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"Kwazilience" and community – a year after the riots

TALI FEINBERG

"I'll never forget the toxic fumes from the UPL [United Phosphorous Limited] factory fire engulfing our home; staying awake listening to gunfire and chanting; our emergency bags packed by the door; and the SAPS [South African Police Service] begging our neighbourhood patrol for firearms and bullets as they were woefully under-equipped."

These are the words of community leader and Durban resident Alana Baranov, who is just one of thousands still haunted by their experience of the unrest, violence and anarchy in July last year in KwaZulu-Natal and parts of Gauteng.

Now, she says, "the first anniversary of the unrest is a time for reflection. Most of the perpetrators of the violence and the instigators of the insurrection, which was carefully planned and orchestrated, have yet to be brought to justice."

"The scars of reignited racial tension in places like Phoenix remain unhealed, and many communities are still divided and suspicious of each other."

"The threat of more unrest is constantly bubbling under the surface because of unresolved anger from July 2021 and other frustrations," she says. "The silver lining is the memory of how most communities rallied together in a time of crisis. Neighbours shared food, fuel and medicine, and people took to the streets to protect not just their own families but their neighbours' homes, shops, and businesses."

"We felt what it was like to be closed off, to live in real fear, without access to petrol, food and basic supplies," says Rabbi Gilad Friedman of the Umhlanga Jewish Centre.

"The destruction that was caused is still very much a part of daily life," Friedman says. "It's been a triple threat: the riots, the flooding and the pandemic. The Durban Jewish community is incredibly resilient." He says the connections forged between people of all backgrounds,

and the strengthening of the Jewish community's cohesiveness, are two silver linings.

Michael Ditz lost 16 clothing stores in the chaos. Twelve months later, he says, he feels "nervous, not relaxed – like being on a knife's edge, and like it could happen again. It made me question my family's future." He would like to see "some arrests and government holding the police and army to account. The fact that there's been neither is a disgrace."

During the riots, property developer Steven Herring watched a small miracle as local residents stood up to looters who threatened his mall. Now, he says, "The riots are fresh in our minds. Property owners had to rely on their own security and goodwill from local communities to protect malls. If anything, mall owners are beefing up security and playing a bigger role in social responsibility to ensure that we all stay safe if this situation repeats itself."

"It's clear that township assets are part and parcel of the makeup of each local community," he says. "You need to work with the local taxi associations, hawkers, local schools, etc to get buy-in to support each mall, not only buying at the stores but also protecting what's essentially their one-stop shop on their doorstep. It's a team effort all the way."

"The July 2021 unrest was undoubtedly one of the most destructive and traumatic episodes in our country's post-liberation history," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn. "The SAJBD and The Angel Network [TAN] participated in clean ups in Daveyton and in arranging food relief in Daveyton, Soweto and in KwaZulu-Natal. We saw the devastation first-hand. It simply cannot happen again. Ensuring this will require a combined effort from all South Africans."

"Poverty has been on the rise since the July looting," says Tanya Altshuler of TAN Durban. "A soup kitchen, which we support in the community of the suburb of Avoca, used to feed 39 adults. That number has



almost doubled in the past year. Many individuals, who operated informal trading stores outside malls and relied on shopping centre trade are starving since those centres were burnt down and still aren't yet operating or are only partially operating. There are also more homeless people in the shelters.

"So many businesses have closed their doors or had to retrench employees to survive. Refugees have experienced high levels of poverty and insecurity. Before the looting, the majority owned small businesses of which a large number were looted and they didn't receive any compensation from any governmental relief fund. TAN Durban assists the refugee community with food parcels on a monthly basis to supplement its loss of income."

"It's hard to believe that one year ago, KwaZulu-Natal was under civilian attack," says Susan Abro, the president of the SAJBD KZN Council. "Kwazilience' applies to those

living in KZN. It's a coping skill we've developed due to lockdown, rioting, looting and flooding."

What she has also realised is that "we need to be prepared for every eventuality, and therefore, we have ensured that all of our installations are in a position to provide adequate food to the community for a period of at least two weeks. This can happen anywhere and anytime, and plans should be put in place so that one isn't caught off guard," says Abro.

In that context, the Community Security Organisation's Jevon Greenblatt says, "There has been much speculation about where our country is heading. The current environment appears to be volatile, with competing factions seeking to impose their own agendas."

"Many South Africans are frustrated and desperate, which creates the potential for individuals and groups

Continued on page 6 >>

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Global leaders call out hijacking of 'apartheid' label to attack Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Leaders from around the world have spoken out against appropriation of the term "apartheid" from its historical South African context with the goal of defaming and isolating Israel by portraying it as a racist entity.

At a June conference titled "Trivialising history: how anti-Israel activists have hijacked the South African 'apartheid' label to attack the Jewish state", co-hosted by the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), NGO Monitor, and the World Zionist Organization, world leaders, diplomats, legislators and policymakers discussed what must be done to restore the "apartheid" term to its proper context and delegitimise its use in discourse about a conflict to which it has no relevance.

"Categorising Israel as an 'apartheid state' is just plain antisemitic," says Nicola Beer, the vice-president of the European Parliament (EP) and special envoy on combating religious discrimination including antisemitism. "In my opinion, such characterisation counters the progress made in the region concerning the peace process. Instead, it deepens the rifts and fuels antisemitism around the world."

The conference was held in response to a global rise in antisemitism. According to the organisers, the "apartheid" campaign questions Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state.

NGO Monitor Vice-President Olga Deutsch commented, "It's heart-warming to see how many officials rallied to denounce the apartheid smear. Preserving the uniqueness of the apartheid narrative is central for the South African people, but in the context of today's event, is also crucial for the global Jewish community facing violent antisemitic attacks. A strong message from our elected officials is imperative in setting the tone for the rest of us."

During the past 18 months, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have published reports accusing Israel of apartheid, and the United Nations has established two bodies in which the claim of apartheid will be prominently featured.

"These attempts distort what happened during South Africa's past system of institutionalised racial segregation. Continuous misuse of the apartheid conversation trivialises the suffering endured by true apartheid victims of the oppressive apartheid regime," say organisers.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) director of public policy,

Benji Shulman, notes that in South Africa, we're at the coalface of the 'apartheid' accusation. "The SAZF is optimistic about this new international movement to discredit the fallacious apartheid analogy," says Shulman. "Israel isn't an apartheid state in even the most trite comparisons. Arab Israelis share equal representation in both Israel's democracy and society."

He says the conference is important because it shows that there's international recognition of this issue. "Senior figures across the spectrum are standing up and saying that this is incorrect. It shows that there is 'push back' against this contested notion."

Local political analyst Steven Gruzds says, "Anti-Israel groups, including those involved in the struggle for equality in South Africa, routinely employ the term 'apartheid' to discredit the legitimacy of Israel. It's used for an emotive reaction, and often achieves this. But in my view, the situations are

incomparable, and it does a disservice to those who fought real apartheid in South Africa. It cheapens their struggle and obscures rational discussion about Israel."

The deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Czech Republic, Jiří Kozák, was one of the world leaders who spoke out. "The suffering of South Africans under apartheid was unique, and attempts to apply the same label to Israel trivialises that history and is unacceptable," he said. "We consider this open antisemitism. Claiming that Israel is a racist endeavour is in violation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism. Claims of 'apartheid' are not about questioning a particular policy, but about challenging the nature of the Jewish state."

In May 2022, Kozák met Palestinian Deputy Minister Amal Jadou, so it's clear he cares about both sides of the conflict and has engaged with its intricacies.

"Whatever the world's greatest and most unforgiveable crime is in any particular moment of history, the Jews will be accused of it," says member of the House of Lords, Baroness Ruth Deech. "Those who accuse Israel of apartheid are themselves racist in that their real mission is to deny the legitimacy of the only Jewish state in the world and if they got their way, they would return Jews to dispersion, slaughter and discrimination."

Continued on page 8>>

Keeping up with the Cohens

Torah Thought



Rabbi Yossy Goldman,
life rabbi emeritus at
Sydenham Shul

"That's some new kitchen Sandra just had done. State of the art!"

"Hey, did you see that brand-new car Mark just bought? Every gadget in the book!" Rather routine, everyday talk.

A rep on the road had broken all his company's sales records. When asked the secret of his success, he explained that the first thing he said when someone opened the door was, "Did you see what your neighbour Mrs Jones just got?" That trick never failed him.

This was never the Jewish ethic, though. We were taught that privacy, modesty and discretion are characteristics our people have cherished since we became a nation.

Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes (Numbers 24:3).

What was so special about the Israelites' dwellings? Rashi offers one interpretation of the verse, that the doorways of their tents in the wilderness were arranged so that they didn't face each other. One person wasn't able to see into his neighbour's tent, and their privacy was protected. In fact, this is one of the explanations of Balaam's famous praise of the Jews, *Mah tovu* (How good are your tents, O Jacob.) The heathen prophet was extolling Jewish town planning, how they safeguarded their modesty and protected their personal family lives from would-be busybodies and Peeping Toms, otherwise known as *yentas* and *nudniks*.

Another possible interpretation of "not looking into your neighbour's tent" might be this: don't look into your neighbour's tent to help you decide what you should be doing. Your decisions in life shouldn't be based on what other people are, or aren't, doing. Certainly not on what your neighbours have or don't have.

Social workers today painfully testify that family breakdowns are often a result of financial difficulties

and the stress they put on marriages. Many of those stresses are self-imposed. Their clients confess that they didn't really need the new kitchen or car, but once their friends were moving up in the status stakes, they felt under pressure to maintain their social standing.

Whether it's the kitchen, car, holiday or the latest digital technology, if we allow ourselves to be judged by other people's criteria, we lay ourselves open to a lot of unnecessary stress. Even a *simchah* – a wedding or Barmitzvah – can get us into "keeping up with the Cohens" mode, from the seven-layered designer invitation hand-delivered to every guest down to the

posh dinner dance replete with ice-cream sculptures.

Why? All because we're busy looking over our shoulders or peering into the next-door neighbour's place.

How much resentment, bitterness and disappointment would we avoid if we didn't try to measure ourselves by other people's standards! We would be much happier if we looked into ourselves and achieved what we could and should, without drawing comparisons with others.

If we want to enjoy the blessing of "goodly tents", we should keep our eyes and noses in our own tent. Then we'll be content, too.

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The traditional Yiddish greeting of Ashkenazi Jews say "Gut Shabbos," which means "Good Sabbath."

The Hebrew salutation, used by Sephardim of Eastern descent and those who favour modern Hebrew, is "Shabbat shalom," which means "Sabbath [of] peace." If you want to greet someone, but are not sure what to say, just let them greet you first and then repeat their greeting back to them. Works every time.

*one hour ahead of SA time

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Hope flowers as shooting survivor raises funds for victims

TALI FEINBERG

Getting caught up in their worst nightmare, South African-born Candice Crane was so relieved that she survived the bloodshed and loss of the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Illinois, she made a plan to help the family of those who didn't.

"Local businesses like mine, Petal Sparkling Botanicals, have committed proceeds to help the victims and their families," says Crane. On Instagram, she told her followers, "All proceeds from all the sales on our website from Friday 8 July to Sunday 10 July will be donated to the families and victims of the tragic shooting in our hometown of Highland Park, Illinois."

Crane grew up in America, so she and her family were excited to celebrate American Independence Day. They had no idea that their day of fun and community was going to turn into a nightmare of bloodshed and loss.

She and her daughter found themselves fleeing a mass shooting. Her husband and baby hid in an apartment. Her parents, Mike and Stephanie Levy (who emigrated from Johannesburg in the 1980s) rushed into the fray to find them all. By some miracle, none of them were hurt, but they are still deeply affected by the tragedy in which seven people lost their lives and scores were injured.

As soon as the dust settled, Crane and her husband, Aaron, decided to help the victims.

"My heart is broken for our community and the victims," she told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. "Luckily, we were about two blocks away so we weren't in the hot zone, but we did run like anything. My six-year-old and I hid in a vacant store under a counter and my husband and baby hid in a very nice woman's apartment building. We were separated because I had just taken my daughter to the bathroom. Never in a million years did I think this could happen in my town. We're trying to recover and move on simultaneously. I'm inspired by how our community has come together to heal and to help those in need."

Her business has deep roots in her family history. "The idea of creating a line of sparkling botanical beverages was inspired by my two grandmothers and their love for tea. My grandmother, René, a true rebel who ran away at 16 to marry the man of her dreams, often sipped rose petal tea and always served different types of teas in the afternoon. Grandmother Zelda sewed her own enchanting floral tea

blends into sachets."

Crane says, "The week has been a rollercoaster – very foggy yet seriously uplifting to see how our community and surrounding communities come together to support Highland Park. More than 500 therapists have dedicated their time to give free counselling at our local Highland Park High School. There have been vigils, memorials and services. The local sports teams are all wearing Highland Park jerseys. On the one-week anniversary, the town was packed with people who came to stand for a moment of silence."

The events hit close to home – literally. "Unfortunately, I know four people who

were shot," says Crane. "They are recovering. Among them is my high school English teacher. Another woman's heel was completely shattered, and another friend was shot in the pelvis, but luckily none of her organs were hit."

There has been a good response to their appeal to raise funds for the victims. "We had 98 orders on our website alone this weekend, and all the proceeds are going to the families," Crane says.

Her six-year-old, who hid with her under the counter during the shooting, "is doing well and has been going to



Candice Crane and her baby before the shooting

summer camp every day. There are some kids that have been more affected. Everyone's response is different."

Crane will be part of a group of 100 local survivors who are flying to Washington DC "to tell our stories to congressmen and the White House. The goal is to ban assault rifles at federal level. Most importantly, we need more safety measures in public and private places. Also, we need to support the community with mental health services, now and ongoing."

Laser beams, Saudis, and the "Jewish Olympics" on Biden's itinerary

GABE FRIEDMAN - JTA

Joe Biden's trip to Israel this week, his first as United States president, might look on paper like a quick stopover: just two days' meeting with Israeli leaders and one day with Palestinian leaders.

But with a day in Saudi Arabia tacked on – a country that Biden once vowed to make a "pariah" in the region – the trip's significance in a dramatically evolving Middle East becomes clearer.

While some predicted that Biden might unveil additional Arab countries that could join the Abraham Accords normalisation agreements with Israel during his much-anticipated trip, the president is now not expected to make any flashy announcements. Still, several of the trip's elements underscore how US relations with Israel and its neighbours are changing and in some senses how Biden is trying to hold back some of those currents of change by advancing a two-state vision of peace.

For example, after dealing with former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for well over a decade and his fellow right-winger, Naftali Bennett, over the past year, Biden was greeted on his arrival on Wednesday, 13 July, by interim Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who represents a different slice of the Israeli political spectrum ahead of yet another election in the fall.

Biden will also spend time with the Palestinian Authority and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, at what is putting it lightly a low point in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. He could become the first sitting US president to visit a part of Jerusalem outside of Israel's pre-1967 state lines, excluding the Old City neighbourhood.

And Biden's time in Saudi Arabia symbolises, among other things, that the US is putting aside its past misgivings to build stronger ties with the country that Israel has been cultivating as a regional ally against Iran.

Here's a quick rundown of what to follow, in order of Biden's itinerary.

A new (interim) Israeli leader

After Naftali Bennett dissolved Israel's government last month in the wake of a series of coalition defections, then Foreign Minister Yair Lapid took over as interim leader as



Photo: Sarahbeth ManneyPool/Getty Images

US President Joe Biden meets with former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in Washington, DC, Aug. 27, 2021

per their coalition agreement. In a show of their ongoing closeness, Bennett will join part of Lapid's formal sit-down with Biden on Thursday.

Before collapsing under the weight of its many parts, the Bennett-Lapid coalition mostly avoided hot-button topics such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict, preferring to prove after years of stalemate (the next will be the fifth elections in three years) how a Netanyahu alternative could operate. It also crucially avoided angering a Democratic US administration – something Netanyahu had done repeatedly as he focused on courting Republican leaders.

Bennett and Lapid agreed to disagree politely with Biden on issues such as the Iran nuclear deal – a pact widely reviled in Israel that Biden wants restored – and to keep big policy disagreements behind closed doors.

But Biden will also meet Netanyahu on Thursday, in part to avoid looking biased before the upcoming Israeli election.

Lapid, who will look to lead another winning coalition (Bennett is taking a break from politics) represents a different look at home compared to Netanyahu, especially on social and religious issues. He supports religious reform and promoting egalitarian prayer throughout Israel.

And on the world stage, on which Biden is more focused, Lapid also takes a slightly different tack than his immediate predecessors: tougher on Russian President Vladimir Putin

and more open to dialogue with the Palestinians.

Real Jewish space lasers

In addition to the formal meetings, a key expected part of Biden's visit with Israeli officials is his scheduled tour of an Israeli air force base. There, he will receive an update on the Iron Dome defence system, which the US gave an extra \$500 million (R8.5 trillion) to replenish after Israel's conflict with Gaza last year.

Hamas militants had begun to crack the code on how to overwhelm the Iron Dome during last year's fighting. But worries about counter-missile supply could

soon be a thing of the past, as Israel will introduce Biden to its still-developing "Iron Beam" system, which in testing has shown that it will likely be able to down missiles with laser beams.

History at the Maccabiah Games

The Maccabiah Games, often referred to as the Jewish Olympics since its founding in the 1930s, attracts thousands of Jewish athletes from dozens of countries, who compete in several Olympic sports. Biden – a huge sports fan – is about to give the Maccabiah a presidential-sized boost. Israeli media is reporting that he will interact with athletes at the Games's opening ceremony on Thursday evening, probably the first-ever appearance by a US president at such an event.

A two-state solution comeback?

Last week, Lapid held a phone call with Mahmoud Abbas, his Palestinian Authority counterpart, who also hosted Defence Minister Benny Gantz at the PA president's residence. It was the first time that a call between Abbas and an Israeli prime minister had been confirmed in years.

Biden has prioritised saving the two-state solution, and it will be telling to see if he uses that specific language on this trip. In a significant gesture, he will visit a hospital on Friday in largely Palestinian East Jerusalem, which Palestinians see as the capital of a future state. It could be the first visit to the

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Boris Johnson’s Jewish moments – the good, the broken and the quirky

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

For many Britons, Boris Johnson’s tenure as prime minister will have been defined by scandals such as the one that forced him to resign on Thursday, 7 July.

For Jewish Britons, the memories might well include a broken menorah.

Elected in 2019, the Conservative Party leader announced on 7 July that he would step down after his Cabinet collapsed amid his latest scandal — the way Johnson handled the case of a senior official who had been accused of sexual abuse. Johnson has also come under criticism for his violations of the United Kingdom’s COVID-19 rules, and his alleged failure to report some meetings with Russian oligarchs (notwithstanding, Johnson has been relatively tough in his criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin).

Johnson said he intended to stay on until his party held an internal vote for a successor, leaving open the question of when and whether he would actually vacate the office.

When he does, Britain’s nearly 300 000 Jews are likely to remember him as someone whose leadership had little lasting effect on their status. Johnson’s predecessor, Theresa May, led the UK’s adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism, blacklisted Hezbollah as a terrorist group, and lifted the unofficial boycott on official visits to Israel by senior members of the British Royal House.

In contrast, Johnson’s tenure featured few changes, for better or worse, on the issues that many community members hold dear, according to Herschel Gluck, an influential orthodox rabbi from northern London. He noted that under Johnson, British authorities did strengthen enforcement of rules that haredi Jewish schools in the UK seem reluctant to uphold.

“Johnson has charisma, spoke generally in positive terms, and gave the feeling that the community was dear to his heart, which a lot of people liked. But I can’t think of a single area where he actually delivered,” Gluck says.

Anat Koren, the editor-in-chief of London’s Hebrew-language newspaper, *Alondon*, offered a more sanguine assessment of Johnson’s tenure.

“He was a friend to Israel with a warm attitude to the Jewish community,” she says. “He made sure there wasn’t a deterioration when it came to the government’s attitude to Israel and the Jews, and that’s already a lot.”

Whatever his scorecard on Jewish issues, Johnson certainly provided some memorable Jewish moments since 2019.

Visit to Belfast synagogue

During a coalition-building visit last month to Belfast, Johnson, who is a key promoter of the UK’s

departure from the European Union, visited the Belfast synagogue and vowed to sort out the kosher market problems that Brexit helped create. The issue hasn’t been solved yet, but its acknowledgment was an unusual recognition of the plight of a small minority by a politician who has sought to minimise Brexit’s negative effects.

The broken menorah

During a Chanukah reception in London last year, Johnson enthusiastically waved around a delicate menorah that he had just been given as a token of the appreciation of the Conservative Friends of Israel group. The object’s candle holders went flying across the room. Johnson, true to his bumbling public image, looked sheepish while the menorah was reassembled. Yair Lapid, who was then Israel’s foreign minister, laughed at the situation, Johnson, or both. “I guess you’re not supposed to wave a menorah about,” Johnson was heard mumbling.

Yiddish on Passover

In a 2021 video greeting for Passover, Johnson, whose maternal great-grandfather, Elias Avery Lowe, was a Moscow-born Jew, demonstrated some deep familiarity with Jewish customs and even used the Yiddish



word *kvetch* to refer to some of what goes on when Jewish families sit around the Passover seder dinner table.

A shift on Israel and the United Nations

As foreign secretary, Johnson spoke out pointedly against what he described as anti-Israel bias at United Nations forums. He also shifted the position of the UK on items dedicated to criticising Israel alone, moving it from a “yes” to an abstention and finally

to a “no”. In 2021, he went one step further and stated that the UK was opposed to the Palestinian bid for an investigation into alleged war crimes by Israel. “This investigation gives the impression of being a partial and prejudicial attack on a friend and ally of the UK,” he said. His position furthered the reversal started by his predecessor, May, which ended decades of the Foreign Office’s endorsement of resolutions and initiatives hostile to Israel.

An intimate Holocaust survivor discussion

Whereas his predecessors often spoke at events featuring Holocaust survivors and commemoration activists, Johnson last year organised an hour-long video call with a survivor and a death camp liberator in which his own role was to listen. Johnson sat on the edge of his seat as he heard the stories of Auschwitz survivor Renee Salt and a Bergen-Belsen liberator, Ian Forsyth. As he interviewed the two elderly speakers, he stopped to inquire about certain details (“You must have been 14 by then?” he asked Salt) and told the two that what they had told him was “one of the most powerful things I’ve ever heard”.

Russia’s “denazification” operation in Ukraine bogus and antisemitic, says US

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

In hard-hitting language, the Biden administration has accused the Russian government of antisemitism and of exploiting Jewish suffering through its claims that its war against Ukraine is a “denazification” operation.

“To serve its predatory ends, the Kremlin is exploiting the suffering and sacrifice of all those who lived through World War II and survived the Holocaust,” the state department says in a dossier which was scheduled to appear on its website. “In the process, the Kremlin is detracting from critically important global efforts to combat antisemitism and is instead propagating one of antisemitism’s most insidious forms, Holocaust distortion.”

The dossier, obtained in advance by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, will appear on a dedicated page, entitled Disarming Disinformation, which is devoted to exposing Russian disinformation in its war against Ukraine.

It’s timed ahead of an informal session on Monday afternoon of the United Nations Security Council that Russia called to bolster its denazification claim. Tass, the Russian news agency, on Friday quoted Dmitry Polyansky, the deputy Russian envoy to the United Nations, as saying the session will “be our response to Western colleagues, who express doubts about one of the main goals of our special military operation in Ukraine, namely denazification, and claim that we are exaggerating the problem”.

The state department dossier quotes historians and Holocaust remembrance institutions, including Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as denouncing the detoxification claims as bogus.

The three-page document emphasises that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is Jewish, and lost family to the Holocaust.



A US State Department dossier on Russian disinformation will feature this photo of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Jan. 23, 2020

It includes a photo of Zelenskyy wearing a kippah, surrounded by orthodox Jews, at the Western Wall in Jerusalem during a 2020 visit.

“The Kremlin falsely claims the worst Nazis were actually Jews, and seeks to downplay the role of antisemitism in Nazi ideology,” the dossier says.

The document refers to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s widely discredited claim from May that Jews contend that “the biggest antisemites are Jewish themselves”. It quotes Israeli officials condemning Lavrov’s statement.

The document concludes by saying that Russia is damaging the fight against antisemitism. “With antisemitism on the rise around the world, it’s imperative for all to call out this particularly pernicious kind of Russian disinformation,” it says.



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One thousand South Africans in Promised Land as programmes resume

TALI FEINBERG

A year ago, it was unthinkable that Jewish youth would be able to travel to Israel freely to enjoy the myriad summer programmes that are usually available. Exactly 12 months ago, South Africans were dying in numbers of COVID-19, and not one vaccine had been injected into our arms. So it's both miraculous and meaningful that hundreds of South African Jews - mostly youth - are in Israel, having the time of their lives. "It's incredibly heartwarming," says Israel Centre Director Liat Amar Arran. "We will really feel the gap of the past two years, but it's wonderful that about 1 000 people are

in Israel on programmes from South Africa right now," she says. "This includes two Diller Teen Fellows programmes – with 20 kids from Johannesburg and 20 kids from Cape Town; 330 teens on Hadracha Bnei Akiva; 350 delegates at the Maccabi Games; 200 students on the Ohrsom tour; 40 teachers on a trip for Herzlia educators; and 23 youth on Habonim's Shorashim trip." In addition, "Sixty people are making aliyah this week, and we expect the same numbers in August. Many people want to get to Israel before the start of the school year and the *chaggim*." And the South African Jewish community will also be feeling the love from Israel, with a number of delegations visiting us in August.

Amar Arran says it's vital that Jewish youth don't miss out on these experiences, but unfortunately, that was the case for many teens over the past two years. Still, it's not too late for them, and she encourages parents to contact the Israel Centre to find out about the many subsidised trips that they can take. "I sent my boys to Israel for the summer and told them they'll probably know half the community on the plane!" quips Amar Arran. "To be able to travel so freely is a real blessing. It feels like everyone is in Israel!" Some Jewish community leaders are still pinching themselves that this is actually happening. "For a long time, in the back of my mind, I didn't think it would happen,"

says Brynn Goldblatt, who heads Habonim Dror's Shorashim tour for Grade 10 pupils. "We're out here, mask free, and COVID-19 has largely been forgotten. It's been really refreshing. We're making the most of it, because who knows what's around the corner?" "When you go to places like Tel Aviv in particular, it's filled with young people. When you experience Israel when you're younger, you really fall in love with the country," Goldblatt says. "It's a country suited to young people, especially in the summertime. It's an incredible place to be for Jewish youth." The Maccabi Games were supposed to take place last year, but were postponed

because of the pandemic. Now, thousands of athletes from around the globe are descending on Israel in what feels like a modern-day miracle. "Travelling to Israel as the head of delegation of the Maccabi 2022 team, especially after all the travel restrictions, has been amazing," says Farrell Cohen. "The excitement and enthusiasm of all the junior athletes is contagious. Everyone is on such a 'high' not only to be representing South Africa at the games, but also to have this long-awaited freedom to travel." "It's wonderful to be back with hundreds of young Jews on the Ohrsom tour after a three-year hiatus," says Rabbi Jarred Bloch. "The energy is palpable, and it's amazing to be teaching and travelling in Israel at a time when the whole Jewish world seems to be coming back. We feel tremendously blessed that in the years when COVID-19 stopped travel here, our gap year was still able to run, providing our students with an opportunity to grow and thrive, and in that sense, we've always been rooted in Israel."

For the participants themselves, it's been powerful and transformative. "Any South African high school student at a Jewish day school looks forward to Grade 10 - the year they head to Israel," says Hannah Evan, who is on the Shorashim trip. "However, the pandemic caused organisations to cancel their Israel trips last year. I was so disappointed. However, this year, organisations allowed Grade 11s to join their trips. I'm fulfilling a dream." "I chose Shorashim as I have been a part of the movement [Habonim Dror] for the past five years. I loved the itinerary, which includes religious sites such as the Old City, staying at kibbutzim and a Bedouin camp, as well as fun activities like snorkelling in the Red Sea. It's an intimate group which allows us to build life-long friendships." "Now that I'm in Israel, I understand all the hype," she says. "There's a reason our trip is called Shorashim [roots]. The closeness I feel to my religion and culture is unexplainable. There's a sense of community bumping into another 17 year old from somewhere else in the world, visiting Israel for the same reason as me. All Jewish youth should visit Israel. It's a transformative experience." Twenty year old Isabella Jackson is studying in Stellenbosch. "Living in a predominantly non-Jewish town and not coming from particularly religious backgrounds, a lot of us students started to feel a bit disconnected from our religion," she says. "Not only did Ohrsom completely rehabilitate that, but it has offered us the trip of a lifetime. The pandemic inhibited

Continued on page 12>>

In Habonim, a Jew is a Jew is a Jew

OPINION

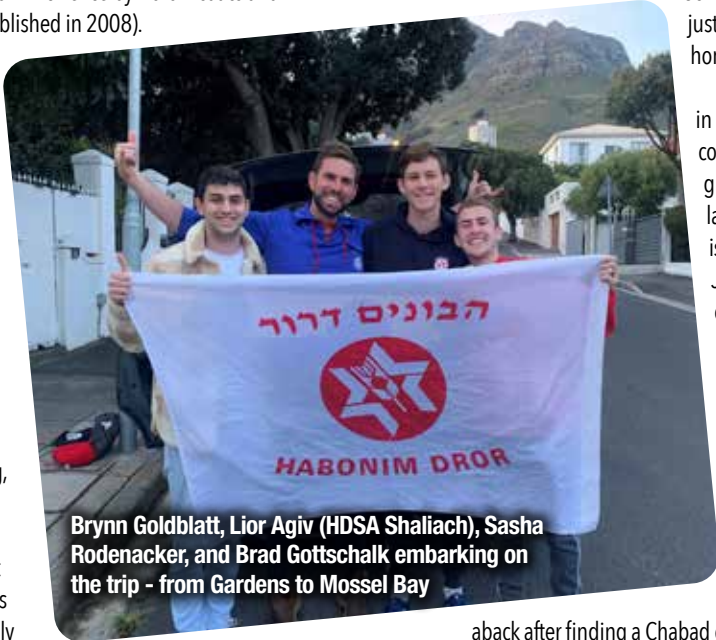
BRAD GOTTSCHALK



Sometimes in life, we're confronted by things which completely shift our perspective of what it means to be Jewish. Falling into the comfort of "knowing" what a Jew acts like or how a Jew looks can be easy at times. But I recently had one of those shifting moments while visiting small Jewish communities along the coast with Habonim. After dealing with COVID-19 for the past 27 months with all the cancellations and heartbreak, we're in a year of rebuilding. The energy we're experiencing is similar to that of the stories we have always heard about Habo in the early 2000s. In those years, the movement was on the brink of closure, but was resuscitated by a group of madrichim who combatted the problems of their time with creative solutions and much heart. Their exploits were even documented in a book (*Like a Phoenix from the Ashes* by Doron Isaacs and Wayne Sussman and published in 2008).

Fast forward to today, and the creativity and drive of Habonim members has become the stuff of legend. One such adventure was a trip along the coast connecting with small Jewish communities. We decided to take a page out of their book. Having lived in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and having access to our plethora of Jewish institutions, seeing what these small communities looked like was absolutely fascinating. I'm part of Habonim because I really believe in the importance of having an informal space for South African Jewish youth to engage with each other and the world around them. I'm used to connecting with "big city" kids (at least) on a weekly basis. But what about the Jewish kids who don't

have the same access to these spaces where they can just be around other Jewish youth? The perks of Glenhazel or Sea Point are evident – one advantage is that we need look only down the road for community. But on this trip, I learned that we take our de facto Jewish lives for granted. It's easy to become a "passive" Jew when you're in such environments. This realisation seeped in quickly on our first stop, Mossel Bay, where the entire Jewish community of the city is situated in one house. There were diverse reasons for wanting to move away from our bigger cities – the calm and nature are compelling enough – but as a Jew, it does seem to come with sacrifice. That isn't to say that the Garden Route community doesn't live as Jewish a life as the broader population – tradition and Jewish education just happen at the home. I'm biased in my views of community, but growing up in a large community isn't the norm. Jews from every era and corner of the world have managed to exist in small outposts. (There's a joke that Neil Armstrong was taken aback after finding a Chabad emissary when he made his first steps on the moon). But we were welcomed by families who were ready to connect with other Jews. Another lesson: being Jewish is about connecting. It was hard to find Jews in these places. Many didn't want to be bothered. However, there were those who made the effort to connect to community.



Brynn Goldblatt, Lior Agiv (HDSA Shaliach), Sasha Rodenacker, and Brad Gottschalk embarking on the trip - from Gardens to Mossel Bay

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Change for the better

We live with certain realities, many not wonderful. How we see them is about our own perspective and attitude. The frustration of living with loadshedding three times a day is hardcore, and something I never thought I would ever have to learn to live with.

I still look back at lockdown and can't believe we lived like that. It almost feels surreal that we were legally forced to stay home. Going shopping for essentials was an exciting outing. Do you remember being allowed to walk outside your property for only a few hours early in the morning? Does it seem real that you were allowed to buy only essential groceries and medicine and all other shops were closed? Remember spraying your groceries before bringing them into your home?



It almost seems unreal now, but it was very real and we learnt to live with it. It wasn't until a couple of weeks ago that we could leave our homes without masks. We didn't see people's faces – other than those we lived with – for two years.

There's so much that we have had to learn to live with and find ways to make peace with. That was the option – do we or don't we make peace with it and accept it? If not, what are the options? We also had to accept that we were experiencing a life-and-death crisis, in which people all around us were falling ill with this devastating virus that was killing many of them.

And, during that time, there were also miracles in which people who had been on ventilators for months came through and recovered from COVID-19. These miracles shocked us but gave us hope that the situation that seemed insurmountable might not be. They reminded us that we could never lose hope while there was life.

Once upon a time, I had given up hope that South Africa was ever going to change. At the time, this country had a cloud of darkness hanging over it because it was run by an apartheid government determined to keep the majority of this country down. It was determined that black South Africans were going to get a second-rate education and they were forced to live in appalling conditions. I need not go on because you know all of this.

So, instead of accepting it, I chose to go to Israel. I was excited to go to a country where being Jewish was expected of me and welcomed, not some kind of oddity in the greater society. I was so keen for the adventure of it, but I still left with sadness because I was leaving the country of my birth, a country I dearly loved and wanted to grow old in.

My childhood memories and the dreams of my adult years were all firmly grounded in South Africa. And as much as I have always loved Israel, this was always home. I left because I believed South Africa wasn't going to release Nelson Mandela – the leader of the African National Congress – and it was going to tighten the screws of apartheid to ensure that change would never happen.

But a miracle happened, and change came to South Africa. Nelson Mandela was released in 1990, and under his leadership, we shifted into a new South Africa in 1994. This brought me hope and home.

Back then, and under Mandela's presidency, we lived as the rainbow nation. That's not to say that the differences that were so stark during apartheid disappeared because they didn't, but we were consciously working towards that. Well, most of us were.

The point is that Mandela saw the glass half full. He saw the possibilities. He let go of the anger and any hatred and worked toward building a country that was unified in its diversity and accepted people as they were.

While some may demonise Mandela, he was a true leader, the likes of which we don't see often in a lifetime. He led this country with a positivity that naturally rubbed off on us, and for years we were hopeful.

On Monday, 18 July, we commemorate this great man and the good that he did in our country. His perspective on life and his vision for the future of South Africa was great. Whether you agreed with the ANC or not, it was actually hard not to ascribe to his vision. It was one of upliftment as opposed to putting people down to get ahead.

As the wise Mike Abel points out on this page, Mandela wouldn't approve of what's going on in this country today, and he would expect us not to accept it.

I totally agree with Mike, but also believe that we have to look up and find the good in what we have here – and there's much of that. We also have to be active in doing good and helping people in order to find positivity in our own souls. If you're working towards uplifting others, you'll find yourself uplifted.

I also believe that as long as we have loadshedding – and I can't see it disappearing soon – we should be getting together to find ways to change this situation. What can we do to ensure that we have electricity? How can we help?

There are certain realities we can't change on our own, but perhaps there are things we can change together.

I would love to be able to be as positive as Mandela and always see the glass half full, but it certainly isn't easy. But I want to be a part of the solution and not the problem, which means I'm saying, "How can I help make things better? What can you and I do to help?"

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

Madiba would be furious, and call for action. So should we

OPINION

MIKE ABEL



How would Madiba feel, this Mandela Day? And more importantly, what would he suggest we do?

I wanted to write something joyous and optimistic this year, celebrating the life and, more particularly, the values of one of the world's greatest statesman and leaders, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

Instead, I find myself thinking that that isn't what Madiba would have wanted at all. He was a realist, a pragmatist, a man of truth and action.

So, Mandela Day 2022 is a sobering moment for our beautiful country. Not because anything has changed particularly, but more because nothing has, over the past year.

A year after our country was reeling in shock semi-post-COVID-19, we saw KwaZulu-Natal go up in flames as the Zuma children and other opportunists stoked the flames of insurrection as Jacob Zuma went to jail, not for the alleged treasonous dismantling and wholesale looting of the state, but for contempt of court. The harder crimes still need to be accounted for. Just like they still do for the majority of the political and white-collar elite who aided and abetted these sustained crimes against a country trying to redress a tragic past and create a more just, equal and shared economy.

This Mandela Day occurs almost three decades after the end of apartheid, and instead of finding

national power facility.

We find our airline remaining in tatters, our railways hanging on by a thread at best, and our infrastructure in an abysmal state of disrepair as our cities try their best to overcome a national absence of leadership or capability right down to the renamed city of Gqeberha running out of water and with no intervention or contingency plans prepared.

We know all this, but the greatest sadness I need to express this Mandela Day is the sheer lack of obvious care or concern from the government.

This reverberating loud silence from the highest levels of leadership. We have no "family meetings" like we did have during COVID-19. We sit here wondering what's actually going on. And when a member of society points out to the minister of police the staggering hard-crime statistics devastating our communities, he gets screamed at and escorted out of the building.

Madiba wouldn't just be sad. He'd be heartbroken and angry. He'd tell us not to accept this. He'd tell us we're far better than this. I can hear him. We can hear him. That distinct and wonderful strong voice saying that it's enough. No more. Be proud. Be strong. Find your voice. Don't be weak.

The important part to remember about South Africa is we have incredible people. Good, decent, kind, capable and warm people.

People who simply want to get on with their lives and make steady progress. We also have an abundance of assets, as I mentioned earlier. It's literally all here. Just waiting for the right structures, leadership and policies to help the country unlock them for the benefit of all. But ever since the startling discovery of cash-filled furniture, we have heard little from our president.

Now, it's no coincidence that we only heard about this two years after the alleged crime was committed. That's because the RET (Radical Economic Transformation) faction is determined to destabilise our country as the National Prosecuting Authority is closing in on it with the shocking evidence and conclusions from the Zondo Report.

It's so outraged at not being able to feed at the taxpayer trough that it's happy to tear the house down to avoid prosecution and to ensure its feeding frenzy remains unaffected.

So, what would Madiba want from us? He'd want us to be angry. To be furious, in fact. To say, "No more!" He'd want us to do all we can as citizens to help our country and its people.

To not allow theft, looting, sabotage and treason to go unpunished.

This Mandela Day, Madiba would be telling us to do everything we can to help build and fix our country wherever and however we can. He wouldn't want us to look at this as a moment for celebration or jubilation, but as a time for constructive action.

He'd want us to ask ourselves, what we can do individually and collectively to fix our country. And that's how we should honour Madiba.

•Mike Abel is a founding partner and CEO of M&C Saatchi Abel. He is recognised as one of Africa's leading marketing, advertising and communications specialists, as well as a prominent thought-leader.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

ourselves in a thriving place of joy and success, we're sadly in the doldrums.

For a country so abundantly rich in minerals, tourism assets, a world-class manufacturing capability, outstanding agricultural know-how and vast fertile land, spectacular businesses and profound intellectual property, we should be booming.

But quite the opposite is happening.

We find ourselves semi-paralysed by the ongoing inability of Eskom to provide our country with the most basic service – electricity. And I don't blame the current leadership of Eskom for this, but the past 16 years of total neglect, looting, political interference, infighting and actual sabotage of our

"Kwazilience" and community - a year after the riots

>> Continued from page 1

with their own agendas, whether criminal, political or ideological, to capitalise by hijacking legitimate concerns and sentiment," he says. "Escalating civil unrest and even insurrection are possibilities that we need to consider – with the events of July 2021 being a key lesson."

To the community, he says, "It's important to be informed. Read credible news sources and keep up to date with the latest developments. Don't create panic by forwarding unverified information. Join your area Community Policing Forum, support your local police station, and where possible, get involved in your area's Community In Blue initiative."

In addition, "Set-up or join a neighbourhood or street watch group. This creates a structured system in which neighbours can come to each others' assistance if necessary. Note that this must be done prudently and within the ambit of the law. Security is a collective effort, so we urge everyone to act responsibly, remain vigilant, and report any concerns or incidents."

If you do arrive at an area or location which seems problematic, "don't take chances, leave immediately. If you end up being caught in a protest, remain calm, don't draw attention to yourself, and always work towards de-escalating the situation and getting away as quickly as possible. If you cannot get away, find a safe place to shelter."

Ensure your home security systems are in good working order and regularly tested. Inform the CSO of any concerning or suspicious behaviour or activity on 086 1800018. "Although there's no reason for panic, it's better to have a plan in place should the need arise rather than needing to act but not considering what will be required under difficult circumstances," Greenblatt says.



Eskomeraderie – the final stage of deprivation

OPINION

EMMA GORDON BLASS



When I arrived in South Africa mid-June after a five year hiatus, to spend a month helping my sister sort and clear the rest of my deceased mother’s possessions (she died during COVID-19), I never imagined that my greatest obstacle would be access to electricity.

The first week was full of nostalgia and regret for my long-lost South African youth, brought on by sprays of aloes against the burnt-dusty veld and the calls of hadedas, loeries and even hoepoes (believe it or not).

I heard some vague talk about loadshedding, which occurred according to a predictable schedule a few times a week, but it wasn’t a big deal. I WhatsApped my children in America images of the camping gas lamps dotted around my sister’s house to show how people here cope with the occasional disappearance of their electric power. “Wow!” they said.

Week two of my visit, and I was deep into the practical details of trying to “get stuff done” on my mom’s possessions, and not wanting to leave anything to the last minute. My sister had warned me that things can often be annoyingly inefficient in Johannesburg so I was pushing through on my to-do list. (I think the adjective she might have used was “exasperatingly”).

By the end of June, I patted myself on the back at having made a bunch of arrangements and not having overpaid too much. The end of my work was in sight! And all of a sudden, I noticed that the electricity started disappearing for longer periods and with ever-greater frequency as we moved from loadshedding Stage 2 to Stage 4.

The bread I had prepared to bake in two hours’ time now had to wait for five hours, which basically ruins the second rise, and results in a pock-holed flat mess. But who am I to complain about my first-world problems, when we could just eat our sandwiches on government loaves?

I WhatsApped my US children about how life in South Africa was starting to remind me of luxurious camping or “glamping”. Everything very comfortable as long as it didn’t involve reliable access to electric power.

You could say that I had passed through the first two of the Kübler-Ross stages of grief in relation to loadshedding: shock and denial.

One late afternoon, I decided to exit my sister’s suburban fortress to take a healthful bike ride around the neighbourhood lake and, when I returned to her gate, it wouldn’t open because of loadshedding, naturally. I made a number of attempts at entering codes manually, pressing the buzzer, and calling family member’s phones over and over. No reply because, you guessed it, loadshedding had powered-down the cellphone towers.

I watched the sun set to my west, a burning vermillion and burnt sienna, and I passed the time by exchanging pleasantries with

pedestrians on their way home from work. “Hi, I’m just a little woman with a bicycle sitting outside a gate trying furiously to dial someone – anyone – on her cellphone, as one does in Johannesburg, one of the most crime-menaced cities in the world.

Eventually, I got the attention of someone inside the family fortress, and was let in. I shouted at everyone about how pathetically inadequate their security system was. Their security company’s emergency app was a joke since it didn’t work when the power was down. How long before the robbers worked out their pathetic “security theatre”, and that the house was defenceless when the power went out?

For those of you counting, that’s stage three, the anger stage.

By early July when the electricity crisis swung off the end of the dial to Stage 6, I was in a panic. It wasn’t so much about all the small businesses losing contracts or students struggling to study for exams in the dark, but how I was going to finish everything I needed to do while the electric power had suddenly become unreliable.

My 14-year-old son, who was along with me for the trip, griped about not having access to WiFi. I started seeing a lot more of him because his computer had become a power and internet-deprived hunk of nothing.

I also started seeing a lot more of my nephews who, when the power went out, gravitated to the living room where a wood-burning stove provided the only heat in the cold winter evenings.

We started to spend more hours together talking in the living room, and it occurred to me that loadshedding was like an enforced Shabbat experience for all South Africans, where we have to spend time together without the distractions of electronics, TV and phones.

I also noticed that everyone I encountered at shops and offices had become nicer and more patient about deadlines because of this shared pain of powerlessness. Even at traffic intersections that terrified me at first because they were absent traffic lights, I noticed that the drivers were more solicitous of each other when the lights were off. I guess this must be Kübler-Ross stage five: acceptance.

Now in the second week of July, my US family still can’t believe the electricity can simply go out for long periods of time and yet the heads of the people responsible aren’t rolling off the guillotines. I doubt they’ll ever understand how native South Africans keep hoping for things to function well enough so they can continue to thrive here in a place where the weather is always great and the sunsets are unbeatable.

This must be the bargaining stage, shifted from fourth to last place, because South Africans must believe that if they pull together long enough, things will get better.

• Emma Gordon Blass is an ex-South African who lives and writes in North Carolina.

Stephan Welz & Co. EST. 1968

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No truth to myth that Wits doesn’t welcome Jews, say experts

SAUL KAMIONSKY

There’s a strange myth about Jewish youth battling to get into the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and not being very welcome there, but it’s exactly that: a myth that needs to be exposed, say experts.

Arnold Basserabie, the chairperson of the Wits Foundation Board of Governors, points to the statistics pertaining to Wits’s feeder schools and governance structures, which show high levels of Jewish representation guiding and supporting the university.

Through annual tracking of its top feeder schools, Wits has found that King David Linksfield

ranked in second place in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

King David Victory Park recorded 14th place in 2020, 11th in 2021, and 15th in 2022. Yeshiva College came 22nd in 2020, and 14th in 2021, while its stats for this year are still being sourced.

In all these three years, Parktown High School for Girls ranked first place.

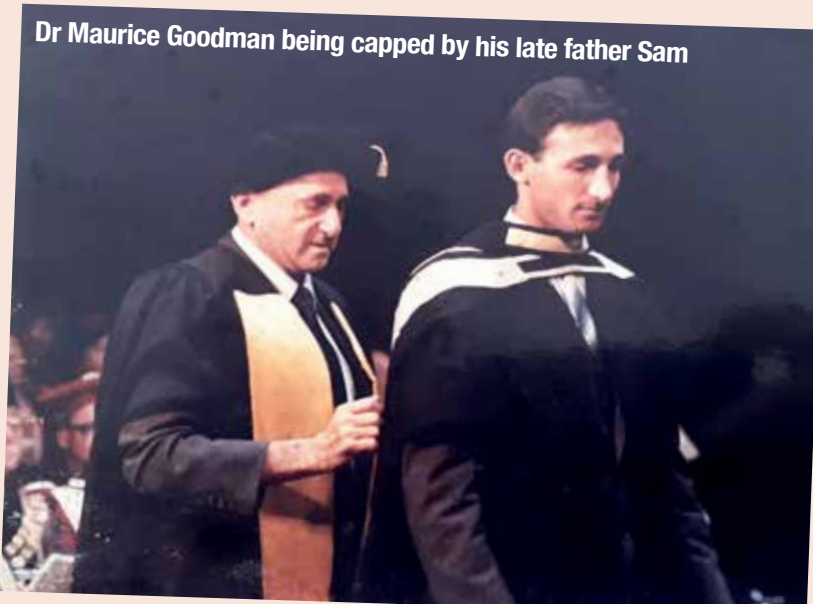
Regarding Wits’s governance structures, the board of directors includes Stanley Bergman, Jane Levy, Jonathan Joffe and David Schneider. “None of the board members would stand for the reality of such a myth,” says Basserabie.

In addition, Adrian Gore is a

governor and trustee of the Wits Foundation, while Sir Sydney Kentridge QC is a patron and trustee of the Wits Foundation UK. Moreover, Wits council members include Dr Jonathan Broomberg, Professor Michael Katz and Dr Maurice Goodman.

Asked about the myth, the latter says, “I have no knowledge of it. I sit on council and convocation exco, and I can assure you that there’s no policy in that regard. So I’m really not sure where this myth comes from. I certainly don’t subscribe to it.”

Goodman and Basserabie are alumni of Wits, with the former obtaining Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Business Administration degrees. The



Dr Maurice Goodman being capped by his late father Sam

latter not only attained a Bachelor of Science degree in Maths and Math Stats, but also participated in an executive development programme at Wits Business School.

“I loved my student time at Wits,” says Goodman. “I was involved in extramural activities, mainly sport. I played soccer for Wits. I really had a good time. Obviously, I had to work hard.”

As a student, Basserabie enjoyed intervarsity rugby against the University of Pretoria, and the annual Rag (Remember and Give), a procession of floats and fancy dress, collecting donations and selling *Wits Blitz* magazine.

“I found the education at Wits excellent,” says Basserabie. “We had great lecturers – Professors Kerrich, Bleksley and Boyd come to mind. We weren’t spoon-fed but taught how to think and solve problems by ourselves. The camaraderie among students was fantastic. We learnt as much about life as an education. One highlight was when the late Bobby Kennedy visited Wits and addressed us on the steps of the Great Hall.”

Today, Basserabie is a member of the Wits Investment Committee and on the board of the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre.

“In my current roles, I have found a dynamic, hard-working institution with committed and motivated people who are really trying to make a difference,” he says. “We have an experienced and competent board of governors which adds significant value to the university’s activities.”

Basserabie’s sons also studied at Wits. “Darren completed a BCom in Law and Accounts, and Lance a BCom in Actuarial Science,” he says. “My oldest grandson, Yishai, is studying Electrical Engineering and seems to work harder than any of the rest of us ever did.”

Basserabie says Wits lays the foundation for an enriched life and presents a gateway to the world. “The standard of education remains high, degrees are highly regarded [also overseas], and the opportunity to engage with students from all backgrounds is a good life experience. Many Wits graduates have gone on to become world

leaders in their fields of endeavour. For example, Patrick Soon-Shiong, Sir Sydney Kentridge, Natie Kirsh, David Fine, Stanley Bergman and many others.”

“Wits is well respected in South Africa, Africa and globally,” says Goodman. The most important thing is the quality of the asset that you are acquiring. Besides the degree, there’s a rich student life at Wits. Wits is also rich in sport. You can play soccer, rugby, water polo, etc.”

Goodman advises those considering going to Wits to partake in extramural activities, but not to the detriment of their studies. “First and foremost, study hard. But you can definitely get involved both in terms of your own growth and in terms of influencing. Important debates go on at Wits. Some have an impact on us as Jews or on Israel, but others genuinely have an impact on the country. Wits students have always made their voices and opinions felt, and there’s a great opportunity for Jewish students to do that.”

To Basserabie’s mind, “Wits, very ably led by Vice-Chancellor Zebulon Vilakazi, is a dynamic and progressive institution determined to produce highly qualified graduates who are able to hold their own in any society. Wits carries out world-class and ground-breaking research, engages in leading-edge initiatives, and enhances society not only in South Africa but well beyond. Wits is an essential part of South Africa and its future.”

He said some examples of Wits initiatives include “the rollout of an ambitious innovation strategy; the conversion of the Planetarium into a Digital Dome; the establishment of a world-class high performance sports, health and wellness faculty; the construction of a burns unit, regarded as among the best in the world. Finally, he points to the success of the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre, “a highly-regarded private hospital and specialist training centre, and the only one of its kind in the country, which has over the past 20 years funded and trained about 100 postgraduate students and a further 500 doctors for the benefit of South Africa’s healthcare community in the private and public sectors”.

Cape Board puts democracy into action with new poll

TALI FEINBERG

Few communal organisations are such sticklers for democratic elections as the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD or Cape Board), which is once again conducting a poll to ensure energy and diversity in this communal body.

“The Cape SAJBD gives its members the platform to be heard on social issues facing the community and the opportunity to guide the values, responses and strategies the board develops,” says Tyla Dallas, the Cape SAJBD’s electoral operations officer.

“It ensures that Jewish life and the Jewish way of life is protected, respected and promoted,” Dallas says. “Similar to its national body, it engages with civil society and local government to advance the rights and interests of the community, leveraging off members who bring a wealth of institutional and communal knowledge. One of its core mandates is to confront antisemitism and promote interfaith and intercommunal relations based on mutual understanding and respect.”

Dallas says the polling process is the result of a commission of enquiry a few years back and revisions to the constitution after complaints from candidates and the public were sent in to the Cape Board following the 2017 Cape Board elections.

“One of the most important recommendations was that a commission be set up to review the structure of the organisation’s constitution and possibly re-draft it. A new constitution was passed in February 2020, which led to a process that includes both a public and an affiliate ballot. It avoids the possibility of the board being made up of the same people year in, year out, and the perceived limited opportunity for “fresh blood” and divergent ideas, Dallas says. Nominees can’t stand for election on the public ballot if they have served on the board in the past five years, which enables fresh leadership.

Five people are elected by public ballot, and another 10 are elected by organisations affiliated to the board, like schools and shuls, at the Cape SAJBD’s annual general meeting in September. Together, this makes up the new board of 15 members which serves for two years (2022 to 2024).

To stand for nomination, to nominate or to vote for the public ballot, you need to be over 18, living in the Western Cape, and registered on the communal database. Two people need to support the



nomination. “We called for people who have a passion for the Jewish community, integrity, are looking to make a meaningful difference in the community and wider society, and challenge the status quo,” says Dallas.

However, this time, “by deadline, there were too few nominations, and so the time period was extended for 10 days as required by the board’s constitution”, Dallas says. “The new nomination period ended on Tuesday, 5 July, with five public ballot nominees and 11 affiliate ballot nominees. As the minimum number of nominees [five] were received for the public ballot, those nominees standing on the public ballot would automatically be elected onto the board.”

Dallas says she’s not sure why only five were nominated this year, “whether it be plain apathy about standing, or that many already serve on multiple other communal boards and committees and so have little spare time”.

“Either way, we want to find out how best we can overcome these challenges and get the community around our board table,” she says. Dallas says all nominees on the public ballot have to be Jewish, live in the Western Cape, and have a passion for the local Jewish community.

“Our nominees have varying jobs, backgrounds and communal involvement. This year, they include the non-executive chairperson of Cullinan Financial Services, Michael Barr; hospitality investment group owner Lynton Cassel; Beck Family Estates Group Trustee Elresia (Rivkah) Myburgh; media veteran and author Vanessa Raphael; and bereavement counsellor Belinda Silbert, who was also the first South African-born woman to be ordained as a rabbi outside of the reform movement.

The affiliate organisations’ chosen representatives would have to be an office bearer past or present in the organisation, have their name on the UJC’s communal database, and not represent more than one affiliate at any time. Those chosen delegates will then vote on behalf of the affiliates at the AGM.

At the first board meeting after the election, the chairperson, two vice-chairpersons and a treasurer are elected from the 15 new sitting board members.

“All meetings of the board aim to take decisions by consensus, but where this isn’t possible, the matter must be put to a vote,” Dallas says.

“Making a difference requires getting involved in your community and its institutions,” says Dallas. “The Cape SAJBD’s biennial election is your chance to get involved in communal democracy and make sure your voice is represented.”

Global leaders call out hijacking of ‘apartheid’ label to attack Israel

>>>Continued from page 2

“Attempts to link South Africa’s past system of institutionalised racial segregation to the nuanced complexity of contemporary Israel-Palestinian relations debases history and trivialises the unique suffering of apartheid victims,” says United States Congressman Henry Cuellar. “We must acknowledge the dangerous effects of falsified name-calling.”

“A lot of political prisoners during the apartheid era would have loved to live as a Palestinian in Israel,” pointed out member of the European Parliament and vice-chairperson of the budgetary committee, Niclas Herbst.

“Applying the ‘apartheid’ label serves no purpose other than to delegitimise the Israeli state, demonise the Jewish people, and ultimately, bring about Israel’s destruction,” said Alan Shatter, the former minister for justice and equality and minister for defence of the Republic of Ireland. Alongside the conference, CAM released a

public petition urging people to sign a pledge to “urge decision-makers at the international, national, and local levels to reject and condemn the ‘apartheid’ libel of Israel.”

NGO Monitor released a number of reports debunking the claims made by Amnesty International and other NGOs. These releases highlight its work in fighting the apartheid libel.

“In light of Unilever’s praiseworthy decision to thwart the antisemitism of its Ben & Jerry’s subsidiary, we have shown that we can beat BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement],” said Elan Carr, CAM advisory board member and former US special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism. “The next challenge is to combat the ‘apartheid’ calumny, and we’ll do that with a carefully orchestrated strategy and a dissemination of the truth and the facts. That’s what we’re doing. The antisemitic ‘apartheid’ campaign will be defeated because it’s built on lies and hate.”

Unity Torah helps heal pandemic-afflicted community

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Hundreds of local Jews, rabbis and communal organisation sang and danced down Oaklands Road in Orchards, Johannesburg last Sunday, 10 July, after completing the South African Unity Torah, a first of its kind in the country.

Never before have organisations got together to create a *sefer Torah* that represents them all. Jewish people, young and old, from all sorts of organisations came together for the grand procession and presentation of the Unity Torah to the Oaklands community. Live music accompanied the procession, a culmination of a three-year scribing process.

...the idea “sparked an unbelievable vision, which ended up much bigger than we ever imagined”.

“This Torah is different to any other Torah that has been written in the history of South Africa in the sense that it celebrates everyone in the community and many organisations,” says Ari Arenstein, part of the group of three who came up with the idea of creating a Unity Torah in South Africa. He was also part of the board that brought it to fruition.

Born at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea

“sparked an unbelievable vision, which ended up much bigger than we ever imagined”, Arenstein says.

The idea stems from 18th-century mystic, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement. “He wrote of a pandemic in their town of Medzhybizh in Ukraine, and if people in the community even just started writing letters of a *sefer Torah*, the pandemic would stop, people would stop dying,” says Arenstein. “So, they immediately got together and started writing a *sefer Torah*.”

“This was known for hundreds of years, so when the pandemic started around the world about three years ago, seven or eight Torahs were written in New York. The catalyst in South Africa was when Rabbi

can we do to help the situation?’ One of the guys suggested that we try to write a Torah for the rabbi’s recovery. We called his son to ask for permission and to see what he thought of it. He was really touched. [The idea] started getting wings and became much broader. Our committee grew bigger.”

Arenstein and fellow board members started working to organise the project and raise funds. Community organisations joined in – such as Hatzolah, the Chevra Kadisha, the Community Service Organisation, the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, the Office of the Chief Rabbi and Jewish schools.

“It became the South African Unity Torah,” says Arenstein. “Its biggest successes were, first, that it broadened from being a Unity Torah to raising funds for those in need during COVID-19. We partnered with an organisation that helps

people who can’t afford the basics. We ended up raising half a million rand for them. Second was getting the letters for the Torah. We got letters from more than 5 000 Jewish children across schools throughout South Africa. Each got a name in the Torah.”

There has never been a project like this in South Africa before, says Arenstein. “Fittingly, today, Rabbi Liberow is healthy and functional. The event on Sunday was also fitting because the Torah is being brought into the community at a time when the levels of COVID-19 restrictions

Arenstein says he and fellow board members witnessed “amazing salvations”. “Whole *parshas* and large amounts were donated to the project by people who might have had a relative who was seriously ill from COVID-19. In many cases, the patients ended up healed.”

The Unity Torah, with its maroon-coloured mantle, is now going to be used on a weekly basis at the Torah Academy Shul in Orchards, Johannesburg. “But any rabbi, shul, or organisation that needs a Torah will be able to borrow the Unity Torah,” says Arenstein.



Photo: Lance Humphrey



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Dayimani realises dream with Maccabi debut

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Stormers’ loose forward Hacjivah Dayimani is in Israel, captaining the South African rugby team in the Maccabi Games 2022.

On the back of winning the United Rugby Championship (URC) final against the Blue Bulls last month, Dayimani will participate in his first Maccabiah on his first visit to Israel, and will be making his debut there as the captain of a senior team.

Dayimani, the son of a Xhosa mother and a Jewish Nigerian father, says, “Playing in the Maccabi Games is something I’ve been looking forward to for years. Being part of it is something I always tried to do. I’m going to do my best. Hopefully, the guys can help me and I will help them.”

Representing South Africa at the games will be a 25-man squad, each of which play for a club in Johannesburg, Cape Town or Durban. Twelve of the players will be playing in the Maccabiah rugby sevens competition, which concludes before the 15s team play their first match against Israel on 15 July. The team then plays Great Britain on 19 July. The semi-finals are on 21 July, followed by the final on 24 July.

Dayimani’s journey to this year’s Maccabiah started when South Africa team manager Anton Chait asked if he would be interested in playing at the games. “I said, ‘Yes, if I’m allowed to,’” recalls Dayimani. “Then Anton obviously pulled a couple of strings and pushed and pushed. He eventually told me that I was part of the team, and asked if I would be captain.”

Dayimani says he feels at home in the team. “For me, it doesn’t matter where you come from. In rugby, when you go on the field, everyone is the same. It basically comes down to effort and what you bring to the game.”

Since the team’s first camp in January, the players have been, Dayimani says, “trying to speak one language and understand each other.

It’s difficult at first, but the vibe has been good, the guys are getting along. We can’t ask for anything else. The attitude is there, and the boys are committed.”

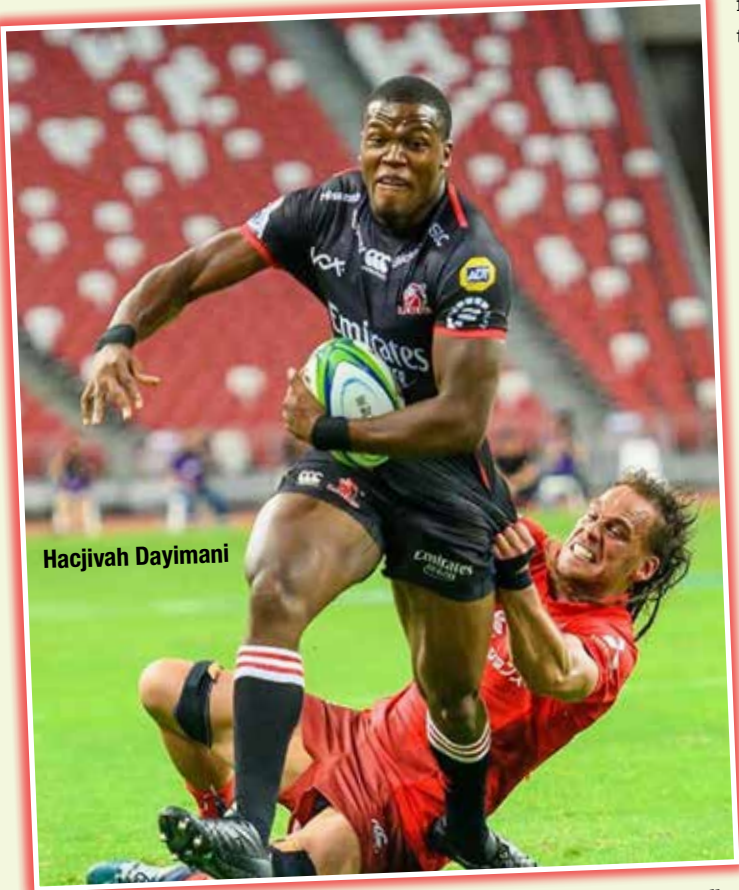
According to South African Maccabi rugby

the team and the only person who couldn’t play on Saturdays. For once, being Jewish and being part of this Maccabi team, everyone understands you, you aren’t different.”

Today, Dayimani observes Pesach, the fasts, and basically all the Jewish traditions except Shabbat, when he often has matches. He describes his unofficial adoptive parents, the Johannesburg-based Kobie and Leylah Smook, who are Jewish, as “the spine in my life”. “They are basically my parents. They look after me. They help me with a lot of things. They make a massive difference. They have done a lot for me, and I’m very grateful. I see them all the time.”

Dayimani says he has experienced discrimination because of his relationship with Judaism. “Being black and Jewish can be tough because you experience discrimination for both. So, sometimes you get it regardless. Being in certain spots when guys found out I was Jewish, there were always comments and jokes with an undertone. I just did my own thing. If guys make jokes, I just brush it off. I call them out, especially when they make fun of other Jewish people and make Jewish jokes. I have always tried not to look at the negative even though it’s there because I feel like if I focus too much on the negative, I’ll never get anything done.”

Dayimani tries to get involved in charity



Hacjivah Dayimani

convenor Brad Berger, “It’s a happy team. Everyone gets on. This is a very good group.” Berger and Dayimani are friends who go way back. “I approached Hacjivah when he was still a schoolboy at Jeppe.”

Reflecting on his younger days, Dayimani says, “I was raised in Jewish customs. We did Shabbat, Pesach, everything. It was tough for me growing up playing sport because of playing on a Saturday. I was the only Jew in

whenever he can help. “For example, I auctioned my jersey and donated some of the proceeds to a school. I’ve donated money I’ve won in previous years. I’ve donated money to a Home of Hope, a home for girls who were raped and abused. I know how it feels to be in an underprivileged position and not be helped. So, I always try to be helpful.”

Asked about his expectations for the team at the upcoming Maccabiah, Dayimani says, “As much as results matter, we’re not result-driven. We’re just there to have fun and enjoy ourselves. For some guys, this might be their last games, while others are in their first games, so we’ll try to make it an experience for everyone. If you win, it’s just a bonus, but we don’t want to put pressure on ourselves.”

Says Berger, “We’re happy to be going, especially grateful just to be participating with load shedding and the whole dynamic of the country at the moment. We’re going to try and make the community proud. The guys understand what it means to be putting on the green and gold.

“We’ve got a mix of experience and some good youngsters. We would have liked a bit more time, but they are a great bunch of kids, they are fit, and in good condition. A lot of them have been to Maccabi before so they know what to expect,” says Chait, who is responsible for the logistics, kit, setting the schedule, and setting standards and discipline in the team.

This former Western Province flyhalf won gold at the Maccabi Games in 1989 and 1993, captaining the team in the latter tournament. His son, Jordan, a flyhalf for the Sharks, is in South Africa’s team for this year’s Maccabi Games, having previously played in the 2017 edition.

“For the new guys, there’s just excitement,” says Chait. “Hacjivah is so humble, so helpful. He’s nurturing the youngsters. Coming from the URC final to Maccabi, you’d think he would be arrogant, but he’s not at all.”

Lviv café owner feeds Ukranian Jews

TALI FEINBERG

Before the Ukraine war, Lola Landa’s restaurant in Lviv, called Jerusalem, was grabbing attention for its delicious take on Ashkenazi cuisine.

Most South African Jews would have felt right at home enjoying 42-year-old Landa’s gefilte fish and chopped herring. But after Russia invaded Ukraine, Landa began feeding thousands of refugees who flooded Lviv. Now, she feeds 100 to 120 people daily, all while still trying to run a business and minimise waste.

“The first three days after the start of the war, we were in shock and couldn’t understand what to do: work or shut down, flee or stay?” she tells the *SA Jewish Report* from Lviv. “When you’re in a state of shock, you can’t sleep, you can’t eat, it feels like the uncertainty is killing you.

The only thing that was constant was the understanding that we should help. But who and how?

“At the end of the first week of the war, Lviv was full of refugees. Restauranteurs created their own chat groups and, with volunteers, delivered food to those who needed it. There were constant requests on the chat: 20 lunches for the hospital, 120 people from Mariupol, 40 people from Bucha ... the flow of messages didn’t stop for a minute. Two months passed

like that.

“At first, we cooked from the products we had. Sellers of vegetables, fruit and meat gave away all their products for free, just to help people. Then it became difficult to get food,” she says. “I never thought that there would be times when I would have money but couldn’t buy anything with it. Now, almost all the goods we are used to are on the shelves, but we face lack of money. For the first two months, we were actively supported by friends and neighbouring companies, some with donations, some with food products. Today, such assistance has stopped because people are running out of money.

“Together with World Jewish Relief, we have organised for 15 internally displaced people to receive food from us. But this provision covers the needs of only 15.

We’re now feeding 100 to 120 people daily, so where to get the rest of the resources and strength? I don’t know myself. I’m involved in fundraising, and I try to work with charitable foundations. We feed people who live in shelters and they count on us, so we’ll hold on as long as we can.”

The food they prepare is simple: porridge, meatballs, soups and salads. “But it’s through food that we show care, and that’s why it

tastes like it’s from a Michelin restaurant,” she says with a smile.

Landa was born in Lviv “to a Jewish family with deep roots. But due to the tragic circumstances of those times – Communism and Soviet power – they lost touch with tradition,” she says. “All I inherited were old recipes and tastes that shaped my perception of Jewish cuisine. I started keeping Shabbat and learning the history of my people. This influenced my future path.

“We have a large family – my mother, her brother and his wife, my husband, our two children, and my sister. We’re all involved in our small family café, Jerusalem. In 2021, our café was included in the Top 100 best food establishments of Ukraine. A year before, it received the European Culinary Heritage award, and in 2022, an article about us appeared in the global publication *Eater*.”

She says Ashkenazi food “is interesting in terms of its cooking principles, as it’s based on kosher laws and flavour accents. If I were to describe the dishes of Ashkenazi Jews in two words, I would say that it has the taste of honey and black pepper. Among the indisputable hits of our menu for 15 years are gefilte fish, *forshmaks* [a chopped herring appetiser], *eisik fleiche* [beef in sweet and sour sauce with honey, cherries, and gingerbread], *kasha varnichkes* [pasta with buckwheat and chicken cracklings], and *oneke lekah* [spicy honey bread]. We introduce traditional dishes to the menu for *chaggim*.”

In addition to the café, “our Lviv Smart Food project has been developing for five years. We prepare and offer a five-course balanced meal and adhere to zero waste. All deliveries are made in returnable glass

containers and reusable eco-bags. This initiative was recognised as the best Zero Waste Project of 2021.”

Everything changed when the war began. “We sent my mother and children to Germany, where our relatives live. I stayed in Lviv with my husband because we still have 15 staff members for whom we also take responsibility.”

Even in the chaos of war, they are trying to reduce waste. “In particular, we were horrified at how much money was initially spent on disposable tableware. Therefore, we ordered delivery and distribution of food in reusable containers and dishes. Eight restaurants followed us. A powerful dishwasher and freezer will help in such conditions to cook for more people.”

She says their business model has always had a tangible social component. “Even before the pandemic, we supported the Jewish elderly. We organised festive dinners, workshops and themed treats. For socially isolated people to go out to a restaurant for lunch, it’s already a holiday. In the pandemic, we delivered food and bought groceries. The essence of our work hasn’t changed, only the goal. We used to work for profit, now for victory!”

Even though they are in the West, they still feel the effects of war. “A bomb fell not far from our house, and many people died. You can still sense the smell of burning. It’s not like the smell of an ordinary fire, it’s a completely different



Lola Landa's eldest daughter Sonya bakes oneke lekah (Traditional spicy honey bread) for Chanukkah

smell. There’s no one in Ukraine who hasn’t lost loved ones or friends because of this war. Soldiers are buried in the cemetery near our café. We see funeral processions almost every day. We see women left without husbands, children left without parents. Every day we have a living reminder that everything we do is for victory. Every step, every meal.”

When asked how the South African Jewish community can help, she says, “During the war, I learned to accept help. Even a drop of help will form a whole sea. Equipment has turned out to be the most urgent need. It failed during three months of frantic operations. A dishwasher and freezer is something that we cannot buy without help because the café isn’t currently profitable. And without this equipment, all processes are complicated. We tried to collect money several times but in the end, the money went to feed the needy. We’re grateful to everyone who supports us and prays for Ukraine. We’ll definitely meet next year in Jerusalem!”



Lola Landa

Tel Aviv, a city with a culinary twist, or 70

LAURICE TAITZ-BUNTMAN

"Tel Aviv! It's a *balagan!*!" the taxi driver snorts as we inch snail-like into the city from the airport. It's baking, and Tel Aviv's most popular new transport, the razor scooter (look left, look right and proceed with caution always) whizzes past us.

It's a beach day. In summer, every day is a beach day, and people are dressed in as little casual clothing as possible.

The road is jammed, giving time to take in the profusion of construction-boom cranes and endless pavement cordons. Taxi drivers scoff at the city's plan to build a light rail service that dates back eight years. Tel Aviv needs it.

Modern Tel Aviv is a "nonstop city", with glamorous restaurants, cocktail bars and nightclubs, young and brash tech magnates, a 24/7 lifestyle, soaring skyscraper hotels, and fancy apartment blocks. It's easy to be swept up by progress, but Tel Aviv's essence and charm is in not losing sight of its past – its distinctive Bauhaus architecture and the charming White City of low-rise modern buildings. In 2003, they were recognised by the World Heritage List of Unesco (United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation) with more than 1 500 buildings marked for preservation.

To find Tel Aviv, you must walk its streets, get a little lost in the messy geography, stop for sustenance frequently, and you'll soon discover you're in one of the world's richest culinary cities.



Photo: Laurice Taitz-Buntman

Find your way into the tranquil elegance of Bialik Street's galleries, and take a self-guided tour of Bauhaus architecture. Head to gritty bohemian Florentine and into the quiet beauty of Neve Tsedek's small cobbled streets. At the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, we found half a day wasn't enough to give attention to the incredible historic and contemporary collections. Picasso and Monet sit side by side with powerful exhibitions on the pitfalls of Israeli urban planning and a video display raising troubling ethical questions of modern statehood.

Walk the American German colony,



Tel Aviv beachfront

one of the city's oldest suburbs, and wind your way into Jaffa, the historic port city, its architecture so reminiscent of Jerusalem's Old City. Sadly, Jaffa's status isn't as sacred or protected, and its architecture is under threat, while its historic mix of traders and cultures is slowly being homogenised.

In Jaffa, I tasted *knafeh* for the first time, at Yaffa Knafeh. Said to be the most representative Palestinian dessert, it's a crunchy pastry-encased salty cheese, warmed on the grill, drenched in syrup, with chopped pistachios and a dollop of ice cream. It's a revelation, and was the first of many more on this short trip.

At Guetta, also in Jaffa, we feasted on Libyan cuisine, eating *chraime*, a spicy fish stew made with hot paprika. I later found the paprika in Carmel market – among a dizzying array of spices, herbs, fresh fruits and delicacies, whole roasted cauliflower and fresh pomegranate juice. In a market

side alley we ate at Shlomo & Doron. They call themselves hummus artists, and so do I.

To get to the true heart of Tel Aviv, you must travel the city through your tastebuds. Falafel, shawarma, *sabich*, hummus, *knafeh*, *chraime*, burekas, *shakshouka*, *malabi*. Even the words alone are enough to make you hungry.

And in that small menu is a trip to food cultures and traditions from across the globe. Yes, Tel Aviv is proudly Israeli, but it's also Libyan, Turkish, Palestinian, Syrian, North African, Georgian, Yemeni and more.

Roger Sherman, who directed the 2016

documentary film *In Search of Israeli Cuisine*, says, "I was knocked out by what I discovered ... one of the most dynamic food scenes in the world." He put the number of cultures that influence cooking in Israel at about 70, a phenomenon that has developed in modern Israel in just more than 70 years.

At the David Kempinski Hotel where we stayed for the first three days of our trip, the kosher breakfast buffet alone was so good and so unbelievably extensive it should be declared a national monument to the tastes of Israel. Roasted whole salmon, tuna in every variation, pickled herring, smoked mackerel and of course hummus, fresh salads, roast tomatoes, tabbouleh, eggplant with labane, immense platters of grilled vegetables, cheeses drenched in honey and topped with walnuts, Israeli salad, quinoa. A heaving display of delicious pastries and breads, a halva extravaganza, and fresh honey from a honeycomb, represent just a fraction of what was on that table.

It's no wonder that it's only open to guests – if word got out, the queues into the hotel might rival the traffic on HaYarkon Street outside the door.

The hotel opened in April 2022, a multi-story glass tower between Trumpeldor and Jerusalem beaches, its outdoor breakfast area and upstairs poolside affording a perfect view of the fine sandy beach across the road, full of activity night and day. Kempinski is Europe's oldest luxury hotel brand, 125 years old, and this its 80th property. A large resort-type hotel, it's unusually intimate for its scale, the result of fine touches such as exquisite fresh flower displays and a hand-picked selection of cookbooks across the hotel. It's an extraordinary place to stay – with immaculate service.

From modern Tel Aviv, we moved to The Drisco in the American-German Colony. The 36-room boutique hotel dates back to 1866, built during the Ottoman Empire by American brothers George and John Drisco. They soon ran out of money (they might have faced the same fate in 2022 – Israel is a pricey destination) and sold the property to

charming hotel for a drink at sunset to admire the quiet beauty of the neighbourhood. Downstairs, book a table at George & John – number nine on the Middle East and North Africa World's Top 50 best restaurants – where chef Tomer Tal is known for his pairing of modern Israeli dishes with Mediterranean influences. His cooking style focuses on seasonality and sustainability, and he ascribes his influences to proximity to the beach, growing up on a farm and nearby Jaffa.

We tasted a sublime dish of tuna toro and roasted cherries; a richly satisfying crab pasta in sweet corn cream, with sage and brown butter.

Of course with so many influences at play, one should venture in many directions. At the buzzing and casually glamorous Hotel Montefiore's restaurant, the dishes are Vietnamese-inspired French cuisine. At Taizu, in an unlikely business-district setting, chef Yuval Ben Neriah serves up Asian street food with a Mediterranean twist.

A city with a twist is a good way to describe Tel Aviv. At a glance, it's a proud cosmopolitan city, rushing headlong into its future like a razor scooter. But take a breath, and slow down, walk its streets and explore, and much like our discovery of *knafeh* on a walkthrough tour of Jaffa, you'll be rewarded with a complex and layered experience that's all the sweeter.

• *Laurice Taitz-Buntman is an urbanist, and the editor of the Johannesburg in Your Pocket City Guide. She's most alive when she's walking through a city. This was her fifth trip to Israel. She was an invited guest of the David Kempinski and Drisco Hotels in Tel Aviv.*



Photo: Laurice Taitz-Buntman

Scooters in Tel Aviv

an hotelier who completed the building in 1870. From housing notable guests such as Thomas Cook and Mark Twain, The Drisco's fortunes fell – it closed in 1940, served as a military headquarters in World War II, and then housed Jewish refugees, before being abandoned in the 1970s.

Its reconstruction and restoration began in 2006, and was completed more than 10 years later, revealing its elegant structure and restoring historic features that include original wall murals, wrought-iron details and an ornate facade.

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The art of being a Jewish mom – and other things

Lorri Strauss and Sharon Spiegel-Wagner are talented actresses and singers, but more importantly, they’re Jewish mommies. The **SA Jewish Report** has a heart-to-heart chat about their motherly lives post-lockdown.

What has it been like getting back to life since lockdown?

Lori: It’s relentless. As much as we moaned and complained about being trapped at home, it was relaxing in comparison to running to tennis matches, fetching children, dropping them, birthday parties, homework, tests and so on. I hoped we would have learnt something from lockdown, but it seems like we’ve slipped back into our old way of life.

Sharon: Everyone has tried to redefine normal life and because everybody has a different definition of it, that overlap is really difficult. Some parents have said, “No more extra-murals, let them come home at the end of the day and not have to have that pressure.” Then, there are those who are back on the grind, trying to catch up on what we missed. There’s just a lot of tension between these two. What are we actually doing?

How are you working that out?

Sharon: I’m in therapy.

Lorri: My coping mechanism is gin and tonic. I’ve actually discussed it with my GP. I said sometimes at the end of the day, I have a splitting headache and I just have a gin and tonic and it makes me feel better. He said, “Well, have a gin and tonic.”

Sharon: It’s just about getting through the day. Because often stress is about the future, what are we going to do next, how we are going to plan for this and this? It’s about getting through that one day, and waking up and getting through the next one. I mean, it’s just a grind.

It feels like everything is overextended because so much was out of reach for so long and now that it’s in reach, it’s supposed to be easy, but you can’t just go so quickly from one to the next. And the situation in the country and in the world in general is hectic. Our electrical crisis is scary.

I did say to Lorri at one point, not that I want to be a Debby Downer, but it feels like we – the human race, civilisation – are going backwards. The laws in America are changing for women, the way the currency is going, economies. It feels like we’re literally going back in time. Corona not only stopped nature, it kind of rewound the clock, and now we’re stuck.

What do you miss about lockdown?

Lorri: I miss my husband being at home. He has only recently started going back to the office and he’s busy in meetings all day. During lockdown, he would have lunch with me and the children, and I could chat to him.

There were lots of hectic, stressful times, but we had lovely moments when we would play Monopoly or go for walks as a family, just that connection. Now, we’re like ships passing in the night. I do try to find a time once a week when we get together as a family, whether it’s a Shabbos dinner or playing a boardgame on a Sunday.

Sharon: It was nice to have a shared reality during lockdown. We were all stuck in the same place – in one reality. And it actually was quite fun in some moments.

Lorri: As a mom, you wish you could wrap your children in cotton wool. Being at home during lockdown, they were safe, in one place, protected from the world.

Being Jewish moms, what makes us different?

Lorri: I do tend to feed my children continuously, which my non-Jewish friends have commented on. I just can’t help myself.

We tend to be so loving, so warm and so involved, which can be a good thing and sometimes isn’t. My Jewish-mom friends really try to micromanage their children’s lives, and it’s not always to the child’s advantage. I’m trying to step back a little bit and let my children make their own mistakes.

Sharon: Jewish moms have a common understanding, a language. Its magic being part of this group that makes you feel safe. Lorri has moved her child from a Jewish school to a secular one, and when I asked her, she said she wasn’t concerned because she still had that tie to the community and with Jewish moms.



Sharon Spiegel-Wagner and Lorri Strauss

My little one is at a very religious Jewish nursery school, which doesn’t really reflect what we have at home. But like attracts like. If there’s a Jewish mom in a group of moms you meet, you’ll find each other. You’ll connect. We have a language.

How do we keep up with our children in terms of technology, language, and so on?

Lorri: I think I’m so cool. My son is on Discord (a chat app). I’m not sure you old-fashioned moms even know what Discord is. Because I’m a singer, I don’t want to scream, “Come for dinner!” So, I logged onto Discord, and my nick is “Cool Mom”, and when I want my child, I message him on Discord, and he comes.

Another wonderful thing about lockdown is that because children couldn’t play together, they would get together on Discord and chat or play Roadblox and Minecraft together. This continued after lockdown. So, we have live playdates, but when my children have a free hour between school and tennis, they go online and build a giant castle together or create a submarine. It’s wonderful – and that was said by Cool Mom 1982.

Do Jewish moms worry more about our children?

Sharon: I have a lot of non-Jewish friends who don’t worry about all the things I worry about. They just aren’t neurotic like we are. Is neurosis in our DNA?

What are supper times like in your homes?

Lorri: I’m going to abstain from this question so as not to incriminate myself. I’ll say we eat supper together every Friday night.

Sharon: During lockdown, mealtimes kind of changed and times weren’t that important. Lunchtime was sometimes at 15:00. And breakfast at 11:00. Now that we’re back to routine, it’s difficult to have a meal together, but we do have our Friday nights and sometimes the whole family goes out for breakfast on a Sunday. But I will say in my home, nobody eats the same thing.

Lorri: Us too.

Sharon: Every psychologist will tell you to make one meal for the whole family. It’s not possible. Everybody wants something different, and the only way to move forward is to have private chefs and get them to make different meals for everyone. That’s it!



Are there least-favourite times with your children?

Lorri: The mornings are tough. Sharon and I are doing a show at the moment, so we get home very late. When that alarm goes off in the morning and I wake up at 05:30, I could cry. Then it’s a struggle to get the children ready. With my youngest, getting every single item of clothing onto his body is a battle. By the time I put him on that school bus, I’m ready for my first gin and tonic.

Sharon: Bedtimes are quite tough because I’m tired and don’t have the patience. My little one is five and procrastinates because she doesn’t want to go to sleep. She’ll find a million things she needs to do. And I can really just do my head in. I feel so guilty because I’m supposed to enjoy it and I know it will pass by so quickly and I’ll miss it. But in that moment, I’m just so tired.

If you were given a ticket to Greece for a week...

Sharon: I would take my hubby. We travel well together, and I miss having some quiet time, romantic time and alone time with him.

Lorri: I was going to say Sharon, but I now take it back...

Sharon: I’m sorry, Lorri. But you and I promised each other we would go to New York or London, and go to shows for 10 days.

Do you have enough “me” time?

Lorri: My children are a little older than Sharon’s, and I find that as they get older, they do get easier. They’re at school longer. They want to be with their friends. I’ve started getting: “Mommy please will you leave my room, I want some privacy.” Their privacy gives mommy time to go lie on her bed and read a book.

Sharon: I’m still trying to find a good way to relax and have some mommy time. With little ones, there’s always stuff to do. I did travel recently for work, and was on my own. It was nice, but it got a bit lonely. I was missing everyone, but I did get to have some mommy time.

Their latest show, “Locked Upside Down & Inside Out” performs at Redfest (at Redhill School) on 29, 30 and 31 July.

One thousand South Africans in Promised Land as programmes resume

>> Continued from page 5

what was supposed to be the best years of our lives. Having this opportunity to spend two weeks in Israel with more than 150 university students has been life changing. Ohrsom Student has given us the most beautiful, spiritually enhancing, and unforgettable trip with the most amazing staff to guide us.”

Kara Gordon is a madricha on Bnei Akiva’s Hadracha programme. “We know the pandemic has taken a huge toll on the youth. Many felt disconnected, including myself. However, being in Israel on a Bnei Akiva programme after two years of nothing has been truly extraordinary,” she says.

“These types of programmes, specifically Hadracha, are crucial to educate our youth, to build a love for community and our land, and most importantly, to let them be kids,” she says. “Most haven’t had the opportunity to travel with their friends, keep Shabbos, or to even be in Israel at all. To see them fall in love with the land and their Jewish heritage gives us the strength to continue structuring these programmes and empowering Jewish youth.

“The end of the pandemic brings a new era for Jewish youth programmes,” she says. “There’s a different, powerful atmosphere post-pandemic. Our participants want to be here, see all they can, and feel all they can.”

For Samuel Bonner, also on Shorashim, “It was devastating that camp didn’t happen [for the past two years because of the pandemic], so when the opportunity presented itself for an Israel trip that fulfils the craving for a break, I jumped at it. People say that when you go with any Jewish youth programme to Israel, it’s unforgettable, and I couldn’t agree more. Five days into the trip, I’m already a different person.

“Religiously observant or not, going to Israel is a necessity for Jewish youth,” he says. “Coming here, to a land of so much historical significance is something else. Habonim is a massive part of my life, and I’m immensely grateful to experience Israel with my best friends and youth movement. I know many Jewish youth feel the same.”

The day I bumped into Mandela – readers reveal their memories

Those of us who were able to meet the late great President Nelson Mandela will remember their “Madiba moment” forever. The *SA Jewish Report* asked community members to share their Mandela-magic.

Singing for a photo



Like many who have experienced a Madiba moment, I have a photograph strategically placed on the wall opposite my “meeting chair”. I have my back to the photographer, but the smile on Madiba’s face says it all.

In 2004, I had the privilege of having my choir invited to sing at the opening of the *466/64 A Prisoner in the Garden* exhibition at Constitutional Hill, in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. The security detail was tight, and the timeline even tighter. Unfortunately – or fortuitously – I was caught in a typical Highveld storm as I battled my way across Johannesburg, arriving late. Everyone was inside the Constitutional Court foyer. Graça Machel and the other dignitaries were already inside. There was only one special guest for whom we all waited. Zelda la Grange, with her hand tucked under Madiba’s elbow, alighted from a black vehicle as they made their way to the door. We reached the door together, the three of us standing at the glass doorway. It really was as if time stood still. Madiba had a quiet aura about him. Nothing frenetic or contrived. I greeted him and La Grange, and excused my tardy timing. He smiled as he motioned for me to go through the door ahead of him, adding that I should enjoy the evening.

As my choristers sang *Plea for Africa* written by John Bokwe and made famous by Sibongile Khumalo, the words resonated for a long time afterwards: “G-d bless Africa and her sons and daughters; Breathe a prayer for Africa.”

My Madiba moment was poignant and lingers today. You’d be hard pressed to find such a gracious individual. The photo adorning my office is a constant reminder of leadership and what that really means. – *Lynne van Dellen, Johannesburg*

Greetings to a young lady

I used to work at the Johannesburg General Hospital in the department of medicine and renal unit. It was 1995. I was working very late for a professor in his office after hours. I heard some people walking down the passage nearby. When I checked out of curiosity, there was Nelson Mandela standing with some body guards. He stopped to say hello, saying, “Good evening young lady. What are you doing here so late in the day? I’m pleased to meet you.” He gave me a big smile and shook my hand. I returned his greeting. It was such a lovely experience. He was so dignified. – *Jodine Krok, Johannesburg*



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Shopping for clothes

I used to work mornings at a telemarketing company in Randburg and then would rush back to my afternoon job at Flowerite in Sandton City (which was just opposite Stuttafords). On this day, when I arrived for my afternoon shift, there was a buzz in the air. I was told to rush upstairs (as we were just next to a stairwell which led up to the next level). Mandela was trying on clothes in the clothes shop upstairs (I forget the name of this exclusive men’s outfitter). There was a huge crowd. Everyone was staring into the shop window. And there was Nelson Mandela, so tall. Everyone was cheering and trying to get a glimpse of him. I was in awe. And all the poor man was trying to do was some clothes shopping. – *Charmaine Chatkin, Johannesburg*

The official portrait

My father, Norman Sher, shared premises with Mandela and Oliver Tambo when they ran South Africa’s first black legal practice at Chancellor House, in Ferreirasdorp, Johannesburg. I painted the only officially recognised painting of Chancellor House, which was also part of the We Love Mandela exhibition that travelled globally. —*Eric Sher*



Breakfast in Brussels

In late September or early October 1993, I was in Brussels coincidentally at the same time as Nelson Mandela. I had been asked as an expert on European South African relations to guide a group of South African journalists on a tour of European institutions in Brussels.

It turned out that Mandela was visiting Brussels at the same time for a series of official engagements with the EU and Belgian government. This was about seven months before the first democratic elections, so Mandela was there as the leader of the ANC, not yet as head of state.

Tito Mboweni heard I was there. He was one of Mandela’s main speechwriters at the time as Madiba was asked so often to speak about the ANC’s economic policies. I had worked with Mboweni and other ANC officials on several speeches for Mandela, and was a member of the ANC’s economic policy group. He invited me to join the ANC delegation to help him work on a couple of speeches.

I was excited when we accompanied Mandela to a meeting with the Belgian king. Though I didn’t join the actual meeting, I was allowed to hang out in the royal place for a while.

But for me, the highlight was accompanying the ANC delegation to a dinner hosted by US businessman Edgar Bronfman Jr for the World Jewish Congress which was meeting in Brussels at the same time. Madiba spoke, seemingly impromptu, on the contribution of South African Jews to his journey and to the struggle against apartheid. He spoke fluently and entertainingly after dinner for more than an hour, and literally had the large and initially sceptical audience in the palm of his hand.

He talked with great affection of Lazar Sidelsky who gave him his first job and encouraged and enabled him to complete his law studies. He talked about the Jewish lawyers who defended him and many others in the Treason Trial, and Jews who had played a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid in the ANC, such as Joe Slovo and Ruth First, and outside the ANC such as Helen Suzman.

It was one of the proudest moments of my life, allowing me to combine my pride in my Jewish heritage with pride at being associated with the most impressive man I have ever met and the organisation he led. – *Alan Hirsch, Cape Town*

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No escape for Sanparks

Sibongile – Bongi to her friends – is worried about me. Yesterday, she gave me a stern talking to, and in what was clearly an act of tough love, threatened to block me from calling Sanparks until I get back from next week’s trip.

“Your wife will be fine,” she said kindly. “You will be fine,” she said with some irritation, “and your marriage will survive this”, she said, maybe a bit unconvincingly.

I might not have created the best first impression when I asked her if the rondavels at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park had a turndown service. Or when I enquired which line of complimentary luxury toiletries we could look forward to enjoying for our bathing pleasure.

“We use a green soap. We will leave it for you on your bed every night,” she answered. For some reason, she seemed unclear about the brand or if it was a hypoallergenic product, but did feel confident that it hadn’t been tested on animals.

It seems further that I misunderstood the reference to “outside ablutions”, which weren’t going to be the same as the catalogues that picture an outdoor shower overlooking the savannah populated with an impressive array of wildlife. The man featured in the photo is chiselled, BMI appropriate, and although we see him only from the chest up, it’s clear that he’s staring thoughtfully at a herd of elephant whilst lathering his ridiculously generous hair. He’s the only human in the picture, and the world is his to consider.

An outside ablution is apparently quite different. And requires flip flops.

“It’s not a problem,” says Bongi, and moves us to a rondavel with an indoor bathroom. The kitchen remains outside

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



though, and she still isn’t prepared to offer me a turndown service. If we want chocolates on our pillow, it means bringing them ourselves. Which makes sense considering that we’ll be adding the actual pillow to our list, as well as down duvets, bath sheet toiletries and probably a blow heater.

I’m reasonably confident that the rondavel will be unrecognisable by the time we have redecorated it.

It’s that time of the year when many South Africans head to the bush. Some are animal lovers, while some of us aren’t. Whereas my family can spend hours personifying and contemplating what a lioness might be feeling when busy with her cubs, I’m much more interested in the types of people we’ll bump into at the coffee stand.

While some can spend unrecoverable time driving in search of a sighting, I’m more than happy to watch the empty landscape pass us by as I enjoy the space, the air and a reminder that there’s more to life than Twitter.

This is why a break in the bush is so powerful. And important. Because it’s an opportunity to connect to something that will enrich our souls and remove us from the sound of the generators. Which is yet another question to ask Bongi when I call her back later. From someone else’s phone, as mine doesn’t seem to work.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

When the going gets tough ...

This week marks the anniversary of the devastating outbreak of violence and looting that gripped large parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng last year. The impact of those traumatic few days continue to be felt, particularly for those whose very livelihoods were destroyed virtually overnight.

In the aftermath of the unrest, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), in partnership with the Angel Network, Union of Jewish Women, and other nongovernment organisations, was involved in relief and recovery efforts in both affected provinces. Our KwaZulu-Natal Council instituted a community helpline for those seeking advice or assistance and with its affiliates, provided emergency food relief, including Shabbat meals and medication for community members affected by the violence. In the case of the wider community, the SAJBD delivered food and other necessities to aged- and children’s homes in Inanda and Phoenix, assisted Ditau Primary School in Orlando East to continue its children’s feeding programme after all its food supplies were stolen, and participated in a clean-up initiative at the Mayfield Mall in Daveyton.

If measured against how much more needed to be done, the impact of these initiatives wouldn’t be great, but they brought immediate help to real people on the ground at a time of acute need. They further provided opportunities for those who wanted to do something about the situation to make a practical contribution rather than simply deploring it from the side lines.

Bombarded as we are by so many bad-news stories of violence and tragedy, we should also remember how much good work is being done, generally behind the scenes and out of the public eye, by ordinary people wanting to make a meaningful difference. We saw that very much during the

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



COVID-19 period, when uncounted individuals from health and social workers through to religious and community leaders, humanitarian activists, teachers and many others did so much to help South Africans get through the crisis. Many such people in our own community came to the fore.

It was during the early stages of COVID-19 that the Board established a Food Relief Fund to help alleviate the plight of those especially hard hit by the lockdown. With the generous assistance of certain donors in the community and in close partnership with the Angel Network, we have since been able to provide nearly R30-million’s worth of food and essential supplies to communities in distress countrywide.

From our tradition (Pirkei Avot/Ethics of the Fathers), we learn that if it’s not incumbent upon us to complete the task, neither are we free to abstain from it altogether. The fundamental message we can take from this is that we all need to ensure we’re doing everything we reasonably can to make things right. Our response to the many daunting challenges facing our country should be – even when small and seemingly inconsequential – to strive to make a positive difference as a community and wherever possible in our day-to-day lives as individuals. Through this, we not only contribute in a practical sense, but do much to counter our own debilitating feelings of pessimism and helplessness that remaining passive in the face of diversity inevitably brings.

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

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

Letters

KICKING ESKOM WON'T PUT WIND IN OUR SAILS

Eskom is down, and defeatist attitudes won’t help. Getting angry, depressed or complaining won’t improve the situation. We’re in this together. By switching off unneeded appliances and saving electricity, some of Eskom’s load will be reduced, and the environment will also benefit.

Reporting and clamping down on corruption and sabotage is recommended. Could the unions play a part?

While there’s no appetite to pay more for electricity in this economy – and when it’s not reliable – that’s what’s needed to finance and repair infrastructure. A culture of non-payment, even by those who can pay, isn’t helpful.

Investing in solar and wind will benefit Eskom and the environment. Much needed jobs are also created by this.

– Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg

Wondering what to do with your time on Mandela Day? Here are some ideas:

Sunday 17 July

• Union of Jewish Women – Bring a loaf of bread to Norwood Mall, and help put the spreads on to give to those in need. Time: 09:30-13:30. Contact: 011 648 1053 or admin@ujw.co.za.

• Mensch, along with The Cape BOD and the United Jewish Campaign, is hosting a Mandela Day Cook-A-Thon. Come join in the fun to do good. Time: 12:00-14:00. Contact jodi@mensch.org.za

• Join the 8km Mandela Day Houghton Run. Starts at 08:00, at Old Eds Virgin Active. Tickets available on www.ticketpro.co.za. All race proceeds go to The Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Monday 18 July

• The Angel Network is looking for volunteers to help sort and distribute non-perishable food items. Contact Glynne on 083 777 1621 or glynne@theangelnetwork.co.za.

• Come to Sandringham Garden and spend some of your time uplifting residents by chatting and knitting. Time: 10:00-11:15. Contact getinvolved@jhbchev.co.za to RSVP by Friday, 15 July.

• Yad Aharon & Michael hosts 67 minutes of packing food for Jewish families in need. Come help. Time: 10:00-11:00. Contact 011 485 2076 or jodye@yadaharon.co.za.

• South African Friends of Israel and the Women’s International Zionist Organisation will be handing over wheelchairs to physically disabled youngsters. Come and help. Time: 10:00-14:00 at Credo Mutwa Village, Jabavu, Soweto. Contact Pam: 068 168 7855.

• Pick n Pay and Food Forward SA are holding a Mandela Day Food Drive up until 18 July 2022. Food hampers will be provided to those who need it most. All you need do is shop for food online at www.pnp.co.za Alternatively, selected stores will be collecting food.

• Woodrock Animal Rescue is asking for donations of R67 or more to make a difference in the lives of shelter animals. Donations open from 09:00 on 17/18 July. Contact: 076 155 4439



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