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South African Jewish Report

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New law could bar foreign rabbis from living in SA

TALI FEINBERG

The South African Jewish community has often brought foreign rabbis to live and work in the country, adding diversity, expertise, and passion to the rabbinate. In particular Chabad *shluchim* (emissaries) have come to South Africa to enhance Judaism according to the Lubavitcher Rebbe's vision. But this may all come to an end as a result of a possible new law announced by Home Affairs Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi on 13 September, who said foreign national religious workers would no longer be eligible for work permits or permanent residency in the country and would be able to enter South Africa only on a visitor's visa.

"We're saying they must come only as visitors, but as visitors who can perform work. This change means there's no avenue available for these religious workers to migrate to permanent residence status," said Motsoaledi.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, the chairperson of the South African Rabbinical Association, says about a third or more rabbis in South Africa come from abroad. "There aren't enough local graduates to fill positions across the board. So if they close the doors, we'll be in a serious crisis." He himself was born in Denmark, and came to South Africa after studying in Belgium and the United States (US).

He says he understands where Motsoaledi is coming from as the charges he raises are serious, "but at the same time, the process of becoming a resident is very involved, demanding police records and so on. If we bring a rabbi out from the US or other first-world countries, their

documents are usually correct, so it would be safe. If this law is implemented, we'll be compelled to challenge it."

"[Such a law] would have a terrible impact on the Jewish community," says Rabbi Greg Alexander of the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation. "As a South African Jew who has been blessed to learn from rabbis who have come and stayed here from all over the world, I would be deeply saddened if this was made law."

"The rabbi who did my Barmitzva and started me on my rabbinical path was from Israel. Rabbis [Moses] Weiler and [David] Sherman, who founded our movement in the 1930s and 1940s, were from Lithuania and America."

"It was communicated verbally," says Adrian Roos,

the Democratic Alliance (DA) shadow deputy minister of Home Affairs. "It was announced during a parliamentary portfolio meeting. The DA has submitted parliamentary questions on how these rules can be changed without consultation, and how they will affect foreign religious leaders in South Africa on work permits."

Roos says before this, foreign religious leaders could apply for a work permit and then later, potentially for permanent residency. But now, "the corrupt activity that allowed [Shepherd] Bushiri to obtain papers has led the minister to conclude that foreign religious leaders should no longer qualify for a work permit so that they, in turn, won't be able to qualify for permanent residence".

He's referring to Malawian evangelist Shepherd

Bushiri, who escaped South Africa in 2020 while facing money laundering charges. A chief director was dismissed, and four junior officials are still facing disciplinary proceedings for illegally granting Bushiri a residency permit. Motsoaledi said an investigation was also taking place to determine how another evangelist, Nigerian Timothy Omotoso, acquired South African residency. Omotoso is facing rape and human trafficking charges.

Asked if research was done on how this would affect religious communities, Roos says, "There was no indication of such research, and I'm questioning this. I'm trying to get feedback from religious organisations."

Asked what religious communities should do if

they want to object, he says, "The DA is getting the full details before determining the appropriate way forward. Section 9(3) of the Constitution holds that the state may not unfairly discriminate against persons on the basis of religion. While strictly speaking this refers to all persons in South Africa, religious leaders shouldn't be punished for the actions of corrupt Home Affairs officials and the illegal actions of a single religious leader."

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) national director Wendy Kahn says, "We are engaging with the Department of Home Affairs to understand the full statement made by the minister in parliament, as well as the possible implications for South African Jewry. Should it be required, the SAJBD will respond."

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein says he needed to find out more about the status of the proposed changes to the regulations and what to do about them. He's speaking to

Continued on page 13>>



The angels of Yom Kippur

Read story on page 19

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2 SA JEWISH REPORT

Elderly woman's murder "probably a terrorist attack"

Cameras caught a man beating an 85-year-old woman to death in the central Israeli town of Holon, in what Israeli authorities are saying is a probably a terrorist attack.

Police are seeking Moussa Sarsour, a 28-year-old West Bank Palestinian who works at a construction site near the scene of the attack, *Haaretz* quoted police officials as saying.

"This is a shocking attack by a despicable and cowardly terrorist, who murdered an elderly woman who couldn't fight back," Prime Minister Yair Lapid said in a statement.

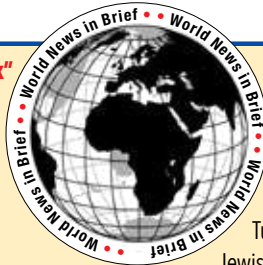
Police checked security cameras in the area after the woman was found dead on the street with her property intact, indicating it wasn't a robbery, *Haaretz* said. Kann Israel Radio said the attacker appeared to be beating her with material from the construction site.

London's Holocaust Memorial Garden clears away Queen tributes

As Britons poured out their sadness over the death of their 70-year Queen, they deposited tributes to her all over London, including at a garden designated for memorialising victims of the Holocaust.

Grace Dean, a reporter for *Business Insider* in London, tweeted on Sunday that the Holocaust Memorial Garden in Hyde Park, not far from Buckingham Palace, had turned into "a makeshift Queen Memorial Garden".

The post quickly elicited distress that mourning for the Queen,



22 September – 27 October 2022

who died at 96, would usurp mourning for the six million Jewish victims of Nazi genocide.

Erdogan tells US Jewish leaders he plans to visit Israel

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a group of Jewish leaders in New York City on Monday that he planned to visit Israel, the clearest sign so far that he is intent on resetting a long-troubled relationship, but didn't say when.

Erdogan also told the leaders antisemitism was a "crime against humanity".

Turkey and Israel last month announced that they planned to restore full diplomatic ties, which have been ruptured since 2010, when Israel carried out a deadly raid on a Turkish vessel attempting to breach an Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Iranian president calls for investigation to prove Holocaust

Iran's leadership has returned to Holocaust denial, its leader made clear in an interview with *60 Minutes*.

"Historical events should be investigated by researchers and historians," Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said in an interview on the CBS News flagship broadcast on Sunday when asked if he believed the Holocaust had occurred. "There are some signs that it happened. If so, they should allow it to be investigated and researched."

Torah Thought

Leopard's boldness spot on for us all



Rabbi Pini Hecht –
Marais Road Shul

The Mishna teaches us to "be as bold as a leopard ... to fulfil the will of Hashem". I always understood boldness to be an attribute associated with assertiveness and presence, so I was surprised when on a recent trip to the bush, I experienced my first leopard sighting and it seemed to belie this description.

My wife and I were participating in the annual South African rabbinic conference which was held at the Kruger Gate Hotel, and included a late afternoon bush drive in the Kruger National Park. As the sun was setting, we were lucky enough to sight a leopard right on the road in front us. However, the excitement was short lived as the leopard shyly slunk away, disappearing into the bush as soon as we made a bit of a fuss at seeing it. This seemed anything but "bold", but our guide explained that the boldness of the leopard is found in its willingness to take on prey and other predators much larger than itself.

This encounter provided me with a reflection point. I tend to think of character traits in polar terms. Boldness and humility aren't often associated. We seem to have a negative correlation with brazenness and aggression and a positive correlation with amenability and acceptance. It was eye opening to witness the leopard, who displays both these qualities. The lesson that came to mind is that it's not our natural traits that define us as good or bad, rather it's how we develop these traits for positive or negative outcomes that define us.

I may be inclined to anger, and anger is usually seen as a negative characteristic. However, when correctly directed, anger can be an impetus for positive exchange. For example, anger at injustice motivates the move for justice. A loving nature is generally seen as a positive trait, but we all know that "too much" love can be stifling or lead to inappropriate indulgence. So, it's not our natural traits that are good or bad nor do they define us as such, rather it's how we develop them.

The well-known phrase "a leopard never changes its spots" is a direct derivation of the quote from our prophet, Jeremiah, who asked, "Can the leopard change its spots?" and is understood to mean that it's impossible for one to change one's character, even if one tries very hard. Many of us have bought into this message and self-define as either good or bad people based on our natural disposition. The message above is empowering, for it tells us we may not be able to change our innate characteristics, but we can choose how we direct and develop them.

This is the essence of *teshuvah*, and an appropriate reflection and preparation for Rosh Hashanah. We need to know ourselves truthfully and always strive

to improve our character to actualise our potential for good. The new year is a time to recommit and act towards this ideal.

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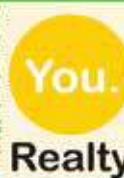
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The most common name for our new year is Rosh Hashanah, the name used in the tractate of Talmud devoted to the holiday. The Torah refers to this day as Yom Teruah (Day of Shofar Blowing). In our prayers, we often call it Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) and Yom Hadin (Day of Judgement) since this is the day when G-d recalls all of His creations and determines their fate for the year ahead. Shana Tova to You and You You You You You

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Editor Peta Krost – editor@sajewishreport.co.za • Sub-editor Julie Leibowitz
Journalists Nicola Miltz • Tali Feinberg • Junior Reporter Saul Kamionsky • Photographer Ilan Ossendryver • Editorial co-ordinator Dylan Berger – editorial@sajewishreport.co.za

Proofreader Kim Hatchuel Advertising Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za • New business development manager

Laura Kaufman laura@sajewishreport.co.za • Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • Distribution Sandy Furman

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SA teacher still being sidelined for Israel support

TALI FEINBERG

“I would like you not to ask Sudesh Mooloo to come and play on our premises. Currently, he cannot be allowed to play because Sudesh has expressed empathy for the state of Israel. There’s no compromise on this issue. We belong to the anti-Zionist movement.”

These were the words of a Muslim community leader in Pretoria who is in charge of the mosque where Pretoria teacher Sudesh Mooloo plays soccer socially. The statements were taken from a conversation with Mooloo’s teammate on 14 September.

The man repeatedly said he didn’t want Mooloo on the premises. “Please keep Sudesh out of this picture, because we don’t want the wrath of the community and the organisations to fall on our heads,” he said, pointing out that he didn’t want media attention. “If you decide to stand in solidarity with him, then you’re also not welcome. There will people monitoring this.” He later added, “We don’t believe in discrimination or apartheid.”

Discrimination against Mooloo began during the Israel/Gaza war of May 2021, when he wrote a WhatsApp status saying, “I’m not anti-Palestine. I’m anti-Hamas. I stand with Israel.” The next day, he was told by the principal of his workplace that his contract was terminated with immediate effect. Mooloo taught Afrikaans, social sciences, and creative arts at Laudium Secondary School in Pretoria for 25 years. He’s a Christian who says he wrote the statement in light of his religious beliefs. He still doesn’t regret it, even after being fired, receiving death threats, the victimisation of his family, and continued discrimination against him.

Regarding this latest incident, he says, “I play indoor soccer on a Sunday with friends. We’re all school buddies. We’ve been playing there for the past five years. I even played there at the time of my WhatsApp status. Suddenly, this man says I’m not welcome, even though he knows me well. I was shocked. I thought this had all been laid to rest.”

He says he was also banned from playing in another tournament, but his team stuck with him and pulled out in protest. Then, he and his family were meant to take part in a Heritage Day event on 24 September, but the organisers also asked him not to participate in that.

“We are from Marabastad [in Pretoria]. We then moved to Laudium. On 24 September, there will be a heritage celebration for Marabastad. My father was a pioneer of

Marabastad and Laudium. He was known as a great footballer, and played for a great team in Marabastad called Sundowns FC. I and my family were to be featured in the programme of this Marabastad reunion.

“Last night, [on 15 September], they held a meeting with the Laudium councillor and the sponsors of the reunion. The man who is on the event committee and who asked me to be on the programme, sent me the following message: “Hi Sudesh, regret to inform you that an objection was launched by the Ldm [Laudium] councillor with you appearing at the event. His argument was that the donors wouldn’t support us if they see you appearing.”

The man said he and another person supported Mooloo, “but we were outnumbered. I’m so sorry. I’m so disappointed.”

“This is South Africa. I thought we had freedom of speech and religion,” Mooloo says. “Apparently, people are now trying to ban me from any sporting facilities in Laudium. I love football, and I work with juniors in development, but they want to stop me from playing any role.”

He says he’ll never go back to the school from which he was fired, “because my safety is still not guaranteed”.

Tzvi Brivik, a director at Malcolm Lyons & Brivik Inc, is representing Mooloo in his legal battle against the school that fired him. “In terms of the rules of the court, we’re finalising a document which records issues which are in dispute and those which are agreed. We’re also required to set out the relief which we’re claiming on Sudesh’s behalf,” he says.

“For example, it’s agreed between the parties that Sudesh informed the school principal that he wasn’t returning to school and that he felt threatened. It’s also agreed that on various community and school WhatsApp groups, messages were circulating that he had been dismissed. Some of the issues which Sudesh’s employer, the school, has placed into dispute are his religious and political views. The school is also disputing whether Sudesh received any threats to his person and the extent of the duty it had to ensure a safe working environment.

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“These are disputes of fact, which a judge will determine on hearing the evidence at trial. Sudesh is claiming that he was discriminated against, amongst other grounds, on the basis of his beliefs, namely that he’s a devout Christian. Such a claim would entitle him to compensation of up to



Sudesh Mooloo

24 times his monthly remuneration.

“Heritage Day recognises and celebrates the cultural diversity of our country,” Brivik says. “The exclusion of our client on the basis of his beliefs runs contrary to all we aspire to as a nation, and is fundamentally wrong. This is a continuation of the discrimination and

alienation Sudesh continues to experience.”

Mooloo notes that the Palestinian Solidarity Movement’s headquarters are in Laudium, “so they will do everything in their power to stop anyone or anything going against that”. He says people have said they agree with his views, and even thanked him for taking a stand. “I would say about 80% of Christians in Laudium agree with me, but they’re too scared to say it as they don’t want to be attacked and marginalised. I also have Muslim friends who fully understand.”

He thanked the South African Jewish community for its continued support, especially the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), which has stood by him in the darkest times.

SAJBD Chairperson Professor Karen Milner says, “We condemn this campaign to silence South Africans who express views on Israel that don’t conform with the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] narrative. This is antithetical to the fundamental principles of our Constitution – free speech and association. Once again, the groups that are attempting to discriminate against and bully Sudesh Mooloo show themselves to be out of step with South African values.”

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), says, “Continued BDS bullying of South Africans for peacefully expressing their support for the democratic state of Israel is unacceptable. South Africans are protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and should freely and without prejudice be able to express their love and support for Israel. Furthermore, it has become evident that the antisemitic, anti-Israel lobby group, BDS, is no longer only targeting Jewish people, but has extended its hatred toward anyone who expresses a different view to its own regarding the Holy Land.

“The SAZF condemns the continuing antisemitic behaviour by BDS, and stands behind South Africans like Sudesh Mooloo, and their right to their political and religious beliefs.

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Antisemitism in SA filters from the top down, Jewish politicians tell US summit

NICOLA MILTZ

Jewish South African parliamentarians last week challenged executives from social media platforms about what they were doing to combat online antisemitism during an Inter-Parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism hearing in Washington.

The conference was convened by a multinational group of legislators to question representatives of Meta, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok about the proliferation of antisemitism on their platforms and examine ways to combat it.

For the first time, South African parliamentarians Madeleine Hicklin, Darren Bergman, Michael Bagraim, and Glynnis Breytenbach – all members of the Democratic Alliance – had an opportunity to meet Jewish politicians from around the world to explain antisemitism in the South African context. They detailed the interconnectedness between anti-Zionism and antisemitism as experienced by South African Jewry.

Addressing the hearing, Hicklin told delegates, “The greatest proponents of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment comes from our government and because of this, it filters from the top down instead of coming from the bottom up.”

Said Bagraim, “I drew attention to the phrase ‘apartheid Israel’, and explained that in our own personal experience, Israel isn’t an apartheid state.”

He told the hearing, “Antisemites the world over carefully manoeuvre themselves around the definition of antisemitism. It’s

important for us to understand that the attack on Israel in every single circumstance is actually a cover-up for an attack on Jews.”

He bemoaned the fact that executives from social media platforms didn’t give him any satisfactory comment on why they allowed “the most horrific attacks on Israel” on their platforms.

Organised by United States Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz



Darren Bergman, Glynnis Breytenbach, Michael Bagraim and Madeleine Hicklin

and Canadian Member of Parliament Anthony Housefather, the summit challenged those present to ask hard hitting questions about the evolution and proliferation of online antisemitism.

Bergman told the *SA Jewish Report* that attending the conference was “definitely worthwhile”.

“It highlighted global online antisemitism statistics and a worrying rising trend. There’s a push and pull for the social media space between good and evil, and

justice must prevail.”

He said it was imperative that people educated themselves on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and all forms of hate speech directed at minority groups.

Legislators highlighted the need for more transparency, and questioned Neil Potts, the vice-president of public policy, trust and safety for Meta; Michele Austin, the director of public policy for the United States and Canada for Twitter; Kevin Kane, the manager of government affairs and public policy for YouTube; and Eric Ebenstein, the director of public policy for TikTok. Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Chief Executive Jonathan Greenblatt described online antisemitism as a “global problem” that needed “global solutions”.

“It must be fought aggressively wherever it comes from, and it must be tackled together. This is why this meeting is so important, bringing together legislators from around the world to tackle this common scourge,” he said.

He said ADL data painted a disturbing picture of anti-Jewish racism in America online and on the ground. Its annual Online Hate and Harassment survey shed light on how Americans – especially

Jews – experience hate and harassment on social media, including types of harassment, its impact, and how and where they experience this harassment.

“More than a third of Jewish respondents – 37% – reported online harassment during their lifetime. More than a fifth – 21% – of Jewish respondents reported online harassment in the past 12 months,” he said.

“Overall, ADL’s online hate work has highlighted platforms’ failure to adopt adequate content-moderation policies, and where they exist, to enforce them at scale and equitably. This includes a lack of effective proactive interventions by social media companies to address online hate against Jews, and a failure to act when the content is reported.”

According to *Jewish Insider*, Wasserman Schultz challenged Potts over his company’s slow response times to addressing antisemitic content and its algorithmic amplification of hateful content.

While thanking the executives for appearing before the task force, she said she felt they had failed to grapple with antisemitism as a “viral toxic infection that drives real-world violence”.

Michael Levitt, a former Canadian Member of Parliament and the president of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center, implored the executives of social media companies to “do more and to do it now. The safety and future of our Jewish community depends on it.”

Breytenbach told the *SA Jewish Report* the conference had been “interesting and educational”.

“Hands-on interaction with

representatives of online platforms is something we could look at doing in South Africa, but we would be less aggressive since we’re not close to legislating on the subject,” she said, “however this is something we should explore.”

Said Hicklin, “Meta, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube are answerable to shareholders more than the Jewish community. The common response to most questions was, ‘We’ll get back to you’ as opposed to giving an unequivocal ‘Yes’ when asked to make a commitment to the eradication of antisemitic and anti-Zionist hate speech immediately.” She found this disappointing.

“If this summit showed me anything, it was that everyone in this room – Republican, Democrat, or any other political party – put ego on the back burner. The eradication of a scourge bigger than ego, bigger than politics, is at stake. We all have to pull together to fight for each other, to fight for one another.”

In a rousing final declaration, Hicklin told delegates that several members of her family were “wiped out in the Warsaw and Vilna ghettos and Hitler’s concentration camps” during World War II.

She said, “We have gathered here, as legislators, as concerned citizens, as Jews, as human beings, to boldly say, ‘Never again!’ and mean it. I’m a South African Jew, a member of the Democratic Alliance, and I am speak on behalf of many South Africans. I’m saying: ‘Never again!’ We’re saying, ‘Never again!’ It’s up to me. It’s up to you. It’s up to us. Hatred is a learned behaviour. It stops here.”

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Learn to forgive and manifest your future

As we wait for the lights to come on, it’s easy to contemplate our navels or, more seriously, consider where we’re at in our lives and where we want to be.

The frustration of loadshedding that seems endless makes it more difficult to see the light, but it’s there. So, too, is the ability to forgive and find solace in letting go of the pain, damage, or sadness we were holding onto.

It’s perfectly fitting for this time of year, as we move into Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the most auspicious time of the year.

I’ve been contemplating embodying forgiveness – what it means to me and how to manifest the kind of life I want to live.

When we asked our Jewish schools to encourage their high school pupils to write about what forgiveness means to them, I had no idea of the depth of understanding they would bring.

They comprehend that forgiveness isn’t just about saying sorry or accepting an apology, it’s about releasing the anger, blame, and any other negative thoughts one has. It doesn’t mean forgetting the pain and the cause, but it does mean letting it go.

When you feel pain or anger because of the pain someone has caused you, that particular person takes up a great amount of real estate in your mind. We allow them to push away all positive thoughts and possibilities, keeping us in a dark place, with the anger and pain and deeds done to us.

Forgiving someone, opens up that dark space in your mind. It allows you to move on. It gives you back that space to fill it with thoughts and experiences that could benefit your life.

This may sound simplistic because I don’t know what you’ve suffered or how you’ve been wronged or hurt, but I can say I cannot live a life of bitterness. I don’t want to hold grudges. I want so much more for myself. So, I forgive those who have harmed me, and allow them to walk away, giving me the freedom to do the same.

It’s not an easy process and I don’t say it lightly, but for me, it’s a necessity. We’ve all seen those who hold onto their bitterness, anger, and pain, believing that to forgive will allow the person or people who wronged them to get away scot-free. They are wizened and aged. They are miserable and unhappy, and cannot see the sunshine and blossoms outside.

And the person or people who wronged them are likely to have moved on and care nothing for their wasted energy and pain. Who knows? But, as long as they still take up space in our mind, we can’t move on to better things. That’s just sad!

So, though forgiveness is a very personal thing, I believe it to be integral to the life I want to manifest for myself and those around me.

I was interested to read the chief rabbi talk along a similar lines (see page 15) about not just accepting what life gives you, but creating the life you want.

I know there are those who pooh-pooh the idea of us manifesting something that we want. We’re not G-d! We can’t create!

True, but we’re powerful in that we don’t just sit back and expect life to throw us all that we want, we make it happen. Sometimes that means telling people what it is you want to do. Though we’re not G-d, as the saying goes, G-d helps those who help themselves.

It’s time to help ourselves envisage the lives we want for ourselves, our community, and our country.

Don’t sit back and expect it to happen, it won’t. Do what needs to be done to make it possible. That way, you manifest it.

Consider this: you want your street and those around it to be safer. So, you could complain bitterly about how dreadful the country is, how unsafe our streets are, and how you’re sick and tired of living like this.

Or, you could get together with the people on your street and create a neighbourhood watch, in which two people patrol at a time. You could connect to CAP, and see how it could help you in your endeavour, and there you go. You have taken control and, just by virtue of the few things you’ve done, you’ve already made your streets safer.

You know, so much lies in our attitude to things. It’s easy to fall into the trap of holding grudges and complaining. Life can never be happy that way. That way, life is just a heavy burden.

Come Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we’re not just given a free pass to let go of grudges and anger and reconfigure our lives, we’re told in the most serious terms to do so.

It’s a gift we get every single year. We get the chance to work out what isn’t working for us, and what we can let go of in order to live the lives we want to lead.

We get this time to consider, release, and move on. The consequences of not doing so can be dire. You know, the whole “being written in the Book of Life, or not” thing.

That aside, it’s unhealthy for anyone to carry a heavy load of anger, grudges, and all that’s unpleasant in the world. It’s enough to make anyone sick and desperately unhappy.

And, happiness is genuinely a choice. I’m not saying that there aren’t a lot of things that can take happiness from you and it’s not possible always to be happy, but you don’t always have to be sad, angry, and hurt. That’s not a natural state of being.

So, this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, dump your load of grudges, forgive people, and manifest the life you want to live. It sounds easy, it isn’t, but it is possible.

Shana tova u’metukah, and I wish you all a meaningful fast!

Peta Krost

Editor

PLEASE NOTE: WE WON’T BE PUBLISHING OVER THE HIGH HOLY DAYS, AND OUR NEXT EDITION WILL BE IN STORES ON 27 OCTOBER.



Why the light at the end of SA’s dark tunnel is distinctly green

OPINION

ERIN BERMAN-LEVY



Without doubt, the biggest talking point in South Africa right now is the national energy crisis.

Over the past few days, Eskom has implemented Stage 6 loadshedding, meaning it has cut 6 000MW from the national grid. To put that into perspective, this is more than 10% of the entire combined generation capacity of the country.

Aside from not being able to watch Netflix or warm up a “Woolies meal”, the country loses about R4 billion each day that we are in Stage 6 loadshedding. Large businesses experience millions in losses due to wastage and shutdowns; small, medium and micro enterprises either have to close or run expensive generators just to keep operating; and city centres become gridlocked without traffic lights.

Suffice to say, the energy situation in South Africa is nothing short of a crisis. The question is, what now?

“...we have an opportunity to keep the lights on at home, for businesses to carry on operating at full capacity, for industry and trade to continue to grow and flourish, all while making a significant impact on reducing our carbon footprint.”

Just as necessity is the mother of invention, desperation is the father of opportunity.

It’s becoming ever clearer that the only sustainable way to bolster South Africa’s energy generation capacity is by making use of private energy producers. From its inception in 2010, the Independent Power Producer (IPP) programme has allowed for private entities to build power plants using a variety of different energy sources and supply that energy to Eskom. To date, this programme supplies just more than 10% of our national grid.

South Africa is blessed with tremendous potential in the renewable energy space. With more than 2 500 hours of sunshine each year, and coastlines which provide a consistent source of wind, it’s no surprise that the majority of these independent power producers are making use of these resources to provide our national grid with clean, reliable energy – just nowhere near enough of it.

It seems logical that one clear, theoretical, solution to South Africa’s electricity woes is to expand on the microcosm of the IPP programme, and endorse it to become a programme that supplies the vast majority of our national grid rather than merely a fraction of it.

So, how do we get there?

The government has already amended its energy plan to allow private entities to build

infrastructure to feed excess solar power back into the grid. This was coupled with an increase in the maximum size of a solar system that companies would be allowed to put on their roof without a generation licence.

What this means is that businesses and households will be able to install solar energy systems at their premises not only to produce their own cheaper, more reliable electricity, but also to be paid for any excess electricity they produce. That would then incentivise them to install larger systems than they might have required previously, and to become mini power producers for the national grid.

At this point you may be wondering, with all these exciting initiatives coming into play, why am I still stuck without power for half the day?

Unfortunately, IPPs are being approved more slowly than the demand for them rises. Actual legislation is still yet to be passed with respect to homeowners and businesses being able to supplement the grid.

Eskom’s infrastructure is too frail to withstand the fluctuating influx of power that will come from larger businesses feeding back into the grid, especially on weekends, when it uses less of its own power.

If all goes well, we’re still a few years away from being able to see the benefits of these measures.

Okay, so what do we do now? The answer is quite simple, look after yourself.

This may sound selfish, but bear in mind the big picture. Solutions for homes, businesses, and industry – to become less reliant on the struggling national grid – are becoming more and more accessible.

By making use of our abundance of clean energy sources, we have an opportunity to keep the lights on at home, for businesses to carry on operating at full capacity, for industry and trade to continue to grow and flourish, all while making a significant impact on reducing our carbon footprint.

If South Africans can adopt this mentality, we’ll not only be looking after ourselves, but also laying the stepping stones for the inevitable end game of government privatising the generation of electricity, and allowing Eskom to shift its focus to distributing and transmitting that power efficiently.

To sum up, while it may all seem like doom and gloom, there’s a tremendous amount of potential in the future of South Africa’s energy plans and developments.

We could soon see South Africa become a hub for sustainable, green energy supplied reliably and affordably by multiple independent producers. Even if we’re a decade or so late.

• Erin Berman-Levy is an industrial engineer and chief executive of Blue Echo Energy, a company that specialises in providing innovative renewable energy solutions.



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SECURING YOUR FUTURE IN ISRAEL



Profits of peace: The Abraham Accords two years on

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



Two years after The Abraham Accords were inked on the White House South Lawn on 15 September 2020, have they heralded the “warm peace” touted at the time?

In 2020, leaders from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Israel, and the United States inked the documents through which the two Arab countries formally recognised the state of Israel. The Abraham Accords – named after the shared monotheistic patriarch of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths – were the first peace agreements with an Arab state that Israel had signed since the treaty with Jordan in 1994. Similar diplomatic deals with Morocco and Sudan followed by the end of 2020, in the dying days of Donald Trump’s presidency, and they were added to The Abraham Accords.

Since 2020, travel by Israelis to the UAE has mushroomed to more than 450 000 trips in spite of COVID-19 lockdowns. In April 2021, Emirates Airlines launched the first direct flights between Dubai and Ben Gurion Airport.

Trade is open and increasing. There’s a catching up between the children of Abraham ... joint projects in various fields, cultural exchanges. This was a closed door, and suddenly it opened, ushering a new era of peace with two out of the six Arabian Gulf countries. I say the learning about each other has begun and we have so much to learn about each other. The few [Emiratis] who have visited [Israel] that I know told me that it’s worth the trip, but always have a guide.”

What of the other three countries? Relations with Bahrain had also existed below the radar for several years. Bahrain, the UAE, and Israel agreed jointly to oppose the revival of the nuclear deal with Iran and Tehran’s ballistic missile programme.

Morocco’s effort to preserve its Jewish history – with about 2 500 Jews still living there – has formed the basis of low-key relations with Israel for many years. Controversially, the US under Donald Trump recognised Morocco’s claims to the Western Sahara as a sweetener to induce better ties with Israel.

Political instability in Sudan has meant little progress on relations between Khartoum and Jerusalem.

Trump promised that many more countries would follow in establishing relations with Israel, but this hasn’t yet materialised after Sudan and Morocco. The deal-making lost steam with Trump’s defeat and the departure from government of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. The proposed Abraham

Fund, supposed to raise \$3 billion (R52.7 billion), collapsed.

The Abraham Accords, a Trump legacy, have survived and thrived. The Biden Administration, however, prefers the term “normalisation agreements”.

In more signs of a warm peace, Israel President Isaac Herzog undertook a ground breaking state visit to the UAE in January 2022. The Negev Summit in Sde Boker in March 2022 brought together the foreign ministers of Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, the UAE, and US – an impossible dream before the Accords. UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed visited Israel for the two-year anniversary, laying a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and meeting the president and prime minister.

The big prize for Israel would be ties with Saudi Arabia. Without Riyadh’s green light, The Abraham Accords would never have been signed. In a positive sign, aircraft to and from Israel have been permitted to use Saudi airspace, beginning with Biden’s trip on Airforce One in July 2022.

Middle East expert Larry Benjamin at the University of the Witwatersrand told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I can say that the Israeli population has been way more enthusiastic than its Bahraini and UAE counterparts, but that aside, trade volumes have grown exponentially especially between Israel and the UAE. So, if that’s the variable by which success is measured, then the Accords have been highly beneficial to all parties.”

Sadly, one country that hasn’t welcomed the rapprochement has been South Africa, which downplayed and naysaid the ties in 2020, viewing the accords as a betrayal of the Palestinians. The progress of the past two years shows how out of touch the South African government is with the new spirit in the Middle East. You snooze, you lose!

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



There’s a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn’t necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we’re looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn’t exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn’t exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendents of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won’t be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesch. I’m well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

My next trip will be from 6 – 13 November in Johannesburg and 13 – 20 November in Cape Town.

Contact me on

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Visiting Israel? Make sure you see the “Big 5”

OPINION

BENJI SHULMAN



With the winter break well and truly behind us, many community members are reminiscing about their first post-COVID-19 opportunity to get back to the game reserve. The highlight of any trip to the bush is a sighting of one of the “Big 5” – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, or buffalo – which then immediately goes up on the “gram”, or is the topic at the evening’s braai.

What many don’t know, however, is that if you’re going to Israel, it’s just as exciting to take the opportunity to see the “Israeli Big 5”. I’m talking here, of course, about the five sectors of the Israeli economy that are transforming the lives of people in Africa – agriculture, water, healthcare, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Just like the “Big 5” is core to the tourism industry on the African continent, so too is the “Israeli Big 5” core to the future relationship between Africa and Israel. The reason for this is demographics. Africa, unlike many parts of the world, has a young population and abundant natural resources. Countries that are able to harness such elements for the good of their population will reap important economic rewards and the development

of their nations. Those that don’t will create an enemy of a new generation of young African people impatient for change, who are technologically savvy, hungry for opportunity, and dissatisfied with the revolutionary rhetoric of their post-colonial leaders. The possible result is another “Arab Spring” in which citizens attempt to overthrow the ruling elite.

One way for progressive African leaders to jumpstart this process is to invest in technology and capacity building in crucial areas. This will aid in the rollout of solutions at scale, and create access to opportunities at speed. The “Israeli Big 5” addresses these core issues, and can take Africa’s developing economies forward in leaps and bounds. And, of course, where the economy goes, politics will follow. Successful implementation and partnership of “Israeli Big 5” technology will drive a closer relationship between all levels of Israel and African society. We’re already seeing this dynamic playing out at the African Union, where African leaders have seen the benefit of working with Israel and have allowed for its re-accreditation to the continental body in spite of the howls of protest from loud voices such as South Africa and Algeria.

This isn’t to say that being part of the “Israeli Big 5” is easy. Like their African “Big 5” counterparts, Israeli companies thinking of entering this space are going to have to be adaptable, fast, hungry, and not afraid to take on a mammoth challenge. So, what are some examples of technologies and companies that are living up to the “Israeli Big 5” opportunity and making an impact?

Take, for example, Zzapp, an Israeli technology company that’s using advances made in artificial intelligence (AI) and applying them to the fight against malaria. Malaria kills 400 000 people a year worldwide, and is one of the top three killer diseases on the African continent along with HIV and TB. By using AI to make the campaign against malaria more efficient, Zzapp believes that it can help eradicate the disease in a cost-effective manner. The idea is so interesting, Zzapp was recently awarded the IBM Watson AI XPRIZE, a global initiative tapping AI to tackle some of humanity’s most pressing challenges. As a test case, Zzapp is working to eradicate 100% of malaria from the west coast island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe in

two short years.

South Africa is a natural home for the “Israeli Big 5”. We have a strong, organised, and passionately Zionist Jewish community. South Africa also has low levels of antisemitism, a good infrastructure, and a can-do spirit across its population. We’ve already started to see the effects of Israeli innovation in our country in areas as diverse as HIV, humanitarian aid, disability access, and youth development. Just a few weeks ago, major South African municipalities met a delegation of Israeli water experts, organised by the Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF-SA) to look at the

challenge of water recycling for the benefit of all South Africans.

This represents a unique opportunity for investment in our country. It has the potential to improve the lives of ordinary South Africans, create jobs, and solve key development challenges. It can also help bring a sense of innovation, as well as connect us to the global Jewish community in the spirit of *tikkun olam*. So next time you’re in the Holy Land, take binoculars and be on the lookout for the “Israeli Big 5”!

• Benji Shulman is director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation.

Heavy hitters take on social-media hatred

OPINION

WENDY KAHN



Social media is often blamed for the spread of decidedly unsocial sentiments and beliefs and all the ills that flow from that. There’s a great deal of truth to this.

Never before has it been so easy to disseminate hateful views aimed at denigrating and defaming not just individuals, but entire groups. Jews are unfortunately among those most commonly targeted.

However, at the end of the day, online platforms are no more than a tool, and like any tool, whatever good or harm they do depends on what use they are put to.

Deborah Lipstadt made that point very effectively at last week’s Inter-Parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism (ITFCOA) summit, held at the United States Capitol in Washington DC.

Social media, she said, was like a knife. When wielded by a surgeon, a knife could save a life but, in the hands of a murderer, it could do lethal harm.

Similarly, the use social media is put to depends on the intent of the user, Lipstadt said. Earlier this year, Lipstadt



Wendy Kahn with members of the World Jewish Congress: Veronica Machtley, Andre Obolor, Yvette Shumacher, and Betty Ehrenberg

was appointed the US special envoy for monitoring and combatting antisemitism. She was catapulted into the limelight when notorious Nazi apologist David Irving unsuccessfully sued her for defamation for having called him out as a Holocaust denier.

I was privileged to attend the ITFCOA summit, the first to be held in person since its establishment in 2020. It was an important opportunity for

parliamentarians, including from South Africa, to come together with special antisemitism envoys Lipstadt (US); Noa Tishby (Israel); and Professor Irwin Cotler (Canada). They were also able to interact with leading Jewish civil society organisations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL); Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations; and World Jewish Congress (WJC) to formulate a strategy to address online antisemitism.

Online hate poses a threat to all of society, not just to those specifically targeted. This point was made by, among others, US Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Shultz. She cautioned that online hate and incitement could lead to physical violence, the most recent example being the racially motivated Buffalo shootings.

As the bodies that exercise practical control over what’s published, the main social-media companies have a particular responsibility to take whatever practical steps necessary to combat the scourge of

online hatred.

It was therefore of critical importance that high-ranking officials from Meta, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok were also present at the hearings, where their company policies on addressing hate were discussed and questions put to them.

This was important for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), since one of the things we have struggled with in the past has been our isolation from these companies.

Last week’s inter-parliamentary summit should be seen as just one step forward in what should be an ongoing battle.

From the SAJBD’s perspective, it’s fortunate that we’re able to work closely with our global counterparts, and most notably the WJC and ADL, who have forged strong and effective connections with the social-media companies concerned.

They are highly experienced and knowledgeable in dealing with online hate, and unfailingly make themselves, their networks, and know-how available to us whenever we need them.

Such assistance has been invaluable

to us in our ongoing effort to combat online hate on the local front, where fake profiles, identity theft, and challenges to obtaining information on those threatening our community are some of the problems we must grapple with.

As previously reported, last week, SAJBD National Chairperson Karen Milner and I participated in the inaugural conference of the new London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, several sessions of which also addressed online hate. I also sit on the WJC online working group, which addresses these issues on a regular basis.

The SAJBD will continue to be vigilant against online hatred, and do all it can to address it. In this regard, we rely in no small measure on members of our own community to bring such cases to our notice, and so I ask anyone who becomes aware of unacceptable content to let us know on sajbd@sajbd.org.

• Wendy Kahn is the National Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

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‘Semigrating’ to Cape is better than emigrating, says Cape Board

TALI FEINBERG

Though the Johannesburg Jewish community faces the perennial question of whether it’s time to “pack for Perth”, the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Board) is asking people to pause and reflect on “semigrating” to Cape Town as another option.

It has launched a project which will give community members options and support if they choose to “semigrate” to the Cape.

Says Cape Board Chairperson Tzvi Brivik, “It’s not the intention to draw community members from other major centres around South Africa but rather to present Cape Town as a viable alternative.”

“The plan is to keep South African Jewry strong, and after discussing it with our colleagues in Gauteng, we agreed it would be best to encourage Jews in the Gauteng area who are considering emigration to come to Cape Town rather than leave the country,” says Cape Board Executive Director Daniel Bloch.

“Not only will this ensure that the Jewish community in South Africa remains stable and sustainable, it also ensures that the Cape’s

community can grow,” says Brivik. “We have an ageing community and need new energy. The project’s success isn’t just based on people moving, but also that they connect with the Cape’s communal organisations.

“Already, many Jewish students are moving to the Cape to study at places like Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town, and we encourage them to be active participants in the community. We have also seen that in some cases, the parents follow their children down.”

Says Bloch, “We take this project extremely seriously, which is why it’s funded by our community and why we’re working with communal organisations to bring it to life. We’ve engaged with key stakeholders within our community, and their commitment was immediate.

“After meeting Executive Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis [City of Cape Town] and Premier Alan Winde [Western Cape provincial government] and receiving their endorsement, we realised that everyone in the Western Cape has their own ‘semigration’ plan, and we need to combine these efforts. We have also met private-sector organisations in finance and



property that are committed to this project. We’re hosting our ‘Move Down to Cape Town Expo’ in Johannesburg in October.

“Many South Africans who leave the country are deprived of the economic status they have here. It’s difficult to maintain the same standard of living,” says Bloch.

“Emigration is extremely difficult,” says Brivik. “It can lead to mental health, family, and economic hardships. However, a move to Cape Town is completely different. The quality of life is accessed and enjoyed immediately. The community is familiar, and for most, a support structure exists. If not, we’re here to assist.”

“You still have access to many luxuries in Cape Town compared to Canberra, California, or Kfar Saba,” says Bloch. “The pandemic has also shown that it’s difficult to move far from family members and not be able to reconnect quickly in times of crisis. Cape Town has been voted the eleventh best city in the world, trumping Sydney and London. It has some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.

“The City of Cape Town also has better infrastructure,” Bloch says. “Loadshedding is a stage lower, ward councillors are able to contact the city’s maintenance team quickly for efficient service delivery, and there’s less red tape when it comes to opening small and medium-sized businesses in the Western Cape. The familiarity of the people, the community, and economy is a big plus. Global giants are setting up base in Cape Town, and many businesses are looking at ways of transferring their operations. Why move anywhere else when you can relocate to a beautiful city in a country we all love?”

He’s not afraid to admit that “there are still problems that Cape Town faces which are endemic to the whole of South Africa. There’s still inequality and a lack of adequate housing for previously disadvantaged individuals, which has led to a large homelessness issue within the city. There’s crime, but the higher police presence in affluent neighbourhoods is helpful. Another issue is traffic.”

Though the Johannesburg Jewish community is generally more observant than Cape Town’s community, Brivik says, “We have a growing observant community and are seeking to expand it. There are more than 20 shuls in the Western Cape. These aren’t only in the main Jewish-populated areas

like the Atlantic Seaboard and Southern Suburbs. There are also active shuls in our country communities like Hermanus, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Plettenberg Bay, Oudtshoorn, and Somerset West.”

“There are a variety of retailers and caterers offering a range of kosher products, and there are several restaurants located around the Cape offering delectable menus,” says Bloch. “There are schools in the city centre, Atlantic Seaboard, and along the West Coast that cater for the more observant members of the community. Those attending our expo will have an opportunity to engage with some of these organisations.”

In terms of property, Bloch says “property prices fluctuate like every other market” and “there will definitely be something to suit most budgets and needs. We have property experts who are ready to assist potential ‘semigrants’ to find their perfect home,” he says.

“All of the Cape Board’s 67 affiliate organisations are involved, and are looking forward to welcoming new members,” he says. “We have organisations involved in education, religion, funding, employment, sport, welfare, and youth. Our community is more than equipped, and ready for an influx of residents.”

“The city and province are also keen to discuss the incentives they have to offer to businesses which relocate,” says Brivik. “These include tax incentives and rebates on services.” They will be at the expo to speak to businesses.

The expo will take place on 23 October in Johannesburg. There’s an advert in this issue of the *SA Jewish Report*, and the community will receive information via email. There will be a QR code to register.

“We’ll also be hosting workshops where organisations will speak about property, education, business and more,” says Bloch. “You’re welcome to reach out to us via social media or email us at sajbd2@ctjc.co.za.”

Finally, he says, “The Western Cape can provide a wonderful lifestyle, a variety of work options, and a Jewish community which is overflowing with opportunity for both young and old. Let’s keep South African Jewry strong. If you’re considering leaving the country, think again and consider the Western Cape as your next destination. Move down to Cape Town!”



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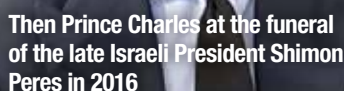
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DR YVETTE ALT MILLER

"Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and I were exact

Last year, King Charles commissioned seven major new paintings to add to the official Royal Collection of art displayed in Buckingham Palace: seven paintings of Holocaust survivors. The project was part of the prince's longstanding aim of educating future generations and



quite extraordinary resilience and courage of those who survived and who, despite their advancing years, have continued to tell the world of the unimaginable atrocities they witnessed. They stand as a permanent reminder for our generation – and indeed, to future generations – of the depths of depravity and evil humankind can fall to when reason, compassion, and truth are

- Dr Yvette Alt Miller lives in Chicago, and has lectured on Jewish topics. Her book, *Angels at the Table: a Practical Guide to Celebrating Shabbat* takes readers through the rituals of Shabbat and more, explaining the full spectrum of Jewish traditions with warmth and humour. This story was first published on Aish.com.

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Brace for Gen Z, the kinder, activist generation

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“Without radical change, our future looks bleak. But there’s a new force in the world that’s shaping our future.”

This force is Generation Z, people born in the last few years of the 1990s going into 2000 onwards, and high-performance coach Ronen Aires focuses on them in his soon-to-be-released book titled *BREACH*.

“What we’ve seen is their ability to become a collective force virtually and on the ground,” he says. “With this, they breach the status quo. What you’ll see over time is numerous attempts to make changes, some together with previous generations, while others led by this generation.”

Aires says South African youth between the age of 18 and 28 makes up a huge proportion of the country’s population. “There’s a youth bulge in many parts of the world. This group is your young voting pool, your early adopters, the ones who are still open-minded to buy your product, potentially going to work at your companies, and eventually being your leadership team. This is the real reason why you should take this group really seriously.”

We’re all similar in many ways, except that across the generations, there are differences, Aires says. “As if you were a device, you come with different settings. So, if you think of the difference between say, Millennials, and Gen Z, it’s as if it was a software upgrade in which certain bugs were fixed, and certain features enhanced. It’s not about slanting. One is not bad, it’s more about noticing some of the differences and noticing that it’s not a one-size-fits-all in each category. Whether a Millennial or Gen Z, there are different sub-groups.”

Millennials, born between the early 1980s and late 1990s, were the disruptive generation, dubbed “Generation Me”, Aires says. “They were seen as selfish, entitled, and disruptive. You could look at someone like Mark Zuckerberg, who is one of the huge disruptors of the generation.”

Gen Z is much kinder, Aires says. In his experience, this generation has been by far his



favourite to work with.

“They’re a lot more aware of the world they’ve inherited. They know it’s in a mess. They also realise it’s up to them to be part of the solution. Millennials were often desktop activists, whereas the younger generation is action orientated and wanting to be part of creating a kinder, more compassionate world. It was born in a world where its members don’t remember not having technology and social media. It’s part of their DNA. They’re as comfortable in the virtual world as they are in the real world.”

The difference between Millennials and Gen Z emanates from Gen X being helicopter parents as a result of lacking emotional support during their childhood, Aires says.

Also, issues like climate change, poverty, unemployment, patriarchal systems, and corrupt governments are becoming more prominent, he says. “Young people are saying, ‘We don’t want you to want to be part of these old systems’. Millennials were very good at pointing out what was wrong in the world. Gen Z is similar, but it actually wants to be part of the solution. It may have been passed down from Millennial parents.”

One of Gen Z’s focuses is on destigmatising and raising awareness about mental health issues, making it okay not to be okay, Aires says. “For many decades, there has been a silent mental health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic made things worse. You’ll see in companies and just in general a lot more compassion and attention to mental health issues, not just for young people, but across the board. In future, it will be okay to speak about it and seek support.”

A public speaker, activist, mental health advocate, and breathwork facilitator, Aires is the founder and chief executive of Student Village, a youth and student marketing agency based in Johannesburg.



Ronen Aires

Gen Z have taken to concepts like gender fluidity, whereas Millennials were all about certainty, Aires says. “Gen Z really want to fix the world and have a need for safety. What does this mean for, say, employers in the workplace? The good news is that you have energetic, innovative, enthusiastic, and smart young people coming through. At the same time, being used to almost immediate gratification through social media, they want their careers to happen at the same pace, so it’s hard to attract and retain young people.”

As Gen Z is very much values aligned, if a company doesn’t match their principles, its members will seek an alternative, Aires says. “This means companies really have to walk their talk. Young people will call them out if they sniff any inconsistencies. They will leave or make a big deal on social media, and companies face being cancelled if caught in the crossfire.”

Having worked with youth and leaders for more than two decades, he was inspired to write *BREACH* during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In the depths of despair, I received creativity, lucidity, and inspiration just regarding the changes that we were forced to make, and how youth were playing a part in recalibrating the new world,” Aires says.

“What I mean by this is if you think back to the early stages of our lockdowns, we were forced to stay at home, working remotely with flexible working hours. We collaborated, we had more empathy, and more compassion for each other. Things were very different. It was a massive change to how companies operated. But young people had been advocating for these changes for many years before this. I remember when I had the insight to write *BREACH*, I was lying on my couch with my laptop. I was on a Zoom call. I was thinking, ‘Here I am at home. I don’t have to be dressed up for work. I’m lying on a couch doing work. Netflix is on in the background.’ This is exactly what young people have been asking for.”

• *BREACH* will launch soon globally in paperback and e-book formats.

New law could bar foreign rabbis from living in SA

>>>Continued from page 1

his colleagues on the National Religious Leaders Council to explore co-operating with them, as well as taking legal opinion to clarify the potential implications of the possible changes.

South African Association of Progressive Rabbis (SAAPR) Chairperson Rabbi Emma Gottlieb says, “The SAAPR is deeply concerned about this announcement. This change would have a direct and negative effect on our movement, which is often dependent on rabbis from abroad to fill our congregational positions. We have begun a process to open our own rabbinic training programme in South Africa, but we’re still many years away from being able to offer home-grown rabbis to our community.”

“Currently, only three of six progressive rabbis are South African citizens, and the rest are either permanent residents or on work visas,” she says. “We have one rabbinic candidate, who would also not be able to join our movement should this policy change be enacted. We haven’t been approached or alerted to this change by the Department of Home Affairs. We plan to support the members of parliament fighting this, and we call upon the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to participate in challenging this policy.”

“Jewish members of the DA are talking to our leadership,” says member of parliament and labour expert Michael Bagraim. “We want to challenge it. It will affect all religions. The concept is wrong in that everyone should have an opportunity to make a proper application and explain why their skills are needed in that particular position, regardless of industry or profession.”

“In essence, there’s hysteria about foreigners coming here to work,” he says. “Instead of trying to tackle the real problem – porous borders and illegal workers – they’re attacking those who legitimately apply for work permits. The system of employment and job creation in South Africa has completely broken down. We have more than 11 million people who can’t find jobs because of a lack of skills and

other factors. Instead of looking at the real problems, the government tries to find scapegoats.”

The Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) organisation says, “The state cannot unfairly discriminate against foreign nationals who want to come to work as religious workers. Fair criteria and assessment should be used in each work-visa category to ensure that legitimate applicants can obtain work visas. A blanket ban on foreign religious workers would arguably be unconstitutional.”

FOR SA’s executive director, Michael Swain, says the charges against Bushiri and Omotoso are serious, but these examples shouldn’t be used to paint all foreign nationals who do religious work as “criminals”.

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to the Department of Home Affairs for comment, but hadn’t received a response at the time of going to print.

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Babies, buddies, and blessings – children’s home changes lives

NICOLA MILTZ

Nestled in a quiet, tree lined suburb of Fairvale in the heart of Jewish Johannesburg is a small, nondescript suburban children’s home, slightly run down yet still cheerful, that’s positively changing hundreds of lives every day.

It’s the headquarters of Impilo Child Protection and Adoption Services – home to six abandoned babies – which is quietly having an impact on hundreds of vulnerable children and those who care for them in the province. It’s also here where the lives of dozens of volunteers from the community are being dramatically altered as a result of hours of time spent caring, swaddling, burping, stimulating, and loving these babies wholeheartedly. For many, spending time with these special souls has left them changed forever.

“Impilo has done more for me spiritually and emotionally than anything I could ever have done for the four babies I cared for,” said Daryl Fleischer, who volunteered for seven years as a “buddy” – a person qualified to take care of children outside the facility for several hours a day. So taken was she by the work, Fleischer has since studied to become an auxiliary social worker.

“These precious little people taught me how the small things in life can make you so happy; how to love unconditionally. That feeling of little arms around your neck, a head lying on your chest, a child’s unbridled laughter, brings joy beyond measure,” she said.

Impilo, which means “life” in Zulu, was opened to children in 2003. Since then, more than 2 000 children and families have benefitted in some way from its myriad services.

“What you see here is only a tiny part of what Impilo does,” said Director Sue Krawitz.

Apart from offering a temporary care nursery, Impilo, a registered non-profit, also offers professional social work, child protection services including foster care, adoption, family reunification, and alternate-care placements.

“The work is endless, so too are the numbers of abandoned and vulnerable children in South Africa,” said Krawitz.

About 3 500 children are abandoned in South Africa every year. At any given time, Impilo is intimately involved with about 150 of them in some way throughout the province.

“It takes a desperate mother to abandon a baby on some dumpsite, in a toilet, at a hospital, in a drain, or just about anywhere,” said Krawitz. “It’s not about her being irresponsible.”

First prize for Krawitz and her team is, somehow, to reunite hopeless, despairing mothers with their babies. “We do this with the help of communities, the police, and social services, but it’s never easy.”

Failing that, the babies find themselves in the long and winding social services quagmire.

Impilo places about 60 children with adoptive families every year. It places many in foster care.

Impilo’s senior caregiver and auxiliary social worker, Zodwa Maseko, has seen it all.

Sipho was found by a waste recycler stuffed in a plastic packet dumped in a dustbin during broad day light in Soweto a few months ago, she said.

“His cord was still attached. He was cold, naked, nameless, and alone.”

He was rushed to nearby Zola Medical Clinic with little chance of survival. “He was then brought to us and today, he’s a happy little guy. Sadly, we haven’t been able to track down his family,” she said.

There’s baby Andile, who was abandoned by his drug addicted mother at the hospital after delivery. He was very sick, had meningitis, and suffered from drug withdrawal. “He came to us



with wide, unblinking eyes, and never slept, he was so unsettled. Now he’s walking and smiling,” she said.

Maseko has often been called out at odd hours by police to collect abandoned babies.

“One was discovered by a *gogo* in the middle of the night in an outside toilet still with her cord attached and covered in afterbirth,” she said.

“The granny asked neighbours if they knew whose baby it was, and finally called the police for help. It turned out to be her teenage son’s girlfriend’s baby. She gave birth

all alone in the toilet and left the baby there because she didn’t know what to do,” said Maseko.

After weeks of counselling and professional intervention by social workers, the baby was finally reunited with its family, said Krawitz.

Maseko has five caregivers who report to her daily.

While one of them feeds a little boy – whose father wants to be reunited but the mother has no interest – another caregiver watches as Baby Blessing happily plays roly-poly on a colourful playmat in Impilo’s special *mpepu* (nursery), smiling with fleshy, dimpled cheeks.

“They are like my own children,” said Maseko, “It’s hard to say goodbye to them, but everyone deserves to have a home at the end of the day.”

Impilo relies on donations from companies and the community to help it meet its high monthly costs.

“We need about R6.5 million a year to cover costs,” said administrative manager Joy Capon. “We would love to give the house a lick of paint, fix the roof,

and outside wall, but have little left after expenses.”

The petrol bill is about R17 000 a month, said Krawitz, listing the number of places drivers go to on a daily basis from searching for parents in far flung places, going to the home affairs department, to the courts and municipal offices.

It uses about 130 tins of formula a year, costing about

R15 000, and about 1 200 nappies a month. Other items on its list of needs include things like creams, soaps, wet wipes, gloves, and tissues.

“We’re battling. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people were extremely

generous. However, things aren’t the same, and it’s a constant battle to meet our financial needs,” said Krawitz.

Though Impilo is enormously grateful to its regular donors, it finds itself needing more.

“It’s the R100 here and there, the small monthly debit order, packet of nappies, the gently worn baby grow, all of these things make a huge difference,” she said.

“These precious little people taught me how the small things in life can make you so happy; how to love unconditionally. That feeling of little arms around your neck, a head lying on your chest, a child’s unbridled laughter, brings joy beyond measure.”

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A time to create the community you want

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



What’s the state of our community? Where are we headed? What does our future hold? In a certain way, these are unhelpful questions to ask because they put us in a passive mindset. Allow me to explain.

There’s a natural human need to predict the future. We want to know what’s going to happen. We feel this need most acutely over Rosh Hashanah, when we have a deep sense of our vulnerability and reflect on Hashem’s decrees for us in the year ahead.

The problem is that when we’re preoccupied with prediction, we think passively. We wonder what the future holds, looking on helplessly, pondering what’s in store for us. It’s vital that we turn this on its head. Rather than passively anticipating the year ahead, we need to create it ourselves, as if on a blank canvas.

There’s a lot out of our control and in the hands of Hashem. But who we are, the values and qualities of the families we nurture and the community we build, these are all in our hands.

Rosh Hashanah is the day we commemorate the creation of the first human beings. As we say in our Rosh Hashanah davening, “*Hayom harat olam*” (Today the world was created), which our sages teach us refers to the creation of Adam and Eve. On Rosh Hashanah, as part of our divine mandate to be creators like G-d, we create ourselves anew.

The journey of self-creation begins with us, then ripples outwards in ever-expanding circles of impact. And our guide for how to achieve this is the divine blueprint for creation – Torah wisdom and mitzvahs. Every year on Rosh Hashanah, we assess our lives in terms of this blueprint, and we’re given the opportunity to reimagine ourselves and our community.

The key is to realise that our community is not something static – it’s a living, breathing thing, constantly changing. This realisation will help us move from describing the state of our community to actively shaping it. Working together,

instead of passively predicting the future, we can actively create it.

So what kind of community do we want in the year ahead? What are our opportunities to fulfil this vision for our community? What are the obstacles standing in our way? I’ve been thinking a lot about these questions, and would like to share my own thoughts and feelings in a special State of the Community Address to reflect on where we are, and share a vision for our future.

In the build-up to the event, as I attempt to formulate my thoughts on these matters, I want to hear your views on the state of our community. What do you see as our main difficulties and challenges, our strengths and weaknesses? What should we be doing more of? What should we be

doing less of? How, in your view, do we chart the way forward to create the best possible version of our community? I look forward to hearing your views.

This is a time of year when our creative energies are at their most potent; when we look back at where we’ve come from, but also look forward to where we want to go; when we have a chance to build new foundations based on bold aspirations, not just as individuals, but as a community. Attempting to predict the future of our community, or anxiously wondering from the sidelines what will happen, is by definition an exercise in passivity.

Let us move off the side lines and get involved. Let us all work together, turning our energies towards creating the kind of future we want. We have the blueprint in

our hands: coming together as a community, with honesty and humility, with innovation and creativity, with positivity and faith in Hashem. We need to live these values, and harness every resource we have with optimism and courage to meet the challenges we face.

May Hashem bless all our efforts, and inscribe and seal our special community for a sweet, healthy, prosperous, and peaceful 5783.

• *The chief rabbi’s State of the Community Address will be held on Sunday, 2 October, at Great Park Shul after mincha, which will commence at 17:30. For booking, or to send the chief rabbi your views, email stateofthecommunity@chiefrabbi.co.za*

The stress and angst of *yom tov* seating

OPINION

HOWARD FELDMAN



Across the Jewish world shul committees are anxious.

With Rosh Hashanah a few days away, there’s minimal time to complete the shul seating lists. And little room for error. Worse, with the COVID-19 pandemic having dominated the past few years, it’s the first time many shuls will be open over this period. The tension around *yom tov* seating is palpable.

I’ve heard of a case of a shul “gabbai” having a recurring nightmare that he inadvertently

button. I’m told it’s what keeps shul gabbaim awake at night.

And I can hardly blame them. There should be a Xanax allowance for this month of the Jewish year.

Along with first night *yom tov* meals, there’s little as contentious as shul seating. Congregants find it difficult to distinguish their seat in prayer from a family Barmitzvah. What that means is that both the location and company is relevant to them and is seen as a

reflection of social status and importance in the community. Get that wrong, and anything can happen.

Fortunately for Orthodox shuls, no one’s at risk of being seated at the “band’s table”.

The fact that someone no longer gets along with their prior seat neighbour is also something that the committee isn’t just expected to know, but to be sensitive towards. Each now non-speaker will expect the other to be

moved even if they were actually born in the seat in question.

Doors, window, aircon positioning are critical factors to many because misplaced seating

could mean the difference between a pashmina and linen as dress code of choice. And no one would want that!

For me it’s relatively simple. I sit in the same seat each day and each Shabbat, and would hope that I remain there for the festivals. Regarding my wife, I asked for her to be seated anywhere where she’s unable to keep an eye on my behaviour. Because honestly, I would rather explain my rowdiness to G-d than to her on the long walk home from shul. Even though we live just a few minutes away.

Then, there are friend groups, in-laws, in-laws of friends, and children of in-laws related to cousins who have never met, but should have. With the amount of interbreeding in the community, the gene pool isn’t just weak and predisposed to all sorts of genetic ailments, but causes havoc for those responsible for seating. And being the entitled and self-absorbed people we’re blessed to be, there’s an expectation that each shul committee member retains the congregant’s family tree in their head, reaching back for a minimum of three generations.

Or from when they left Lithuania, whichever is sooner.

Perhaps because they’re out of practice, and perhaps because it’s that time of year, it might be a good idea to at least try and be a bit more understanding when it comes to shul seating.

That’s what I intend doing. If my wife is able to see me.

• *Howard Feldman writes a regular column for the SA Jewish Report and hosts the Morning Mayhem show on Chai FM.*



seated a dead person, the mistake publicly posted on the shul noticeboard for all to see. Like a mistaken Facebook birthday wish to a person long past. Without the edit or delete

chief
Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Warren Goldstein

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Religious Zionism – where to from here?

RABBI DAVID STAV

Continued on page 33>>

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Can you change?

OPINION

There’s a story told of a young man who was gung-ho and enthusiastic. As soon as he graduated from college, he set out to change the world. After a couple of years, he realised that this was too big a project, so he settled on changing his country. But that, too, proved to be exceedingly difficult, so he narrowed down his options, and chose to just change his city. Alas, that was also exhausting and difficult. Alright then, he decided, now visibly weary after many years, I’ll just change my community. Maybe just my family? He eventually came to a grinding halt, exhausted from all his effort and lack of success. But he also came to a profound realisation – the only thing he could change was himself!

The result? When he changed himself, he changed his family, his community, his city, and of course, the world.

We’re again standing at a precipice. The year 5782 is about to take its leave, and we’ll usher in a new year, a new slate. Our hopes, expectations, and needs all take centre stage, and we take stock of ourselves. Perhaps this year we should flip things around. Let’s not bemoan or dissect our external realities, hoping that somehow this year, things will change. Let’s simply look at how we can change ourselves.

What do we need to get the ball rolling? Here are some ideas I’ve come up with, elucidated through the acronym “**CHANGE**”.

C – control – perhaps one of the greatest impediments to growth and happiness! Leave your control tower and throw the keys away. You’re in charge only of yourself, and the only person you can control is you. Everything and everyone else aren’t for you to control, change, direct, or influence. So, resign right now as president of the control committee. It will be the most liberating first step you can take.

H – happiness – choose happiness over being right. Today’s world is filled with ego and selfishness. People do hurtful things in order to preserve their identities or to fill their unwanted needs. Everyone has an agenda, and everyone has an opinion. But don’t get caught up in the fray. Instead of trying to prove you’re right, choose to find happiness. It’s a smoother, kinder way to live.

A – live in a state of appreciation. We’re hardwired always to look at our glass as half empty. Every day, practice finding five things you can be thankful for. Even in the darkest places, there are always things that are good. When we change our focus, that which we perceive as being “not revealed goodness” will be tempered down, and it will give us the courage to live life more fully.

N – practice being non-judgemental. Everyone is going through something. Everyone is fighting their personal darkness. Quit judging them! And even deeper, stop being harsh on yourself! When we stop judging others and ourselves, G-d responds in kind, and won’t judge us harshly either. Learn to give the benefit of the doubt when you see something that you feel is unfair or wrong.

G – acts of goodness and kindness will change the world. We need to be compassionate to the world around us. A smile, a warm greeting, or spending time lifting up another human being has immeasurable benefits not only for the recipient, but for you too. It’s worth more than all the money in the world. It engenders love and peace, friendship, and camaraderie. It gives people hope, and makes them feel loved.

E – finally live life with exuberance, excitement, and energy! G-d woke you up today for a purpose. He believes in you, and wants you to live life to the fullest.



Search inside, and find out what your passion is, what strengths you have, and then go out and give it to the world.

I love the saying, “Change the way you look at things, and the things you look at will change.” We’re at end of this long and dark exile.



REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY

G-d is waiting to usher in a world of peace, health, and prosperity. He’s waiting on us! Let’s do the internal work. Let’s change ourselves, our priorities, and commit to being better this year from the inside out. And then G-d will respond in kind, and our world will see the greatest transformation ever.

Wishing everyone a *shana tova u metukah* – a good, sweet year ahead.

• *Rebbetzin Aidel Kazilsky is a radio and television host and an inspirational speaker who teaches the wisdom of Torah and applies it to contemporary times.*

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The non-accidental tourist

OPINION

RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN



I lived in New York for many years. During this time, I never once toured the Statue of Liberty, went up the Empire State Building, or visited world famous toy store FAO Schwarz. It wasn't until later, when I returned as a visitor with my own children, that we frequented famous tourist spots. One of the kids was absolutely enthralled by the throngs crossing the busy Manhattan pedestrian crossings when the "Walk" sign came on, and begged for us to cross the same avenue, over and over, loving the feeling of being part of this wave of humans!

Clearly, we become accustomed to our habitual surroundings and develop a blasé attitude to them. When a place is fresh and new, there's a mystique and excitement to it. What about our shuls? Do we take our places of worship for granted, accustomed as we are to going there? Or is each visit to the House of the Lord a magical, rousing venture?

In Psalm 27 – which we recite daily through the month of Elul and throughout the holidays of next month – King David expressed the following wish: "One thing I ask of Hashem, and this I will seek, that I can dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life, to gaze at the pleasantness of Hashem, and to visit His sanctuary." This request appears contradictory. If the first part is fulfilled, then he will be in G-d's house permanently. To visit implies that he's not there all the time and comes only occasionally.

For many, the high holidays of 2022 will be their first *yom tov* season back in shul, as we emerge from two years of a horrific pandemic. Services were legal in 2020 as well as in 2021, but with severe restrictions. There was a limit on the number of participants and the duration of prayers; attendance registers had to be completed and temperatures taken at the door; seating was socially distant; and we had to pray through masks. It's hard to believe that just a year ago, midnight Selichot services couldn't take place due to curfew regulations! None of this was normal, and for those who chose to attend the past two holiday seasons, as unpleasant as much of it was, it made the services more appreciated.

We cherish things most when we have been deprived of them. As the saying goes, absence makes the heart grow fonder. This year's Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services offer us a unique opportunity of renewal and freshness. Obviously for those who didn't attend for the past couple of years, it will be special to be back in the pews. Even for the stalwarts who didn't stay away, this will be the first "normal" *yom tov* season, when we'll be able to connect with Hashem and each other at shul without the artificial limitations of the past. We may have become blasé about the privilege it is to "dwell in the House of the Lord". This year, we'll appreciate every minute of what we had been deprived of.

This the dichotomy King David presents in his heartfelt plea of Psalm 27. He wishes to spend every day of his life in Hashem's sanctuary. But he fears that this will become habitual, that he'll stop appreciating the privilege it is to "gaze at the pleasantness of Hashem". So, he adds a proviso to his request: that each stay in the sanctuary feels like an occasional visit. He wishes to be a permanent resident who never loses the curiosity, excitement, and awe of a tourist.

Thank G-d our shuls were returned to us! Now, let's return to our shuls, grateful for the privilege and excited at the opportunity. Let's cherish and appreciate every moment, like a permanent resident who behaves like a tourist in his own city.

Shana tova!

• Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at Oxford Synagogue and chairperson of the SA Rabbinical Association.

Listen to the shofar, even if it's stolen

OPINION

RABBA SARA HURWITZ



There's a key difference between the shofar and other ritual objects. The *mishna* in Sukkot and elsewhere clearly states that a stolen object cannot be used to perform the ritual. A *lulav gazul* (stolen lulav) or etrog, tefillin, or even matza aren't considered to be kosher if stolen because a *mitzvah* that came about from a sin cannot fulfil the obligation.

It's strange that the Mishnayot in Mesechet Rosh Hashanah is silent on the topic of a stolen shofar. Although you might assume that a stolen shofar also cannot be used, the Rambam in Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shofar (1:3), teaches the opposite – a stolen shofar can indeed be used. A surprise twist!

Shofar haggazul shettaka bo yatza she'ein hamitzvah ella bishmi'at hakkol ... Ve'ein bakkol din gezel

A stolen shofar that a person has blown has fulfilled [the obligation], for the commandment is just to listen to the sound, and there's no law of theft with sound. Sound cannot be stolen.

Using a stolen shofar is kind of insane, especially when you consider that our rabbinic tradition places so much emphasis on the shofar itself. There are specific laws around which animal a shofar can come from, whether it can be bent or straight, gold-plated, or if a cracked shofar can still be used. Clearly, the shofar as an object, the way in which it's constructed, is significant enough for our tradition to mandate all these laws. And yet, as long as it's bent, made from a ram, not split along the entire length in half, or gold-plated at the mouth of the shofar, we may use a stolen shofar. The sole indication that a stolen shofar may be problematic is from the Magen Avraham (586:4), who suggests that you shouldn't make a *bracha* over it!

essence is to stir and awaken us to think about our deeds. And what's the one thing that prevents us from moving forward? When we get stuck in the past, when we can't let go of past iniquities and memories, we're prevented from changing. Perhaps the stolen shofar is a reminder that the past needs to stay in the past if we're to ever move forward and change.

It's Rambam's simple answer that I find most compelling. For the Rambam, the shofar is all about the sound. All the *halakhot* that make the shofar kosher are intended to preserve the pure sound of the shofar. A cracked, straight, or gold-plated shofar would alter the sound. Since the sound is still intact in spite of the fact that it's stolen, it accomplishes the purpose of the *mitzvah*.

This is where our focus must lie. The message of the stolen shofar, the reason why it's kosher, is to underscore that the object doesn't matter. I imagine that if today's *ba'al tekiyah* was indeed using a stolen shofar, that's all we would want to talk about. Why did he steal it? Who did he steal it from? Will he return it? But those would be the wrong questions. Our attention may be drawn to the shiny object right before us because it's human nature to be excited by the austere, beautiful shofar or the *ba'al tekiyah* himself, but if we notice only the shofar or the person, we're missing the point of the *mitzvah*.

There's actually a name for the phenomenon of being distracted and focusing on the wrong thing: shiny object syndrome (SOS), a psychological concept describing focus on whatever is most current or trendy. In fact, those who fear missing out (FOMO) are especially susceptible as newer, shinier objects cause distraction, cloud judgement, and cause loss of focus.

We worry about the thing that shouts loudest at us in the media. Our attention is short, and must be held by dramatic images. We're drawn to the heart wrenching images of people dying from COVID-19 or the damage from a hurricane or the pictures of war or the headline about abortion in Texas. And we must care about these things. But these dramatic headlines will disappear and in their wake, there will be individuals still picking up the pieces after suddenly losing a loved one or who struggle from long COVID-19, or there will be a woman who no longer has the right to decide what to do with her body. For every headline, there are individual, more quiet tragedies that don't make the news. Even our own everyday challenges get lost in the shuffle.

"Awaken!" says the shofar. "Pay no attention to the vessel even if it's stolen. Pay attention to the sound that emanates that's calling to your soul."

It's easy to become mired in the smallness of the shiny objects. There are so many crises and events that we must pay attention to. Sometimes I wonder how we can even get out of bed with the crushing sensation of it all. Yet, my challenge this year is to cut through the noise and focus on what matters – not on whether the shofar is stolen or not.

The sound of the shofar is a tool for what we can achieve and accomplish in the world. So, this year, when I hear the *shevarim truah*, I will acknowledge and cry and mourn for all that's broken, for the things I'm struggling with in my life, for the struggles of our society and world. I'll allow the sadness to wash over me even if I can't fix it all today.

And, then, I'll feel emboldened by the strong, sure sounds of the *tekiyot*, the sounds that bookend the sadness, and I'll listen for the song of triumph, hearing that there will be days ahead that are filled with joy, celebration, and hope.

And the familiar sounds of the shofar will keep me focused on what really counts.

• Rabba Sara Hurwitz is the president and co-founder of Maharat.

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The first responders who put themselves second on the high holidays

NICOLA MILTZ

For most people, Yom Kippur is an energy sapping experience on a spiritual and physical level. For Hatzolah Medical Rescue workers who save lives while fasting, the Day of Atonement adds an extra dimension to an already draining day.

“On this day, there’s nothing more meaningful than saving a life,” said Hatzolah Operations Manager Uriel Rosen.

It’s also demanding on Community Security Organisation (CSO) volunteers. Many spend hours in the hot sun ensuring that the community is safe while praying to be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Rosen and a team of highly skilled doctors and advanced life-support (ALS) paramedics perform the ultimate *mitzvah* of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life) on the holiest day of the year.

Hatzolah medical manager and ALS paramedic, Yudi Singer, sits by the door of his shul in case he’s called to a medical emergency and has to rush off.

On a recent Yom Kippur morning, his cell phone alerted him to a life-threatening emergency requiring him to stop davening immediately. His Hatzolah partner, Avigdor Hack, received the same alert at his shul.

“People understand when our two-way radios or cell phones go off in shul. It’s not like we’re running to a braai,” said Singer, “and we can’t exactly keep it on silent in case we miss the emergency.”

An elderly male patient was at home with his family experiencing a severe heart arrhythmia and was semi-conscious. It was touch and go as the patient was deteriorating rapidly, said Singer. The two experienced paramedics provided oxygen, checked his vital signs, put up a drip, administered medication, attached

It doesn’t always happen like that. A few years ago on Yom Kippur, just after the Kol Nidre service, Rosen was called out to a life-threatening emergency to assist a man experiencing cardiac arrest. He and his partner worked on the patient for what seemed like hours, performing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, literally giving the breath of life. In spite of all efforts to save the patient, he passed away in front of his distraught family.

“I was sweating and dehydrated – it was traumatic. I remember thinking I could do with a glass of water, knowing that there were still 24 hours left of fasting. We pushed through. It’s part of the deal. It’s what we do,” he said.

According to Rosen, during Yom Kippur, only the most senior and experienced paramedics and doctors are on shift, preventing the need to call for extra back up. The most qualified people arrive on the scene to make the most vital lifesaving calls and clinical decisions.

“We try to limit the need to go to hospital, but sometimes it isn’t possible. If hospitalisation is needed, it’s treated with the same intensity and enthusiasm as a normal day,” said Singer.

Often, emergency calls occur shortly before *yom tov*, making it difficult for paramedics on duty to eat a meal before the fast starts. Likewise, emergencies can happen shortly before the fast ends, often requiring paramedics to continue working before breaking their fast.

Rosen said Hatzolah had now prepared for this eventuality, and a food hamper was placed in the ambulance should it happen.

On one occasion, Singer handed a patient over to hospital staff with five minutes to spare before the fast came in. “We were dirty with bloodied clothes, and had no time to shower and prepare ourselves for the fast. We put on clean hospital aprons and gloves and turned the stretcher into a table so that we could gobble something light provided by Hatzolah. It wasn’t exactly a gourmet meal, but it did the trick,” said Singer.

“There’s a brotherhood when it comes to this,” said Rosen, “Hatzolah always makes sure paramedics have something to eat to start their fasts in time, even if it means going to find them outside a hospital.”

The volume of calls on Shabbat and *yom tov* is the same, “just like any ordinary day”, said Rosen. “Our radios are going like it’s a Tuesday. Nothing changes, the only difference is that we’re in shul and fasting between calls,” he said.

There may be more dehydration and fainting spells, but usually these are successfully dealt with by doctors who happen to be in shul, he said.

“We never break our fast. When we finish an emergency call, we go back to shul. There are drivers who meet us at the end of a call to shuttle us back to the operational area,” said Rosen.

The organisation has arranged a Hatzolah *minyan* since the COVID-19 pandemic for despatchers, responders, and their families. It acts as a pop-up shul for those on call who find it easier to daven from the operational base.

During Rosh Hashanah, it’s not unusual for them to miss the blowing of the shofar, but “there’s always someone on standby who’ll blow it for us”, Rosen said. “We’ll make a plan because it’s important.”

If you call Hatzolah for help on Shabbat or a *yom tov*, it should be for only a life-threatening medical emergency, he said. “Of course, if you’re in doubt, call.”

The CSO also has hundreds of dedicated volunteers prepared to step up to protect the community and go the extra mile during this four-week high-holiday period, said Jevon Greenblatt, the CSO’s operations director.

“One year, an elderly man didn’t arrive to break the fast. We activated a team of people who were still fasting to go search for him. It took two hours to finally locate him, flag him down, and escort him safely to his family,” he said.

He had apparently got lost and confused. The CSO team didn’t make it home in time to break the fast with family.

“There are some extraordinary individuals who go above and beyond at this time,” said Greenblatt. They miss out on family and shul time, and remain vigilant throughout, in rain or shine. They arrive before shul starts, and leave when the last person has left. They do it willingly with a smile because they recognise the need for added security at this time.”



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Leave to appeal – what to do when you have to work on the *chaggim*

TALI FEINBERG

We live in a constitutional democracy that prizes freedom of religion, but South Africa's labour law doesn't regulate leave for religious holidays. Where does this leave observant Jews who want to take time off over *chaggim* and Shabbat?

"I work in the education sector for a corporate," says a Johannesburg woman speaking on condition of anonymity. "My CV states that I'm Jewish. During the interview process, I said I was an Orthodox Jew and I observed the holidays. I was told it wasn't a problem. My mistake was that I took this at face value and didn't get them to put it in writing.

"Pesach came around, and I informed them that I wouldn't be in for two days at the start, and two at

the end. They seemed fine about it until my payslip came, and I was given unpaid leave for four days. When I queried it, I was told that it was a Christian-ethos school, and if I wanted the Jewish holidays, I should work at a Jewish school. There was no policy for religious leave."

Indeed, South African labour law says that if an employee wants to take leave for religious holidays other than an official public holiday, they must take paid annual leave or unpaid leave. Any paid annual leave taken is deductible from the employee's annual leave entitlement.

"I'm chairperson of the diversity committee now, so it's something I fight all the time," says the woman. "It's something they're 'looking into' but from a financial perspective, it's a lot to take unpaid leave every time there's a *chag*, so I take two days at the start

of Pesach and two days for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. For the rest, I suck it up and go in. It leaves me feeling resentful and angry, especially since I feel I give way more than most staff time-wise to the school. I do, however, refuse to do anything on a Saturday, so it's left me doing the bare minimum.

"From a diversity perspective, the school can't claim to be inclusive and progressive if it doesn't acknowledge and respect religious practice," she says. "In my case, it's hard to fight as it's just me – I'm the only Jew now in a staff of more than 100 people. I'm looking for another job, but I've just had my second baby so [the search] has gone on the back burner. My sister is at Investec and if I look at how it's so accommodating with religious leave and how its employees go the extra mile, [it's clear] an environment that's inclusive is definitely more fruitful."

Labour lawyer and Member of Parliament



From a diversity perspective, the school can't claim to be inclusive and progressive if it doesn't acknowledge and respect religious practice.

Michael Bagraim says there's no specific labour law for religious holidays. "The issue is a perennial one, and I'm often phoned at the last minute about a disciplinary hearing," Bagraim says. "Often it's actually the fault of the employee who didn't tell the company upfront. On every single Jewish case I've worked on, the employee didn't come forward [about their religious needs] at any stage."

He remembers one exception about 20 years ago, when a Jewish person applied for a job and stated that they would need to take leave on Shabbat and the *chaggim*, and the employer refused to hire them on that basis. This case was taken to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), and resolved. He also remembers a case three decades ago of a woman applying for a job and the company saying that it didn't hire Jews because they have too many religious holidays, even though she herself wasn't observant. She was disgusted, and chose not to pursue it further.

Bagraim says that if such cases occur, they can be dealt with legally. But he points out that the potential employee needs to be clear about their observance, even when applying for a job. He also says human resources departments should ensure that this is clarified during the interview process.

"I encourage everyone to put their religion in the application to be employed, and to outline their needs at the first interview," Bagraim says.

"There have been numerous court cases on this and arbitration awards," he says. "Normally, I put it into letters of appointment and contracts of employment. You would normally apply in terms of your annual leave policy. It must be at least one week prior or three weeks prior if the leave is for two or more days. If you have used up all your leave, you would take it as unpaid leave.

"My experience has been that many employers deal with it fairly and properly, especially if they are told long in advance," he says. "There have been many disputes when employees suddenly become religious or change religion without informing the employer. The reality is that employees need to be upfront and try to negotiate this to the best of their ability."

At the same time, "No one should be forced to work on *chaggim*, especially if they're observant. It takes two to get into an agreement, and therefore it doesn't help to make demands at the last minute. I've been involved in many cases regarding discrimination for people wanting to take holidays, not only Jewish, but in particular Jehovah's Witnesses, who don't work on Saturdays."

Asked what an employee should do if they are forced to work on a *chag* or Shabbos, Bagraim says, "If the company has been told beforehand about your religious beliefs and it has given permission in the past, you can raise an internal grievance with the company in terms of its grievance policy. If this isn't resolved, it could be taken either to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration, or Equality Court. The Equality Court is there to protect religious and cultural rights."

SAJBD associate director David Saks says, "Employees have the right to take annual leave for religious holidays. It's incumbent on them to give their employers sufficient advance notice. When problems arise, the SAJBD will approach the relevant employer to explain how Jewish religious law prohibits working on certain festive days and this is usually sufficient to resolve the situation."



It is hard to watch a child struggle. It is harder not knowing why.

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Until educators and parents know WHY, they can't know WHAT to do and how best to find the right help.

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Every child has the potential to learn. How, where and when are the variables. Listed below are just a few symptoms that struggling learners present with:

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Rewriting our song under a dark moon

OPINION

ADINA ROTH



I'm in a Rosh Hashanah state of mind and there's a song that's been playing in my head: "I am unwritten/can't read my mind/I'm undefined" sings Natasha Bedingfield in her 2004 hit *Unwritten*. She continues, "I'm just beginning/the pen's in my hand/ending unplanned". Bedingfield couldn't have known it, but her glorious hit captures a profound potential of the Jewish new year: every year we have the chance to "fade to black" and renew ourselves "anew".

The rabbis in the Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 8a-b, cite a source from Tehillim (81,4) to describe the timing of Rosh Hashanah. "*Tiku vachodesh shofar, bakeseh leyom chageinu*" (Sound the shofar on the new moon; the concealed moon is the day of our festivities).

Indeed, Rosh Hashanah is the only Jewish holiday to begin on the new moon, when the moon is but a speck in the sky, an imperceptible sliver in darkness. The verse in Tehillim continues, "For this is a statute for Israel, a judgement for the G-d of Jacob." These two verses juxtaposed present a paradox; our Day of Judgement begins in a time of visual obscurity, when the moon is occluded, except for the tiniest sliver.

It might seem counter-intuitive that at a time of *teshuvah*, introspection, inner work, and G-dly judgement, the light is dimmed and vision impeded. The medieval midrashic work *Pesikta Rabbati* offers a reason for this: just as the moon is dimmed on Rosh Hashanah, on the Day of Judgement, Hashem chooses to "not see" our sins.

This beautiful idea suggests that the



judgement of Rosh Hashanah isn't about utter scrutiny. Rather, G-d is rooting for us on Rosh Hashanah, so much so that G-d would choose the darkness of the moon rather than see our flaws.

Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgement, isn't about G-d simply weighing up the good and the bad on a scale, it's about G-d dimming the vision, creating a soft focus so that G-d can see us in a particular way, for good!

This gives us a clue that Rosh Hashanah isn't about microscopic examining of ourselves, and it shouldn't feel critical and punitive. In fact, Rashi explains that the new moon of Rosh Hashanah isn't utter darkness. Rather, it's such a thin sliver, that it's both there and not there. To see this inchoate new moon, we need soft focus, gentle vision.

The idea of seeing ourselves differently, kindly, is developed by Michael White and David Epston in narrative therapy. Non blaming and non pathologising in nature, narrative therapy encourages clients to look at the stories we use, in order to heal and live our lives.

Some of the stories we carry are empowering and liberating while the others we tell about ourselves might be untrue, restrictive, and unkind. Narrative therapy helps us to undo the unhelpful stories so that we can free ourselves to live in greater authenticity.

The dark moon of Rosh Hashanah is our own narrative therapy. It invites us all to let go of the scripts that no longer serve us, the habits and ideas about ourselves and the world, so that we can begin again.

In the verse from Tehillim, the shofar

is linked to the concealed moon, "Blow the shofar on the new month ... when the moon is concealed." The Hasidic thinker, the Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger, points to the purity of the shofar blasts, and how its sound is devoid of speech.

He says speech divides sound into varied movements of the mouth while the sound of the shofar is a united sound that cleaves to source. The Sefat Emet suggests that on Rosh Hashanah, we seek to connect to the inner flow of life, to the source that precedes division.

The time of Rosh Hashanah, the dark moon, is the time of soft focus, inviting us to undo fixed and unhelpful scripts and ideas. The sound of Rosh Hashanah, the shofar, is "a cry from the heart that the lips cannot speak". In other words, the shofar takes us in this time of concealment to our deepest longings.

The poet Keats writes, "So the darkness shall be the light/and the stillness the dancing." Rosh Hashanah invites us to let go of preconceived notions of ourselves so that we can allow our deepest longings and our fullest selves to surface. But we need to allow for the darkness and the opacity of the new moon, to surrender brightness and clarity of vision, and sit in the swirling, opaque mists of our potential.

Poised at the beginning of 5783, this feels particularly resonant for me. For almost 20 years, I have lived in South Africa, worked, raised our family, and connected with community.

This Rosh Hashanah, I'm preparing, with my family, to leave South Africa on an adventure to another country. We're in the heart-wrenching throes of saying goodbye to beloved family, friends, and a country that means so much to us.

And we also don't know the contours, the story of our new life. Indeed, we're sitting with the hidden moon and we're blowing the "unwritten" sounds of a wordless shofar. This is, perhaps, the only way for new life to unfold.

Next week, we'll sing "*Berosh Hashanah yikateivun*" (On Rosh Hashanah it is written). This time of soft vision, wordless sounds, and open hearts allows us to release the stories that diminish us, and seek the stories that allow for our souls to unfold. In the words of Natasha Bedingfield, "Today is where your book begins/The rest is still unwritten."

Shanah Tovah. May we and all our loved ones be written and sealed in the Book of Life

• *Adina Roth is a clinical psychologist who runs a barmitzvah and batmitzvah programme and other Jewish studies classes. She is about to move to Sydney to become Head of Jewish Life at Emanuel School.*





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Blow your shofar at antisemites, but be strategic

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Ever been confronted by antisemitism, and instead of arguing logically, simply kept quiet out of shock or for fear of responding inadequately?

As the piercing sounds of the shofar mark the approach of Rosh Hashanah, we’re reminded that we have a voice that cannot be silenced. But tackling antisemitic comments starts with learning how and when to respond.

“For Jews, the most important part of speaking up in the face of antisemitism is to make sure you’re educated,” says Ben Freeman, the founder of the modern Jewish Pride movement, and an educator of Jewish identity, combatting Jew-hatred, and raising Holocaust awareness. “There’s a vast amount of information out there, some of it false, so it can be hard to decipher fact from fiction. It’s crucial that we arm ourselves with knowledge and truth.”

When we’re confronted by antisemitism, it’s important to navigate the fine line between facts and emotion that naturally arises.

Says Freeman, “Though we want to avoid getting angry and shouting at people, we’re allowed to demonstrate that this is an emotional issue for us, and one that has a direct impact on us. It helps to understand the key myths propagated by those who wish to malign us, for example, the false maps of Palestinian land being stolen from Israel. We have to know what’s being said about us, and be able to counter it factually.”

Yitz Santis, a senior writer and analyst at StandWithUs, an international Israel advocacy organisation which educates people about Israel and fighting antisemitism, echoes Freeman’s call to steer away from anger in such situations.

“Always avoid making personal insults. Don’t call someone ‘ignorant’, ‘stupid’, or ‘uneducated’, even if they are. Your target audience isn’t the person you’re arguing with. Rather, you’re trying to reach those witnessing the discussion. Generally, the person who resorts to name calling does so because they don’t have an argument.”

Rather than responding to antisemitism or anti-Israel propaganda, he suggests reframing the discussion. One tactic is the “**ARM**” method in which you:

- Briefly and honestly **address** their point;
- **Reframe** it by structuring the issue on your own terms; and
- Constructively reinforce your **message**.

Though we can and should defend ourselves when faced with antisemitism, we must assess the situation to establish how and whether to respond. “If it’s clear that you’re confronting a malicious antisemite, arguing is a waste of time,” says Santis. “They’re baiting you and claiming a right to interrogate you. Don’t fall into that trap. Be strategic, and choose your battles wisely.”

Freeman says you shouldn’t respond to someone who doesn’t approach the conversation with openness and respect. Should you feel at physical risk, he says, definitely don’t engage. It also depends on the context in which the conversation occurs.

Sixteen-year-old King David Victory Park student, Liana Wes, is rarely at a loss for words, but she says she was too shocked to respond eloquently when a debating coach from a rival school made a blatantly anti-Israel comment. Though it wasn’t necessarily antisemitic, it made Wes very uncomfortable.

“As debating is quite a formal extracurricular activity, we wear our blazers, and on mine, I have a badge that says ‘Israel

Quiz’ because that’s an activity I participate in,” she says. “One day, I was at a debate early, and we were talking to the coaches of other teams and one of them asked what Israel Quiz was. While I was explaining, another coach said, ‘Is it not called illegally-occupied Palestine quiz?’”

“I was flabbergasted that a professional debating coach, an adult teacher, said this to me. I was stuttering a bit, and explaining that they try to teach us as much of both sides as possible, and I tried to disengage from the conversation. I thought afterwards of all the [more confrontational] ways I could have responded, but I didn’t want to get myself or my school into trouble by starting a fight with a coach from another school.”

“Ultimately, you have to know that even if you’re a passionate Jew with Jewish Pride, you’re allowed not to participate in difficult conversations all the time,” says Freeman. “You must always take care of yourself.”

In general, though, an overarching code of silence in the face of antisemitism isn’t the answer. “Jews are often taught to keep their heads down and downplay our differences,” says Freeman. “This is false. Jews are allowed to talk about Jew-hate whenever and wherever it appears. If we choose not to, then the lies told about us go unchallenged, we further embed the idea that we should keep our mouths shut in our own minds, and we fail to stand up and reclaim our dignity.”

We also need to consider the underlying causes of antisemitic rhetoric, says Santis. “Don’t assume everyone is a malicious antisemite. Many people are simply ignorant, and can change if you engage them constructively about antisemitism.”

A common issue that comes up when discussing antisemitism is anti-Zionism – something South African Jews often encounter – and to what extent the two are aligned. “Avoid labelling all critics of Israeli policies as antisemites,” says Santis. “Criticism of Israel isn’t necessarily antisemitic. But, when it’s obvious that someone is using antisemitic tropes, call it out, and explain why.”

Addressing a question on this at his recent talk at Limmud Johannesburg, American journalist Yair Rosenberg, a frequent commentator and speaker on the issue of antisemitism in the modern era, suggested ways to establish when anti-Zionism enters antisemitic territory. “You have to judge in the moment by determining what the person’s intent is,” he said.

Though it’s hard to respond in the moment, having arguments at the ready gives you confidence, especially

when it comes to establishing when anti-Zionism is antisemitic. “Everyone will say, ‘I’m the good kind of anti-Zionist, I’m just a principled anti-nationalist, and I don’t think any nation state should exist’,” he said. “In response to this, ask, ‘Are you interested in any other state being disestablished other than the Jewish one?’”

A clear-cut example, he said, is when anti-Zionists compare Israelis to Nazis. Respond by saying, ‘So you think that whatever Israel is doing to the Palestinians is equivalent to the Nazis? Then you must definitely think that Bashar al-Assad, Vladimir Putin, and Kim Jong-Un are Nazis. Yet, you haven’t called any of those people Nazis, the only people who you call Nazis are the people who were murdered by the Nazis, and their descendants. That’s really weird.’

“Almost every person who does this,” says Rosenberg, “calls only Jews Nazis. It’s clearly about brutalising Jews with their own



Interactions at Israel Apartheid Week at University of Cape Town in 2019



trauma. So, though one must acknowledge that anti-Zionism isn’t always antisemitism, it’s also important to be able to show people when it’s becoming antisemitism, and explain why.”

Tackling an antisemitic incident is a complex issue without a “one-size-fits-all” response, says Professor Karen Milner, the Gauteng chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). “However, should any member of our community be on the receiving end of any form of antisemitism, they should immediately get in touch with the SAJBD which is here to offer appropriate support and resolution.”

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In accordance with the Jewish calendar, congruent to the solar calendar and the year 2023, this Rosh Hashanah is the dawn of the year 5783. Symbolically, it is the Year of the Voice of the Wind with Expansion and Fruitfulness as the key themes. At Afrika Tikkun, the latter themes of Expansion and Fruitfulness, are of great significance in relation to our core values of excellence, quality, and sustainability. As ardent agents of change and beacons of hope, through our Cradle-to-Career model (C2C) and 360° Social Support Services, we remain dedicated to expanding our impact and reach. Our Cradle-to-Career approach is designed to provide sustainable solutions and enrich our young people from the ages of 0-35 years. Simultaneously, our 360° Social Support Services (SSS) employ wraparound development solutions including education, health, nutrition, as well as personal and skills development.

To us, the beneficiaries whom we serve in our five community centres in Alexandra, Braamfontein, Diepsloot, Mfuleni, and Orange Farm do not merely represent numbers and statistics; they represent young lives brimming with untapped potential. With the various programmes that we roll out at all our community centres, we have had the honour and privilege of harnessing the innate and raw talents of our young people. From our Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme to our Child and Youth Development (CYD) programme and Career Development Programme (CDP) through to our Youth Accelerator Programme (YAP), we are privy to the profound transformation at every critical point in their lives.

As we step into the New Year ahead, of Expansion and Fruitfulness, it is written: "The poor cry out, and some of those who prosper heed their call", let us carry and hold on to these sagacious words. To those of us who are prospering and privileged, let us heed the call and share in the sweetness of a lasting legacy of growth and fruitfulness.

L'Shana Tova Umetukah and may Hashem grant us peace, happiness and success this Rosh Hashanah!

For more information, visit afrikatikkun.org

Why remembering is re-mem-bering

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



As the new year begins, I have just finished the *shloshim* period for my mom, *aleha shalom* (peace upon her). It doesn't matter how many times I've sat with mourners, it doesn't prepare you for being a mourner yourself.

One line from Rosh Hashanah prayers has been sitting with me over the past few days as I prepare for the *yom tovim*: “*Atah zocher ma'aseh olam*” (You, G-d, remember the deeds of all time). The thought of this line has somehow been a comfort to me. I hear it telling me that life – every single small part and particle of it – is precious and valuable, that life everywhere and always deserves our love and respect, that nothing is simply irrelevant or forgotten, and that everything matters. My mom was a real doer, and the notion that all her actions have been archived in the divine hard-drive is a great comfort.

G-d remembering is a key element of the high holy days. Rosh Hashanah in the Torah is known as “*Yom haZikaron*” (the day of remembering). *Zikaron* comes from the Hebrew root “*zachor*”, which has four root meanings.

The first is the most well-known, which is to remember. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, “Judaism doesn't command us to believe, it commands us to remember.” When someone dies, we say, “*Zichronah livrachah* (May she be remembered for a blessing), and we add the acronym, “*z”l*”, after their name. *Zachor* is linked to *yizkor*, a service I'll participate in for the first time as a participant, not just a leader, when we remember those who have made their



Rabbi Greg Alexander as a toddler with his mother Carol Alexander during a Pesach holiday in Scottburgh

crossings to *olam ha-ba* (the next world).

When we remember someone, we literally re-member them – we gather together those memories as if we're gathering together the parts of that person and re-making them in our minds. In Yosef Chaim Yerushalmi's amazing little book on memory, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, he says, “Memory isn't recollection, which still

preserves a sense of distance, but re-actualisation.” He said this describing the Pesach seder and how we re-enact going out of Egypt, and it applies to any act of remembering that is re-mem-bering. When we gather together the threads of memory, the person lives in some way in those memories.

The second meaning of the word “*zachor*” is to be aware – remain aware – of something, like, “You'd better remember who's boss around here.” From Rosh Hashanah onwards, we're sitting in a divine courtroom, waiting to see how our year ahead will be sealed, and for that we're asked to be fully present, to be aware. Throughout the high holy days, we repeatedly ask G-d to remember us for life – *zichrono l'chaim*. Aware of how fragile life is, we ask for another year of good health, with those that we love around us.

The third meaning of “*zachor*” is to speak of something or someone, like when we might say to a friend or relative, “Remember me to your family.” Think of Shabbat kiddush, when we say *zachor et yom ha-shabbat l'kadsho* (Ex 20:8) (Remember the Shabbat day, and make it sacred). On Shabbat, we regularly re-member through speech – *kiddush*. On Rosh Hashanah, we speak in prayer to G-d, saying, “Help me to return, help me to get back on the path.” And equally, throughout the days of return, we're called to speak to each other saying, “Forgive me for being less than I should. Forgive me my mistake, and let me repair it.”

Finally, the fourth meaning of the word

“*zachor*” is linked to the Hebrew word *zachar* – male. Are men better at remembering than women? Clearly not. It's probably because in ancient societies, you were “remembered” by your male descendants, while daughters might get married out to other families or tribes and wouldn't then continue the patrilineal line. In kabbalistic imagery, the male aspect is the penetrating aspect, and over the high holy days, the obvious masculine image is the shofar, from which we send out the primal sounds that penetrate our ears and souls. One of the three parts of the shofar service is called *zichronot* – remembrances. *Zichronot* are the power to re-member, to assemble our fully present selves in all our strength and call out in our voices, to respond, to answer, to pray, to seek repair in our relationships, to wail and cry with the shofar.

Can you imagine the consequences if we had no memory, no past to learn from? To re-member is to look backwards and fully count our days of the past year, to look with full awareness at where we're now, and to look ahead to where we want to be and who we want to be. Written over the entrance to Yad Vashem are the words from the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism: “*Ha-z'chira hi shoresht ha-geulah*” (Memory is the root of redemption). May the high and holy days to come see us re-mem-bering and re-membered for a good and sweet year ahead. *Shanah tovah umetukah!*

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is a member of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.

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Time to bring down the curtain on history

OPINION

I recall one Shabbos, walking back from the Lions Shul in Doornfontein to Orchards, when I experienced one of many unusual encounters over thousands of walks to and from the shul. (Perhaps I’ll scribe a journal one day.)

This guy waves to me as I’m briskly walking down Louis Botha Avenue, and I pause and ask, “What’s up?”

With charisma and confidence, he tells me that he has experienced an extraordinary Divine revelation, that he’s a prophet, and his message needs to be heeded. “Will you follow me?” he asked.

My first reaction, facetiously, is to quip that it’s such a coincidence, amazingly just the previous night, I had also been visited by the word of G-d, one that needs to be shared with all humanity. “Will you follow me?” I asked.

In our chat, I explain to him that I’m Jewish (it’s pretty obvious as I’m wearing my Shabbos garb and tzitzit) and I recommended, sincerely, that he try selling his newly discovered truth to other folk, not to Jews, because it would be foolish ‘to try and sell coals to Newcastle’ – meaning that the Jewish people are the doyens of revelation and the word of G-d, and it would be in vain to try to pitch this new “word of G-d” to them in the hope they would adopt it.

I warn him that they’re not the kind to buy into a new religion without thorough examination of its authenticity. I conclude that he would save much heartache and time if he were to focus on the other eight billion humans in the world minus the 15 million Jews in launching his exciting start-up.

This somewhat jovial encounter is only light-hearted in our age of egalitarianism and freedom of life choice. This wasn’t the case for much of Jewish history, when the Jews were told that if they didn’t accept the religion of the land in which they lived, (if lucky, they would be offered the chance to leave and not come back), they would be persecuted and eventually forced to choose either to convert or die. As the late Rabbi Immanuel Schochet put it, they were told, “Either you kiss this [the cross], or this [the sword] kisses you” – or as Al Pacino’s classic line in *The Godfather* goes, “I’ll make him an offer he can’t refuse.”

But through the course of millennia of unimaginable persecution, to the dismay of the many haters of Israel, the Jewish people refused the offer (sorry Al!) and rather than forsake G-d and religion, went to the stake.

Not to be easily outdone, the forces and currents of history schemed a new strategy to undo the Jews’ grip on their faith. The Jew hadn’t been intimidated and didn’t baulk under threat and persecution, but perhaps that other time-old method of dissolving individual and national identity might succeed. We were thrust into an age of acceptance, freedom, and bountiful offers of opportunity, prominence, and societal embrace. In this complete-integration construct, the Jew would surely blend in and assimilate?

For a short while, it looked as though this seeming irresistible smorgasbord that offered no bounds in lifestyle and a green light to any identity might prove an existential threat to the Jew’s continued adherence to his time-old heritage.

But, yet again, the inseparable bond of the Jew to his faith and G-d proved to be unassailable, and from the full gambit of tantalising choices available to him, the Jew chose his G-d and stood willing to sacrifice any suggested benefit he might otherwise gain.

So, where to now? We’ve faced the furnace time and again, and emerged holding dear to our *Yiddishkeit*. We were given all the freedom in the world to be anything and anyone, and guess what, we said, “Thanks but we’re already spoken for. We’re G-d’s chosen people, and



in spite of all the delights and temptations on offer, we’re not trading anything for Him.”

So, on this Rosh Hashanah 5783, we’ll once again coronate Hashem as we sound the shofar, crowning Him to be our king through our own free will. And we’ll say to Him that it’s time. It’s time to bring down the curtain of history and end the darkness. The challenge of exile has been met, and we’ve succeeded magnificently in our task.

Let the shofar that’s sounded this Rosh Hashanah rather be

RAV ILAN HERRMANN



the one You have long promised us: “And it shall be on that day, the great shofar shall be sounded ... and we shall prostrate ourselves to G-d on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim.” (Yeshayahu 27:13)

• *Rav Ilan Herrmann has served as a congregational spiritual leader in South Africa for 25 years. He’s the publisher of Soul Sport magazine, and runs the Soul Workout non-profit organisation.*

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WHAT IS HABONIM DROR?

For 92 years, Habonim Dror Southern Africa has been using our Machaneh and other initiatives to build future Jewish leaders in South Africa. This has been underpinned by our commitment to our 3 pillars.

Judaism

Being part of the South African Jewish community is a beautiful thing that instills a sense of pride in each of our members. All of our events for channies are kosher and Shabbat-friendly! Shabbat and Havdallah are always highlights of any Habo programme and are celebrated in a way that highlights the importance of Kehilla and togetherness, as well as how to make these times special in the lives of each of our chaverim. Through our involvement at the Jewish Day schools as well as at community events, we encourage our chaverim to engage with their Judaism and grapple with Jewish values and how to bring these to life to better our communities and themselves as individuals.

Zionism

HDSA is proudly Zionist and hence supports the self-determination of Jews in Midnat Yisrael - The State of Israel. We believe Israel is the central physical, cultural, and spiritual space for the Jewish people. That means we support Aliyah and consider it to be one of the highest forms of Hagshama (fulfilment). Year on year, we have many alumni and active members who make Aliyah and join those from Habonim who have helped shape and build it to be the state that it is today. We believe it is our duty to educate South African Jewish youth on the rich history and ongoing breakthroughs in Israel. This is done dually via education on our South African-based camps - as well as our yearly Shorashim tour, and Shnat Hachshara gap-year programmes, which go a long way to develop all of our members' deep unique connections to Eretz Yisrael.

Equality and Service to Humanity

HDSA envisions a world where equality is the fundamental value governing human interaction; a world based on the values of freedom, peace, social justice, democracy, compassion, respect, sharing, cooperation and mutual responsibility. We hold close to our hearts the Jewish principle of Shiyon Erch Ha'adam (the belief that all humans are born with equal value), which compels us to create a just society. Through outreach programs and education on ongoing issues within South African society, we are constantly working towards understanding and bettering the environments around us and the lives of those who exist within them.

Socialising

Camp is an opportunity to grow emotionally and socially. Due to not having a Machaneh for the past two years, there will be plenty of children who have never been on camp before, making camp a phenomenal opportunity to meet and make new friends, and reconnect.

KEF!

Machaneh is the most kef (fun) environment for your child to be in during December holidays. These three weeks are an absolute utopia for kids, with constant fun activities to participate in, whilst being with their friends. It's also a utopia for parents, as it's a blissful three week experience knowing your children are in good hands. Each group has incredible projects which are exhilarating and fulfilling, like the carnival, bands night, ruach, and much more! Furthermore, we have several sports tournaments throughout Machaneh, one of which is a 5-a-side football played on our very own 5-a-side court.

Education

Part of the fun in camp is learning. We engage with our channies through valuable informal education on various topics which are not taught anywhere else. For example, by being part of a collective movement where the children are part of the process of creating their own projects, building structures, helping clean, cook, and serve, it enacts a sense of gratitude and responsibility. A huge amount of effort goes into our Chinnuchic (educational) vision of Machaneh, and we make sure that reflects in the channie's experience.

Professional Staff

Your child's physical, mental, and emotional safety is in the best hands on Machaneh. We have professional doctors, CSO, Psychologists and cooking staff to help supplement our childcare. We put great effort in providing our maddies (counsellors) impeccable childcare training and experience.

Judaism

We are a proudly Jewish youth movement! We love the fact that we are Jewish, and we offer something for every kind of Jew. To this end, we maintain a strictly kosher kitchen and shabbat-friendly environment to cater for any and all Jews. There is much to be celebrated about our Jewish identity and we take every opportunity we can on Machaneh to do so, such as meaningful shabbat experiences, and introspective and engaging peulot on Judaism, Jewish history, and Jewish values.

Networking

Habonim is more than a youth movement, it's a legacy. It has modern Jewish leaders and the building of Israel through kibbutzim woven into its history. By coming on just one Machaneh, your child will develop a network of future Jewish leaders all over the world. Habonim breeds leaders. Many of our alumni have gone on to have extremely successful careers and become leaders in international Jewery.

Israel

We are a Zionist youth movement! We run various different programmes in Israel, such as our gap year programme and our 3-week grade 10 trip. Programmes like this and our Machaneh breed a love for Israel, as many of our alumni go on to make aliyah, go to Israeli universities, or go on gap years to Israel.

Being Outside

The pandemic has made it more difficult to spend time outdoors thus kids have grown to be over reliant on their electronic devices. We have a beautiful campsite surrounded by nature, situated on the Onrus beach, with direct access to it. This is a space where children can connect with nature and socialise without social media.

Our Campsite

Located in a green forest just off the beach, the Habonim campsite is packed with natural beauty. On top of that, the site is stocked with amenities and opportunities for fun and education like direct access to the beach, an astroturf soccer court, zipline, stunning foliage, unmatched tent-sites, sports fields, obstacle courses, and breathtaking views to name a few.

Mini Mach

Can't wait until December? Have your child experience a taste of Habonim Dror on our upcoming Mini Machanot happening from the 7th-9th October in Bronkhorstpruit, and the 30th September to the 2nd October on our Campsite in Onrus.



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WHAT IS MACHANEH?

After 2 years without programming and canceled camps, it's finally time to return home. Join us on Machaneh Hashiva Ha'Bayita (Homecoming) this December for weeks of memory-making, bond-building, life changing experiences, and informal learning about Judaism, Zionism, and other world issues. Nights with friends under the stars, on the most beautiful campsite in the world, right on the beach of Onrus. Choosing to send your child/children on a three-week long Machaneh, after a two-year long period of minimal social interaction should be an easy decision to make. We believe that the solution to a difficult two-year period is Habo Magic!

Machaneh creates an environment where all kinds of Jewish channies are welcome and feel like themselves. After over 90 years of experience of running Machanot, we have mastered the art of ensuring that every channie has a magical time on our campsite. Across all shicavhot, channies can expect to have three dynamic peulot (activities) a day, a well-stocked tuckshop, hanging on the beach with friends, and constant interaction with their maddies. Even in free-time there is always something structured to do, such as sports tournaments or arts and crafts stations. No channie will ever be bored on our campsite!

Our youngest shichvah, Shtilim (grade 5 and 6s), stay in state-of-the-art comfortable cabins with modern ablution facilities. Each shichvah is assigned a group of maddies with a combination of various levels of experience and training, who run activities for the channies as well as constantly supervising your children 24/7. Each tzevet (group of maddies) is carefully crafted, considering personality types, experience, and overall tzevet diversity. In addition to this, we have a team of social workers, medical practitioners, and psychologists on site throughout machaneh to ensure that we are prepared for any possible scenario.

WHY CHOOSE OUR MACHANEH?

Fasting far from home – tales of travellers on Yom Kippur

SAUL KAMIONSKY

A man secretly fasting in an Arab country; a national-team cricketer breaking his fast during a team meeting; and a woman refused entry into a shul are some of the Yom Kippur experiences South Africans have had in weird and wonderful places across the world.

In August 2007, Israeli-born Johannesburg-based engineering professional Ishai Klawansky bagged a job with a big American dredging corporation in Bahrain building massive islands off the northern coast of the Arab country. It was a multimillion-dollar project.

“I’m a dual citizen, I’m Israeli and South African, so I’ve got two passports,” he says. “When I started working in Bahrain, I wasn’t sure what the status of me being an Israeli in an Arab country was, so I went there on my South African passport. Yom Kippur occurred a month or two after I arrived.”

Having not really disclosed to anyone in Bahrain that he was Jewish and Israeli, he worked quietly at the office and, amid the scorching heat, fasted the whole day without telling anyone. “I wasn’t sure where that information would end up if I did,” Klawansky says. “The Bahraini government was very involved with the dredging company. Even though I worked with a whole host of different nationalities, lots of local Bahrainis were involved.”

Being an Israeli, Klawansky wasn’t sure if he was even allowed to be working in Bahrain, so he felt scared to divulge that he was fasting. “I didn’t want it to become known to the company’s Bahraini partners and cause problems.”

That said, Bahrain isn’t antisemitic or anti-Israel, Klawansky says. “Until the Abraham Accords were signed recently, there weren’t any official relations between Bahrain and Israel. But even though I was there on my South African passport, I’m also Israeli, so you can’t ignore that.”

Former cricketer Adam Bacher’s admirable

performances during the Proteas’ three-match Test series in Pakistan in October 1997 overlapped with Yom Kippur.

He scored two 50s, including 96, as South Africa became the first team to win a Test series in Pakistan since Sri Lanka in the 1995/1996 season.

“Fortunately for me, Yom Kippur fell on the day after the first Test match, so I didn’t have to worry about what to do, if I should play or not,” Bacher says.

He says his teammates respected the fact that he was fasting, and were curious about it.

As the breaking of the fast happened during a team meeting, everyone in the Proteas camp learnt about the fast and its timing. “The whole meeting was stopped to allow me to break my fast on an Energade, our sponsor at the time.”

All in all, Bacher reminisces, “It was interesting and memorable to spend Yom Kippur in an Islamic country with people who didn’t understand what the fast was about. I think my teammates enjoyed learning about the experience.”

Johannesburg trauma counsellor Andy Nossel was in Amsterdam during the *yom tovim* to visit her grandparents. Besides reading a book titled *The Practice of Happiness*, which she felt was quite profound on Yom Kippur, she didn’t know what to do with herself during the fast. “I went to the shul, but they weren’t letting strangers in, so I went walking.”

After wandering around the city, she meandered through a park and chanced upon a cemetery. “It turned out to be a Jewish cemetery with tombstones which had fallen. It felt profound that I ended up in a Jewish cemetery in a strange city on Yom Kippur.”

Later, someone explained to Nossel that in Amsterdam, people weren’t very open about being Jewish. “You had to be known,” she says. “You couldn’t

just rock up at a shul. They were still quite paranoid, not comfortable.”

SA Jewish Report editor Peta Krost, then a journalist at the *Saturday Star* and *Sunday Independent*, didn’t feel comfortable about going to Munich on a press junket

so many of our people had been murdered and treated like sub-humans.” There were 32 000 documented murders there, and many thousands weren’t documented – mostly Jews.

Krost discovered that Dachau wasn’t just the first concentration camp created by the Nazis, it was also the prototype for many others. Above the entrance gate was that chilling phrase, “*Arbeit macht frei*” (Work makes one free), making Krost feel quite queasy.

“I saw the mounds of teeth, hair, and the rows and rows of bunks that abused people were shoved together to sleep on,” she recalls.

Krost felt the urge to find a shul, specifically so she could hear Kol Nidre at the start of the fast.

“I found a shul, and sought solace there among people who all looked so familiar to me. It was as if



Ishai Klawansky in Bahrain

over Yom Kippur during the late 1990s, but it turned out to be a Day of Atonement she’ll never forget.

“I didn’t want to pass up an opportunity to see a country I’d never seen,” she says. “Also, the trip included a visit to Dachau, the concentration camp on the outskirts of the city. Somehow, being able to walk through Dachau on *erev* Yom Kippur made sense to me.”

Just before entering Dachau, the tour guide pointed out to the group that Krost was the only Jew with them, and that this might be upsetting for her.

“I steeled myself and kept to myself as I walked through the grounds of this place of destruction, where

I recognised faces from home. Then, I spotted a woman and thought to myself, ‘Wow, that looks like my Israeli cousin, Rochel!’” Rochel was the daughter of Krost’s paternal grandfather’s sister, a generation above her.

When the service concluded, and they were all walking out, Krost called the woman.

“She immediately turned around and with her, I recognised her husband, Yitzhak. It was a warm reunion. I didn’t know until then that Yitzhak was a Holocaust survivor whose whole family were murdered, and that he went back every year around Yom Kippur to remember them,” she said.



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Forgive, but don't forget

We all understand forgiveness in our own way. The SA Jewish Report asked teens from Jewish schools around the country to send us their thoughts before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Here's a selection:

Be kind to yourself – and others

Liora Scop, Grade 12, King David Victory Park

The clock in front of me is ticking. I'm in "the zone" of absolute concentration. My focus is solely on the paper, and my hands move swiftly as they answer each question.

Suddenly, just as I'm about to finish my last sentence, I feel a hand on my shoulder and I know that I must stop writing.

The frustration is agonising. How can this be? I was about to amaze my marker, that last sentence was what would make or break my results.

I was humbled after receiving my essay when I realised that I had based most of it off Robin Williams's character, Professor Keating in *Dead Poets Society*, and not Keats, the dead poet.

Now that the anecdote has been delivered, I must state a fact. Not a single person in this world will remember that mistake after school.

I didn't feel failure once I exited that exam. Yes, I was irritated, but I forgave myself because that

exam was practice, and I still had finals.

It's vital to have the capacity to forgive. Even the greatest individuals must lower their walls to

achieve peace. I believe in the power of kindness, one of the only things that can extend beyond individual desires.

My *zaida* had the ability to make interpersonal connections. This year is the first Rosh Hashanah without him, but a part of him remains.

At prayers for him, peers from school came out of kindness, school peers I had been too afraid to have a proper conversation with.

I realised it was important to ask for forgiveness for the times I stayed in my comfort zone and didn't build connections with others.

Without growth, the human psyche would remain unchanged.

The root of *teshuvah* is "*shuv*" (return). For mistaking Keating for Keats to remaining comfortable in our own space, it's possible to return to seek forgiveness for ourselves and from others.



Forgiveness never comes easy

Jenna Zetler, Grade 11, Herzlia High School

Forgiveness never comes easy. It isn't our first instinct, but it's what gives us inner peace. According to the Torah, it's forbidden to take revenge or hold a grudge. If only it were that easy, right?

In the run-up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, taking time out to acknowledge our wrongs is what will guide each of us into the new year with a clean slate, without grudges and burdens weighing us down. We have to understand that kindness along with forgiveness isn't a one-day stop and shop on Yom Kippur. We use the time beforehand for self-betterment, healing, and, of course, repentance.

As Elul is the last month in the Jewish year, it's viewed as



a month of reflection as well as constructive change. The shofar blowing isn't someone testing out new ringtones, but rather a special ritual each morning to awaken Jews to the fact that Yom Kippur is fast approaching.

We're all human, and the truth is, we all make mistakes. The Book of Life is opened during Elul, and it stays open until the end of Yom Kippur. This is where the traditional greeting, "*L'shanah tovah tikatevu*" (May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year) originates from.

Forgiving someone means realising that you didn't get what you wanted. We learn that forgiving is more than okay, but we mustn't forget. The valuable lessons of the past are what will prevent us from repeating wrongdoings.

Writing about forgiveness on Rosh Hashanah stems from gratitude. We're so grateful to have people who love us unconditionally, friends who are willing to say, "I'm sorry", and for the opportunity to say "I'm sorry", ourselves.

Life is never simple. There can be much to be concerned about, but there's so much more to be grateful for.

I strongly encourage everyone to spend some time during the Days of Awe saying, "I'm sorry." And, "I love you."

From insult to injury, the many levels of mercy

Jordi Kubelun, Grade 10, King David Linksfield

Throughout Jewish history, there have been many examples of forgiveness. The most recognised are when Joseph, after being sold to the Ishmaelites by his brothers, revealed his true identity and forgave them, proclaiming, "I'm your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt! Don't be distressed and angry with yourselves for selling me here." Although Joseph didn't explicitly use the word "forgive", forgiveness is evident in his words.

As the year 5782 draws to a close and the year 5783 is on the horizon, the concept of forgiveness resonates strongly during the month of Elul. To my



mind, there are many levels to the term "forgiveness". Basic forgiveness requires that I forgive a minor mistake. It can involve an argument with my siblings or a misunderstanding about arrangements. Deep forgiveness involves personal hurt. This can take the form of an insult from a friend, in which after inner reflection, I come to terms with the fact that the deed is worth less than the loss of friendship, and I resolve to forgive. Ultimate forgiveness is the forgiveness of Hashem for those who have been victims of the evils and atrocities of war such as the Holocaust and yet have been able to forgive and embrace the miracle of life.

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Apologise for a clean slate

Joshua Galgut, Grade 9, King David Linksfield

Forgiveness is a wronged person’s way of saying that once again, they trust the perpetrator and his motives.

During the month of Elul, forgiveness means so much more, because you ask those you have harmed to enable you to stand innocently in front of the King of Kings so that you can start the new year on a clean slate.

Quite simply, you’re at the mercy of those who you have hurt, and perhaps that’s the way that it should be. Those who have been hurt by you are able to decide how you start the new year. For that reason, this year, I want to ask forgiveness from those whom I have unwittingly hurt. If I have accidentally caused you harm, please let me know, and I’ll try my best to resolve our differences. I would hate to think that there are people out there who are angry

with me without me being able to apologise. In turn, I have decided to forgive those who have hurt me, whether they know it or not. They can know that there’s no resentment between us.

This Rosh Hashanah, after experiencing a turbulent year, I want to start 5783 without hatred, without sin, without the influence of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). I hope I start the year with nothing but holiness, joy, and encouragement from the *yetzer hatov* (the good inclination). *Shanah tovah*, and may you merit starting the year on a clean slate.



Choosing to reserve judgement

Tali Snaid, Grade 11, Torah Academy

Forgiveness is when you free a wrongdoer of any injury they have caused you, whether they deserve it or not. It’s a conscious choice to release any resentment or bitterness you hold. When we choose to forgive, we’re wiping the slate clean.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated in the month of Tishrei. It’s a time when we appreciate everything around us. We have the custom of asking for forgiveness from any person we feel we have hurt over the past year. However, there are two levels of forgiveness: there’s saying sorry, and then there’s fixing the problem. I was in the car with my mom when someone bumped into her car. Their first reaction was to say sorry, and of course

she forgave them straight away, but the car still had that dent in it. Even though the deed has been forgiven, every time we see the dent, we’re reminded of the incident.

Forgiving doesn’t mean forgetting. Forgiving is when we stop resenting someone who has caused us pain, and forgetting is when we choose to block out what happened and move on as normal. We can forgive in order to achieve peace, however by not forgetting, we learn a lesson. Forgiveness takes courage, as most of the time it requires confrontation. Social media has given us a third medium of communication. We’re no longer forced to interact face to face, and it’s so much easier to hide behind our screens. We can refuse to reply or simply press the “block” button. Personal interaction has greater authenticity as a result of the addition of facial expression, body language, and tone. In today’s society, it takes courage to confront those around you and many people are no longer used to the intensity which accompanies human interaction. Seeking or providing forgiveness is a complicated task as we’re never sure how a recipient will behave. I have learnt that it’s always better to give each other time to gather our emotions before attempting to discuss a problem. We all say things we don’t mean when we’re angry, and once the words are out, the damage is usually irreparable. My parents have guided me to forgive as none of us are perfect and we cannot gauge one another’s actions. Forgiveness is accepting that we all have different value systems. Forgiving is a form of self-growth, and a lesson in how to reserve judgement.



Change requires honesty

Meira Feinblum, Grade 12, Torah Academy

During the month of Elul, we’re taught the fundamental idea that “the king is in the field”. As I have grown older, I’ve begun to wonder about the significance of this. How do you arrive at Rosh Hashanah having repented completely for what you have done, and why do you deserve Hashem’s forgiveness after having strayed so far from Him during the year? Every year, the pattern is the same. During Elul, we work hard to repent and be forgiven by Hashem, but in the next two months, we go straight back to our old, unhealthy habits. Why is it that on Rosh Hashanah, we genuinely want to change our lifestyle, but in the

days following it we don’t seem to care about our resolutions? The reason is that as a generation, we’re not honest enough with ourselves. By the time we begin making these resolutions, the way to wiggle out of them is in the back of our minds. This is usually due to fear of change. No-one wants change, even when not changing is detrimental to their life. Then comes guilt, and then the cycle begins again. The simple solution to this not-so simple problem is being able to look deep, and observe the real things you want to change in yourself, be able to be vulnerable, and really

think about what you want to achieve. When you do that, the thought of change becomes less unbearable as it’s more like changing a screw rather than the whole machine. Once you break out of your comfort zone and are honest with yourself, you’ll hold your values and achievements close to your heart, and live a deeper and more meaningful life.





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Bury the hatchet, but keep the map

Miri Harris, Grade 12, Torah Academy

"I bury hatchets but keep maps of where I put them." These words were sung by Taylor Swift in her album *Reputation*, and summarise my outlook on forgiveness.

As we draw close to Rosh Hashanah, I cannot help but fixate on my past misdeeds and perceived flaws that I have unearthed like some demented brain-archaeologist. I find myself wondering if G-d, too, has taken up cartography.

In life, we're often told to forgive and forget, to brush ourselves off and continue. I've never been particularly fond of this advice.

I believe no-one ever never forgets. Forgive if you must, but keep your maps. This thought path leads to an obsessive loop in my mind: "There's something wrong with me, and G-d will never forget that."

To illustrate my point, I mention my sisters. In my house, we have the tradition



of assigning sentimental value to the order of lighting and placement of our Shabbos candles. Recently, my elder sister, unprovoked, moved her candle to the middle – the most desirable spot. This bothered my younger sister, and sparked a weeks'-long feud. The curious thing about this dispute is that it went unmentioned for the duration of the week and only flared up at candle-lighting. It was forgiven, yes, but never fully forgotten, and only further proves my argument.

It may be that nothing we do is forgotten, but is that really a bad thing? People are multifaceted. We're more than just our good or bad sides, and should remember rather than hide and condemn the less perfect aspects of who we are. There's space for all of it. The bad doesn't define us, but isn't irrelevant either.

From the above, I have proven that nobody ever fully forgets the mistakes you make, but this isn't a crisis. There's a certain comfort in knowing that G-d remembers all the times I have messed up and keeps me alive anyway. There may, indeed, be something amiss with me, and although it's part of who I am, it's by no means the only part of me that matters or what will bind me to a dark and terrible new year.

Without trauma, I wouldn't see the light

Taylor Seinker, Grade 11, Torah Academy

When I was in Grade 4, I wasn't happy at school. It made my life unbearable. I wasn't getting good marks; I had teachers screaming at me; I couldn't do my homework because I just didn't understand what to do. They gave me a detention every day at break. The teachers and principal called a meeting and told my parents that I needed to go to a remedial school. They said I wasn't capable of getting a matric. My parents just kept quiet. The school didn't even give us a term's notice – they just wanted me out because I wasn't academic enough.

I remember the trauma of moving from school to school because in each



institution, I didn't feel like the teachers accepted me for who I was. I was bullied by the other children because I didn't get good marks. One of the teachers blamed me for causing a friend to fail. To this day, I believe it was my fault.

Today, I'm fortunate to be in Grade 11 in a wonderful school, with teachers that care about me, especially my principal, fondly known as "Morah". I now keep Shabbos, which was difficult as I wasn't brought up in a *frum* home. All the trauma I experienced as a child has made me a wiser person because I have connection to Hashem. Without that trauma, I wouldn't be able to see the light in every person. Elul always makes me happy as Hashem is active. My faith has given me the strength to forgive the people that gave up on me before I even had the chance to try. I believe that everything happens for a reason, and I wouldn't be the person I am today without all that has happened to me.

The power of not holding a grudge

Rivka Youngworth, Grade 10, Torah Academy

When we fully forgive another and surrender the pain, we release ourselves from hurt. Forgiveness allows us to free ourselves from resentment and bitterness. To forgive someone shows courage. The ability to let go and not hold a grudge against another person displays inner strength.

There's a difference between forgiveness and forgetting. When we've been wronged by a person and make the decision not to dwell on the past and forgive them, it doesn't erase the moment of pain. Alternatively, it's much healthier to acknowledge the suffering and use that to move forward to grow together – or

separately – in a positive way.

A well-known example of forgiveness is Joseph and his brothers. After being thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, and separated from his family for many years, he was still able to summon the bravery required to forgive his jealous and deceitful brothers. Joseph recognised that this forgiveness was beneficial not only for his brothers but for him as well. He's an exemplary example



to all mankind of being able to release the pain of the past, regardless of how severe his treatment was.

As we approach this Rosh Hashanah, receiving forgiveness from those whom I may have hurt intentionally or unintentionally is an essential part of personal development. I want to let go of the things that have wounded me, and be able to progress into the new year with a new light and positive energy. I believe that if I forgive others, Hashem will forgive me.



A completely new you: the promise of the high holidays

OPINIONYOSEF SHNEOR



In a few days, we’ll all gather in our synagogues for the yearly prayers and rituals we usually call the “high holidays”. For some of us, it’s a time of great importance, when we’re judged by G-d, determining the year we’ll have. For others, it’s a time for a family reunion or vacation.

According to The Holy Zohar and the writings of The Holy Ar”i (Rabbi Isaac Luria, a great 16th century kabbalist), a deep cosmic process occurs on these days, a process that effects each one of us.

The goal of this process is to allow us to re-choose who we really are.

Am I a prisoner of my reactive nature? My impulses? My fears and phobias? Must I forever be controlled by my limited thinking? By my narrow belief system?

Am I really the person I think I am, or can I reveal a totally new me after the holidays?

The kabbalists describe a fascinating, soul-level procedure, which starts on Rosh Hashanah and continues throughout the 21 days of the holidays of Yom Kippurim, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah.

This divine process starts with *dormita*, Anastasia like falling asleep. This is followed by *nesira* – sawing or cutting off all the negative imprints of the past, all our soul-level memories.

This process takes exactly 10 days – from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. The rest of the holidays are the healing phase, embraced by the light of mercy (*chassadim*) of the Sukkah for seven days.

Simchat Torah is the day when we’re introduced to our new identity – our renewed soul.

This fascinating process is a cosmic gift for all of us, yet, it’s up to each one of us to determine how successful it will be.

So, how can we effect this process? How can we become proactive participants in it?

Step number one is to be aware of the process. King David writes in Psalms (89, 16), “Blessed are those who know the sound of shofar.” The great Tanah and author of The Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, explains that knowledge or awareness of what’s happening is an essential stipulation of this process. It’s up to each of us to learn and deepen our understanding of the holidays (as well as other areas of our lives). We shouldn’t take things for granted or accept them just because it’s our tradition, religion, or because that’s what we always do.

Step two is about developing a sense of urgency about our transformation. On a scale

from one to 10, ask yourself how strongly you’re yearning for a change.

My teacher and mentor, the kabbalist Rav Berg, used to ask, “How many days in the past year were you really happy? Wouldn’t you like to have more of those days in the coming year? Can you imagine yourself happy every single day of the coming year?”

The month of Virgo, Elul, which proceeds Rosh Hashanah, is designed to assist us with our inner preparation for this transformative process. In this month, we’re guided to perform three major tasks as part of this preparation. They are *teshuvah* (repentance); *tefilah* (prayer); and *tzedakah* (charity).

What’s the secret of those three tasks?
a: *Teshuvah* means “to return”. This means we need to go back to our original “setup”, before we accumulated and burdened ourselves with the wrong, unenlightened, layers. We can start this process by asking ourselves some of the following questions:
• Who am I in my core?
• What do I really want out of life?
• Do I live the life that truly makes me happy?
• If I could change some of my qualities/ beliefs/behaviours, what would I choose to change?
• What do I regret doing or not doing enough in the past year?

Dealing with those questions in a serious way will prepare us for the transformation of the high holidays.

b: *Tefilah*: this means that I know I cannot transform myself without the support of a higher power. I’m asking the creator to support me in my efforts to transform
c: *Tzedakah*: my teacher and mentor, Berg, used to say, that we need to demonstrate our desires via actions. If you really wish to become a more kind, loving, generous, patient human being, you need to act upon it now. Find proactive ways to share with others this month – whether it be through time, energy, wisdom, or money. This will generate a more powerful and meaningful process during the holidays that will affect your entire year.

Following some of the advice given here will generate a positive new beginning for all of us this coming New Year.

Let’s all wish each other – and the entire world – nothing less than a blessed, peaceful, and meaningful year.

Shana tovah!
• Yosef Shneor is senior kabbalah teacher at The Kabbalah Center in Israel.

Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



Having European citizenship offers many benefits besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we’re looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn’t exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn’t exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendants of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won’t be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I’m well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws.

I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

My next trip will be from 6 – 13 November in Johannesburg and 13 – 20 November in Cape Town.

Contact me on

WhatsApp: +48 783 953 223
Email: adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com



Religious Zionism – where to from here?

>>Continued from page 16

reflecting our values on issues of public policy and governance, we’re failing.

My fear is that there are those who advocate the claim that “our work is done” when it comes to public advocacy. Our advocacy was to create the state and apparently in this regard, we have succeeded. Perhaps there is some legitimacy to such an argument, but I would certainly suggest an altogether different direction that’s based on two key principles.

The first is that religious Zionism doesn’t exist in a social laboratory of its own. We’re part of a greater Israeli society, and we need to remain concerned for its future and, for that matter, for the future and welfare of all global Jewry. We need to recognise that challenges like assimilation and the dilution of Jewish identity in Israel and across the diaspora are issues that must disturb us deeply.

The second principle is the appreciation that we have a particularly unique role and responsibility to work towards developing a society and nation that’s built upon ethics, morality, and a code of justice. Though Theodor Herzl’s vision was largely to create a land which would serve as a haven for Jews, religious Zionism advocated taking that vision to a far broader level. That new land wouldn’t just be a geographic safe house but also the modern realisation of the ancient prophecy of a return to a place where justice, compassion, and morality would make us a light unto the nations.

Our political divisiveness proves that we’re certainly not where we need to be in achieving that element of the religious Zionist vision. Certainly political debate can and should exist in addressing practical issues surrounding matters like security, economy, and the like. But we need to return to a place where we as religious Zionists have a common voice when it comes to the more fundamental issues of morality and identity. I would humbly say that our community must become leaders in advocating unity which will in turn carry over to other segments of society.

In absence of success in those areas – and we’re forced to admit that we remain a long way away from true success – we’re unable even to begin to contend that our vision has been achieved. Just the opposite. The need for a strong and passionate religious Zionist voice is more critical than ever.

• Rabbi David Stav is the founder and chairperson of Tzohar Rabbinical Organization in Israel.

L'shanah Tovah



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 Pick n  Pay

Are you keeping your apples too close to the tree?

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Your precious children may be the apple of your eye, but by doing everything for them, you’re effectively disempowering them. This so-called “helicopter parenting” is the “murder-one offense” of parenting styles, say experts.

“Our job is to equip our kids with the skills to take on their lives and become independent, yet we’re doing just the opposite,” says Dr Ken Resnick, an educational psychologist and founder of the SmartChoiceParenting programme. “I call it a pandemic of overcompassionate, overprotective, mollycoddling parents.”

Identifying a strong correlation between parenting styles and negative behavioural patterns in children, Resnick’s evidence-based programme has shown that parents play a vital role in guiding their child to adulthood.

Though we may wish to shield our children from unpleasant experiences, we also want them to feel good about themselves. Yet, by helicopter parenting, our actions are having the opposite effect. “Our children are growing up lacking self-esteem,” says Resnick. “Self-esteem is being independent. Yet they’re doing only what they want to and avoiding challenges because somebody is always there to help them.”

This results in what Resnick terms “learned helplessness”, in which children, for example, stop trying or listening at school, because they know a parent or tutor will always be there to pick up the slack. “One of the biggest consequences of this is that these kids have no grit or determination, which is key to success in life,” says Resnick. As a result, he argues, far too many children land up in various therapies or special classes with limited results.

Parenting coach Laura Markovitz elaborates. “When we hover, kids have the constant sense that we’re watching and listening, that we will get involved, fix it, and sort things out. The message therefore being conveyed is that they don’t have the capability to think

and problem solve for themselves.”

It’s important to draw a distinction between a natural impulse to protect our children and becoming overprotective. “Parents who hover are often overcontrolling, shield their children from certain discussions, and may do tasks for them or place too much pressure on them to succeed,” says educational psychologist Lee-Anne Lewis.

“This may limit their children’s ability to develop in an age-appropriate manner and to individuate. Children with ‘helicopter parenting’ may have difficulties with problem solving, with decision making, with navigating healthy social interactions, and with being able to cope or adapt when necessary.”

Though parents should give children the security of knowing they will love and support them no matter what, they also need to ensure that their children learn how to deal with failure and disappointment – inevitable aspects of life. “Children learn to get through difficult things by going through them,” says Markovitz.

Empathy is a fundamental place to start, she says, by reflecting on what your child may be going through rather than how you feel about what they’re experiencing.

“For example, if they’re not picked for a sports team, meet your child where they are at with things like, ‘How do you feel about it? I can imagine you are feeling sad about this. I understand, and am here for you if you need to chat.’ This option gives the child the space to know that it’s normal to feel whatever they feel about the situation.

“They need to know that perceived failure is unpleasant, we don’t want to minimise it, but we also don’t want it to define them. We can ask our kids, ‘Why do you think you didn’t make it? Does it feel fair/unfair?’ Given support and time to talk about it, we then have more room to reflect on what to do about the situation and empower our child to handle it.”



while you observe them from the back of the shop.” Parents say it’s such a dangerous world, and of course it is, but you’ve decided to have that child and he’s got to deal with that world. If you’re going to keep him inside until he’s 18 and then put him in that world, he won’t make it.”

Ultimately making kids feel safe and raising them to be good human beings isn’t about shielding them from the world, it’s about instilling discipline. This doesn’t mean smacking, it means putting clear boundaries in place. “There’s got to be structure, routine, rules, and consequences. There’s got to be a boundary of respect between the authority figure – the parent – and the child.”

It starts with having a calm but firm attitude. “There are a lot of really stressed-out parents – especially mothers who still tend to oversee much of the childcare responsibilities – out there,” says Resnick. Yet, if you’re screaming or out of control, your kids will feel the same way. By managing your reactions and parenting style, you will raise a secure child who learns to make empowered choices.

Sarit Glickman, a self-confessed mollycoddling mother who completed Resnick’s programme, agrees. “In tackling issues with my kids, no one ever asked, ‘How are you parenting your child?’ which is so obvious in hindsight. When your kids are acting out or aren’t coping at school, you have to look at yourself as parents to see what you’re doing.”

Learning to regain control as a parent was key, she says. “My children are learning that their choices have consequences – their behaviour controls the outcome. I expected so little from my kids before, I felt like I had to protect them and do everything for them. Yet, I was making them completely dependent, making them feel like they weren’t capable. Just changing how we parented, changed my kids’ behaviour overnight.”

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New year, new clothes – why shul is the smartest place you’ll be right now

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Few people, especially the “fashionistas” amongst us, need an excuse to go shopping. Yet, on Rosh Hashanah, the tradition of dressing up in new clothes moves into the spiritual realm.

Many of our most treasured memories surrounding Rosh Hashanah relate to buying new clothes.

“I grew up with my mother buying us something new, whether it be a new shirt, a new tie, or if we were really lucky, a new suit,” says Rabbi Ari Kievman of Chabad Sandton Central. “My parents weren’t wealthy, but they certainly made an effort that before *yom tov*, we should feel our very best.”

For Jenna Esrechowitz, the owner of Cape Town-based clothing boutique Rampage and its national online store, her calling to clothing began on *yom tov* shopping trips

with her mother. “I have vivid memories of the times I would go shopping with my mom, especially over the Jewish holidays,” she says.

Also a common practice around Pesach, the custom of honouring the holidays by buying new clothing is mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch* – the code of Jewish law, says Kievman. “The idea is that people always feel good in something new, and it’s a way of honouring the festival, particularly when you’re beginning a new year.”

It also gives us something additional over which to say *shehecheyanu* (blessings), he says. “Though we usually have a new fruit that we haven’t had in the season, we often get new clothing as

well.” This is also common on Pesach. Both festivals occur around the changing of the seasons, giving added impetus to buy something new.

For those who can’t afford new clothes this Rosh Hashanah, Jewish food fund Yad Aharon & Michael have set up an upmarket pop-up shop available exclusively for its recipients to shop at, at no cost. “Our first of its kind pop-up was named J.E.M RE-LOVED. It was done in loving memory of the late Robbie and Julie Treger as well as for the continued progress of a specific child in our community,” says Yad Aharon Chief Executive Lauren Silberman.

Volunteer run, the shop was stocked by the community, whose members generously



Dress from Rampage Boutique



Dress by HELENA The Label

donated new and gently worn clothing as well as pre-loved accessories, says Silberman.

“The range was exquisite, with quantities in the thousands, clothing for ladies, gents, and kiddies, who loved the entire experience.

“Once in a while, everyone deserves new, attractive, top-quality clothing ... and what an opportune time just before the high holy days,” Silberman says.

Helena Kahanovitz-Unterslak, the founder of modest fashion line HELENA The Label and also known for her modest fashion Instagram blog, *hkmodstyle*, also speaks of the joy and meaning that comes with dressing for *yom tov*. “It adds to the excitement and holiness of the day,” she says. “That’s why we dress eat well, it elevates the holiness of the festival from a physical to spiritual level. Ultimately, that’s why we’re in this world – to elevate the physical and make it spiritual.”

Dressing modestly, she says, is rooted in this belief. “Wearing beautiful clothes while dressing modestly makes me feel good within myself, which conversely enables me to focus less on the external. It’s not about hiding who you are, it’s about enabling your true essence to shine through.”

Through her clothing line and Instagram page, Kahanovitz-Unterslak is dedicated to showing women how they can dress modestly and still be fashion forward.

She says current fashion trends largely tie into modest dressing. “For example, maxi skirts and dresses are very in style for spring and summer 2022. Bold colours and floral patterns are also a must this season.” Be true to yourself when selecting outfits, she suggests.



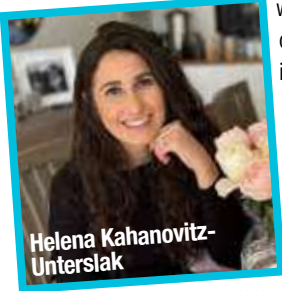
Leigh Sussman

Esrechowitz agrees, saying, “As long as you’re comfortable, you can own what you’re wearing.” Yet she encourages people to mix things up a bit. “My tip for looking and feeling your best is to try something you would never normally wear. It just takes that one time to try on something different to realise that your taste is more diverse than you thought, allowing you to expand on your style and wardrobe.”

This Rosh Hashanah, as many of us return to shul following the pandemic, is the perfect time to experiment. “The past two years have changed the way people shop and dress in general,” says Esrechowitz. “All special occasions, including Jewish holidays, had to be celebrated in isolation, or with immediate family only. So, buying new clothes took a backseat.”


Leigh Sussman, a stylist and image consultant for personal and corporate clients, elaborates. “COVID-19 has had a huge impact on fashion. People are working in a hybrid way or exclusively at home, and the emphasis is on comfort. Many of my clients are struggling because they’ve got these extreme work wardrobes, and no-one is wearing suits and high heels, or suits and ties to work anymore. Even in corporate environments, it’s about looking smart casual.”

“Shul is probably the smartest place you’re going to be dressing for right now,” she says. “In the reform community, we were doing everything online and now we’re back in shul and it’s been very different.” Yet she points out, dressing up for *yom tov* isn’t just about impressing Mrs Cohen sitting next to you at shul. “Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are a real time to reflect on ourselves. Dressing up adds to the meaning and special nature of the high holy days. They should stand out.”



Helena Kahanovitz-Unterslak

Not only is fashion allowing us to elevate our *yom tov* celebrations to a spiritual plane this year, it’s allowing us to recapture the joy that new clothes bring. “Now that restrictions have eased, I can see a clear difference in people’s mindsets – the joy and willingness to dress up are back,” says Esrechowitz. “With spring and summer in the air, people are feeling inspired to dress how they used to. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of that expression. Embrace it!”



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Jews with eating disorders follow new traditions on Yom Kippur

ELLA ROCKART – JTA

S honna Levin is an Orthodox Jew, but she didn't spend last Yom Kippur in a synagogue. The Brooklyn activist planned to set up camp in Prospect Park, where she was going to host an all-day gathering for Jews with eating disorders for whom the holiday centred on fasting can be especially difficult. Levin, who herself has struggled with disordered eating in the past, was forced to cancel, however, due to an injury. Her event was to follow rules typical of recovery-focused spaces: no weight, calories, or numbers talk. She also intended to bring along something that's not typically part of Yom Kippur observance: the materials required for a *seudah*, or festive meal. "I'd love to do it in future years," she told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA). "Too many people feel so isolated in this experience."



Levin's idea reflects an increasing number of efforts to craft new rituals and offer new modes of observance for Jews with eating disorders. Recognising that the holiday's traditional demand of a 25-hour fast could cause people with eating disorders to undertake dangerous behaviour, advocates across the Jewish world are developing alternatives and working to normalise Yom Kippur observances that don't preclude eating. The Blue Dove Foundation, an organisation that seeks to change how Jewish communities handle mental-health issues, has created a framework for reflecting on repentance that doesn't depend on fasting. Rather than asking for confessions of wrongdoing, which can be part of the pathology of eating disorders, the framework asks users to consider what they are already doing and want to do more of. Many college Hillels are making food available in private spaces so that students with eating disorders or other needs can eat while remaining set apart during the holiday from the rest of the student body. Meanwhile, the National Council of Jewish Women is encouraging Jews to turn a ritual around smelling fragrant scents on Yom Kippur into an opportunity to set new intentions for the coming year – a move that the group's promotional materials emphasise is ideal for people who are and aren't fasting. "And in terms of eating disorders, since that comes up every year, again, health comes first, always," the group's rabbi in residence, Danya Ruttenberg, wrote last year on Twitter before promoting the scent ritual. "Take care of yourself, and if that means not fasting, don't fast." Efforts to support Jews with eating disorders have grown more resonant since the COVID-19 pandemic, which heightened the isolation and loneliness that those who struggle with the disorders are already prone to experiencing. A study from the first 12 months of lockdowns and social distancing showed that a children's hospital in Michigan admitted more than twice as many adolescents with eating disorders as it does in an average year. The findings are no surprise to Temimah Zucker, an Orthodox therapist and social worker in New York, who treats many Jews and has seen a rise in both new and relapsed patients. "People didn't know what to do with their time, and there was so much emphasis around 'this is the time to change your body', and no focus on whether you're

taking care of yourself and your mental health," Zucker said. Yom Kippur serves up its own array of unhealthy messages, she said. "There's the theme of repenting, where individuals already experience high cognitive distortions around themselves and wrongness," Zucker said. "Plus, the pressure to connect to the day and whether that means fasting or not fasting." Jewish tradition is clear that people whose health would be jeopardised by fasting need not abstain from eating. That includes those who are ill, pregnant, or nursing, and according to many religious leaders, people with eating disorders. Still, many of those in recovery struggle when they attend services where they are surrounded by hungry people and triggering associations between fasting and discipline or morality. Others, driven by their disorder, ignore spiritual and medical advice. "Expect the patient to come up with all sorts of ways to try to get out of eating," said Levin. "I knew a young man who told his psychiatrist that his rabbi is insisting he not eat for religious reasons, then told the rabbi the psychiatrist OK'd him fasting," she said, but neither case was true. Hannah Davidson, a 23-year-old Brooklyn college student, said her family's rabbi had advised them that she shouldn't fast because of her eating disorder. Davidson said that she, like many others with eating disorders, had embraced fasting because it dovetailed with her disorder. "That's why we don't fast – because we shouldn't look forward to it," Davidson said. "That defeats the purpose." Esti Jacobs is the co-ordinator and co-founder of Ayelet Hashacher, a non-profit organisation in the Orthodox community which helps people access treatment for eating disorders. She said that even with a rabbi's instructions to eat on Yom Kippur, those with eating disorders can still struggle to prioritise recovery. "It's like how during the COVID-19 pandemic, people found it very hard not to go to synagogue. You're raised to do anything to be in synagogue, to miss a flight or leave the house with a high fever," she said. "So even though G-d wants us to stay home because of COVID-19's risk to life, it just doesn't feel right." Said Jacobs, "It's hard to realise that what G-d wants from you is different from what G-d wants from others, that you're keeping Yom Kippur by doing what appears to be wrong." Many Jews with eating disorders do structure their lives to insulate themselves from the challenges presented by Yom Kippur. Davidson, for example, said she rarely travels home from college for the holiday. But avoiding the holidays shouldn't be the only option. Yocheved Gourarie was a 24-year-old Orthodox woman who documented her struggles with anorexia and depression on Instagram until her death by suicide. Now, her father has his own account honouring her memory and documenting her experiences, especially around special events such as holidays. "She didn't fast for nine years, and she didn't attend services completely," Avremi Gourarie told JTA. "We made certain that any time religion could have been a factor [in harming her recovery], it was taken out of the equation." Levin's group had aimed to offer a middle ground: a space for those who do attend services and need a place to eat throughout the day. Her goal was to allow people with eating disorders to have a meaningful Yom Kippur without having to choose between isolation and risk of relapse, in an unstructured, supportive space. That kind of setting – and other initiatives like Levin's – is exactly what observant Jews with eating disorders need more of, Zucker said. "It's so beautiful that there are so many opportunities for more support like that," she said. "Part of it is greater community awareness so that there's less judgement, so that it's normalised to do what's best for you in the effort to uphold Jewish law."

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When life gives you apples...

OPINION

We're used to the famous saying about lemons and making lemonade. But what do we do when we are handed something sweeter and rounder? Something that isn't sour and doesn't cause us to pucker? Well, that's Rosh Hashanah. The beginning of a new year. A clean slate.

Now, not all apples are born equal either, because a Granny Smith might indeed bring on a bit of that sour face pucker whilst a Starking or Golden Delicious will deliver true sweetness, but perhaps with less crispness. Choices. Decisions. And yet this piece isn't really about apples, whilst it is.

Rosh Hashanah is about symbolism, reflection, and opportunity. The apple, in this instance, is the symbol for a whole year. And anyone with even the slightest interest in the role apples have played throughout civilization, will recall it's the cause of original sin with Eve, whilst also the eureka gravity moment when one fell on Isaac Newton's head. It was deliberately placed on William Tell's son's head that Tell needed to shoot an arrow through. And, Snow White was poisoned by one. So, whilst the apple has played a central role in many biblical, scientific, and literary tales, on Rosh Hashanah, it's seen as the promise of a full year. Plainly put, it's the wish and hope to live from this Rosh Hashanah until the next one as G-d either inscribes us in the Book of Life. Or not.

Now nowhere does a full or whole year remotely promise a perfect year. There's sadly no such thing as "a perfect year", much as we may hope for one. Unless, of course, one has both low expectations and even lower self-awareness. Both would defeat its symbolic role and purpose here, so we won't dwell on it. Perhaps it's a complicated Jewish observation for another time. Not Rosh Hashanah.

The reason I point out that the apple doesn't promise perfection – remember Eve again – is that a full year and a whole year is hopefully the gift of time. The choice is what we do with the next 365 days. And in that, we find meaning. Therefore, these days must be used carefully as a specific time



of reflection. Because life has given us apples. Now what to do about it?

And here the "lowly" insect comes into our story. Were you not to follow a bee home, you'd just see a tiny six legged, yellow and black, striped, winged insect buzzing from flower to flower collecting pollen on its legs. Were you to take an even closer look, you may get a nasty sting. And, the insect would die. (And so might a person. There are about 86 bee deaths per year and only 11 from sharks. So, a bee is almost eight times more likely to kill a person than a shark. As I said, it's a time for reflection.) Yet, as is commonly known, if all the bees in the world died, humans would too, and much animal life. Were humans to die, however, the planet would thrive. But again, this isn't the stuff of this particular piece. Although, like I said, it's a time for reflection.

Why do I mention what your observation may be if you didn't follow the bee home? If you didn't get to know it, you'd never discover it made honey. And how true of so many people around us each and every day that we never get to know. We never experience their magic. Something to consider, perhaps?

MIKE ABEL



And so, the humble honeybee provides us not with the sting, or cross pollination, but with the key ingredient to help symbolise not just a whole new year, but the hope for a sweet one too, by dipping the apple into the honey on both the first and second night of Rosh Hashanah.

Something we also give little consideration to is the name "rosh" – the head of the year. But the word also means a head. Your head. And we're encourage to use our kop, noggin, to think things through. To consider, to reflect. To ask forgiveness from our family, friends, and associates for any transgressions, both known and unknown against them. To reflect on our lifestyles, our health, and fitness for the coming year. Heard the expression "an apple a day keeps the doctor away"? In this case, it's metaphoric. The reminder of those well-intentioned promises we make to ourselves and to Hashem over this particular period of both opportunity and judgement. And judgement here, at this time, is only to be made by G-d. Not by us humans.

So, what will you do with your "apples" this year? Is it going to be a time of momentary reflection and good intentions, but then settling back into "same old"? Or are you going to begin something new? Are you going to plant apple trees? Or have an apiary? How will you contribute to making your life more meaningful? More enjoyable? More purposeful? None of these are judgements. Heaven forbid right now! Just questions. Because wherever we may find ourselves, there's so much we can do to make our year fuller and sweeter by making a difference, small or big in our lives, which might have huge benefits also for those around us. Apple vinegar? Apple cider? Or apple pie? Our choices, right now, to use wisely. Wishing you all a *shana tova umetukah* (a good and sweet year).

• Mike Abel is the founding partner and chief executive officer of M&C Saatchi Abel. He was awarded Absa Business Award at the 2018 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

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Simple but delectable Rosh Hashanah fare

Complicated cooking is for those who have lots of time on their hands, and we generally don't. So **Romi Rabinowitz** and **Lauren Boolkin** have some fantastic simple recipes for you.



ROMI RABINOWITZ

At this time of year, it is all about sweetness for the new year.

OAT STUFFED BAKED APPLES

I love having fruit for dessert, and these baked apples are perfect. Serve them on their own or with a vanilla ice cream.

- Ingredients
- ☞ ¾ cup cake flour
 - ☞ ¾ cup treacle sugar
 - ☞ ½ cup Jungle Oats
 - ☞ 6 Tbsp butter or margarine melted
 - ☞ 6 Golden Delicious apples
 - ☞ 1 cup apple juice
 - ☞ ½ cup honey
 - ☞ 2 tsp cinnamon

Method

Preheat oven to 220°C. Prepare your filling in a bowl. Mix flour, brown sugar, oats, and butter or margarine. Combine to form crumbs. Wash the apples, and using a scoop, scoop out the centres, but don't go all the way to the bottom of the apple. Fill each apple with the oat filling, going right to the top of the apple. Arrange the apples in a baking dish. In a small bowl, stir the apple juice, honey, and cinnamon. Pour over and around the apples. Bake uncovered for about 30 minutes or until the apples are tender. (If the topping starts to burn, cover lightly with tinfoil.) Place apples on your serving platter or an individual dessert dish, and drizzle pan juices over them. Simply heavenly!

SWEET AND SPICE LAMB SHANKS

This is an awesome Rosh Hashanah dish.

- Ingredients
- ☞ 6 lamb shanks
 - ☞ 1 Tbsp chopped garlic
 - ☞ 1 Tbsp chopped fresh ginger
 - ☞ 2 Tbsp oil
 - ☞ 1 onion chopped
 - ☞ 1 carrot finely sliced
 - ☞ 2 leeks finely sliced
 - ☞ Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - ☞ 12 dried apricots halved
 - ☞ 2 bay leaves
 - ☞ 1 Tbsp garam masala
 - ☞ 1 Tbsp curry powder
 - ☞ ½ tsp mixed herbs
 - ☞ ½ cup beef stock
 - ☞ ½ cup red wine
 - ☞ 1 cup orange juice
 - ☞ ½ cup chutney
 - ☞ 1 tsp mustard powder
 - ☞ 1 tsp ginger or garlic paste
 - ☞ 1 onion thinly sliced



Method

Heat the oil in a large pan, and sauté the garlic and ginger. Add the onions, carrots, and leeks, and sauté until the onions and leeks are translucent. Remove the vegetables from the pan and set aside. Using the same pan, brown the lamb shanks. Add the salt, pepper, garam masala, and curry powder. Add the dried apricots, bay leaves, mixed herbs, beef stock, orange juice, wine, and chutney. Lastly add the vegetables back to the pan. Heat through. Place in a roasting dish, cover completely, and cook for two to three hours at 180°C.

LAUREN BOOLKIN

BEEF WELLINGTON

This recipe is simple to make and is an absolute showstopper. The meat and mushroom filling can be prepared in the morning. I use store-bought puff pastry. Don't forget to defrost the pastry the night before in the fridge. I have invested in a meat thermometer – they're cheap and it does away with the guesswork and worry about whether your meat is cooked.

- Ingredients
- 1 2kg scotch fillet
 - 1 cup of sunflower oil + 3 Tbsp for the filling
 - 1 tsp salt
 - ½ tsp black pepper
 - ½ tsp ground ginger
 - ½ tsp Herbamare (optional, don't buy if you don't have)
 - 2 onions
 - 1 clove garlic
 - 1 packet mushrooms sliced
 - ½ tsp of dried oregano
 - ½ tsp of dried rosemary
 - 2 rolls of puff pastry (you may need only one but get two in case)
 - Beaten egg to brush the pastry

Method

Preheat your oven to 225°C. Place the oil in your roasting pan, and allow it to get very hot. Wash and dry the meat, and season it with the salt, black pepper, ginger, and Herbamare. Place the meat in the roasting pan and cook it to medium rare. We prefer our meat with no red bits, so I do 40 minutes a side. (If you're not using a thermometer, cut into the meat to check it before taking it out the oven. Remember, it will cook some more when you cook the pastry.) Allow the meat to cool completely. Chop the onions and garlic, and fry them in three tablespoons of sunflower oil until soft and translucent. Add the mushrooms, and cook until there's no more liquid. Season this mixture with salt, pepper, oregano, and



rosemary. Allow it to cool. Up to two hours before serving, roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface. Place the filling in a strip down the centre. Top with the meat and gently fold the pastry to encase the meat. If you're not exhausted at this point, you could pinch the seal in a decorative manner. Brush with beaten egg just before placing in a 180°C oven. Bake until golden.

STRAWBERRY VANILLA ICE CREAM CAKE

My husband said the cake reminded him of the strawberry ice creams we bought as kids. It's the simplest of recipes, and the result is ever so beautiful. Use dairy ice cream and butter if you don't need a parev dessert.



- Ingredients
- 1 cup salted pretzels
 - 15 ginger biscuits (parev ones are readily available at most bakeries)
 - 4 Tbsp coconut oil melted
 - 1 litre of vanilla ice cream
 - 1 litre of strawberry ice cream
 - 1/3 cup strawberry jam
 - 1/3 cup strawberries chopped
 - 1 cup strawberries sliced

Method

Line a 24cm springform tin with baking paper. In a food processor, crush the biscuits and pretzels. Place them in a bowl and mix with the melted coconut oil. Press onto the base of the springform tin and freeze for 15 minutes. Scoop three and a half cups of the ice cream onto the base and freeze again for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, chop a quarter of a cup of the strawberries, and mix into the jam. Swirl the jam through the strawberry ice cream. Spread the strawberry mix over the vanilla ice cream, and freeze again for 30 minutes. Spread the reserved vanilla ice cream over the strawberry ice cream, and top with sliced strawberries. Place in the freezer and remove from the springform tin to serve.

See www.sajr.co.za for additional recipes from Romi Rabinowitz and Lauren Boolkin

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Lipstadt acclaimed for calling out denialists

DAVID SAKS

Back in 1996, Deborah Lipstadt was a respected but relatively little-known academic and author noted for her work in the field of modern Jewish history and Holocaust studies.

This changed dramatically in September that year, when she was thrust into the public eye when David Irving launched a libel case against her and her publisher, Penguin Books.

His claim was that she characterised some of his writings and public statements as Holocaust denial in her award-winning 1993 book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

In that book, Lipstadt referred to Irving as being one of the world’s most dangerous and influential Holocaust deniers, who deliberately distorted the historical record to fit his thesis.

The ensuing trial and unequivocal verdict found Irving, a favourite of pro-Nazi apologists and assorted far-right-wingers worldwide, guilty as charged. It was a watershed event in the battle against Holocaust denial, and made Lipstadt an international figure.

Her subsequent book about the trial became the basis of the 2016 biographical film *Denial*, in which Lipstadt was portrayed by Rachel Weisz.

Lipstadt will be in South Africa later this year, where she will be the keynote speaker at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD’s) Gauteng Council conference on 10 November.

She last visited the country in 2002, when she spoke at the IUA-UCF campaign launch as well as addressing a capacity audience at Johannesburg’s Linder Auditorium.

The theme of the SAJBD conference this year will be trends and responses to contemporary antisemitism in the local context and globally.

Lipstadt has been the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, since 1993.

Since the Irving trial, she has been much in demand on the international lecture circuit, combining her growing status as a widely respected public intellectual with the continued pursuit of her career in academia.

This culminated in her appointment by President Joe Biden as United States Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism on 3 May this year.

Noted for her forthrightness and scholarly rigour, Lipstadt hasn’t shied away from controversy, sometimes being highly critical of trends within the Jewish world which, in her view, misapply or misuse the legacy of the Holocaust.

She has been sharply critical, for example, of the tendency of many Jews and Israelis to compare the upsurge of antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East in recent years to



Deborah Lipstadt, speaks at the Inter-Parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism

the Holocaust era. She characterises this as “hysteria” and “neuroses” devoid of nuance.

She has also accused previous Israeli administrations of having “cheapened” the memory of the Holocaust by using it to justify going to war. At the same time, she has continued to confront continued manifestations of Holocaust denial and distortion.

This includes calling out not only the outright denialism practised by Irving and his ilk, but the more insidious – and in some ways more dangerous – phenomenon of what she calls “soft-core denial”. In the case of the latter, the true magnitude of the Holocaust and the horrors it constituted is subtly

minimised through invalid comparisons with other historical and contemporary events. As an example, she has cited the refusal of groups such as the Muslim Council of Britain to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day unless equal time is given to anti-Muslim prejudice.

Lipstadt has acquired further renown for championing the cause of Holocaust survivors, including initiatives aimed at recording and preserving survivors’ testimony.

Her later books include *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* (2005); *The Eichmann Trial* (2011); and *Antisemitism: Here and Now* (2019).



Shana Tovah



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Lies and videotape – Melman takes on BDS in print

American attorney and expert on the cultural boycott against Israel, **Lana Melman**, has brought out a new book, *Artists Under Fire: The BDS War against Celebrities, Jews, and Israel*, in which she puts the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign on trial. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to her.

What inspired you to write this book?

The cultural boycott is using artists and celebrities as pawns to spread damaging lies about Israel, and is stirring up global anti-Jewish racism. Jews are being attacked on the streets in New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto. In London, cars drive through Jewish neighbourhoods as their passengers scream out calls for violence against us. The cultural boycott is creating much of this hate, and people need tools to combat it.

What went into writing it?

Almost everything. I write about artists and entertainers from my recollections of current events or personal engagement. I’ve fought against the cultural boycott campaign since 2011, and have corresponded with more than a thousand representatives of artists under BDS fire such as Alicia Keys, Cyndi Lauper, Pitbull, and Scarlett Johansson. Previously, I worked in the entertainment industry for more than 20 years as an attorney, creative executive, and writer-producer.

What do you hope to achieve with this book?

I want to share what I learnt, provide a clear and concise

analysis, and offer people tools. Many people, even the best-informed members of the pro-Israel community, don’t really understand the cultural boycott campaign – how it works, which artists support it, why it’s so dangerous, and how to talk about it. I wrote this book to educate and empower them.

I’d like to encourage people to go on the offensive and bring the battle to BDS. When we reveal the classic antisemitic tropes inside BDS messaging as well as its attempts to censor and intimidate, we focus on the morality of the campaign itself. It’s a winning argument that puts BDS on the defensive.

How do you believe this book can assist in the fight against antisemitism?

Artists Under Fire helps the reader understand the connection between anti-Zionism, which demonises Israel, and classic Jew-hatred. Anti-Zionism disseminates the same lies about Jews being evil that have led to discrimination and violence against us for centuries. When people disparage Zionists, who do you think they’re talking about? Dr Martin Luther King is often quoted as saying, “When people criticise Zionists, they mean Jews.”

What do you believe is the hypocrisy of the BDS movement?

Proponents of the cultural campaign against Israel claim that their cause is human rights and their methods are non-violent. They have mastered the language of the enlightened left but scratch the surface, and you will see that their tactics – along with their messaging – are anything but peaceful. Most international entertainers who want to perform in Israel face threats to their careers and their reputations, and some even to their lives.

BDS isn’t pro-Palestinian; it’s anti-Israel. Time and time again, proponents have rejected opportunities to improve the lives of Palestinians and instead work cynically to advance their own political agenda, namely to delegitimise Israel.

Just recently, Big Thief, an American band with an



Lara Melman

Israeli bass player, wanted to donate the proceeds from an upcoming concert in Tel Aviv to Palestinian charities, but the BDS campaign pressured it to cancel, which deprived the Palestinian people of funds.

When comic Eddie Izzard wanted to run in a West Bank marathon which was intended to draw attention to the restriction on freedom of movement for Palestinians, he was turned away because he had performed in Israel the

night before. If BDS proponents were truly concerned about the welfare of Palestinians, they would re-examine this strategy. They haven’t.

What’s the real impact of BDS and the anti-Israel lobby on the entertainment industry and artists?

The cultural boycott campaign has a negative impact on artists, Israel, and global Jewry because it’s a censorship campaign. It seeks to separate artists from their audiences, and attempts to control what people think by controlling the films they see and the music they hear.

Who has been most detrimentally harmed by BDS in this industry, and why?

BDS is harming a large swath of the creative community. Minority artists, like Black Coffee and Alicia Keys, are attacked for allegedly betraying their community. Young artists, like Demi Lovato, can be emotionally devastated by social-media bullying. Arab Israelis are deprived of opportunities to collaborate with their Jewish brethren. Less well-known artists are sensitive to threats to careers, implied or explicit, and BDS callously exploits this vulnerability. Israeli artists performing abroad face a gamut of discrimination.

How would you define what it is that “Israel-haters” like BDS do, and why?

When an artist books a trip or concert date in Israel, BDS groups launch a multifaceted campaign to pressure them to cancel. They write statements, petitions, and “open letters” filled with appalling lies about the Jewish state. They circulate memes and photoshopped images on social-media platforms associating Israel and the artist with destruction, racism, apartheid, the murder of children, and worse.

These aspersions against the artist’s reputation and threats to their career are bald-faced coercion. On the flip side, when Israeli artists perform for an international audience, there are calls for cancellations, performances are disrupted, and audiences are forced to walk past intimidating protesters.

Because entertainers, particularly celebrity entertainers, are media magnets, the story about the campaign becomes “news” and gets picked up by mainstream and entertainment industry media. Invariably, the media repeats the false allegations and spreads the disinformation further.

Mind you, we’re most often talking about campaigns against artists who don’t support the boycott and don’t end up cancelling. Nonetheless, BDS is leeching off their ability to attract attention to advance its poisonous messaging.

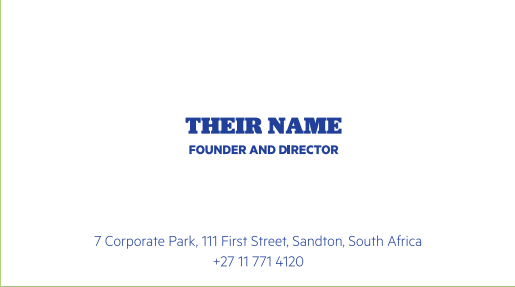
What impact has publishing this book had on you?

Honestly, I’m deeply moved by the response. There are many times in life when you put something good out into the world, but it doesn’t necessarily resonate. I’m so grateful that people have responded and expressed appreciation not just for the work I’ve done, but for helping them get their arms around a topic that frequently feels overwhelming.

Now that this book is done, how will you take it further?

I’ve just begun a book tour, and plan to continue to do that for the next couple of years to raise as much awareness as possible. I’m available to journalists and filmmakers to provide context and insight on this issue. I also plan to get the book out to as many high school and college students as possible, likewise members of the entertainment industry. And, of course, I remain available to artists and entertainers who seek my advice.

• For more information, visit www.liberateart.net



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Author throws the book at Jewish angst

Ben Freeman is a young author, internationally renowned educator, and diversity, equity and inclusion specialist focusing on Jewish identity, combatting Jew-hatred, and raising awareness of the Holocaust. He has just launched his second book, *Reclaiming Our Story: The Pursuit of Jewish Pride*. The SA Jewish Report caught up with him.

What inspired you to write *Reclaiming Our Story*?

In my first book, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People*, I wrote a chapter on internalised anti-Jewishness. However, in that chapter, I described the most extreme manifestations of this phenomenon – Jewish opposition to Zionism. Since the book came out, I have received countless messages and taken part in hundreds of speaking engagements and have been told by Jews literally all over the world that *Jewish Pride* helped them to process negative feelings about their Jewishness. These people weren't opposed to Zionism, but they still experienced this phenomenon. It made me realise that this was a much wider problem that required more research in a contemporary context.

Has antisemitism had an impact on young Jews speaking about Judaism? If so, please explain what you're seeing?

We're witnessing two major responses. The first is a coming home to Jewishness for many young people. They're appalled at what they're seeing with regards to the rise in Jew-hate, and feel isolated from the communities they previously felt at home in. This is important, but we must cultivate Jewish pride, so their Jewishness isn't just rooted in fighting Jew-hate. On the other hand, we're seeing Jews, I believe as a result of internalised anti-Jewishness, turn their backs on Jewishness, or at the very least Zionism (which is a fundamental component of Jewish identity). This is a huge worry, and is why we must recognise internalised anti-Jewishness and work as a community to fight it.

What's the antisemitism you're witnessing?

Jew-hatred is growing in every portion of society. From the right to the left to the Muslim community. We're witnessing online attacks, social exclusion, propaganda, political hate, institutional Jew-hate, and physical violence. Jew-hate has been made normal again and has returned to the centre of society.

In South Africa, antisemitism is cleverly veiled as being anti-Israel. Please can you explain the dangers of this type of antisemitism and the impact it has on Jewish pride.

It teaches young people that to be accepted into the leftist (or progressive) community, they must disavow Israel. This obsessive hatred of Israel is a non-Jewish idea being imposed on Jews. It has a devastating impact on Jewish pride, and is a major driver behind modern internalised anti-Jewishness. This is particularly problematic on campus, as the academy has become a major bastion of Jew-hate.

Many Jews don't reveal their identity and support for Israel because of fear. What's the impact of this on us and others?

We live in a culture of fear. This isn't acceptance, and although some of us can pass as the majority, it isn't privilege either. To be forced to hide who you are is a form of oppression. We're taught that our Jewishness is something to be ashamed of, and that we should diminish it. The impact on the wider world is the reinforcement that only certain kinds of Jews are acceptable. Jewish pride is the rejection of shame and non-Jewish perspectives on Jewishness.

When surrounded by people who hate Israel and have lots to say about Israel as an oppressor (particularly on university campuses), how should or could Jewish people respond?

First, Jews should reject the idea internally. This isn't to say we must close ourselves off from criticism of Israel, we shouldn't. However, that's not what this is. Israel isn't being criticised; it's being demonised. Jews must know that Israel – and by extension, Jews – isn't what the world says it is. Second, they must decide for themselves if they

feel safe to raise their voices. Most importantly, Jews must never allow the non-Jewish world to define who we are or how we feel about ourselves. We must understand that we deserve to be treated better than we're treated.



Ben Freeman

How do we enable ourselves to respond effectively to antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric so that we no longer feel afraid of being in situations where we have to face it?

We must educate ourselves. We must know the historical facts, and we must also know the lies that are said about us so we can understand why they are false. The Jewish community (globally) has failed miserably when it comes to Jewish education. We must recommit ourselves to education. Young people must be armed with pride and education as they begin to navigate the world.

There is a growing number of Jewish people who have found a home in the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement or organisations aligned with it. Why do you believe this has happened? How would you respond to them?

Like so many Jews who came before them, they try hard to be "good Jews", to be palatable, so to speak, so they warp and change themselves to be accepted. They find themselves in spaces where only a particular kind of Jewishness is deemed acceptable. Their Jewishness has been defined by the wider world through the broken mirror of Jewish identity. They have absorbed non-Jewish ideas about Israel, and have incorporated them into their own worldview, and in turn have

rejected a fundamental aspect of Jewish identity. **Is there a legitimate anti-Israel stand or is it all antisemitism? If so, what's a legitimate stand to take?**

Of course, fair criticism of Israel is legitimate. Anyone who says otherwise is wrong. Israel can be criticised like any other country. But we must also be aware that that rarely happens. We must be aware that even something that purports to be criticism of Israel can be anti-Jewish, so we must be particularly careful when engaging in criticism of Israel.

Antisemitism comes in various guises. What are you witnessing in young people?

All the same forms that existed throughout history still exist, it just depends which community you're talking about. Christian and Muslim Jew-hatred is still there in certain spaces, racial Jew-hatred is still there in many spaces, they all just mingle together. Although we can separate forms of Jew-hate into different categories, we must also understand that they are all connected. Regardless of the source, roughly the same thing is being said about Jews. One of my former students described Jew-hate as "same soup, different bowl" meaning that the outward expression (the bowl) may change, but the core (the soup) stays the same.

Why is it important for us to reclaim our Jewish pride?

Because being Jewish is a wonderful thing. It's a 4 000-year-old identity, and we should be proud of it, just as every community should be proud of their culture and heritage. The fact that we're even having this conversation in South Africa in 2022 is a miracle. We've survived and thrived, and we must celebrate that. Additionally, Jewishness doesn't belong to us, it's our job to cultivate it and maintain it for future generations. What are we passing on if we don't raise our youth in pride?

Continued on page 46>>



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Actions and words – Tony Raphaely’s honourable life story

TALI FEINBERG

“When I think of the word ‘mensch,’ it’s you who comes to mind.” This was how Anthony ‘Tony’ Raphaely’s granddaughter described him, shortly before he passed away from cancer on 17 September. A businessman, philanthropist, author, and family man, Raphaely spent periods of his life in South Africa and abroad. As a strong Zionist, he chose to be buried in Israel.

Even when illness took away his ability to speak, he continued to live by his values. Just three weeks before he passed away, Raphaely made the long trip to Australia for his grandson’s Barmitzvah. And when he had to write notes to communicate, “His letters were marked by an amazing sweetness,” says his brother, Denis Raphaely. “He was incredibly brave and never complained. He lived life as an honourable person.”

Raphaely was born in Cape Town in 1939. His brother remembers him battling with academics and a stammer, “which he mastered with incredible discipline”, and that he first went to Wynberg Boys High School and then to a boarding school. He moved to London at the age of 18, and lived there for six years before returning to South Africa, where he worked as a commodity trader in the business his grandfather, Leo, founded in the early 1900s.

Throughout the 1960s, he travelled extensively and lived in Peru, Iran, and Hong Kong. He met his wife-to-be, Penny, while visiting London in 1968. She and Tony’s sister, Pene (also pronounced Penny) were good friends, and Pene made the *shidduch*. They were married for 52 years, until his death.

They got married in London, and then moved to Johannesburg where they had four sons. “He and Penny raised them to understand the importance of family,” says his cousin, Betty Rajak. “When my children got married, he ensured all four of his sons were there, no matter where they were in the world. He also bought my kids their first dog, which they named Tony!”

Raphaely continued to work as a commodity trader in the 1980s and early 1990s until his retirement in 1995, at the age of 55. “His professional life and achievements pale in comparison to his real passions, which were his family, the Jewish community, and his charitable work,” says his son, Mark. “He didn’t simply give to charity. He was a leader who created forums for others to give, and he inspired them to do so.”

For example, after Raphaely’s son, Nick, and his friend, Jasper, founded the Link-SA Trust for Tertiary Education, “my dad soon realised the immense need to educate a new generation of South Africans and was the organisation’s sole fundraiser for almost 25 years”, says Mark.

“He advocated on behalf of students whose names he never knew and who never knew his, and put tens of thousands of underprivileged students

through university. Many have gone on to senior positions in business, law, engineering, and medicine.”

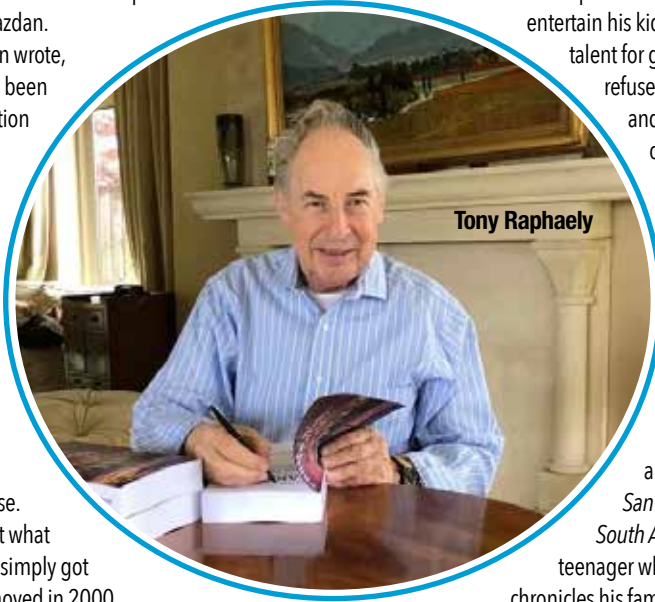
“He really left a legacy, and he did it without a fuss, and as anonymously as possible, supporting as many causes as possible,” says Denis.

He followed in the footsteps of his Raphaely ancestors, and served as chairperson of the Great Synagogue in Johannesburg, forging close friendships with Chief Rabbi Bernard Casper and later with Rabbi Dovid Hazdan.

On his passing, Hazdan wrote, “The Raphaely family has been builders of our congregation for generations. Tony was a past chairperson of our community in the challenging closing years of the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street. His strength, tenacity, and determination kept our community alive and enabled our new Great Park campus to materialise. While others spoke about what needed to be done, Tony simply got it done. When the shul moved in 2000, Tony was incredibly proud to re-lay the foundation stone that his great uncle, Siegfried, had laid when the original shul was built in 1913. He was a very proud Jew, and faced each day with courage and strength.”

In his work with the South African Board of Jewish Education, Raphaely was tireless in ensuring that every Jewish child in Johannesburg who wanted a King David education could have one regardless of their financial position.

Mark says he was also a continuous supporter of the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha, an organisation his great grandfather founded in the 1880s. He brought attention to the needs of impoverished Jews in Johannesburg, and did what he could to ease their plight. And, he identified that there were countless Jewish seniors whose families had left South Africa. Many didn’t have the means to travel abroad to visit their children and grandchildren. With this in mind, he founded The Bobba Project, in which



he single-handedly raised funds to send these grandparents overseas for a month-long visit to their families.

“He was acutely aware of how blessed he was to be able to be an integral part of his children and grandchildren’s lives, and wanted to ensure that any *bobba* or *zaida* who was physically up to the journey could travel overseas to spend a Pesach or Rosh Hashanah with their families,” says Mark.

“He was a phenomenal storyteller. It started with adventure stories to entertain his kids on long car rides, but he also wanted to use this talent for good. To that end, he wrote stories about Russian refuseniks in the 1980s to raise awareness of their plight, and also about the life of Isaac Ochberg who saved Jewish orphans from the pogroms and gave them new lives in South Africa. His daughter-in-law, Nikki, is the granddaughter of an Ochberg orphan.”

In 2019, he published a photographic book titled *A Handful of Sand* which, in a series of pictures, captures the beauty and diversity of the Cape Town Jewish community. “He did this as a gift to the community which raised him, and also to provide an eternal memory of Cape Town Jewry,” says Mark.

In his final years, while battling cancer, he wrote a historical novel in two parts called *From Saratov to San Francisco – Five generations of one family’s stay in South Africa*. This incredible saga tells the story of a penniless teenager who leaves Eastern Europe in the late 1800s, and chronicles his family over 140 years.

“He said that writing these books kept him alive,” says Denis. “It’s incredible that he could write books even while he was so ill.”

“In the book, he was able to share his wealth of knowledge on the history of South Africa, the commodity trading world, his love for travel, the importance of giving back when Hashem has given so much, and the value of family,” says Mark.

“It was a life well lived, without any doubt,” he says. “He lived the way we all should: he worked hard, had fun, and gave back in so many ways. For him, the idea that we’re all small players in a much bigger story was at the forefront of his mind, and even in his final days, he continued to highlight that we Jews bear responsibility not only for our own welfare, but for the welfare of society at large. The world is so much better because he lived in it. May we all learn from his incredible example.”




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SAUL KAMIONSKY

When we hear the words "medicine" and "the Holocaust", we generally think of Nazi doctors and their inhumane crimes.

However, there were numerous Jewish and other doctors who "resisted the Nazis in their own way, without weapons, but with knowledge and unbelievable power, they struggled to save lives that the Nazis thought were unworthy," said Dr Maria Ciesielska, the author of, *The Doctors of the Warsaw Ghetto*.

They did this by continuing to treat people, smuggling drugs, and inventing new therapies or vaccinations. "They continued to do research and medical education," said Ciesielska. "They must have been superhuman. My father said, 'It always brings me to tears what our colleagues did in conditions like hell.'"

Ciesielska was speaking on 18 September during a Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC)-organised webinar about the Jewish doctors of the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II.

Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto lived without knowing what the future might bring, said Ciesielska. "The only certainty was that the next day would be worse. The goals of everyone in the ghetto, physicians included, was stabilisation and survival. The conditions of treatment of sick people in hospitals in the ghetto as well as of those who were deported to dispensaries were deteriorating from week to week because of a total deficiency of medication, dressings, and medical tools, as well as hunger and a typhus epidemic."

When rumours about the deportation took hold, and everyone began to sense that the end was near, the pressure on every ghetto inhabitant intensified, said Ciesielska. "Life and death hung in the balance. 'Where will they send us?' To medical personnel, this issue was professional and personal. What does a doctor do with his or her family? What does a physician do with his or her patients? Medical ethics were even more challenged from then on."

Between 22 July and 29 September 1942, at least 265 000 Warsaw Jews were deported to the Treblinka death camp near the city, said Ciesielska. "There was no selection there. All were condemned to death."

"The Jewish doctors working in the Warsaw Ghetto, as well as their families and patients, were transported to their final destination in overcrowded, sealed boxcars, in which they battled to breathe. Some chose to end their lives by committing suicide, or they helped others to die."

However, 40 000 were spared thanks to the Germans issuing *numerki zycia* (tickets to live) – small cards with a stamp declaring that the bearer was entitled to live.

"On 12 September, four patients and remaining hospital personnel boarded the boxcars, even those who had tickets, to attend to the patients to the very end," said Ciesielska. "A number of doctors left the Warsaw Ghetto to hide on the Aryan side, but not everyone found the promised help on the other side. Those who decided to remain in the ghetto began preparing bunkers. All hideouts quickly filled up

during the first days of the Ghetto Uprising that began on 19 April 1943. Unfortunately, the Germans discovered the shelter after a couple of days, and called for everyone to leave the shelter, promising them a safe exit.

Albinski's late Polish, Catholic grandfather, Waclaw, lived in the suburb of Wlochy, which didn't participate in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, but Germans arrested a few thousand men there, so

Polish-born Holocaust survivor and doctor, Michael Katz, lost his entire family in the Holocaust, but he escaped the Janowska concentration camp and lived as a Roman Catholic in Warsaw, became a member of the resistance, and fought in the Warsaw Uprising.

"The late doctor, Myron Winick, my colleague in medical school, brought with him from a visit to Warsaw an original text of a book called *Hunger Disease*, created by a variety of physicians working in ghetto circumstances and suffering themselves," said Katz. "The quantity of food offered per person in the Warsaw Ghetto was insufficient to support life. That remarkable book was by people who knew that they were dying, but wanted to leave the scientific information, and devoted themselves with a great deal of perfection to documenting it."

Katz also mentioned that Polish doctor Janusz Korczak, whose real name was Henryk Goldszmit, wrote wonderful short stories and tales for children. "He was offered an opportunity to be saved by the Germans, but refused, and went to Treblinka, where he was killed by an injection of phenol into his heart."

Tali Nates, the director of the JHGC, lauded the heroism and resistance shown by those who turned down the chance to avoid death camps. "Many of the doctors and heads of orphanages in the Warsaw Ghetto were offered a way out. Dr Rotstein, after smuggling her four little children, was offered a way out many times, but chose to stay with her patients by going to Treblinka, knowing full well what Treblinka meant in September 1942."



A family marching at the head of a long line of Jews on their way to be deported during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943

"On 21 April, three doctors and their wives responded to the Germans' call. They were brought to the Umschlagplatz [the departure point in Warsaw from which hundreds of thousands of Jews were deported to Nazi extermination camps]."

Luc Albinski spoke about how his grandmother and her family left Warsaw on a train when the city was being besieged by the east. When the train stopped, they went to a hotel nearby, consequently waking up the Soviets there. The hotel manager destroyed the guest book to prevent them from being identified. They eventually walked back to Warsaw, now Nazi-occupied.

Waclaw ended up in Auschwitz and died in Buchenwald on 28 September 1944.

Albinski's great uncle, Mietek, fought in the Warsaw Uprising, ended up in Germany, and never returned to Poland, where it was too dangerous for him.

"In 1990, I made my first trip to Poland still completely unaware of the Jewish side of my family," said Albinski. "My cousins spoke about how my Polish-Jewish grandmother [Halina Rotstein, a doctor in the Warsaw Ghetto] took control of everything in a hospital and then helped the patients transport themselves to the death trains. This was a huge shock for me."

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The tragic fate of a Jewish heroine in Morocco

PERSONAL STORY

Solica Hatchuel was a Jewish heroine in Morocco. Back in the early 1800s, she refused to give up her faith despite this meaning she would be choosing between riches and a life of leisure or being beheaded.

Her brother, Issachar (Yitzhak), was my great-grandfather.

Solica's story was one of great sadness, but one that will never be forgotten.

She was a very beautiful young woman. So much so, that a Jewish explorer, Israel Joseph Benjamin, who visited Tangier in the middle of the 19th century wrote of her that "never had the sun of Africa shone on more perfect beauty".

He said her Muslim neighbours said, "It's a sin that such a pearl should be in the possession of the Jews and it would be a crime to leave them such a jewel."

Solica was born in Tangier, Morocco, in 1817, to Haim and Simha Hatchuel. Haim was a trader and a Talmud scholar, and Solica developed her faith in Judaism under his tutelage.

My late father, Albert Isaac Hatchuel's, Hebrew name was Avraham Yitzchak, in honour of his grandfather, Yitzchak, and his great-grandfather, Avraham, who was known as Haim.

My father often told Solica's story, and was proud to be the descendant – indirectly – of this revered young woman. And, of course, as is often the case with oral history, the story varies according to who tells it.

A writer and friend of the family, Eugenio Maria Romero, reported that Solica's friend and neighbour, Tahra de Mesoodi, claimed that she had convinced Solica to convert to Islam after Solica had had an argument with Simha. This claim was false, and vehemently denied by Solica. Solica was brought before the local governor, who ordered her to kneel and declare herself to be Muslim.

The pasha threatened her by saying, "I will load you with chains. I will have you torn [apart] piece-meal by wild beasts, you shall not see the light of day, you shall perish of hunger, and experience the rigor of my vengeance and

indignation in having provoked the anger of the prophet."

Solica responded, "I will patiently bear the weight of your chains; I will give my limbs to be torn [apart] piece-meal by wild beasts; I will renounce forever the light of day; I will perish of hunger; and when all the evils of life are accumulated on me by your orders, I will smile at your indignation and the anger of your prophet, since neither he nor you have been able to overcome a weak female! It's clear that heaven isn't auspicious to making proselytes to your faith."

Solica's refusal so angered the governor that he ordered her to be incarcerated in chains in a windowless cell. Appeals to the Spanish vice-consul for her release were fruitless, and Solica was subsequently sent to Fez, where her fate would be decided by the sultan. The cost of her journey was to be paid by her father, who couldn't afford it. A family friend paid the money.

The qadi (judge) in Fez declared that if Solica remained intransigent, she would be beheaded and the Jewish community punished. Elders in the community pleaded with Solica to save herself – and the local community – and convert to Islam, but she was steadfast in her decision.

Her conviction and sentence were handed down. Solica was to be executed. It was ruled that her father would have to pay the costs of her burial. The execution took place in a public square in Fez.

Romero described the event. "The Moors, whose religious fanaticism is indescribable, prepared, with their



Photo: Howard Sackstein



DAVID HATCHUEL

"Here rests Mademoiselle Solica Hatchouël, born in Tangier in 1817. Refusing to enter into [or re-enter – the French text reads '*rentrer*'] the Islamic religion. The Arabs murdered her in 1834 in Fez, while she was torn away from her family. The entire world mourns this saintly child."

Oral history varies according to who tells it. Thanks to my father's research, I have a photocopy of the English translation of *The Jewish Heroine of the Nineteenth Century* by Romero, found in the library of Emanuel College, Cambridge. It's a very flowery and, I'm sure, imaginative story of the life and execution of Solica. In his book, *Folktales of the Canadian Sephardim* Andre E. Elbaz states in his notes to the story of Solica that Romero knew the Hachuel family.

There are many other iterations of the story, ranging from Ripley's Believe it or Not, to an extract from an article titled "Fez Past and Present" by Glenys Roberts in the *New York Times* of 4 December 1983.

"Fez's Jewish quarter is the oldest in Morocco. In the past, women wandered in it unveiled, and Muslim boys, unused to seeing the features of their own brides before marriage, were apt to fall in love with Jewish beauty. Paul Bowles, the American author, has written of one such sad love match in 18th century Fez, sad above all because the Jewish bride couldn't get used to the Muslim dictate that a woman goes out only three times in her life: once from

the womb, once from her father's house when she marries, and once from this world. Sol Hachuel suffered fatal claustrophobia in her husband's home."

I heard the story countless times while growing up. My father claimed that there was a tradition amongst his siblings that their first-born children were named in Solica's honour, and so I and one of my cousins have middle names that start with "S". Another cousin's second name is, in fact, Solica. My son, Steven, was named with Solica in mind.

Like my late father, I'm proud to have this history. I doubt I'd have the courage that Solica displayed, although I did once walk out of a job when my boss at the time, the son of a rabbi, insisted that his staff join a church he had discovered.

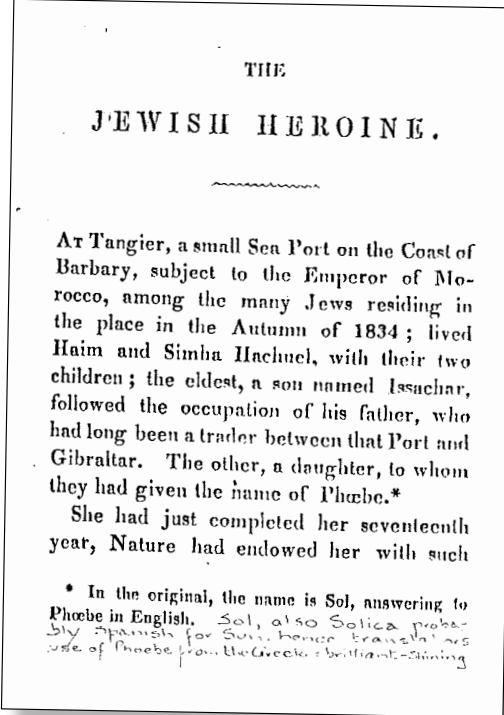
• *David Hatchuel is the great nephew of Solica Hatchuel. He lived in South Africa for many years, and now lives in Melbourne.*

accustomed joy to witness the horrid scene. The Jews of the city were moved with the deepest sorrow, but they could do nothing to avert it."

The Jewish community paid for the retrieval of Solica's head and body, and scraped up the earth on which her blood had fallen, all for burial in the Jewish cemetery. The rabbinate declared her a martyr.

Solica's tomb is said to be a place of pilgrimage by Jews and Muslims alike. This might sound strange, and in Léon Godard's book, *Description et histoire du Maroc*, he explains, "Despite their intolerance, Moroccans, however contradictory this may appear, do in some cases honour the holy people of other religions, or beg the aid of their prayers from those whom they call infidels. In Fez, they render a kind of worship to the memory of the young Sol Hachuel, [sic] a Jew of Tangier, who died in our time of terrible torture rather than renounce the law of Moses, or alternatively renew an abjuration previously made by yielding to the seductions of love."

The inscription on Solica's tomb reads (translated from the French):



Author throws the book at Jewish angst

>>Continued from page 43

What went into researching *Reclaiming our Story*?

I spent six weeks doing research in Hong Kong during the summer of 2021. There aren't that many books about internalised anti-Jewishness, so I read the few that are available along with academic articles. I also researched modern Jewish conversations by reading news articles as well as social-media posts. My work is rare in that it incorporates historical and contemporary research. This is important as it allows people to have a bird's eye view of the topic, enabling them to spot patterns as opposed to understanding it in a silo.

Were there any surprising revelations in your research?

What surprised me the most was that internalised anti-Jewishness has been a part of the Jewish experience for thousands of years. It certainly took on a more prominent role in our communal experience following the enlightenment (as people will read), but it has always been there. Similarly, reading so deeply into the 19th century German Jewish experience made me realise just how similar it was to the 20th century American Jewish experience. I always understood the

connections between the two, but even I was surprised by just how close they were.

What do you hope to achieve with *Reclaiming our Story*?

I hope to educate, inspire, and empower Jews to look inside themselves with empathy and kindness so they can investigate whether they experience some of the manifestations of the phenomenon I describe in this book. I want to continue building and developing the Jewish-pride movement that began with the publication of my first book, *Jewish Pride: Rebuilding a People*, and I want to help create a culture of healing, so Jews can see their Jewishness as a source of pride, never shame. I hope it speaks to Jews people and helps them feel seen. I also hope it helps non-Jews understand more about the Jewish experience so they can consider how to support our community better.

• *Freeman's book, Reclaiming Our Story: The Pursuit of Jewish Pride is out on 24 October and is published by No Pasaran Media. To pre-order, go to <https://tinyurl.com/2p8xa5ju>*

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Karate trio shatters age boundaries at world championship

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Three proteges of Johannesburg karate grandmaster and instructor Malcolm Dorfman achieved something they never thought possible by winning bronze at the World Shotokan Karate Association Championships in Liverpool, England, on 10 September.

The synchronised Shotokan-style kata executed by King David Victory Park Grade 9 student Ross Raven (15), Greenside High Grade 10 student Dylan Harry (16), and Parktown Boys Grade 11 student Matthew Pine (17) resulted in them being placed third in the junior men (under 21) team kata, ahead of Belgium and behind the Czech Republic and winners England at the M&S Bank Arena.

“They did pretty well because going against youngsters of 20 when they are 15, 16, and 17 is very difficult,” says Dorfman, who owns Dorfman Karate in Johannesburg with his son, karate master Shane. “There are maturity and physical differences. To come out with bronze medals was quite a feat.”

He says the host nation were quite old in comparison to his South African proteges. “You could see a physical difference.”

Dorfman doesn’t take all the credit for his charges’ performance, saying, “Shane’s students are my students, and my students are Shane’s students.”

Raven attends all Dorfman’s classes at Dorfman Karate’s Parktown dojo, but actually belongs to Dorfman Karate’s Melrose dojo spearheaded by Shane.

“Malcolm has given me a new look at karate,” Raven says. “He’s helped me understand the meaning of it. He’s shown me how it correlates with life.”

Raven says it’s unbelievable to have won bronze at a championships contested by 24 countries, saying, “We never thought we could.”

He says Dorfman, the first 9th Dan Westerner in a Japan-based mainstream Shotokan organisation, pushed their limits further than they imagined possible in the lead-up to the championships. “Malcolm drove every aspect of everything we did. It was tough.”

Wanting them to get experience of competing against other countries, Dorfman entered Raven, Harry, and Pine in the junior category to do their kata in unison. Every country was allowed to enter one team.

Similar to synchronised skating, they performed their kata together at the championships in front of seven judges, who scored their performance.

“Virtually every single European country participated along with the United States and South Africa,” Dorfman says. “Some teams were bigger than others. Obviously, it was easier for the European teams to get there. South Africa’s disadvantage is distance. If you take the Europeans, for instance, a team in Switzerland can have an international with Germany by getting onto the train and just travelling across the border, so these guys have such international exposure. Our guys may be just as good, but they don’t have the same experience. We train amongst ourselves.”

To prepare his three championships-bound karateka, Dorfman focused on the tournament in his regular classes during the week and gave the trio special classes on Fridays and the odd Saturdays. “They also practised on their own to make sure that they were working in sync. They were very diligent in their approach. I shared my experience and advice, which they took gladly. They also listened well. When somebody listens well, they do well.”

At the championship, aside from the team kata, Raven competed in the youth men individual kumite, while Harry and Pine competed in the cadet men individual kumite. The latter captained the Karatenomichi World

Ross Raven (right) at the World Karate Championships



Federation South African cadet team at the championships.

Harry and Pine started attending Dorfman’s classes when they were about five. “I was asked by a friend who had a nursery school if I would come and give the nursery school kids some karate,” Dorfman recalls. “Two boys stood head and shoulders above the others. The other kids were inattentive, playing the fool. So, I phoned their parents and said, ‘I’ve noticed something special about your kids. Please bring them to my dojo.’ I’ve

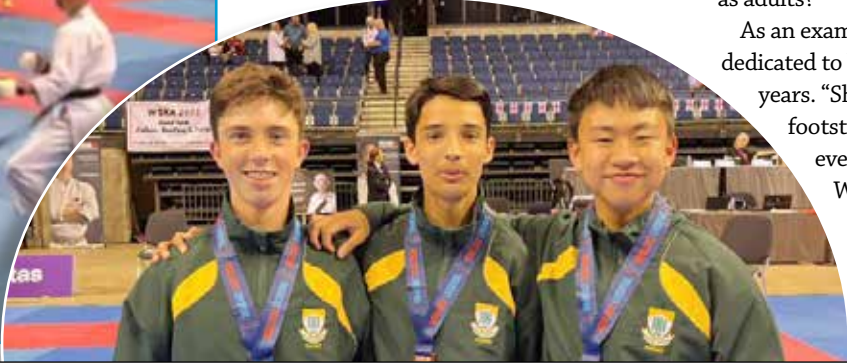
been teaching their kids ever since.”

The duo has won many titles, and been South African champions in their age group almost every year.

Asked what he would like to see Raven, Harry, and Pine achieve in karate, Dorfman says, “This will be up to them. Number one, they have the talent. Number two, both Shane and I can give them the expert intuition that we’ve accumulated over decades of top international exposure. Number three, do they actually have the desire to rise to the top as adults?”

As an example, Dorfman has been dedicated to karate every day for the past 55 years. “Shane [a 7th Dan] followed in my footsteps, but my other son didn’t, even though he was fantastic, a World Junior Champion, but at 18, he decided he wanted to pursue another path,” he says.

Ross Raven, Dylan Harry, and Matthew Pine with their bronze medals



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A snapshot of current titles is as much a reflection of current times as it is the Jewish state of mind on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

Take Nikki Erlick's *The Measure*, which has become a word-of-mouth favourite book clubs the country over.

What if, one day, you found a box on your doorstep? Inside the box is the exact number of years you have to live.

The same box appears on every doorstep across the world. Do you open yours? Do you want to know? And would that change how you choose to live?

Gripping, original and thought-provoking, this book really might keep you up at night – but for all the right reasons.

But not all of us are going to

receive a proverbial box on our doorstep. What will shake us into really thinking about our 70 years, and making it count?

For some, it was a pandemic that stole so many life milestones from so many – big and small – a stark reminder to enjoy every minute now spent with family and friends. For others, it's a visit to Poland's death camps – that experience certainly reframed and continues to

reframe my life like none other.

Perhaps that's why, Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* just goes on selling and selling. If you haven't reread it like many others did during lockdown, it's worth a revisit. Published

in 1946, psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. Based on his own experience and the stories of his patients, Frankl argues that we cannot avoid suffering, but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed

purpose. *Man's Search for Meaning* has become one of the most influential books in the world; it continues to inspire us all to find significance in the very act of living.

In the non-fiction space, memoir and personal narratives in a newly coined genre of "stealth help" – books which can help people improve their lives without being overtly self-help guides – have become popular. Frankl's story – and the lessons he gleaned and taught – is possibly the original "stealth help classic", a perennial shake up we all need to reframe life.

So, however many years you have, how do you want to live them? The idea that we inspect our lives, and make conscious decisions on how to live and find our "why", is what a Torah-guided life encourages. The Jewish festival cycle, with its scheduled times for joy, sorrow, introspection, and celebration, force us to go through the gamut

of human experience on an annual basis and not be a slave to the feeling of the moment or the unreliable vagaries of mood. It helps us cut through the noise – no the din – of everyday living

and crises that so often distract and confuse us.

Ruth Ozeki's novel, *The Book of Form and Emptiness*, which won this year's Women's Prize, is a powerful, thought-provoking look at the difference between hearing and listening, the noise around us, and the things that really matter. With its blend of sympathetic characters, riveting plot, and vibrant engagement with everything from jazz to climate change, the book shows Ozeki to be a poignant and playful writer, but also her Zen Buddhist view of our attachment to material possessions and where we find belonging.

For me, it's the personal story that really engages. Benny – the boy who hears the voices of objects all around him; his mother, drowning in her possessions; and a book as a talking thing, which narrates Benny's life and teaches him to listen to the things that truly count. *The Book* itself has a marvellous voice – adult, ironic, and affirming.

Here are three very different books that have the power to shake you up and remind you of your *raison d'être* (reason for being).

As we face Rosh Hashanah, a time to introspect and recalibrate, these

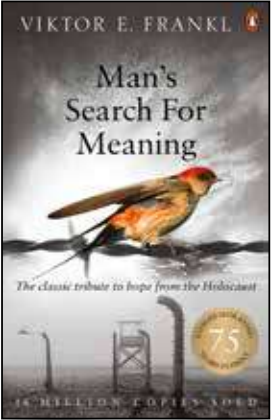
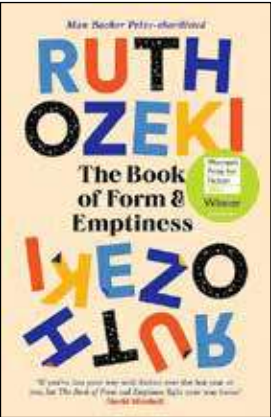
books offer a good primer to get us "in the mood".

Books and stories have the power to ignite conscious living, something the shofar has been doing for centuries.

Perhaps Erlick, Frankl, and Ozeki heard echoes of the Rambam's explanation of why we blow the shofar at the start of a new year: "Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a scriptural decree, nonetheless it contains within it a hint [as to its purpose], namely: 'Wake, you sleepers from your sleep, and you slumberers from your slumber, examine your

deeds, return in repentance, and remember your creator, you who forget the truth in the follies of time and waste the whole year in vain pursuits that neither profit nor save!'"

A timeless perspective indeed. • Batya Bricker is general manager books and brand for Exclusive Books, and the author of Goodnight Golda – A Handbook for Brave Jewish Girls And Her Mighty Friends, available in South Africa at Exclusive Books, and www.exclusivebooks.com, and internationally at www.bookdepository.com. Visit www.goodnightgolda.com.



Musos battle it out at KDL

Few events have sparked enthusiasm at King David Linksfield quite like The Battle of the Bands, Singers & DJs, which launched the schools' KD Kulture Fest on Sunday, 18 September.

In a festive day of music, competition, and fun on the school's main field, bands, singers, and DJs showed their talent as they battled it out on stage to win incredible prizes. The competition was adjudicated by a panel of expert celebrity judges including acclaimed South African actress, singer, and presenter Carmen Pretorius; award-winning South African blues/rockers Dan Patlansky; Alain Soriano, the organiser of the original Battle of the Bands held at King David Linksfield in 1980; and

DJ Gold and DJ Jung Ice, aka Lior Goldstein and Nevada Razika, who brought First Thursdays to Joburg.

Black Anonymous from Rand Park High won the band competition, and Melissa Krawitz from King David Linksfield won the singing section, each winning a recording session from JB Recording Studios, courtesy of Jonathan Birin.

Shane Yutar from King David Victory Park was chosen as top DJ, and Jordan Sweidan from King David Linksfield took second place, winning Pioneer DJ controllers courtesy of Sound Select. Yutar also won the chance to play a live set at First Thursdays at The Courtyard at the invitation of DJ Gold and DJ Jung Ice.

The event concluded with a "KD Kulam" where the voices of King Davidians were united in one powerful song.

Torah Academy introduces new leadership

Torah Academy held its first annual general meeting on Thursday, 15 September, at which the school's new board launched its constitution and governance procedures. Principals Morah Rebecca Sarchi, Rabbi Motti Hadar, Morah Sara Bronstein, and Morah Leah Lipskar wowed parents with the school's educational reforms.



Rabbi Motti Hadar presenting to Torah Academy parents at their first AGM

Yeshiva matrices celebrate in style



The matrices of 2022 marked the end of an era with glitz and glamour and a large amount of Yeshiva College vibe as they, along with the Grade 11s, celebrated their matric dance in style, with elegance and energy. While staying true to Yeshiva College values, the pupils did the school proud as they celebrated their high school years and end to this journey.

Sydenham Preschool prepares for Rosh Hashanah

The children of Sydenham Hebrew Preschool have spent the past few weeks refining their knowledge of Rosh Hashanah. They have been busy with Rosh Hashanah preparations, and have created beautiful machzors and gifts to take home.



Raphaela Bernstein, Frankie Levitas, Noah Bricker, and Maya Sher

Sher wows Golden Acres with song

Leading cantor Ezra Sher received one encore after another from residents of Golden Acres recently, after singing a repertoire in English, Yiddish, and Italian.

Sher took his audience on a rollercoaster of emotions, from the spiritually uplifting in *Hinei Ma Tov u Manaim*, *Ba Shana Ha Ba*, *Heveinu Shalom Aleichem*, *Adon Olam* and *Jerusalem of Gold*, to the amusing tale of *Rebbe Elimelech*, and onto the light hearted Beniamino Gigli's *Funiculi Funicula* and *O Solo Mio* in Italian, and Frank Sinatra's *New York, New York*.

Everyone was happy to sing along to *Hallelujah*, the 1979 Eurovision winner, and there was a lump in the throat and many a tear as Sher continued with numbers like *Bring Him Home* from *Les Misérables*; *Phantom of the Opera*; and *My Yiddische Mama*, which he sang in Yiddish.

The concert ended to thunderous applause, and many in the audience including a number of carers congratulated Sher on his performance.



Ezra Sher

Letters

DEFENCE OF ISRAEL IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL OF US, NOT JUST THE AMBASSADOR

I'm greatly perplexed by the comments made by Rabbi Silberhaft in the article, "African Jews should leave defence of Israel to the ambassador." (*SA Jewish Report*, 15 September 2022).

The state of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people and the realisation of the hope of 2 000 years. Israel is central to our identity as Jews, whether we choose to live there or not. There are many in South Africa, including in government, who would like to see this come to an end and have launched a vitriolic campaign assaulting Israel's right to sovereignty.

The assault on the legitimacy of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people is the latest iteration of antisemitism, and as it increases around the world, it's incumbent on Jews, no matter where they are, to fight back. After the horrors of the Holocaust, we vowed "Never again!" That time is now.

The South African Jewish community is one of the most cohesive and proudly Zionist communities in the world, and leads by example. Through some of Israel's most challenging times, South African Jews

and their allies have led global rallies, and organised communal bodies fight valiantly in the media and on many other battlefields to ensure that the rights of the Jewish community are respected – and heard.

When one minority community stands up for their rights, it's a clear signal to others who may feel marginalised or discriminated against to do the same.

Israel's envoys to African countries are tasked with representing their country and building on bilateral ties. As African countries steadily open up to warming ties with the Jewish state, we should take up the mantle of supporting them by leading the charge against the assault on the country they represent.

None of us can afford to be silent or abdicate the responsibility of standing up against antisemitism and its new iteration disguised as anti-Zionism. It's not just the responsibility of Israel's ambassadors to do this – it's all of our responsibility, regardless of where we live.

- Rolene Marks - co-founder South Africa-Israel Policy Forum

WOOLWORTHS

Shanah Tovah

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and prosperous.

W

COVID-19 is history, but some things shouldn't change

It's going to take a while to get COVID-19 out of our systems. And although I would happily forget many aspects of the pandemic, there are some that we ought to hold on to.

The mask isn't one of them. It still happens that every now and then, I find myself looking for my mask when getting out of my car. I sometimes do the same when I leave the house on the way to synagogue. Which is remarkable, considering that the pandemic was a relatively short period of time, and that it's thankfully pretty much over now.

The impact on our behaviour extends way beyond protective clothing. It will probably remain with us for a while.

Consider the shul service. As we head into Rosh Hashanah, I spent a few moments recalling last year. A year ago, our prayer service took place outdoors, and lasted for a maximum of two hours.

There were limits on the number of people at each venue, which is why we elected to go at 07:30. We had a positive attitude and we made it work, even though between the masks, social distancing, the hurried service, and lack of physical contact, there was undoubtedly a void. On the face of it, all was "normal".

But in spite of our repetitions of gratitude that shuls were open and that we had survived the pandemic, there was a tinge of sadness that couldn't be ignored and is easier to acknowledge a year on.

This year is different. The doors to shuls have been flung open, and people have returned. The sceptics among us might have been concerned about whether community members would go back to synagogue, but they have done so. In great numbers, even with great enthusiasm.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us what community means to us. And how much we value it. Services are more enjoyable in that

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman



they're being run with greater sensitivity to time. It's as though COVID-19 made it apparent that we won't live forever. And that even if we did, we probably wouldn't choose to spend it all at shul. A two-hour Rosh Hashanah service might not be practical, but it's gratifying that Shabbat services hardly extend beyond that.

COVID-19 reminded us of the value of the older members of the congregation. The most vulnerable and the hardest hit have struggled more than most. Anxiety about the disease, fear of catching it from children and grandchildren, made shul a scary place to be. Slowly, I have seen masks drop as they became more comfortable and confident with being around people.

It made us appreciate our community organisations, which all contributed one way or another to keeping us alive, and which provided support when we needed it. It allowed us to value our rabbis and community leaders, who sought ways to keep people connected, informed, and cared for. And our doctors who risked their lives, physical, and emotional well-being because that's what was asked of them.

It's a year later, and we're "back to normal". At least visually. Those we've lost won't be returning, and those who are suffering the impact might still be doing so.

As we move further away from one of the strangest times that we'll live through, it's worth considering what we need to let go of and what's worth holding on to with all our might. My wish to us all is that we choose wisely. May we all be blessed.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Famous activist for Gauteng conference



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

Preparations are in place for the Gauteng council conference on 10 November, and we're boosted by the news that Deborah Lipstadt, the United States special envoy for monitoring and combating antisemitism, has agreed to be keynote speaker.

For those in the fields of combating antisemitism and Holocaust commemoration and research, Lipstadt has long been an inspirational figure. The extraordinary story of how Nazi apologist David Irving was unmasked as the bigot and fraud he was when he unsuccessfully sued her for libel became one of the defining moments in the fight against Holocaust denialism, one of the vilest forms that antisemitism has taken in the modern age. If you haven't yet seen *Denial*, an acclaimed film closely based on Lipstadt's book about the trial, I encourage you to do so.

Ambassador Lipstadt was among the diplomats, legislators, civil society leaders, and others who participated in last week's Inter-Parliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism in Washington DC. South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn also attended, joining colleagues from the World Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League, with whom she has often worked in this area over many years.

A noteworthy aspect of the summit was that it included representatives of some of the leading social media companies.

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

One of the darker sides of social media is how it's too often used as a vehicle for propagating hate and misinformation, and it's ultimately the responsibility of the entities that control those platforms to implement practical measures that will at least place reasonable limitations on this kind of abuse.

With the approach of the *yom tov* season, the Board has been hard at work in resolving the many instances of exams set on one or other of the upcoming holidays that have been brought to its attention. This is one of the perennial issues that the SAJBD is required to deal with, but thankfully, working closely with the relevant universities, we have been able to address such problems satisfactorily over the years. For us to do so, however, it's incumbent on those students affected by scheduling clashes to inform us as timeously as possible. I urge anyone in this situation who hasn't yet informed the Board to do so without delay on sajbd@sajbd.org

That said, I wish you all *shana tova*. May the forthcoming year be one of good health, happiness, and peace for ourselves, our country, and our Jewish communities in Israel and throughout the world.

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



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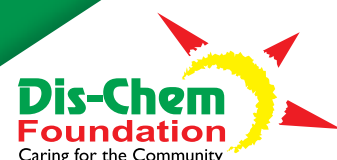
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