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Could the ANC start excluding Jews who support Israel?

TALI FEINBERG

“Should South Africans be tolerant of Zionists?” is a question we have yet to answer as a society because some could equate them with South Africans who still fly the old South African flag.”

These are the words of ANC Western Cape caucus coordinator Wesley Seale. He wrote to the *SA Jewish Report* after the newspaper covered how the ANC questioned the hosting of a Jewish community event at the residence of Western Cape Premier Alan Winde.

It is a fact that most Jews in South Africa are Zionist, but the ANC simply doesn’t seem to acknowledge or accept this. The term ‘Zionist’ is known to refer to people who support the maintenance of an independent Jewish State, which refers to most Jews around the world.

“The demonising of Zionists could result in the marginalising of Jews who are Zionist or even of Jews irrespective of whether they are Zionist or not,” says the Institute of Race Relations’ Sara Gon.

The ANC’s confusion around how it sees Jews was also clear in the rest of Seale’s comments. In the same breath, he says: “The ANC would never take aim at the Jewish community and we have a long history fighting for the rights of Jewish people in South Africa. We deplore any form of discrimination and especially towards a community that has among its members great luminaries who fought against apartheid. However, apartheid is also what is happening in Israel. The ANC firmly believes in the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in their homeland.

“We clearly took aim at the premier’s Zionist friends,” he adds. “We did not question the hosting of the event based on the fact that it is a Jewish event. We asked the question based on the fact that the DSCF [David Susman Community Foundation] has as its description displaying ‘unwavering commitment to Israel’.

“We do not object to Jewish events being held at Leeuwenhof, but we would object to a state residence, belonging to all the people of the Western Cape, being used for Zionist purposes and, in particular, to raise funds for the apartheid Zionist state of Israel.

“The ANC has and will always fight for all people to have a place in our country,” he says. “If we are to struggle against antisemitism and discrimination of any sort, we must fight fear and ignorance. We must not tolerate discrimination and prejudice towards anyone within our society.”

While the links between Judaism and Zionism are part of daily Jewish life, the ANC seems insistent on seeing them as separate. “Research has shown us over many years that 90% at least of the Jewish community have a strong belief in Zionism,” says Member of Parliament Michael Bagraim. “Secondly, our daily prayers refer to Zion. Thirdly, Jewish history and our teachings strongly refer to the Promised Land of Israel. Zionism and the religion are strongly connected. I believe that the issue of Zionism and the Jewish community is becoming more and more of a wedge issue.”

Antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town Milton Shain agrees. “There can be no doubt that an overwhelming majority of South African Jews are Zionist, with surveys showing over half of South African Jews feeling a strong attachment to the Jewish state and another third a moderate attachment. Almost four in five Jews have visited Israel at least once, as opposed to about a third of American Jews. This is not to say all Jews in South Africa support all Israeli policies. And of course, from the early 20th century, there have been those opposed to the idea of a Jewish State.”

There is no doubt that the ANC’s conflicting statements reflect the unstable approach that the ruling party has to a community that has always been inherently Zionist. On 18 July, the *Daily Maverick* reported that the ANC could review the party’s 2017 decision to downgrade the South African embassy in Tel Aviv.

Newly elected SA Communist Party general secretary Solly Mapaila says his party wants to go further “by urging the ANC to resolve to push the South African government to close down the Israeli embassy in Pretoria as well”. The head of the ANC’s subcommittee on international relations, Lindiwe Zulu, echoed these sentiments.

Where does this leave a strongly Zionist Jewish community?

“The ANC has been very explicit in describing Israel as an ‘apartheid state’,” notes advocate Mark Oppenheimer. “It will marginalise not only Jews who view themselves as Zionists, but anyone that sees themselves as a supporter of Israel. They’ve already proven themselves as doing so with Miss South Africa, Lalela Mswane. They strongly encouraged her to withdraw from the contest in Israel. She defied them. But the ANC has not been chastened by this, and continues to target activities that it views as being pro-Zionist.

“It is true that the majority of Jews are Zionists. The Constitutional Court in the matter of Masuku recognised this fact: that when Bongani Masuku targeted Zionists to suffer harm, the court recognised that that’s really coded language for Jews. And so, when the ANC targets the hosting of an event at Leeuwenhof for a Jewish organisation that happens to support Israel, it of course has antisemitic undertones.

“But it must also be remembered that South Africa doesn’t just protect people’s religions, it protects their political ideas as well,” he continues. “Undermining people’s belief in Zionism is itself a threat on the grounds of people’s rights to freedom and belief. Zionists appear to be one of the only groups that are actively targeted by the ANC.”

Continued on page 6>>

Running for home

Gold medalist Adam Lipschitz running in the Maccabiah

See Maccabi stories on page 7 and 8

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Israel takes centre stage in Tour de France

TALI FEINBERG

It was an emotional moment for Israel Premier Tech (IPT) cyclist Hugo Houle when he won Stage 16 of the Tour de France (TDF). The Canadian crossed the line pointing to the sky, dedicating the win to his brother who was killed in a hit-and-run by a drunk driver 10 years ago. His win gave IPT its second victory of the tour after Simon Clarke's on Stage 5.

"I could not believe it when I crossed the line. I was just so happy. It was what I have been dreaming of for the past 10 years. This one is for my brother," said Houle.

It was just one of many ups and downs for the team from Israel.

For example, South African Daryl Impey was ruled out of the race the day before it began. He was the second rider from the IPT team to test positive for COVID-19. Impey is a two-time stage winner at the Tour and the first South African to wear the leader's yellow jersey.

Despite being asymptomatic, a test before he was due to travel confirmed he had coronavirus. "No symptoms, nothing wrong and I'm healthy," he said. "It's very, very frustrating for me because I worked really hard to get here, winning a stage in Switzerland, knowing I was going to the Tour."

Impey had been hoping to take part in his ninth Tour, this time with four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome as a teammate for the first time. The two have been friends for many years and are both from African countries, with Kenyan-born



Photo: Facebook

Hugo Houle from
Team Israel -
Premier Tech (IPT)

Froome, who attended high school in South Africa.

Impey signed on to join what was then Israel Start-Up Nation (ISN) in 2020. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* at the time, he said, "Our goal is to win the Tour de France with [fellow team member] Chris Froome. That's our primary objective."

ISN announced on 9 July 2020 that Froome would lead the team. "The Israeli team and the legendary champion will sign a long-term contract on 1 August that will see Froome wear ISN's

blue and white until the end of his illustrious career. This is a historic moment for ISN, Israel, Israeli sports, our many fans all around the world and, of course, for me personally, a moment of enormous pride," said the team's co-owner, Sylvan Adams, when Froome signed.

Impey quickly followed in his footsteps, signing a two-year contract with ISN on 5 August 2020. "I will be a road captain, and use my experience of racing the TDF to help guide the team as best I can. Apart from the Tour

and chasing my own goals, we are also trying to develop cycling in Israel," he says.

ISN was founded in 2014 by Ron Baron and Ran Margalit to elevate and popularise the sport in Israel. It began as Israel Cycling Academy (ICA) and grew to become a WorldTour team. It includes riders of 16 nationalities, making it one of the most diverse in the world of pro cycling.

Now, the team is getting noticed on the world stage. On 19 July, an article entitled "From the brink of relegation to grand

Continued on page 14>>

Do you have what it takes?

Torah Thought



Rabbi Oshy Deren -
Chabad of the West Coast

These aren't exactly the best of times ... And even if they aren't the worst of times either, having Europe toy with a third World War, a global economy on the verge of a recession, and more than enough problems here at home, it takes more than a bit of grit to have a go at it – and succeed.

From a Jewish perspective, thank G-d, this isn't the worst of times. We have so much to be thankful for. But between the cost of Jewish education, post-Covid shul fatigue, and a world that is slamming us with moral, spiritual, ethical and religious challenges, no one I speak to feels like it's the best of times either.

Yes, there is so much good news, but I'm not alone in the sense that the quantity of tragedies, illnesses and accidents feels just a little more than we can handle right now. Do you have what it takes?

Well, this week is not exactly the best of times either, standing as we are in the middle of the Three Weeks also known as *Bein Hametzarim* or "the dire straits", which is when we remember what were truly the "worst of times" on the Jewish calendar, the destruction of Jerusalem, and all of the sorrows brought in exile since then.

That's why this week we have two characters, both of them ridiculed by the people of their time, thrust against their will into moments of great consequence, beset with a deep sense of self-doubt. The phrase "do you have what it takes?" is amplified by the naysayers and confusion swirling around them.

Nevertheless, both Pinchas in our Parsha, and Jeremiah in our Haftorah, despite everything going against (and within) them, rose to the moment, radically altering the narrative of the time, and for generations thereafter secured a lineage of sacred pedigree.

How? Because they listened to the loudest voice inside of them – louder even than the prophecy of Moses, which in that critical moment when Pinchas asked, was silent.

It is the voice that speaks to every one of us, and in the words of Haftorah: "Say not: 'I am a child' (and therefore incapable) for wherever I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you,

you shall speak. Fear them not, for I am with you!"

Whether it's the best or worst of times, one thing is for sure; it's your time – because you have it in you.

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UN Watch details torture by Palestinian authorities

NICOLA MILTZ

“They arrested me, hanged me from the ceiling, beat me up and interrogated me for five days,” says a gay Gaza Palestinian now living in exile in Turkey.

“Everyone is afraid of everyone. Some have been punished, some have been killed. Others killed themselves,” says another gay man from Gaza.

These are just two shocking testimonies by detainees held in Palestinian custody in the West Bank and Gaza.

These and other revelations of torture at the hands of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas have been included in a jaw-dropping report by human rights watchdog UN Watch and submitted to the UN Committee Against Torture (the Committee).

UN Watch charges that the PA tortures human rights activists, women, LGBTQI+ persons, political opponents, so-called “collaborators” and Palestinians who sell land to Jews.

Another testimony in the report reads, “Never in my life have I seen such brutality. The sounds of people screaming inside the police station, to this day I still hear it.” It’s by Palestinian radio journalist Akil Awadah, who was himself beaten and detained in July 2021 after protesting the death in custody of PA critic Nizar Banat.

According to the report, Palestinians who are accused of “collaborating” with Israel are routinely tortured by both the PA and Hamas. “Torture included beatings, putting out cigarettes on their bodies, pulling out teeth, forcing them into painful positions and abusing their genitals,” says the UN Watch report.

The UN this week addressed these allegations. The Committee which is a subsidiary of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, met to review whether the PA is in compliance with the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

At the time of going to print, members were looking into alleged violent interrogations, beatings, the holding of the remains of Israeli soldiers, mysterious

disappearances of Israelis, and other torture-related issues. The Committee was also reviewing actions by Hamas, the terror group that rules the Gaza strip and is routinely accused of torture by international watchdogs.

Prior to this year’s session, Ramallah submitted the required compliance report, which reportedly ignores documented PA abuses or deflects blame onto Israel. For example, the death in custody of critic Banat is reportedly omitted from the PA’s

in May 2021, PA security forces arrested dozens of activists and students considered critics. They were reportedly taken to the infamous Jericho prison known as the “slaughterhouse”, where they were accused of “stirring up sectarian and racial strife” and subjected to torture.

Neuer says, “Hamas in Gaza also routinely employs torture.” The report lists documented examples where Hamas security forces severely beat protesters and subjected them to torture.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called on donors to cut off funding to PA security forces and urged the international criminal court to investigate. The HRW says Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip systematically torture critics in detention, a practice that could amount to crimes against humanity.

Its report alleges that Palestinian security forces “use solitary confinement and beatings, including whipping their feet, and force detainees into painful stress positions for prolonged periods, including hoisting their arms behind their backs with cables or rope, to punish and intimidate critics and opponents and elicit confessions.”

HRW’s report comes a year after the death of Banat, whose family say security forces stormed his residence in the middle of the night and beat him with metal batons.

Amnesty International says that the PA has failed to hold its security forces accountable for Banat’s death. Palestinian authorities arrested 14 officers and are trying them in a military court, but have reportedly taken no action against top commanders.

It is understood that the Committee is to review additional reports submitted by American Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, the Palestinian Coalition Against Torture, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Clinic on International Human Rights and others.

Neuer says, “We trust that our collection of evidence and harrowing testimonies will assist the UN committee experts when they review whether the PA has followed through on its promises to eradicate the use of torture.” He has called on the Palestinian envoy to Geneva, Ibrahim Khraishi, to come clean about the PA’s regular use of torture.

The Committee’s conclusions, which will include recommendations for reforms, are due later this month.



Palestine is part of the Convention against Torture, which requires members to work to prevent torture. This is the first review of the PA – which signed on to the Convention in 2014 – despite the fact that the Committee is meant to review all parties to the Convention every four years.

WE TRUST THAT OUR COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE AND HARROWING TESTIMONIES WILL ASSIST THE UN COMMITTEE EXPERTS WHEN THEY REVIEW WHETHER THE PA HAS FOLLOWED THROUGH ON ITS PROMISES TO ERADICATE THE USE OF TORTURE.

Hillel Neuer, executive director of UN Watch, says, “Evidence continues to emerge of widespread torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees held in Palestinian custody in the West Bank and Gaza.”

submission to the Committee.

UN Watch legal adviser Dina Rovner presented its in-depth report to the 10-member committee on 18 July, a day before members of the Committe began to fire questions at a delegation from the PA.

While the PA is thought to have touted how it has fulfilled its promises, UN Watch says the PA’s compliance report “seeks to absolve” Palestinian actors of responsibility for complying with the treaty’s prohibitions against torture.

“Instead it points the finger at Israel to deflect attention from the PA’s own record, which is the subject of the UN review,” says Neuer.

According to the UN Watch report, LGBTQI+ people living under PA and Hamas rule suffer “severe persecution and ostracism”. The report also maintains that routine PA torture includes beatings, solitary confinement, feet whipping, threats and taunts, and forcing detainees into painful positions for extended periods.

The report cites several incidences of the torture of activists, including how

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Will the ‘Elders’ guide Cape community forward?

TALI FEINBERG

A group of senior, experienced and committed leaders have formed an advisory group in Cape Town, calling themselves The Elders Group, to guide the community through challenges. However, two members of the community have questioned the democratic nature of this group, its access to communal resources, and even its name.

“A group styling themselves as The Elders Group wrote to members of Cape Town’s Jewish community with a Community Progress Report [on 1 July]. Who on earth are these ‘Elders’, and who appointed them?” Judge Dennis Davis and Gilad Stern wrote to the *SA Jewish Report*. “We are ourselves not spring chickens, but would hardly call ourselves ‘Elders’ -- hence our incredulity at the contents of their letter.”

Philip Krawitz, chairperson of The Elders Group (TEG) explains how the group came about: “For a number of years, the senior Cape Town communal leadership liaised informally in respect of communal issues. Shortly before the pandemic, a number of us started arranging weekly calls to discuss challenges facing our community. Communal entities started calling on us for guidance and we decided to call ourselves ‘The Elders Group’. The collective experience of this group covers decades of involvement spanning the entire community.”

The original members were Krawitz, Lance Katz, Samuel Seeff, Ronnie Stein and Marco van Embden. Alison Berk Katzeff, Natalie Barnett and Rael Kaimowitz have since been co-opted.

“Our involvement covers, in the main, the raising and disbursement of funds in the best interests of the community. The group has been integrally involved in virtually every aspect of Jewish life in Cape Town, apart from religious affairs, which we see as the domain of the Beth Din, and political issues, which we believe should fall under the Board of Deputies,” says Krawitz.

“At the start of the pandemic, we undertook an emergency campaign raising R34-million,” he continues. “Needless to say, TEG members led by example. By working together, we have managed not only to raise substantial funds for the Covid crisis, but also for our annual campaign.

“In several instances, we have been involved in efforts aimed at *Shalom bayit* [literally ‘peace in the home’, or resolving internal conflicts]. The essential quality of the TEG has been a focus on the community as a whole. We often speak of putting on ‘The Big Communal Kippah!’ Another aim is to assist with the implementation of the ground-breaking Vision 2040 Project.”



The Vision 2040 Project “was initiated a few years back by the Priorities Board (funded by the David Susman Community Foundation) to take a long-term look into the future of our community and its needs,” explains Krawitz. “This has been expertly driven by Raoul Miller and an outstanding group of young leaders. They have interacted with virtually every communal organisation and provided feedback to the community. One of the recommendations is to formalise the TEG into a Board of Governors, adding up to four co-optees.

“The TEG does not have any funds,” he emphasises. “However, the representation of the United Jewish Campaign and the David Susman Community

Foundation ensures that money is expeditiously disbursed within our community.”

Meanwhile, Davis and Stern say: “Reading this document, which informed the community that this group had reconstituted a Board of Governors and set out a plan by which they would supervise the governance of the community, induced a sense of amazement at the profoundly undemocratic nature of these decisions. For more than a century the SA Jewish Board of Deputies has been the umbrella organisation mandated to act on behalf of the community. Whatever its flaws, the Board consists of members who have actually been elected by the community. The system may be imperfect, but at least it has some democratic pedigree.

“By contrast, who elected these Elders? In a time of state capture, is this ‘community capture’? Who gave them this ‘Elders’ authority to circumvent a century-old system of communal governance? Without coherent justification to the contrary, we must assume that the organised Jewish community in Cape Town has just witnessed a coup,” they say.

But Krawitz says, “A coup implies a takeover of various entities by a new group of cohorts. In the case of TEG, nothing could be further from the truth. No organisation has been taken over, and TEG has consistently operated with no budget and no formal structure. The new Board of Governors proposed through the Vision 2040 Project will not result in the takeover of any entities. The community is well run, with all entities having good leadership structures in place.”

He says they have a close relationship with the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD), “and do not in any way impact on their endeavours. We have good relationships with communal entities.”

Cape SAJBD chairperson Tzvi Brivik says, “The Cape SAJBD is the apex communal body of the community, ensuring that Jewish life and Jewish way of life is protected, respected and promoted. We are fortunate to

have members in our community who bring a wealth of institutional and communal knowledge, offering a depth of practical experience of communal issues.

“TEG is such an informal grouping of civic-minded individuals who meet to discuss important community matters. It is true that they are unelected, but equally true that they have no official (or even semi-official) authority. Each of them has served and currently serves on multiple communal organisations and has dedicated their lives to the growth and sustainability of our community.

“Based on their communal and business experience, on occasion, they are asked to share their views with the Board, which we receive respectfully,” continues Brivik. “These views do not inform our decision-making and where such views do not concur with our own, we follow our own Board’s advice. There is no compulsion involved, and no deference, though we do hold the individuals in high regard and almost invariably find their guidance very helpful.”

In its ‘progress report’ email on 1 July, TEG spoke of a new structure. Krawitz explained that this consists of “a Board of Governors (essentially an expanded TEG); a revamped Priorities Board with a greater focus on the fixed assets of our community; an Allocations Committee continuing with its current task of disbursing funds as expeditiously as possible; an Advisory Committee focusing on service delivery and assisting with professional appointments; and a Centralised Investment Committee, which will look at optimising the performance of all Community Capital Funds through a unitised central fund”.

Finally, he says, “We are extremely proud of the way that the Cape Town Jewish community operates. There is excellent fiscal discipline, high levels of co-operation and intelligent use of assets. Some current members of TEG have indicated their desire to hand over to younger members once the new structure is in place. We have every confidence in the abilities of the next generation.

El Al worker sentenced for role in smuggling cocaine from SA to Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Twelve years in prison was the sentence that a former senior executive of El Al’s security division received on Tuesday, 19 July, for his part in smuggling more than 50kg of cocaine from South Africa to Israel. Rami Yogev (57)

was given an additional 24 months’ probation. Judge Mordechai Levy said it was one of the most serious drug incidents Israel has ever known.

Yogev and a former Shin Bet officer, Beno Shalom, were among several people arrested at the end of 2018 for their suspected roles in an international drug-smuggling



Lieutenant Colonel Katlego Mogale from the South African Police Service told the *SA Jewish Report* at the time of the arrests that the drugs were believed to be from countries outside South Africa, probably in North America.

network that used Johannesburg’s OR Tambo International Airport as one of its transit routes. According to the indictments, the suspects took a total of 150kg of cocaine from South Africa to Israel on 10 occasions over a period of several months.

Yogev was charged in 2019, along with eight other suspects. According to the *Times of Israel* (TOI), he was convicted in a plea bargain, saying that while he hadn’t known what was in the suitcases carrying the smuggled drugs, he had “closed his eyes” to the possibility that they might be in there. According to the court, he allowed the transfer of the suitcases without proper inspection in exchange for \$10 000 (about R170 000) per suitcase, reported *The Jerusalem Post*.

Yogev’s high-ranking position in El Al security gave him access to restricted areas of Ben Gurion Airport, bypassing standard security checkpoints. The drugs were put in hand luggage and smuggled past security in Johannesburg before being carried by a courier onto flights to Israel. At Ben Gurion, the hand luggage was handed off to Yogev as soon as the plane doors were opened. He then took the bag past security into Israel.

The investigation began after

drugs were found in the luggage of an Israeli citizen arriving on a flight from Johannesburg, according to Israeli media. *Ynet* reported that a warehouse was discovered in central Israel, which is alleged to have been used by the smuggling ring to store and manufacture weapons. *TOI* wrote that in one intercepted haul, police were said to have recovered 20kg of cocaine, with a street value of about NIS 8-million (about R39-million).

Prosecutors wrote of Yogev that he “blatantly and grossly violated the trust given to him as part of his job”. The main suspect, Hanania Knafo (a prisoner involved in the case), was sentenced to 10 years in prison, reported *The Jerusalem Post*. The original indictment says that the state witness in the case worked in the security division of El Al until he was replaced by Yogev in 2010.

An Israeli man, Shai Alon, was arrested in South Africa in April 2021 in connection with the cocaine smuggling ring. He was arrested after Israeli authorities asked their South African counterparts to extradite him. *Ynet* reported that it was alleged that Alon acted as a drug courier on three occasions and recruited someone else to carry the contraband.

Mogale says the security measures at OR Tambo “are and have always been strict”.

“SAPS renders support as far as the protection of passengers at check-in counters and boarding gates. SARS [South African Revenue Services] customs and SAPS are responsible for the checks when there is intelligence that has been gathered relating to a specific flight.

“Law enforcement will in cases like this follow on intelligence gathered to ascertain the origin of the drugs, the modus operandi of the suspects, as well as the connection the suspects have to syndicates.”

She said there had been significant breakthroughs in arresting drug mules and traffickers, as well as in making sure that prison sentences were handed down.

El Al did not respond to questions from the *SA Jewish Report* this week. However, at the time of the arrests, it responded with the following statement: “El Al is assisting the legal authorities in their investigation [to] reach the truth, and regardless of the investigation, we emphasise that El Al has never compromised and will never compromise on security matters, and is acting on this matter in accordance with the guidelines set by official security authorities.”

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Fist bumps and friendship: Biden’s Middle East visit

OPINION

While South Africa continues to shun and slate Israel at every turn and has discouraged high-level political visits to the Jewish State, US President Joe Biden last week completed a four-day trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia. This is his first visit to the Middle East since becoming president in 2021, a year after the chaotic American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Biden has met every Israeli prime minister since Golda Meir in 1973, and this was his tenth trip to Israel. The world was watching. Biden met new Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who is leading the government as the country heads for its fifth election in three years. Biden also met with beleaguered opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is hoping to make a spectacular comeback to power in November’s polls. Biden visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and pledged support for the new Iron Beam laser defence system that builds on the Iron Dome anti-rocket weaponry. He said he favoured diplomacy to stop Iran developing nuclear weapons, while Lapid said there had to be a credible military threat to Iran if it does so. The allies agreed to disagree. Some controversy arose with Biden’s visit to an East Jerusalem hospital, without Israeli officials.



Critics charged that this was tantamount to undermining Jerusalem’s status as the united capital of Israel. Biden brushed this off. He announced a \$100-million (about R1.78-billion) package for Palestinian hospitals. The Palestinians were virtually ignored by President Donald Trump, but Biden made a point of visiting Bethlehem to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Biden said the time was not ripe for restarting negotiations (paralysed for over a decade), but nevertheless paid lip service to an increasingly unlikely two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition to the support for health, Biden announced a \$316-million (R5.4-billion) aid package for the Palestinians, but no firm plan for reviving statehood talks. He also announced resumption of US funding to the UN Relief and

Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, which had been stopped by Trump. Last Thursday, Saudi Arabia announced that all flights to and from Israel would be allowed to overfly its airspace. Biden’s flight on Air Force One was the first to make the trip. This is a major win for Israel’s aircraft, which previously had to extend trips

normalised Israel’s relations with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates – is one of the few Trump-era initiatives that the Biden administration has not sought to reverse. But Saudi Arabia is still not ready to join the accords, despite burgeoning behind-the-scenes ties with Israel and its tacit support for the Gulf States’ participation. The two recently agreed to Saudi sovereignty over two disputed islands in the Red Sea. Biden’s visit may prod the countries closer together. When campaigning for president, Biden had strongly condemned the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul in 2018. He vowed to make Saudi Arabia a “pariah”. Now, the world was watching as he met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (known as MBS), widely

went viral on social media, evoking equal measures of disgust at this seeming hypocrisy and affirmation of the relations between the two states. Biden also urged Saudi Arabia to increase its oil production, to counter the steep rise in the petrol price since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The US economy – like many around the world – is struggling with high fuel and food prices, and this is set to disadvantage Democrats in the congressional midterm elections in November. The Saudis made no public promises in this regard. South Africa condemned the Abraham Accords, showing just how out of touch it is with a much-changed Middle East. The Palestinian issue will no longer be able to prevent relationships that make business sense, and military sense as these countries face a common enemy in Iran. While these high-level trips are about the optics and photo opportunities, they also cement ties between nations. Sometimes, South Africa seems to be more anti-Israel than the Palestinian leadership. It should wake up to the new reality. • Steven Gruzd is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.



STEVEN GRUZD

Photo: Daniel Karmann picture alliance via Getty Images

While these high-level trips are about the optics and photo opportunities, they also cement ties between nations

by flying around and not over the Saudi Peninsula. The move is evidence of further bridge-building with the Saudis, and perhaps a prelude to full recognition of Israel and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. This would be a big prize indeed for Israel. The Abraham Accords – which

suspected to have given the orders for the assassination. Realpolitik prevailed over ideology in the Red Sea port of Jeddah as Biden and MBS performed an awkward fist bump. It was not quite the same as a handshake, but an acknowledgement of friendship nevertheless. The gesture quickly



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Wake up and smell the roses

I am astonished how the ANC, our incumbent ruling party, which I know includes many smart, educated people, cannot understand the connection between Jews, Judaism and Israel.

It is not rocket science. You can even google it to see for yourself.

Every single day, three times a day, Jews say a prayer called the *Amidah*, and every time, they do so facing Jerusalem. Not north, east or west, but in whichever direction Jerusalem or Israel is. In the prayer, we refer to Jerusalem and returning to the city.

During *Birkat Hamazon* said after every meal, we again refer to a longing for Jerusalem and rebuilding it.

At the end of the Yom Kippur service and the Pesach seder, we say: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

These are only a few references that make it clear that Jews, our religion and Israel are interdependent. And to be a Jew that has no bond whatsoever to Israel is unusual and fairly rare.

We all feel some kind of allegiance to the Jewish state, not least because when the Holocaust was over and many countries turned Jewish refugees away, Israel was once again proclaimed our land by the United Nations.

But truth is our connection goes back much further than that.

Even when we are angry with something that the Israeli government may have done, we still love Israel. We still feel that bond. We may not even approve of the ruling party there, but we are still bonded to the country. It is just like that!

So, the fact that the ANC can condemn Zionists – which in my understanding is a person who feels that intrinsic bond with Israel – but say it would stand up for Jewish people is absurd. And it seems that no matter how many people may have tried to explain this to the ruling party, and to be honest, I don’t know who has, it doesn’t seem to be able to comprehend this.

This nonsense about separating us into Zionist and non-Zionist Jews is foolhardy because even those Jews right on the fringes of the community have an allegiance to Israel.

Yes, there are some who put their names to petitions against something Israel has done that they disagree vehemently with. I recall the one called “Not in my Name”. But even then, they probably feel a connection, which is why they are angry with how Israel responded. However, I cannot speak on their behalf about what they feel.

I am sure there are some Jews who are genuinely anti-Israel and they may have big voices, but they are so few in numbers.

Which is why our lead story is baffling to me, because of the ANC’s desire to separate us from anything to do with Israel.

However, therein lies the problem. If the ANC decides to outlaw Zionism and the Israeli flag, where does that leave us?

So there is an urgency to helping them to understand that while we may support the Jewish state, we don’t make decisions for Israel. We also don’t necessarily all feel the same way about Israel in our Zionism.

But more important is that their blanket hatred of Israel is unwarranted and misdirected.

Advocate Mark Oppenheimer, who is an expert in hate speech, among other things, spoke recently at an FW De Klerk Foundation event and made so much sense about the SA government’s blindness around Israel and the misdirection of anger that should be going to countries that really abuse their people. I have his permission to quote him liberally.

He spoke about how South Africa sidles up to some of the most sinister regimes, ones that practise torture and suppression of media and their own people. And instead of calling them out on this, the government supports and makes excuses for them.

He referred to Iran, Syria, North Korea, Nicaragua, Russia, Venezuela and Cuba. Our government’s foreign policy explicitly sympathises with these countries, saying that sanctions against them are considered “bullying”. Oppenheimer makes the point that these are, in fact, sinister rogue nations, not sweet countries doing good for the world.

The human rights record of Iran is abysmal, he says. Consider Venezuela, where over 2.5 million of its people were driven into exile because of horrific economic policies, he says.

Instead of condemning this, the SA government tries to emulate the amendment to the laws allowing the state to confiscate property, according to Oppenheimer. It also blames those “terrible imperialists” for imposing sanctions on poor Venezuela.

As for Cuba, a communist nation that oppressed its people, the SA government offered it R50-million. Never mind that we don’t have enough money to feed our own people.

The point is our government appears to take a back seat in any condemnation of rogue countries when other countries are standing their ground against them.

But, somehow, it changes its tactic when it comes to Israel, which is comparatively an innocent. Israel is always singled out for rebuke, according to Oppenheimer. In fact, the ANC welcomes the leadership of Hamas – an organisation outlawed by many as a terrorist group – at its conferences. Hamas makes no bones about its intention to destroy Israel.

Oppenheimer suggests that perhaps it could be that our government has a problem with “occupied people”. But he goes on to remind us that the ANC stays silent around Tibet and its oppression, and China’s suppression of the Uyghurs. And it also remains silent about what Russia is doing in Ukraine. So, it is clearly not about occupation per se.

So I wonder what it would take to get our ruling party and government to acknowledge and accept that Jews and Israel are interlinked and that they really should consider doing an audit of their friends and enemies.

I am happy to help, as I am sure is Mark Oppenheimer (who has all these facts at his fingertips).

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Anyone can get the emoji picture



OPINION

ARTHUR GOLDSTUCK

Last Sunday was World Emoji Day, but don’t panic: there’s still time to join in the fun. In fact, you probably already are, every hour of every day. It is estimated that 92% of internet users have used emojis, and up to 10 billion of these pictograms are sent every day in instant messaging, email and across social media.

No surprise there: they allow users to add instant emotion, tone and nuance to short messages. They represent a convenient shorthand, especially for those who often find themselves at a loss for words.

But emojis also represent serious business. Or, at least, serious impact on business. Various studies have shown that their use in marketing increases user engagement. Brands using emojis in their email subject lines achieve a higher email opening rate – and people process visuals dramatically faster than they do text.

According to Hubspot, emojis in a tweet can increase engagement by 25.4%, and in a Facebook post can increase the number of likes by 57% and the number of comments and shares by 33%.

The Unicode Consortium, the not-for-profit organisation responsible for digitising the world’s languages, says the most popular emoji last year was Tears of Joy (or 😄), which accounts for over 5% of all emoji use. The heart emoji (❤️) is a close second, then 🥰, with the rest of the top 10, following distantly behind, comprised of 🍷👩🏻👨🏻👦👧👶🏻 and 🍷.

The original Unicode Standard comprised text and symbols that could be created by computers. Emojis formally became part of its ambit in 2009, but it had long embraced equivalents. Who remembers the wonderfully named Zapf Dingbats family of symbols? That was part of Unicode 1.0 in 1991.

Next year, the consortium will add to the existing 3 663 approved emojis another 31 new entrants, including the pink heart, the hair pick and the khanda, symbol of Sikh faith. That’s well down on last year’s 217 and this year’s 100 or so newcomers.

Ironically, while the number of objects that could be “emojified” may be infinite, the introduction of new entrants is fraught with cultural peril.

Says Jennifer Daniel, chair of the Unicode Emoji Subcommittee, “When there are as many foods as there are ingredients in the world, as many genders as there are people on the planet, and a variety of objects limited only by your imagination, every addition to the emoji palette is at risk of creating zones of exclusion without consciously trying.”

She makes the startling point that in some ways emojis were not intended to be for everyone. They were, in fact, a Japanese innovation, for people in Japan and exclusive to Japanese phone carriers.

“Reconciling emojis’ origins with where they are now – a worldwide phenomenon with a life of its own

– is delicate. Everyone wants an emoji to be ‘mine’ when the truth is, they’re not. They’re everyone’s but also no one’s. Some 92% of the world’s online population uses emojis but what percentage of the world feels their identity is completely reflected in emojis?

“Should emojis be globally relevant or culturally specific? If they are for everyone, they should be as broad as possible. If they are intended for a specific group of people, then perhaps emojis shouldn’t be deployed on everyone’s keyboards.”

The challenge is even more delicate for keyboards that use non-Western alphabets.

“Like, what if the emoji selection for Hebrew keyboards were different than the emojis for Portuguese speakers, which would be different than the emojis found on Chinese keyboards? Nearly every culture has some form of dumpling but they all look radically different. As we lay the technical groundwork and strategy, these kinds of questions merit consideration. For now emojis are intended to be for everyone, which means encoding concepts that are as flexible as possible.”

Possibly the least known fact about emojis is that anyone can propose new ones. The 2023 roster, under the banner of Emoji 15.0, is done and dusted, and will be released in September this year. It can be expected to roll out on Android phones from October to December, followed by iPhones and social networks early next year. Cue a flood of the new shaking-head and high-five pictograms.

Submissions for the 2024 edition are still open, but you have only a week to get yours in – the closing date is 31 July. The Unicode Consortium provides extensive guidelines for proposed additions, in particular distinctiveness, frequency of expected use and “breaking new ground”.

Religious symbols are acceptable, but deities are not. The Star of David was approved as part of one of the early versions of Unicode, in 1993, and added to Emoji Version 1.0 in 2015. The menorah was approved as part of Unicode 8.0 in 2015 under the name “Menorah with Nine Branches”, and also added to Emoji 1.0 in 2015.

Marketers are out of luck here. Specific exclusions include logos, brands, signage, specific people, specific buildings and landmarks.

And even if your emoji concept is a winner, it won’t arrive on your neighbour’s phone tomorrow.

“It can take up to two years from conception and proposal to landing on your phone,” says Daniel.

• *Arthur Goldstuck is founder of World Wide Worx and editor-in-chief of Gadget.co.za. Follow him on Twitter on @art2gee*

Could the ANC start excluding Jews who support Israel?

>>Continued from page 1

Regarding Seale’s comment about the Israeli flag, Oppenheimer says, “The Equality Court has declared that displays of the 1927 South African flag constitute hate speech. The matter is currently before the Supreme Court of Appeal. If it is the case that through the judicial process it is determined that that flag amounts to hate speech and is banned, then there remains the possibility that this will be used as a precedent to ban other symbols that are viewed as connected to apartheid. And given the ANC’s continual moves to draw comparisons between Israel and apartheid, there remains the strong possibility that it will seek to ban displays of the Israeli flag.”

Says Gon, “There has been talk of making the public display of the Israeli flag illegal. This would be a truly slippery slope in societal freedoms as a legitimate member of the world community has its national symbol effectively declared hate speech. The ramifications of this would be wide and ominous.”

Shain adds: “It needs to be said that accepting a

two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem effectively makes one a Zionist – that is, accepting of the idea of a state for the Jews. The ANC [which formally supports a two-state solution] is therefore Zionist. It may disagree with policies of the Jewish state, but accepting Israel alongside a Palestinian state makes one a Zionist.

“As citizens in South Africa, Jews have every right to support Israel,” says Shain. “The country is a fully-fledged member of the international community. Premier Winde has no need to apologise to anyone for hosting the event. Those invited are entitled to support the Jewish state in whatever way they choose. Or is the ANC thinking of doing an ideological ‘pencil test’ for fundraising events?” he asks rhetorically.

“The ANC is desperate to get more votes in the Western Cape,” says Bagraim. “There is also a very strong radical group of people controlling the ANC. The antisemitism, which was disguised in the past, is now rearing its ugly head.”

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Lipschitz in it for the long run



SAUL KAMIONSKY

Professional runner Durbanite Adam Lipschitz defended his 10km title in Jerusalem on 18 July at the Maccabi Games, crossing the finish line ahead of about 2 000 runners in just under 32 minutes to take the gold. Second-placed Jordan Schilit of the United States came in three minutes behind him.

“It feels good to have won,” says Lipschitz, the 126th best male road runner on World Athletics’ rankings. “I won it last time, so it was nice to win it again.”

Lipschitz found himself alone at the front for basically the entire race. “We ran a hilly course in Jerusalem, with a lot of ups and downs,” he says. “The temperature was 28°. We ran a bit through the Old City. It was tough. We ran on cobblestone, we ran on the side of the road, but it was very nice to run in the city. A good vibe was going on there, a lot of music. It was a good race. I enjoyed it.”

Lipschitz changed a few things in his training routine leading up to the race. “Knowing it was going to be hot, I ran at a hotter time during the day so my body could adapt.”

This Glenwood High School alumnus started running cross-country and athletics events in primary school, before representing South Africa in running during his high school and higher education days.

He lives in Durban, but his running career takes him across the world.

He ran a half marathon in Rome in March and a half marathon in Romania in May, finishing fifth in the latter. “I’ve also been place-making in Europe, in the marathons in Hamburg and Rotterdam recently.”

He was pencilled down to run in the 5km race at the Maccabiah on 20 July, but wasn’t sure if he would be able to take a stab at defending the title he won in the 2017 games as his body was a bit sore from the heat.

During the games, he has been staying at a hotel in Jerusalem. “Everyone is all over the place at different hotels all around the country, but my hotel has about 1 000 people, maybe a bit more,” he says. “I’ve been spending time with the Americans, Canadians, Australians. No other South African runners are here, but I’ve got a lot of friends. I’ve been meeting up with them. You do spend a lot of time with people in your own sport, but you eat breakfast, lunch and dinner with everyone when you go down to the dining hall. It’s very festive and a great place to be if you’re a sportsperson and you’re Jewish.”

In August, he will be competing in a half marathon in Northern Ireland. Two weeks later, he will be participating in the Great North Run half marathon in Newcastle, England.

Moshe wins gold

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Team South Africa won its first gold medal of the ongoing Maccabi Games when its lone golfer, Johannesburg-based 74-year-old Moshe Duek, won the individual nett competition in the Grand Masters (65-plus) category at Caesarea Golf Club, the only golf course in Israel, on 15 July.

By winning the tournament, played over 54 holes, against about 40 other golfers, Duek added to the three medals (one gold and two silver) he had won at previous Maccabiahs.

“It feels amazing to have won gold,” says Duek. “I didn’t think I could win it. The only disappointing thing is that I was on my own. No other players from South Africa were there. That was difficult because every other team came with many players, like four or five teams. It was sad not to see a South African. The person who is in charge of Caesarea said they always love to have the South Africans and they were disappointed that nobody came, only Moshe did.”

In the boiling heat, Duek played 18 holes on each of the three days. “The first two days, I played really well. I played under my handicap. The last day, I was a bit weaker. That’s why I didn’t think I would win it. But it seems like everybody had a bad day on the

last day. When the management called me and said that I’d won the gold, I was very surprised, but very happy obviously.”

Duek’s family were in Israel to support him. “It was lovely being with all my family. I have family in Israel and the others came from the US and South Africa. They all walked with me when I was playing. It was just amazing, unbelievable. My children went to the opening ceremony.”

He says the Maccabi Games are “a big thing” in Israel. “I think it’s the biggest Maccabiah we ever had, with over 10 000 athletes.” Indeed, this year’s Maccabiah will be the world’s largest sporting event for the year 2022.

“It was so great to see all the Americans and Australians wishing me Mazeltov and so on. It’s very special. It’s the best thing an amateur can win in Israel. You are participating with players from all over the world. I played with Australians, Americans, Uruguayans etc. It’s quite interesting to play with all these people, meet them, have coffee with them and then have a meal with them after the game. It’s an amazing, amazing week.”

Next month, Duek will be swinging his golf club at Fancourt on the Garden Route in the Western Cape, before playing in the Swazi Open at Sun City in October. “I’m very involved in golf,” he concludes. “I live at Houghton Golf Club on the golf course with my wife, Carla. I have mates there. All my mates in South Africa are very proud of me that I won the golf. It was an amazing week for me.”

Moshe Duek with his gold medal

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Sefffrican versus ex-pat Sefffrican, who do you back?

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South Africans are being pitted against South African expats or their children at the Maccabi Games and for some, this poses a small conflict of interest ... or not.

King David Linksfield alumnus Gary Flaks, for example, will be hoping that his country of birth comes off second best when his son plays against South Africa.

“Any parent will always want their child to win over their affiliation to any country, so I will be shouting for the United States [US],” says Flaks, whose son Eden is playing for America’s under-18 futsal team.

Judd Michel, whose son Ariah is captaining Australia’s soccer team, has a different view, “I feel that regardless of who he plays for, I’m just proud of him. As Jews, it doesn’t matter which country we play for at the Maccabiah. Competing and experiencing the magic of the Maccabiah is the main thing.”

Michal Sasportas says she is proud to see her daughter, Jessica Rae Segal, representing Israel in golf at the games, just a year after making Aliya from South Africa.

“Jessica will be the first in our family to compete in the games and we are so proud that she follows in the steps of her father, who made his mark in the sporting world,” says Sasportas. “To be able to do this representing Israel makes it extra special.”

It has been Segal’s dream to represent Israel at the Maccabiah, and realising it is her greatest achievement in golf, she says. “Golf is my passion and I love being part of a team and experiencing the team spirit that comes with it. I jumped at the opportunity to try out in the qualifiers.”

Segal was drawn to the sport as a youngster after watching her father, an excellent all-round sportsman who competed at Wimbledon, play golf.

Likewise, Ariah got into soccer as a youngster through his father, who participated at three Maccabi games in either futsal or football. Eden’s love for the beautiful game stems partly from his father being a top-level soccer player back in the day. “I love to follow in my dad’s footsteps so when I saw he was a top player, that’s what my goal was to be,” says Eden.

On the other end of the spectrum, Ilan Danziger took up cycling only last year, yet he is competing in the sport at the Maccabiah. “I always knew I was going to cycle when I got older, but due to Covid restrictions, I only started at the beginning of 2021. Cyclists were

able to get out on the road and exercise and we took full advantage of the situation,” says Danziger, who made Aliya from South Africa with his wife and two dogs in March 2020. “I joined a cycling group called Drops. I didn’t realise how serious the group was. I was just there for fun but enjoyed the structured training and people, so I became a cyclist.”

Danziger, who cycles between 300 and 500 kilometres a week, says his best cycling achievement so far, is winning his category at a race in Beit Guvrin, in April. The Maccabi race this year will follow the same route.

Making the US Maccabi futsal team this year is one of Eden’s greatest accomplishments in soccer. “There were tons of people who tried out for the biggest delegation taking place,” says Eden, who emigrated from South Africa with his family when he was three. “Soccer and futsal are the top two biggest sports in the tournament. I’ve also been able to get the most goals and assists for my club team as well as high school. Another achievement is winning many hard tournaments with my club team against very good high-level teams.”

Ariah, who played college football in the US, ranks being named in the Australian schoolboy team and captaining the New South Wales schoolboys as his top achievements in soccer.

He says it’s beautiful to be at the Maccabiah and special to play for Australia. “Our selection process was a bit screwed up this year because we had a coach leave. But essentially most of the players who play in the top tier would just be selected for the team and then there were trials. Obviously, for us who have been named captain of the squad, it’s been an amazing experience.”

Ariah says his father left South Africa for the opportunities in Australia. “He was looking for a better life in terms of our health and safety and really paved the path for us in the business world.”

Nevertheless, his father remains a South African at heart. “I love the Springboks especially (I represented the Boks at tumbling), but I’m also Australian now and back my son’s team at the Maccabiah,” says Michel. “If I played for Australia, I would be proud to and would give 100%, like I did for South Africa.”

On that note, Flaks says, “For a long time I felt South African but after 15 years, we now feel more American.

At the opening ceremony, we had more emotion when the US entered. I did not know or think I would feel that way. Definitely a shift, even though SA is still in our hearts.”

Flaks, whose brothers competed in gymnastics at two Maccabiahs, played futsal in the 1993 games for the SA open team. “I managed to get a red card against Brazil after some very controversial rulings in a tight game. The overall experience was incredible, as it still is today, regardless of your nation.”

His son’s participation at this year’s games came about from initially trying out for the USA under-18 outdoor soccer team. “The try-outs were in July of 2021, and I ended up making the alternate team,” says Eden. “This meant I had the choice of either waiting for a spot to open on the outdoor team or choosing to play for the futsal team. I chose to come to futsal because I wanted to play, rather than just taking the chance of no spots opening.”

Eden, who plays soccer all year for his club and high school team, says being at the games has been one of the best experiences of his life. “Being with a great group of boys as teammates and getting to bond with them, having free time, hanging out, having every meal together has been amazing and shown us what a great team really is. Not only that, but also meeting other Jewish athletes from all over the world. Also, getting to compete in the sport you love makes the experience a whole lot better. It brings you to meeting athletes who enjoy what you enjoy.”

South African Andy Smollan’s daughter Michaela Jackson is playing for Great Britain’s women’s soccer team. Although South Africa didn’t send a women’s soccer team to the games, if Jackson did happen to play against South Africa, Smollan says, “I would feel very torn about where my loyalties lay. However, when I watch international rugby on TV, I will always be wearing my Springbok jersey and waving my SA flag.”

In 1995, Smollan emigrated to England, where her daughter was born and raised. Sport runs in the Smollan family: Andy played in a mums’ netball team, her father Eric was a celebrated athlete who broke records at school and university level, her great uncle Fred played rugby for the Springboks, and her older daughter played soccer for Great Britain in the 2017 Maccabiah.



Eden Flaks



Jessica Segal



Ilan Danziger



Ariah Michel

Israel defeat SA to claim historic gold in Sevens Rugby Maccabiah



Photo: Maccabi SA Facebook page

Israel and South Africa 7’s vying for the ball in a lineout

MYRON MICHEL

Prior prior to the opening ceremony of the 21st Maccabi Games (MG), an experienced Israeli squad beat a young SA Sevens rugby squad 12-5 in a closely contested game at the Wingate Institute in Netanya. Kian Davis scored the sole try for SA. The Israelis – who were head coached by former Maccabi SA Kevin Musikanth (who won a Sevens gold with SA in 2017), assisted by former South African Sebastiaan Jobb, and managed by former Capetonian Julian Shapiro – have an international Sevens team who compete in Rugby Europe’s competitions.

The victory was a milestone for Israeli rugby as it was their inaugural gold in the Sevens tournament since it was introduced in 2013. The bronze was won by USA over Great Britain (34-5).

Anton Chait the SA manager says, “Given we had one Sevens practice, the squad did damn well and we are proud of the boys.”

The SA silver medallists comprised Tom Walker (captain), Kian Davis, Brandon Sweet, Kiernan Rabie, Jake Rosen, Brent Shone, Judd Silverman, Aston Silver, Jayson Hirshovitz, Nicholas Zille, Joshua Pimstein, Thomas Berman, Dylan Coll and Jordan Chait. Carrying the water was captain of the 15s, Stormers flank Hacjivah Dayimani. In the playoffs, Israel convincingly beat Britain 22-0 and SA overcame America 19-12. Davis was outstanding, scoring two tries and kicking two conversions, while Dean Gordon also got a try. This was followed by Israel beating USA 17-12 and SA thrashing GB 24-0. On the SA scoreboard were Walker, Hirshovitz, Coll, Berman and conversions by Davis and Chait. Australia withdrew from the Sevens, citing a focus on the main 15s tournament.

Opens Rugby 15s

SA got retribution on Israel, winning 40-8 in a scrappy encounter. The try scorers were flank Dayimani and centre Richie Bryant, with two tries apiece, flyhalf Chait and left-wing Dylan Colin with one try each. Chait converted five conversions out of six. In the 30th minute, loose forward Hirshovitz was red-carded. At halftime SA were 35-3 up. In the second half, they were reduced to 13 men after Brandon Sweet was sin binned. But Israel couldn’t capitalise, with SA conceding only a solitary try and winning two heels against the head, which epitomised the game.

Israel beat Australia 35-30, dominating the scrum and with a resilient defence. The game was refereed by international and former Saffer Jonathan Kaplan of Canada. SA went on to take Great Britain 21-19, with nine changes from the previous game. The try scorers were Bryant, Davis and prop Steph Annandale with Chait converting all three.

In the semi-finals, SA will square up to Australia, while Israel takes on Britain before the final on Sunday.

Matric swimmer gets top results

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Matric pupil Hannah Robertson has won four medals, including two golds, for South Africa at the ongoing Maccabi Games. This St Andrew’s School for Girls scholar bagged golds in the 100 and 400m freestyle races as well as silver in the 200m freestyle and bronze in the 800m freestyle.

“It feels amazing,” she says, “especially to win the 100 because I haven’t really decided what my main race is. So to win in a sprint race was exciting. I was very happy.”

For the 100m distance, she first swam in the heats in the morning, qualifying for the A and not the B final, meaning she stood a chance at a medal.

“I expected to win gold because I saw where I was ranked before I swam. I was ranked first and obviously that motivated me even more because I knew I had a chance. Even if I was ranked second, it would have motivated me to win.”

Robertson followed in her mother’s footsteps into swimming. “Since I was a little girl, I swam with her, and she coached me,” she says of her mother, who coaches swimming and has a swim



Hannah Robertson

school. “I just loved the sport so I carried on swimming and then when I was nine, I moved to the coach I’m with now. I loved swimming so much, I just started and never stopped.”

Recently, Robertson has been training every day at her school in Bedfordview, Johannesburg. “Since I’m in matric, I swim in whatever time I have available because I know when I write exams in the near future, I’m going to have a lot less time.”

For now, she is focused on the two races she still has at the Maccabiah. Initially, she wasn’t even in the team when South Africa’s swimming squad was announced. “I only found out that my coach was going to the games six or eight weeks before the team was supposed to leave. I said to him, ‘Since you are going, can’t I just come with then?’ So I was actually late on the team.”

Robertson says she would love to win an Olympic medal one day. “That’s the goal I’m training for. I don’t mind if it comes in two years, six years or eight years.”

Robertson’s great-grandmother was adopted at a very young age, at the time of the Holocaust. “She didn’t know that she was Jewish. After the Holocaust, she discovered she was, indeed, Jewish and that both her parents were Jewish, meaning my gran, mom and I are Jewish. Now my mom’s boyfriend is also Jewish. We often go to Friday night dinner with him, so I’m exposed to the religion. It’s really amazing because I love the religion a lot.”



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Class of 2040 grows as pandemic shrinks

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

COVID-19 uncertainty and resultant financial concerns are just two of the reasons for a slight decline in pregnancies over the past two years. Yet, as our lives return to some form of normality, 2022 looks to be bringing a welcome baby boom to the community.

“It seems a lot of babies are being born this year,” says Johannesburg-based professional Natanya Ruso, who gave birth to her second baby in February 2022. “With weddings being back on in the past year, there are a lot of newly married couples who are keen to start families. Perhaps those who put off babies for a while due to COVID-19 feel that it’s a good time to start or expand their families, with there being minimal restrictions and less overall anxiety and unknowns about the pandemic.”

Ruso, who had her first baby in August 2020, says that the two pandemic pregnancy experiences were vastly different. “When South Africa entered its first hard lockdown, I was about four months pregnant. Suddenly everything closed down, and I couldn’t even buy so much as a baby-gro. Next thing, the hospital was sending out emails that fathers wouldn’t be allowed in the hospitals and all the prior excitement of having a baby was overshadowed by uncertainty and panic.

“The second time around was totally different – I had already been through the worst COVID-19 restrictions and although some restrictions

were in place, I was confident I’d be able to handle it.” Ruso also found support amongst friends who had had babies at similar times as well as through various WhatsApp Groups, particularly one called The Class of 2040. “No questions are off-limits, and it’s incredible to see such camaraderie among women of varying ages, circumstances and levels of religious observance,” she says.

Having started the original WhatsApp group of this series called The Class of 2038 for moms expecting babies in 2020, Tali Gritzman, also based in Johannesburg, had no idea just how valuable the group would become.

Named for the year that most of the babies would matriculate, the group, which started in March 2020, grew as mothers sought support during the pandemic as well as updates on the ever changing COVID-19 birth rules. At its height, the group had 90 members.

“The main idea was to support each other and offer a safe space where we could ask any questions about anything, from COVID-19 restrictions to what to pack in your hospital bag,” says Gritzman. “Looking back, I see how much of a purpose it served in creating a community of mothers during a challenging time and connecting those whose children

would theoretically grow up together.”

Gritzman, who gave birth to twin boys in 2020, passed the baton on to another mother who ran the Class of 2039 group and she, in turn, passed it forward this year. The current Class of 2040 group has 110 members, more than ever before. Natasha Amber, a group member who gave birth to a baby boy in May 2022, says that as a first-time mom, the support has been wonderful. “You have a little community with these moms who are mostly the same age, and when you have a question there’s no judgement, just help,” she says.

Although a number of factors may have contributed to the rise in WhatsApp groups and



Lawrence and Danielle Katzeff with their kids Tefilla, Neima, Dovid and baby Zachariah

comorbidities such as diabetes held off falling pregnant until the pandemic became less of an unknown entity.

Doula and antenatal teacher Tziporah Orkin cannot categorically state that there’s a baby boom in progress, but she agrees that the lessening of restrictions has played a role in creating more positive birth experiences. “I’ve observed that generally, in terms of people’s

physical, mental, and emotional health, they are feeling quite positive,” she says. “With births specifically, the healthcare restrictions in the past two years were severe with pregnant women.” Doulas – professional birth assistants – weren’t allowed, and in some cases husbands couldn’t attend births or had limited hospital access.

Indeed, Gritzman’s husband tested positive for COVID-19 shortly before their twins were born in June 2020, and couldn’t be at the birth.

Danielle Katzeff, who gave birth to her third baby during the height of the pandemic, also couldn’t have her husband present as their baby was premature and there was no time for him to get a COVID-19 test. Both her third and her fourth baby, the latter born in January this year, had to spend two months in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit), which was also complicated by COVID-19.



Natasha and Daniel Amber with baby Linc



Aryeh, Natanya, Alon and Rafael Ruso

was right. For many, she says, “Life is going back to normal after COVID-19, people are settling back into their routine, and the timing just makes sense.” Some of the moms we spoke to also pointed out that friends with



Talia and Ashley Gritzman with their children Aryeh, Levi and Amelie

“The first time, one parent was allowed to visit once a day, so we alternated days, and this year, they allowed both parents to go in on the same day but not at the same time.”

In general, though, restrictions are far more relaxed, says Orkin. “People who may have held back now are saying, ‘Let’s go for it.’”

Many, in fact, speak of the increasing difficulty of finding gynaecologists who also do deliveries. The demand is high and the supply low as few do deliveries these days because of high insurance costs, they say. It’s often hard to get an appointment if you’re a new patient.

Orkin concurs, saying that this may be because couples often want the same doctors as their friends because they prefer to go by recommendation, pursuing gynaes who they know are popular in the community. “However,

there are plenty of new gynaes who have come into many of the hospitals, and midwives have also become more popular,” she says. During the pandemic, people around the world tried to avoid hospitals so found smaller birthing centres where just one midwife would look after them from start to finish. This created

a more intimate experience, which also contributed to the increasing number of midwife-led births in our community.

Doulas are also gaining in popularity as people seek a more positive birth experience. “Women are realising that they want to be more proactive in their whole birth journey,” says Orkin. “They’ve become much more empowered.”

Chev student fund makes dreams a reality

TALI FEINBERG

Saul Singer studied Accounting Science at the University of Johannesburg, and is in his final year of articles. It sounds like a common path for a nice Jewish boy from Johannesburg, but getting there wasn’t easy. His family did not have the financial means to put him through university.

“I always dreamed of having a degree that would provide stability for me and my family. I felt lost as my family’s financial situation meant that I would be unable to attend university without outside help,” says Singer, reflecting on that time.

It was then that he turned to the Chevrah Kadisha’s (The Chev’s) Jewish Students Education Fund, which offers interest-free student loans that are paid back at a nominal rate.

“The Chev helped me by paying for my tuition annually, allowing me to focus fully without being worried about my tuition not being paid,” says Singer. “The application process was seamless. I provided university documents and agreed to the very fair conditions. I felt supported through the process and continue to feel supported, even after graduating.”

The loan took a huge burden off his family and spared him from needing multiple jobs to cover the cost.

Singer’s ultimate goal was to become a registered Chartered Accountant, which he has achieved. “I have grown to see how finances should never be a reason one is not able to receive an education,” says Singer. “There is too much wasted talent as a result of families being unable to send their children to university. There

is no telling what one can achieve with opportunity.”

He hopes to help other students who are in the same position. “We are unbelievably lucky to have an organisation like the Chev. The way in which they go about their student loans differs from other financial institutions. They offer all kinds of support and allow students to focus on their studies, while paying back what they can afford. Your donations enable lives to be changed. I am eternally grateful.”

Chev CEO Saul Tomson says: “The community is not always aware of the extent of the Chev’s services. Our Jewish Students Education Fund assists some 100 students a year, with several thousand graduates since inception. This has been going for many decades, and there are literally thousands of people out there in gainful employment who were assisted by the Chev.

“We are passionate about creating economic independence for those who have the ability. Giving someone the tools to build a career of their own, and support their family, is something we take a lot of pride in,” he adds. “We are looking to reach out to any Jewish student in need, across the country, who wishes to pursue a tertiary education. It would be our pleasure to empower them to build a better future.”

Karen Carpel is the Chev’s student loan administrator for tertiary education and has been in this role for about 12 years. She says her job is incredibly meaningful, “knowing that every day the Chev is making a positive impact on the lives of young people in our community, and giving them an opportunity that they otherwise would not have had”.

“One of the greatest successes was a young lady who did not have a matric. She dropped out of school due to learning difficulties and family issues. She was working as a teacher’s assistant and wanted to qualify as a teacher. It was a long road as she was still working and had to do a certificate prior to enrolling for her teaching degree. The day she called to say she was a qualified teacher will stay with me.”

Regarding the process of applying, “The candidate needs to be Jewish and demonstrate financial need. The process involves the completion of an application form, which can be obtained by email. Thereafter, an interview is conducted. Should the application prove successful, documentation, including a debit order form and acknowledgement of debt, is signed by the student. It is important to note that the student pays off their loan, by debit order, at an amount that is affordable to them. Once the graduate has found gainful employment, a more substantial debit order is required in order to settle the loan within a four- to five-year period.

“There is a significant timing and cash flow difference between the inception of the loan and full settlement, and it’s not unusual for this time frame to be as long as 10 years. We are very grateful to donors and external bursars who come forward to fill this gap.”

Gabriella Carzola is a third-year Chemical Engineering student at the University of Pretoria. “With COVID, few people were offering bursaries,” she says. “The Chev gave me the opportunity to

take a student loan. They also wanted me to live a well-rounded life and not feel pressured to have my nose in a book every second of every day. The assistance has made it a lot easier for my family to pay off things that have been weighing down on us.”

She hopes to work in the biochemical industry, using biochemistry methods for environmental remediation.

Shana Vilensky is another student who has benefitted from the fund. She is working and studying law at the same time. Not knowing if she could fund her studies was “overwhelming. It also made me angry.” It took her some time to feel she could ask for help. “I felt nervous at first because I had to be very open and transparent. But once I began the process, I felt at ease and supported. It wasn’t as intimidating as I thought.

“The Chev has helped me than words can describe, taking the financial burden off my shoulders. By them also helping, it meant I could spend money on rent, food or petrol to get to work.”

Her ultimate goal is to “become a qualified attorney and to provide for my family – to make sure they never have to struggle the way I did. Not only that, but I want to help those in need, like doing pro bono cases.”

She would love to help other students in the same position. “Having come so far because of the Chev, I would want another student to feel that same sense of hope and pride – to feel that if I can do this, so can they. I believe having an education is so important and knowledge is power. I want to give people hope through hearing my story, to believe that things can get better, and that help is available if you have the courage to ask. Sometimes you just need to take a leap of faith.”



Gabriella Carzola



Shana Vilensky



Saul Singer

Navigating the singles scene

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

After a series of failed relationships and disastrous dates, it's easy to lose faith in the idea of ever finding "the one". Yet, say those in the know, it's often about releasing preconceived ideas and opening yourself up to new possibilities.

"When my ex-husband and I separated, all my friends were married," says Lisa Kowalsky, who runs a Facebook group called South African Jewish Singles 30+, which has more than 1 000 members. "I suddenly found myself with no one to go out with socially and no one who could relate to my new status. "Although I met someone after eight months, I started the group because I understood how lonely being single can be. As a single mom, I also understand how overwhelmed one can sometimes feel. It's vital for people who are alone and feel vulnerable to have a safe space where they can connect with others in the same position, for dating or friendship."

She initially started her group for Johannesburgers over the age of 35 but later opened it to Jewish singles from all over South Africa – as well as expats – and lowered the age limit slightly "as older men tend to like dating younger women – many are looking to meet women who can still have children".

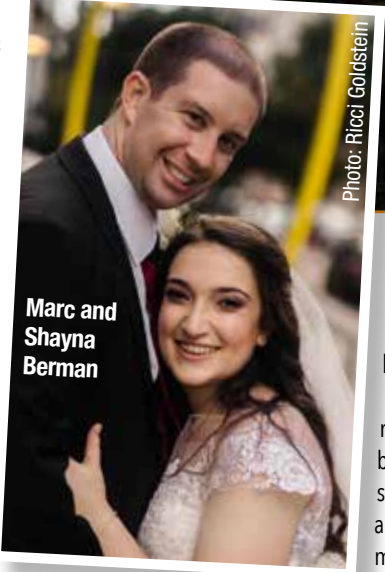
For slightly older single women, this preference can be challenging. "If a religious or secular woman is not married at a specific age, usually after 35, men see them as too old," says Debbie Singer*, a single *ba'alat teshuva* (a secular Jew who has become religious) in her 40s. "They want to know what's wrong with you, why you aren't married, and they think you're too old to have children. Yet single women of that age also want to settle down and have children, so what do they do?"

Both men and women become set in their ways after a certain age, she adds, and may be divorced and have children, which can bring challenges. "It's ultimately about having trust in Hashem that when it's the right time, you'll meet someone. But it's not always easy," she admits.

There is hope, Kowalsky stresses. She helps facilitate singles events and encourages group members of all ages to organise and advertise exciting events or getaways for specific age groups. "There are people to meet, it just takes initiative and creativity. Get out there and find ways to connect with other singles. You may just meet your soulmate."

Hosting speed-dating and high-end singles parties, Casey Shevel became known for facilitating great nights out – and lasting love – with her initiative Casey's Schmingles. But as people increasingly requested one-on-one dating, and Covid-19 hit, Shevel focused on dating coaching and matchmaking.

Passionate about Jews marrying Jews, Shevel works with people of all levels of observance and doesn't charge for her services. Her tips for singles? "To know yourself and not get in the way of your own happiness. Marriage is not about two people gazing into each other's eyes; it's about two people gazing in the same direction. It's about finding someone who is heading the same way as you, who will be your partner



Marc and Shayna Berman

Photo: Ricci Goldstein



and your equal and hold your hand through life." We often focus on externalities like looks and job titles, which aren't nearly as important as having a shared destination, she says.

Shadchan Cindy Silberg matches religiously observant singles, primarily between the ages of 18 and 40, who are seeking marriage. She usually facilitates a couple's first few dates to build momentum and circumvent issues like people not calling when they say they

will. "This is especially important at the beginning because the couple is not sharing everything yet. Here, you're able to be real with someone else and iron out issues early on

instead of ending things when something crops up."

While Silberg acknowledges that South Africa's Jewish dating pool has shrunk through emigration, she says that people underestimate the value of having a shared culture. "I'm getting calls from many singles who have emigrated, mainly to Israel, who are asking if I have anyone for them because they're finding the dating scene there very hard. They're realising that culturally they still want a South African – someone who 'gets' them."

Within South Africa, Silberg says that everyone in the community thinks that they know each other. "But they're judging someone when they're with their friends or in a public setting and not getting to really know the person. It could be that someone is more reserved in a crowd and they're actually very engaging. I have to convince many

clients to give people a chance. I've got couples who I had to initially beg to go out with each other who are now married!"

Ethan Green*, a 29-year-old single man, feels that shuls should be organising regular young adult events. Seeking someone who shares his level of observance, he's a regular shul-goer but says other young singles generally don't attend.

"Dating apps haven't been successful for me. There's a small pool of Jewish users. I would get a few matches, but I struggle with small talk. I prefer to get to know a person face to face."

Open to meeting people of different faiths, Bianca Bayer*, a 40-year-old, says that dating apps and websites have been useful for meeting like-minded people. While she enjoys the excitement of possibly meeting someone with whom she can form a multifaceted connection, she says dating can take an emotional toll when men who are initially extremely keen quickly lose interest. "It takes a lot of energy to invest in the dating world."

Marc and Shayna Berman, who got married in February, agree with waiting for the right person. Fixed up by Shayna's cousin, a friend of Marc's, the two felt an immediate connection. "After our first date, I knew that there was something there," says Marc.

"High expectations are good when you'll be spending your life with someone," adds Shayna. "But you also need to give everyone a chance. Marc is eight years older than me. I could have said I don't want a relationship with such a big age gap, but then I wouldn't have met him. Your person is out there, you just need to be open to anything."

*names have been changed

First there was Padel, now there's Pickle

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When Darren Zidel came across pickleball while scrolling through Instagram about 18 months ago, he never thought he would become the president of Pickleball South Africa with a mission to spread the sport across the county.

"Because Instagram learns about you, all of a sudden pickleball started coming up on my reel," he says. "The videos were intriguing. I thought to myself, 'This looks like fun. I want to try it.'" Though Zidel had found places to play padel (paddle tennis), he couldn't find any court that was suitable for pickleball. Undeterred, he contacted the International Federation of Pickleball, which put him in touch with Megan Charity, a South African professional pickleball player ranked among the top 20 women players in the world.

"She plays pickleball tournaments every weekend," Zidel says of North Carolina-based Charity. "Her day job is creating a lifestyle pickleball facility. Pickleball in America is the fastest growing sport. It's just exploding. It's crazy, the growth on that side."

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles on a badminton-sized court of 6.10 x 13.41m. Points can be scored only by the serving team. Starting with the right-hand service square, the ball is served diagonally.

The ball must bounce once before volleys are allowed. On each side of the net is a 2.1m no-volley zone to prevent spiking. The server continues to serve until they fault. The first side which scores 11 points and leads by two points wins, meaning that if a match is 10-all, the next team to score a point wouldn't win. It would have to score two additional points.

Pickleball was invented in 1965 at Joel Pritchard's summer home in Bainbridge Island, Washington. He and two of his friends, Barney McCallum and Bill Bell, are credited with creating the game and its rules.

According to Pritchard's wife, Joan, "The name of the game became pickleball after I said it reminded me of the Pickle Boat in [rowing], where oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats."

Pickleball quickly became popular with the founders' local neighbours and relatives. Pritchard, McCallum's son,

David, and two other friends formed Pickle Ball Inc in 1968. Interest in pickleball continued to grow, with the sport spreading from the Pacific Northwest into warmer areas thanks to "snowbirds" migrating to Arizona, California, Florida, and Hawaii. In the latter state, *puka*, meaning "hole" in Hawaiian, initially referred to a pickleball, which has holes, but ended up being synonymous with the game itself.



Playing pickleball

Today, the International Federation of Pickleball has 67 member countries, with South Africa being represented by Zidel's organisation.

Zidel and Charity are working together to grow pickleball in South Africa.

So far, they have set up four pickleball courts at both Bryanston Country Club and Wendywood Squash Club, north of Johannesburg. "We took one of their tennis courts and converted it into four pickleball courts," says Zidel. "The nice thing about that is you can get 16 people playing on one court when playing with doubles. When we started with Bryanston Country Club, it had about four people playing pickleball. We started running open days and did an exhibition match with Meg and answered questions. Today, they have about 40 members playing weekly, and it's growing fast."

Zidel says Johannesburg Country Club in Auckland Park has dedicated pickleball courts, and pickleball courts are being set up at Irene Country Club in Centurion.

He believes pickleball has the potential to be a national sport one day. "In South Africa, I would say 200 people are playing. Because of the padel hysteria, many people are wanting to know if they can play pickle as well."

Zidel has always been a sportsman. "I've always played squash and tennis, not professionally, but at a higher level. I went to Maccabi for soccer a couple of times. For me, pickleball is such a fun game to play. It's fun, it's competitive, it's a proper workout, and it's really easy to get into, meaning anyone can play. You can pick up the pickleball paddle and literally within five minutes, you're up and playing."

Allon Rock, the chief operating officer of Pickleball South Africa, a professional tennis coach, and an accredited pickleball coach, says, "Darren sent an email last year about an open day for pickleball at Bryanston Country Club. I said I would like to get involved if they needed any help with the growth of the sport."

"Being a tennis player my whole life, the equipment does take a bit of getting used to because the paddle in pickle is a lot smaller. The ball is a hard plastic Wiffle ball. It bounces differently to a tennis ball. You serve underhand with a bounce or without a bounce. That changes the whole dynamic."

Paul Levine plays pickleball at least once a week at Wendywood Club. "I was introduced to the game by Darren. He invited me to an open day at Bryanston Country Club and I was hooked from the moment I struck the first ball. It's a sport that you can learn quickly, and can play across various age groups."

The *SA Jewish Report* asked Zidel and Rock why sports like padel and pickleball are suddenly gaining popularity in South Africa. "It's because of the pandemic," says Zidel. "Everyone was looking for a way to socialise or to play sport again, but in a safe atmosphere. The nice thing about padel and pickle is you are close but not on top of each other."

Rock says a sport like pickleball may be easier to organise and play than some traditional sports. "A beginner can learn to play pickleball in 10 minutes, you can't do that with tennis. It's not even a matter of just being social and hitting a few balls. A 59-year-old lady recently came for one session and after five minutes, she was playing a match. She loved every minute of it to the point where she has already spoken to a tennis club and school in the West Rand because she wants to get pickleball out there."

Levine also plays padel. Asked how it compares to pickleball, he says, "They're both incredible games gaining momentum across the world. They're very different, and both have a place on the map for new social sports that can be played by all ages."



Allon Rock and Megan Charity

The kings and queens of chess

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“Either you love chess, or you don’t play it.” So says Clive Wolpe, who has been a lover of the game for most of his life. As players celebrated International Chess Day on Wednesday, he says there’s been huge growth in the game in South Africa.

“There are top Jewish players at all levels of chess in South Africa,” says Wolpe, who is the director of Goforchess Academy in Bryanston, Johannesburg. Local chess moved into the big league back in December 2014 when Kenny Solomon became South Africa’s first chess grandmaster, and the fourth black chess grandmaster in history, by winning the African Chess Championship.

Wolpe’s own most memorable moment as a player was when he beat the other 13 top players in the country to become the South Africa Chess Champion in 1985. While he’s loved the game all his life, he hasn’t always had it as a career. “I’d been doing other things but then slowly I was drawn back in to coach others and that sort of became my career.

“I still play but not as much,” he says. “I’m more focused on coaching. As a coach, I’ve had some good moments with more pupils doing well at various

tournaments. I’ve coached players to become African champions and that sort of thing.” Wolpe believes “chess becomes a way of life. You approach things with a kind of ‘chess thinking’. I think chess players have a lot in common in that respect. It’s an exciting time to be part of the game.” Chess enthusiast Neil Vardi says that if you walk past Joubert Park in Johannesburg, you will be surprised at how many people are sitting there playing chess.

“It’s traditionally a sport, a science and an art that attracted Jewish people,” he says. In the 12th century, chess became popular among Jews. Of the first 13 undisputed world champions, over half were Jewish, including the first two.

Jews made up approximately half of the 51 highest-ranked players in 476 major tournaments from the 19th century onwards, according to an analysis by Professor Arpad Elo, the inventor of the scientific rating system employed by the International Chess

Federation (under whose auspices International Chess Day has been observed on 20 July since 1966). “There is something in Jewish people that makes them stand out in the game,” says Manuel Aaron, India’s first international master and a keen student of history. “One of the oldest sayings in chess is, the best players are Russian Jews, non-Russian Jews and the others, in that order,” he adds.

Several renowned players in chess history belonged to the community. Wilhelm Steinitz, a Jew born in the ghetto of Prague, was the first official world champion in 1886. Emanuel Lasker, the son of a Jewish cantor; Mikhail Botvinnik, born to Russian Jewish parents; and Mikhail Tal, from a Latvian Jewish family, dominated the game during the early 20th century. Later on, the world number one from 1984 until his retirement in 2005 was Garry Kasparov, whose father was Jewish. The strongest female chess player in history is considered to be Judit Polgár, who was from a Hungarian Jewish family.

In recent times in South Africa, the country has been home to two well-known Jewish chess players in the late Leonard Reitstein and the late Eddie Price. A new star on the rise is the captain of Yeshiva College’s junior chess team, seven-year-old Shlomo Block. He started playing during lockdown after his dad, Netanel, zeida, Roy Block, and uncle, Eitan Bartkunsky, taught him to play. He recently won his first tournament,

a Goforchess event, against players of all ages, and made the finals of school regionals the other week when Yeshiva College beat the other seven schools in its region. “Shlomo practises every week, once at home with a private chess coach, and once a week at school,” says Netanel. “Shlomo has a very clever brain, strategic and analytic, so the game suits him. I play friendly games against him, but he beats me all the time.” Block says he likes chess because of “how all the pieces can move in different ways and the strategy of the game. I like to win.”

Like Block, Vardi was taught to play by his dad as a youngster. “In some respects, the game has changed my life because it teaches you a certain kind of logic, which benefits you,” says Vardi. “You can feel it in your day-to-day dealings and activities.” Over the last few years, Vardi has been playing chess online, watching live games on YouTube, going through grandmaster games, and reading chess books. While a coach for Wolpe’s academy for a couple of years, they ran two youth leagues every Tuesday afternoon, which attracted children from King David. Vardi says his most memorable moments in chess were as a youngster when he participated in tournaments and met people. “It takes over and gets into your blood. Then you see yourself improving, you just want to play more, and it becomes addictive.”



Shlomo Block with his Goforchess tournament trophy

The Line that’s crossed when people do evil

PERSONAL STORY

GINA SHMUKLER



With a genetic Holocaust memory and living in a country where xenophobia rears its head all too regularly, veteran theatre practitioner Gina Shmukler wrote and directed the thought-provoking piece of theatre that is *The Line*.

In 1988, my matric year, I was extremely privileged to attend the first ever March of the Living with the late Ronnie Mink.

It remains one of the most profound experiences of my life.

Among many powerful memories, I remember so vividly looking out of the bus window as we got closer to the camps, in this instance Majdanek, and later Auschwitz-Birkenau, and being amazed at the proximity of the villages.

How did this happen? I wondered. How did ordinary people who were once neighbours turn to foes?

I knew my Zaida’s story. The day the Nazis entered their village in Iyve (Belarus), he was in another village, painting. His family was hidden in a makeshift hideout. A Nazi officer lifted the “trapdoor”, saw the family, and replaced the lid and left. What had evoked his humanity in that moment?

While living in New York, I was given a beautiful book called *Skyline* written by South African novelist Patricia Schonstein Pinnock, and published in 2000. It traces the journey of a Mozambican man fleeing the war in his country, crossing the Kruger National Park game reserve by foot and eventually finding himself in a flat at the bottom of Long Street in Cape Town. *Skyline* beautifully captures the refugee experience.

I share the above because as theatre-makers, so much of what we witness and experience finds its way into our work. This was true for me as I started my Master’s in Drama in 2011.

With the horrific outbreak of the South African xenophobic attacks in May 2008, *Skyline* became the inspiration for my studies, but was replaced by our own refugee crisis. It is these stories that formed the narrative of what would become *The Line*, a new South African play.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris in conversation with Elie Wiesel said: “The real question is not the question of the crimes against mankind, against humanity. The real question is that these crimes are crimes of *mankind*, crimes of *humanity*.”

Over a five-month period I conducted interviews in Soweto with victims and perpetrators of the xenophobic attacks.

I became extremely engaged with the stories of the victims and while that was my focus for a time, I was still searching for “that” thing I wanted to explore.

I had my light-bulb moment when introduced to the ground-breaking work of Dr Jonathan Shay, which examines the psychological devastation of war by comparing the soldiers of Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with the experiences of Vietnam veterans.

Shay offers a psychological explanation of the process of moving from good to evil and “why good people do bad things”. I became excited and realised that the story I wanted to tell lay with the perpetrator. I wanted to understand how ordinary people kill; how a neighbour turns into a violent foe. I wanted to warn the audience of what Shay describes as the “fragility of goodness” and, to quote Shay, the extent to which “our own good character is vulnerable to destruction by bad moral luck”.

Set against the backdrop of the xenophobic attacks, *The Line* speaks to the fragility of humanity and the delicate line between victim, perpetrator, witness and bystander.

For the next two years, *The Line* toured both locally and internationally,



Khutjo Green and Gabi Harris in Shmukler’s *The Line* production

garnering Naledi Theatre Award nominations for Best Production of a Play, Best New South African Script, Best Performance by an Actress in a Lead Role (Play), Best Theatre Sound Design

/ Sound Effects and Best Theatre Set Design.

It is my belief that as theatre-makers, we need to find the psychological and psychic truth in our work. We need to

confront our spirituality and engage with what it is to be human.

The Line asks of its audience: What is our collective responsibility? Where were we during this time? What are we doing to prevent this from happening again? Are we indeed bystanders until we become victims, or will we become perpetrators, “our own good character . . . vulnerable to destruction by bad moral luck”?

With the global refugee crisis and our own local battles against xenophobia, we have decided to bring *The Line* back for a short season at the Redhill Arts Festival.

- Gina Shmukler is an actress, director, and theatre maker.
- Tickets are available for 11:00 on 30 July and 19:00 on 31 July at redhillartsfestival.co.za

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Holidaying as only Kruger people can

I think I might have scurvy. It's day number four in the Kruger and I am starting to fantasise about fruit and vegetables. I dreamed last night of freshly squeezed orange juice that I drank while eating a salad packed with ingredients available only at Woolworths.

Only to wake up to yet another meat breakfast. Earlier this evening on a game drive I found myself begging a kind-hearted woman a few seats away for a naartjie she had in her bag. She took pity on me and although it was not easy for her to part with her last vestige of vitamin C, handed it to me knowing in her heart that she was saving a life. And what could be sweeter than that.

Recalling my grade 5 knowledge of scurvy, I checked my teeth to see if they are still secure in my gums. One molar might have shifted slightly. But it might be the amount of biltong consumed. It is impossible to say if I am losing hair, as that ship sailed a long time ago. I also am unable to google the other symptoms of scurvy as the cellphone signal is so bad that the search returns with no information. Which is very disconcerting. Almost like Google doesn't have the heart to tell me how bad it is.

Fortunately, I managed to find a multivitamin in my toiletries bag – it was buried under the Nexium and had been there from the days of COVID, when having the vitamins in our possession helped with anxiety. Mercifully, we didn't need to take them back then, and so I started a course last night in the hope that it is not too late. I took them along with my malaria tablets.

Apparently, the Kruger is a meat-only holiday, and all "Kruger people" are aware of this. Other things "Kruger people" know is that: It is imperative that you are one of the first cars at the gate when it opens at 05:30 or 06:00. You need to spend a minimum of eight hours in



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

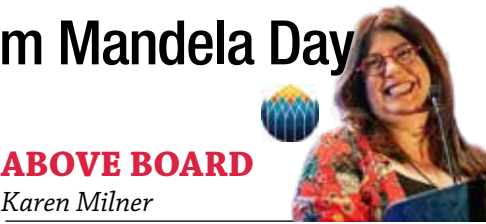
the car a day. And then say that it's not enough. You will suffer borderline depression if you haven't seen at least the Big Five each day by the time you "skottel" at 11:00. You need to own a minimum of three pairs of binoculars, one pair from the early 1980s or prior. You have to be able to describe in detail, for no less than 30 minutes, a sighting that no one cares about. And never ever will. Especially because you made it sound too dull. You have to have a disdain for fruit and vegetables for the time that you are in the park. Even if you are a vegan. It is also imperative that you are able to describe sightings in ways normal people will never understand. "We were on the H1-76 where it meets the X-64 towards Lower Sabie when before Crocodile Hoedspruit meets the Jukskei and just over the second rise of the S-100 we saw a Red Nyala followed by a Red-breasted bore." Other "Kruger people" will nod and say "I know exactly where that is" because they too were there, just as the gates opened. We have two days left in the park. Our accommodation met our expectations. There is still no turn-down service and I am wearing my flip-flops as we speak. And I am loving it. It has been the best way to get to away from it all, a fantastic way to disconnect from the madness of the country and the world, and a great reminder of how G-d runs the place. When we let Him. It is now 05:34 and we are heading to the gate to be one of the first cars there before it opens at 06:00.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

What we can learn from Mandela Day

"The distinctive characteristic of Jewish ethics is the social concern for all." This simple yet deeply meaningful statement appears on a sign planted in a vegetable garden on the grounds of the old Brakpan synagogue. Through the vision and energy of Yakima Waner and the Harvest Project she founded, these premises have, since the onset of COVID, been turned into a vibrant hub of social outreach for the youth of the area, one of its flagship projects being to train and empower young children in sustainable food production.

The Harvest Project was one of four SAJBD-supported initiatives that our president, Shaun Zagnoev, national director Wendy Kahn and other professional staff members visited on Mandela Day. In addition to Brakpan, they travelled to Soweto and Alexandra to see what our partners The Angel Network, Simbambisene Foundation and Fingertips of Africa are doing, not just to alleviate the immediate needs of those they assist, but as importantly, also to provide them with the tools and skills to become self-sufficient in the future. While we have, through the SAJBD Food Fund, supported hundreds of worthy projects, these were chosen because of the especially close partnerships that have developed between us. This has been particularly true of The Angel Network, with which we have worked hand-in-hand since lockdown to decide on what projects to take on and ensure that the funds are put to the best possible use. During their visits, Wendy and her colleagues participated in the nitty-gritty tasks of food preparation and packing. In acknowledgement of the amazing work that these organisations are doing, we also presented them with certificates of appreciation from the SAJBD. While these paid tribute to the organisations themselves, I wish here to mention by name Glynne Wolman of The Angel Network, Fingertips of Africa's Yehuda Lazarus, Clive Mashishi, Yakima Waner, and the husband-and-wife team of Linda and Gaofose Mbatha.



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

Regarding Clive, I can record how invaluable he has been as the interface between us and the communities in which he operates, thereby enabling the assistance we provide to be channelled quickly and efficiently to where it is needed most. For their part, our Cape Council partnered with Mensch and the United Jewish Campaign CT to help feed and create future food sustainability for the Langa community. Beneficiaries included Fair Food SA – SA Urban Food + Farming Trust and IKhaya Le Langa. Thanks to generous donations to the Mensch Mandela Day 2022 Global Cook-A-Thon; with some 100 volunteers pitching in, they were able to make 500 litres of soup for the community. In Durban, the Board once again partnered with the Union of Jewish Women in preparing food for distribution to various outreach programmes in the city they support. Prior to the day's roadshow, Wendy spoke on Chai FM about how the Board and its partners were going about realising the values Mandela embodied. A crucial point that she made was that the Mandela Day spirit needs to be carried through throughout the year, and to that end must go beyond being concerned only about what affects us. We are privileged to work with people who are showing how much can be achieved by those who care enough to go beyond their comfort zones and find ways to make a practical difference. For them, every day is Mandela Day, and the example they are setting is an inspiration to us all.

• 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

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Sunday 24 July

- New Beginnings presents a talk by Chani Lavine – *Gelatissimo, a piece of Italy in the heart of Glenhazel – turning challenges into sweetness* at Pine Street Shul. Time: 10:00. Donation: R50. Contact: 083 320 9229 or 082 568 6016
- Hatzolah will be running a blood drive. Time: 9:00-16:30. Contact: www.linktr.ee/Hatzolah or info@hatzolah.co.za

Wednesday 27 July

- Melton Cape Town presents an online course entitled *Biblical Women*. Time: 19:15-21:00. Contact: 082 880 2257 or lauren@snitcher.org
- ORT SA presents Business Bootcamp – Personal Branding with Lori Milner. Time: 9:00 – 10:30. Entry: Free. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Thursday 28 July

- Melton Cape Town presents online course *Midrasha Book Club*. Time: 19:00-20:45. Contact: 082 880 2257 or lauren@snitcher.org

Tuesday 26 July

- New Beginnings hosts a walking tour of the Fort, Women's Jail and Constitutional Hill in Hillbrow by Sarah Barret. Time: 9:30-12:30. Entry: R350. Contact Roz 082 568 6016
- Union of Jewish Women presents Brain Boost – a brain stimulation group. Time: 10:00. Entry: R100. Contact: info@ujw.co.za or 011 648 1053

Sunday 31 July

- Yeshiva College hosts Kfar Second-Hand Book Sale in the primary school hall. Time: 11:00 - 14:00. Contact: j.swartz@yeshivacollege.co.za

Israel takes centre stage in Tour de France

>>>Continued from page 2

tour stage winners: how this Tour de France has been a redemption ride for Israel-Premier Tech" was published in online cycling magazine *Rouleur*. The article describes how "few would have expected the Israeli squad to be one of the most visible non-GC teams at the Tour de France this year, animating stages and being rewarded with wins and podium positions accordingly in one of the biggest races of the year".

"It's true that Israel-Premier Tech is a team that has never been afraid to invest for the long haul," continues Rachel Jary, the author of the article. "They have stuck by Chris Froome as he has worked his way back from the life-threatening injuries he sustained in a crash in 2019, their support never wavering as many doubted if the British rider would return to his previous Tour de France-winning form. When Froome finished third on stage 12, ending atop Alpe d'Huez this year, it was the beginning of his repayment to Israel-Premier Tech for their long-standing belief in him.

"Over half of Israel-Premier Tech's 31-rider roster are over the age of 30," she adds. "As the cycling world is going crazy for the wunderkinds who burst

onto the scene and win Grand Tours before they even reach 25, this is a team that is showing how experience and craft learnt from years in the peloton can still win you races today.

"The performances of Israel Premier-Tech in this Tour de France are proof that the chance of winning slips away only when riders themselves stop believing it's possible, and this is a team that is growing in confidence by the day. We will only know by the end of the season if these performances in the Tour de France have been enough to keep IPT in the WorldTour, but they will have gone a long way in strengthening their chances."

For South African fans, it's been both thrilling and moving to see an Israeli team take on those mountains. "It's a celebration of Israel being part of the global sporting community and one of the greatest sporting events," says keen cyclist and businessman Shaun Matisonn. "It's unique to see Israel there, winning stages."

"It's fantastic to see an Israeli-owned team competing with the best in the world," adds Herschel Jawitz. "It's good for cycling, and good for Israel."



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Wits is delighted to present the South African premier of internationally renowned artist and Wits alumnus William Kentridge's "Oh to Believe in Another World," accompanied by Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, and performed by the Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra, on **27 and 28 July 2022** at the Wits Linder Auditorium.

In 2022 Wits University turns 100 and Wits Art Museum turns 10. As part of the celebrations, WAM presents an exhibition by William Kentridge, who has played a vital role in championing WAM's creation and development. Open to the public.

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Doing good on Mandela Day



Mensch Mitzvah Day Cook-A-Thon in Langa, Cape Town



Wendy Kahn from the SAJBD at the The Harvest Project & Blessings Eco School in Brakpan on Mandela Day



Sandringham Gardens Knitathon – Knitting squares to make blankets for various charities



Union of Jewish Women making sandwiches at Norwood Mall



Glynne Wolman from the Angel Network with Clive Mashishi



Fresh produce food packing at Yad Aharon's "Open-Bayit for Mandela Day"



Shaun Zagnoev and Wendy Kahn from the SAJBD



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The Chev Social Services team making sandwiches for the greater community

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