with its antisemitic agenda, isn't interested in this."

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The heroes within

When word got out in the community last week that someone from our community had been kidnapped and was being held hostage, for many of us there was a deep sense of dread.

Did we know him? What were the chances of him being rescued? Would he make it out alive? What would happen if they harmed him?

As a journalist, my mind went to a horrific story I covered years back of Leigh Matthews, who was kidnapped and never released alive.

I remember her parents’ anguish while they waited in hope, and then their sheer devastation when her body was found.

I’m sure, like so many of us, our deepest fears emerge when we hear snippets like this.

However, there’s a whole other side to this event that can be told only now. That is of CAP, its police connections, and the heroes who stopped at nothing to get this man back.

They used the latest technology and equipment, and went where fools fear to tread to find Gary Bress, an integral part of our community.

Now, I say he’s integral because according to CAP, the Community Security Organisation, the Chev, and Hatzolah, every single Jewish person is a vital part of our community. Even if you haven’t been to shul since your Batmitzvah or Barmitzvah, you’re essential, and will be looked after.

What transpired for Bress and his family was, without doubt, excruciating and probably the most frightening night of their lives. However, there’s such solace in knowing that those who are there to look out for us will do their job way past any expectation (see page 1).

Suffice to say, the message is clear: don’t mess with us because we protect our own and won’t take any nonsense, crime, or hatefulness lying down.

So in the midst of the darkness of the kidnapping, there’s strength and relief in knowing we’re not alone. We’re a powerful community with organisations and people who stop at nothing to ensure the safety and security of us all.

In the same week, we hear of an alleged sexual predator in Hermanus who was finally arrested thanks to two women in our community (see page 3). Koleinu SA’s Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler and Rozanne Sack were determined that this man, who they believe to be a serial rapist, wouldn’t get another opportunity to harm anyone.

The man isn’t part of our community and, as far as we know, his victims weren’t either. But our two Koleinu SA heroines don’t just care about Jewish people, they care about stopping abuse. It turns out that it was a young Jewish woman who was almost a victim who originally alerted them to this alleged predator.

Their dedication to stopping him has been remarkable. Their persistence and dogged determination to find women who have fallen into his lair and convince them to come forward has been nothing short of outstanding.

Now it seems, more and more women are coming forward. Isn’t it wonderful to have women like Hendler and Sack on our side?

It gives me hope that those women, men, and children who are being abused right now have people whom they can trust and depend on to make sure that their attackers are brought to book. They give of their love, support and knowhow so willingly to stem the pandemic of gender-based violence.

Going back to the kidnapping last week, there were WhatsApp messages calling on people to daven for Gilad Ben Gila’s safe return. People were praying hard while CAP, the police, and others were doing their damndest to find Bress and bring him home.

A “Yiddishe kop”, state-of-the-art technology, and prayer is an awesome combination, as it happens.

We have witnessed the power of prayer so often in what appears to be fairly bleak situations.

Remember Gavi Waksman who we recently wrote about? He fell while running cross country with King David Linksfeld, and was unconscious for two weeks. Well, Gavi was discharged from hospital last Friday, and is recovering at home with his family. He still needs therapy and medical assistance, but clearly miracles do happen!

I learnt something else this week about the work our community does, in this case outreach work to help the greater community and country.

The Jewish National Fund that, in my head, was always about planting trees in Israel is doing the most astonishing work in our own backyard.

Not only is it working to enable South Africans to deal with a potential water crisis, it’s helping scholars bridge the education gap created by the COVID-19 lockdown (see page 8). The organisation is going all out to help these scholars update their knowledge of science, technology, and geography so that they can get a decent matric and become contributing members of society. This isn’t all that the JNF does, but this is what most resonated with me.

This seems such a fitting thing to learn about just before Youth Day, which commemorates a day 46 years ago, when scholars stood up against a system created to keep them down. Many of those youngsters believed in “liberation before education” and left their formal schooling to join the struggle against apartheid and fight for a better future. In this, so many fell through the cracks because they didn’t get a formal education, not even an inferior “Bantu education”.

Today, a good education isn’t optional, but COVID-19 certainly set so many youngsters back almost two years in their studies.

So, the work that the JNF is doing is a blessing. I wonder if there’s more we could do to bridge this gap? Any ideas?

Reading what Jewish school children wrote about what Youth Day meant to them is so inspiring (see page 10). I love that it’s not just a holiday to them and they have found real significance in this day.

Frankly, to me, that means our future is in good hands.

On that note, I wish all our heroes of tomorrow a smooth path to wisdom and success! I also wish the fathers of our nation a happy Father’s Day!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost

Editor



Israel can’t get a fair shake at the UN

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



The latest Israel-bashing session at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has commenced in Geneva. Meanwhile, more than 10 000 people have signed a petition calling for South Africa’s Dr Navi Pillay – who chairs the commission of enquiry that produced the new report – to be removed due to her long history of strident opinions against Israel.

The commission’s report is riddled with bias. The UNHRC is considering the “Report of the Independent International Commission of Enquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel” in its session that runs from 13 June to 8 July 2022. Can such a UN report ever be independent, fair, and objective, if its chairperson has long ago picked sides?

At a UN Watch workshop in Geneva, South African Christian pro-Israel activist Olga Meshoe Washington said, “My people’s history and experience is being used as an antisemitic tool to politically, morally, and with incredible pretzel-like twisting and legal gymnastics, legally delegitimise Israel in the hope of criminalising her.” Though this report didn’t mention apartheid, critics say the commission is laying the ground for this in future similar reports under its mandate.

Hillel Neuer, the executive director of UN Watch said, “The reason that Hamas and the PA [Palestinian Authority] are enthusiastic supporters of the commission is because they are assured of its outcome.”

At the workshop, Arab-Israeli human-right activist Yoseph Haddad said, “This report, at its core, fundamentally misunderstood the conflict and misattributed every social ill – and I mean every social ill that has an impact on the Palestinians – to Israel.”

Colonel Richard Kemp, the former commander of British forces in Afghanistan said, “It’s a little like *Groundhog Day*. Hamas triggers a war, the UN convenes a commission to condemn Israel for the war.”

The current 18-page report being considered was authored by Pillay, India’s Miloon Kothari, and Australian Christopher Sidoti. Israel wouldn’t co-operate with the commission, and refused it entry into Israel and the territories. Israel has been down this road many times before, having been badly burned by the Goldstone Report (also having its chief author as a South African) in 2009. Pillay worked on the Goldstone Report. Israel considered it would be damned if it did co-operate, and damned if it didn’t, and chose the latter course. So, the commission visited Jordan and Switzerland instead. Taxpayers’ money well spent?

The report covers what it considers breaches of international humanitarian, human rights, and criminal law by Israel, and builds on multiple previous UN reports condemning the Jewish state. It lists a litany of Israel’s supposed transgressions, including: “an occupation in perpetuity”, “discrimination and geographic, social, and political fragmentation”, “settlements and settler violence”, “forced evictions and displacement”, “attacks on civic space”, “violence against women and girls”, and “a lack of accountability”. Israel’s many detractors will say it deserves everything that the UN throws at it and more.

But make no mistake, the Pillay Report isn’t an impartial investigation into the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The report mentions “Israel” 157 times, but “Hamas” and the “Palestinian Authority” only three times each, and rather uncritically in those mentions. It’s undoubtedly,

predictably, and unapologetically one-sided. It concludes that, “What has become a situation of perpetual occupation was cited by Palestinian and Israeli stakeholders to the commission as the one common issue that constitutes the underlying root cause of recurrent tensions, instability, and protraction of conflict in both the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.”

The UNHRC as a body has been widely criticised for singling out Israel. Agenda item number seven, the “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories” is discussed at every session. The UNHRC has made an overwhelming number of pronouncements against Israel compared to other human-rights situations the world over since it took over from the equally-discredited UN Human Rights Commission in 2006. It has become a platform for relentless Israel-bashing. President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the UNHRC in June 2018, citing its extreme anti-Israel bias as one of the chief reasons. It has since rejoined under President Joe Biden, and will sit on the council from 2022 to 2024. South Africa is gunning for a seat from 2023.



In many UN bodies, developing countries hold sway by their sheer numbers. The game is fixed; the odds are stacked against Israel from the get-go. And although Israel has been trying to chip away at this bloc by strengthening ties with African, Asian, and Latin American states, the majority remain pro-Palestinian and opposed to Israel.

A statement condemning the report was signed by 22 countries, including Cameroon, eSwatini, Liberia, and Togo from Africa.

Many on the (now much depleted) Israeli left would concur that the “occupation” is the key problem. I believe that Israel, like every other state, has made mistakes and should be open to proportionate, fair criticism. But this report makes no mention of the spate of recent murders of Israelis or the incitement by the Palestinian leadership of would-be jihadis to commit these terrible crimes. It doesn’t talk about Hamas’ refusal to recognise and make peace with Israel. It doesn’t point out that the PA pays the families of terrorists and suicide bombers. It seems that, sometimes, it takes only one to tango.

In a desperate attempt at balance, it does concede, however, that “Palestinian armed groups launched indiscriminate rocket attacks towards Israeli cities and towns, which killed and injured Israeli civilians and caused significant damage to civilian objects.” It could hardly avoid mentioning this, could it?

The conclusions of the Pillay Report were probably reached before a word was even written. Whatever happens in Geneva, Israel and the Jewish world will weather the storm and live to fight another day.

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

Queers for Palestine? I prefer Pride in Israel

OPINION

ADAM SACHS



With June being international Pride month, it seems appropriate to reflect on the fact that Israel is the only country in the Middle East where homosexuality is accepted and gay peoples' human rights are recognised and protected.

There, gay people are able to participate in all parts of society and Pride parades and celebrations aren't just permitted but supported and incredibly well attended. In fact, Tel Aviv's Pride parade is one of the largest and most vibrant in the world, let alone the Middle East.

This is a far cry from the situation in every other Middle Eastern country where homosexuality is criminalised and gays are deprived of the most basic human rights and protection, let alone the opportunity to host festive Pride parades once a year. From Jordan to Turkey, Syria to Saudi Arabia, and beyond, gays are one of the most persecuted minorities in those countries who can only dream about the types of freedom and acceptance enjoyed by their Israeli counterparts.

You would think then that Israel, the lone bastion of gay rights in that part of the world, could surely count on a measure of support from progressives who claim to champion gay rights and support persecuted gay minorities. You would be wrong.

In a truly stunning rejection of sanity and reason, there are an increasing number of gay rights activists who choose to vilify Israel and rather side with one of the most homophobic societies in that rather homophobic neighbourhood, the Middle East.



This group of activists can often be found waving Palestinian flags at Pride marches across the world, along with their favourite banner proudly proclaiming "Queers for Palestine".

You might be tempted to think that these people are rightly carrying the banner for gay Palestinians who are subject to abhorrent persecution in the Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza. But again, you would be wrong.

The "queers for Palestine" crowd aren't that interested in drawing attention to the fact that Palestinian society is among the most homophobic and least tolerant in the world. Rather, these activists prefer to protest against Israel and accuse the country and its supporters of something they call "pinkwashing".

With an all too typical disregard for reality and truth, the "queers for Palestine" crowd have decided that the very real progress made in the arena of gay rights in Israel is merely a facade, a devious illusion manufactured to distract from the "evil, colonial-settler-apartheid state's" many crimes.

inevitably leftist LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) activists who profess solidarity with Palestinian LGBT minorities but more often than not, know nothing about the truly staggering degree of homophobia in Palestinian society. They'd rather blame Israel of course.

It's quite clear, then, that the allegations of "pinkwashing" have no substance, and are merely another attempt by anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, antisemitic – I'm increasingly of the view there's actually no difference between those terms: they're all just antisemites – elements on the left to attack Israel.

Do these people really think that Israel has been using its gay community to score political points with international progressives in an attempt to divert attention from the conflict with the Palestinians and other Arab neighbours?

Do these people really think that the struggle for gay rights in Israel, which spans more than 60 years, is naught but a cunning ploy to distract from Israel's

"occupation" of Palestinian land? Like I said, it's patently absurd. But it's also an especially malicious accusation because it erases and delegitimises Israel's gay community, ignoring its struggle and achievements.

The fact of the matter is that while Israel's gay rights struggle isn't yet over, Israel is, without doubt, the safest place to be gay in the Middle East. To acknowledge this and to take pride in it isn't "pinkwashing", it's simply the truth.

It's also the truth that since the early 1960s, same-sex couples have been able to live freely in Israel without fear of institutional persecution and with protection under law.



Many of the most liberal countries in the West followed suit only a good deal later when the gay liberation movement swept the West in the 1980s. That same movement brought further far reaching recognition of gay people in Israel and subsequently, gay people have been able to serve openly in Israel's military and also in parliament – incontrovertible evidence of a country making real social progress.

Show me a gay Palestinian politician or an

openly gay member of its armed forces.

Activists who genuinely care about gay rights would be far better served embracing and supporting Israel's gay rights efforts rather than trying to detract from and erase them. Those making the "pinkwashing" accusation claim to be acting in the interest of oppressed minorities, yet this rings hollow.

The most disturbing thing about the "queers for Palestine" crowd isn't just that they would delegitimise what gay Israelis have achieved, it's their total lack of concern about the deplorable treatment of gay Palestinians by their own government and institutions. The institutionalised homophobia and abuse of gay Palestinians gets little to no attention from them.

"Pinkwashing" would be pretending that queers in Palestine have any rights at all. This isn't an exaggeration. Polls and surveys consistently find Palestinian society among the most homophobic in the world. According to such polls, about 95% of Palestinians don't believe homosexuality to be acceptable.

In the words of Talleen Abu Hanna, a Palestinian citizen of Israel who became Miss Trans Israel in 2016: "I wouldn't be alive if I grew up in Palestine." But Talleen is alive and thriving and that's because Talleen lives in Israel, and that's something to be proud of.

• Adam Sachs is a specialist in digital product development and agile transformation, coaching product teams, from small start-ups to the largest of enterprises.

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Celebrating Israel, its achievements and what it has to offer SA

PETA KROST

"The history of the Jewish people can be summarised in four words: 'We are still here,'" Rowan Polovin, the chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), told hundreds of people gathered to celebrate Israel's Independence at the Israeli Embassy last Thursday, 9 June.

Ambassadors, international and local dignitaries, communal leaders, and guests applauded loudly and chuckled at this in the embassy garden, knowing that this achievement has been no mean feat. And, Israel's has been the greatest contributor to it over the past 74 years. Hence, the celebration was hosted by the embassy and the SAZF.

"Please G-d, may the Palestinians and their leadership come to terms with the fact that Israel is here to stay, that she's going

nowhere, and that the only solution for a prosperous future is to coexist peacefully with her," said Polovin.

"South Africa has an opportunity to play a mediatory role, and in order to do so, needs to stop its hateful anti-Israel rhetoric and recognise that it doesn't need to be anti-Israel in order to be pro-Palestinian."

The Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky, reiterated the importance of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, which he referred to as "our [Israel's] greatest challenge of all".

"We're neighbours, and we're bound to live side by side with each other," he told the guests. "Both of us have to compromise in order to let our people prosper.

"The Israeli people are thirsty for peace, there's tremendous support for a compromise that will lead us to true reconciliation. However, unfortunately, we

have yet to find a partner on the other side."

Belotsercovsky was, however, excited by Israel's investment in its relationships in Africa. "Today, we have diplomatic relations with 44 out of 46 sub-Saharan African states. In February, Israel confirmed its status as an observer at the African Union. Only last week, another African leader visited Israel – the foreign affairs minister of the Republic of Togo."

Polovin traced the Jewish people's history, and how it intercepted with Israel. "For almost 2 000 years, the Jewish people were scattered around the world after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the loss of sovereignty of *eretz Yisrael*. Each and every day over those 2 000 long years, across lands, cultures, and peoples, the Jews never forgot Zion and Jerusalem."

And then, 74 years ago, Israel was reborn, and is "the very embodiment of our tenacity as a people", he said.

"We celebrate the rebirth of Israel, the Jewish homeland, alongside the astounding fact that she continues not only to exist, but to thrive. We are blessed that here in democratic South Africa, we have the freedom to be Jewish, to be proudly South African with our political capital right here in Pretoria, and to be able to celebrate openly that our spiritual, religious, and eternal capital is Jerusalem."

Polovin pointed out that Israel had become one of the most successful economies in the world, creating more start-ups in the technological and medical arena per capita than any other country, and surpassing South Africa in gross domestic product even though she was 60 times smaller.

"In a new record, Israeli tech companies have raised more than R88 billion in the first quarter of this year alone," Polovin said.

"Israel, remarkably, is among the happiest nations on earth, according to the world happiness index, and Israelis have a far longer life expectancy than most countries – more than 82 years on average – and the highest birth rate in the developed world."

He went on to point out that Israel had the most efficient desalination programme in the world, which had enabled it to overcome the crippling water shortages and assist other nations. "And, after 30 years of shrinkage,



Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky with SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin

the sea of Galilee is finally overflowing its banks. Israel has enormous energy and water solutions to offer South Africa. It's high time that South Africa opened up to these opportunities."

"Israel has achieved all this in spite of 14 wars, countries bent on its destruction, antisemitic boycott movements, countless hostile United Nations resolutions, and a growing trend of worldwide antisemitism which has been further exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis."

Polovin said that in the past two years, the Arab-Israeli conflict had effectively ended, with Israel normalising relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

"A few weeks ago, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, United States, and Israel travelled to the Negev desert in southern Israel to create a forum to further the historic Abraham Accords, which has led to a warm peace between Israel and the Arab world. This metamorphosis within the Arab world, after decades of hostility towards Israel, opened new possibilities and opportunities unimagined until recently, and South Africa has an opportunity to be part of this transformation."

The ambassador said that while Israel was a dynamic country, "we didn't have it easy, and time and time again, had to face attempts to destroy our state. To prevail, we had to pay a terrible price in the lives of our

young people, who sacrificed themselves for the defence of our country. Tragically, we're continuing to pay this price today."

He said that as a Jewish State, Israel was proud of the participation of the country's minorities in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country.

"Currently, an Arab Islamic Party is a member of the ruling coalition, and we have two Arab ministers. This in addition to MPs, judges, mayors, ambassadors, academics, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and many others. Last but not least, our national football team consists of a high number of Muslim players, including the captain."

He reiterated that Israel was a world leader in agriculture, water management, cyber technology, the automotive industry, and boasted eight Nobel Prize laureates in the sciences.

Israel has so far trained more than 60 000 African experts in Israel and in different African countries, Belotsercovsky said. "Israel has undertaken different projects in the field of healthcare, agriculture, and social development in all of sub-Saharan Africa."

"In Limpopo, the Israeli non-government organisation, Innovation Africa, has connected close to half a million people to running water. The embassy has worked with NGOs to create vegetable gardens at schools and provide food for students. We have also trained young women to deal with GBV [gender-based violence]. And yet, this is only a small part of what we can do together."

JNF focuses on SA water sustainability and education

PETA KROST

For decades, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was known for raising money to develop Israel's agriculture and environment, but its focus has grown to include helping South Africa become water secure and environmentally sustainable.

JNF South Africa is also now on an "aggressive campaign" to help get scholars who have fallen behind in science, geography, and technology back on track so they can become successful contributing members of society.

So said JNF South Africa Chairperson Michael Kransdorff to a crowd of dignitaries and community members at the JNF's Gin and Jazz evening in Sandton on Sunday evening.

Before being entertained by the talented Avi Salitan and Esra Sher singing to the backing of Yochi Ress, Peter Sklair, Dan Selsick, and Posho Lebesse, Kransdorff gave the crowd some food for thought.

He introduced many to the JNF's award-winning Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre in Mamelodi, the beneficiary of the evening's events, which is "providing assistance to help South Africa better manage our coming water crisis".

Kransdorff said the JNF and its partners, KKL and the Arava Center in Israel, were expanding the centre to "bring Israeli water and agricultural technology to South Africa to help improve the lives of people here and ensure water and food security".

He said the centre had become a huge education and learning site. "More than 10 000 pupils from 41 schools come through our doors every year," he said. "Many have gone on to launch their own

environmental projects in their neighbourhoods or to pursue careers in environmental science."

JNF SA also runs an annual Mamelodi greening programme with the community in which thousands of trees are planted and people are trained in basic horticulture.

Kransdorff explained how the centre is intent on bridging the learning gap that lockdown inflicted on scholars in science, technology, and geography.

"COVID-19 has had devastating impact on poor communities. It was hard enough for wealthy children to sit on Zoom for two years, but can you imagine without all of that what schools in poor communities were able to do?" asked Kransdorff. "If this situation isn't improved

urgently, there's a real result of having a lost generation of black South Africans who will be unable to access job opportunities and be lost in poverty."

"So, we will focus on assisting the department of education with programmes at our centre that will help children recover some of this lost ground in geography, technology, and science."

Kransdorff explained how during the pandemic, the centre was also challenged with the closure and restriction of schools. So, it pivoted to train community organisations and schools to grow their own food gardens to ward off hunger.

The centre's team also launched a recycling education campaign throughout the township as a way for people to earn extra money during the pandemic.

The centre has recently been accredited as a science centre, one of only 11 in the country and the only one in a township.

If you would like to make a donation, please contact the JNF office at 011 645 2579 or b.schneider@jnfsa.co.za.



Esra Sher and Avi Salitan singing up a storm

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Youth Day – past, present, and future

Though Youth Day was inspired by the Soweto Uprising in 1976, our youth wasn't around then. The SA Jewish Report asked pupils at Jewish schools what Youth Day means to them today. Here are their written and photographic responses:

Youth Day represents so much more than an extra day off school. Youth Day honours and commemorates the sacred lives of the South African youth who died as heroes in the uprising against the Bantu education system. This encapsulates the idea that in spite of being discriminated against, South African youth were empowered by their activism. They fulfilled their civic responsibility to fight for human rights. The heroism and bravery displayed on 16 June 1976 serves as a reminder and that we need to acknowledge our power, privilege, and platforms, and use our voices to catalyse change and promote equality and justice.

Yakira Aires – Grade 11 King David Linksfield



As a young Jewish boy living in South Africa and celebrating Youth Day on 16 June, the similarities between the struggle that the Jewish people worldwide and black people living in South Africa under the apartheid system had to endure isn't lost on me. We both had to fight for our freedom after being persecuted, harassed, ridiculed, and even murdered – all because of race or religion.

As a boy about to celebrate my Barmitzvah, I'm grateful that I get to celebrate this milestone in all its glory, and to be proud of my heritage. I also realise how incredibly blessed I am to

attend a Jewish school – it feeds my soul.

My great grandparents had to fight for their freedom during Hitler's reign just as black youths fought during apartheid in 1976. They fought so that my fellow South Africans and I could live without fear of discrimination today. As a young person in 2022, I take the message from these times that we must make it known when things are unfair or wrong. A timeless Torah message is that we're all made in Hashem's image. I choose to live by this on Youth Day – and every day.

Levi Rosen – Grade 7 King David Victory Park

I've come to understand why I should be rejoicing on Youth Day. It's an opportunity to appreciate the sacrifice and bravery of the powerful young leaders of the past who got us to where we are today. It's also a day that allows us to recognise the responsibility that we, the

current youth, have to build on this legacy. With our passion to change the world for the better and to bring morality into our society, it gives me the hope that we can achieve greatness as future leaders of South Africa and *am Yisrael*.

Rafi Midzuk – Grade 11 Yeshiva College



This Youth Day, we take the opportunity to acknowledge the privilege of the education we have been afforded and the opportunities we have received in our lifetime. To us, Youth Day is an important day to reflect on the wrongdoings of the past, and the challenges many students went through during apartheid to fight for their right to a fair, just, and equal education.

This 16 June, we also are focusing on how we can make an impact on the youth in the years to come. We aim to put our education to good use, and make it our goal to educate those around us, whether by teaching something new to the family around the Shabbos table, or by helping our friends better understand algebra, we all have a responsibility to ensure the future of education in South Africa.

Youth Day also serves as a day where we celebrate young leaders, and encourage younger generations to become an active part in making change. We must come together as future leaders of our nation, and continue to forge a new, proud South Africa that celebrates and finds strength in its diversity.

Greg Landau – Grade 11 King David Victory Park



Youth Day is about freedom to choose and become the best version of yourself. It's about growth and potential. Today, we're lucky enough to live in a country where we have the freedom to do these things, but we cannot forget the time when students were denied the basic freedom to learn in their home language. Standing up for themselves resulted in them losing their lives. We can never



take for granted the basic rights our Constitution gives us. Whenever we feel that our freedom as youth is threatened, we should stand together and fight for what we believe is fair and right. Being Jewish adds another layer to this important concept because as Jews, we have always needed to fight for our right to exist as a nation. The way to protect the freedom of youth in our country is to get involved in projects that uplift people's lives and allow them to grow to their full potential.

Amira Hanson – Grade 7 King David Victory Park



As I delved a little deeper into the history of the Soweto Uprising, I began to realise that Youth Day is symbolic of the realisation of a vision fought for by thousands of South African youth. It's a celebration of youth, power, and unity and the profound reality of how we as young people have a responsibility to make an impact on the world.

We not only look back at 16 June 1976 to recall how far we've come, but to remind ourselves to keep moving forward. We still have far to go. Our fight continues to unlock our potential, create change, and positively influence our country's future.

My wish as a South African Jewess is for the fences to come down, for proverbial longer tables to be built, and for South African youth to unite, communicate, and collaborate for a better future, regardless of background, race, and gender.

Noa Nerwich – Grade 10 King David Linksfield

We cannot forget the sombreness of the event of 16 June 1976, in which South African schoolboy Zolile Hector Pieterse was shot and killed at the age of 12 during the Soweto Uprising. Though the image is imprinted in our minds and as we commemorate Youth Day to honour him and those who perished during this time, I prefer to focus on the positive aspects of this event.

To me, it's an inspiring day in which I, as a 16-year-old, can celebrate youth, freedom, progress, and democracy. Last month, Yom Ha'atzmaut brought to mind the connection between my Jewish heritage and my South African roots. Attending this event also brought to life the South African independence we now share and can celebrate simultaneously. I hope Youth Day can be commemorated this year and in the future as a joyous occasion, like Yom Ha'atzmaut, that celebrates life and liberty instead of only mourning tragedy.

Zoe Jay – Grade 10 King David Linksfield

On a chilly June morning, my matric peers and I clambered into our school bus to set out on our Soweto tour. It was a tour which would commemorate Youth Day and give us insight into the history, present reality, and future of South Africa's youth.

The youth of 1976 courageously resisted



an answer to the issues of poverty, unemployment, and general inequality in our society.

The Soweto tour gave me a glimpse into South Africa's future through the warm welcoming smiles and delicate hands of Kliptown's children. They represent hope as a result of the sacrifice of 16 June, 46 years ago.

Adam Bertoldi – Grade 11 King David Victory Park

oppression. This struggle is forever preserved in Sam Nzima's iconic photograph of a dead Hector Pieterse. It fought for equal education, seeing it as something crucial to upliftment and the eventual removal of apartheid.

Education, from early childhood development to tertiary level, is recognised today, as in 1976, as



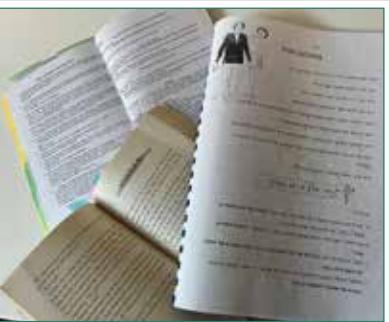
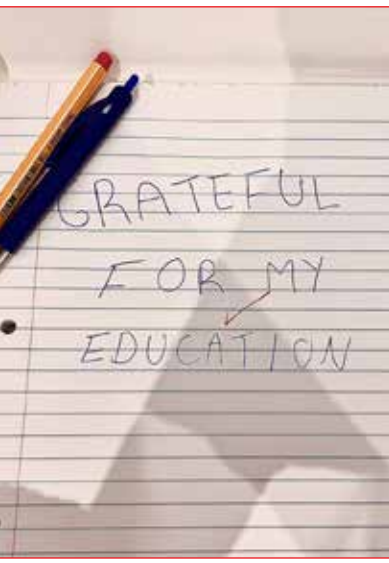
South Africa's motto is "unity in diversity". On Youth Day, that's exactly what we commemorate. We remember the protests that occurred across our country when students from different schools marched together to protest against Afrikaans as a compulsory subject.

When I think of the protests on Youth Day, I realise how privileged I am to go to a private Jewish school with a choice of subjects based on my interests. I'm aware of the difference between my privileged environment and that of those students living in deprived, impoverished circumstances. I would love to be able to initiate projects to uplift these communities such as literacy programmes to ensure all children are taught how to read, and to organise times for children from privileged schools to visit underprivileged schools to share information and skills. On this day, we should celebrate our youth who are the future of our country.

Ella Passman – Grade 7 King David Victory Park

Youth Day means immense gratitude. It's recognition that I have access to one of the most powerful tools – education. This is a basic right that so many before me weren't granted purely because of the colour of their skin. However, the youth who were denied their education were brave, and they marched for their rights. It's because of their courage that so many can be grateful today.

Jayda Sack – Grade 11 Yeshiva College



Youth Day is a day to celebrate the privilege of being able to learn in my mother tongue, and to honour the courage of youth everywhere who fight for the right to education.

Kelli Hollander – Grade 12 King David Linksfield

Youth Day is a day that created massive ripple effects. It's a day in which the youth of apartheid South Africa stood up for what they believed in. Photos of the event spread across the world, which called for change. Youth Day means that every child has the right to a proper education. Youth Day is a day of power and courage because children took their future into their own hands, and they did so in peace, when adults couldn't.

Shira Ephron – Grade 11 King David Victory Park

Al prof wins grant for teaching robots a thing or two

TALI FEINBERG

Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and robotics are all in a day's work for Professor Benjamin Rosman, one of 18 early-career researchers in the world to be selected for the prestigious CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars programme for 2022-2024. This programme is unique in that it provides \$100,000 (R1.6 million) in unrestricted research support to pursue high-risk, high-reward ideas. Rosman is passionate about growing AI education across Africa, and highly recommends going into this field, which he believes is "the most exciting thing that anyone could work on."

"There are very important ramifications that AI can have in every sphere of life, ranging from affecting our understanding of intelligence as a scientific question, to resolving problems such as climate change and poverty," he says. Chosen for their outstanding early-career research in diverse fields, being a CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholar gives researchers like Rosman the freedom to take the kinds of intellectual risks that are essential for creating truly transformative knowledge. The CIFAR is a Canadian-based global research organisation, and this year, it's commemorating 40 years of exploration of the most pressing questions facing science and humanity.

Describing himself as a "very proud South African", Rosman grew up in Johannesburg, and went to Crawford, matriculating in 2003. "I then went to Wits [the University of the Witwatersrand] where I did a BSc Honours in computer science and a BSc Honours in applied mathematics. I was really interested in computers and possibly going into gaming. But then I discovered that I was really excited about the science itself. I chose to study abroad – I wanted to do a Masters and there weren't any opportunities to do that in my field of interest in South Africa. So I ended up doing my Masters at the University of Edinburgh, and then a PhD there as well. It has one of the largest computer science departments in the world, and it was a really exciting environment to be in."

Rosman chose to come back and contribute all that excitement and expertise to his home country. "I always wanted to come back to South Africa. I had to go abroad to study, but I wanted others to have the option to work in these fields – AI, machine learning, and robotics – in South Africa. So I've dedicated a lot of my time to working on that – to growing the African machine learning community through a number of initiatives, such as the Deep Learning Indaba." The organisation, of which Rosman is a founder, works towards the goal of Africans being not only observers and receivers of ongoing advances in AI, but active shapers and owners of these technological advances.



Professor Benjamin Rosman

Rosman was selected from more than 200 eligible applications from 32 countries for the Global Scholars programme. Recently promoted to full professor in machine learning and robotics in the School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics at Wits, he also runs the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence and Learning Laboratory, and is director of the National E-Science Postgraduate Teaching and Training Platform. In 2017, he was the recipient of a Google Faculty Research Award in machine learning, and a 2021 recipient of a Google Africa Research Award. In 2020, he was made a senior member of the IEEE (the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers), the world's largest technical professional organisation for the advancement of technology.

His research asks how the knowledge gained from robots and other artificial agents solving one task can be reused in the next by drawing insight from humans' ability to decompose complex problems into reusable pieces.

"What I'm really interested in is autonomous decision making, which is being able to have a machine learn to make decisions," he says. "These could be single decisions or long sequences of decisions. At their core, these decisions are about what it means to be intelligent. A lot of the specific work that I do is around the idea of being able to generalise knowledge. So, if my robot has learned to solve one problem, how does it use that experience to speed up learning the next problem?"

"A lot of this comes down to the question of what kinds of transferable knowledge can it learn about the world that can help it solve multiple problems," he continues. "And in many cases, this is like a skill. So I'm really excited about this idea of learning generalised knowledge, and this is what I work on with my lab of fantastic colleagues and students."

"It's a real honour to receive this recognition from CIFAR, an organisation that has played such an important role in science, particularly AI, and I'm excited about the opportunity to work with global thought leaders in many different fields and receive mentorship from one of the most influential networks of scientists," says Rosman.

"This award recognises the novel work we're doing in AI and machine

learning in my lab, and confirms the calibre of the cutting-edge research conducted at Wits," he says. "This advances the science and reputation of Africa in the field. The funding will be useful for everything from trying to buy more equipment for our labs to funding students travelling to international conferences."

Asked what exciting developments we can expect in the next five to 10 years, he says, "In the near future, we're going to see more robots enter

the workplace and home to assist people with challenging and mundane tasks.

"AI is one of the most powerful tools we can have in our arsenal to deal with the world's challenges. I would really encourage people to go into this field, and they can be confident that this is something achievable. You don't need to be at one of the fanciest universities to be engaged in this community. You can do this from anywhere, and in fact, this is what we're doing. In preparation, you would need to study science and be comfortable with mathematics and programming. Above all, you must have passion and a curiosity for development, science, and trying new and interesting things."

Looking back, "my upbringing really drove

home the value of community. It's important to acknowledge where you came from, give back, and help the next generation to fulfil their dreams, and to help them realise that there are goals that they might not realise are attainable. This is what I try and do in my job as an academic, as someone training young people, as a teacher, and as an educator.

"Many of my students collaborate with people all over the world, and I constantly hear from them just what high quality students we have coming from South Africa," he says. "This is something to be aware of, because I think it's very easy to feel hopeless about the future. But when you work with the youth, it's easy to be inspired."

HA

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Fathers reflect on the joy of working remotely

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

From hurried moments before school or bedtime to being present throughout the day, remote and hybrid working has given working parents increased time to interact with their children. With Father’s Day approaching, a few dads reflect how the work flexibility brought by the COVID-19 pandemic has enriched their family lives.

“I had minimal to no flexibility and together with travel time, I would find myself being away from home easily for 10 hours a day, missing all of my son, Jamie’s, milestones as he was growing up,” says Shalom Katzen, reflecting on his working hours before the pandemic. “If I wanted to attend his school concert or birthday ring, I would have to apply for a half day of leave.”

As a global IT director for an international technology and software-development company, and in previous positions, Katzen used to rush to make it home before his now six-year-old son went to bed. He started his IT director job just weeks before the national lockdown in 2020. While no-one knew quite what to expect when the country shut down, the company adapted, and Katzen realised that with the right degree of planning, the new reality could give him more quality time with his son.

“I set meetings when I knew that it would be calm at home and ensured I could be there to support my family while working,” he says. That’s not to say that it was a seamless transition. Katzen even found himself working in his car in the garage sometimes to find a quiet space. “Initially, I felt guilty when I had to tell Jamie that I couldn’t play with him as I was working,” he says.

“I’ve even had him join a few Zoom meetings with dinosaur toys walking across the back of my chair. At first, I was apologising, but I slowly started to embrace it since I wasn’t at the office and was, in fact, at home, sharing his space with him.” When Katzen’s company later allowed him to choose whether to work remotely or in the office, it was an easy decision.

“Planning my schedule correctly, I’m involved in a relaxed morning wake-up, we eat breakfast together, and I do school lifts whenever I can, watch him play soccer matches, or walk the puppies and take him to the park,” says Katzen. “This has brought us even closer, knowing that he won’t see me only at the end of the day.”

“My wife is a teacher, and she and I share parental responsibilities,” he says. “We’ve learned from these past two years – we have a system, and we work as a team. Jamie is thriving from having two parents who are actively involved in raising him.”

Working in digital marketing, Ryan Urdang, the father of two boys, was also office bound before COVID-19, fetching his older son, Jayden, from crèche at 17:00 each day. Working from home during the pandemic meant turning the dining room table into a workstation with frequent table-top visits from his small “co-worker”.

“Lunch breaks were my best when we would play in the garden,” says Urdang. “Jayden

would ask all morning when it would be time to play. Now I have a second son, Asher, who’s nine months old, but both are at school and crèche. I’m office bound again but with a lot more flexibility. I often fetch my kids in the early afternoon, and then finish working from home.”

Though maintaining a work-life balance during the upheaval of the past few years hasn’t always been easy, nothing can replace the special moments Urdang gets to spend with his sons. “The best part of being a dad is seeing my boys happy,” he says. Rowan Horwitz, a lawyer, changed jobs during lockdown. “In my previous position, I was based at clients and I usually left early and got home late. I did my best to be at home as much as possible but realistically, there were many days in which I would miss things like bath time.”

When Horwitz started his new job during the height of the pandemic, he didn’t go into the office at all for about a year. With his optometrist wife going out to work, he took on more responsibilities around the house. “We’ve always tried to split roles, but I would look after my son, Aaron, who was still a baby, a lot. I really loved being at home and spending more time with Aaron. When he went to crèche, I could be at home with him in the mornings and then take and fetch him. I

could also do other helpful things at home – washing, cleaning, and cooking. It’s been a blessing.”

Having welcomed a baby daughter, Eliana, 10 weeks ago, Horwitz has loved being present. He now goes into work three times a week but is grateful to still be home often. “My wife is on maternity leave, so it’s been great to be home and be with her and Eliana, and to help out with Aaron.

“When Aaron was born, I went back to work after two weeks, and it was heart breaking not seeing him for 10 hours a day. It’s been a completely different experience this time because of the new way of working. I know for many people, COVID-19 was awful, but I’ve been blessed to be able to work from home and have enough time with my wife and kids.”

Martin Smookler, a chartered accountant, who has also worked remotely since the pandemic struck, agrees with this. About to launch a new skills development company with the BEE123 Group just as COVID-19 struck, Smookler delayed his plans and he and his wife prepared to welcome his third son, who was born in April 2020 in the midst of the hard lockdown. “It was an intense time to have a baby. We didn’t even know what was going to happen at the hospitals.” Yet all went well, and Smookler enjoyed his extended family time.

“It was the traditional way of the world when my first kids were born and time with them was limited by long work days. This was the other extreme. It was great. I got to be home all the time.” Having worked remotely since launching his company in July 2020,



Rowan Horwitz with Aaron and Eliana



Jayden, Ryan, and Asher Urdang



Shalom and Jamie Katzen



Martin Smookler with Yonatan, Raphael, and Adam



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Because we give a damn

I didn't know Julie Treger. And I didn't know her husband, who passed away suddenly three months ago. And yet, the news of her death shook and unnerved me. My heart breaks for the children left, and for the families and friends who loved them.

I know Gary Bress, but only enough to say hello, and ask him how he's doing. And yet last week Thursday night, I found myself adding him to my prayers when the news of his kidnapping began to circulate. Even then, I had no idea who it was as I had only his Hebrew name to go on.

I celebrated his return to safety as though he was a close friend. Such was the relief that I felt and that rippled across the community when he was found physically unharmed.

I don't know the 16-year-old teenager who collapsed while running a cross country, but I do know his parents, and I do know some others in our community who have suffered life changing and horrific incidents over the past six months. Some are friends and some are just names that I might have heard, but can't really be sure.

On some days, news of these events feels overwhelming. And many a time, it feels almost too much to bear. It feels like there's a tsunami of bad news, and that there's more suffering than in prior years.

Maybe the approach needs to be different, and instead of being devastated by the terrible news that seems to come at us like an unrelenting wave, we should consider an alternative. Because feeling means caring. And a caring community is exactly one that is worth living in.

It might sound counter intuitive, but this

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



is what I mean.

Whereas there might be days when the news seems unbeatable, I'm certain that I wouldn't have it any other way. Why? Because feeling means that we give a damn. And that beats the alternative by a long shot.

When I interviewed the mother of kidnap victim, Gary Bress, I was struck by her sentiments. Instead of being angry and resentful, she was thankful. Not only for the fact that her son had been saved, but for the immense amount of care the family received. She repeated over and over how much gratitude she had to our Community Security Organisation, to CAP, and to all who supported the family through what was an unimaginable ordeal.

People and organisations who give a damn.

The degrees of separation in our community aren't many. With shrinking numbers, there's a sense that each soul counts. There's a high value placed on care. No society is utopian by any means, and yet, there's little arguing that the South African community is defined by kindness and *chesed*. And the fact that we give a damn.

I don't know why there's a spate of bad news. But I'm grateful that I care, and blessed that as a community, we give a damn.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Meeting and greeting



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



After a busy week in Israel as part of a Jewish leadership delegation, I spent some time in the United States, where I met Jonathan Greenblatt, Susan Heller Pinto, and Shaya Lerner of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The relationship we have forged with the ADL over decades is a very important one, and in fulfilling our core mandate to protect the civil rights of our community, we continue to benefit from the advice and resources that it so generously makes available.

The meeting was an opportunity to update one another on trends and challenges after a long hiatus. They were supportive of the work we do, and were especially interested in hearing how we're combatting the threat from the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions group. Greenblatt observed that the issues we face in South Africa tend to be a harbinger of what takes place in other parts of the diaspora, particularly on university campuses.

During my visit, I also had the opportunity of meeting Stanley and Marion Bergman once again, who updated me on the work they are doing across Africa, including through the American Jewish Committee Africa Institute that they founded. It was a warm, productive meeting and we hope to continue building on these international connections.

Jewish Affairs and the drama of South Africa's liberation

The latest issue of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies journal, *Jewish Affairs*, has just come out, with a special focus on Jews in the anti-apartheid

struggle. It includes an edited transcript of the interview I conducted last month with Paul and Nicholas Goldreich, who share their fascinating memories of growing up on Liliesleaf Farm when it served as the secret headquarters of banned resistance movements. I encourage those interested in Jewish history and heritage, particularly the history of our own remarkable community, to go to the site, <https://www.jewishaffairs.co.za/> and browse through the more than 500 articles that have appeared over the past 14 years. Even better, add yourself to our subscription list by writing to the editor, David Saks (david@sajbd.org).

Once again, I would like to mention the successes we have had in addressing recent instances of university exams scheduled on *yom tov* or Shabbat. We are fortunate to live in a country where religious rights and freedom are fully protected, but even so, problems of this nature are often very complex and resolving them can take an enormous amount of sustained effort. As the organisation mandated to uphold Jewish religious rights and freedoms, we'll continue to exert ourselves to the utmost to ensure that no member of our community is unfairly disadvantaged because of his/her religious practices.

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

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

Former Cape board director appointed Mitzvah Day chief

Stuart Diamond has been appointed as the new chief executive of faith-led social action charity Mitzvah Day.

A former director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and a graduate of the Schusterman Leadership Program, Stuart immigrated to the United Kingdom (UK) from South Africa with his family in July 2021.

Since arriving in the UK, he has been working with Moishe House and the United Synagogue while on the lookout for a role that resonates with his passion to roll up his sleeves and serve his community with a hands-on and supportive leadership style.

Before his role at the SAJBD, Stuart was mayoral committee member for assets and facilities for the City of Cape Town. He's also currently a governor of Alma Primary School in Friern Barnet Lane, Whetstone, London.

Mitzvah Day has become firmly established as the UK's largest faith-led day of social action, with 25 000 volunteers of all faiths and backgrounds across Britain doing good deeds every year. A further

15 000 get involved in more than 30 other countries around the globe.

Stuart is no stranger to the day, having participated in numerous projects personally with his family, and professionally at the Cape SAJBD.

"Service to community is my calling and *tikkun olam* and interfaith work are close to my heart. I'm thrilled to be a part of the UK's – and possibly the world's – largest faith-led day of social action," he said.

Mitzvah Day founder and chairperson, Laura Marks, said that when Stuart approached Mitzvah Day about the role, "we didn't hesitate to snap him up".

"Stuart's extensive experience in interfaith relations, in work with government, and in social action made him an ideal candidate," she said.

To find out more about Mitzvah Day, visit www.mitzvahday.org.uk.



Collaboration creates warmth at Temple Israel

The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) Johannesburg recently collaborated with Reeva Forman, chairperson of Temple Israel in Hillbrow; Marion Bubly, Temple Israel vice-chairperson; and Simonne Horwitz of Beit Emanuel to hand out blankets, hoodies, fruit, and sandwiches to recipients at the Thursday weekly feeding scheme from the premises of Temple Israel. Two hundred



to 300 homeless/jobless people are being fed and clothed every week. The City of Joburg Protectors Force, thanks to Councillor Zanele Myema, provides guards to control entry and exit into the grounds, making it a safer experience.

Shirley Ancer, an executive committee member of the UJW for more than 50 years, generously arranged more than 100 warm blankets, and the UJW Sewing Empowerment School received an amazing donation of more than 150 hoodies. Winter has arrived, and the homeless were thrilled to receive a blanket or hoodie and of course, a sandwich and more.

Monday 20 June	Tuesday 21 June	Wednesday 22 June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Union of Jewish Women presents Roz Basserabie – “Switch from news channel worlds in a mess to channel: My best life. THEN ... LIVE IT”. Time: 10:00. Entry: R40. Contact: 011 648 1053 or admin@ujw.co.za	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ORT Jet presents a webinar – <i>SEO starter guide</i> with Renato Dequinis. Time 09:30. Entry: free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.zaUnion of Jewish Women presents <i>Brain Boost – a brain stimulation group</i>. Time: 10:00. Entry: R100. Contact: 011 648 1053 or admin@ujw.co.za	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ORT Jet presents <i>Mailchimp email marketing with Nadine Hocter</i>. Time 09:30. Entry: R100 members, R200 non-members. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za
<ul style="list-style-type: none">ORT Jet presents a webinar – Mentor induction with Elana Godley. Time 16:00. Entry: free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Melton Cape Town presents a course – <i>Between The Lines</i>. Time: 10:00. Contact: 082 880 2257 or lauren@snitcher.org	<div>WHAT'S ON</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Education Africa presents <i>Sounds of Celebration</i>. Time: 17:00. Entry: R85. Contact: 011 685 7300 or james@educationafrica.org

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KDVP senior debating team rides high internationally



Liana Wes, Levi Lipschitz, Dylan Steiner, and Liron Krawitz. Absent Kate Lange.

King David Victory Park senior debating team triumphed in the recent Atheneum Debating League and the World Scholar's Cup, participated in by thousands of students from six continents. The team comprises Liron Krawitz, Levi Lipschitz, Dylan Steiner, Kate Lange, and Liana Wes. They will now participate in the global final rounds of the World Scholar's Cup which will be held later this year in an as-yet-unspecified international destination. Lipschitz ranked top scholar in the World Scholar's Cup, while Dylan Steiner ranked top speaker in the Atheneum League.

Nossel's Gadol wins big at My Family Story competition

Yeshiva College student, Avia Nossel's, project, *Gadol*, won first place in the English category of the 2022 My Family Story International Competition. This year, the Museum of the Jewish People received hundreds of submissions from 26 countries in 11 languages. Nossel's project stood out for the judges, who all came from backgrounds in Jewish peoplehood, museum studies, academia, and Jewish community leadership. *Gadol* is on display at the Museum of the Jewish People.



Avia Nossel with her project Gadol

Torah Academy Girls host shmita fair

Torah Academy Girls High School brought *shmita* (the seventh year of the agricultural cycle) to life recently by hosting a grand *shmita* fair.



Rachel Unterslak and the Grade R class

Torah learning a family matter at Yeshiva College

A group of Yeshiva College Primary School parents and children learned Torah on Shavuot in the merit of a *refuah shleima* for Levi Yitzhak Yaakov Ben Tamara Aviva. They used flash cards, wooden wagons, and puzzles to learn an invaluable lesson from *parshat Nasso*.

Every family received a magnificent parsha book to take home for continued learning as a family. A huge thanks to Rabbi Zevi and Devorah Leah Weinberg for making this event happen, and to the wonderful and committed parents of Yeshiva College who prioritised Torah learning.



Amanda Spitz with her children

Herzlia mathematician places 16th in Western Cape

Luca Dobrin, in Grade 6 at Herzlia Weizmann, placed 16th overall in the Western Cape at The Horizons maths Olympiad, and was the top performing student at his school.



Luca Dobrin

The Horizons Olympiad is an annual maths competition that has been held for the past 25 years, and is written by Grades 5, 6, and 7s. This year, 74 000 pupils participated nationwide, 21 000 pupils and 158 schools from the Western Cape alone.

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