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## Plea to prioritise security in wake of Thulsies' parole

NICOLA MILTZ

The Community Security Organisation (CSO) this week begged the community to prioritise security in light of last week's early parole of the notorious Thulsie twins, convicted on terrorism-related charges.

Tony-Lee and Brandon-Lee Thulsie, 28, were released from prison last Thursday, 18 August, six months after their trial was concluded in the Johannesburg High Court. The pair had entered into a plea agreement with the state after spending almost six years behind bars awaiting trial.

The brothers were convicted in February on charges including planning attacks on members of the community and Jewish installations.

Real fear of terrorist attacks at Jewish schools, shuls and elsewhere in the country reverberated at the time of their arrest in 2016, sending shockwaves through the community.

Jevon Greenblatt, the CSO's director of operations in Johannesburg, said that although the idea of them being free raised concerns, it didn't change the fact that "at any given time" there might be others with similar views planning similar attacks.

"We're pleading with the community not to hide its head in the sand," he said, adding that security was a collective effort and the CSO could do only so much.

He cautioned community

installations that continued to ignore security concerns in spite of warnings.

The Thulsie twins were teenagers when they converted to Islam and later became radicalised. They had planned to join Islamic State in Syria (ISIS), and attempted unsuccessfully to leave the country on two occasions. Frustrated by their failure to join ISIS abroad, they plotted to carry out terrorist attacks in South Africa, including on Western embassies and diplomats, Jewish installations including King David Linksfield, and members of the community, and mosques of the Shia Islam sect.

Among others, they contemplated targeting Jewish South Africans including cartoonist Jonathan "Zapiro" Shapiro. They publicly stated on social media that they supported ISIS and had downloaded a bomb making manual.

Jasmine Opperman, a security consultant specialising in extremism and political violence, expressed fear that the twins' early parole could send the wrong message.

"This can easily motivate international terror groups to find a home in southern Africa," Opperman said, "the perception being that even if there are court cases and convictions, people get early parole."

Security experts say the Thulsie case has exposed weaknesses in current legislation related to terrorism in South Africa, which make it difficult to secure

successful convictions.

Many have called for a review of the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Act (POCDATARA) and all current legislation related to terrorism, including calls to include thorough definitions of terms such as "terrorism", "extremism", and "radicalisation".

Opperman said to prove intent beyond doubt remained a highly complicated matter subject to interpretation.

"Counter-terrorism strategies are only as effective as legislation

allows. In South Africa, the term 'terrorism' remains loosely and broadly defined," she said.

"This should be a wake-up call to all governments in the region to revisit how terrorism is going to be countered in a court of law."

Dr Barend Prinsloo, senior lecturer in security studies at the School of Government Studies at North West University, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the plea bargain was the best outcome for the state, but legislation on terrorism in South Africa "should be strengthened".

In his research on Islam and Muslims in Africa,

he recently wrote that the first weakness is that POCDATARA fails to explain or define terrorism.

"An amendment to the Act was drafted in 2021, but wasn't signed into law by the time of the conclusion of the Thulsie case," Prinsloo wrote.

He said it was a victory for the state to get the accused essentially to admit to *actus reus* (the intention or actual doing of the crime). But the state's case would have been much stronger had there been a solid definition of terrorism in legislation.

Continued on page 4>>



### A Klass act

See story on page 5

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## 2 SA JEWISH REPORT

25 August – 1 September 2022

# Mob boss, suspected of extortion in SA, arrested in Israel

TALI FEINBERG

**A** criminal mob boss who was arrested in Israel is suspected of trying to blackmail Jewish businessmen in South Africa who specialise in crypto-currency. According to Israeli media, Yossi Mosley (sometimes translated as Musli or Mosli) was arrested on Sunday, 21 August, three days after attending his daughter's wedding, for which he returned to Israel.

The *Jerusalem Post* reported that Mosley was involved in placing a stun grenade near the home of one of these Jewish South African businessmen when he refused to co-operate with him.

"When they refused to give in to his blackmail, he arranged through his people in South Africa to threaten them and place a stun gun at the entrance to the house of one of them," a police source told the *Mako* news site. "The suspicions against him are serious. We have enough evidence against him in this case," the source continued.

This isn't the first time that he has been arrested, and not the first time he and his family's crimes have been linked to South Africa.

Back in 2015, when Mosley was serving 11 years in prison, his brother, Shay Mosley, was arrested in South Africa by local police on an Interpol warrant. He was captured at Montecasino while gambling.

The International Department of the State Prosecutor's Office launched his extradition to Israel. He was suspected of murder, attempted murder,

“

**THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THAT  
MOSLEY HAS BEEN ARRESTED, AND  
NOT THE FIRST TIME HE AND HIS  
FAMILY'S CRIMES HAVE BEEN  
LINKED TO SOUTH AFRICA.**

and conspiracy. However, Shay's lawyer at the time, Ian Levitt, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the extradition was unsuccessful and that as far as he knows, Shay is still in South Africa.

During Shay's bail hearing, it was put to the court that he was deeply integrated into the Sephardi community; his family are here, and his children attend local schools; he has never been a person of interest

in any investigation in South Africa; and therefore he wasn't a flight risk.

Meanwhile, Yossi was initially arrested upon his return to Israel two weeks ago. He was then released from house arrest to attend his daughter's wedding on Thursday, 18 August.

An undercover investigation conducted by the Major and International Crime Investigation Unit (Yachbal) led to the arrest of Yossi on suspicion of threats, extortion by threats, conspiracy to commit a crime, and illegally placing an explosive device.

During Yossi's daughter's wedding last week, more than 100 police officers, border police, riot police, and traffic division officers were

deployed. They were there to secure the event over concern of escalation due to such a large concentration of high-ranking criminals and their henchmen. Later in the night, two men were arrested nearby for an alleged assassination attempt.

Yossi is suspected of the murder of Avihai Vaknin, killed in February 2017, and of the attempted murders of the criminals Itzik Cohen and

**Continued on page 8>>**

## No road too long for this package

**Torah Thought**



**Rabbi Pini Pink  
– Chabad Greenstone**

**T**his week, we read the parsha of Re'eh, in which Moses instructs the Jewish people to bring their tithes to Jerusalem. For those who lived far from Jerusalem, there was a dispensation to bring the monetary value of the tithe and buy in Jerusalem instead of bringing everything with them. "If the road will be too long for you so that you cannot carry it, because the place that G-d, your G-d, will choose to place His name there is far from you." [14:24]

"The place that G-d, your G-d, will choose to place His name," in Hebrew, *hamakom*, is a reference to the Beit Hamikdash, the Temple that stood in Jerusalem. As the Jewish nation spread across the holy land, and in Second Temple times even to Babylon, it was often too far away to bring fruits and animals. Why does the verse need to repeat this with the double comment of, "If the road will be too long for you", and "because the place ... is far from you"?

The Dubna Maggid (d. 1804) clarifies with one of his parables on a verse in Isaiah (43:22): "You did not call out to me, Jacob, because you grew weary of me, Israel."

Someone once sent a messenger to pick up a package. Afterwards, the messenger refused the payment offered, claiming that it wasn't sufficient for carrying such a heavy bundle. In amazement, the sender said, "If the package was so heavy, obviously you weren't carrying my package. My package was very small and contained valuable gems." Similarly, the prophet is saying to the Jewish people, "If you grow weary and become tired doing my *mitzvot*, obviously you didn't call out to me, Jacob." In other words, they weren't done for his sake – the sake of heaven – because his *mitzvot* are a delight not a burden.

We're now in the month of Elul, in which we spend time in preparation for the high holidays. During this month, it's traditionally a time to look back over the year that has gone by and make firm resolutions for the coming year.

As we look back, it's easy to slip into feelings

of entitlement. We may feel that we have been good Jews, fulfilled our responsibilities to G-d, but that He has been lacking to us. Chassidic philosophy teaches about awe and

love of G-d. When we contemplate the awesomeness of Almighty G-d, it should engender feelings of deep love and appreciation for everything He does for us. Wishing you a *ksiva v'chasima tova*.

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In Jewish tradition, the month of Elul is a time of repentance in preparation for the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The word "Elul" is similar to the root of the verb "search" in Aramaic.

Elul is seen as a time to search one's heart and draw close to G-d in preparation for the coming Day of Judgement and Day of Atonement.

**Rosh Chodesh Elul** courtesy of



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**Rosh Chodesh 1 and 2 Elul (last month of the Jewish calendar) will fall on Shabbat – Parsha Re'eh, 27 and 28 August respectively.**

**It's customary to sound the shofar every day after the morning services from Rosh Chodesh 2, except on Shabbat until before Rosh Hashanah (New Year). This is to stir the Jewish people to introspection and repentance. It is also customary to recite Psalm 27 from Rosh Chodesh until Shemini Atzeret after morning and evening services. Selichot (supplications) commence at midnight on 21 Elul (17 September) or 22 Elul (18 September), and recited daily except on Shabbat until the day before Rosh Hashanah and after Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur.**

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# SA government delegation to Middle East ignores Israel

TALI FEINBERG

The deputy minister of international relations and cooperation, Candith Mashego-Dlamini, and her entourage took a trip to the Middle East on 21 August 2022 but left Israel off the itinerary. The entourage made stops in the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The trip was made soon after International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister Dr Naledi Pandor told visiting American Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "We must use the proven tools of diplomacy, peace-building, dialogue, and mediation to resolve conflict. South Africa is keen to be a partner in this endeavour."

"It's a little unusual for a senior South African government official to travel to the Middle East for meetings about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and not meet anyone on the Israeli side," said local political analyst Steven Gruzid. "The possibility of South Africa playing a credible mediation role has long passed, as the government has lined up firmly behind the Palestinians and makes no pretence of neutrality any more. South Africa doesn't wish to legitimate Israel, and so the deputy minister is acting like Israel doesn't exist."

views on the most recent developments in South Africa, the South African Development Community region, and the African continent. While in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, the deputy minister will hold meetings with her counterparts. The meetings will be aimed at deepening relations between South Africa and these countries."

Mashego-Dlamini was accompanied by the director-general of the department, Zane Dangor, and other officials. "The director-general will co-chair the second round of the South Africa – Palestine political consultations in Ramallah on 21 August 2022," said Monyela ahead of the trip.

"It's not normal for such a high-level delegation visiting the region not to visit Israel," said Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State. "Whether you like its politics or not, it's important to engage with Israel, because there's not going to be any peace without the Israeli side."

"There's a broader dynamic here," he said. "If you look at South Africa in terms of our stance regarding Ukraine and so forth, our foreign policy seems to be guided by an ideological prism which is fit for the 1960s not 2022. We don't have real pragmatism in terms of what our best



Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Candith Mashego-Dlamini and Palestinian Deputy Minister Dr Amal Jadou

Dirco spokesperson Clayson Monyela said in an official statement, "The working visit is intended to enhance and strengthen bilateral relations between South Africa and the Levant countries. This will include the formation of strategic dialogue between Palestine and South Africa aimed at advancing the Palestinians' desire to establish an independent, sovereign state."

Said Monyela, "It's expected that the visit will further provide the deputy minister an opportunity to exchange

interest as a country are.

"Israel has a lot to offer us. Beyond helping resolve the conflict, our national interests dictate that we engage with the state of Israel. That doesn't mean to say that we agree with all that it does. In the same way that South Africa doesn't agree with the United States on a variety of different issues – including Ukraine – our ambassador is still in the US. Excluding Israel doesn't reflect a mature foreign policy or a mature leadership in Pretoria."

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Priyal Singh, senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, whose research interests include South African policy, said, "My immediate takeaway is that on this particular trip, I don't think Israel was factored into South Africa's strategy." He believes that if South Africa was going to engage with Israel, it would have sent an even higher-level delegation. "Though there hasn't been any meaningful engagement with Israel for quite some time, South Africa may be building up to that engagement. It wouldn't have suited what it wanted to get out of this visit."

He said this visit was more of a symbolic one, rather than focusing on any meaningful conflict resolution. "South Africa is becoming more explicit in its opposition to the US," Singh noted. At the same time, he said South Africa was proud of being a constitutional democracy that prized human rights. He thinks this will hold South Africa back from officially aligning itself with states like Iran and Syria.

He believes South Africa still wants to play a role in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "South Africa calls for mediation and dialogue in other places, but when it comes to Israel and the Palestinians, it disengages from one party. If it were to play a constructive mediation role, it would need to build some level of trust and rapport with Israel. And even if South Africa appears to support isolating Israel, it doesn't officially boycott it. Israel and South Africa have trade relations, back-and-forth investment, and historic ties. All of this points to a confused foreign policy."

"Strategic dialogue on issues relating to Palestinian statehood need to include input from Israeli and South African representatives," said South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. "It highlights the importance of having a South African ambassador based in Israel to help facilitate such dialogue. Appointing an ambassador would help improve South Africa's image by creating a fair and balanced approach to its diplomatic efforts."

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner said the

visit showed that "South Africa may be looking for ways to practically re-engage in the region. We hope that this visit will be followed up with an official visit to Israel in the near future."

"The SAJBD believes that a negotiated two-state solution, with Israeli and Palestinian states co-existing in peace alongside one another within secure borders, is the only way forward. South Africa can play an important role as a mediating partner. This, however, can be done only when there's a direct understanding of the situation on the ground, based on engaging with all parties. We hope that the deputy minister's visit signals the beginning of such a process."

The SA Jewish Report approached Dirco for comment, but received no response.

The Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa and Dirco's Facebook pages shared almost identical posts about the trip. This after Pandor recently admitted to the fact that South Africa had funded that embassy since its creation in 1994.

The embassy's page said the deputy minister had arrived in Jerusalem, but at no point was this described as being in Israel. She then went to Bethlehem.

Using the hashtag #SAinPalestine, both Dirco and the embassy said, "Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini accompanied by a Dirco delegation, visited the Yasser Arafat tomb and museum in Ramallah, Palestine."

"The museum serves as an ongoing repository of national knowledge and culture where information on the history and culture of Palestine is displayed," they said. "The museum also encourages effective dialogue with the public. This is a resource centre established as a vital, educational research facility for the local community and those interested in the Palestinian cause and the life and legacy of Yasser Arafat."

Both Dirco and the embassy shared that the deputy minister had participated in the "second session of the Palestine-South Africa strategic dialogue with her counterpart, Dr Amal Jadou, the deputy minister of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

"The purpose of the #SAPalestine #StrategicDialogue is to deepen relations between Palestine and South Africa including on political, economic, cultural, and social issues. Furthermore, it also provides a platform for government representatives from the two countries to exchange information on developments within the region as well as globally," continued the post. This was accompanied by the hashtags #SAinPalestine, #SAPalestineRelations and #Solidarity4Palestine.

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# Half a year of war and wandering the world

TALI FEINBERG

South African-born Rebbetzin Rochi Levitansky has travelled between seven countries since she fled Ukraine six months ago. Like millions of others, she found herself on a rollercoaster ride as a refugee since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. But this week, her husband and sons made their way back to their hometown of Sumy, where they visited those in their community who stayed behind.



Burning of *chometz* (bread) before Pesach in Poland, April 2022

"It's surreal," says Levitansky, about her husband, Rabbi Yechiel Levitansky, visiting Ukraine. The couple are Chabad *shluchim* (emissaries), and are still tending to the needs of those who remained in Sumy. Never did she imagine that the war would still be raging six months later and that she and her children would be scattered around the world with no place to call home.

Rebbetzin Sora Levinson, whose brother, Rabbi Levi Silman lives in Cape Town, also fled the war from Kharkiv, escaping to Moldova and then America. "We left everything. Each child took a small case with some clothes and valuables. Thank G-d there are a lot of kind family, friends, and people we had never met who helped

us when we came to New York. My kids still talk about 'when we go back'. They don't realise how much damage has been done to the city," she says. She's grateful that their home is still standing, but has no idea when she'll be able to return.

She and her husband, Rabbi Chaim Eli, who are also Chabad *shluchim*, have tried to put down roots while living life in limbo. They are still tending to the needs of their community, now scattered around the globe.

Vita Pugh-Jones lives in South Africa, but her mother, brother, and relatives are still in Ukraine. "I'm even more worried about what's going on than I was before because before, it was just a few areas that were affected, but now, it's everywhere. There's no safe place in Ukraine," she says.

"Another thing is the threat of damage to the nuclear power station. It could be another Chernobyl. Speaking to my family, everything is so expensive, and obviously, salaries stay the same or there's a delay in getting paid as there's no money in the country. They may have to go through winter without any heating, which is very worrying."

The head of the Ukrainian Association of South Africa, Dzvinka Kachur, says, "It's still difficult to believe that something like this is possible – that 376 children have been killed or that 2 000 hospitals have been bombed, or that thousands of civilians have been killed. Six months also brings the realisation that the need for humanitarian aid is growing all the time, but attention to the matter is decreasing."

She says getting refugee status in South Africa is difficult. Ukrainian refugees have been able to get a visitor's visa for three months, which can be extended once. So already, some refugees who came in February have had to leave. Others have been able to get a "relatives visa" for two years, "but there is little certainty about who the government will allow to stay".

She thanked those who have supported Ukraine. "I call on businesses to stop trade or any co-operation with Russia as it supports its killing of civilians and war crimes."

South African Ronnie Apteker also fled Kyiv with his wife and son in the early days of the war. Six months later, they remain in South Africa. Writing on his blog, Apteker says, "When 9/11 happened America and the rest of the globe was shocked. This tragedy changed everyone's lives. And now in Ukraine, we're witnessing terrorism constantly but not much has changed in the world – well, not that I can see."

"Perhaps I'm just cynical but I don't believe Russia is being punished for what it's doing. It's insane and evil, and yet, it keeps doing it, and the world is watching, week after week. If a mall in a G7 country was hit by a missile or if a residential building got destroyed by a rocket, there would be a backlash towards Russia the next day. A total boycott would be the result. But when it's Ukraine, who cares?"

Levitansky, who is in New York, says she's blessed to have been able to help other refugees fleeing the war. The highlight of this was running a "refugee hotel" in Warsaw. The project was run by Chabad, which found sponsors to keep it going for many months.



Rebbetzin Rochi Levitansky saying goodbye to people in Poland

slept on chairs. She cried the whole time, as she had lost contact with her daughter and grandchildren.

"Then one day, the building was bombed and went up in flames. They had nowhere to go and moved from town to town. Her elderly father collapsed and died, and they buried him along the way. Though she lost her father, she eventually found her daughter and grandchildren. All they had were the clothes on their backs. It felt like something from 70 years ago, not my modern world. How can that be?"

The refugees wanted for nothing at the hotel. Children were entertained, and people could recuperate after horrific ordeals. The Levitanskys kept Jewish life alive. "On Shavuot, people stayed up all night learning.

People really wanted to hold onto their Judaism," Levitansky says.

Most refugees were Jews, but if non-Jews arrived and had nowhere else to go, space was made for them. Eventually the hotel closed, but "we didn't leave until everyone had a place to go," she says. She and her family hope to continue working with refugees, and see their journey as part of Hashem's plan.



Rabbi Yechiel Levitansky putting on tefillin with his son in Poland

"The refugee hotel was for people who needed to wait before heading to other places, or people who had nowhere else to go," she says. "Many of our community members came there, which was emotional. We had 150 people for Pesach. Some had never celebrated it before, some never imagined they would be having a seder, and there we were, having Pesach together."

She says some of the stories she heard from refugees were horrific. "We had a couple from Mariupol. She, her husband, and her elderly parents lived in the basement of their apartment building for 40 days and 40 nights. They ate jars of food. They broke pipes to get water. They

on with life, making food, writing software, building airplanes, and more. Tourism was on the rise, and life in Ukraine was good.

"Now, innocent people are being brutally killed just about every day, and it seems like it will never end. And yet, the average Russian is carrying on with their lives without a care in the world. Something isn't right with this scenario. Please G-d, this nightmare war ends soon. If Russia wins this war and destroys Ukraine, then evil and terrorism have prevailed, and it will spread. What kind of a world is this then? Not a world I want to be a part of."

## Plea to prioritise security in wake of Thulsies' parole

>>>Continued from page 1

Greenblatt said the CSO was confident that should authorities become aware that the community was under imminent threat, it would be notified.

"The question is whether they will pick up the threat in time before there's an issue, and do they have capacity before the threat becomes real," he said.

He said the Thulsie arrest and conviction should be a wake-up call to all South Africans.

"Not only was one of their primary targets a Jewish school, but other cell members, arrested at the same time and later released, went on to commit acts of extreme violence in support of ISIS or to join the ISIS insurgency in Mozambique," he said.

"There's no doubt that there are extremist individuals and groups operating in South Africa. They are ready and able to do whatever is necessary to further the vision of radical Islam and its expansion – particularly in Africa – which is the new frontline in the global war on terror."

Security insiders have expressed concern about whether the twins have been

rehabilitated.

"What we do know from other cases around the world is that radicalised individuals often become more radicalised in prison, and that a fair number go on to commit acts of terror once they're released," said Greenblatt. "Whether this is true for the Thulsie twins remains to be seen."

He expressed concern about the state's dire lack of resources.

"Even in countries with substantially more resources, tracking and monitoring of radicalised groups and individuals is a difficult task, with numerous examples of the systems failing and known terrorists going on to commit attacks," he said.

The twin's lawyer, Nadeem Mahomed, didn't respond to requests for comment at the time of going to press. He told *Salaam Media* the Thulsies "are young and they will have a long, happy, and prosperous life ahead of them".

He said they had plans, including focusing on their religious and other studies.

"They ought not to be under surveillance," Mahomed said, as they had a parole officer and would live under normal parole conditions.


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# A Klass act – 91 years old and still in the driver’s seat

NICOLA MILTZ

“Drive for as long as you can,” advises 91-year-old Holocaust survivor Irene Klass of Johannesburg, who last week renewed her driver’s license.

The well-groomed, red-haired nonagenarian told the *SA Jewish Report* that driving gives her “independence and freedom” – two things she lacked growing up in Poland when World War II broke out.

“Driving is a necessity,” she said. “My two daughters live overseas, and I don’t want to burden people by asking for lifts, so I drive myself around.”

Not only does she manage to get from A to B, she also continues to play a regular game of bowls at her bowling club, although there aren’t many players left these days, she says.

“I also go shopping for groceries. I want to be able to do these things myself, and driving allows me to do this.”

Klass, who drives a white Nissan, concedes that she doesn’t drive as much as she used to but holds on to the fact that she can still get around at her age.

She received help from one of the volunteers at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) to apply online to renew her license, and was then taken for an obligatory eye test, which she passed.

On Wednesday, 17 August, she was taken



to the Driving Licensing Testing Centre at the Midrand Gautrain Station to collect it.

“I’m pleased. One needs a driver’s license to get around, otherwise you have to rely on others, which isn’t my choice,” she said.

She posed for a picture with the staff at the testing centre, who were enamoured with her positive attitude and zest for life.

“Irene is fantastic,” said Shirley Sapire of the JHGC.

“She still speaks to children at schools about her experiences during the Holocaust, and attends our Holocaust survivor meetings at the centre, where she was an active volunteer,” Sapire said.

“She also walks every day around her complex in her retirement village, and is an inspiration.”

Born in Lodz, Poland, Klass was eight when war broke out in the country. She was in the Warsaw Ghetto, and managed to escape to live with a non-Jewish woman in Warsaw. When the war ended, she left Poland with a transport of orphans for England.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a particularly lonely time for the independent Klass, who found herself

confined to her home, unable to go shopping or to the hairdresser.

She was also unable to enjoy playing Kalooki with friends and attend monthly meetings at the centre, where she would usually gather for some form of entertainment and companionship. During the lockdown, she read, watched television, and walked twice a day to pass the time. Those days brought sad memories of her youth spent in the Warsaw Ghetto, when she was one of four people confined to a tiny room, unable to go out and play.

However, Klass said she had lived through worse times than the COVID-19 pandemic, and was a survivor.

“Thankfully those pandemic days are over, and I can now drive around freely,” she said.

# Domestic workers: what you don’t know about the law

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

She looks after your children, cleans your house, cooks your food, co-ordinates your household, and sometimes lives on your property. Yet, are you aware of your domestic worker’s legal rights?

“In many ways, domestic workers are an intimate part of our lives,” said Dawn Norton in a presentation, “Domestic workers and the changing legal landscape” delivered to the Union of Jewish Women in Glenhazel this week. Norton is the director of employment law at Mkhabela Huntley Attorneys.

Considering the fact that there are about 900 000 domestic workers in South Africa, most of whom are African women, they are a significant category of employee. However, domestic workers are generally not unionised, and there’s not much information about them in the public arena. “They are vulnerable and exploited,” said Norton.

There are, however, minimum legal entitlements for domestic workers which afford them a certain level of protection. Yet, the minimum wage for domestic workers is R23,19 an hour – a figure that’s adjusted over time – which means adhering to the minimum requirements isn’t nearly enough.

Norton laid out the regulations regarding hours of work and pay:

- Domestic workers may be required to work a maximum of 45 hours a week;
- An additional 10 hours of overtime is permitted. This is charged at one and a half times the hourly rate. Alternatively, the regular hourly rate is paid plus 30 minutes off per extra hour worked;
- A “stand-by allowance” is when the domestic worker, while in her room, is on call from 18:00 to 06:00. This can happen only up to five times a month. Here, workers are entitled to R30 a shift whether or not they’re called out. If they’re

called out, this is considered overtime, so they receive one and half times pay;

- After working for five hours solid, the employee is entitled to a one-hour lunch break; and
- Double pay is required for work on Sundays or public holidays.

Domestic workers are also entitled to three weeks of paid annual leave, which must be taken within six months of the end of a cycle. So, explained Norton, should a domestic worker start in January 2022, and a leave cycle goes to December 2022, then by June 2023, she must have taken her three weeks’ annual leave. If an agreement around dates cannot be reached, the employer has the final say. “For those who have worked less than a year, leave is calculated at one day paid annual leave per 17 days worked.”

Six weeks of paid sick leave in a three-year period which equates to two weeks a year is required. Domestic workers are also entitled to family responsibility leave for the illness or death of a parent, child, or partner.

“If workers are employed for more than four days a week for longer than four months, they are entitled to five days’ paid family responsibility leave,” said Norton. “The employer is allowed to ask for reasonable proof of illness or death.

Domestic workers are also entitled to four months’ unpaid maternity leave, and they may claim compensation from the UIF. “There’s

no entitlement from the employer to pay for maternity leave, they just have to give the time off and keep the domestic worker’s job open for this period,” said Norton. Provision is also made for miscarriage, where the worker is entitled to six weeks’ unpaid leave.



If someone is working for more than 24 hours a month for you, there needs to be a written contract of employment in place. “However,” said Norton, “if there’s no written contract, it doesn’t mean that there’s no contract, there is still a verbal contract in place.”

In the case of retrenchment, there needs to be a paid notice period of four weeks for any worker who has been employed for six months or more. Severance pay is made up of one week’s pay for every year of completed service. Workers are also entitled to one month of notice pay and any outstanding accumulated leave must be paid out.

Whether it be about substantial breakages, theft concerns, or extended leave without notice, the employer is entitled to dismiss their domestic worker should issues of misconduct arise. “You don’t need a fully-fledged hearing, but you must

make the allegation of misconduct known to the employee and, importantly, provide an opportunity for their response,” said Norton. “To dismiss your employee, the nature of the misconduct must warrant the termination.”

You don’t need to pay notice in this case, but any outstanding leave must be paid out. If, like many, you’re concerned about being taken to the CCMA, take comfort. “Provided you have been fair and the nature of the misconduct is serious, you shouldn’t have a problem,” said Norton.

Finally, it’s important to keep abreast of new legal developments. COIDA (the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Death Act) said Kyle Bentley, a candidate attorney at Mkhabela Huntley Attorneys, was applied to domestics in 2021. “If a domestic worker gets injured, ill, or dies in execution of their work duties, they or their dependants – if the worker is the breadwinner – are entitled to compensation.”

Employers are required to pay this compensation annually for any domestic worker who works in their home for more than 24 hours a month. Register your domestic for COIDA via the government website – where you’ll search for government gazette #44250, said Bentley. This compensation must be paid, regardless of whether or not a domestic employee submits a claim.

What’s more, the law has a retrospective effect. Domestic workers who suffered injury, disease, or death due to work are entitled to compensation dating back to 27 April 1994. They or their dependants can now lodge a claim for past work-related injuries or death. “Yet, if you register your employee with COIDA, the responsibility shifts to the compensation fund rather than the individual employer,” said Norton.

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# Tali Nates makes history on receiving the Goethe Medal

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Holocaust educator Tali Nates founded the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) in 2008.

Now, Germany, the country that led the systematic murder of six million Jews during World War II, has awarded her the Goethe-Institut's Goethe Medal, making her the first South African to receive it.

Nates, the executive director of the JHGC, will be awarded the Goethe Medal, the most important award in Germany's foreign cultural policy, on 28 August by the president of the Goethe-Institut, Carola Lentz. The award isn't just for founding the JHGC, but also for contributing to the fields of Holocaust and genocide education, dialogue, and memory in South Africa, Africa, and globally.

The Goethe Medal ceremony will take place in Weimar, the city which hosted the constituent assembly that established the Weimar Republic, Germany's government from 1919 until the rise of Nazi Germany in 1933.

Weimar is also the home of the poet, playwright, novelist, scientist, statesman, theatre director, and critic widely regarded as the greatest and most influential writer in the German language, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whom the Goethe-Institut and medal is named after.

Nates previously received an Absa Jewish Achiever Award, the Czech Republic's Gratias Agit Award, and the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award, but being awarded the

Goethe Medal "really took [her] by surprise", she says.

"It's a famous and distinguished award. When you see all those wonderful, deserving people who have won it from all around the

who have rendered outstanding services to the teaching of the German language and to international cultural exchange.

In November 2021, the Goethe-Institut called Nates to say its jury had chosen her as one of the four cultural notables to receive the award in 2022, the others being visual artist Mohamed Abla, and the artists of the Sandbox Collective, Nimi Ravindran and Shiva Pathak.

"What!" Nates responded in disbelief. "Sorry, can you repeat?"

"Yes, yes, you've won it," the Goethe-Institut replied. "You have to keep it quiet because the actual announcement is happening only in 2022."

When the award was officially announced in May, Nates says, "I was allowed to tell the world, my board of trustees, and all the supporters."

Nates said the award recognises the JHGC's "innovative way of looking at the past to make connections to today's world. That's why we are different to other institutes in the way we do it constantly with conferences, workshops, new projects, and so on."

She says German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock will speak about her and the other three recipients. "I had a wonderful meeting with her speech writer to share some of my stories," Nates says. "It's a great honour. She's Germany's first woman foreign minister, and her past actions and standing as a new foreign minister is inspirational."

In addition to Baerbock, Nates is also "looking forward to meeting many other dignitaries, mayors, presidents, and so on".

The European Union special representative



Tali Nates with a photo of her father, Moses Turner

Photo: Jono David of the HaChayim HaYehudim Jewish Photo Library

world – from [seven-time Grammy-winning pianist and conductor] Daniel Barenboim, [international best-selling author] John le Carré, and so on – the first reaction was disbelief, then great excitement. I was so humbled and honoured, not only for me, but for everyone who made this centre possible and for everyone pouring their hearts into this important work."

Since 1955, the Goethe-Institut has awarded the Goethe Medal annually as an official decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany. It honours global public figures

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for the Horn of Africa and conflict researcher, Annette Weber, will give a laudatory speech about Nates. "She's also famous in her own right because of her expertise in Africa," Nates says.

Nates will also speak for a few minutes. "Apart from saying thank you, I will speak about my own history as a daughter of a survivor who was saved by a German, Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi party. Besides the rescue, perpetration, and the killing of the rest of the family, I will connect to the lessons I learned from this personal history about the importance of creating centres such as ours to connect the past and the present and learn lessons for humanity."

A six-minute film will be shown about Nates and the JHGC. "A filmmaker filmed me and schools coming here, interviewed teachers, and Holocaust survivor Irene Klass," Nates says.

The daughter of Polish parents, her mother leaving the country before World War II, Nates grew up interested in history,

studying the subject first at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Having emigrated to South Africa with her husband at the end of 1985 to study further at the University of the Witwatersrand, Nates went on to establish the JHGC in 2008 from a remote office.

"We would go to schools and do all our activities in partnership with other museums and centres," she recalls. "In 2016, we moved into the specially built JHGC centre, courtesy of a partnership with the City of Johannesburg. Then we established a permanent exhibition before officially opening every aspect of the building in March 2019."

Besides opening the centre, other memorable moments for Nates include being at the opening of the memorial and museum at the Belzec death camp, where most of her father's family were murdered; being invited by Marlene Bethlehem to facilitate an impactful workshop for women in August 2004; and visiting her father's home town in Poland.



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# Former IDF soldier recalls shooting that changed his life

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When Roei Ben-Tolila was an officer in the elite units of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), he always told his soldiers, “There’s nothing you can’t do”.

So, when the then 23-year-old Ben-Tolila tried to move his legs after being severely injured during combat in May 2004 and nothing happened, he couldn’t understand why. “For me, that was what I would describe as a crisis, the moment that you can’t rely on the belief that helps you to deal with obstacles and escape,” said Tolila at Sydenham Shul on 20 August during a talk about his life.

Although he has remained paralysed in a wheelchair since the injury, the 41-year-old is a mentor, facilitator, and leadership lecturer who helps educational, social, and business leaders work together to achieve their goals. He has worked with organisations that specialise in training leaders such as Maoz and the Mandela Institute. He’s the founder of the wheelchair basketball team Beit HaLochem in Jerusalem, and for the past 13 years, has played for the Israeli national team. He’s married to Maya, and is the father of four children.

Born and bred on a kibbutz in Israel, Ben-Tolila went to a premilitary programme after finishing school. “It was supposed to prepare you for the army not only militarily, but also mentally and spiritually,” he said.

After joining the army, Ben-Tolila was the commander of two teams tasked with arresting terrorists who would blow

themselves up in public spaces. “Our main mission was to arrest all the terrorists, not when they walked in our streets in Yerushalayim, Haifa, or Be’er Sheva, but when they were in their houses in Palestinian cities,” said Ben-Tolila.

During a mission to arrest a terrorist in the Palestinian city of Jinbeh, Ben-Tolila experienced the moment that changed his life. “Someone started shooting,” he recalled. “I saw the shooting wasn’t supposed to hurt us. I told my soldiers, ‘It’s not a good enough reason to stop our mission, we’re to continue. Remember, there’s nothing you can’t do, there many things you don’t want to do.’”

Unfortunately, an IDF soldier from another unit made the opposite assumption. “This soldier joined us about two hours before the mission,” said Ben-Tolila. “He had a panic attack. He made a huge mistake. He saw me as a terrorist, and shot me a number of times.”

The soldier in Tolila’s unit who came to save him had a dilemma – “whether to listen to his heart or to what the commander of the mission said two hours before: ‘Don’t take care of wounded soldiers because you can take care of one soldier, but then you risk many other soldiers. Also, please don’t invite the helicopter, as we have a hospital about 10 minutes from here.’”

Nevertheless, the soldier called the helicopter, and tried to save Ben-Tolila’s life in the middle of an urban area where they were exposed to terrorists.



Roei Ben-Tolila, Rabbi Yehuda Stern, and Stanley and Ingrid Seeff

girlfriend, later that it was probably his last hour.

“According to the doctors, the second scenario, if I stayed alive, would probably be to suffer brain damage,” said Ben-Tolila. “The third scenario, which the doctors said would be a miracle, was that I would wake up and suffer a spinal-cord injury, but my head would be fine.”

When Ben-Tolila woke up fully functionally mentally, his family members had the happiest day ever, he said. “They experienced a miracle. For me, it was the saddest moment in my life.”

He lost 20kg in two weeks, his days as a commander were over, and no solution could be found to his paralysis.

However, he forgave the soldier who shot him.

Ben-Tolila moved to a rehabilitation centre before a doctor took him to an “amazing” place for wounded soldiers. “I could

“He was doing everything to save me,” said Ben-Tolila. “After five minutes, he tried to feel my heartbeat but felt nothing. He spoke to the commander, saying, ‘He’s probably not alive anymore.’ He tried to do complicated surgery to save my life while risking his life and that of our teammates. My life was saved thanks to him. He got a medal of honour for his actions. But my life was also saved thanks to three other people, one being Dani.”

Ben-Tolila met the latter a year before he joined the army. They became best friends.

“He didn’t know that it was me,” said Ben-Tolila. “He just knew he had an opportunity to save a person’s life. Even though they were told that the wounded soldier was probably no longer alive, they chose to land a helicopter, piloted by Dani, in an unauthorised place, and saved my life.”

Ben-Tolila was so severely injured, doctors told his family and Maya, his then

play many types of sport there such as wheelchair table tennis and basketball.”

In 2006, “a few days after the last Monday of the Second Lebanon War, at 20:00, it was the wedding of someone I knew. At the same time, less than 2km from there, Dani was buried. His friends had to take a significant decision. Do we go to the wedding or the funeral? For me, it was even harder because Dani was the guy who saved my life. I never had the chance to get closure in our relationship.”

Ben-Tolila never thanked Dani for saving his life. “I thought it would embarrass him because he was a modest, humble guy. I thought that according to him, he just did his mission.”

Unsure what to do, Ben-Tolila and his friends phoned Dani’s father who said, “The funeral won’t be less sad if you’re not there, but the wedding will be less happy.” Thus, they went to the place where they could influence the result.

## Mob boss, suspected of extortion in SA, arrested in Israel

>>>Continued from page 2

Yankal’e Amsalem over which he was initially arrested two weeks ago upon landing in Israel. His family is also previously linked to the assassination of Shimmy Anu, another alleged mobster, who was gunned down near Johannesburg in 2013.

Yossi fled Israel to South Africa in 2017 after several of his criminal associates were arrested. It’s not yet clear whether the authorities in Israel will pursue any co-accused South Africans or Israeli citizens in South Africa.

According to an article in *Tablet* magazine published in 2019 titled “A field guide to Israel’s organised crime”, Yossi is the boss of his organisation and his “home turf” is south Tel Aviv.

The article explains that the family started out as greengrocers, but are known to police as Israel’s gambling kings, setting up a network of illegal casinos

in southern Tel Aviv. Three sons – Yossi, Eli, and Shay – grew the family business, turning it into an international crime organisation that also ran legitimate businesses like a vegetable-distribution operation.

In 2015, the police believed it had all the evidence it needed to bring down the Mosleys, arresting the organisation’s members and accusing them of assassinating a few of their former colleagues who had turned state witnesses. To the embarrassment of the police, the case collapsed in the wake of bad intelligence work as well as the mysterious murder of one of the prosecution’s key witnesses, who was killed when his car exploded.

The *Jerusalem Post* reported in 2015 that the Mosley family allegedly ran gambling and other criminal enterprises in South Africa as well as casinos in Romania.

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# Why land for peace is a myth in Israel

STEVEN GRUZD

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict essentially pits Jewish Zionism against Arab anti-Zionism, Israeli academic Dr Einat Wilf told a webinar hosted by the South African Board of Jewish Education and King David Schools on 18 August. Though the Jews were prepared to accept a state in only part of the historical land of *eretz Yisrael*, the Arabs weren't prepared to accept a Jewish state in any part of the land, in any borders. "Both sides are trapped in a battle of mutual exhaustion" that they both think they are winning, Wilf said.

At the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, "land for peace" appeared viable and even attainable for the Israeli left. The equation was that Israel would eventually give up the territory conquered in the 1967 Six-Day War – the Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and the Sinai Peninsula – in exchange for peace with the Arab and Muslim world.

In 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak was in serious negotiations with chairperson of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Yasser Arafat, under talks hosted by United States President Bill Clinton. "The proposal addressed all the areas that we were told were the obstacles to peace – the occupation, settlements, and Jerusalem," Wilf said. Israel proposed its withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank, dismantling settlements or exchanging them for other land, and dividing Jerusalem so that half the city could serve as the capital of a Palestinian state.

"I'm not just talking about the square kilometre that is the Old City in Jerusalem, an area I like to call 'insanity central', but

100km<sup>2</sup> of Jerusalem neighbourhoods," Wilf said.

"But Arafat walked away. Abu Mazen [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas] walked away from an even more generous offer by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2008," she said.

"And there was no public criticism of this refusal from the Palestinian public or the Arab world. In fact, these leaders were criticised only for negotiating in the first place."

This was followed by a wave of terror in Israel known as the "Second Intifada".

"It was the darkest time I remember in Israel," said Wilf. "Innocent people were blown to bits. It felt like you were playing Russian Roulette with your life every time you went to a café, in a bus, or car.

"It left Israelis in the peace camp asking what Palestinians wanted. They clearly didn't want an end to occupation, settlements, or Jerusalem – they could have had all this and they didn't take it. They wanted something so much more. What's that other thing for which they were prepared to throw away

multiple opportunities for statehood?

"The answer was clear and had been consistent for years. We didn't see it, or didn't listen. They said, 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' and you can add 'of Jews' to the end of that. First and foremost, there should be no Jewish state in any part of the land," Wilf said.

At every juncture when faced with the possibility that Jews would have some of the land, the Palestinians walked away.

"In 1967, 2000, 2008, the Arabs said, 'No! No! A thousand times No!' This is the conflict. It's incredibly simple in essence," Wilf said.

"How do we get to peace? Either the Jews give up Zionism or the Arabs give up anti-Zionism. The problem is that both sides believe they are winning."

She said many Arabs describe Israel as a "second Crusader state", peopled by foreigners – "European, white-settler colonialists" with no rights or connection to the land, who should therefore be thrown out.

However, the Abraham Accords got some Arab states to abandon anti-Zionism. "And they are brilliantly named. There's no better word than 'Abraham' to flip the narrative that Jews have no bond to the land. I wrote an

opinion piece with two young Emiratis who insisted on saying that anti-Zionism had been an utter waste of time and money."

"The Palestinians' so-called 'right of return' for all those who fled or were exiled in 1948 and 1967 isn't a mere bargaining chip in negotiations. In the 2000s, we didn't believe that this is what they really wanted. Faced with a choice, we thought they would exchange this 'right' for their state. We were wrong."

The Arabs recognised that if Palestinian refugees were absorbed into their host countries, this would be a de facto acceptance of Israel, and hence the end of the war. "They aren't willing to do that," Wilf said.

"They blackmail the West to keep these people perpetual refugees who would one day return. They are indulged, and maintain this perennial loophole, a vital part of Palestinian identity. To be Palestinian is to be a Palestinian refugee.

"The Palestinians' top priority isn't their state, it's no Jewish state. And when they say they support two states, what they mean is a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Jordan, and a Palestinian state in what's now Israel." They never say that one of the two states should be a Jewish state. "It's disingenuous to say that they ever supported two states and now reluctantly support one state. That was always their goal."

She noted that the past two decades have devastated the Israeli left and right, creating a large centrist political bloc. "If the price for real peace with the Arab world was the West Bank, about 70% to 80% of Israelis would support it and say it's totally worth it. But 'land for peace' as a compelling political idea is dead. It's not why we don't have peace now."

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# Beauty not necessarily in the eye of the beholder

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Likhlukhit was a woman so ugly, her husband divorced her, according to the Talmud. In exploring this story, Jewish educator and psychologist Adina Roth reflected on the nature of beauty and how women see themselves.

From the realm of Greek mythology to the Talmud to modern times, women have sought the secret to beauty, whether it be within a mythological box of ointment or through new cosmetic products. Yet, the Talmud offers hidden insights on what truly constitutes beauty, Roth told Limmud Johannesburg.

She highlighted a passage from Deuteronomy, which explains that a man may divorce his wife “if she finds no favour in his eyes” – if he doesn’t like something about her. Examining this, Roth looked at the Mishna, the oral Torah, in which Rabbi Akiva says that a man may also divorce his wife if he finds another woman who is more beautiful.

In both sources, said Roth, the evaluation of female beauty comes through the lens of the man. “Even from this



Adina Roth

very ancient text, we have the assessment of a woman’s beauty that is squarely in the domain of what, in feminist theory, is called the male gaze.”

Though in biblical times men could control the destiny of women through their “gaze”, this isn’t the case today. “However, the perception of the male gaze still influences how women feel about themselves,” said Roth. Women conspire with it by succumbing to the pressure it brings to look a certain way, and judging themselves and others accordingly.

Returning to the system of marriage in biblical times, which was central to society, Roth said rabbis had to find their power in the face of vows made by husbands, who declared their wives *konam* (forbidden), a form of divorce. Though vows are taken seriously in Judaism, according to the Mishna, if a vow is based on something that false, it doesn’t hold.

Furthermore, argues the Gemara, the rabbinic commentary on the Mishna, even if the vow wasn’t made in error, but an ugly woman became beautiful, it could be dissolved. This is especially true of something as transient as beauty.

In the story under discussion, the man could find nothing beautiful in his wife, Likhlukhit. He therefore declared her *konam* unless Rabbi Ishmael, the son of Yosei, who was an advocate for women’s beauty, could find something beautiful in her.

Likhlukhit stood before the rabbi and his students, and they analysed each of her physical features, finding nothing beautiful in any of them. Yet, when they heard her name, they found it beautiful as it reflected who she was. “It’s beautiful that she’s called by the name Likhlukhit, as she is dirty [*melukhlekhet*] with blemishes, and he admitted her [to her husband].”

“In terms of women’s empowerment, this story is easily attackable and disturbing, yet there’s also something quite profound going on,” Roth argued. “Talmudic stories sometimes challenge or subvert things or get us to think about the wider framework.”

Digging deeper, Roth said the story made a point about authenticity. “If your inside – who you are – is fully reflected on the outside through your name, there’s alignment, linked to the idea of authenticity. That congruence, Rabbi Yishmael seems to say, is beauty. This also gives women, even today, a way to climb out of the male gaze by reflecting on who they are, looking inwards, and finding their authenticity.”

## From supervillains to superheroes: theories about Pesach’s four children

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

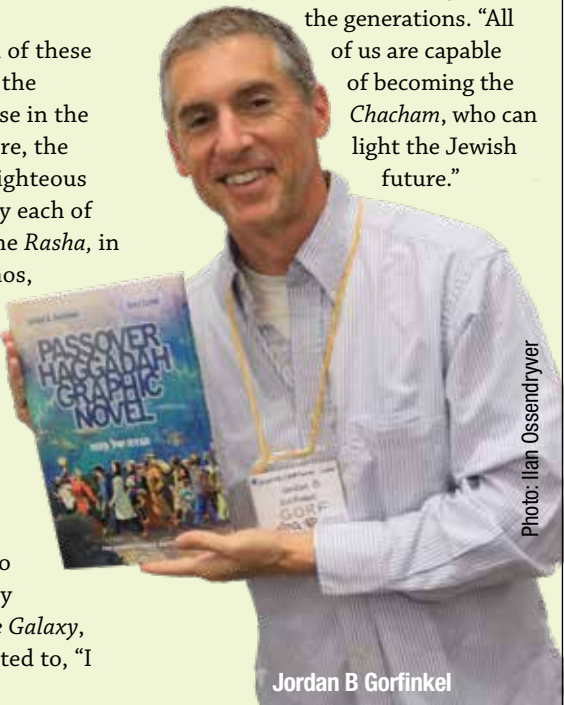
What do superhero stories and the Haggadah have in common? More than you think, said American cartoonist, veteran DC Comics editor, and producer Jordan B Gorfinkel, aka Gorf, who entertained Limmud audiences with his immersive look at the four children who form part of the Pesach seder.

Having managed the Batman franchise at DC Comics for almost 10 years, Gorf is the man behind *Birds of Prey* and his series, *Batman: No Man’s Land*, inspired by the movie *The Dark Knight Rises*. For Gorf, it’s all about storytelling.

Through his bestselling *Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel*, Gorf fulfilled his goal of bringing Judaism to life through visual storytelling. The Haggadah is in fact not a complete story or narrative but a compendium of knowledge, he said. Turning it into an engaging story merging words and pictures was the task of his graphic novel. “My mission is to bring out what’s wonderful about what we already have but to make it as accessible and universal as possible,” he said.

Gorf challenged traditional conceptions about the four children in the Haggadah, namely the wise one (the *Chacham*); the evil or rebellious child (the *Rasha*); the simple one (the *Tam*); and the one who doesn’t know to ask (the *She’Aino Yodea Lishol*).

In understanding each of these children, Gorf turned to the Marvel cinematic universe in the form of *The Avengers*. Here, the *Chacham* is seen as the righteous superhero represented by each of the Avengers, whereas the *Rasha*, in this case the villain Thanos, is the embodiment of evil. The *Tam* is represented by the leadership of the Avengers, Nick Fury, who sees things in simple black and white. Finally, the one who doesn’t know how to ask can be represented by Groot in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, whose vocabulary is limited to, “I am Groot.”



Jordan B Gorfinkel

“There are more dimensions to understanding the definition of the four children than we may have thought,” Gorf argues. For example, we need to engage the one who doesn’t know how to ask at their level. Perhaps they’re not developmentally ready to ask or are even disabled, we cannot dismiss this child. Furthermore, the simple one may in fact not be simple, their role is possibly not yet defined.

Though the four children represent four different people or four distinct personality types, we should avoid placing them in static boxes. “The exterior doesn’t always fit the interior – the way we present ourselves isn’t necessarily the way that we feel inside,” said Gorf.

For example, the *Chacham* and *Rasha* could have similar intentions that manifest in different ways. Applying his theory to real people whether it be in the sports, celebrity, or legal world, Gorf argues that you can place any person into any one of the four child archetypes. “It’s about context, anyone could be anything depending on your point of view,” he said.

We could also apply a psychological perspective, that the four children could represent different parts of our psyche. They are four individuals but also represent one community.

The four children also show character progression, meaning they are capable of evolving – a capability we all have throughout the generations. “All of us are capable of becoming the *Chacham*, who can light the Jewish future.”



Havdallah at Limmud 2022

## Praying to live or die – survivors’ complex relationship with G-d

TALI FEINBERG

When talking about the Holocaust, people often wonder if Jews held onto their faith during humanity’s darkest hour. But Yad Vashem educator Dr David Deutsch says that victims often had a complex relationship with G-d, and that they held onto or abandoned their faith depending on their circumstances.

“Only those who believed in G-d survived,” said one survivor in testimony recording by the USC Shoah Foundation. “To survive, you couldn’t think of faith or anything spiritual. You had to become like an animal, and your job was to make sure you had enough food and didn’t go to the slaughterhouse. If you thought of faith, you became lost. Thinking about G-d wasn’t favourable for survival,” said another survivor, in testimony shared by Deutsch.

Deutsch shared these and other testimonies with a large audience at Limmud Cape Town, under the topic, “Faith, prayer and belief under Nazi rule: prisoners talking about G-d.”

He said he “stumbled upon this topic by chance, and it changed the way I believe”. Using oral testimonies, his session emphasised how Jews in the ghettos and camps attempted to maintain their beliefs and traditions in a world of chaos and in spite of inhumane conditions. The lecture also demonstrated how Jewish prisoners created different and new perceptions of G-d under Nazi oppression.

For example, one survivor spoke about how frustrating she found it when people expected her to believe in G-d because she survived. She spoke of how she couldn’t understand why so many “excellent people” like artists, academics, and leaders died, while she, a simple teenager at the time, survived. “How could G-d allow me to step over the bodies?” she asked rhetorically. She said it was this that made her question her faith after she survived.

Deutsch said such testimony should “expand the way we listen” to survivors, and that we shouldn’t put them into a box defined by our own expectations. He implored the audience not to have preconceived ideas about survivors’ spirituality, but rather to be open to their reality – even if it wasn’t easy to hear.

Another survivor described how her

relationship to G-d changed from moment to moment. As she was marched to work in the freezing cold, she asked G-d why He did this to them. “I told him, ‘I don’t like you anymore.’” But then she asked for forgiveness, as she had lost everyone and realised G-d was her “only friend”. Her testimony showed how people viewed G-d less as an authority and more of a companion, and that their relationship with the divine was constantly in flux.

Another woman spoke of how she strongly believed in G-d during the Holocaust, but afterwards lost her faith. She spoke of how on Yom Kippur, it should be G-d asking her for forgiveness, not the other way around. Now in her later years, she’s welcoming religion back into her life. Asked if she believed in G-d now, she responded, “Well, we’re talking!”

Deutsch noted that the way people prayed also evolved, because time changed in the universe of the camps. “People could pray to survive only the next 12 hours. Anything more led to despair,” said one survivor.

People didn’t just pray to survive. Some described how they prayed to die soon, quickly, or peacefully. One survivor prayed that she would die next to a tree – close to a little bit of nature in such a stark environment. One woman described the humiliation of her and other women being made to wash and parade naked in front of German guards, who laughed and mocked them. “I prayed the end of the world would come in that moment. That a hole would open up, and everyone would sink in. But that didn’t happen,” she said.

Deutsch pointed out that prayers like this gave survivors a tiny bit of control in a situation where all agency had been taken away. He said sometimes people prayed even if they had lost their faith.

Another survivor’s testimony showed how she held onto tradition, but also turned it around to suit her circumstances. She spoke of the Pesach seder, and how the prisoners in the camp experienced all the plagues, from lice to death of the first born. “She makes herself a recipient of G-d’s anger,” said Deutsch. He pointed out that “turning over” a ritual in this way helped survivors make sense of a world that was completely senseless.

This same survivor went on to host music and theatre shows in the camps as a way to uplift other inmates. In this way, she shifted the structure in the camps, said Deutsch. “She brought the divine in.”



Dr David Deutsch



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# Young entrepreneurs ‘Jew it better’ with Judaica

TALI FEINBERG

Josh and Michelle Hayman are young parents with busy careers, but in between it all, they have managed to create a range of Jewish gift cards, aptly titled “Jewishes”. They’re part of a number of young, dynamic South African entrepreneurs who are building businesses based on their Jewish identity and traditions. “The essence of the brand is to send love, literally,” they say.

“Jewish traditions, holidays, and childhood memories were the real starting point,” says Danielle Abel of Chai Modern. “The old embroidered tablecloths, crockery, and silver jugs all played a role, and making them modern for today’s families was the key driver. You don’t just want to inherit Judaica – you want to make it your own.”

For Casey Sher of Bayit Judaica, “As I started envisioning an online store, my upbringing and family traditions became central,” she says. “I kept being pulled toward the challah cover, and it very quickly dawned on me why. Growing up in a home where the dining room table was always extending, and still is forever extending; where the food is bottomless, the love is boundless, and the challah stretches for miles, there was and is always a constant sound of joy. As the challah gets passed around the table, it’s that sound of joy that I hope I can bring into your home.”

“We both have jobs in the creative industry, and we’ve always collaborated

and weighed in on each other’s work. When COVID-19 came around, we finally had a bit of free time to explore the idea and brush up on our Yiddish,” says Josh.

“I wouldn’t be a good Jewish boy if I didn’t mention my mother at some point,” he quips. “My mom has a bit of a reputation for always buying weirdly specific and appropriate birthday cards, but over the years, has always complained that she could never find suitable Judaica cards to wow her recipients. With

her voice in the back of my head and Mich wanting to turn her love for gift-giving (and receiving) into a business, it seemed like a good idea.”

In our screen-filled world, “There’s

something special about a handwritten note that can’t be replicated digitally,” says Michelle. “There’s a level of care that’s intrinsically present in the act of putting ink to paper – or a high quality textured card in our case. The thought of friends, family, and loved ones exchanging our cards and keeping them in their homes is really gratifying.”

“There’s a distinct humour or personality that comes through in all the cards, always with a focus on quality. We call it “*chutzpah-chic*”. While all our cards have a Jewish flavour, we also intentionally use terms that would be understood and enjoyed by people outside of the community,” says Josh.

Examples include a play on the chocolate bar, KitKat, with the logo changed to “KitKa” (the distinctly South African Jewish word for challah) accompanied by the wish: “Have a break, have a good Shabbos.”

The cards are sold at Kleinsky’s (in Cape Town and Joburg), Fabricate (Cape Town), and the South African Jewish Museum (Cape Town), and they’re working on an online shop. “We’d like to reinforce the idea that Jewish-focused design or creativity can be just as good – if not better – than any other contemporary work that’s out there,” says Michelle.

Abel feels that “at the heart of every Jewish family is tradition”. Chai Modern “celebrates this tradition by bringing life or *chai* to modern families”.

She worked in the clothing industry and then turned to ceramics. “Family *simchas* made me think

of appropriate tableware for the first time. I searched locally, and was amazed at how little modern Judaica items there were. It challenged me to use all my skills to produce items for special occasions.”

Her bespoke items “play a role in other people’s *simchas*, which is so exciting. We get immense *nachas* from seeing our items

on a Shabbat table or at a Bar/Batmitzvah, specially designed to fit the décor and feel of the event.”

Products are available in South Africa on her website. She also supplies stores all over the United States and Europe. She’s about to launch ranges of menorahs and mezuzahs “that I keep getting requests for”.

Sher says, “I’m at the stage where I’m building my own Jewish home. I wanted a specific look for my Judaica, and to give

gifts to friends and family, which I just couldn’t find.”

On a visit to Israel in May 2022, “I started collecting pieces for my own home, and decided to take the plunge and purchase my first round of stock to bring back to South Africa and start my own brand.” She named it ‘Bayit’, meaning ‘home’.

She notes that “there are three *mitzvot* particularly related to women, one being challah. This *mitzvah* was



Jewishes cards



Josh and Michelle Hayman



A Bayit Judaica challah cover

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Chai Modern Judaica

cover after female members of her family, from babies to grandmothers, the array of colours and textures reflecting their unique personalities.

At the moment, she takes orders through Instagram. “Our next step is to build an online ecommerce website.” She would love to have her own modern-day Judaica store one day, “a shop which is inclusive, affordable, and where our community feels welcome to find Judaica pieces for all occasions. We have a special community, and I’m proud to be part of it. I’m excited to continue this journey with you, bringing joy from my home to yours.”



# CT filmmaker’s dream hits the big time

TALI FEINBERG

Jessie Zinn is only 28 years old, but she’s already achieved what most filmmakers dream of: recognition and global reach.

Zinn reached this apex moment when *The New Yorker* announced that it had acquired her film, *Drummies*, last week. This means that this short documentary will be streamed on its platform, bringing a South African story to the world. “As someone who grew up reading articles in *The New Yorker*, this is an absolute dream,” she says.

Zinn grew up in Cape Town, and attended United Herzlia Schools, before going on to study at the University of Cape Town. It was there that she first picked up a camera and fell in love with the medium, and she’s never looked back. This is just one of many accolades she has gathered in recent years. Her short documentary, *Wavelengths*, literally made waves when she filmed it from outside the windows of hotline volunteer counsellors in San Francisco during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Drummies*, which is about a team of drum majorettes in Cape Town (known as drummies), was also shot at the height of the pandemic, when time stood still, and it’s this stagnation that Zinn captures, contrasting it with the drive, energy, and frustration of teenage girls under lockdown.

The theme of ambition and coming-of-age is infused in the film, which *The New Yorker* describes as having a “dreamy” quality, and which Zinn says is about “a drum majorette team over a slow summer in 2020, and [about] aspiring to be greater than where you are now, which everyone can relate to”.

She doesn’t take achieving her dreams for granted. “*The New Yorker* has always been a publication I’ve admired, and it’s an international platform. The digital world has opened up an incredibly exciting space for documentary filmmakers because there’s real appetite for content,” she says. “Just to have that reach is an incredible opportunity. I hope people from all over the world watch the film and are able to relate to it on some level or learn

something new.”

Zinn says *Drummies* is the film she produced as part of her MFA (Master in Fine Arts in Art Practice) at Stanford University. She was one of eight candidates from around the world selected for the degree, which she humbly describes as “miraculous”. It was during these two years that she made documentaries that shaped her as a filmmaker, and where she developed an interest in telling stories about women’s reproductive health. The sensitivity needed when engaging with real people about their lives “required an extra level of respect and understanding”, she says.

She has always wanted to make a film about drum majorettes, but wasn’t able to do so until Stanford University provided the funds and resources to make that dream a reality.

“I grew up in a post-apartheid South Africa, where sport plays a pivotal role in shaping ideas of nationhood and identity. As a sport, drummies is particularly interesting, as it emerged in the late 1920s, and was one of the few racially integrated school sports to exist throughout apartheid,” she says. “Today, drummies is a fiercely competitive and high-stakes sport in our country. Drummies girls sacrifice a lot for excellence, but absolutely love what they do. The teams are more than just sports teams – they grow up together and become little family units.

“However, due to the sport’s glitzy veneer, drummies is often taken less seriously than other male-dominated, more stereotypically ‘masculine’ sports,” she says. “I was fascinated by this dichotomy of a glitzy exterior versus an interior world filled with blood, sweat, and tears. Drummies provides an escape from some of the harrowing realities in our country, and is intrinsically bound to dreams, hopes, and aspirations. I wanted the film to reflect a dream-like escapism, joy, and fantasy. Mostly, I wanted to create an empowering portrait of these incredibly inspiring young women, all of whom I have no doubt will help pave the way for a better future.”

Zinn first came across a team of drummies through a

photo series by South African photographer Alice Mann, which was published in *The New Yorker* in 2018. It was this that sparked her interest, which has now come full circle back to that publication.

“There was a real sense of empowerment and strength in the portraits that immediately caught my attention. I was also drawn to this subject as I was extremely dedicated to sports and dancing growing up, so I immediately felt a connection. The team that I ended up filming is at a school just down the road from where I grew up, so it all felt personal and familiar. Though I’ll admit, the girls tried to teach me how to do a couple of their tricks, and I failed. The hand-eye coordination required is insane!”

It was in mid-2020, when she was unable to get back to South Africa, that Zinn got in touch remotely with the Groote Schuur Primary School drummies coach Nadia O’Reilly, “who was excited about the project. Through WhatsApp messages and voice notes, I ‘cast’ the main girls that the film would focus on in order to expedite the filming process a bit,” Zinn says.

“However, due to COVID-19-related restrictions, I ended up getting stuck in South Africa for the rest of the semester, which in a strange way was great because it gave me more time to spend with the girls, on and off screen. I became close to most of their families, who kindly invited and welcomed me into their homes.”

Zinn says she usually shoots with just her and her cinematographer in the room, so they worked “with COVID-19 restrictions instead of against them”. It created the intimate quality that she wanted to achieve, making a film from the girls’ perspective. Kyle Stroebel, a colourist at The Refinery, helped achieve the film’s dreamy quality. He also worked on Oscar-winning documentary *My Octopus Teacher*.

After *Drummies* played at a number of film festivals, Zinn was approached for it to be acquired by



Jessie Zinn

*The New Yorker*. She says it was “extremely lucky, as often filmmakers struggle with distribution, especially for short films”.

Now based in Cape Town, Zinn is signed to Giant Films to create commercial films, and also creates her own independent documentary films under her production company, Red Coat Films. She credits her family, especially her mom, theatre critic Robyn Cohen, for nurturing her love of the arts.

“My goal is to continue to create, learn, and improve, so I pick projects that allow me to experience the most growth,” she says. Her advice to aspiring young filmmakers is to “back yourself” in a difficult industry with lots of rejection. You have to be mentally strong, and back your vision or goal, because you’ll face many hurdles. Get comfortable with rejection – it becomes your best friend,” she says. “Behind every success is 100 rejections. You need to be able to use them as fuel for forging ahead.”

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# Scientists dedicate lives to dealing with death

TALI FEINBERG

Death may be one of the last taboo topics, but for two Jewish scientists working at the forefront of forensics in South Africa, it's something they see every day.

"The dead have so much to teach the living," says Professor Ryan Blumenthal, senior specialist forensic pathologist and associate professor at the University of Pretoria's department of forensic medicine.

"From my autopsy table, I have a relatively good idea of what's happening in the world," he says. "I can tell you if a new gang has moved into the neighbourhood. I can tell you if there's a new or emergent drug or disease. I can even tell you the health (physical, mental, and psychological) of the nation. I can tell you all this without even venturing outdoors."

Meanwhile, from her office in the Johannesburg forensic pathology services medical legal mortuary in Hillbrow, Ildi Wainer says her work focuses on "teaching and moulding young minds for the future". She works to "provide them with a reality of how forensic toxicology works in this country in 2022. It's not like the TV show *CSI*. I wish I could run down the corridor in slow motion, but the reality is very different. It's stark and sobering, but necessary."

Forensic toxicology is the analysis of biological samples for the presence of toxins. These results can be used to determine a substance's potential effect on an individual's death, illness, or mental or physical impairment. Wainer spent years working in these trenches. "Ultimately, you test biological fluids and tissues," she says. "The outcomes are submitted to some form of legal



Ildi Wainer

process: an inquest, insurance claim, or police investigation, so there are huge implications."

Wainer then worked in a hospital setting before moving to academia. She's now a medical scientist specialising in forensic toxicology, teaching in the department of forensic medicine and pathology at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Faculty of Health Sciences.

"Working with the living and the dead are different," she says. "When it comes to students, I try to inspire, educate, and convey my passion. Forensic pathologists aren't born, they're made. They're medical doctors who have completed their community service and now choose this speciality. They do four to five extra years of training."

When it comes to working with the dead, "there are a lot of cases. The Johannesburg mortuary where I work from deals with more than 3 500 cases a year, and we're one of eight mortuaries in the southern Gauteng cluster. The pressure is great, especially for the

likes of Professor Blumenthal and forensic pathologists. Resources are stretched. Understandably, the health department has a whole living population to worry about, but here are the dead, also calling out for resources."

Blumenthal trained as a medical doctor but an encounter with a patient who refused to stop smoking made him feel he could make more of an impact on the dead than the living. This turning point is described in his book *Autopsy – Life in the trenches with a forensic pathologist from Africa* which became a non-fiction bestseller.

His chief field of interest is the pathology of lightning trauma (keraunopathology). He has published and educated widely in the fields of electrocution, suicide, and other areas involving the pathology of trauma. "My chief mission in life is to help advance forensic pathology services nationally and internationally," he says.

"Forensics fascinated me from the start. In its purest form, forensics is about practical puzzle solving and the truth. There remains much injustice in this world. Some truly evil people share this planet with us. For those of you wanting a fight in life, I invite you to come and fight in this arena. Focus your aggressive tendencies towards the forces of darkness which beset this world. Forensic pathology isn't some side show. It's a main arena."

"My battle is personal," he says. "I hate sickness, war, stupidity, ignorance, bullying, and human exploitation. That there are cheats and crooks in life goes without saying, but the great majority of human beings are essentially good. I feel I have a moral obligation to serve my immediate community and the greater community of humankind."

"Everyone benefits from our service," says Blumenthal. "Forensic pathologists simply report on what we find at autopsy. We present our findings fairly, scientifically, and objectively. No one is 'holier than thou'. I have seen political leaders and holy people die in nefarious circumstances. Once, I found a religious leader dead in a place of ill-repute. The police carelessly let it slip to his wife where her husband was found dead. The wife was so incensed, she said, 'He must now bury himself!' and stormed out. We were left with the unenviable task of

managing the delicate matter of his funeral."

Regarding cases that stand out, Wainer says, "In the past few weeks, we had a spate of Jewish people passing away. We had to deal with a lot of unnatural deaths, which was emotional and visceral. There have been a lot of young Jewish women who have died due to acts of suicide."

Wainer says she'll never get on a motorbike as the driver "always comes out second best". She says shootings are a huge problem in this country. "The media may highlight 12 people killed in a tavern, but we see it on an ongoing basis. It's like the Wild West. People are being shot multiple times. This is extremely labour-intensive work for forensic pathologists."

Blumenthal says "forensics demands an optimistic philosophy towards life. You have to maintain a positive attitude about self and society, especially when dealing with death and dying, decomposing bodies, and tragedy on a daily basis. I always have plants in my office so that I can be surrounded by life, especially after spending my days surrounded by death."

Ultimately, Wainer wants to make a difference. "A dead person cannot talk, and it's our role to get scientific and medical clues about what could have led to that person passing away or the behaviour which may have contributed to their death. There's a lot of silent investigative work. We're only one piece of an entire investigative puzzle."



From Professor Ryan Blumenthal's eight-part documentary, *Lightning Pathologist*

Wainer has confronted death professionally and personally. Her husband, Clyde, passed away unexpectedly at the beginning of this year. His brother is Rabbi Shlomo Wainer of Chabad in Umhlanga. Her advice to others going through grief is "you have inner strength you can draw upon. We owe it to our loved ones to keep living and making a difference. Do the best you can, and make the best of every day, because not everyone has that opportunity."

Like Wainer, Blumenthal is a passionate teacher. Both are committed to investing their expertise in the next generation of South Africans. Blumenthal has been teaching for 20 years at the University of Pretoria. "Students are smarter than we think," he says, "and they learn best when challenged." "Curricula should be in line with what's happening in centres of excellence around the world. My unique contribution is that I create medical detectives and sceptics."

"What I tell young people about forensic pathology is that the hours are terrible, the pay is terrible, the conditions are terrible. You're underappreciated, unsupported, disrespected, frequently physically endangered, but there's no better career in the world!"



Professor Ryan Blumenthal

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**EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD**

**KIRSH FAMILY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARD**

*in honour of Helen Suzman*

**ART, SPORT, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE  
AWARD**

**HUMANITARIAN AWARD**  
*in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris*

Absa  
Jewish Achiever Awards

**2022** 

**NOMINATIONS CLOSE:** 16 September 2022 at 17:00  
**SEND NOMINATIONS TO:** [nominations@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:nominations@sajewishreport.co.za)

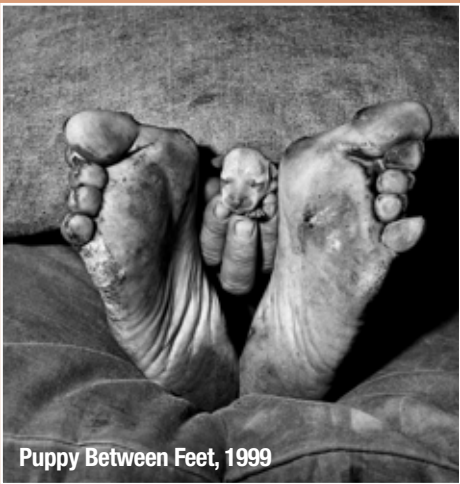




# The inside out world of photographer Roger Ballen

Internationally acclaimed Jewish photographer **Roger Ballen** recently spoke at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre about his 40 years in the industry. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with him.

**You're originally a geologist from the United States. What brought you to South Africa 40 years ago?**  
In 1982, I found myself in South Africa working in mineral exploration, travelling across vast expanses of the countryside. But though my profession provided me with a living, there were questions about my existence that it didn't begin to answer. I needed to use the camera to excavate layers of my inner life.

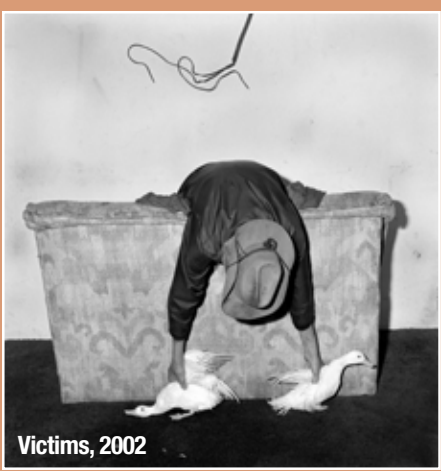


In common with my work, peering below the earth's surface for hidden treasure, I began to do the same with the people and places I photographed, trying to pierce their outer layer to reveal their elemental selves. During these travels in the South African countryside, perhaps because I was an outsider or because I felt compatible with isolated places, I was drawn to the unique aesthetic of the *dorps* or small towns.

**What drew you to photography?**  
I bought my first camera, a Mamiya, when I was 13. My mother was then, in the early 1960s, working for Magnum (a top international photo agency) for some years. Through her, I was exposed to the work of many photographers, some of them now considered historically important. In this milieu, there was a complete belief in the value of photography, particularly its ability to convey meaning in a socio-documentary context. The Magnum photographers were my idols, my heroes. My mother hung their photographs all over the walls of our suburban house in Rye, New York. I ended up assimilating their images, and by the time I went out to take photographs seriously, at around 18, I had a clear idea of the level I was aiming at.

**Which award means the most to you and why?**  
The Photographer of the Year Award at the Arles Festival in France in 2001. This was my first big award, and it gave me the confidence to dedicate more of my time to photography.

**Describe how your art has changed over the years.**  
From 2003 onwards, I felt that there was no need to place real people in the theatre I was creating. I wanted to eliminate any and all items that could be seen to relate to culture, society, economics, and identifiable locales, and to create purely psychological images. At the same time, portraiture disappeared from my photography, as it was clear to me that I couldn't make the transition to another aesthetic as long as viewers were focusing on the state of the human subjects in the image to the exclusion of all other aspects.



**What does the term "Ballenesque" mean?**  
Beginning around 2002, the human face started to disappear in my imagery, replaced by broken body

parts, drawings, animals, and objects. As a result, the images started to express a more complex reality that became more difficult to define and which could be best described as *Ballenesque*. I became increasingly involved in video, installations, collage, and painting. My goal was – and still is – to produce parallel art forms that expand and enhance one another to generate a wider, more encompassing aesthetic.

For this reason, I tend to regard my photographs as a kind of psychological projection rather than a truthful documentation of reality. My express intention, particularly as my work has evolved, has been not to create pictorial realms that mirror the world as we see it, but to create images that externalise scenes of the mind itself.

**In press photography, it's that decisive moment that photographers look for. Is this integrated into your work?**  
I believe the so-called "decisive moment" is the most important aesthetic concept that separates photography from other art forms. Hardly an image of mine over five decades doesn't take this concept into account.

**What do you look for in a subject?**  
My subjects vary from people to animals, drawings to objects. Everything in my photograph is a subject working towards a greater meaning.

**You often use animals where humans would be, and vice versa. What are you saying here?**  
An animal is truth, a reflection of purity. I'm intrigued by animal psychology. If you want to try to understand the deeper parts of human behaviour, sometimes a good place

to start is with the animal. Each species of animal brings with it its own mythology, and when you bring that mythology into a photograph, it offers unlimited possibilities for creating deeper meaning relevant to the human condition.

**You use a lot of mystery and the unexplained in your work. How do you do this, and why?**  
It's my hope that my images will assist people to better integrate their various states of mind. In other words, I hope that my photographs can break through layers of mental repression and allow different sides of people people's minds to communicate with each other. It's my belief that unless a substantial proportion of humanity is able to unshackle mental repression, the condition of the species won't improve substantially. On the other hand, my photographs need to be enigmatic. When you ponder the nature of life and death, you begin to understand what enigma is. If I produce pictures that have an enigma, then perhaps they make



a profound statement.

**Describe your background and the importance of Judaism and the Jewish community in your life?**  
I was born in New York City to Jewish parents whose family originated from Russia. My grandparents never lost their Jewish identity, and passed it on to their children. Our family adopted the reform Jewish faith, and I and my sisters had Bnotmitzvah. My two children, Paul and Amanda, as well as my wife are very

conscious of their Jewish identity. Paul and Amanda were educated at King David Victory Park. We're all proud of our Jewish heritage.

**Why hold this event at the Holocaust & Genocide Centre?**  
The goal of my images is to help viewers make peace with their inner self, and to work through layers of repression. Ultimately, the Holocaust was the result of individual failure to come to terms with deficiencies.

**You built an arts centre up the road from the Holocaust Centre. Tell us about it.**  
About 10m up Jan Smuts Avenue from the Holocaust Centre, I built The Inside Out Centre for the Arts, which will open in 2023. It will host exhibitions and educational events that will focus on psychological relevance to Africa and the South African community and have some relationship to my aesthetic.



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# Comrades regulars brace for run of their lifetime

SAUL KAMIONSKY

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world’s largest and oldest ultramarathon returns on 28 August, when more than 20 000 runners will line up on the start line of the 2022 Comrades Marathon.

The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with some of the South African participants.

“The race has become a bit more of an unknown entity because, with there being no Comrades for two years, you forget the difficulty and level of training needed to successfully finish it,” says Joshua Apfel, who seeks his sixth Comrades medal on Sunday, a down run from Pietermaritzburg to Durban.

Vic Boston had run 43 consecutive Comrades since 1977 when the pandemic struck in 2020. However, it didn’t upset him that he couldn’t participate in the race he loves for two years because “there was nothing [he] could do about it”. He used his spare time to immerse himself in studying.

No COVID-19 measures (such as a vaccination or test requirement) are deemed necessary by the organisers of the race. In spite of this, eight-time Comrades medallist Neil Lewus has no concerns

## Raising the flag for Israel



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Former Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions activist Klaas Mokgomole will be running the Comrades Marathon on Sunday with the Israel flag draped over his shoulders, raising money for South African Friends of Israel (SAFI).

“It’s to show that I stand with Israel and support Israel,” says the head co-ordinator of Africans for Peace ahead of his second Comrades. Having previously noticed a large media presence at the race, “I’m hoping the flag will bring about a conversation. It’s important for the community out there to understand the issues in the Middle East region.”

The Limpopo-born and Johannesburg-based Mokgomole will also do it to raise funds for SAFI, which promotes dialogue between the Jewish community and broader society to ensure a more balanced view of Israel.

The funds will help bring water technology to disadvantaged communities in Mpumalanga that have no or little water.

Mokgomole recalls that somewhere around the 10km mark during his last Comrades run, he and other runners heard calls about Israel being an apartheid state and saw anti-Israel placards.

“I’m going to run with the flag only for the first 10km and maybe the last 5km because the Comrades can be draining. The plan is to make sure that I finish the race on time again, but this time with the flag just to open up conversation. People must be willing to tolerate each other, we must be willing to discuss things. Normally, when we deal with this issue of Israel and Palestine, people aren’t willing to talk about it, they attack each other.”

Meanwhile, the South African Malka Ella Fertility Fund has a team of 16 runners in the Comrades to raise funds for fertility treatments for couples in our community.

This will be the tenth time the fund has put together a team for the Comrades. From its nine previous Comrades, the fund has raised R3 260 000, enough for the birth of 35 babies.



Joshua Apfel

about being around so many other runners. “I believe you wouldn’t be able to get to the start line if you didn’t feel well,” he says. “If COVID-19 is around, I’ll just have to take my chances.”

One runner who will be taking a chance by starting the race is Richard Rovetti. He was training about six days a week from February this year when tragedy struck in early August. “I overdid the training and stressed my Achilles – it can happen from overtraining.”

His injury has left him “emotionally broken”. “This was my swansong. Every milestone I crossed was a point of no return, and a small section of the final chapter to go for a silver Comrades medal, close this book, and look for other challenges in the future. It was to be the pinnacle of my running life.”

After all, it was for the Comrades that Selwyn Kahlberg postponed his daughter’s Batmitzvah so his brother, Hilton, could run it.

Hilton had run the Comrades from 1988 to 1994 before emigrating to Australia in March 1995. He wouldn’t participate in the race for the next 17 years. “It was a throwaway line that my brother, Selwyn, and I would one day run the Comrades Marathon together,” he says. “In the beginning of 2012, Selwyn sent me the dates for his daughter’s Batmitzvah. It was on the same date as the Comrades. I said, ‘I’m not travelling all the way to South Africa to be here on the same day as Comrades and not be able to run it.’ So, the Batmitzvah was postponed for a week, and together with Toni Hesp, we ran the marathon.”

Having thus completed his eighth Comrades, he was determined to get his green number, for which one needs three wins, five golds, or 10 medals. “I had a small hiccup on my tenth as I was sick when I got to South Africa in 2014 and had to withdraw after about three hours of running,” says Hilton. “Thankfully, I finished in 2015, and received my permanent number.”

Having completed his eleventh Comrades in 2018, Hilton is once again running this year’s race. Asked what makes him come all the way from Australia to do the Comrades, he says, “It’s in our blood. Once you have done it once, you then have to finish one more in the opposite direction. Then you’re hooked. I said 2018 would be my last. But my good friend Toni, who lives in South Africa, is running her thirtieth Comrades on Sunday. So, I had to come back and do one more and say goodbye to my friend, Ms Comrades.”

Hilton got Selwyn into running 25 years ago. “We have started four Comrades together and finished together twice,” says Selwyn, a six-time Comrades medallist. “Running with my brother makes the special day even more memorable as he lives in Melbourne. Hilton is a marathon legend who has completed 93 official marathons.”

Avron Krasner, aiming for his eleventh Comrades medal, will be running with his wife, Zelda, making her Comrades debut.

Inspired by the credo, “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” Zelda started running three years ago. “Training with Zelda has been an amazing way to spend quality time together,” says Avron. “It has enhanced our relationship.”

Seven-time Comrades medallist Rabbi Jarred Bloch’s most standout Comrades memory is the experience of “the quiet moments in the last 20km, when you feel extraordinarily exhausted. All your strength has given in, and all that’s left is the power of your mind, will, and spirit to get to the finish line. You get extra energy from the tremendous support of all the thousands of South Africans standing on the sidelines calling your name and cheering for you.”

One Comrades moment Lewus always thinks of is when he met a runner at the starting line with a prosthesis. “He had no left leg, and I said to myself, if he can do it, so can I. It really made me appreciate life,

and seeing him finish was inspirational.”

Boston advises Comrades runners to eat and go to bed early the day before the race. “Don’t do anything new on a race day. Don’t use the shoes you just bought. Drink what you’re used to. Be careful the day before about what and where you eat. Don’t be overcome with excitement right at the beginning and go too hard. Simply work out your pace based on your training and prior achievements. If you feel good near the end, you can always speed up.”

Lewus advises those who want to run the Comrades for the first time to, “Just do it, put in the training, get advice from previous Comrades runners, cross train if possible, and know that you’re in for early mornings and hard work. Comrades depicts life in a day, with many ups and downs, unpredictability, and also the opportunity for great joy that changes your existence. You feel like a celebrity at the finish. The cold beer at the end never tasted so good.”

## Running on tefillin and tehillim

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When runners pass through Hillcrest at about the 60km mark during this year’s Comrades Marathon, they can stop to lay tefillin and do other *mitzvahs*.

The initiative started about 29 years ago, when Rabbi Shlomo Wainer of Chabad of the North Coast in Umhlanga sat on the side of the road in the Mitzvah Tank so that his friend could stop and lay tefillin during the race. “While waiting for my friend to run past, another two runners came and asked to put on tefillin,” recalls Wainer. “That became the beginning of what we do today.”

Wainer says laying tefillin during the race “spiritualises the Comrades. It gives it another purpose. It’s about having opportunities to do *mitzvahs*. The runners have a chance to make *brachot*. The ladies say *tehillim*.”

This year, the Comrades falls on Rosh Chodesh Elul (the beginning of the month of Elul) for the first time. “We will say *kaddish*, make sure we have a *minyan*, and learn a Mishnah in the Haftarah,” says Wainer. “I have food for them to eat and other refreshments. It’s a point for their supporters to come and meet them. At times,



Rabbi Shlomo Wainer helps Vic Boston lay tefillin at the 2008 Comrades Marathon

we have had 40 or 50 people there in the past.”

Many runners have shed a tear while laying tefillin during the race, says six-time Comrades medallist Selwyn Kahlberg. “It’s a big deal for the runners, and cannot be missed.”

The spiritual opportunities aren’t limited to the day of the race. “We make a whole weekend out of it,” says Wainer. “This year, we have a Shabbos dinner.” Nine-time Comrades winner Bruce Fordyce will be the guest speaker. “We have more than 100 people coming. At shul, we’ll welcome the novices to the Comrades family.”

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Making friends and dealing with enemies

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies has unfortunately been required to address many instances of anti-Israel rhetoric crossing the line into antisemitism. This was what was fundamentally at issue in our 13-year-long case against then Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) International Relations Secretary Bongani Masuku, who in February this year, was found guilty of hate speech by the Constitutional Court and ordered to apologise to the Jewish community.

More recently, we were called upon to respond to an article, titled “The Israel-Gaza conflict and the banality of evil” by Oscar van Heerden, which encapsulated this mode of wounding and denigrating Jews under the guise of criticising Israel. The title incorporates Hannah Arendt’s famous phrase in reference to Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official who oversaw the practical implementation of the Final Solution. In his article, Van Heerden makes the shocking statement that “most Israelis ... cannot or will not acknowledge that what they are doing is no different from those very Nazis so aptly represented by Eichmann”. The Board’s response appeared in the same publication, and can be accessed on our Facebook page.

In his article as well as in a subsequent radio interview on Smile FM, Van Heerden propagated further deeply unpleasant antisemitic tropes, specifically by grossly misrepresenting the ancient Jewish religious notion of what it means to be a “chosen people”, combined with inflammatory claims that Israeli Jews don’t regard Palestinians as human beings. Last week, I was interviewed

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

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

by the same station to respond to these comments. In terms of likening Israelis to Nazis, I pointed out that so manifestly false was that comparison, that the only reason for Van Heerden’s making it would have been to use the pain that all Jews still feel about the Holocaust against them, not because of any desire to see peace in the Middle East. Aside from demonising Israelis and causing gratuitous hurt and offense to Jewish people, it also served to minimise the true extent of Nazi crimes.

In addressing Jewish understandings of the Biblical concept of “chosenness”, I objected in the strongest terms to how someone from outside our religion had been given a platform to misconstrue and denigrate this aspect of our tradition in the way Van Heerden had done.

On Sunday, our Gauteng chairperson, Harold Jacobs, and National Director Wendy Kahn were invited to attend a luncheon organised by The Chinese Association to celebrate the Chinese community’s recent victory in the Equality Court concerning a hate speech case against it. It was a welcome reminder that while purveyors of spiteful Jew-baiting are a reality and must be responded to, there are deep reserves of goodwill towards our community from across the racial and ethnic spectrum, and we should take every opportunity to deepen and build on these relationships.

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



# Not quite the marriage expert

I’ve long considered giving marriage lessons. Not because I consider myself an expert on it, but because I find myself perplexed by some of the current trends. Sessions would include titles like, “No, we are not pregnant!” and “If your wife wanted someone to weep along with her, she would have married her best friend”.

I had mapped out learning paths and semesters with differing levels of skill and qualifications, all the way through to a master’s level in husbandry. And then I was schooled.

It happened this past Shabbat, when my brother asked me to guide a visiting couple to his house for lunch. He had to leave a bit earlier and didn’t want them to get lost. I readily agreed, and mentioned this to my wife, because there was a reasonable chance that I would forget. “Sure” she said, “But Howard, don’t leave me alone with them. You know I’m not good at that sort of thing.”

I assured her that this would never happen. And I meant it. Until we started walking. And I got chatting to a friend. And we found ourselves about 110m ahead of the couple and my wife. But the conversation was interesting. “She’s going to kill me,” I told my friend when I realised what I was doing. He, too, is married and assured me it would be worth it.

And so, we continued in our wicked ways. To make matters worse, en route, we decided that we needed to attend a *mincha* service. This would include a quick whiskey or two, and some biltong ahead of prayer.

There was no limit to the depth I would go. I was shameless. And my behaviour was

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



objectively appalling. I deserved whatever was to come my way.

“I’m sorry I left you,” I said sheepishly when I finally saw her. I braced myself, fully prepared for what was to follow.

“Don’t stress,” she said. “It was actually good for me. And they are such lovely people.”

I was devastated. “Scuse me?” I stumbled. “You need to be irritated. I demand that you are annoyed! I deserved it!” It was honestly like she no longer cared. And that didn’t feel good.

My confidence was shattered. I started to question everything I thought I knew.

I clearly wasn’t half the expert I thought I was.

And then, on Tuesday night, she called me into the kitchen to ask my “honest” opinion of something she had made. I wasn’t required to taste it but just to give feedback visually. “I’m not sure it works,” I said sensitively. “I think it needs to be larger and more symmetrical.”

“Seriously?” was her response. “I have no idea why I bothered to ask you. You’re overtired and irrational. And maybe you should get an early night so that you can pull yourself together.”

And just like that, she was back. And I felt safe and secure. Order was restored to my world, and once again, I felt at peace. My confidence surged, content in the knowledge that I was still loved.

Maybe I’ll do a bit more research before kicking off those masterclasses.

### Sunday 28 August

- Elphin Lodge Shul presents *This is Africa* by Marcelle Pincus. Time: 14:00. Entry: R50. Contact: 083 788 2206 or 083 226 1687.
- Emmarentia Hebrew Congregation presents Paula Slier on *Stories that have touched me the most during my career*. Time: 10:00. Entry: R120. Contact: 011 646 6138 or emmarentiaslul@telkomsa.net
- The DL Link hosts its Casino & Comedy Evening with Nik Rabinowitz. Time: 18:00. Entry: R1 200. Contact: events@dllink.co.za or 073 066 7721.
- The Chev hosts webinar *Mind on your money, money on your mind* with Quan Ho. Time: 19:30 to 21:00. Contact: talyah@jhbchev.co.za

### Monday 29 August

- ORT SA presents *Mentor Enrichment* with Elana Godley. Time: 08:30 to 10:00. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

### Tuesday 30 August

- The Union of Jewish Women presents Chavah Barit on *How does exercise improve quality of life?* Time: 10:00. Cost: R40. Contact: 011 648 1053 or info@ujw.co.za

- Melton Cape Town Midrasa presents online course *New Year-New Energy*. Time: 19:30 to 21:00. Contact: lauren@snitcher.org or 082 880 2257.

### Wednesday 31 August

- ORT SA presents *Business Bootcamp – business plan processing* with Amanda Blankfield-Koseff. Time: 09:00 to 10:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

### Thursday 1 September

- The SA Jewish Report hosts a webinar *Bill Browder is back – author of “Red Notice” and “Freezing Order”*. Time: 20:00. Contact: bit.ly/jrlive137 or editorial@sajewishreport.co.za



## Letters

### ANC GOVERNMENT COULD LEARN FROM JEWISH COMMUNITY’S SELFLESSNESS

What a wonderful example the Jewish community is, and how much could the ANC government take a leaf out of our book?

Not a day or a news cast goes by without hearing of some government official emptying government coffers dry for themselves. Can you imagine if the wealthy among us simply enriched themselves only, leaving nothing for the lesser of us? This way, we all get a piece of the pie.

Just the other day, a Gentile friend of mine was

admiring the Jewish community – how we “look after our own people”. It was a marvel to her.

We can be so proud and thankful. We have such courage and endurance, and spent no time feeling sorry for ourselves after all our hardship.

Sure, we have our faults, but so what, we simply dusted ourselves off and started all over again to build legacies and empires that others can only fantasise about.

So proud! – Tracy Korsen, Johannesburg

### SUFFERING CAN PURIFY US

It’s difficult to understand why there is so much suffering, especially among good people.

Pain can make us bitter, angry, or tired. Or it can purify us.

Mandela spent his time in prison trying to understand why his captors were suppressing his people. He realised that it was unwarranted fear of the African majority which led them to hatred. This probably saved South Africa from the racial bloodbath much of the world expected.

Some say suffering is payback for past wrong doings, possibly even those done in previous lives. This is in accordance with the teachings of Eastern religions, the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), and some early Christian churches.

It might help to ask those we have harmed for forgiveness, including for damage done in past lives, and to pray for our victims.

– Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg

### ISRAEL BEING BASHED, BUT NOT A WORD TO BLINKEN

The minister of foreign affairs has never missed an opportunity to “bash” Israel, even for trivial, unrelated news.

Recently, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited our country, but not a word about Israel to him. Surely, Mr Ramaphosa, we can do better? – Dr Les Berman, Pretoria

### AWARD AFRICAN FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO ACHIEVE IN SA

Given the strong antipathy shown towards foreigners in South Africa, we suggest a Jewish Achiever Award nomination for any foreigner/s from African countries that have contributed to South African affairs socially, economically, or scientifically.

My wife and I were overwhelmed at participating in our first Limmud in Johannesburg. We learnt so much about love for humanity.

– Jean and Nicole Bwasa, Johannesburg

ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS 2022

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HUMANITARIAN AWARD

In honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris

Awarded to a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of the lives of the people of South Africa.

Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

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## CELEBRATE WITH WITS

### Friday 2 September

#### Wits Centenary Parade

Procession starts at 13:00 from the Origins Centre.

#### Wits Picnic on the Lawns

15:00 – 17:00. Bring your friends, family and colleagues to the Library Lawns.

#### #WITS100 Alumni Reunion *(By invitation only)*

#### #WITS100 Visible Resonance Light Show

19:00 – 21:00. The Piazza, Wits Great Hall. A multimedia activation on the Wits Great Hall façade that employs projection, real time light drawings, improvised movement and sound.

### Saturday 3 September

#### Wits Parkrun

08:00 – 10:00. The Wits Club, West Campus.

#### Wits Legends vs Pirates Legends Soccer Match

11:00 – 13:00. Wits Football Stadium, Yale Road.

#### Free People's Concert

12:00 – 02:00. DIG Fields, West Campus. Includes a tribute to Johnny Clegg by his son Jesse and Sipho Mchunu and the Johnny Clegg band and a performance by Mango Groove. **Tickets R100 from Webtickets.**

### Sunday 4 September

#### Founders' Tea *(By invitation only)*

### 5-10 September

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Arts & Crafts  
market open  
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The Origins Centre, Wits Art Museum, Planetarium and Yebo Gogga Yebo amaBlomo show is **free and open to the public on Homecoming Weekend.**

Find all the **#Wits100** Homecoming Weekend details at **[www.wits.ac.za/homecoming/](http://www.wits.ac.za/homecoming/)**



## Britanys celebrate 70 years of love and *naches*

Mike and Golda Britany celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on 24 August. The couple have shared a lifetime of love, commitment, and *naches* from their two children, six grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren. They have worked together their entire adult lives and have maintained a mutual respect for one another.

They are still active in the Inyoni community, play bridge, socialise with friends, and enjoy eating out.



Mike and Golda Britany

## UJW's Bev Cohen honoured for 44 years of service and two iconic projects

The Union of Jewish Women Johannesburg (UJW) has paid tribute to stalwart, Bev Cohen, for 44 years of active service by awarding her honorary life membership.

Besides being involved in all of UJW's numerous projects over the many years including delivering Kosher Mobile Meals, assisting at the weekly Friendship Club lunches, organising Mandela Day projects, co-convening the Bobba/Zaida Trip, revamping Sandringham Lodge's lounge and dining rooms, as well as many additional projects, in awarding the honour to Bev, two special projects were mentioned – Bags for New Beginnings and the Brain Boost Club.

Bev started Bags for New Beginnings seven years ago. Bags laden with newborn baby clothes, diapers, a blanket, baby

creams, and a soft toy, as well as toiletries for the new mom including sanitary towels are delivered to moms who have given birth at government hospitals and clinics. Some babies were previously taken home wrapped in towels or even newspapers. To date, Bev has been responsible for packing and delivering thousands of baby bags. This project has been so successful, it's now a national UJW project with other branches having followed suit.

Bev's compassion and love for the elderly resulted in her starting a weekly programme six years ago for members of the Jewish community suffering from mild to moderate Alzheimer's and dementia. These Brain Boost sessions, held every Tuesday at UJW House in Percelia, concentrate on memory games, art, singing, music, socialising, and enjoying tea, while the caregivers also get time off to socialise, share ideas, and enjoy tea.



Bev Cohen with a 'Bags for New Beginnings' recipient

## KDVP pupil showered with medals in Israel

Adam Fradkin Harlev, in Grade 5 at King David Victory Park, won four gold medals and one silver medal at the Israeli National Swimming Competition on 1 August. Harlev won two gold medals for backstroke, two for relay, and a silver for freestyle.



Adam Harlev

## Sandton Sinai encourages chatterboxes to speak

Sandton Sinai hosted the first Inter Jewish Day School Chatterbox Speech evening on Tuesday, 16 August, an event created to motivate young minds. Seven Jewish schools were represented: King David Sandton, King David Victory Park, King David Linksfield, Hirsh Lyons, Torah Academy, Yeshiva College, and Sandton Sinai.

The idea for the evening came from Spfia Caripi, the head of department for the intermediate phase, who has a passion for English, and believes that children develop confidence and self-esteem when presenting speeches in front of an audience.



Inter Jewish Day School Chatterbox Speech participants and parents

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