

Jewish Achiever Awards 2022

Back To Life



Jewish Achiever Awards

2022



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2022 



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Government funds Palestinian embassy with taxpayer millions

TALI FEINBERG

It's one thing for the South African government to have an anti-Israel stance, but it's a whole different ball game when the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) admits to funnelling millions of taxpayers' hard-earned money into funding the Palestinian embassy in South Africa since it opened in 1995, at about R1.3 million a year.

Since 2018, Dirco has given R8 999 932 of taxpayers' money to the upkeep of the Palestinian embassy in South Africa. According to The Angel Network's Glynne Wolman, this money could provide "3 600 000 meals from our soup kitchens". This amount doesn't include the money Dirco provides for training embassy staff.

It all became clear when Freedom Front Plus Member of Parliament (MP) and chief whip, Dr Corné Mulder, asked

Dirco Minister Naledi Pandor about her department funding both the Palestinian embassy and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) embassy in South Africa.

"It's the first time I've seen figures put to what has long been suspected – that the South African government makes payments to these embassies," says local political analyst Steven Gruz. "These are two causes that South Africa has been very consistent about and sees as its duty to support as 'anti-colonial struggles'. The taxpayer must ask if this is money well spent. Aren't there many more priorities in South Africa that require attention than paying for foreign embassies on our own soil? And [there's] a huge training budget as well. It doesn't seem like the best use of resources."

Asked if other countries fund foreign embassies on their soil, Gruz says, "They might, but frankly I have never heard of it in 25 years of working in international affairs and diplomacy. Embassies are the sovereign territories of other countries and in theory, they should be entirely responsible for their own costs."

Former diplomat Brooks Spector says, "To the best of my knowledge, no. This isn't standard practice. Many countries do provide various forms of foreign assistance to 'states' that aren't representing formal, *de jure* governments."

MP Michael Bagraim says, "The reality is that South Africa somehow always finds the need for vanity projects. This suits the minister and her agenda. In essence, most of our country is lacking in basic amenities. People are literally starving, and almost 90% of our municipalities can't provide the basics. However, we

find millions for something that adds nothing to help people. This government is incorrigible."

MP Darren Bergman, the shadow minister of international relations and cooperation, says he has always believed such payments were being made. "There should be key performance targets given to embassies being subsidised so that money is being utilised for growth, development, and building relationships. Otherwise it just becomes a funnel for taxpayers once again to pay for services they cannot access," he says.

"The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) has serious concerns about Dirco spending millions of taxpayers' money on these embassies," says SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. "The Palestinians have received \$37.2 billion [R626 billion] of international aid since the Oslo Accords in 1993. Why should South Africans be forced to contribute towards the running of a Palestinian embassy which ferments hate and anti-Israel sentiment in South Africa?"

"Dirco was taken to court in May for giving R50 million to Cuba," Polovin says. "Dirco has also been reducing South Africa's own embassy staff around the world, yet South African taxpayers bear the cost of running foreign embassies. Given South Africa's crippling challenges, it's immoral and shameful to spend taxpayer funds on propping up authoritative regimes that promote an anti-Israel and anti-peace agenda. This money would be better spent on solving problems at home."

The Palestinian embassy spends most of its time bashing Israel, as can be seen on its social-media platforms. Even on Mandela Day, 18 July, it sought to

sow divisions over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict instead of taking part in the unifying spirit of the day.

And on 21 July, it made the following claims, "The State of Palestine strongly condemns Israeli colonial occupation's ongoing war crimes and land theft. Land theft is an Israeli national project undertaken by every branch of Israel's government and facilitated by Israeli officials. It's a state-sanctioned crime. Far from being an enterprise of a small, warped minority of settler ideologues, settler militias methodically and strategically work hand in glove with Israeli officials to cleanse the land of its rightful owners, displace the Palestinian people, and replace them with illegal settlers."

Mulder told the *SA Jewish Report* that he asked questions because, "We have been watching this issue for a while, believing that the South African government was spending money on certain embassies. We suspected that it supported the Palestinian embassy, but was surprised to see that it involves the Saharawi Republic as well. My intention is to follow up on this with further questions."

Both groups have embassies in Pretoria and maintain bilateral relations with South Africa. The Western Sahara conflict is an ongoing conflict between the SADR/ Polisario Front and the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mulder posed a written parliamentary question, to which Pandor responded. "The details of the expenses covered by the financial aid include maintenance of the Palestinian and SADR embassies in

Continued on page 6 >>

Maccabi Magic

See pages 10 and 11



Photo: Mark Patterson

Victorious Maccabi rugby captain Hacjivah Dayimani

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Back to life at Jewish Achiever Awards 2022

Out of the darkness always comes a light far brighter than if there had been no darkness. And so it is with the Jewish Achiever Awards 2022 on 17 November as we emerge from lockdown and interacting online or through masks to celebrating and have fun.

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We're all learning to live again in the best possible way.

And the SA Jewish Report and the Jewish Achiever team are on top of this. This year's Jewish Achiever Awards is going to be totally different to any held before. We will be having a party as opposed to a traditional sit down dinner. We're creating something you've never experienced in our community.

This will be a Jewish Achiever

Awards 2022 like you've never imagined. It's going to be the biggest and best party you've ever attended.

We will celebrate emerging from our homes and ending isolation to having a ball with all our favourite achievers and other wonderful people in the community.

Our theme at this year's Jewish Achiever bash in November will be "Back to Life". We will do it in a way that you'll never forget and will be talking about for years to come.

It will be the party of the year, and we will celebrate our achievers and our freedom with you.

The SA Jewish Report recently surveyed what people wanted for this year's Achiever Awards

ceremony. Did you want it to be online or in-person? Did you want the option of either? Did you want to be there physically to interact with your friends and guests?

Well, 50% wanted it to be an in-person only event, while 41% favoured a hybrid that gives us the option of either, and only 9% opted for online only. As many as 86,4% want to be there in person and 72.7 % want your guests there in the flesh. We heard you. And we'll deliver. You have the option of being in-person or online and both will be outstanding. We promise!

So, nominate your achievers, and get ready for the Jewish Achiever Awards 2022, the only fundraising event for the SA Jewish Report.

Greater than joy



Rabbi Dr David Nossel

One of the most popular Jewish teachings is from the Mishna, that says, "When the month of Adar enters, we increase our joy." And so, as the month of Adar starts, we try our best to fulfill this very serious obligation to be more joyous. To our credit, we're happy to do it.

The importance Jewish thought places on being happy is indeed no laughing matter. King David teaches us to "serve G-d with joy" (Psalm 100:2). G-d Himself tells us that when troubles and curses befall us, it's "due to your not having served your G-d with joy". (Deuteronomy 28:47).

This being the case, how strange it is that the very same Mishna that teaches us to increase our joy in Adar straight away continues with another teaching that says, "When the month of Av enters, we decrease our joy." Decrease our joy? Really?

What would King David have to say about that? Or G-d Himself, for that matter. Why would the great sages of Israel, people of the highest levels of wisdom, tell us that we need to decrease our joy? Are they joking?

In order to understand the message of the sages, let's go back to the first teaching of the Mishna: when the month of Adar enters, we increase our joy. Clearly something funny is going on here. Why specifically when Adar enters? Why not all the time? The answer it seems is contained in the concept of the month of Adar. Adar means mighty. The sages are teaching us that joy is related to mightiness. It's not

some reaction to an event that comes to us (like Purim which comes only two weeks after Adar enters). No. Happiness must come from us, from our own mightiness, our own positive and powerful mindsets. Because of Adar. Because we are mighty.

If so, we can understand the second part of the sages' teaching as well: when the month of Av enters, we decrease our joy. Why should we ever give up a mighty mindset of joyfulness? And why specifically when Av enters? Once again, the answer lies in the concept of the

month. Av means father. When the time arrives for us to be a parent, to take responsibility for the next generation, we need to be able to put jokes aside and focus on something more important than joy. The responsibilities of parenthood.

Joy is wonderful. King David was a great fan of it. So is G-d. But joy isn't the goal, it's the means, just as mightiness isn't the goal, it's the means. The Temple won't be rebuilt because we're mighty or happy or mighty happy. It will be rebuilt because of Av. Because we're parents.

Torah Thought

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Rosh Chodesh Av conjures up a mixture of conflicting moods. Is it contradictory to say Hallel on the day that ushers in a sad period? No – being Jewish often means being able to see the bright side of sad times, and not forget the sad note at happy times. May we soon merit the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.



Israeli sinkhole victim made huge impact in Cape Town

TALI FEINBERG

Israeli marketing guru Klil Kimhi (32) was enjoying a swim at a party in Karmei Yosef (central Israel) on 21 July when the unthinkable happened: a giant sinkhole opened up in the pool, sucking him to his death. Rescuers took four hours to reach Kimhi in a hole that was 13 meters deep, and the pool owners were detained on suspicion of negligent manslaughter.

Now, people from all walks of life are mourning the senseless loss of a person who made an impression wherever he went – including Cape Town. He visited the Mother City as part of a StandWithUs delegation in 2016. In pictures, one can see him enjoying all that the Cape has to offer, including a trip to Robben Island and the warmth and hospitality of the Jewish community.

“I was devastated to learn of the tragic passing of Klil, who came to South Africa to assist SAUJS [the South African Union of Jewish Students] for Israel Awareness Week in 2016,” says South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) Chairperson Rowan Polovin. “I was chairperson of the SAZF (Cape Council) at the time, and we were seeking to bring talented young Israeli activists to the University of Cape Town to help fight the antisemitic hate fest held there each year that SAUJS bravely stands against.

“Several months before, I was sent an impressive resume of an individual named Klil Kimhi. He had an outstanding record with the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]. He then became a student at the IDC [Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya, now Reichman University] and joined its public-advocacy unit. Klil established a Facebook page making the case for Israel, which quickly grew to 50 000 followers from around the world. He was known as a design genius and expert on social media. It was obvious that his talent and passion would make a huge impact. We brought him to South Africa without hesitation, alongside Israeli journalist Lital Shemesh.

“Klil made an immediate impression on everyone,” Polovin remembers. “He

was generous with his skills and had an obvious desire to share Israel’s true story with students. Klil produced powerful designs and videos in almost real time, and dramatically bolstered the campaign. He left a mark on South Africa, and helped shape numerous students’ perceptions of Israel.”

“He deeply cared about Israel and the Jewish people,” says Jono Levi, who was SAUJS Western Cape chairperson at the time. “He was always calm and never lost his cool in intense, aggressive situations on campus. When he left, I remember saying, ‘Thank you for coming out here and doing this.’ He looked back and said, ‘No, thank you.’ It was a really meaningful moment of appreciation. He really cared.”

This is clear from the hundreds of messages on Kimhi’s Facebook page from people grieving his passing. He had 3 400 Facebook friends. He was known as a thought leader, and many shared the posts he had written, filled with insights and ideas. In one piece, Kimhi wrote about how people define themselves by their achievements.



Klil Kimhi and Lital Shemesh when they visited Cape Town to support SAUJS in 2016

“I really love to challenge people,” he wrote. “One of the games that I play when I meet new people is to ask them to introduce themselves without any facts: without telling me their job, where they live, their age, etc. Recently, this game became real to me. One of the businesses I was emotionally invested in was in danger. Why did I feel like my whole world was caving in on me?” he asked prophetically. “I understood that this business became what defined me.

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“Are the loved ones in your life going to love and accept you even without all of these things?” he went on. “Before we set out to conquer a mountain or achieve a goal, we must feel like we’re worthy – even without that achievement. John Wooden, one of the greatest basketball coaches, told his players, ‘The day you come home from a game and people cannot know based on your behaviour if you’ve won or lost, then you’ll know you’ve won.’”

Kimhi thought a lot about being human in the 21st century, as can be seen in his Facebook ‘bio’, in which he wrote, “In an era where machines do everything better than humans, be the only thing it can’t. Be creative.” On Instagram, his “bio” was “I create, meaning I exist.”

One friend wrote that Kimhi was supposed to be the best man at his wedding the day after the tragedy. Other friends shared a video of themselves talking about Kimhi, sobbing on live television. Another wrote of the time she helped him dress up as a pineapple for Purim, showing that Kimhi clearly had a sense of humour.

“The guy with the blue eyes, outstanding in sports, studies, the one who has knowledge about every subject in the world ... Klil, you are the one who introduced me to Matan and who was the witness at our wedding, who lifted us up on your shoulders in every celebration,” wrote another woman. “Whenever I mention the city of Kfar Saba [where Kimhi was born and grew up] they will ask me, ‘Oh, so do you know Klil?’”

“You passed all the difficult stages of life: combat service in a superior unit,

bachelor’s degree, studies for personal and professional development, you got hired and very quickly understood that it wasn’t for you and became independent,” she continued. “You opened a number of businesses and [I can] just imagine how you [would] build your empire from your apartment. You’ve done so much in so little time.”

Describing the funeral, another friend wrote, “It’s crazy how many people loved him, the amount of people and tears I saw, the crazy traffic jam, the stories about all the good deeds he did.”

Roughly 50 people were at the pool party, but only six were in the pool. A second person escaped the sinkhole with light injuries. The couple who owned the pool are suspected of renting their home, operating a business without a license, and money laundering. They regularly hosted such gatherings, Hebrew media reported, but they didn’t apply for a permit before building the pool. A report claimed such a permit wouldn’t have been given due to known infrastructural problems at the site.

At a hearing the day after the tragedy, Sergeant Rami Desta accused the couple of “a very large contribution to this tragic outcome”. The couple were released on house arrest to their daughter’s home.

Izzy Goren, the chairperson of Karmei Yosef’s council, noted that the home was located within 50m of an underground cave. Rescue services said the search was complicated by fears that tunnels branching out of the sinkhole could cause a secondary collapse. They built a support structure to prevent the pool’s surface from further collapsing on them before they were able to locate Kimhi’s body. Police dispatched a helicopter to ensure there were no additional sinkholes nearby.

“What an absolute tragedy that he passed at such a young age, with all his talents and what he had to offer the world,” says Polovin. “May his memory be a great blessing, and may he inspire a generation of future activists for our beloved Israel.”

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Jewish Board vows to fight A4P and BDS antisemitism

TALI FEINBERG

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has criticised a particularly ugly post by local extremists Africa4Palestine (A4P) which the SAJBD said clearly showed the organisation to be genocidal and antisemitic.

“For those who still believe Africa4Palestine is a ‘human-rights organisation’, for those who still believe Africa4Palestine wants a peaceful resolution between Palestine and Israel, for those who still believe Africa4Palestine is anti-Israel and not anti-Jewish, don’t be fooled,” it wrote.

“Africa4Palestine wants the destruction of the only Jewish country in the world, as it clearly shows in its slogan and its meme, ‘From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’. It uses the Jewish symbol of the Star of David. It wants to get rid of Jews and make Israel ‘Judenfrei’ [the term the Nazis used to describe areas that were ‘Jew free’ after murdering Jews during the Holocaust]. We condemn Africa4Palestine’s genocidal calls. The SAJBD calls for a negotiated two-state solution with Israel and Palestine existing side by side with secure borders,” the SAJBD said.

Now, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn says, “The SAJBD will continue to hold these BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] groups accountable when they

cross the line into hate speech, and where required, will take action, as we did with Bongani Masuku in the Equality Court and Constitutional Court, and Matome Letsoalo in the Magistrate’s Court.”

The image the SAJBD refers to was shared by A4P on Wednesday, 20 July. The group wrote, “We will accept nothing less than a #FreePalestine from the river to the sea!” This was accompanied by an image of a Palestinian flag plus a Star of David plus the map of Israel and then a cross, indicating that it wouldn’t accept two states.

It then showed a Magen David and a map of Israel and a cross, indicating it would want the Jewish State and its people obliterated. The last line shows a

position themselves as human-rights organisations. Nothing can be further from the truth,” says Kahn. “Time and again, their mask slips to reveal their antisemitic motives. The SAJBD has and will expose this hypocrisy whenever it emerges.

“This week, Africa4Palestine posted ‘From the river to sea’, which amounts to a genocidal call for the Jewish presence in Israel to be obliterated. Recently, it endorsed a ‘mapping’ project, which specifically targets Jewish institutions for boycott. A4P routinely equates Israelis with Nazis, not because it believes it to be true, but to cause maximum hurt and offense to Jews. It chose Yom Hashoah this year to indulge in this malicious Jew-baiting.

“A4P’s predecessor, BDS SA, likewise failed to conceal its love of classic antisemitic tropes,” she says. “One recalls its 2019 Facebook post comparing the SAJBD’s treatment of Bongani Masuku (whom the Concourt found guilty of antisemitic hate speech earlier this year) to Shylock, literature’s best-known symbol of Jews as avaricious, cruel, and filled with hatred towards gentiles. In response to Trump’s 2020 peace plan, BDS published a cartoon portraying Jews as greedy, gobbling rodents devouring ‘Palestine’ (identified, in case anyone missed the point, by the sign ‘kosher cheese’).

“Some of the most egregious antisemitic incidents of the past decade have directly resulted from BDS campaigns,” says Kahn. “They include placing a pig’s head on a kosher meat shelf during the boycott against Woolworths, and the Durban University

of Technology student leadership demanding that Jewish students be ‘deregistered’. We also remember then BDS SA Director Mohamed Desai defending the chanting of ‘*Dubula i’Juda*’ (‘Shoot the Jew’) during a BDS protest at Wits University. After falling out of favour with BDS SA, Desai went on to establish A4P – new name, same old bigotry.”

South African Zionist Federation chairperson Rowan Polovin says, “For those who consider A4P a ‘human-rights’ organisation or a ‘Pro-Palestinian’ lobby group that’s simply critical of Israel, we suggest paying more attention to its words and deeds. The organisation doesn’t even hide its sinister intent of wiping the Jewish State and the Jews living there off the map. Indeed, one needs simply to look at its ominous post that calls for the Magen David, the symbol representing Jewish identity and Judaism, to be eliminated from the land of Israel.

“This vulgar antisemitism has no place in South African discourse, and should be rigorously challenged,” he says. “A4P represents a sad group of Jew haters who are increasingly desperate to achieve their ends, and their antics and behaviour reflect this. As proud Jews and Zionists, we denounce this hate and intolerance to the core.”

Another recent post by A4P shows a woman holding a sign saying, “It wasn’t okay in Nazi Germany, why is it okay in Palestine?”

“Equating Israel with Nazism is absurd to anyone who knows basic facts about Nazi Germany’s history,” says Günther Jikeli, the Erna B. Rosenfeld Professor in Jewish Studies at Indiana University. “It’s also deeply offensive because Israel’s population has included large numbers

of Holocaust survivors. Such defamation is strong sign of a hateful obsession with the Jewish State and antisemitism.

“Calling for the end to the Jewish State is equally a strong sign of antisemitism,” he says. “There’s a 2000-year history of antisemitism that has denied the Jewish people their legitimacy or their very existence. Many antisemitic interpretations of Christianity postulated that Christians not only have a new covenant with G-d but that the ‘old’ one between the Israelites and G-d was invalid – that is, that Judaism should cease to exist and Jews had to convert to Christianity. Calling for the destruction of Israel seamlessly continues that train of thought.

“It’s no surprise that Jewish communities are deeply worried about such rhetoric, which not only targets Israel and Israelis but Jews worldwide,” says Jikeli. “Once Israel has been demonised, every Jew becomes suspicious and a potential target.”

Antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, Milton Shain, agrees with the SAJBD’s statement.

Regarding the recent posts, he says, “A4P has learnt something from the Goebbels school of propaganda, but its reading on Nazism stopped there,” he says. “To draw parallels between the murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust and the occupation of the West Bank is absurd. However oppressive the occupation is, the reality is that the Palestinian population has increased. This isn’t genocide. At least A4P is honest about its objectives: Israel is to cease to exist. The maps [in its post] make this quite clear.”



Palestinian flag and a map of Israel with a tick and a heart, indicating that only when the Jewish State and its people are eradicated, will they be satisfied.

“BDS SA and its new variant, A4P,

Reverberations of AMIA bombing felt around Jewish world

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“It was one of the deadliest attacks on the Jewish community since World War II, and remains the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentinian history,” said Harold Jacobs, the chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Council at the commemoration of the tragic terror attack on the headquarters of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) 28 years ago.

Eighty-five people were killed and more than 300 injured after a bomb-laden van was driven into AMIA, the Jewish community centre in the heart of Argentina’s capital of Buenos Aires, on Monday, 18 July 1994.

The South African Jewish community commemorated the attack for the first time on 26 July at Beyachad, Johannesburg. The event was organised by the SAJBD in partnership with the Argentinian embassy to pay tribute to the victims of one of the most tragic and traumatic events in modern Jewish history.

“The AMIA tragedy was a watershed event,” said Jacobs. “While it impacted directly on the Argentinian Jewish community, its reverberations were felt throughout the Jewish world. What happened that day in July 1994 brought home to Jewish communities throughout the diaspora how vulnerable they were to being similarly targeted and the urgent need therefore to provide for their own security.

“What happened in Buenos Aires could have happened anywhere. Taking this lesson to heart, diaspora Jewry has since taken extensive steps to ensure that appropriate security measures are in place at Jewish communal installations and community events.

“Another critical lesson we need to learn from the AMIA bombing is for the civilised world as a whole to take a



The attendees at the commemoration

firm stand against extremist ideologies. Terrorist atrocities occur when people are radicalised, indoctrinated, and taught to hate to the extent that they aren’t just willing to take the lives of innocent people but even sacrifice their own lives to achieve that end. To defeat these evil ideologies, humanity needs to work together to build a culture of tolerance and respect for the sanctity of human life.”

The Argentinian ambassador to South Africa, Claudio Pérez Paladino, said, “For the past 28 years, our country has sought justice. We have organised and participated in commemorative events. The president wants to keep the memory alive, both in Argentina and in other countries. Argentina won’t cease in its objective to see all those implicated in the attack brought before Argentine courts for questioning and, if appropriate, sentencing and conviction. The Argentine republic continues to demand that the Islamic Republic of Iran co-operate with judicial investigation of the attack.”

Paladino said international co-operation could lead to those responsible being identified and prosecuted.

Recalling the day of the attack, Anita Weinstein, a survivor, said, “We were taking care of all the preparations

to celebrate the 100th anniversary of AMIA, an institution that started when Jewish immigrants started coming to Argentina. Over all of these years, AMIA became a central building, a central organisation for the Jewish community. That Monday, I remembered that I had to go and find out something, so I stood up and went to the rear of the building. At the same minute I got there to talk to another person, the lights went off. We started to cry and shout, ‘What happened, what happened?’ Maybe the building was bombed or exploded. We couldn’t imagine that this would be another bombing in the Jewish community. [Two years earlier, a suicide bombing of the building housing the Israeli embassy of Argentina, located in Buenos Aires, resulted in 29 civilians killed]. Luckily, we found a door to get out into the open air, a few of us, maybe 10. Through a ladder, we could go up and stay there. In that place, I saw a young woman breastfeeding her baby. I’m very moved when I speak about this. When I saw that, I understood that this image of this young girl saving her little baby was a connection with life. It made me understand and make a decision that I would continue with my life. I would continue working with AMIA, I would continue being

active in Argentine society and in many other places. As my mother had taught me, my parents were survivors of the *Shoah*. They created a family and my mother worked in a Jewish organisation.”

A video playing during the commemoration showed people bleeding, crying, and being carried on stretchers around AMIA in the hours after the attack. “Many of those who were standing together with me were shouting, calling for their wife or husband who was working in AMIA,” recalled Weinstein. “We understood that they wouldn’t be able to answer.”

She said it was difficult to tell them that it would take time to recover the bodies of their beloved families. “It was a very difficult moment for me and for everybody. But I was convinced that I would keep working in a good way for the Jewish community in Argentina.”

One image Weinstein remembers is that of the man driving the van that hit AMIA. “I cannot understand how he could take the van and enter the building. He was one of the victims of course. Also, I’m very moved when I remember how much people helped us.”

Weinstein said the worst part of the attack has been the lack of justice. “We know investigations took place from all sides. It’s known who planned it, who paid for it, and how they researched months before. But this information isn’t leading to justice being served. Nobody has gone on trial.”

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SAJBD, went with Mary Kluk, the national vice-president of the SAJBD, to attend the 2016 World Jewish Congress plenary in Buenos Aires. “We went to a commemoration at the AMIA centre,” recalled Kahn. “It was a very sobering experience for both of us. It meant so much in terms of being with the community which had been through this horrific attack and hearing some of the witnesses.”

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Keffiyeh-clad Pandor pins colours to the mast

NICOLA MILTZ

Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Naledi Pandor this week called on the world to join South Africa in its fight against Israel “until victory is won” to demonstrate its solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) was aghast at her vitriol.

“The reality is that by her obsessive, factually distorted, and morally bankrupt vendetta against Israel, minister Pandor has shown herself to be a thorough-going bigot,” the Board said in response to Pandor’s speech this week at the Palestinian Heads of Mission in Africa Conference at the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria on Tuesday, 26 July.

“Her unstatesmanlike diatribes simply parrot the line followed by those implacably opposed to the very existence of the Israeli state without even the slightest attempt to consider the Israeli perspective. It’s quite evident that Pandor has no interest whatsoever in learning about the true nature of Israel,” it said.

Bedecked in a Palestinian keffiyeh, the minister expressed South Africa’s unwavering support for the Palestinian people. During several intervals, she became uncharacteristically impassioned, veering off her measured Dirco-issued speech to go full tilt anti-Israel.

Pandor admitted to the Pro-Palestinian audience that her emphasis on a two-state solution was a way to avoid being labelled antisemitic.

The SAJBD called Pandor’s speech “yet another propaganda tirade against Israel”. It said she had “shown her true colours” when she “scoffingly dismissed” Jewish concerns about antisemitism during her address.

“In the course of her speech, Pandor flippantly remarked that she was mentioning the two-state solution because if she didn’t, many people would seek to paint her as antisemitic. By this, she not only implied that Jews level baseless charges of antisemitism in response to negative views about Israel, but that Jewish concerns about calls for the world’s only Jewish state to be eliminated need not be taken seriously,” said the Board.

Pandor insisted that other countries “take up the struggle” with South Africa, because there was a need to “see greater activism from civil society all over the world”.

“We need to have daily pickets at embassies of Israel throughout the world to make sure the cause, the unjust experience of the people of Palestine is made known,” she told her audience of dignitaries and media.

“It’s only by seeing the participation of a large body of organisations in a very visible campaign that we’ll ensure that this matter remains on a global stage until victory is won.”

Minister Pandor spoke about the “shifting sands in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East”, which she said presented new challenges.

“We don’t know the impact this will have on the struggles of the Palestinian people and those we considered allies in your struggle. While some might be wavering in their commitment to the Palestinian

with people on the ground, she chose to obtain her information from “self-evidently biased, ideologically compromised sources” whose sole objective was to portray that country as a “caricature of evil”.

“Dirco doesn’t even have an ambassador or a political consular in the country to provide factual information,” said the Board.

“Pandor has stubborn disregard for

anything that might contradict her view of the Palestinians as being no more than blameless, suffering victims of the conflict,” said SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn. This is in spite of the Palestinian leadership’s long and depressing track record of rejecting far-reaching Israeli peace overtures, instilling grossly false and defamatory views about Jewish people and their history at all levels of their society, and glorifying violence as a means to ultimately destroy Israel rather than co-existing in peace alongside it.

“Pandor pours scorn on the notion that she’s antisemitic, but her record of unbridled hostility towards the Jewish State and contemptuous dismissal of legitimate Jewish concerns regarding the realities

of insurgent antisemitism tell a different story. If something looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then presumably, it’s a duck. The quacking of our minister of international relations and cooperation has become so deafening as to remove any reasonable doubts on that score.”

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) said it was outraged at Pandor’s “blatantly biased” speech that placed South Africa “at odds with the United States, the free world, and the African Union”.

“It’s interesting how she has appointed herself an arbiter of what constitutes antisemitism over groups dealing with this issue on a regular basis,” said SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin.

“Minister Pandor, garbed in a keffiyeh usually worn by activists who call for the destruction of Israel, used her international platform to divert and deflect from South Africa’s numerous domestic and international failures.”

“Dirco’s stance will only be to the disadvantage of South Africans. It isolates our country from the rest of the world, and does nothing to promote peace and dialogue. Our foreign policy should seek to affirm our position as a major country in Africa and involve us in the peace process and the growth of the global economy. Aligning our foreign policy with rogue actors is destructive,” said Polovin.



cause, South Africa will remain steadfast in our support of your just quest for freedom, justice, and independence,” she said.

Pandor strenuously objected to the African Union (AU) Commission’s decision to grant Israel observer status at the AU last year, saying it was “shocking” and “inexplicable”.

“We must not rest to ensure this decision is reversed,” she said.

The Board said that rather than Pandor visiting the country herself and engaging

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Our tax money is for our country

I take offence to the money I diligently hand over every month in taxes being spent on a foreign embassy when so many of our fellow citizens are starving.

When almost R9 million from government coffers – in other words, your and my hard-earned taxpaying money – is going to keep up the Palestinian embassy in South Africa, there's something very wrong with the decisions being made in government.

This money should, without question, be going to the upkeep of our own people and country. Why isn't it?

Why are we paying – over and above that amount – for training in the Palestinian embassy? What's that about? How about paying for training our own people for jobs in our own country?

It's so obvious by both the vitriol that Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor spewed at the Palestinian Heads of Mission in Africa Conference on Tuesday (page 5) and the news that the government is supporting the Palestinian embassy in South Africa (page 1), that this is far more than just a problem.

I take umbrage that this money is being spent on this particular embassy because all it does is spend time engendering more hatred towards Israel. However, the reality is that we shouldn't be paying for anybody else's embassies but our own.

Surely all those people who bust a gut to feed people who have absolutely no income should also be enraged? That money could be used to help our own people, but isn't and our own people so desperately need it. That money could have been used to build industry, create jobs, feed the masses, or even house people.

Today, as I was doing the early morning school run, I saw a number of indigent people sleeping on grass verges just off the main roads. They had absolutely no shelter to protect them from the cold. I wondered how they would feel if they knew that our government was giving away millions to an embassy from another country.

Surely someone in government needs to take a stand against this? Surely, as a country, we should do something about this? We have to think about the welfare of our own country long before that of the Palestinians.

The truth is, it's not just the Palestinian embassy that's being funded, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic's embassy gets almost R2 million a year.

I don't know what goes into deciding how government budget is spent in a country where our economy is shot, we have massive unemployment, and people are starving, but it seems to be confused.

I understand that this particular money is from the department of international relations and cooperation's budget and not the budget that generally feeds or employs South Africans, but it comes from the same pockets. Ours. And it should be going to improve the situation in our country, not "Palestine" or the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic. We need it!

But somehow, there's a warped perception that it's more important to throw money at the Palestinian embassy. Could it be that the Palestinian cause has become the South African government's most important focus, at least when looking abroad?

I don't have a problem with South Africa supporting solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis because it needs a solution, but that's clearly not the plan of our foreign affairs minister. But there's no way that you can assisting in solving a problem when you have taken 100% of one side.

The minister made it clear in her speech at the conference that she always felt the need to call for a two-state solution because if she didn't, she was called "antisemitic".

Minister, for the record, if you didn't call for a two-state solution to this situation, you wouldn't be following official government policy. Perhaps that should be foremost on your mind rather than how far you can go in lambasting Israel for simply surviving. Don't just pay lip service to a two-state solution while clearly taking another bow out of your quiver and aiming it at Israel. And another. And another.

Talk is cheap. Please don't claim that you support a two-state solution when all you do is attack Israel. Let's not kid ourselves, there is only one state whose future you care about and it isn't Israel. That viewpoint is not very diplomatic, nor is it relationship building. But then, is relationship building between countries even on your agenda?

It's time for our government to do some real soul-searching and consider what's really important. It seems to spend an inordinate amount of time Israel-bashing rather than South Africa building.

It's time to refocus on sorting out our internal issues. To end corruption and jail corrupt politicians. To actively sort out our electricity issues, and sort out our economy so that other countries want to invest here.

There's so much that needs to be done. It requires a huge refocus away from things that aren't that relevant to this country and toward a better South Africa.

Reading the opinion of financial expert David Shapiro (on this page), it's clear that we have a tough road ahead. However, he clearly sees a future, which will take a lot of work. We just need to hunker down and make it happen.

The government needs to focus on what's important and get together with private business and civil society and go full steam ahead.

Stop spending money on other embassies and wanting to give money to other countries, like Cuba. Let's rebuild our own country.

I hear people talk about leaving, and I understand, but in all honesty, the grass isn't greener elsewhere. We live in the most beautiful country, within the best Jewish community in the world, and the truth is, we have a great life. Let's make it work!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



A Mandela Day of reckoning

OPINION

DAVID SHAPIRO



Last Monday, our firm, like so many other businesses in South Africa, celebrated Mandela Day, a tribute to the country's revered former leader and distinguished international statesman.

I chose to sit this one out. Not because I didn't admire the great man, but rather because I couldn't rekindle the hope and joy we experienced in the nineties. Back then, we had a country that was the toast of the world, with a head of state whose principles and values set new standards that other governments wanted to emulate.

The economic prospects of the country's Rainbow Nation were limitless. Businesses around the globe scamped to invest in and trade with us.

A quarter of a century later, the dream of being the torchbearer of a revitalised African continent lies in tatters, sullied by lawlessness. We have an administration that put self-enrichment ahead of fighting crime, caring for its people, and delivering services vital for the functioning of a thriving economy.

The signs of financial and moral decay have been evident for ages. It's not something that materialised overnight.

Fearing that opposing the rot in our system would elicit a political backlash or meddle with our comfortable lives, we pretended it didn't exist.

We recoiled into the sanctuary of our homes and holiday retreats, hoping that when we resurfaced, the mess would somehow have disappeared. The outcome of our inaction is now clear for us to see.

South Africa is facing immense political, social, and economic problems that aren't self-healing,

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana, speaking at a municipality summit in the Eastern Cape recently, was even more brutal in his attack on municipal leaders. He accused them not only of mismanaging their budgets, but also of lacking the technical skills to maintain critical infrastructure.

Factories and small businesses were closing because they couldn't rely on the timely delivery of electricity and water. The rule of law was crumbling because police stations were understaffed and under resourced. And hospitals that couldn't afford to hire nurses and doctors were stretched to breaking point.

Our private sector is well known for its resilience and ability to work around a multitude of challenges brought about by the administration's ineptitude. However, even so, the government's ongoing failure to invest in basic services and infrastructure is taking its toll on economic growth.

In their recent results, mining companies Exxaro, Thungela, and Kumba reported that they had been forced to cut production in buoyant markets because of the state's dysfunctional railway network.

And last Thursday, the governor of the Reserve Bank, in a sombre mood, forecast that gross domestic product in 2023 and 2024 would be a miserly 1.3% and 1.4% respectively, considerably lower than previous projections.

Though higher oil and food prices are a worldwide worry, South Africa has had to deal

with the additional constraints of falling commodity prices, elevated electricity tariffs, and increasing public-sector wage demands.

The world economy has endured a harrowing six months. Our nerves are frayed. Yet, history has taught us that downturns are seldom, if ever, long-lasting, and like all other previous crises, this too will pass. Signs are appearing that sentiment is changing for the better, but financial markets remain on edge. Only when investors are confident that

inflation has peaked and that interest rates in the United States have reached levels that won't restrain growth, will equity, bond, and property markets turn up.

Comedian Jackie Mason always joked how people whispered when conveying bad news. For too long now, we've spoken in a murmur about our government's inadequacies.

Conditions globally will start improving soon, but if we want this country to keep pace with the rest of the world, it's time we raised our voices.

• *David Shapiro is a veteran stockbroker, market commentator, and deputy chairperson of Sasfin Securities.*



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

and unless we tackle these realities, we stand to squander everything we and our forebears have built over generations.

The good news, though, is that members of the ruling party are finally accepting their failure to deal with issues ranging from unemployment and poverty to inequality and lawlessness.

In a rare admission last week, former president Thabo Mbeki, talking at a memorial service for African National Congress Deputy Secretary-General Jessie Duarte, rebuked the current administration for its poor performance. He said he feared that this could spark violent protests similar to the Arab Spring.

Government funds Palestinian embassy with taxpayer millions

>>Continued from page 1

Pretoria," she said. She said payments to the Palestinian embassy have been made since 1995, while payments to the SADR embassy have been taking place since 2018.

"From 2018/2019 to the 2022/2023 financial year, the department paid a total of R8 999 932 to the Palestinian embassy, which is approximately R1.3 million a year. With regard to the SADR embassy in Pretoria, the department contributes R1 948 100 annually with a 10% adjustment after every two years," she said.

In addition, Dirco has provided funding for training and guest speakers at these embassies. "The expenses for training programmes for foreign delegations have

been paid from Dirco's budget for training and skills development," she said. "These training payments aren't regarded as foreign aid. Dirco procures a service provider to present these training programmes and pays the training fees directly to the service provider."

She said fees paid to South African presenters "are based on the department of public service and administration's guidelines. In addition to presenter's fees, the training expenditure also covers subsistence and travel as well as international air travel for participants."

Pandor addressed the "Palestinian Heads of Mission in Africa Conference" on Tuesday, 26 July. See story on page 5.

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Millennials seek meaning – that’s why we need new communities

OPINION

A Hassidic tale tells of a rabbi who used to dip in the river every morning. One day, the new local policeman sees him diving into the frozen river. He runs to the strange old man, shouting, “Who are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going to?” The old rabbi smiles gently and asks the policeman, “How much do they pay you?” “Ten kufeykas a day,” answers the baffled young man. “I’ll tell you what,” says the rabbi, “I’ll pay you 20 if you come every morning and ask me who I am, where I come from, and where I’m going.”

Human beings are dynamic and ever-evolving creatures, and just like our muscle system becomes atrophied if not stimulated enough, so too do our moral and intellectual systems. Hence, it’s crucial that we’re asked those questions constantly. We could create a mobile app to do that, but I argue that communities are the optimal environment for challenging our character and preserving our identity.

This sentence may ring a bell as a common catch phrase among so-called millennials, meaning those born after 1982. Many see us as a challenge to be addressed, especially in the Jewish context, worried about diminishing affiliation. It may even serve as an explanation – “See? All millennials care about is themselves.”

As one of the oldest millennials alive (born in December 1982), I would like to offer a different approach. Millennials are no different. Human physiology and psyche don’t change over a short period of time (eons). What does change is the environment. Like everybody who preceded us, we have the need of food



Group activity at Hakhel

and shelter, and the millennial challenge begins where this problem ends. Indeed, making a living can still be tough, but relatively, Jewish millennials are expected to possess more resources than previous generations.

After satisfying their basic needs, people crave a sense of belonging, identity, and meaning. The aspiration to become a better version of one’s self is rooted in this, and not in egocentrism. In fact, data shows that almost half of millennials would move to lower paying jobs if they offered more meaning and purpose.

However, the unprecedented economic-technological leapfrog has its side-effects. We all know of the environmental crisis, but there’s another one: loneliness. According to a 2018 Harvard study, loneliness is an epidemic, riskier to health than physical inactivity and almost as risky as smoking.

The government in the United Kingdom even established a new ministry in 2018 to deal with loneliness. And no, social media doesn’t solve it. Research shows it increases it. Just like we still don’t have a better

solution for hunger than food, we don’t have a better solution for loneliness than communities. What we do have is new technologies to produce these.

So, why is millennial affiliation with established Jewish communities on the decline? First, millennials are looking for intimate and horizontal structures rather than mega-communities. In addition, Jewish millennials see themselves as privileged, hence responsible for everybody, and don’t find themselves in communities originally designed to protect a weak minority.

On top of all that, sociology plays a role. The Jewish ecosystem was geared to support Jewish identity until college, assuming youngsters will get married soon afterwards and circle back to the community, which is designed to accommodate young families. However, circumstances have changed. The gap between college and settling down is no longer two to three years, not even 10, sometimes not even 15.

One idea that has been tested successfully in Israel and other countries is intentional communities. An intentional community is a small, non-hierarchical group of people who have consciously decided to live together spatially and temporally around a shared purpose. In this sense, an intentional community can serve as a framework for individual growth and moral behaviour as well as give people the opportunity to work collaboratively to make the world a better place.

However, one community isn’t enough, and one could justly argue that a group of 50 to 60 households cannot possibly be the cure for the contemporary Jewish peoplehood predicament. He or she would be right.

We need scale, but we also don’t want to give up the benefits of an intimate community. The solution would be a network of communities. Since 2013, at Hakhel, we have been working to build such a global network together with Israel’s diaspora affairs ministry, which joined us in 2017. Today, Hakhel’s network comprises more than 140 communities in 30 different countries and all continents (well, except Antarctica).

One country, however, wasn’t on our radar. Until 2019, our assumption was that the South African Jewish community was close-knit and well connected to Israel anyway, hence we should concentrate our efforts elsewhere. When an initial connection was formed through a friend of a friend, we were amazed to discover that here, like anywhere else, the circumstances have changed.

Below the surface, a Jewish renaissance is taking place here as well, and today, we already work with three communities in Johannesburg and are looking to expand to Cape Town.

If you want to attract millennials, you need to offer them – no, sorry, create with them – the appropriate complex response. All of these communities all have different themes, but they share a goal in that they’re creating the Judaism of the future, one in which millennials become a better version of themselves.

• Rabbi Lavi is co-founder of the Israeli umbrella organisation of intentional communities, and of Hazon’s Hakhel Jewish Intentional Communities Incubator. His recent book, “Seven”, deals with the social and economic aspects of the shmita year. arilavi@gmail.com



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Farewell to our survivors – they did us proud

When our brave Holocaust survivors pass away, it brings deep sadness because with them goes the stories they told. It's incumbent upon those who remain to keep their legacy and legend alive long after they're gone. This month, we lost Doris Lurie and Miriam Lichterman. The SA Jewish Report pays tribute to them.

A touch-and-go escape led to a life well lived

PETA KROST

After three emigrations in less than two years, 12-year-old Doris "Dossy" Ehrenstein (who became Lurie) arrived in South Africa with her mother. They were destitute, but had managed to escape the true impact of the Holocaust in her birthplace, Austria. Thereafter Doris never moved away from South Africa, which was the birthplace of her mother. Doris died in Johannesburg on 17 July at 94 after a long illness. But she lived her life to the full, not least of all because she was so aware that her escape could so easily have ended differently. When her mother made the snap decision to get the two of them out of Vienna in 1938, Doris was no longer allowed to attend school, Jewish-owned shops were attacked, and Jews were assaulted on the streets. It had even become dangerous for Jews to use public transport. Doris's mother, Edith, managed to obtain their passports, which were being held by a lawyer, only to find that she had two days before her passport expired. So, the two left everything they couldn't fit in two small bags and did their best to get to Paris, two days away, where Doris's dad was working. They were robbed and harassed by Nazis en route, but somehow made it as far as Zurich. There, they had no choice but to contact Doris's dad for money to get them to Lyon, where they joined him in March 1938. Doris enrolled at a school there until September 1939, when war broke out and her father was arrested and interned as "an enemy alien". At the time, there was much talk of women and children being arrested and sent to other camps. Doris's mother tried everything she could to have her husband released, but to no avail, so they fled to safety. They got to England on Friday, 13 December 1939, after crossing the Channel through a minefield. "We stood on the deck wearing cork lifebelts, ready to jump into the icy sea should the ship be blown up. We saw a mine right in the path of the ship. Just as we were going to collide, a destroyer came out of the thick fog and exploded the mine harmlessly," Doris said.

They stayed in England with family until the school Doris went to was bombed in May 1940, and they were evacuated to the west of England. As her mother only had an Austrian passport, they weren't allowed to stay in England long as she couldn't earn an income. Early in June, a charity organised them two one-way tickets to South Africa, where Doris's mom had been born. Three weeks later, they arrived in Durban. Again, they relied on family to survive in the beginning. "My mother, who was in a poor state of health due to all the stress and deprivation, had to go out to work – hard physical work – in order to support us," said Doris.

Doris went to Parktown Convent, where she matriculated in 1944. In 1945, she began a degree in science at the University of the Witwatersrand on a municipal scholarship. She was one of very few women studying science at that time. After graduating, she worked as a biochemist at the medical pathology laboratory at the then Johannesburg General Hospital. She married Julian Lurie, a chemical engineer in 1953, and lived in Johannesburg, apart from four years in Durban. They had three children: Peter (an architect then opera singer, now living in London after many years in Munich and New York City); Carol (a city planner and aviation sustainability expert living in Boston); and Roy (also a Boston resident, a qualified electrical engineer, working in the tech sector for a market-leading global corporation). Her mother, Edith, died in 1969 in Johannesburg, and her father passed away near Carcassonne, France, in 1972. After the death of her beloved husband, Doris got involved with the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and was extremely active with her many creative interests, skills, and talents, which included painting, expert sewing projects for her own use, and beading.




Her children say the war influenced her life in that she was always interested in the effects it had had on her contemporaries and extended family. She maintained a long correspondence with her remaining family around the world including in Austria, France, Uruguay, Brazil, Israel, Czech Republic, Germany, the United States, and Canada. She was an avid reader, and followed the family histories of contemporaries. Most people remember Doris as "a very dignified lady, a creative multi-talent, a great listener, still making new friends until a few weeks before she passed away", according to her children.

From the depths of horror to a life of service

PETA KROST

Polish-born Miriam (nee Teitelbaum) Lichterman would have been 100 in September had she not passed away on 18 July. With her long life, she graciously defied the Nazis who wanted to destroy all Jews. She survived a horrifying childhood, facing the worst losses and devastation under the Nazis regime in the Warsaw Ghetto, then Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Ravensbrück concentration camps. She lost her close-knit family, but survived, and went on to lead a life of service to the Cape Town Jewish community. "Despite my experiences I was never bitter. I never sought revenge," Lichterman, who was born in Warsaw in 1922, told people in her testimonies. "We were a very close, very warm family. There was my sister. She was the oldest, and there was my brother, four years younger, and I was the youngest. I recall a very happy life with my parents, with uncles and aunts, cousins, friends. I recall with much emotion how it was my teachers and my home environment that really moulded my character and made me the person that I am today. That allowed me to remain human when I found myself in later years in very inhuman circumstances." In fact, Lichterman was known for being kind and compassionate, a mother to all within her Sea Point community. She was a young schoolgirl when World War II broke out in 1939. In November 1940, the Warsaw Ghetto was established. It was divided into two – the "large ghetto" and the "small ghetto" – so as to exclude an important thoroughfare, Chłodna Street, from its official boundary. Miriam and her family were forced to move into the small ghetto. When she told her story to the thousands who wanted to hear it at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC), she said that despite the hunger, cold, and deprivation they endured, she and her family tried to keep some semblance of a normal life in the ghetto. In order to get bread and jam, she volunteered to be a machinist in a factory. However, any semblance of normality ceased when in July 1942, the Nazis began deporting Jews from Warsaw to the Treblinka killing centre. Lichterman was finishing her night shift at the factory in the early hours of the morning in September 1942, when she and her fellow workers discovered they were locked in. When they were eventually released, she discovered that her parents had been deported to Treblinka. She never got a chance to say goodbye. Her brother, Israel, managed to evade the deportations and get out of the ghetto to safety. He returned to tell her that he was one of the leaders of the planned Warsaw Ghetto uprising. He told her it was better to die fighting than to be murdered in a gas chamber. He died fighting in the April 1943 uprising. Lichterman was then sent to Majdanek, where she was one of the few chosen to live. After just a few weeks, she was transferred to Auschwitz-Birkenau. "On arrival in Birkenau, I was shocked to discover that we were being tattooed with numbers on our arms. My number was 447332 – we had stopped being individuals, being humans – we became numbers." In January 1945, she joined thousands of Auschwitz prisoners on a death march through knee-deep snow to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. The Nazis at Auschwitz had evacuated the camp to avoid the advancing Russian troops. "Even today, so many years later, I wonder how I survived the death march because anybody who became so weak that they couldn't walk anymore was just shot on sight by the guards," she said. Lichterman was taken to Malchow, a sub-camp of Ravensbrück. After some time, they were told they had to move again. However, on the day they were meant to leave, she recalled, "Suddenly a cry came from the girls who were right in the front. There was nobody guarding us. The guards

with the dogs had disappeared. The commandant must have run away the day before. There wasn't a uniform to be seen. We were liberated, we were free. We were not really free to go and do whatever we wanted, but we were alive, we were not destroyed, and we were free." She would tell people in her testimony, "While walking back after the war through devastated Germany, I met German refugees, elderly people, and small children. Their sons and their fathers were probably in the SS and guarding camps and committing all crimes against humanity, yet I could not say a nasty word to these people. I couldn't do anything to them."  Miriam Lichterman lighting a candle during the Yom HaShoah commemoration in 2017 As a free woman, she met Jacob Lichterman, the cantor of a prestigious shul in Warsaw that she had attended as a child. They married and moved to South Africa in 1950. She quickly learnt to appreciate the sense of belonging that the Cape Town Jewish community represented. They went on to have two sons, who both also became cantors, and later gave them five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Jacob taught Barmitzvah boys at Vredehoek and later Schoonder Street shuls, and Miriam became second mother to many. She also became the first *mashgicha* for the Beth Din, and established a kashrut department at the Mount Nelson Hotel, which became a favourite venue for Jewish weddings. For many years, Lichterman didn't speak of her war-time experience. But, once the CTHGC was opened in 1999, she slowly started to share her testimony. For more than 22 years, she continued to share her testimony with thousands of school children and adult groups at the centre. She would tell them about the intrinsic necessity of living with hope, the ability to forgive, and the need for young people to resist all forms of injustice. "Her unwavering support and generosity of spirit at the centre was amazing," said Heather Blumenthal, CTHGC executive director. "Through her powerful presence, warmth, kindness, compassion, and love, people were naturally drawn to her, listening attentively, absorbing every word." "Reading through the numerous letters of thanks and reflections which people have written to Miriam over the years, one sees a common thread – one of admiration, respect, and inspiration. She truly touched the hearts of so many people," said Blumenthal. "Miriam was a woman of resilience, tremendous courage, and faith. She was truly a lady, always beautifully groomed, quietly spoken, but with an indomitable spirit." Lichterman also joined Bnoth Zion WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organisation), and became a leading member of She'erith Hapletha (association of survivors). She played an important role in the Cape South African Board of Deputies Yom HaShoah Committee, and always participated in the annual ceremony. "It was important for her to contribute to her community in a meaningful way. She was extremely kind, caring, and involved. She never missed an event at the CTHGC, or the Cape Town Jewish Seniors, and other organisations," said Blumenthal.

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Game, set, match for Jacqui Boyd

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South African tennis star Jacqui Boyd has now won a total of nine Maccabiah medals, including seven golds. In this year's Maccabi Games, her fifth time competing, she successfully defended her singles title by winning the Masters 35-plus category on 24 July.

She won 6-0 6-2 in the final against an Israeli, and dropped only four games in the whole tournament. Three days earlier, she bagged gold in the Masters Mixed Doubles with her Argentinian partner, Esteban Bluvol, whom she had never played with before.

"It feels amazing," says Boyd, who first competed at the games in 1993 as a 14-year-old. "Being the defending champion brought a little bit of pressure because people are gunning for you and know you. I had probably one of the toughest draws I could have had."

On top of that, Boyd had to play all her matches at around noon in the sweltering heat. "I'm relieved as well as tired mentally and physically," she says.

En route to the singles final, she came up against one Argentinian and then just Israelis, many of whom were Russian-Israelis. "We joked when I said, 'It's Jacqui versus Israel!'" says Boyd. "I never got drawn against any of the other countries such as Britain and Australia."

The standard of her opponents was higher than her previous Maccabiah, she says. "My age group was probably the strongest age group. The Israelis were tough, and there were one or two tough Argentinians. I think some of the other countries weren't as strong."

Boyd met Bluvol a few years ago at a World Senior Tennis Championships event. "When I saw him after 2017, he said, 'In 2021 or 2022, we must play.' We played very well. We beat a top Israeli couple [6-2 6-3] in the final, a really good match with a lot of people watching.

She says this year's Maccabi Games has been

great. "I've stayed in Netanya for the first time. All the master tennis players and master soccer players have been together here in a beautiful hotel on the beachfront. The vibe is amazing. You sit in the lobby and chat with everybody



Jacqui Boyd with her two 2022 Maccabiah gold medals

– people from Argentina, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Chile, Canada, France, and Switzerland. We all have the same commonalities, the same passion for Judaism, sport, and travel. You bond instantly."

When Boyd first arrived at the hotel, two Argentinian girls started shouting, "Jacqui! Jacqui!"

"They remembered me from 2017," she says. "I was excited to see them. Year on year, you sometimes see the same faces, but you also see new faces. Most people are really competitive, but you're also here to meet people and have a good time."

During the closing ceremony, everyone sang and danced, says Boyd, one of South Africa's flag-bearers at the opening ceremony. "We might not all speak the same language, but we all sang Hatikvah together. It was special."

Golden moments: South Africa's many Maccabi wins

GOLD
OPEN TRACK AND FIELD: Adam Lipschitz defended his 10km run in Jerusalem in a time of 31:37 (winning gold).
MASTERS GOLF: Moshe Duek won gold in the Individual Nett Competition played over 54 holes.
OPEN SWIMMING (WOMEN): Hannah Robertson won an individual tally of six medals (three gold, one silver, and two bronze). She won three gold medals in the 100m freestyle, 400m freestyle, and in the open water 1.5km swim.
JUNIOR SWIMMING: Rachel Smith won gold in the 1.5km open water swim.
MASTERS SWIMMING: In the 50m butterfly, 50m freestyle, and 100m freestyle, Dave Letschert won three gold medals. Maccabi SA chairperson Cliff Garrun won a gold medal for the 100m freestyle.
OPEN TENNIS: Josh Luck won the doubles to clinch a gold medal.
MASTERS TENNIS (35+): Jacqui Boyd won two gold medals in the singles and mixed doubles.
SILVER
OPEN RUGBY 7s: After losing to Israel 12-5, South Africa got a silver medal. USA won bronze.
OPEN CRICKET: In the final, South Africa took home a silver medal by losing to a much-

improved Great Britain by 27 runs. GB broke South Africa's hold on the cricket tournament by denying them a gold medal for the fourth consecutive time.
OPEN SWIMMING (WOMEN): Hannah Robertson won a silver medal in the 200m freestyle. SA won a silver in the 4x50m medley relay.
OPEN SWIMMING (MEN AND WOMEN): South Africa got a silver medal for the mixed medley relay.
OPEN SWIMMING (MEN): Shane Feinberg won a silver medal in the 1.5km open water swim.
JUNIOR SWIMMING (BOYS): The South Africa team won a silver medal in the 4x50m freestyle relay. Dylan Bloch won a silver medal for the 3km open water swim.
MASTERS SWIMMING: Dave Letschert won a silver medal for 50m backstroke.
Cliff Garrun won silvers in the 50m freestyle and 200m freestyle.
OPEN KARATE: In Kumite, Noah Maisel won a silver medal.
JUNIOR TENNIS (GIRLS): Mikayla Plitt and Rebecca Widan won silver in doubles.
BRONZE
OPEN SWIMMING (MENS): Four bronzes were won by South Africa for the 4x50m

SA Maccabi rugby brings home the gold

MYRON MICHEL

South Africa's Maccabi rugby team is bring home gold after it overwhelmed the Great Britain team by 33 to 6 in front of a record crowd of about 3 000 spectators on Sunday, 24 July.

They had a spectacular win in taking the coveted gold at the Wingate Institute in Netanya. Did it have anything to do with the South African squad's visit to the Kotel in Jerusalem just two days before the final?

Richard Bryant, Kym Hirshovitz, and Vice-Captain Jordan Chait were the try scorers. Chait, who earned himself the title of Most Valuable Player in the tournament, also kicked over two conversions. Dylan Coll also slotted over a conversion in the match.

Great Britain got to the finals, but have never actually won in rugby at Maccabi, in spite of this being their third appearance in the finals since rugby was introduced in 1985.

South Africa has played in the finals eight times, winning six golds. However, it has been 17 years since they took home the golden Maccabi title. The last time was in 2005.

The Israel team's head coach, South African Kevin Musikanth, said, "South Africa were a standout team and deserved to win the Maccabiah under their captain, Hacjivah Dayimani.

"The standard of play was more competitive than the last games, and it's a credit to Israel rugby to have clinched the bronze in the 15s after defeating Australia 17-13."



Vice-Captain Jordan Chait

Photo: Mark Patterson

In the semi-finals, South Africa swept the "Jewish Wallabies" off their feet by decisively thrashing Australia 38-0. They had no chance of comeback against South Africa, whose try scorers were scrumhalf Thomas Walker and wing Dean Gordon with two tries a piece. Jayson Hirshovitz also scored a try, while Chait converted at 100%, and kicked a penalty.

In the other semi-final, Israel, the favourites, lost in a thriller to the underdogs Great Britain 13-12.

Surfers make waves in debut competition

SAUL KAMIONSKY

"You experience almost a spiritual feeling while surfing in the sea. Every wave is totally different. You need the creativity to pull off different types of manoeuvres which are really beautiful and high energy. That feeling of speed and flow is so exhilarating."

So says Johannesburg-based Katie Goldreich Cragg, who together with Capetonian Levi Kruyer represented South Africa, reaching round three in the 2022 Maccabi Games' inaugural surfing competition, which took place in Netanya.

With the waves small and lacking power, the competition was challenging for surfers, especially foreign contestants not used to surfing in Israel.

"The Israelis were amazing," says Cragg. "They cleaned up. It was full Israeli quarterfinals, semi-finals, and finals. They definitely had the home-ground advantage, being used to these types of conditions."

Cragg, who counts being the KwaZulu-Natal champion and the runner-up in the South African Surfing Championships among her honours, found it exciting to participate in one of the new sports at the Maccabiah – the others being bouldering, 3×3 basketball, motocross, and padel.

"The wave size was challenging," she says. "Unfortunately, I didn't get the result I was hoping for. I won one heat and managed to get through to round three before being knocked out. I'm obviously proud and so thrilled to have been there."



Katie Goldreich Cragg

Though Cragg was selected for the games because Team South Africa knew she was a former semi-professional surfer, Kruyer's journey to the games started two years ago when his friend, Saul Jackson, the sports director of Maccabi Western Province, told him about the inclusion of surfing in the games. Having swum in the 2013 Maccabiah, Kruyer then decided to pursue surfing in the 2022 games.

Kruyer, an alumnus of Herzlia in Cape Town, took up surfing 16 years ago. "I live close to the beach and my family comes from a surfing background," he says.

Cragg, an alumnus of Crawford International in Durban, started surfing when she was 10. "I've always loved the ocean," she says. "I had a family friend who surfed, and I went to watch him.

We were around the same age, and I was just fascinated by it. I stood up on my first wave, and I was hooked from there."

She enjoys surfing because "every single wave is different. It can be really difficult as there are so many variables that are beyond your control, but you just have to roll with it."

Although Cragg recently moved from Durban to Johannesburg, she'll try to surf as often as she can.

She says the key to surfing is a love for the ocean. "One should have strong upper body strength to paddle into waves and out into the ocean," she says. "You need to be brave to battle whatever the ocean brings. A sense of adventure is important as well."

For Kruyer, the secret is "pushing yourself to surf in tough conditions and not only going out when the waves are good".

freestyle, 4x100m freestyle, 4x50m medley, and 4x100m medley. **Mikey Hendler** won a bronze in the 1.5km open water swim.
OPEN SWIMMING (WOMEN): Hannah Robertson won two bronze medals in the 200m individual medley and in the 800m freestyle.
OPEN SWIMMING (WOMEN): South Africa won 4x100m freestyle and 4x100m medley.
OPEN SWIMMING (MEN AND WOMEN'S): The relay team won three bronze medals in the mixed

relay, 4x100m freestyle mixed, and 4x50m mixed relay.
JUNIOR SWIMMING (BOYS): Won two bronze medals for the 4x100m freestyle and the 4x100m medley. In the 3km open water swim, **Zack Waters** won a bronze.
JUNIOR SWIMMING (BOYS AND GIRLS): Won bronze for the 4x100m mixed medley.
OPEN KARATE: In Kumite, **Greg Cohen** got a bronze medal. In the team event, **Maisel and Cohen** won bronze.

OPEN TENNIS (MENS): In the singles, **Josh Luck** won bronze.
JUNIOR TENNIS (GIRLS): In the doubles, **Mikayla Plitt and Rebecca Widan** won bronze.
JUNIOR TABLE TENNIS (GIRLS): In the doubles, **Keira Sorour** won a bronze medal.
JUNIOR NETBALL (U/18): Team Maccabi SA won a bronze medal after defeating Israel 57-36.
JUNIOR NETBALL (U/16): In the inaugural tournament, **South Africa** beat Israel 56-16 for bronze.

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Cricket youngsters bowl over competition

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South Africa's junior cricket team won gold at the 2022 Maccabi Games for the fifth consecutive time since the introduction of junior cricket to the Jewish games.

The majority of the team's players were aged 16 and from Johannesburg. Their coach, Matthew Townsend, believes they were the youngest side in the tournament in terms of average age.

The team scored 292/4 in 40 overs during the final against Australia, with Man of the Match David Teeger smashing 149 off 133, and Giyan Sulcas amassing 79.

In reply, Australia managed only a total of 73 runs as South Africa bowled them out in just 21 overs. Dovi Porter took four wickets for eight runs in two overs, while Jacob Sacks and Sulcas claimed two wickets apiece to seal a win by 219 runs.

"The vibe after we won was unforgettable," says captain Joshua Jacobs, a 16-year-old student at St David's Marist Inanda in Johannesburg. "The boys did exceptionally well. They were very good on and off the field, so they made my life a little bit easier."

"We put a lot of work in during the build-up," says Townsend. "We executed everything we needed to. It's just an amazing experience to see these boys

perform at such a high level. We won every game by big margins, and we just stuck out head and shoulders above the rest."

In the team's matches on their journey to the final, they bowled out Great Britain for just 38 runs and thrashed Israel after posting a colossal 536/7, which Townsend thinks may be a record for 40-over games.

In the latter game, Sulcus scored 196 and Porter made just under 130. Speaking about some of the team's other standout performances, Townsend says, "Jamie Gronemann scoring 89, Benji Bernstein 87, Jordan Myers 85, and David Teeger in the final. The whole team just chipped in. Benji Stone picked up 10 wickets in the tournament with a couple of runs. Dovi Porter also got some good runs and wickets. But I think a lot of a lot of the team's credit has to go to captain Jacobs. He was outstanding on and off the field. Having been involved in cricket at professional level, I think he was an amazing asset to the team and led from the front."

Jacobs got into cricket when he was about five. He has captained his central Gauteng under-16 indoor side, been vice-captain of the South African indoor cricket junior team, and, in outdoor cricket, captained his club side, the under-18 Old Edwardians cricket team, to the final of the Jozi Cup.

Jacob's best moment on the field during

the Maccabiah was when his side bowled out England for 38. "On the way to the game, we were on the same bus as England, and they were singing chants and giving us little chirps," he says. "I told the boys to be quiet and let the bowling and batting do the talking for us. Bowling them out for 38 was pretty unbelievable. Off the field, I would say probably the tours. My favourite tour we did was of the underground tunnels in Haifa."

In the lead-up to the games, the team had training sessions every Sunday. "We did have one weekend when we played T20 and a 50-over practice game against a select side in Johannesburg in which two of the Cape Town boys flew down to join us," says Townsend. "Sulcus was actually overseas playing cricket in England, and he joined us the night before we played England. It was the first time we had a chat as a full team. We kept everything on Zoom, so no one was ever left out. They all knew what we were doing and how things were going."

From the moment the team left South Africa, Townsend didn't believe any team would pose his side much trouble. After arriving in the holy land, they would have an hour and a half team meeting before every game. "We would strategise our game plans, and everything seemed to fall into place. Everyone just did their job and executed what they needed to do perfectly," says Townsend.



The junior cricket team after winning the final

Born in Mutare, Zimbabwe, Townsend played nine first-class matches between 1999 and 2002, having made his first-class debut at the age of 18.

"I played for various Zimbabwean sides during the time when I had a national contract, so I was privileged enough to play against the likes of India, Bangladesh, and the West Indies. Those are probably some highlights. But I stopped playing professionally at a very young age – 21 – when I ended my national contract due to the political situation. I played a handful of first-class games after that, a bit overseas, a spell in Australia. I've been coaching ever since."

He has been a professional cricket coach in Zimbabwe and the director of cricket at Crawford International in Johannesburg, and has been approached by the chairperson of Israel cricket to be the head coach of the Israel national side at the ICC World Cup qualifiers next year.

"I moved to Johannesburg a couple of years ago, and I've been doing quite a lot of coaching. I actually came to the last Maccabi Games with the junior rugby side. Then, the convener of cricket asked if I would be interested in taking the role as coach. I don't think I've ever been fortunate enough to have such a good team as this Maccabi side. They all just gelled together. We never had a single problem. No leaving someone out. They were just a complete unit."

The players may be hoping to follow in the footsteps of other South African cricketers to have played at the games such as Dennis Gamsy, who played in two Tests for South Africa against Australia in 1970, and Adam Bacher, who played in 19 Tests between 1996 and 1999.

South Africa's open cricket team, meanwhile, lost by 27 runs against Great Britain in the final of the 2022 Maccabiah, to take home silver.

SA swimmers glide to victory

SAUL KAMIONSKY

South Africa obtained two gold medals in the 1.5km open swimming at the Maccabi Games on 24 July, with matric student Hannah Robertson winning the open category and 16-year-old Rachel Smith winning the 14 to 16 age group.

In doing so, Robertson ended the games with 14 medals (six coming in individual races), while Smith added to the relay bronze she won earlier in the tournament.

Just participating in the Maccabiah was the realisation of a dream for Smith. "It's been absolutely amazing," says this King David High School Linksfield student. "We actually just went to the Kotel now, which was also my granny's dream. I spoke to her afterwards, and that was very special."

Robertson enjoyed her open water race in spite of having a setback. "I actually went off course," says this St Andrew's School for Girls student. "I was coming first overall. Then I went to the wrong beacon triangle in the water and I had to turn around and go back, meaning I came fifth out of the water but I came first out of the girls. I don't usually do open water swims, but it was really fun."

Smith, who swum in several races during the games, was amazed to win her open water category. "The competition is strong here," she says. "I was just aiming to do my best."

She says swimming with the relay team was a lot of fun. "We were all so happy. We didn't



Hannah Robertson

know each other very well before this, but we've become very strong friends."

Smith swims at Mandeville Dolphins Swimming Club in Bezuidenhout Valley, Johannesburg, under the tutelage of Dean Price, a former Springbok swimmer and the current manager of Swimming Excellence at Swimming South Africa. He has coached some of the country's top swimmers such as Natalie du Toit, the winner of 13 gold medals at the Paralympic Games.

Whereas Du Toit once said, "Going out there in the water, it feels as if there's nothing wrong with me," Smith says, "The pool is the place where I feel happy."

Smith won the South Africa Regional Junior Age Group Champs 1 500m freestyle earlier this year, and also partakes in cross country at school.

"My mom introduced me to swimming when I was a baby," says Smith. "I just carried on from there."

Her goal is to "get better and better and perform. Just give my all-around best and maybe get a scholarship overseas for it one day."

Robertson, meanwhile, has "had the best time ever" at this year's Maccabiah. "I knew I was going to have fun and make lots of friends, but I can honestly say that I feel like I've been part of a family. Everyone has been so kind to me, so supportive. I'm really sad to leave because I'm going to miss everyone, but I can honestly say that this trip is life changing."



Rachel Smith during the open water swim

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Israeli foodie promises delectable discussions

STEVEN GRUZD

He’s the great-grandson of the reviver of modern Hebrew, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. He’s descended from a long line of writers and journalists. But Gil Hovav is very much his own man. The 60-year-old Jerusalem-born Tel Aviv resident is a famous food critic, a former TV producer, and a successful writer. He’s heading to South Africa to speak at Limmud in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban in August. His talks are dishes not to be passed up. “I’m now a true Limmudnik,” Hovav told the *SA Jewish Report* via Zoom from London. “The first time I was invited to Limmud in the UK, I wasn’t sure what it was, but it looked very Jewish. I said I was honoured to be invited, but that I’m a heathen. I don’t practice Judaism. I didn’t have a Barmitzvah. They said speak about something connected to Judaism. That I could do, and it was really so lovely. Limmud has such energy, and is a wonderful bunch of knowledge-seekers.” Hovav has since presented at Limmud in the United Kingdom,

United States, Germany, Israel, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. This year is the hundredth anniversary of the death of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in 1922. I asked Hovav what it meant to have such a famous forebear. “It’s a privilege,” he said. “But I don’t believe in dynasties. I have met so many idiots descended from geniuses and the other way around. My great-grandfather was a prophet, a Zionist 20 years before Theodor Herzl, and proudly secular. A hundred years ago, there was no Jewish state, no language, no pride, no dignity. He made it all come true.” Ben-Yehuda faced an uphill battle against religious Jews who really didn’t want Hebrew to be a spoken language. He was spat at and stoned in the streets. But he pushed on with his dream. His descendant, one of Israel’s most famous restaurant critics, tells me he’s not a chef and never studied cookery. He learned to cook simple fare from his grandmother, growing up in Jerusalem. “She cooked peasant food. Jail food,” he chuckles. “Very basic traditional dishes.” In spite of

travelling around the world eating in three Michelin-star restaurants for his aptly named TV series *Captain Cook*, he prefers plain home-cooked meals. When he grew up, he said, “Israel was a socialist country. People didn’t eat in restaurants. It was impolite to enjoy life.” His parents – pioneering radio journalists – were avowed capitalists, however, who dined out a lot. Their love of the good things was passed down to their children. As a poor student, Hovav juggled multiple jobs, including teaching Arabic, being a bartender, cleaning houses, and giving private lessons. He grabbed the chance to be a bar critic for the local Jerusalem newspaper *Kol Ha’ir*, and moved to critiquing restaurants from there. Street food in Israel is excellent, safe, and clean, he said, and there’s much fusion cuisine. “Where else can you eat a French baguette with Thai chicken and a hot Ethiopian sauce? It’s a mixture. Sometimes it’s hideous. Sometimes it’s wonderful. Israel is the land of innovation – it can be adventurous and embarrassing. The



food scene is booming in Tel Aviv.” In the ethnic *mélange* that is Israel, he recommends trying a Moroccan doughnut called a *sfinj*, Brazilian food, and Yemenite pastries. He takes his overseas guests to the Tel Aviv spice market to sample everything from Iraqi to Georgian to Turkish delicacies, and drink Israeli alcohol. “In Tel Aviv, it’s hard to find kosher food and in Jerusalem, it’s hard to find non-kosher food,” Hovav said. He finds that though kosher food has come a long way, there are some

dishes it will just never pull off. “There are some wonderful kosher restaurants, but not at the high end. They’re the traditional ‘greasy spoons’”. In spite of producing television series about food for 20 years, Hovav hung up his apron about five years ago. I expected him to be a fan of cooking shows like *MasterChef*. He isn’t. “Cooking isn’t about competition. It’s about love.” He has resisted being a judge on these shows. “I don’t want to tell a grandmother that her food isn’t good enough,” he said. “I never loved TV,” he admits. “I’m a writer first. Since I stepped away, I feel there’s more oxygen in the air.” He now devotes time to lecturing and writing. Hovav is in London working on his latest book, which tries to find the truth behind the tales told by his grandparents through their passionate love letters to each other. “They are super interesting, very romantic. But a lot of it is myth.” It was a forbidden romance between an Ashkenazi aristocrat and a penniless Sephardi. Their own writing embellished these stories, and they were so casual about extra-marital affairs they both indulged in. I ask whether he thinks food can be the bridge between communities such as Israelis and Palestinians. He replies that organisations like “Chefs for Peace” have good intentions, “but the problems are bigger than just eating a good *shakshuka* together.” As a gay man, he says “once people know the people who are supposed to be the enemy, once they can sit and talk, they cannot really be enemies”. “I talk very frankly about life in Israel,” Hovav said. “Sometimes people in the diaspora are too idealistic, they want Israel to be something it no longer is.” He said all his friends have left Jerusalem, a beautiful but totally intolerant and conservative city. “Tel Aviv is amazing. It’s so much more fun than New York. It’s the heart of modern Israel.” His Limmud sessions are about Ben-Yehuda, hummus, and the contemporary Israeli family. “The food talks are fun, but I think the historical and literary lectures have more meat in them. You can get a glimpse of what Israel is really like.” Don’t miss out on these dollops of Gil Hovav.

Levick pays back fleeced elderly couple, but it’s not all

NICOLA MILTZ

Sequestered businessman Martin Levick has paid back most of the money he took from an elderly couple after he promised to invest their life savings and left them destitute. Levick, whose family were close friends of Peter Michels, 80, and his wife, Cheryl, 74, allegedly left them penniless after convincing them to hand over their money to him to invest. The couple, once well off, were forced to rely on food parcels from Yad Aharon & Michael, and money from the Chevrah Kadisha after allegedly investing their hard-earned life savings with Levick. According to the Beth Din, which became involved in the messy affair last year after being approached by the Michels and Levick for assistance in sorting out the matter, the money has been paid back. Levick, the former chief executive of investment house Genesis Capital, which is under business rescue, and former non-executive director of Genesis Capital Partners (renamed Calculus), was sequestered in June 2019. He was previously accused of fleecing investors and former colleagues and friends of hundreds of millions of rand. After months of fruitless attempts to try get their money back, the Michels turned to the Beth Din, the rabbinical court, for assistance. A settlement agreement was drawn up on 2 December 2021, which Levick failed to honour timeously. This led to the Beth Din granting

permission to the Michels to pursue criminal and civil proceedings against Levick after he failed on numerous occasions to abide by the settlement agreement to pay back the money. It’s rare for the Beth Din to do this, but it did so as a last resort when Levick continued to obfuscate and dodge holding up his end of the agreement. The *SA Jewish Report* reported in May this year how Levick had allegedly persuaded the Michels to invest their money with him with promises of large returns. After doing so, the Michels were left high and dry. The article went viral. Pressure increased from all sides, including from the couple’s attorney, Jeffrey Afriat, the director of Edelstein Farber Grobler Incorporated, who instituted criminal and civil proceedings. Add to that the pressure from the Beth Din, and Levick paid back most of the money in June. The Beth Din sent Levick a letter giving him until 30 June to pay back the money in full or risk all rabbonim being alerted to deny Levick future aliyas. This is the honour bestowed upon a congregant when called to the bimah to read a segment of the Torah. Within a few weeks of the publication of the *SA Jewish*

Report article and legal letters to the trustees of Levick’s insolvent estate, as well as to banks, Levick settled most of the money owed. Though Levick’s attorneys say he has settled the amount in full, the Michels’ attorneys claim that there’s still money owing. Afriat confirmed that “the majority of the capital amount in terms of the settlement agreement before the Beth Din was received by the Michels, however we will be proceeding to claim the outstanding balance and interest. A criminal complaint of fraud, forgery, and uttering



Cheryl and Peter Michels

was reported during June 2022 against Levick and his mother, which investigation is currently underway.” In October 2020, the Michels contacted Levick, whom they had known since he was a child, for advice about a potential business venture. “I also trusted Martin in light of the close relationship

which my family shared with his over the past 30 years or so,” said Cheryl. Levick allegedly advised the Michels rather to invest with him in his mother, Lois Cherie Levick’s, loan business because it would get them a better return, according to the Michels. The Michels allegedly invested their entire nest egg with Levick over the space of a year. Levick allegedly conducted transactions on his mother’s bank account which he wasn’t entitled to do as an insolvent. He was aware that he was forbidden from entering any agreements as an insolvent without the permission of the trustees of his insolvent estate. Though the Michels are relieved to have received a substantial amount back, the stress and aggravation of months of trying to get their money back has taken its toll. Peter Michels was this week again admitted to hospital suffering heart problems, a condition which the family believes has been exacerbated by the stress experienced ever since they entrusted Levick with their hard-earned life savings. Attorneys are busy with litigation arising out of Levick’s alleged fraudulent conduct during his tenure as chief executive of Genesis Capital. Levick didn’t respond to requests for comment.

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Shabbos rescue of baby girl inspires global festival film

NICOLA MILTZ

When newborn, abandoned baby Odala was miraculously picked up by a Johannesburg couple walking home one Shabbos night, it not only heralded the start of a beautiful new life for her and the unsuspecting couple, it also became the inspiration for a short film.

The story of Darryl and Natalie Mayers finding baby Odala inspired Lia Solomon, who was in matric at King David Linksfield last year, to make a short film to apply to film schools in the United States.

This film was selected to première at a global film festival.

Solomon's *Odala*, a short three-minute, 50 second film, was showcased at the recently held Garden Route International Film Festival (Griff) in Mossel Bay earlier this month.

"I was the only 19-year-old on the green carpet on opening night, it felt amazing," said Solomon, first-year film and media student at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Solomon's film is based on the Mayers of Waverley, Johannesburg, finding Odala after they heard what's believed to have been her first newborn cry. She was still warm to the touch, tiny at 2.1kg, and covered in afterbirth. This observant couple were smitten by this tiny baby girl, leading to them fostering her and other abandoned babies.

The story went viral, and *Odala* soon gave a face to the

countless abandoned babies in South Africa.

Solomon's movie, produced on a shoestring budget, taps into the heartbreaking adoption and abandoned-baby crisis in the country. The subject appealed to the festival's judges who showcase quality films that emphasise social issues, culture, the environment, and entertainment.

"It's such a powerful story that really needs to be told, one that could one day be made into a feature-length film," said Solomon, who made the film shortly before writing her prelim exams last year.

Solomon, whose family is friends with the Mayers, approached the couple for permission to highlight their story on film. "I met them, and they told me the story of Odala, which means 'blessing' in Chichewa, a name inspired by the Malawian doctor who tended to her in hospital," said Solomon.

The Mayers fostered Odala and another abandoned baby girl, Emi, throughout lockdown before they were each adopted by their new families.

"It was the most magical experience, filled with every emotion under the sun," said Natalie Mayers whose love for Odala grew every day, from the moment she first held her in her arms, never missing one feed while she spent 18 days in the neo-natal intensive care unit at Linksfield Hospital. She continues to visit Odala, travelling across town once a week to see and hug her. Emi now lives in Austria. The Mayers are fostering their third baby, a boy named Sibub, who has mild cerebral palsy and had fetal alcohol syndrome when he was placed with them.



Darryl and Natalie Mayers with Odala and Emi

"You should see him now," said Natalie. "He's amazing – so bright, capable, intelligent, a pure joy.

"Odala was my blessing, but she was also the start of a calling," said Natalie, 55, who is also the biological mother of three sons.

"Darryl and I were excited to hear about Lia's movie at the festival. It's an astonishing story that deserves to be told," she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Solomon wrote, produced, and directed *Odala*. It was filmed at various locations close to her, including the night scenes filmed outside her parent's complex in Sandton, in her beautician's studio made to resemble a hospital ward, and at her shul.

"My actors were all amazing and so supportive," said Solomon.

She cast her drama teacher, Chiara Atwell, as the mom; actor Brad Nowikow from the Fame Academy as

the dad; and Paulina Sebopa a friend of her domestic worker who kindly offered to act as the biological mom using her newborn baby boy.

"It was low budget. I secured the services of a co-producer, Steve Chalom, cinematographer Gavin Goodman, and editor Callaghn Robertson, and we managed to pull it off," she said.

When Solomon realised that attending American film school was unrealistic with South African rands, she applied to UCT for a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Media, and soon forgot about her little film, enjoying varsity life.

Her mother, Teri, however, encouraged her to take it further and enter *Odala* into a film festival, creating a huge learning curve for the teenager, who explored various online platforms that showcase films. She decided to enter the Griff festival and "never thought about it afterwards".

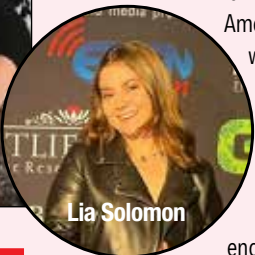
One day, she was scrolling through her emails and happened to see that her film had been selected.

"I couldn't believe it, I honestly wasn't expecting anything," she said.

She attended the festival with her mother for a few days, hosted by the Diaz Hotel from 12 to 16 July.

Odala was shown at the Revolving Shorts cinema, where it was played repeatedly along with other short films; and at the beach front Drive Thru cinema, which acted as a prelude to feature films shown.

"It was a thrill watching people's faces as they viewed my film, it felt incredible," Solomon said.



Outstanding calibre of Jewish achievers

As the *SA Jewish Report* opens nominations for Jewish Achiever Awards 2022, we recognise the incredible calibre of people who have won in the past and what it means to be a Jewish Achiever Awards winner.

The judges, all of whom are selected for their expertise in specific areas, deliberate extensively over the nominees, ensuring they pick only the best of the best.

In the past two years, our focus was partly on COVID-19-related winners, but now that the pandemic's hold has loosened, we're looking for achievers whose activities are unrelated to illness and restraint.

We're looking for winners who have, in spite of any hardships, made magic happen.

We have had winners like Business Icon 2020 Professor Michael Katz, whose achievements know no bounds, having created our present-day tax laws among other amazing feats. In that year, we gave the Lifetime Achiever Award to veteran struggle lawyer Sidney Kentridge, who has left an indelible mark on the judicial system of South Africa and the United Kingdom. He also just happened to defend Chief Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu along the way.

In 2019, we honoured Sir Mick Davis with the Lifetime Achiever Award. His impact in business, parastatals, politics, and helping Israel is renowned. In the same year, Discovery co-founder and Chief Executive Adrian Gore was awarded Absa Business Icon Award.

Advertising guru Mike Abel won the Absa Business Award in 2018 along with Professional Excellence Award winner Judge David Unterhalter, who has been



Professor Bonita Meyersfeld

scratching at a Constitutional Court judge role for a couple of years now. Human rights lawyer, Professor Bonita Meyersfeld, won the Europcar Women in Leadership Award the same year.

In 2018, Investec founder and business guru Stephen Koseff won the Absa Business Icon Award, with theatre and entertainment champion Hazel Feldman winning the Arts, Sports, Science, and Culture Award, and international resort and business magnate Sol Kerzner taking home Lifetime Achiever.

We have also had the calibre of Woolworths' Simon Susman winning the Lifetime Achiever Award in 2017, and Minister Pravin Gordhan taking the Humanitarian Award that year.

Esteemed High Court Judge Sharise Weiner won the Europcar Women in Leadership Award in 2016 with veteran human rights lawyer George Bizos winning the Humanitarian Award in the same year.

We have also honoured cartoonist Dov Fedler as Arts, Sports, Science, and Culture Award winner in 2015 and Issie Kirsh as a Lifetime Achiever. In the same year, we awarded then Public Protector Thuli Madonsela the Humanitarian Award and Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre Director Tali Nates the Community Service Award.

Prior to that, retired judge and veteran African National Congress activist Albie Sachs won Lifetime Achiever (in 2009) and South African music Icon Johnny Clegg won an Arts Award. Others went to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Gill Marcus, and President Nelson Mandela.

Suffice to say, whoever wins this year is bound to be phenomenal.

So, look around you, and nominate now.

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Much “hoo-ha” about mixed prayer

As much as I love my wife, I’m very happy to not sit next to her at shul. And as much as I might like other people’s wives (as people), I’m equally content to not sit with them at prayer time either. It’s bad enough that I can feel my own wife’s judgement burning at the back of my neck when my behaviour starts to stray during services, I can’t imagine being told to keep the noise down by people I’m not married to.

Which makes it difficult for me to understand the “hoo-ha” that has continued to plague the egalitarian section at the Western Wall.

The situation is so bad that this week, the Israeli government chose to ban any separations from being brought into the so-called mixed section at the Kotel. This followed an incident in which a few ultra-Orthodox members of the public attacked an American group who were celebrating Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs in blended company.

The behaviour of those objecting was objectionable. In the name of G-d Himself, they blew whistles and their noses to prevent the service from continuing. Some of them were no older than children themselves, which speaks volumes about lack of parenting. Considering their actions, perhaps praying under their mother’s watchful eye might have been just what they needed.

Several years ago, when this issue reared its traditional ugly head, I wrote an article for *The Times of Israel* in which I suggested that we have a greater chance of encouraging a person to be Shabbat observant by inviting them to dinner than by throwing stones at them. To my mind, if someone is allowed to talk to G-d in a way they’re comfortable with at the Western Wall, there’s a greater chance that conversations can be had and minds

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



and hearts can be changed. Blowing whistles in their ears and ripping up their prayer books is unlikely to result in anything positive.

The South African community, while wholly imperfect, is an excellent example of this. For years, traditional self-identifying Orthodox Jews drove to shul on Friday night. For the most part, the rabbis chose to not focus on this but rather to reinforce the positives of them being in shul rather than anywhere else. This resulted in generations of Jews who might not have attended synagogue being comfortable and familiar with it, rather than finding it alien.

This is partly the reason that South African Jewry has experienced a massive return to observant Judaism. Had people been insulted and demeaned, the result would probably have been very different.

The issue of a *mechitza* isn’t without emotional complexity. Even in Orthodox synagogues, the separation often represents areas of conflict and flashpoints that illustrate the tensions that exist in the community. And whereas once again South Africa hasn’t been forced to confront these challenges as other communities around the world have, they still need to be handled with empathy and sensitivity.

And with constant adherence to what G-d would expect from us.

Lessons of AMIA bombing

The terrorist bombing of the AMIA Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires in July 1994 was a watershed moment in modern Jewish history. The atrocity, in which 85 people were killed and more than 300 injured, brought home to diaspora Jewry how vulnerable they were to similar attacks and the urgent need for Jewish communities worldwide to adopt appropriate security measures. Since then, securing Jewish installations and following sensible safety protocols at community events has become a major focus of the global Jewish leadership.

On Tuesday 26 July, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Council partnered with the Argentine embassy in commemorating the 28th anniversary of the AMIA bombing at Beyachad. Board representatives have taken part in previous such memorial events in South Africa and in Argentina itself, but this was the first time the local Jewish community was commemorating the tragedy on its own behalf and on its own premises.

Participants were addressed by Argentine Ambassador Claudio Paladino, who spoke about what had been done by succeeding governments to bring to justice the perpetrators of what remains to date the worst terrorist attack on Argentinian soil. We were further fortunate to have a survivor of the attack, Anita Weinstein, relate via a live link her memories of that traumatic day. In addition to the victims of the 1994 bombing, those who died in a terrorist attack on the Israel embassy in Buenos Aires two years previously were also remembered.

In his welcome message, SAJBD Gauteng Council Chairperson Harold Jacobs stressed that what happened in Buenos Aires could have happened anywhere – in New York, London, Sydney, or

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Johannesburg. Taking this lesson to heart, diaspora Jewry have since taken extensive steps to ensure that appropriate security measures are in place at Jewish communal installations and community events. Jacobs took the opportunity to pay tribute to the Community Security Organisation, many of whose members were present, for having so admirably performed this essential function over the past 25 years and more.

AMIA alerted world Jewry to the necessity of being continually vigilant against possible terrorist attacks and of securing itself as much as possible against this. Jacobs pointed to another critical lesson that we – and indeed the civilised world as a whole – must take from what happened in Buenos Aires, which is the urgent need for all of us to take a stand against extremist ideology and its adherents wherever they surface. In the course of relating her memories, Weinstein commented how much hatred people must feel in order to carry out a mass murder of innocents, even (as was the case with AMIA) at the cost of their own lives. Indeed, for terrorist atrocities to occur, it’s first necessary for those who perpetrate them to be radicalised, indoctrinated, and taught to hate, to the extent that their chosen victims are regarded as legitimate targets rather than as fellow human beings. To defeat these evil ideologies, it’s our abiding duty to build a culture of tolerance and respect for the sanctity of human life and to inculcate these values into our own and future generations.

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

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

WIZO wheelchairs give hope to disabled on Mandela Day

WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) and the South African Friends of Israel joined forces to make a difference to the lives of children on Mandela Day, 18 July, by donating eight ergonomically designed wheelchairs.

The children’s wheelchairs, designed by Wheelchairs of Hope in Israel, are lightweight, brightly-coloured, and robust enough to handle urban and rural terrain. They will make a huge difference in the children’s daily activities, creating lifelong impact.

At the Credo Mutwa Village in Soweto, WIZO representatives met powerful women who have embraced the task of taking care of children with disabilities with love, patience, and respect. Three children received new wheelchairs that will change their lives and the lives of their primary caregivers by giving them greater freedom of movement.

Five children at Takalani Home for the Mentally Handicapped in Soweto also tried out their new wheelchairs to the smiles and delight of their caregivers. Everyone was excited as they celebrated the new wheelchairs and enjoyed a slice of cake specially made for Mandela Day.



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Sunday 31 July

- Yeshiva College hosts Kfar Second Hand Book Sale in the primary school hall. Time: 11:00 to 14:00. Contact: j.swartz@yeshivacollege.co.za
- The Chevrah Kadisha presents webinar The Brain Gain. Time: 19:30. Contact: talyab@jhbchev.co.za

Monday 1 August

- Union of Jewish Women presents Daphne Kuhn – Theatre on the Square “To be or not to be”. Time: 10:00. Entry: R40. Contact: info@ujw.co.za or 011 648 1053

Tuesday 2 August

- ORT SA presents Time To Think Experiential

Workshop 1 - 4 Building Blocks with Sibylle Sharon. Time: 09:00 to 10:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Wednesday 3 August

- The South Africa Zionist Federation presents Sam Grundwerg on Keren Hayesod’s mission to rescue Ukrainian Jews. Time: 19:00. Contact: 072 084 2960 or admin@sazf.org
- ORT SA presents Business Bootcamp – Strategy That Works with Ian Mann. Time: 10:00 to 11:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Thursday 4 August

- ORT SA presents Business Bootcamp – Building Tools for EQ (Part 1) with

WHAT'S ON

Dr Karina de Bruin. Time: 09:00 to 10:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Sunday 7 August

- Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society host R30 book sale at Genesis Centre. Time: 09:00 to 14:00. Contact: 011 485 5232 or gloria@jwbs.co.za

Letters

WRITING ON WALL FOR SHULS

Though there’s great admiration and fanfare about writing a new Torah in the community, there’s little or no concern about the continued demise of shuls in Johannesburg.

We gain one new Torah for healing

a community from a “plague”, and suffer eternal damnation as a people for destroying shuls by creating myriad shtiebels or allowing shuls to close, especially during the Three Weeks.

– Michael Lubowitz , Johannesburg

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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.

Visit webtickets.co.za to book your seat now!

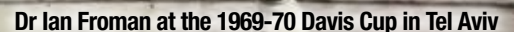
SAUL KAMIONSKY

"There were also a lot of Israel's top tennis players over the years, people who donated money and helped the project financially," he says. "It was a special occasion. You seldom bring together groups who don't really know each other because some are in their 80s, some in their 50s, and some in

"Tennis is an educational sport because whether you are playing competitively or socially, you meet people from all backgrounds irrespective of their finances or religion," says Froman. "I started with this in mind. I was a dentist by profession. I gave it up for a sabbatical year, but I never went back to dentistry. My tennis project just took off from there. Fundraising became a big aspect of it. In life, everything is timing."

"Wimbledon was exciting because I had just turned 18 and never thought of playing at Wimbledon. It was an experience, second to none," says Froman.

Froman and his wife made aliya in 1964, and have lived in Israel ever since.



"I met a lot of people, and the achievement of the tennis centres together with a lot of *hakavod*, have made me a contented man in my latter years," he says.

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ARTS, SPORTS, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE AWARD

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in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris

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