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■ Volume 26 – Number 30 ■ 11 August 2022 ■ 14 Av 5782

South African Jewish Report

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SA's anti-Israel hypocrisy held to account

TALI FEINBERG

"Massacre, carnage, butchering, and ethnic cleansing," were just some of the ways that the African National Congress (ANC) described Israel's defensive actions in Gaza over the weekend. This was while more than 1 100 missiles were launched into Israel by the Gaza-based terror group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), over the weekend. Many of these missiles (about 200 of them) fell short of the Gaza border, killing Palestinians in Gaza.

The ANC's statement came shortly after equally extreme remarks from the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), which said that "the killing of children by the Israeli government must urgently be addressed".

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor's remarks clearly insinuated that Israel was deliberately targeting youth, in spite of the fact that it was rockets launched from Gaza that killed Palestinian children.

This was confirmed by Prime Minister Yair Lapid's spokesperson, Keren Hajioff, on 6 August. "Tonight, Islamic Jihad terrorists in Gaza fired a rocket towards Israeli children but ended up killing Gazan children instead." According to media reports, 16 Palestinians lost their lives because 200 PIJ missiles fell within Gaza over the weekend.

"We've become all too used to gross displays of hypocrisy on the part of Dirco, but with this latest demonstration, Minister Pandor has sunk to a new low," says Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. "She has shown one set of standards for the Jewish State and another for the rest of the world. It makes a mockery of South Africa's

pretensions to being a moral voice on the global stage.

"Six months and tens of thousands of civilian deaths later, we're still waiting for Dirco to condemn Russia's barbaric war of aggression against the Ukrainian people," Kahn says.

"By comparison, within hours of clashes breaking out on the Israel-Gaza border, Pandor rushed to issue yet another virulent denunciation of the Jewish State.

"South Africa evidently has no problem with most countries defending themselves against violent Islamist extremism. In fact, South African troops have been fighting that very scourge just across our border in Mozambique. When it comes to Israel defending its citizens against terror by the PIJ, however, it appears as though our minister has little sympathy for Jewish lives.

"One waited in vain for our government to express condolences when dozens of Israelis were killed or injured in a wave of terrorist attacks earlier this year. As always, all expressions of outrage were reserved solely for condemning Israeli acts of retaliation."

Regarding the ANC's statement, Kahn says, "It's regrettable that the ANC, with his proud history of peace building and reconciliation, has betrayed these principles. The hypocrisy and double standards have destroyed the credibility and integrity it once upheld. By singling out of the Jewish State for its hate and venom, it makes a mockery of these values. This bizarre rant distresses not just the Jewish community, but all South Africans who oppose hate."

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) also released a strong statement in response to Pandor's words on Gaza. "The SAZF notes that the South African government has jumped on the opportunity

Photo: Majidi Fathi/NurPhoto via Getty Images



A salvo of rockets is fired from Gaza City towards Israel, 7 August 2022

to bash Israel for doing what any responsible country would do to protect its citizens against senseless terror and violence," said SAZF spokesperson Rolene Marks.

"PIJ, an Iranian proxy operating in Gaza and the West Bank, has been responsible for horrific terror attacks and murder of hundreds of innocent Israeli citizens. PIJ has been designated a terrorist organisation by the United States, European Union, Japan, United Kingdom, and others. Israel has taken action to prevent PIJ from carrying out further barbarous acts.

"Israel has a moral obligation to protect Israeli citizens," said Marks. "Instead, the South African government is misconstruing the situation so as to signal to anti-Western sentiments that place our country at odds with the modern world. Not one word has been said by South Africa to condemn the double war crimes PIJ commits each time it fires rockets and mortars from civilian areas in Gaza towards civilians in Israel. We call on

the South African government to clarify why it's taking the side of an international pariah organisation responsible for the killings of innocents," she said.

The SAZF also condemned the ANC statement. "The extent to which the ANC has recklessly ignored the key factors of the recent conflict cannot be overstated. It refuses to consider the danger in which PIJ has placed civilians during attacks by selecting firing locations in densely populated urban areas. Israel, on the other hand, has gone far beyond the expectations of a modern military to reduce civilian casualties. This includes evacuating buildings, aborting strikes on PIJ leadership, and utilising Israel's Iron Dome to protect urban areas.

"The ruling party ignores its laundry list of domestic failures. Instead, the ANC shifts the focus to a conflict which has no impact on the lives of South Africans. Where Egypt, a fellow country in Africa, acted to broker a ceasefire and save lives, the ANC government has

simply fanned the flames of hate. The ANC's deplorable hypocrisy should be condemned in the strongest possible terms."

"It seems as though most of the South African state at institutional level has largely abandoned any effort to be even remotely even-handed on Israel," says local political analyst Daniel Silke. "It's possible that much of this is pre-December ANC conference bluster in which Israel provides a useful base to rally the ANC troops. But at the moment, South Africa isn't attempting to look more critically at events on all sides."

Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, says, "Dirco seems to be trapped in a time warp. The ANC is in an existential crisis and all it can do is cling to the memory of the anti-apartheid struggle. If it really wants to make a difference, it should be seen to be engaging objectively, neutrally, and dispassionately with both sides."

From one generation to another

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ChevrahKadisha

Late popstar Olivia Newton-John – the granddaughter of Jewish Nobel laureate

JACKIE HAJDENBERG – JTA

Olivia Newton-John, the iconic pop singer of the 1970s and 1980s, died at her home in Southern California on Monday of the breast cancer she had battled for three decades. She was 73.

Newton-John was most famous for her starring role as Sandy Olsson, alongside John Travolta's Danny Zuko, in the 1978 musical *Grease*, and as the singer of the 1982 hit song *Physical*.

Newton-John was born in Cambridge, England, to Brinley Newton-John and Irene Born, the daughter of Max Born, a Jewish Nobel laureate and one of the founders of quantum mechanics. Born, who was a friend of Albert Einstein, moved to England after being suspended from his position at a German university by the Nazi regime, probably saving his life. There, his wife worked to help Jewish refugee women find employment.

"My mother was very proud of her Jewish heritage and talked about it a lot," Newton-John told an Israeli news network three years ago. "It's interesting, some of my closest girlfriends are Jewish."

Newton-John had built a prolific and historic career as a pop singer over the decades, performing at Eurovision the year that ABBA won for *Waterloo*, earning an Oscar nomination for her performance in one of the most successful movie musicals of all time, headlining her own Las Vegas show and releasing chart-topping pop hits.

In 1992, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and became an advocate for cancer research. Newton-John

went into remission for 21 years, but the cancer returned in 2013 and again in 2017. In a 2017 interview with NBC's *Today Show*, she revealed that John Travolta had remained a long-time friend and had been supporting her throughout her ordeal with cancer.

Over the past two years, the song *Hopelessly Devoted To You*, which was sung by Newton-John in *Grease* and hit the top of the Billboard Hot 100 when it was released, regained popularity on TikTok with original covers and talk-box remixes.

Newton-John is survived by her husband, John Easterling, and her daughter from her first marriage, Chloe Lattanzi.



Olivia Newton-John

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Torah Thought From baseless hatred to groundless love

Tisha B'Av is a day that the Jewish Amora'im attributed to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem as punishment from G-d for the baseless hatred that pervaded Jewish society at the time. Why aren't we learning from our own history?

The day commemorates the destruction of our first Temple in the year 586 BCE. Sadly, it also marks the day, about 600 years later in the year 70 CE, when Roman legions pushed through the crumbling defences of Jerusalem to desecrate and destroy the rebuilt Second Temple as they crushed a rebellion that shook the heart of the empire and drove our people into exile.

Most Jews commemorate Tisha B'Av by reading the biblical book of Lamentations, which places responsibility for our catastrophe squarely on our own shoulders. Its essential message is that we have a covenant with G-d, who expects us to create a just, caring, and compassionate society, but we didn't. Consumed by jealousy and baseless hatred for others, we neglected the poor and needy, failed to treat the elderly with dignity and respect, and spurned opportunities to make newcomers feel welcome in our midst.

The destruction of the Temple was one of the watershed moments in Jewish history – the end of one age and the beginning of another. Biblical Judaism effectively ended then because without the Temple, the

sacrificial cult and everything that went with it was no longer possible. Rabbinic Judaism – the dominant form of Judaism in the world today – hadn't yet been born. That would happen in the following months, as Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai moved his students to the academy at Yavneh.

With the destruction of the Temple, G-d moved us into a new period of history, one in which our sacrifices would be made of prayer and song rather than of animal gore.

Sinat chinam means groundless hatred. The verb *soneh* means "to hate", as in the command *lo tisnah at ahicha blevavecha* (don't hate your brother in your heart) – Leviticus 19:17.

The Talmud already knew of the phenomenon of *sinat chinam*, and taught us about its destructive effect on Jewish life.

Rabbi Abraham Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel, famously wrote that if the Second Temple was destroyed and the world with us due to baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild the Third Temple

Rabbi Julia Margolis – Beit Luria Progressive Shul

ourselves and the world with us with baseless love – *ahavat chinam*.

I don't believe in the need for the Temple in Jerusalem and for bringing back sacrifices, but I believe in *ahavat chinam* (causeless love) that can allow us to achieve anything we would like, we just need to open our eyes and hearts.

Paul McCartney and John Lennon summarised this idea in beautiful lyrics from 1967:

There's nothing you can do that can't be done
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung
Nothing you can say but you can learn how to play the game
It's easy
 וְצַר יְהוָה (May it be G-d's will.)

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GENT'S SPECIAL R70

GREMLIN: In the story, "Finding unknown family 70 years on", SA Jewish Report 4 August 2022, we captioned a photograph as having been taken on a Shabbos, when it wasn't. We apologise for any embarrassment caused. – Editor

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 Thursday night / Friday is the 15th of Av - one of the happiest days in Jewish history. The Talmud considers this day the greatest festival of the year, as its essence represents the future redemption, which signifies the rebirth after destruction. On this day, marking the onset of the grape harvest, the daughters of Jerusalem would borrow linen garments, in order not to embarrass others who did not have beautiful clothing, and dance in the vineyards to find prospective grooms.

Community mourns passing of humble hero

NICOLA MILTZ

A community hero who had been in a coma for three years after tragically being stung by bees was this week laid to rest.

Father of two, Shaun Karpelowsky, 48, a Community Security Organisation (CSO) stalwart, was remembered for his passion for protecting the lives of the community and putting others first.

"No, I haven't lost you. Not at all. Not even close," wrote his devoted wife, Liora, 44 on Monday, 8 August, bringing to a close three years of life interrupted as she tended to his needs.

With their family life suspended in a time warp of perpetual hope and heartache, she said, "You're always right here. You'll always live in the space above my rib cage, where it still beats your name."

"Shaun was totally passionate and committed to his family, friends, and the community," said Rabbi Eitan Ash. He was an intensely private man, which belied the hundreds of mourners who converged on West Park Cemetery to pay tribute to him, testament to the admiration in which he was held and his understated greatness.

"He spent hours night and day protecting the lives of the community," said Ash, commenting that Karpelowsky inspired the longest running rotating *tehillim* group and dozens of charity and *chesed* events around the world, all in his name.

On 17 July 2019, Karpelowsky, a plumber specialising in water leaks, was stung by a few bees while attending to a leak-detection job in Glenhazel, Johannesburg. Highly allergic, the bees sent a surge of life-threatening poison through his strapping body, instantly causing anaphylactic shock, resulting in him collapsing a few seconds after.

News of this situation sent shock waves through communal emergency personnel, who reacted with lightning speed.

Within minutes, the very men and women he had worked alongside at the CSO and Ezra, the medical response team of the CSO, as well as paramedics from Hatzolah, descended on the Corbel Crescent home to revive their hero and friend – someone they called a brother.

Paramedics and doctors worked tirelessly to save his life, but devastatingly, he never regained full consciousness.

Liora described what happened three years ago as like having "the rug pulled out from under our feet".

On the third anniversary of the incident, three weeks before his passing, she wrote a message on Facebook acknowledging the support and care she had received and explaining that the damage to her husband's brain from lack of oxygen was severe.

He wasn't able to see or hear or recognise the sound of her voice or attach meaning to the gentle touch of her hand, she said. "I'm comforted to know that Shaun doesn't know, think, or feel. It would be even more devastating if he did."

"Sometimes, it feels like he's looking right at me, even though I know he's not. He's here but he's not."

For three years, she said, it felt as if there was a giant



Shaun and Liora Karpelowsky with their children, Ashira and Idan

wrecking ball hanging over her shoulder, waiting.

In this "space of uncertainty" she endeavoured not to "borrow sorrow from tomorrow". Instead, she hoped, while they waited "in that difficult space that is everyday life, we are able to try to actually live, not just survive. That we are able to try and find the beauty, gratitude, and joy in the smallest of things."

Nicknamed "Chopper" by his close friends, Karpelowsky was described this week as a man who was "humble to his core" and "fiercely unassuming".

He wasn't a man of many words, but his actions spoke volumes, friends said, and he never needed recognition or praise.

"He had a passion for protecting people," said family

friend and long-time running partner, Steve Crouse, who described Karpelowsky as an avid outdoor enthusiast.

"He loved camping and being fit and healthy, and took part in multiday backpacking hikes and warrior races which included strength and endurance events. He was the strongest man I knew," Crouse said.

He recalls one scary time when Karpelowsky was stung by a bee six years ago in the Cederberg mountains.

"We were in the middle of nowhere. It was day three of a six-day hike when a group of us stopped for a break at a wine farm. We had been in the wilderness on rations, so welcomed a cold beer. There was a bee in the neck of the bottle which stung him. I jabbed him in his leg with his epipen," he said.

Then followed a frantic drive through mountainous roads to get him to the nearest hospital in Clanwilliam while Karpelowsky lay unconscious in the back of the vehicle.

"That's when I realised how allergic he was," Crouse said.

Karpelowsky had a wide circle of friends, many of whom go back to their Betar days where he met Liora, becoming teenage sweethearts.

Darryl Oberstein, a lifelong friend since nursery school, said Karpelowsky loved to sing and had a beautiful voice.

"I have the best memories listening to him play guitar around the Betar camp fire. That's where he lured Liora with his voice and charm," he said.

"He had a calling to protect. I believe he didn't want to leave his family, friends, and community behind, and on a deeper level, that's why he held on so tightly," he said.

Close friend Mark Riesnik, who worked with him at the CSO, said, "He was the true definition of a friend, a mensch, and what it means to be a CSO protector."

Countless charity events and prayer sessions in his name have been held since the incident. A close group of friends continued putting tefillin on him while he lay unconscious until his last breath.

"One would think that his ability to affect people's lives would have ended with him in a coma, but remarkably, even like that, Shaun was still able to transform people's lives," said Ash.

Karpelowsky is survived by his wife, Liora, children Idan, 16, and Ashira, 14, his parents, Lionel and Rhona, and sister, Melanie Greenstein, all their close family, and friends.

Forty years and going strong

NICOLA MILTZ

Few shuls in South Africa can celebrate 40 years with the same rabbi and rebbetzin. Chabad of Sandton is one of them, with Rabbi Yossie and Rebbetzin Raisy Hecht at the helm.

The Hecht's never-say-die, indomitable spirit has kept this small, tightly-knit community afloat for four remarkable decades of extraordinarily good times and some bad.

"Most shuls see 40 years as a time to sit back and relax, but at Chabad of Sandton, we see it as a springboard for new things," said Hecht, 70.

"We're up against crazy odds: people are leaving the country, the community is dwindling, worldwide shul attendance is down, but Chabad of Sandton is committed to maintaining and growing the shul," he said.

In spite of being relatively small, it's also the only Chabad in Johannesburg that's a community centre with a shul, a nursery school, a *mikvah*, and a function hall.

It also gets *minyanim* twice a day, come rain or shine, where Hecht arrives reliably on time to greet at least 15 to 20 congregants.

The sound of children's laughter and strollers piled up at the entrance to the shul on a Shabbos morning

are signs that the shul is resuming a post-pandemic vibrancy. It has recently created a special changing and feeding room for mothers to cater for the growing young community.

The rabbinical couple met in New York in 1975. Raisy, now 65, was an 18-year-old frum teenager from Golders Green in London – the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. The rabbi, five years her senior, was a shy boy from Brooklyn, New York. He spent time at 770 Eastern Parkway, the iconic centre of the world headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. There, he learnt Torah in the presence of the revered Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Hecht's late father was the Rebbe's assistant and translator for 45 years.

Theirs was a *shidduch* followed by a short courtship and a blessing from the Rebbe himself.

They moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where the young couple took up the position as the first Orthodox spiritual leaders, running a Chabad House on campus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After four years and three children, they decided it was time to move to a place that would ensure a Jewish education for their growing family.

With the Rebbe's blessing, they went to South Africa.

With guts, two children, and a six-month-old baby, Raisy, 22, and the rabbi, 27, arrived in Johannesburg



Rabbi Yossie Hecht receiving a new Torah for the Chabad of Sandton in 1993

during the turbulent 1980s. It didn't deter them.

After two years at Chabad of Yeoville, they chose to venture out to Sandton, where they heard about young couples wanting to start a community.

An ordinary-looking house in Aberfeldy Avenue in Morningside Manor caught their eye because it had a double garage converted into a dance studio with windows and a finished floor.

Continued on page 10>>

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Farewell to the sensei who inspired generations of warriors

TALI FEINBERG

When judo grandmaster Michael "Mickey" Davidow passed away on 8 August 2022, he left a legacy as a pioneer of martial arts in South Africa and generations of students, who in turn went on to make an impact around the world.

"Grandmaster Mickey Davidow, 10th Dan, was a legend who transformed martial arts and combatives in South Africa, and was a pioneer of self-defence," said the Combat Arts Institute of Australia, paying tribute to his global reach. "Grandmaster Davidow's impact on the way we practice and teach cannot be understated."

Davidow was an all-rounder and expert in his field. He was known for saying "learn everything but master one thing". He achieved excellence in judo, jiu-jitsu, Fanchento, Aikido, Kung Fu, Go-Ju karate, and Krav Maga.

It all started with humble beginnings in South Africa. "Mickey, short for Michael, grew up in Regents Park, a tough Johannesburg southern suburb, in the late 1930s and 1940s," says Mark Finkelstein, who was taught by Davidow from the age of five.

"His parents, who came to South Africa from Ponevezh in Lithuania, kept a kosher home for Mickey and his sisters. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, there was a strong following of various martial arts in Jewish communities around the world. Due to threats from Nazi sympathisers and antisemites in South Africa, being young and Jewish in Johannesburg in the 1940s made learning martial arts more of an urgent need rather than a sport."

So at the age of nine, "Mickey took up boxing in a gym run by a Mr Coetzee. He recalls settling antisemitic taunts with his fists at Regents Park School. At 13, he took up wrestling and, at 16, he joined the jiu-jitsu club under a Brigadier Morris. At 18, Mickey took up judo and soon after he started, he was told by his instructor that he would never amount to much in the martial arts.

"But he persevered and ultimately found mentors in Norman Robinson, one of the country's judo and karate greats, and his father, Professor Jack Robinson, who is considered the father of martial arts in South Africa," says Finkelstein.

Davidow went on to win a number of awards, and in 1955, he began teaching judo in the Berea Shul hall. In 1960, he established his first dojo, the Johannesburg Amateur Judo Club. "A number of remarkable judokas emerged from his clubs – one being Solly Margolis, who participated in the Maccabi Games and the other being Dennis Hanover, who became the president of the Israeli Martial Arts Federation," says Finkelstein. "It was because of the joint initiative of Mickey and Dennis that judo became a Maccabi sport in the 1960s.

"It's fair to say that Mickey's impact in my life has been significant," says South African expatriate Dr Gavriel Schneider, who

has had an extensive career in martial arts, bodyguarding, security, education, and crime prevention.

"Mickey trained my two main teachers, Dennis Hanover and Vernon Rosenberg," says Schneider from Brisbane, where he lives. "He was always willing to share, guide, and assist, helping me find my first teaching venue in Glenhazel. He was guest of honour at so many events, gradings and activities, and was always humble and appreciative.

20, I switched to karate, but kept in contact with Mickey, even teaching karate in his dojo. His loss to the martial arts community is immense."

Finkelstein was also one of his many students. "At the first class, I was quickly pinned down by a more skilled opponent. To release myself, I punched the boy in the face. When my mother came to fetch me from the class, Mickey told her that I had the right amount of aggression, but it would be best if I came back when I was slightly older!"

He returned a year later, "and in the more than 50 years since, Mickey has been my sensei in a number of martial arts, as well as a mentor. If you're Jewish and participated in martial arts in Johannesburg from the mid-1950s until about 10 years ago, Mickey or one of his disciples is likely to have been a sensei of yours."

Along with judo clubs in Berea and Glenhazel, Davidow also opened dojos in Savoy, Kensington and Doornfontein. He also helped the Community Security Organisation train its first protectors 25 years ago.

Davidow was also a Grandmaster of Fanchento – a form of jiu-jitsu known as "the way of the cobra". "Grandmaster Edward Liang was a student of Bruce Lee, and founded Fanchento using Lee's principle:

'Absorb what is useful and reject that which is useless,'" said Davidow in an article for *Jewish Life* magazine. Davidow learned from Liang himself, and, starting from his garage in Joburg in the 1960s, developed the art in South Africa.

The Fanchento organisation describes Davidow as playing a pivotal role in its history. "In the history of all fields there are giants that stand out as having revolutionised their art. In martial arts such figures include Jigoro Kano, the Japanese educator who founded judo. Kano's art was passed down to Mickey Davidow primarily from Jack Robinson and Msumoro Saganji.

"Mickey always put his students first," says Finkelstein. "The Davidow dojo was the place to feel good about life, yourself, and your skills as a fighter. Above all, Mickey wanted us to enjoy ourselves.

"Although he made only a modest living from teaching judo, he never turned a student away on financial grounds." Now a sensei of martial arts himself, Finkelstein has "attempted to follow Mickey's manner of encouraging pupils in a kind and calm way.

"Mickey taught us more than just the martial arts," Finkelstein says. "Through his example, we learned humility, bravery, kindness, love and *derech erez*. Above all, Mickey always strongly believed that to truly grasp the art of self-defence, you must abandon your prejudices, your likes or dislikes of the other arts, and you must extract the best from them all. In your humility, you will find the consummate warrior."

• Some information in this story is from an article by Mark Finkelstein in *Soul Sport*.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Mickey Davidow with two of his pupils

All of my students have benefited from Mickey's legacy."

South African karate icon Shihan Malcolm Dorfman describes Davidow as "the Jewish judo icon of South Africa".

"In my teenage years – my judo era – Mickey was a household name in the Jewish community," he says. "So many Jewish champions emanated from his dojo. Around

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Irony in Iran: Mandla Mandela gets human rights award

TALI FEINBERG

The Mandela name is associated with human rights, so it would make sense that awarding the late president's grandson an award would be reason to celebrate. However, Mandla Mandela went to Tehran, Iran, at the beginning of this month to receive the Islamic Human Rights Award from a country that, according to Amnesty International (AI), has an appalling human rights record.

Experts say it indicates growing closeness between Iran and South Africa.

"We bring fraternal greetings from the people of South Africa to the Iranian people. The ties that bind us are deep and historic," Mandela said in his acceptance speech. He invoked his grandfather's legacy of human rights activism. This in a country where, according to

AI, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, and intersex people and ethnic and religious minorities face discrimination and violence.

Iranian legislation undermines sexual and reproductive rights, the right to freedom of religion and belief, and access to the internet, AI says. Torture and other ill-treatment remains widespread. Judicial punishment of flogging, amputation, and blinding is imposed. The death penalty is used widely, including as a weapon of repression. Executions are carried out after unfair trials.

Mandela made no mention of any of this. Instead, he said, "Today, we witness the prevailing hypocrisy in the world, the unfolding of great tragedies, genocide, and human displacement on an unprecedented scale in the Middle East as if there's no international law protecting human rights, and as if there are different sets of rules for

some than for others."

He then invoked the Palestinian cause. Iran backs terror groups like Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hezbollah, which carry out terror attacks against Israelis and want the Jewish state obliterated. After Israel targeted PIJ militants in Gaza in early August, Iran said it would "pay a heavy price" and that the country wanted to

"eradicate Israel from the map and the face of the earth".

"We join the leadership and people of Iran in standing with the oppressed people of Palestine until freedom dawns," said Mandela. "On behalf of all who support the struggle for a free Palestine and especially the brave and courageous men, women, and children of Palestine, I humbly accept this prize."

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian hailed Mandela's efforts to strengthen Iran-South Africa co-operation and his support for the Palestinians.

Local political analyst Daniel Silke says the visit symbolises South Africa's growing closeness to Iran, even though it wasn't an official trip. "By the look of it, much of South Africa's foreign policy, whether defined through Dirco [the department of international relations and co-operation] or Mandla Mandela, now looks as though it's firmly within the grasp of the pro-Iranian, heavily-pro-Palestinian faction.

"South Africa increasingly looks as though she's distancing herself from the Saudi Arabian, more Gulf-oriented view, and pursuing much more of an Iranian view, because ultimately, those are the two big competing interesting the Middle East. Whether it's on issues relating to Israel or even on regional issues, South Africa may see herself more closely aligned to the Iranians. It's a choice that seems to have been made, although South Africa will deny it," Silke says.



Mandla Mandela with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian

Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, says, "Mandla Mandela has been a leading figure in BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement], and his visit to Iran is a logical outcome of his ideological persuasions."

Iran uses the Palestinian cause as "a political football" that's "useful in terms of its foreign policy goals", Solomon says.

"Iran is a pariah state in the international community and a designated state sponsor of terrorism that consistently ranks as one of the world's worst human rights abusers," says Rolene Marks, the spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation.

"Its record on antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, is well documented. Iran is also the key sponsor of PIJ, against whom the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] recently conducted a military operation in Gaza. Mandla Mandela's loyalty to Iran is especially horrific given the context of PIJ's campaign of terror over the weekend, with hundreds of rockets raining over civilian areas in Israel and fired from civilian areas in Gaza."

"Mandla Mandela's obsession with demonising Israel and perpetuating the BDS antisemitic narrative makes him irrelevant," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies national director Wendy Kahn.

Anglican Church mellows stance on Israel

TALI FEINBERG

The Anglican Church made a conciliatory statement regarding Israel this week following outwardly antagonistic statements made by the organisation in the recent past.

In 2019, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) voted to support "well-directed BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] actions" against Israel. And in 2021, Anglican Church Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba described the situation in the Middle East as "evil", and placed all the blame on Israel.

The statement, from the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, sponsored by Archbishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Naoum, was released at the Anglican Church's pivotal international conference (the Lambeth Conference) on 7 August.

"In our commitment to the common good of all ethnic and religious communities in Israel, and to those in the occupied Palestinian territories, we reiterate our conviction that a two-state solution offers the best hope for a sustainable future for all, where both states live side by side in security peace, and dignity of all their citizens," it said.

"Jerusalem remains a historic part of that future hope, and the existence and indeed flourishing of the Christian presence within Jerusalem should be respected and guarded," it continued.

"We therefore affirm that: Israel is a state that deserves the security and protections of a free state, but is also subject to the demands of international law just like any other state. A two-state solution to the aspirations for self-determination of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, and the end of the occupation, remains the best hope for a just and peaceful resolution to all peoples in the region.

"Jerusalem is a city that's precious to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. Therefore, in accordance with the United Nations, we regard Jerusalem as an intrinsic issue with respect to any future political settlement for Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories," it concluded.

"The statement is a small step forward," said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, "but it's worth reminding ourselves and the global community that there should be no need to express gratitude for mere acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist, which isn't theirs to grant or withhold."

The Lambeth Conference, which takes place every 10 years in England, is an international meeting of Anglican bishops to discuss church and world affairs and the global mission of the Anglican communion for the coming decade.

Makgoba was in attendance at the conference and led the closing service. He confirmed to the SA Jewish Report that he agreed with the statement.

South African Friends of Israel General Manager Pamela Ngubane welcomed the statement. "The Anglican Church has affirmed Israel's right to exist as a

free, Jewish nation with an obligation to defend itself. While we would call on it to take a more balanced approach by calling on Palestinian organisations Fatah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to respect international law and cease firing rockets into Israel from civilian areas, it's heartening to see that pro-BDS and anti-Israel views didn't hold sway."

John Atkinson is one of four local Anglican Church-ordained ministers who spoke out against ACSA's anti-Israel doctrine. "It seems that at the Lambeth Conference common sense prevailed," he said. "This may have been encouraged by the negative reaction to a combined letter issued by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop of Jerusalem Hosam Naoum in the *London Sunday Times* last year.

"Their letter claimed that Israel was to blame for a "concerted effort" to drive Christians from the holy land. The letter was shown to be contradicted by all available evidence. A Central Bureau of Statistics survey found that Israel's Christian community grew by 1.4% in 2020 and numbers about 182 000 people, with 84% saying they were satisfied with life in the country. Open Doors, an independent Christian organisation which monitors persecution of Christians around the world, listed 50 countries where Christians were persecuted. Israel wasn't on the list."

Reverend Rowan Rennie put his livelihood on the line by quitting the Methodist Church of Southern Africa over its BDS policy towards Israel in 2020. He said he would rather "sleep on the street" than "stand against the people of G-d".

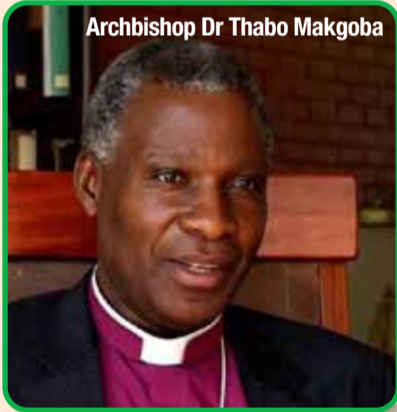
He believes the statement is "in some regards positive". "This will certainly be an indirect yet import rebuke and rebuttal of the mainline churches in South Africa that have taken the BDS stance. It will show up the theological inaccuracy and absurdity of the BDS stance," he said.

"Though these positive outcomes are worth celebrating, I don't believe that there's been enough work done at the Lambeth Conference of 2022 to sufficiently address the crisis," he says. "I say this for the following reason: the media is deliberately driving an agenda of manipulating the globe against Israel. The church needs to address this."

Rennie says the conference failed to address the wrongs on the other side. "The conference must condemn those attacking Israel. A two-state solution is an ideal that's unrealistic while the motive of obliterating Israel remains at the heart of her opposers.

"Calling for a two-state solution to this crisis without addressing campaigns to obliterate Israel is to avoid the elephant in the room. At the very heart of this conflict is a spiritual war that carries deep convictions for which people are willing to die. Extremist and militant teachings aimed at indoctrinating people, especially the young, must be addressed and condemned."

His concern is that the conference "is calling for peace, yet what impact is it really making upon the enemies of Israel? All that happens is that pressure is placed upon Israel and the democratic world to soften its defenses against extremists. Soft calls for peace and superficial agreements won't hold in the face of embedded hatred and while the spiritual conviction of obliteration of Israel exists."



Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba

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THEATRE ON THE SQUARE

Knee-jerk reaction

If South Africa's National Intelligence Agency confirmed that a dangerous and violent organisation, which was well known around the world for its terrorist activities, was planning a massive attack on the country's civilian population, what would it do?

Would it sit around and wait for the attack, hoping like hell that it wouldn't materialise in spite of numerous previous attacks? Would it kowtow to anti-South African sentiment, and do nothing because it might harm its reputation? Or would it do whatever it could to take out the ringleaders so that the deadly attack wasn't able to happen?

It's a no brainer, right?

Any country that cares about its population would do what it had to in order to eliminate the threat. Israel is no different. Like any country, it has a responsibility to put its citizenry's safety and security first.

That's what Israel did to ensure that Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) – an organisation recognised as a terrorist organisation by the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Israel – couldn't pull off its planned attack. Israel confirmed the intelligence behind the planned attack, and did what it had to prevent it.

The planned PIJ attack was in response to Israel recently arresting PIJ senior leader Bassam al-Saadi.

Unlike many other countries, Israel did its utmost to ensure that it targeted only those kingpins involved in this planned attack, trying to make sure as few people as possible were harmed.

One of those killed was Taysir al-Jabari, a PIJ commander in charge of the rocket arsenal and the main co-ordinator with Hamas.

Predictably, PIJ wasn't happy with this, and so it began a missile attack on Israel. It went into the heart of civilian areas in Gaza and began its attack, resulting in about 1 100 missiles launched.

Launching rockets from civilian areas towards civilian areas is, as I understand it, a double war crime as innocent lives – Palestinian and Israeli – are put in jeopardy. This clearly isn't a concern for PIJ.

Israel spends an untold fortune to protect its population, hence its inimitable army and the Iron Dome that deflects the missiles detected in Israeli airspace. It's not 100% fool proof, but it gets pretty close. This means, thank G-d, that those missiles will, as far as possible, not fulfil their target of killing and maiming as many Israeli civilians – Arab, Christian, or Jewish – as possible.

PIJ's missiles are aimed at the most populated parts of the country and the organisation's leaders don't care who gets killed. It doesn't matter to them if they are children, women, or even Palestinians.

However, those missiles from Gaza that didn't make it across the border, about 200 of them, landed in Gaza and killed at least 16 Gazans, including four children.

So, when the South African government had its vicious knee-jerk reaction against Israel, which has become all too frequent, all it acknowledged was that Gazan children were among those killed in this battle and Israel was involved. In our government and ruling party's eyes, this meant Israel was the aggressor and absolutely had to be wrong. Without checking the facts, it condemned Israel for targeting and killing children. Its logic is flawed. It blames everything on Israel, not once acknowledging PIJ's part in it. I guess any organisation that the Western world sees as a terrorist group cannot do any wrong. Right?

And because Israelis weren't killed, the Israelis were 100% in the wrong. In fact, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor makes Israel out to be a heinous, bloodthirsty country, worse than some of those our government holds so dear and invariably defends.

I don't doubt that if Israelis had died in this conflict, the fact would have been ignored because somehow, the lives of those within the Jewish state aren't acknowledged by the South African government. How long did it take for any kind of response from our government when South African Eli Kay was killed in a terrorist attack in Jerusalem in November last year? Too long!

When there was a string of terrorist attacks earlier this year in Israel, 18 people were killed, where was the South African government's condemnation and outrage? Or is condemnation and outrage only against Israel?

Some people say that the government and ruling party stepping up anti-Israel rhetoric is purely an electioneering tool to win the anti-Israel vote. This would be short sighted, albeit possible. However, surely the government looks ridiculous to the rest of the world when it shows such ignorance about the real situation?

But, I guess, as some political commentators said in our article about late president Nelson Mandela's grandson getting an award in Iran, our government is cosying up to this tyrannical country that supports PIJ (see page 5). In fact, Iran provides millions of dollars for funding, training, and weapons for PIJ.

So, it would make sense that, if this is the case, South Africa would jump to its defence – even if it's the aggressor.

Is it just a political game, and what does it mean for us in future?

I would love to suggest that it was time for Pandor to vacate her position, only I'm not hearing anyone in government defending Israel. I'm hearing silence outside of our community and our Christian brethren.

So, it was a relief to hear that at the international Anglican Church's pivotal, once-a-decade conference of bishops, a decision was made that was balanced and fair about the Israeli-Palestinian issue. This is really great news! (See page 5).

May this herald better news and more wisdom regarding South Africa's views of the Jewish state.

May it also bring on the dawn of a better understanding of what goes on in the Middle East.

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



"Thank G-d for our Domeys" – Israelis fierce under fire

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



The site of the Iron Dome upon a hill in Modiin is comforting yet fills me with dread. Israelis know that when Iron Dome batteries are rolled out across our cities, we'll face the now all-too-familiar barrage of rockets and mortars fired by terror entities in the Gaza Strip.

Last Friday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Breaking Dawn, pre-emptively striking with pinpoint precision Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) targets in the Gaza Strip. Following the arrest of PIJ leader Bassam al Saadi during counter-terror operations in Jenin in the West Bank, military and security officials received intelligence that the terror group was planning to launch attacks on Israeli civilians. The IDF moved quickly, shutting down access roads to the Gaza border, locking down communities, and shutting off train services between the city of Ashkelon and Sderot, the most bunkered town in the world.

Israelis waited for the storm that would inevitably follow the tense calm.

It started with barrage after barrage of rockets fired at Israel's southern communities. More than 1 500 000 of us who live within an 80km radius were advised by the IDF Home Front Command about the dangers of incoming rockets. City after city opened their public shelters, and families prepared personal shelters for any inevitability.

fighting. The IDF claimed it had achieved all of its aims and believed PIJ had been pressured by Hamas to accept. That organisation stayed out of the fray for a variety of reasons, but don't be fooled into thinking it's going soft!

By the end of the weekend, 1 100 rockets had been fired by PIJ, 47 Israelis were injured, 95% of incoming rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome system – thank G-d for our Domeys – and more than 200 misfired rockets fell in the Gaza Strip, killing 16 out of 27 civilian casualties. This has been acknowledged by the Gaza media as well as PIJ, which has offered compensation to the families of the victims. Will it pay from its swollen Iranian-backed coffers?

Living on the frontline are Israel's southern communities. You couldn't meet more extraordinary people. I visit the south often, taking groups or individuals to visit our rocket-proof WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organisation) day-care centres and to meet the staff who work to help the people of Sderot and surrounds cope with the profound trauma they have experienced for several decades.

The people of Israel's south are a true inspiration. They have a fierce Zionist spirit and community and are determined not to be chased out of their homes and towns, but they experience trauma few

of us can understand. Over the past two decades, through countless attacks, children have grown up with the all too-familiar sound of the *tseva adom* (red alert) being called out from speakers. Sirens don't wail because that's far too scary for many. There are teenagers who still wet the bed, small children who can recite exactly what they need to do when they hear the *tseva adom*, and parents who feel the strain of helping their children deal with post-traumatic stress disorder while coping with their own.

Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the privilege of leading a WIZO delegation on a visit to the south that included our rocket-proof day-care centres, trauma centre, a terror tunnel with an exit point in the middle of a sunflower farm, as well as a visit to Kibbutz Netiv Ha'asara, located just metres from the wall that divides Israeli sovereign territory from the beleaguered strip.

The residents have buried several of their own over the years, killed as a result of rocket attacks. It's this kibbutz that in 2014 reported "strange digging noises beneath us". WIZO evacuated the entire kibbutz, hosting residents in its projects further north. This past weekend, my heart sank every time I saw the alerts for incoming rockets and mortars.

They have fought back in the most Israeli way possible, starting a project called "Path to peace". Visitors are encouraged to choose a small tile from the collection made on the kibbutz and place it on the "peace wall" that divides Palestinians and Israelis in the hope that the message of peace will someday manifest into reality. They have hope, which is the greatest weapon against hate. Make no mistake, Israelis will defend themselves with everything they have, but will stubbornly pursue hope with everything they are.

This resilience is the spirit of the south, it's the character of Israel, and it's why try as hard as they might, terrorists will never defeat us. *Am Yisrael chai!*

• Rolene Marks is world WIZO executive for public diplomacy and hasbara, and is co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.



Rolene Marks places a tile on the wall of peace between Gaza and Israel in 2020

The sirens wailed, the booms from Iron Dome interceptions followed, and the cycle continued. My peaceful Shabbat reverie was interrupted on Saturday, 6 August, by the wails of our siren, sending my husband and I (and our very disciplined cat) running into the shelter. A boom followed. An explosion was reported just outside the city that left a small crater in the ground. The obligatory, "Are you guys okay?" WhatsApp messages soon circulated.

I'm not embarrassed to share the fact that sirens scare me. The warning wail of an air-raid siren makes me anxious – a feeling shared by many. In spite of working in the media and being particularly busy during these times of tension, I still feel anxious.

PIJ would continue to pound our southern communities, but would also fire rockets as far as Tel Aviv, Beer Sheva in the Negev desert, and Jerusalem, a city holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. They fired their weapons of destruction towards Jerusalem on Tisha B'Av, a day of fasting, reflection, and mourning for our holy Temples that were destroyed.

At 23:30 on Sunday night, an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire had gone into place, ending 66 hours of



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How Israel took in 32 000 olim

STEVEN GRUZD

It's almost six months since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February. Israel has opened its doors and heart to 32 000 Ukrainian and Russian Jews who wanted to move to Israel from this war zone. Keren Hayesod (the Foundation Fund) was at the heart of the biggest aliya operation in decades. Its world chairperson, Sam Grundwerg, explained why and how it was done on 3 August at an event organised by the South African Zionist Federation in Johannesburg.

"Without existing communal infrastructure in Ukraine, the rescue of its Jews would have been impossible," Grundwerg said, referring to the efforts of 40 *shlichim* (emissaries from Israel on the ground in Ukraine) and 80 local employees. He also said the work of locally based organisations like Chabad was invaluable.

Since 24 February, Israel has taken in 32 000 Jews from Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was absorbing 35 000 *olim* from the entire world per annum. "They need resources beyond their arrival," Grundwerg said, "for learning Hebrew, places to live, and jobs."

"This was a very different kind of aliya. It was mostly women, children, and the elderly. Men aged 18 to 60 are forbidden to leave Ukraine as they are conscripted into fighting the Russians," Grundwerg said.

In March 2022, he visited an abandoned shopping mall in neighbouring Poland, filled by thousands fleeing Ukraine. "It was a human tragedy," he said, "impossible to comprehend. I felt their deep, profound sadness, especially in their separation from the men in their families."

Keren Hayesod raised more than \$22 million (R365.3 million) from Jewish communities worldwide for the campaign to rescue Ukrainian Jews. Working closely with Israel's ministries of foreign affairs and aliya and the Sochnut (Jewish Agency), it set up rescue centres at five different borders with Ukraine – in Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia – to fast-track



One of the Holocaust survivors rescued from the war in Ukraine arriving at Ben Gurion Airport, April 2022

the processing of Jewish refugees for travel to Israel. Temporary consulates were set up in hotels in these countries. Due to shelling in the capital, Kyiv, the Israeli embassy had to move west to Lviv and then over the border into Poland.

"This wasn't my first rodeo," Grundwerg said. "Organisations can step on each other's toes or trip each other up. But this time, there were no egos. We worked together to get the job done."

"I met a 90-year-old Ukrainian Holocaust survivor in Poland," said Grundwerg. "He recalled being bombed 80 years ago, surviving that, and was now going through a war again. The difference is that now there's a state of Israel to take care of him. You can't witness something like this without it profoundly affecting you. It showed me how *am Yisrael* is one people, and why Keren Hayesod is still relevant."

"Israel has existed a sovereign state for almost 75 years," Grundwerg said. "That's not long. It's a few generations. After 2 000 years, Jews have a voice in public forums, we have our own diplomats to speak up. We have a sword and shield to defend ourselves, and

we have a refuge. I think we'd forgotten this for a bit. It seemed outdated. It has been needed in 2022."

Grundwerg said one of the most moving experiences was welcoming a plane of orphans from Ukraine on the tarmac of Ben Gurion Airport.

In April, Grundwerg hosted a Ukrainian family at

his Pesach seder table – a mother, two daughters, and a father (permitted to leave Ukraine as he had an Azerbaijani passport). "They had little knowledge of Judaism, but it was the most emotional seder. They taught us a lesson about what freedom means."

In terms of eligibility for this aliya, the requirement was having one Jewish grandparent, the standard set in Israel's Law of Return, and the measure identifying Jews in World War II by the Nazis. The estimate is that before the war, there were about 50 000 to 60 000 Jews active in Ukrainian Jewish communities, and about 150 000 more with at least one Jewish grandparent. There are no accurate estimates of the number of Jews killed in Ukraine, Grundwerg said.

"Most of those who came to Israel are from very secular families," he said. "But we're seeing the younger generations more connected to Yiddishkeit. It varies."

Grundwerg noted that the relationship between Israel and diaspora Jewish communities had changed. "We're more equal partners now. Jewish communities need a strong Israel, and Israel needs strong Jewish communities around the world." This aliya has proven that once again.

From LA to Lviv to Linksfield, Grundwerg connects Jewish communities

STEVEN GRUZD

Israel's relationship with Jewish communities around the world is now "more of a two-way street," says Sam Grundwerg, the world chairperson of Keren Hayesod United Israel Appeal (Israel's fundraising arm), on a visit to South Africa.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, Keren Hayesod established an emergency loan fund for Jewish communal organisations, which was used by some institutions in South Africa," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Keren Hayesod also provides physical security such as cameras and secure doors and gates for Jewish buildings."

Grundwerg has been planning this trip to South Africa for some time. "My visit to South Africa in March 2020 was the first trip I had to postpone due to the pandemic," he said.

Grundwerg grew up in Miami Beach, Florida, and made aliya aged 17 on his own in 1990. He became a lone soldier "before it was fashionable", returned to the United States, studied for an MBA, and qualified and practised as a real-estate lawyer. He went back to Israel, and joined the World Jewish Congress, an umbrella body for Jewish communities across the globe.

Being posted as the Israeli consul general in Los Angeles from 2016 to 2018 was a great honour, but it wasn't all glitz and glamour. "It wasn't red-carpet balls every night," he chuckles. "I was asked by then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to focus on Hollywood." He was responsible for bringing United States (US) late night talk-show host Conan O'Brien on his successful trip to Israel. He also organised a big bash for Israel's 70th anniversary at Universal Studios.

But he said the 2016 election of Donald Trump split the country and the American Jewish community in two. "Half the population was in shock. The other half was rejoicing."

Grundwerg pointed to many positive things Trump did for Israel, including pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal; stopping payments to Palestinians who rewarded the families of suicide bombers ("pay to slay"); recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the US embassy there; affirming Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights; and the Abraham Accords, leading to peace with four Muslim-majority countries.

Reflecting on his role at Keren Hayesod, he said Israel had four "national institutions" with special status – the World Zionist Congress (founded in 1897); Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (the Jewish National Fund, to purchase land, founded in 1902); Keren Hayesod (a fundraising arm, founded in 1920); and the Sochnut (the Jewish Agency, founded in 1929). Uniquely, these institutions sit around the table with Israel's cabinet and have a say in the country's direction.

Keren Hayesod focuses on raising funds for aliya, disadvantaged communities in Israel, and making connections with diaspora Jewish communities. It's

active in 45 countries and runs 60 campaigns.

But why does Israel need a fundraising body in 2022? Its economy is much healthier than those in many diaspora communities. "Yes, it's true," Grundwerg said. "Israel after 74 years is much stronger economically, diplomatically, and in terms of defence and security. The Ukraine war reinforced for me just how relevant these national institutions remain today."

"Jewish people had stopped thinking of Israel as a place of refuge. We had a scenario where people had to up and leave because of a terrible war. It's our obligation to be there to help every Jew who wants or needs to come to Israel. Lack of resources can never be an excuse."

Grundwerg has been to Poland twice since February, and entered Ukraine, where Israel handed over a field hospital to the Kyiv government.

The relationship with Russia is complex, he said. "We share a border with Iran – it's called Syria," alluding to both militaries being active in the war-torn country. "At the same time, we have to be on the right side of history, and we have spoken out about the invasion of Ukraine. We've decided not to provide military equipment to Ukraine, but focus on humanitarian assistance."

Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's efforts to mediate didn't bear fruit. We also cannot forget that Russia still has a very large Jewish population.

He said Israel aimed to bring about 5 000 *olim* from Ethiopia to Israel in Operation Tzur

Sam Grundwerg Yisrael (Rock of Israel) by the end of 2022. It has reached half of that target already. "We're reuniting families after 20 or 30 years. It's amazing to see the scenes when these planes arrive at Ben Gurion Airport."

Grundwerg is a major in the Israel Defense Forces, and volunteers as a casualty officer. "It's my job to give families bad news. Why do I do it? To show that Jewish people are always there for one another. Mutual responsibility isn't just a slogan."

"In my short trip so far, I have been impressed with how strong and cohesive the South African Jewish community is," he said. He visited King David Linksfield, and was heartened by the connection the students had to Israel. "The reality is that the community is shrinking and the government has a complex relationship with Israel." He said he was hopeful of better ties when the African National Congress no longer ruled on its own as its electoral support plummeted.

"I admire what you've built here to preserve a strong Jewish identity and connection to Israel. I want the community to know that while we garner resources for Israel, we're also here for you."

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Leaving abusive partners “tough but empowering”

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Walking away is the toughest but often the most empowering thing to do for a woman living with an abusive partner – and they don't have to do it alone. This is one of the lessons of the Koleinu SA and South African Union of Jewish Students Women's Day Breakfast on 9 August.

Fear and a lack of self-esteem kept Jodi* trapped in a marriage defined by verbal and emotional abuse. “Recovery and making different choices is absolutely necessary for your survival,” she said sharing her story.

Very young when she met her ex-husband, Jodi said, “There were so many warning signs before we even married, but I chose to ignore them. I switched off my gut feelings.”

Forced to walk on eggshells, Jodi navigated a marriage in which her husband made her feel that nothing she did was right. “He never wanted to be near me when he came home from work,” she said. “He would point out my faults in front of family and friends. He would scream and get right up in my face.”

He tried to control Jodi's behaviour, repeatedly threatening her with divorce if she didn't conform. “When he finally asked for a divorce, it was sheer relief. I had wanted one for more than two years but was too scared to ask or share my story with anyone.”

Afterwards, instead of working on her feelings, Jodi became a workaholic and continued to believe she wasn't good enough. Inevitably, her next relationship was abusive too, this time physically.

Jodi finally realised that if she continued on this path, she would die. “I knew I needed to heal and set boundaries for myself,” she said. “I'm no hero, but I've learnt who I am and who I'll never be again. Manipulation and abuse will always be part of your partner's story, but it doesn't have to remain a part of yours.”

Mother, entrepreneur, women's empowerment advocate, and author, Phindile Yende also got married in spite of the warning signs. “As women, we're still marching this Women's Day,” she said, “because we're still having to fight for our freedom from our male counterparts.”

It's a fight she experienced from the moment she met her former husband. “I grew up in a happy home with parents who loved me, took me to good schools, and wanted a great future for me. Yet, there was a moment where I totally forgot about that because I wanted to get married.”

Her ex-husband constantly cheated on her, had children with other women, and lied about being a doctor. “I couldn't tell my family and friends the truth,” said a visibly emotional Yende. “I lived a lie for six years. My problem was having to admit my own insecurities.”

In time, she saw a psychologist who helped her realise that she was desperately seeking love from a man at any cost. “In our culture, our men are socialised to provide but they're not taught to hug their baby girl and give her affirmation and reassurance.”

Koleinu SA co-founder Rozanne Sack said the degree of healing that comes with reporting one's abuser is often overlooked.

A trailblazer in law enforcement who often collaborates with Koleinu SA, Detective Colonel Joyce Buthelezi, is a specialist in the investigation of rape, femicide, and crimes against women and children.

“We have a serious problem in our country,” said Buthelezi. “You may think nothing is happening, but we're trying our best and we do arrest perpetrators.” Yet, often cases of rape and domestic abuse are reported too late, after the damage is done.

“Our cultures and religions are sometimes obstacles to fighting crime the way we want to,” she said. “For example, in my Zulu culture, if an uncle is raping his niece, it becomes the story of family. If a police officer comes in, they can get shot for doing what's right. A teacher can put her life at risk by

adhering to the Children's Act and reporting it.”

“Yet, our Constitution is on your side,” she said. “You have a legal obligation to report violence and abuse.”

Sack spoke of the cultural barriers to reporting in our own community. “We have the issue of *shidduchim*: will reporting this affect my marriage prospects or my

children's marriage prospects? Yet, by not dealing with your issues, you're going into a marriage damaged. Rather come to people who will help you through the process and facilitate healing.”

Issues around *lashon hara* (derogatory speech

about another person) and *mesira* – which means you don't hand a Jew over to non-Jewish authorities – shouldn't exist in this context, she added. “If a crime is committed, it has to go to the relevant authorities. This realisation will open a safe space

for victims, to say, ‘I'm not destroying someone's life, they did it to themselves. I'm going to stop this.’”

Advocate Carina Coetzee, a senior public prosecutor at the sexual offences unit of the National Prosecuting Authority, has had a front-row seat to cases of gender-based violence (GBV) since the 1980s. In spite of what many believe, she said, the

government has done a lot. “When I started with GBV, I was in a desert, now I'm in a lush garden.”

The fact that children and, more recently, women over 60 and men over 65, can testify with the help of an intermediary via an audiovisual link away from the courtroom means they don't have to hear or see their perpetrators. This eases the anxiety around testifying, and encourages victims to press charges.

What's more, said Coetzee, you can also now obtain a domestic-violence protection order online. Yet, she pointed out, when someone has been victimised their entire lives, they don't know any different. You can never convince them they're a victim, making reporting unlikely. For victims and perpetrators, the positive input of just one person or one experience during their childhood can change the whole trajectory of their lives, Coetzee said.

*Surname withheld to protect identity.



Advocate Carina Coetzee

Photos: Adir Miller



Phindile Yende



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"How's that for romantic?" – lessons from long-lasting love

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Who better to give advice on love and marriage than those who have successfully weathered storms together for more than 50 and in some cases 60 years?

"We've been married for 67 years, and we still love each other," says Joe Kassel proudly a few days before celebrating Tu B'Av (the Jewish equivalent of Valentine's Day) on 12 August. "I'm just enjoying life with my lovely wife. She's my head and shoulders and my eyes and ears."

Joe and his wife, Anita, first met when they were children growing up in the same Cape Town suburb. "Having shared memories is a fantastic thing," says Anita, "You don't often get couples that can go back as far as we do. It's an added blessing to us that at our ages, we can remember all we've been through together."

Anita recalls the moment when her feelings for her childhood friend turned romantic. She was 16 and in hospital after an emergency appendectomy. When Joe heard, he came to visit. "He held my hands and sang me the song, *Nature Boy*. He's got a very good tenor voice to this day."

"The song ends with the words, 'The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.' That was the turning point for me because you don't just get boyfriends coming around serenading you! I thought, 'Oh my G-d, he's really in love with me!'"

The couple laugh as they confirm that

Joe, who once made a record album with his brother, still regularly sings to Anita. "We both have a wonderful sense of humour," says Anita. "A day never passes without a laugh between us. One thing we've learnt is that if you have differences of opinion, you can argue, but when we go to bed, there's never any animosity."

Speaking of what's kept them together for so long, Anita says it's love, religion, a shared love of music, and other interests.



Joe and Anita Kassel

"But," she says, "we never stopped each other from doing what we wanted to do separately." Though Joe has no interest in Scrabble, he's always supported Anita's talent and shows off her trophies proudly.

Joe says there's no real secret to a successful marriage. "You're either attached to one another or you're not. We live for each other, that's the key."

Married for 54 years, Vivienne and Itzik Maron finish one another's sentences. While both were studying pharmacy, they were initially connected by their cousins, who arranged for Vivienne to befriend Itzik, who was moving down to Joburg from Cape Town

to complete his degree.

"The first day I got to college, I saw this person standing at the bottom of the stairs," says Vivienne. "A very good-looking person," adds Itzik. Once they had introduced themselves, Vivienne told her future husband that his cousin had asked her to look after him. "I've done quite a good job!" she laughs.

While they met periodically on campus, the two began dating only when they later reconnected in Cape Town at Vivienne's cousin's wedding. Over the next two years, they conducted a long-distance relationship, mainly through letters, which sometimes led to misunderstandings – something they resolved together.

Becoming engaged, however, proved to be a dangerous exercise. "I was visiting Cape Town," recalls Vivienne. "We were in the car, and I said to Itzik, 'I booked my plane ticket back to Joburg, I have to go back.' He said, 'Oh sh*t, we better get engaged.' How's that for romantic?"

"In the excitement," says Itzik, "I turned against the traffic on the highway!" Living to tell the tale, they later married and built a family in Cape Town before moving to Israel, where they've lived for almost 22 years.

Marriage and parenthood is something nobody teaches you how to handle, they say, you just face the challenges together.



Vivienne and Itzik Maron

attract!" says Itzik. "You know the old story," jokes Itzik, "even when I'm wrong, I'm right. Seriously, open your ears and listen before you open your mouth and criticise."

"Except when you get to our age," laughs Vivienne, "you can't be a good listener because you can't hear so well anymore!"

Approaching their sixtieth wedding anniversary, Barbara and Les Koz exemplify togetherness. "I don't think we've ever been apart," says Les. "We do everything together, we go everywhere together, we ran businesses together, we've travelled the world together, we've always been together. I'm very easy going and that's helped. I'm not a fussy eater, and Barbara's not a fussy cook," he laughs.

Recalling how they met, Les says, "I was picked up in a hotel by my wife." Elaborating, Barbara explains that a year before, they met briefly when she went to Les's house with another guy for a small get together. "Most of the time, Les was in his dark room developing his photographs."

When, a year later, Les walked into the lounge of the Cape Town hotel at which she was staying, Barbara was relieved to see someone of her own age. "I said 'I know you.' He didn't know what I was talking about. A year later we were married."

Barbara says their compatibility has cemented their marriage. "I'm the weak one and she's the strong one," says Les. "When two people

get together, the one naturally compensates for the other."

Echoing the Marons, the couple say marriage is all about give and take. Initially, though, it's always a gamble. "Nobody knows what marriage will be like, it doesn't matter how long you've been with the person," says Barbara. "It's what you do that makes it a happy marriage. We've been blessed."



Barbara and Les Koz

The support of both their beloved families and later their own three children and their families has helped keep their marriage strong.

"Vivienne's a super-duper lady," says Itzik. "From the day I met her, my eyes started to sparkle, and she hasn't changed in all the years."

"After being married for 54 years, we're still very different," Vivienne admits. "Opposites

Forty years and going strong

>>>Continued from page 3

This was the start of Chabad of Sandton, with the couple creating the first satellite Chabad in Johannesburg. Shul services took place in the garage, a *brocha* in the couple's dining room, and a children's service in the living room. Soon new, larger premises were sought in Satara Avenue, Gallo Manor, this time a house with space for a nursery school, giving birth to Chabad of Sandton Nursery School.

The community continued to expand and with it came a new address at 1 Chabad Way, Hampton Court Road, where it exists today.

Looking back, the couple remember each new Torah as a "magical moment" – dancing in the streets and being ushered into the shul with song. They recall the opening of the *mikvah* and later its renovation, together with breaking ground for the function hall.

"When we first moved into the area, we were one of the only families to build a sukkah and had the only lulav and etrog. Now, practically every family has a sukkah, and the rabbi orders up to 70 sets of lulav and etrog annually," said Raisy.

In the early years, it was just the two of them with strollers who went in search of running water to perform

tashlich on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. As the family symbolically cast off the sins of the previous year, she said, "We felt like idiots standing alone by the river. Now between 60 to 100 people perform the ritual at different places each year."

The couple is cognisant of the ever-changing, disparate needs of a shifting community, and has had to embrace new ideas from younger members in a bid to survive and thrive.

"We have been blessed to have capable family members who have wanted to come back and invest in the community they grew up in," said Raisy.

A young, energetic shul council has been appointed, "which is able to think out the box and inspire with fresh, innovative ideas", she said.

"The biggest challenge remains staying relevant and becoming a place where teenagers and young people want to come," said Hecht. But he's optimistic about the future of the shul. "We're reaching one of the most exciting periods now – a watershed time passing the torch onto the next generation, and we have lots to look forward to."

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Largest Jewish family tree in world has famous names

TALI FEINBERG

They have almost 79 000 ancestors and descendants and count among their relatives Barbra Streisand, Billy Crystal, Bob Dylan, Bette Midler, Gene Wilder, Kirk and Michael Douglas, Sigmund Freud, and Amy Winehouse.

"We believe we have the largest documented Jewish family tree, which has been more than 25 years in the making," says Ralph Cilevitz. About 60 family members gathered for a reunion in New York City on 9 August.

"Some of our lineage is familiar such as Joffe, Levine, Cohen, Kagan, and mine – Cilevic," says Cilevitz, writing from Toronto, Canada. "I'm originally from Vryheid via Durban and Johannesburg. There are many, many rabbis [in the family], all the way back to Rabbi Rashi to the present-day chief rabbi of the Commonwealth, Rabbi Mirvis, who is my cousin.

"The family originated in the tiny town of Kukliai/Kuklya in Lithuania (with a population of about 200) around 1520, then emigrated to the area of Rezekne in Latvia in 1591," says Cilevitz. "We have published a Kuklya encyclopaedia of more than 2 000 pages and a family tree of 1 000 pages, copies of which are now housed at Yad Vashem."

This will be the fifth family reunion and the first in North America. The first two were held in England – with more than 500 descendants attending – then one in Rezekne, Latvia, and one in Haifa, Israel.

"At a guess, there are about 60 Kuklya-related descendants living in Toronto, and 200 to 300 in South Africa. We're hoping to have the next reunion in South Africa in a few years' time," says Cilevitz.

His father, David Cilevitz, emigrated from Latvia to South Africa in 1930, "because of a fur coat, but that's another story. He changed his name from the Latvian 'Cilevic' to 'Cilevitz'. Most of his family were killed in 1941 by the local town police in collaboration with the advancing German army.

"He ended up living in Vryheid, Natal, marrying

Bessie Mirvis (cousin of Rabbi Mirvis). They had two children, Rita and Harold, and shortly afterwards, Bessie died. David remarried my mother, Sarah Goldman and soon after, I was born. Sarah's parents came from Kovno, Lithuania."

Cilevitz described growing up in Vryheid as idyllic. "The Jewish population was about 40 families at its peak, yet we had a shul and a permanent rabbi. From 1960 onwards, Jewish children left to continue their education, and moved to Durban, Cape Town, or Johannesburg. They married and had children. The older Vryheid Jews then followed and the town's Jewish population disappeared. The ark, bimah, and wooden seating were re-located to the Durban Jewish Club."

Cilevitz immigrated to Toronto in 1979. "I have three children who all live nearby. Almost all my family emigrated, and are now living in Toronto or Los Angeles. I studied electronics at Natal and Wits Technikon, and had a career as an industrial inventor."

He was his family's historian for about 30 years, "but only had about 100 ancestors and descendants on our tree. Two years ago, I did a DNA test through a company called My Heritage, and found a match of a second cousin in Pittsburgh in the United States. After contacting him, he told me of another family historian living in England who was our cousin and had been researching his family tree for 25 years. After comparing notes and sharing trees, my family tree grew from 100 to 78 225. I was connected to the main family tree in at least six ways. I had the

opportunity to find many lost pieces of the family jigsaw puzzle."

He has been the main researcher on his paternal side and is now a contributor to the full Kuklya tree. "More and more data is being released online worldwide, which was for many decades found only by visiting archives. It's a time-consuming but rewarding hobby."

Anyone inside or outside the family can participate. "For generations, information was passed along by mouth or sometimes a few scribbled notes, but all these small details help in establishing researchable data. For example, I looked for my family for three decades under the name 'Cilevitz'. Then by chance I found a relative's birth certificate which showed his birth name was 'Cilevic'. Once I started searching with this name, I found dozens.

"It was then that I realised that name spelling isn't important, it's the way it's pronounced. In Eastern Europe our ancestors spoke Yiddish, German, or Russian. The spelling of surnames varied as the names were pronounced, so when people emigrated, there were times when one sibling's surname was spelled Shapiro while the other was spelled Shapira. Yet they are the same family. Our family historian, Ian Levine, has published a 2 000-page encyclopaedia of the family and a novel, based on the Kuklya history."

For Cilevitz, the project is important because "most of my father's family were killed in the Holocaust, so for decades, I thought our family was very small. I always looked for family as I felt a need

to belong."

Tracking is done through people that might remember their ancestors. "This is the tricky part. Many people remember their 'Granny Sadie', but her birth name was probably Sorah, so without that knowledge, the search becomes more difficult. I've found that about 80% of people I contact are keen to learn more."

Their first reunion in England had 400 family members attend. The second, also in England, had more than 500 attendees. The third one in the Latvian town of Rezekne, where the family story began, had about 100 attendees from all parts of the world. The fourth was in Haifa, Israel, with 150 attendees. The current reunion was organised quickly, and there were about 60 attendees.

Asked what people should do if they think they may be part of this family tree, Cilevitz says, "We have many fairly common names. Our main branch is Joffe. We also have Levine, Shapiro, Cohen, Kagen, Katz, etc. Our tree is very strong from the Lithuanian and Latvian areas and also America because that's where the focus has been. Now, it's my job to add the South African connections. If people have the names of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents, they can email me the names and I can check our database. But I must stress that for many South African families, their history goes back only to perhaps 1875. I'm trying to establish connections between them and our tree." He can be emailed at ralphc@gwsergo.com.

"I would absolutely recommend genealogy as a hobby and sometimes a career," he says. "If you enjoy learning about history, this is one way to do that and as a side-benefit, learn about your ancestors. For many South African Jews, their family history is quite short. Genealogy is an opportunity to go further back in the family and discover who they were, where they lived, and what they did. In a small way, looking forward, they are remembered forever."



Ralph Cilevitz next to the picture of his father, David

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Cape Board not pursuing "antisemitic" matter against Khoisan chief

TALI FEINBERG

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) has decided to accept a formal apology from Chief Aútshumao Mackie, a member of the Western Cape Khoisan Legislative Council (WCKLC), who allegedly wrote an antisemitic WhatsApp message and verbally abused a Cape Jewish entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur, who cannot be named for his own safety, says he's still waiting for an "unconditional apology", and claims that some of what the Cape Board has accepted as evidence is incorrect.

In June, the *SA Jewish Report* cited an affidavit from the entrepreneur describing an incident in the corridors of the Western Cape High Court in which he said Mackie shouted, "You Jew! You Jews! Go home Jews! You Jews are stealing again."

In a separate, widely shared WhatsApp message,

Mackie criticised the First Nation Collective (FNC), which supports the entrepreneur's development, writing that "selfishness, self-enrichment, and greed are the basis of establishing the FNC. The person at the centre of this distasteful saga is the Jew [the Jewish entrepreneur], whose parents are originally from Lithuania."

At the time, the Cape SAJBD said it couldn't comment as it was still investigating the matter. Now, Cape SAJBD Executive Director Daniel Bloch says, "The Cape SAJBD considered the evidence before it. It found the contents of the WhatsApp message labelling [the Jewish entrepreneur] as 'the Jew' to be offensive and derogatory.

"When it engaged with Chief Mackie, he explained that this wording to describe [the Jewish entrepreneur] was based on how he had allegedly introduced himself

in the past: that is as a Jew whose parents come from Lithuania. Therefore, it was felt this description of [the Jewish entrepreneur] could be used in communications. Chief Mackie acknowledged that the message could be perceived to be offensive to the Jewish community, and affirmed that this wasn't the intention."

However, the Jewish entrepreneur says, "I've never engaged in a one-on-one conversation with Chief Mackie, and certainly never told him my parents are from Lithuania – they aren't. I await an unconditional apology. In a recent court case, he resorted once again to aggressive behaviour, calling me a colonialist." He says he stands by his affidavit and the antisemitism he experienced in the corridors of court.

"Based on these findings, the Cape SAJBD won't be taking this matter further, and after consulting with [the Jewish entrepreneur] and his legal counsel, has agreed that a formal apology from the author of the WhatsApp text would be an acceptable outcome," Bloch says.

"The best way to resolve issues of this nature is through dialogue. The Board has engaged with the WCKLC in the past, having Chief Mackie attending the Yom HaShoah memorial service in Cape Town. This relationship has enabled it to have



Chief Aútshumao Mackie

clear lines of communication and allowed the current issue to be resolved by meeting face-to-face.

"The Cape SAJBD is committed to fighting antisemitism, and will investigate any and all allegations of antisemitism brought to its attention," Bloch says.

Responding to questions from the *SA Jewish Report*, Mackie says allegations of antisemitism are "inaccurate", and that he can't be antisemitic because he has been invited to Cape Board events in the past.

Exhibiting an enduring passion for portraiture

The *Eternal Scholar* portrait photographic exhibition portrays the life and loves of Arnold Castle. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to his daughter, **Elana Castle**.

What drew your dad to photography?

My dad hadn't picked up a camera until his late 40s (the 1970s). He and his brother owned a clothing business. My dad needed to produce a promotional fashion catalogue, and with budget constraints, he decided to do all the photography himself. He asked our neighbour, an avid photographer, for assistance. Dick encouraged my dad to learn the basics of the craft so that he could create his own promotional material. He enrolled in a course at the Ruth Prowse School of Art, where he learned the fundamentals of photography from some of the city's most esteemed photographers, and soon developed a passion for the medium, setting up a darkroom and portrait studio in his garage.

What was he trying to do with his photographs?

Originally, he was just curious about capturing people and landscapes. Then, he developed an interest in creating portraits that told a story. He was also technically driven – a photograph had to be technically correct and “perfect” for him even to consider presenting it to photographic societies and camera clubs.

How much time did he spend on his portraits, and how did he go about choosing his models and creating images?

He sought out interesting people whom he felt would make compelling character studies. He was known to approach local street vendors, newspaper sellers, and strangers that he encountered on his regular walks along the Sea Point promenade in the hope that they would agree to sit for portraits

in his studio. Sometimes, my mom was given the job of sobering them up!

I have so many memories of my dad whiling away incalculable hours in his darkroom, only to emerge late at night or early in the morning in a speckled lab coat, reeking of chemicals, with either a smile or grimace on his face. He was an absolute perfectionist.

Tell us a bit about his models. What did he know of their lives?

He loved hearing about people's backgrounds and interests. It's what drew him to the genre of photography in the first place.

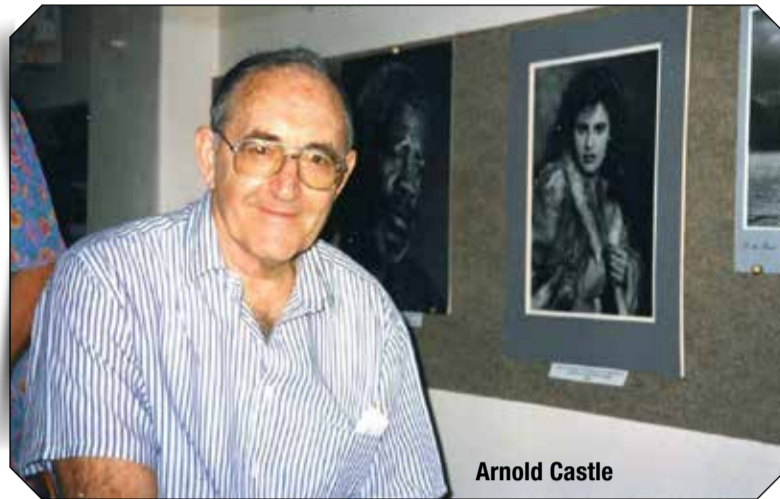
What was most important to him in creating these portraits?

I would say my dad shot in two main styles. On occasion, he would shoot his subjects unaltered, but later, his style evolved into a more theatrical approach in which he created portraits through the use of props and costuming.

How did his work change over the years?

He started off with a great love for portraiture. All his early work was produced in black and white and developed in his darkroom. He ventured into colour photography only when digital photography became the norm. By then, he was well into his 70s, yet was committed to learning an entirely new skillset. His Hasselblads and Leicas were replaced with digital single-lens reflex cameras and the darkroom was replaced by a computer loaded with Photoshop and PaintShop Pro. He immersed himself in the world of digital editing and manipulation, shifting

genre to his other passion – landscape photography. Until his passing at 87, he continued to develop his craft, producing award-winning photographs captured on field trips through South Africa and on his global travels.



Arnold Castle

Why is the exhibition titled *The Eternal Scholar*?

The title refers not only to the name of Arnold's most treasured image, but also to his enduring passion for the medium of photography. He won a gold medal from The Photographic Society of America for *The Eternal Scholar* in which he dramatically transformed a working class, glass-grinding craftsman into a scholarly rabbi.

What was your dad like?

He was a businessman with a love of fashion. He was a natty dresser! He was a loyal friend, a family man, a global traveller, and absolutely passionate about photography. He also followed Israeli politics and Liverpool soccer team with equal dedication.

What acknowledgements did he get for his work?

In 1978, he achieved an Associateship of the Photographic Society of South Africa in monochrome prints. In 1984, he received a Fellowship of the Photographic Society

of South Africa, an honour bestowed on very few other photographers at the time. Accolades and awards soon followed, including a gold medal from The Photographic Society of America for *The Eternal Scholar*.

What was his relationship to Judaism?

He grew up in Vredehoek, and attended a public school. It wasn't always easy being Jewish in that environment, but he was a proud and outspoken Jew. As he told it, he lost a few of his teeth defending himself against the antisemitic bullies at school! He would have been especially delighted to have seen this project come to fruition at the South African Jewish Museum.

How did this exhibition come about?

A chance encounter with Gavin Morris of the South African Jewish Museum almost three years ago led me to mention my dad's photography. He was as struck by the character and quality of these images.

How did you select the works exhibited?

Once I'd had my initial meeting with Gavin, my dad and I sat down together and selected his favourite images – the 14 images displayed in the museum. We talked about how these photographs came to be. The stories are as fascinating as the thoughtful manner in which they were photographed and edited.

What part did you play in the exhibition?

In August 2019, my dad suffered his first heart attack. I flew straight home from New York to be with him and my family. As he lay in his hospital bed, I asked him if I could have a look through his old work. I had many memories of my dad photographing strangers in our garage. I came across a large collection of portraits that he had taken in the late 1970s and 1980s. They were enchanting. I realised that my dad was an even more talented and skilled photographer than I had realised, and that other than his contemporaries in the photographic industry, so few people had had the opportunity to appreciate his work. My dad was extraordinarily humble, and I felt that these images needed to be shared. And then there was the meeting with Gavin Morris.

• *The Eternal Scholar* is on at the South African Jewish Museum until 30 September 2022.

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Jewish farmers' Boran bull sold for Jumbo price

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Simeon Hurwitz, the co-owner of Hurwitz Farming, didn't expect his farm's eight-year-old Boran bull, named Jumbo, to be sold for a record-breaking price of R2.3 million during the Mpumalanga mixed-use agricultural business's Boran auction on 6 August.

However, once the hammer came down, the winning bid set a new South African record for a Boran bull.

Jumbo was acquired by Mutanda Farms, a Zambian-headquartered agricultural operation managed by the Cuturi family, meaning that he's now emigrating to Zambia, where he'll be making an impact on the Zambian national herd.

"To spend this type of money on an animal that's eight years old is a phenomenal achievement in itself," says Hurwitz, who owns Mpumalanga-based Hurwitz Farming with his brother, Jarren. "An amount of R2.3 million is a lot of money in anybody's language. Whether its value for money is debatable, but still, it's an amazing achievement."

An indigenous African breed of cattle, Jumbo has suddenly jumped to legendary status, says Hurwitz. "He's an incredible animal. His genetics are highly sought after. I think that's why people were keen to spend a bit of money on him and fought to bid on him. His sisters were record-priced heifers when they were sold in their time. One of his sisters previously held the South African record for the highest price ever."

Aside from Jumbo, four other animals sold for more than R1 million during the auction, and four other South African records were made. Kelly and Kubota became the new record-priced Boran cow and calf; Freckles became the new record-priced Boran pregnant cow; Winnie became the new record-priced Boran pregnant heifer; and Jasmine became the new record-priced Boran open heifer.

Hurwitz says Jumbo's progeny and breeding stood out for the bidders. "That, together with the marketing and previous success of the animal. Before Jumbo even entered the ring, his pre-

bidding was already on R600 000."

The auction was competitive, with a real vibrancy in the room, says Hurwitz. "People wanted him. Syndicates and coalitions were made to try and own the bull afterwards, but ultimately, he was bought by a good friend of ours in Zambia – Zambian farmers with a very diverse business. They're serious about what they're doing. Clearly, Jumbo was part of their plan for the future."

Another reason why Jumbo received such a high price include the fact that phenotypically, his structure is outstanding, says Hurwitz. "He's in perfect balance. His weight is about 860kg, so not too big, not too small. His masculinity ticks 10 out of 10. Then, we talk about his genetics, which definitely has to tick a box because it's related to reproduction and where you're going to pair that animal in the future. Another reason is his ability to produce superior progeny."

On top of that, auction-type thinking along with the increasing gravitas of the agriculture business came into play, says Hurwitz. "There's always the ego side of it – somebody wants this, and somebody doesn't want to lose it. Other animals and cattle have sold for similar prices over the past couple of months, so agriculture is definitely becoming serious business."

Hurwitz Farming has a farm of 5 000ha in Davel, midway between Bethal and Ermelo in Mpumalanga. "We have an integrated beef business in which we have stud cattle, which is the Boran herd which Jumbo comes out of," says Hurwitz. "It's the largest registered Boran herd in the world, with about 3 000 cattle."

In the 1980s, Hurwitz's late grandfather, Dr Barney Hurwitz, established Hurwitz Farming under the guise

of B Hurwitz Farming. "He took over the farming village from relatives of ours in order to prevent them from going under," says Simeon Hurwitz. "He was a pharmacist back in the day, made a name for himself in medical enterprises, and is the founder of Clinic Holdings, a group of hospitals, which later became

Netcare."

When their grandfather was ageing, Hurwitz and Jarren decided to drive out to the farm with him and become involved in the operation.

In those days, much less activity took place on the farm, says Hurwitz. "The herds of cattle were much smaller, agricultural cropping was much smaller, and so on. My brother and I elevated the farming operation to a different level by integrating, expanding, getting more modern with technology, investing in animals, crops, and land. We built it up over a space of maybe 12 years. It's been a quick learning curve and a quick growth curve."

Hurwitz points out that he's one of quite a lot of Jewish farmers in South Africa today – a couple of others being the Karan family in Johannesburg and the Neuman brothers in the Free State. "Wherever we go, we find a few Jewish families popping up," says Hurwitz. "When you do find Jewish people in farming, they definitely make an impact and a contribution and are leaders in their own sectors similar to other industries."



Jumbo, the Boran bull

Levin bowled over by Commonwealth Games medal

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Seventy-year-old Johannesburg lawn bowler, Desiree Levin, couldn't walk 10 years ago, so winning bronze at the Commonwealth Games on 3 August was "beyond her wildest dreams."

Having also exceeded her expectations by bagging bronze at the World Championships Para Bowls in 2015, this Killarney Bowls Club member didn't envision winning a medal when she and Victoria van der Merwe paired up for the first time ahead of their opening game against England in this year's Commonwealth Games.

The duo's 17-13 victory against the hosts was followed by wins against New Zealand and eventual champions Scotland before defeat against Australia in the semi-final resulted in them competing for bronze.

During the games, Levin could be heard giving words of encouragement to Van der Merwe amidst what she describes as "roaring applause" from the crowd.

"It's been a great experience," says Levin, who celebrated becoming a septuagenarian on 8 August. "The Commonwealth Games is just an event of a different magnitude. It's amazing what it has taken to pull this event off."

Having started playing para lawn bowls in 2014, Levin has won the South African Disability National Championship in the sport every year since then, "so I was pretty much an automatic selection for South Africa at the games", says the top-ranking gold medalist in national disability bowls for South Africa.

Leading up to the games, Levin and Van der Merwe didn't realise how high the standard of the opposition would be. "Of the top-six countries invited to participate in the Commonwealth Games para lawn bowls, only five could field a team," says Levin, an alumnus of Carmel College in Durban and the University of Natal. "Australia was young and very strong, while Scotland was older but also strong. England had the whole of England behind them, with the one lady being quite young and the other around my age. New Zealand had two middle-aged ladies."

When Levin was quite young, she started playing bowls as an able-bodied player. "I watched my parents always playing on a Sunday at a Jewish club and eventually tried playing bowls myself when I was allowed to," she recalls. "In those days, you couldn't start too young, but when I was old enough, I did. I played for only one year and then raised my family before starting again in 2001."

In 2009, Levin was paralysed after not fully recovering from Guillain-Barré Syndrome. "I ended up with quite a lot of problems, especially with balance. That's what made me a para person."

Having previously played provincial table tennis, squash, and golf, she found herself having to play lawn bowls while balancing against a wheelchair.

She says paraplegia was the greatest thing that ever happened to her. "It gave me a new dimension in life,

it gave me new aspirations, it introduced me to a new concept. Wow, it has opened my eyes enormously."

Recalling how she came to mentor para lawn bowler Mandy Latimore, chosen as a reserve for South Africa at the Commonwealth Games, Levin says, "I was told by somebody that she was an incredible activist for sport, having been paralysed herself, and she had apparently played a little bit of bowls during her rehabilitation. About six years ago, I phoned her and said, 'Why don't you come and play? I'll teach you.' That's how she started playing seriously."



Desiree Levin during the 2022 Commonwealth Games

Lawn bowls used to be one of the top spots in South Africa, but it has diminished for various reasons, says Levin. "Maybe because of the age bracket, immigration, and people simply not being able to get around to the clubs anymore. Now, we have started a whole new young dimension in bowls with an under 15, under 20, and under 30 national team. It's our time to rebuild the sport."

Although Levin thought that her bowling would dwindle in her 70s, she says there's "a lot on the table".

"I've been selected to play in the South African able-bodied masters, so that's going to be a tough weekend for me when I get back to the country. In March next year, there's an invitation team of para bowlers going to Australia for what they call the Australian Challenge."

The World Bowls Championships will be staged in August and September 2023. "In 2024, we have the World Bowls Championships for para bowlers in Gauteng, so there's quite a lot on the cards for the next two years. Hopefully, I'll be well enough and good enough to participate."

Asked what she likes about lawn bowls, Levin says, "Of all the sports I've played, and I have played many at provincial level, this is the most challenging. You really have to come to terms with who you are, the conditions, and the crowd. You need a strong mind to stay focused."

She encourages people to try the sport, saying, "It's a wonderful outing and a wonderful way for people who have disabilities to see another side of the world. It just gives you a different attitude to who and where you are."

She's done a lot of work for disability in South Africa. "I initiated the Rainbow Trips, a big competition to raise funds in South Africa. It grew from 35 participants to 222 in five years, during which time we also raised a lot of funds for disability."

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ANC can act fast



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

about proxy nations like Iran funding and orchestrating the conflict, one can only imagine what it could do in South Africa where it has knowledge and jurisdiction. No doubt the electricity crises would be solved by Friday afternoon at the very latest, and crime would be done and dusted by the following Monday.

It might sound absurd to deliberately blame Jews for something that they aren't responsible for, but considering that the ANC is doing this in any event when it comes to Israel, the approach is hardly new. The advantage of blaming the Jews in this case is that we might as well get something positive out of it.

Sadly, the ANC wouldn't be the first to scapegoat Jews for the sake of the country. And unfortunately, as history well knows, it will hardly be the last. Jews have been scapegoated by those way more impressive than the ANC.

The statements by Dirco and the ANC are unsurprising. They are factually absurd, deliberate in obfuscation of the truth, and antisemitic in approach.

As an organisation, the ANC's view of international affairs is irrelevant. Outside of South Africa, it's hard to imagine that anyone cares what it thinks – the result of its relentless and at times embarrassing support of the world's human-rights abusers.

If there's a lesson to be learned over the past week, it's not that the ANC has a visceral, irrational, and blinding hatred for the Jewish State. It is that this obsession is the one thing that spurs it into action. Which is why I need to tell it that just up the road, there's a pothole with the word "Haifa" written in the centre.

It has taken the African National Congress (ANC) 14 years to not solve the electricity crises. It has taken it 30 years not to address land reform in a meaningful way, and a similar amount of time not to provide education, healthcare, and safety for many of its citizens. It has, in the roughly 20 years of the Zimbabwean decline, failed to assist the people of the country.

It has taken it six months not to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. And it has taken forever for it never to criticise Iran or Cuba.

But it took the ANC and the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) an impressive 36 hours to assess the conflict in Israel. One has to assume that in that time, they needed to gather the facts, determine who was at fault, determine the impact of writing not one but two lengthy pieces, proofread and fact check them, and publicise them.

Impressive indeed! Especially for an organisation that seems to stop its internal battles only for lunch and perhaps a bit of pilfering.

Which proves that if motivated correctly, the ANC is capable of decisive action.

As an optimist and someone who seeks opportunity in every challenge, I began to wonder if there isn't a way to harness the knowledge that the ANC, when motivated out of hate for the Jewish State, is able to act.

What if, for example, we called the electricity crises a Jewish power problem? What if we told Naledi Pandor that victims of crime in South Africa are Palestinians? If the party could, in just a few hours, decode and simplify the complexity of the Middle East along with the required knowledge of its history, nuance, and influence of religion as well as concerns

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Gloves off, as Pandor sinks to new low



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

Diaspora Jewry has learned to brace itself for the inevitable backlash whenever conflict erupts between Israel and its neighbours.

Over the past 15 years, most of these conflicts have taken place on the Gaza front, something which could hardly have been anticipated when Israel withdrew its troops and evacuated in its entirety the Jewish population of the territory in 2005. Tragically, Gaza quickly fell under the sway of militant Islamist groupings whose core ideologies commit them to the pursuit of Israel's violent destruction, no matter how long it takes and regardless of the price that ordinary Palestinians have to pay.

Over the past week, we witnessed yet another round of violent confrontation, this time involving the smaller but no less fanatical faction Palestine Islamic Jihad. Thankfully, it was of relatively short duration, and the ceasefire, brokered by Egypt, appears to be holding. Hardly had the missiles begun flying, however, than ritual condemnations of Israeli "aggression" began flooding in, and as we have sadly come to expect, our own government and ruling party lost no time in adding their voices to the clamour.

As the representative voice of South African Jewry, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' stance is to be strictly apolitical. To bring the needs and concerns of our community to those in authority, we seek to maintain cordial relations with the government, as indeed we do with all political factions. This doesn't mean that we'll never disagree with the government when it comes to certain issues, but neither do we wish to be continually at loggerheads with it. Unfortunately, and particularly over the course of this year, South Africa's stance on Israel has become so obsessively and unreasonably

hostile that the Board has had no choice but to respond in correspondingly harsher terms.

Within hours of the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), as ever in the name of Minister Naledi Pandor, rushed to issue yet another virulent denunciation of the Jewish state, effectively denying Israel its right – and duty – to defend its citizens from the more than 1 100 rockets targeting them. In our statement, we contrasted this alacrity to condemn with South Africa's extraordinary silence regarding Russia's barbaric war of aggression against the Ukrainian people six months and tens of thousands of civilian deaths later. Likewise, we had waited in vain for the government even to express condolences when dozens of Israelis were killed or injured in a wave of terrorist attacks earlier this year. As always, all expressions of outrage were reserved solely for condemning Israeli acts of retaliation. Why, moreover, did our government have a problem only with Israelis defending themselves against violent Islamist extremism, when South Africa itself is fighting that very scourge just across our border in Mozambique?

We've become all too used to gross displays of hypocrisy on the part of Dirco, but with this latest demonstration that she has one set of standards for Israel and another for the rest of the world, Minister Pandor sank to a new low. It not only makes a mockery of South Africa's pretensions to being a moral voice on the global stage, but in a deeper sense is a tragic betrayal of the ruling party's proud legacy of peace building and reconciliation.

• 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

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JNF tour gives Herzlia staff first-hand experience of Israel



Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) recently sponsored a group of South African teachers from Cape Town Jewish schools on a trip to Israel to celebrate its 120th anniversary. Teachers from United Herzlia Schools departed on 4 July for the eight-day immersion tour of Israel to get a glimpse of Israeli life and culture. They formed part of a group of 39 South Africans from Herzlia, Rallim, Torah High, Sinai Academy, and Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School, and were joined by delegates from Australia, Canada, and the United States.

United Herzlia Schools believes in investing in its teachers and staff across its six schools and the value of experiencing Israel

first-hand to gain a multidimensional view of modern Israel. The intention was to include teachers who weren't Jewish and had never visited Israel before so that their experiences could be used to inspire their classes with a sense of Jewish identity and a love for Israel.

The tour was organised by the JNF that has over the past 115 years, bought land for Israel and evolved into a global environmental leader by planting more than 250 million trees, building more than 240 reservoirs and dams, developing more than 250 000 acres of land, creating more than 2 000 parks, providing the infrastructure for more than 1 000 communities, and connecting thousands of children and young adults to Israel and their heritage.

New youth leaders at King David Linksfield



Jake Weinstein
Head Student Leader



Noa Bakal
Head Student Leader



Gidon Romberg
Deputy Head Student Leader



Danielle Allan
Deputy Head Student Leader

ORT Jet keeps small business spinning

ORT Jet held an evening of spinning and partying at its cyclethon fundraiser at Montana The Club in Rosebank on 28 July. The cyclethon is one of the main fundraisers for ORT Jet, a non-profit organisation dedicated to facilitating the growth of businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurs.



Tsholofelo Mokgalaga and Jade Beyers

Herzlia welcomes new SRC



Front row: Shay-Lee Geva (Council Committee); Leah Marks (Council Committee)
Second row: Jason Collins (Head of Grade 9); Jenna Zetler (Council Committee); Isabella Sherman (Council Executive); Marc Falconer (Principal)
Third row: Taya Allardice (Head Student); Tristan Goldstein (Council Executive); Shane Brorson (Senior Deputy Principal)
Fourth row: Leo Bachmann (Council Executive); Jonathan Querido (Council Committee)
Back: Matthew Carrol (Council Committee)

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