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South African Jewish Report

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Be vigilant, but don't panic, security experts say

TALI FEINBERG AND
NICOLA MILTZ

The Community Security Organisation (CSO) is taking the United States government's security alert about a possible terrorist attack in Joburg seriously, but has made it clear there's no reason to panic.

On Wednesday, 26 October, the US government issued an alert, warning that it had "received information that terrorists may be planning to conduct an attack targeting large gatherings of people at an unspecified location in the greater Sandton area of Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 October 2022."

"There's no further information regarding the timing, method, or target of the potential attack," the warning said. "The US embassy has advised staff to avoid crowds of people and other large public gatherings in the greater Sandton area of Johannesburg during the weekend of 29-30 October 2022."

Says Jevon Greenblatt, the CSO's head of operations in Gauteng, "Every indication is that this threat shouldn't be taken lightly. Although we don't have any information that the Jewish community is the target, we cannot rule this out, and are taking necessary steps to ensure that our community is secure."

"The CSO will communicate further with any relevant updates," he said. "We urge the community not to panic, but out of an abundance of caution, to exercise vigilance when out and about in public and crowded places."

Ryan Cummings, the director for Africa-focused political and security risk-management consultancy Signal Risk, says, "In terms of Jewish interests in South Africa, I think it's notable that in some dismantled

terrorist plots that we've witnessed to date, specifically involving the Thulsie twins, Jewish interests were cited as a target. In the South African context, our Jewish community is facing a discriminated and elevated threat.

"I advise the Jewish community not to panic, just to remain vigilant. Travel to Sandton at this stage should be limited to essential purposes only."

"Large-scale public gatherings should be avoided because that's among the higher-profile targets for attack. Be vigilant around places of worship, schools, and other facilities associated with the Jewish community."

"We need to realise that foreign governments, specifically the US, generally issue security messages of this nature in response to receiving of some form of intelligence specifying a specific threat which could potentially place their citizens or nationals in danger of being targeted in acts of violence."

In addition, "South Africa has been at a heightened threat of Islamist extremist attacks, particularly since we started engaging in the war in neighbouring Mozambique. ISIS [Islamic State] warned in July 2020 that it would target South Africa in acts of retributive violence if we engaged in the war, and that threat should be seen as credible."

Security expert Jasmine Opperman said that the US had no choice but to issue such a warning when it received intelligence of a possible terror attack targeting its institutions or US citizens. "This is a legal requirement according to US diplomatic protocol. I see this statement as an obligation [to reveal] that vague information has been received, but is such an attack actually on the cards?"

"If one looks at recent trends related to terrorism, there are simply no red flags

indicating that such an attack is a high probability," she says. "A terror attack can occur any place in the world at any time, but when it comes to Johannesburg or Sandton, it's always an area that gets attention. The presence of the US embassy in Sandton adds fuel, so I do understand the warning, but I don't have any information corroborating that such an attack is imminent."

"The alert is specific when it comes to

the date. Why isn't it specific when it comes to the other details?" Opperman asks. "I think we should acknowledge that an alert has been issued as part of protocol, but we shouldn't go into crazy conspiracy theories. There's simply no indication at this point in time directing us towards such an attack."

Willem Els, senior training co-ordinator at the Institute for Security Studies says, "The US embassy, and for that matter any

other embassy, normally issues these kind of warnings as a precaution in service to its citizens. They normally work in close co-operation with local intelligence and crime-intelligence services. They wouldn't issue such a warning if they didn't have credible information due to the implications on the local communities and economy. But to them, safety comes first."

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Mpho Phalatse mayor again

NICOLA MILTZ

"I'm back!" said a relieved Dr Mpho Phalatse, a good friend of the community, who was this week reinstated as mayor of Johannesburg after high drama in the courts following her shocking and dramatic ousting last month.

On Tuesday, 25 October, the Gauteng High Court declared unlawful, unconstitutional, and invalid her removal as mayor of the country's economic hub of six million people, and the subsequent election of the African National Congress (ANC's) Dada Morero.

Morero is on record as saying that Israel is "more extreme than the South African apartheid experience" and other anti-Israel comments in a bid to garner political points.

The Gauteng High Court declared the motion of no confidence which pushed Phalatse out to be

unconstitutional and invalid.

Judge Raylene Keightley agreed with Phalatse that the case was urgent, and reinstated her. Morero's election as mayor by the council was declared unlawful, unconstitutional, and invalid by the court, and he stepped down after a mere 25 days in office. Consequently, all decisions taken by him have been set aside, said Keightley.



Joburg Mayor Mpho Phalatse with her counsel, Advocate Carol Steinberg, in court after her case was heard

Photo courtesy News24

Though this has been celebrated as a victory for the Democratic Alliance (DA), it's a tenuous one as the ANC prepares to bring another motion of no confidence against her. As the city is governed by a minority government, it all comes down to numbers and strengthening the multiparty coalition which

Continued on page 2>>

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Mpho Phalatse mayor again

>>> Continued from page 1

presently hangs by a thread after the Patriotic Alliance (PA) moved over to the ANC.

Phalatse wasted no time getting back to work with partners in the coalition to seek ways to strengthen it.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* on Wednesday, 26 October, she said, "I have already held my first mayoral committee meeting. Nine of the 10 MMCs [members of the mayoral committee] are back in their portfolios. We have unfortunately had to let the PA MMC go, so there's one vacancy," which will assist in negotiations with parties going forward.

From the moment Phalatse was nominated by the DA as a mayoral candidate, she has been heckled by detractors hell-bent on seeing her demise, often using her past remarks about Israel as a political smokescreen to oust her and power up party seats.

In 2018, Phalatse found herself suspended from her role as MMC for health and social development by then Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba after she publicly declared support for Israel during a South African Friends of Israel conference. She has consistently expressed the DA's belief "in a two-state solution, in human rights for all, and for peaceful coexistence".

At the time of her mayoral nomination, Africa4Palestine posted a warning to its followers on Facebook, saying, "Spoiler alert!!! Apartheid Israel sympathiser running for mayor in Johannesburg South Africa is approaching local government elections – voters, take note!!!"

When she delivered her mayoral

acceptance speech last year as the city's first woman in the position, a rowdy group of chanting ANC councillors were hell-bent on intimidating and harassing her, demanding that she withdraw the pro-Israel comments made more than three years prior. Her opponents persistently wear Palestinian keffiyeh at council meetings and brandish placards with pro-Palestinian slogans.

They have been at it again since she was unlawfully ousted as mayor with comments online. One comment said, "She was an unrepentant supporter of apartheid Israel. Good riddance"; another post called her "The Israel apartheid Zionist canary bird", and another called her the "queen of darkness".

“

**"So much gets said in
the political space, and
you grow a thick skin."**

She's not bothered by these comments, Phalatse told the *SA Jewish Report*. "It hasn't played out much in council lately, and honestly I'm over it," she said. "I think everyone has moved on. My focus is on service delivery.

"I made a vow to the residents of Johannesburg that I would deliver services to them through a government that was stable, that was for them, and that was anti-corruption, and this remains my focus," she said.

"It's propaganda, it's politics much like

many other things that get said about me. For instance, in the past few weeks, it's been said that I'm desperate, that I don't want to let go of the mayorship as though the fight was about the title and the position as opposed to it being about rendering services to people and saving a city in desperate need of help. So much gets said in the political space, and you grow a thick skin."

Meanwhile the community has expressed its approval of her reinstatement. Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) said, "Dr Phalatse is on record for support for Israel, as are a number of her coalition partners in the city. In spite of the fact that the new ANC coalition hasn't yet commented on Israel, previous administrations called for Sandton Drive to be renamed after a terrorist, Leila Khaled. Furthermore, the ANC coalition regularly abuses council time by shouting anti-Israel rhetoric. It also has within it parties such as Al Jama-ah, which have a history of indulging in anti-Israel conspiracy theories.

"The SAZF calls on all coalitions to take seriously their obligations to service delivery for residents. We encourage them to reach out to Israeli experts for expertise in areas such as water, which are of critical importance for the future well-being of the residents of the city."

DA councillor Daniel Schay told the *SA Jewish Report* that the court's decision was a victory for democracy and the rule of law. "For 10 months, Mayor Phalatse poured her heart and soul into ensuring that this city regains its shine and begins to serve residents again. It would have been an absolute travesty had that all been brushed aside," he said.

United we fall



**Rabbi Greg Alexander –
Cape Town Progressive
Jewish Congregation**

Our Torah portion this week opens with the famous story of Noah, but I want to focus on the end of the *parshah* and the equally famous story of Migdal Bavel. What was it about the Tower of Babel that annoyed G-d so much? What's the problem with a bunch of folks building a skyscraper? From the Burj Khalifa to the Shard and the Empire State Building, tall buildings are major tourist attractions. They take years to design and plan, more years to build, and they become icons for a city.

The generation of the flood set to work to "build a city with a tower to reach the sky". It's clear that they didn't lack vision or efficiency – they were productive and effective at getting the job done.

I imagine the builders of the city as a powerful colony of ants swarming over the tower, passing brick to brick, not pausing for a minute in their labour until the task was complete. They were "of one language, and the same set of words" (Gen 11:1). It's the dream of every corporate executive – hive mind, united as one in purpose and plan.

Just think what we could achieve today if the whole world were "of one language and the same set of words". We would be infinitely connected, no need for translation, infinitely powerful. As John Lennon sang, "Imagine there's no countries

*It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too."*

The generation of the tower, united as one, knows its power. It realises what it's capable of, it aims to "make a name" for itself. And it does this even at the cost of what's most important.

One *midrash* (Midrash ha-Gadol 11:3) gives us a disturbing insight into the priorities: "As the tower grew in height, it took one year to get bricks from the base

to the upper stories. Thus, bricks became more precious than human life. When a brick slipped and fell, the people wept, but when a person fell and died, no one paid attention." (Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 24). For the builders of Babel, the dream of seeing their tower made real had become more important than the people they were building it for.

And here lies the warning for our generation and our time. Being united, being "one", isn't always best. More efficient, yes, greater control yes, but at what cost? What falls away in the face of the overpowering sameness of one language, one religion, one people?

Like the builders of Babel, we live in a time of great progress and achievement and with it great possibility for good –

ease of living, medical breakthroughs, alleviation of poverty, and more. But as we reach for these heights, we have to beware that we don't neglect what's most necessary to sustain them – values, ethics, and good governance. And the ability to be different, to think differently. And that that is a strength.

"Ex unitate vires" was the motto of the old South Africa. We know what that "unity" cost us in moral currency. Pascal (17th century, who invented the calculator and great big chunks of maths to terrify matriculants – good luck to them all by the way) once said "unity which doesn't depend on plurality is tyranny, plurality which isn't reduced to unity is confusion."

Babel is a compelling warning to us to get that balance right.

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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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Dis-Chem memo “a bitter pill to swallow” for CEO

TALI FEINBERG

If Dis-Chem Chief Executive Ivan Saltzman had the chance, he would “definitely” change the wording of the memorandum he wrote instituting a “moratorium on the appointment of white individuals” that led to a wave of antisemitism. He was also lambasted as a ‘racist’.

In an exclusive interview with the *SA Jewish Report* this week, Saltzman said, “Its inadvertent release was of a rough draft, and doesn’t reflect our values. We regret its wording and tone. More importantly, we sincerely regret the offence and distress it caused to so many people including our staff and millions of loyal customers.

“The intention of the memo was to reinforce Dis-Chem’s commitment to accelerate transformation, and to continue to give preferential employment and greater opportunities to suitably qualified persons from designated previously disadvantaged groups, especially in the spheres of logistics, accounting, and nursing,” he says. “There’s simply no ban on employing and promoting white employees in any categories throughout the business.”

The memorandum, which was written in September and leaked in October, resulted in a wave of outrage from many sectors of South African society. In the midst of it all, the South African Jewish community was targeted.

“It was an internal communiqué intended for senior managers that was unfortunately leaked and misinterpreted,” Saltzman says. “The backlash is regrettable, but at the same time, we have received overwhelming support from many quarters. Dis-Chem has always strived to comply with the spirit of the Constitution and other applicable legislation. While it was unfortunate that the memo was misconstrued, the board and I stand by its intention of being inclusive of transformation.”

Regarding the antisemitic comments directed at him, Dis-Chem, and the South African Jewish community, he says, “There’s no place for racism and discrimination at any level. I will continue to support the South African Jewish Board of Jewish Deputies [SAJBD] in its fight against antisemitism.”

Some of the antisemitic vitriol directed at Saltzman and the community included

comments like “These Jewish CEOs think they are untouchable”; “Is Saltzman a loxist? [Hatred for non-Jewish white people, and belief in Jewish supremacy]”; and “#KanyeWest you may be targeted for telling the truth, but the glaring #TRUTHWINS.” The last comment refers to antisemitic outbursts by rapper Kanye West in recent weeks. One user called for South Africans to “boycott all Jewish businesses”.

“The CEO and his family remind me of the Jewish people who sold out other Jewish people to the Nazis,” wrote another person. After the SAJBD criticised the antisemitic comments, another user wrote, “SA Jewish Board, the whites have made you very rich in the past ... show backbone and support them.”



Ivan Saltzman

“A Jewish CEO ... they had their knives in for white South Africans since the beginning,” was another comment on Twitter. “They’re the same deep-state Jewish ownership cabal that profits from government edict[s] via Jewish owned mainstream media and big pharma interests,” wrote someone on Facebook.

“Clearly, the controversial Dis-Chem memorandum has allowed the floodgates of Jew-hatred to be opened,” says Milton Shain, antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town. He notes that the comments



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claim Jews to be “outsiders, disloyal, and riddled with double standards”.

“It’s remarkable to see how the phantoms of antisemitism need little to be aroused,” Shain says. “At all times, they are merely below the surface. A simple plan, albeit controversial, is fastened onto by purveyors of hate.”

While the wave of hatred came from individual “trolls” online, “antisemitic comments are never harmless, especially if no one calls them out”, says Dr Günther Jikeli, the Erna B. Rosenfeld associate professor at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University. “They help to trivialise antisemitism at best and lead to radicalisation and violence at worst.”

SAJBD Chairperson Karen Milner agrees that “there’s never an excuse to express any form of hatred. To hold a community liable because you’re angry with something a community member has said is unacceptable.

“Outrage towards Mr Saltzman due to his being Jewish, in spite of having no relevance, was used to denigrate him and the entire Jewish community,” she says. “This manifested into blatant aggression towards Jewish South Africans, including comments referring to the ‘gassing of Jews’ and threats to boycott Jewish businesses. We condemn the vile social media posts. We’ll continue to monitor the comments and respond if and when required.”

Meanwhile, thought leaders have pointed out that the memorandum demonstrates the pressure that employment equity targets have on South African businesses, and that they are actually destroying jobs.

“The desperate letter penned by Saltzman underscores the panic engendered by pending changes to employment equity (EE) legislation,” says Democratic Alliance Shadow Minister of Employment and Labour, Dr Michael Cardo. “The Employment Equity Amendment Bill [EEB],

which now sits on the president’s desk awaiting his signature, is a destructive exercise in social engineering. It’s a job-destroying jackhammer, and it will worsen South Africa’s economic woes.

“Critically, the Bill empowers the employment and labour minister to set numerical EE targets for any national economic sector, backed by hefty fines for non-compliance. The Bill facilitates the reintroduction of race quotas by another name. Inevitably, the new EE regime will deter investors, undermine economic growth, and jeopardise jobs.

“It’s against this backdrop that Saltzman’s letter must be understood,” Cardo says. “Businesses are in a tailspin at the thought of sacrificing 10% of their turnover on the altar of the ANC’s [African National Congress’s] racial madness. Fines of this magnitude would bankrupt many firms.”

In light of the Dis-Chem memo, the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) wrote to the presidency renewing its call on President Cyril Ramaphosa to stop the EEB from becoming law. “Dis-Chem’s ‘moratorium’ is a concrete manifestation of the inhuman, chilling effect that Nxesi and his department’s actions have had on a particular business,” says the IRR’s Gabriel Crouse. “The IRR has reason to believe that this effect is more widespread and underreported than a single case. More aggressive race law equals more pain for the poor.”

In addition, in a nationwide, demographically-representative survey commissioned by the IRR in 2020, 80% of all respondents of all races preferred job appointments to be made on merit.

Says Saltzman, “My vision, and that of the Dis-Chem board, is for a company that’s reflective of South Africa’s demographics. I also want to reiterate how Dis-Chem has contributed to transformation in other areas. These include health, education, upskilling, childcare, job opportunities, and nutrition. These are run by previously disadvantaged people, again leading to jobs.”

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Ice cream entrepreneur frozen out for Israel photos

TALI FEINBERG

Local ice cream entrepreneur Paul Ballen felt the viciousness of the anti-Israel lobby when he posted enchanting photographs of his holiday in Israel on his personal Instagram account.

Ballen, the owner of Paul’s Homemade Ice Cream, is an avid photographer, so when he visited Israel for his cousin’s wedding this month, he shared his images online.

His holiday snapshots show life in Jerusalem, from a child eating candyfloss to a man praying at the Kotel.

None of the images were political, but anti-Israel extremists quickly began trolling his personal account and spamming his photos, mostly with calls to “free Palestine” and Palestinian flags. Others spammed his business account. The ugly comments were from local and international social-media users.

One user in particular saw positive comments from customers, and approached multiple people individually to stop supporting Paul’s Homemade Ice Cream. “Does your ice cream come in the flavour ‘heartless, cruel, merciless murder’?” commented one user, tying into the classic antisemitic blood-libel accusation.

Ballen told the SA Jewish Report he had kept his cool during the onslaught. “I always take photos when I travel, and this was no different,” he says. “The titles of my photos are neutral, for example, ‘Popcorn Kid’ of a young boy enjoying popcorn. I expressed no political views, and didn’t even mention Israel.”

But soon after he posted these pictures, he said, “we started getting emails, comments on my personal page, and some on my business page. Some customers, who are wholesalers, sent us long emails asking us to ‘uplift our freezers from their forecourts’.”

His colleague, Amir Laufert, says, “We told these wholesalers that we’re Jewish-owned, and two of us are Israeli. We said that we didn’t believe Israel was an apartheid state. We said we were proud Jews entitled to visit our holy sites. We believe there’s pressure on Muslim-owned dealers, and this is antisemitism hiding behind anti-Zionism.”



Paul Ballen

At the same time, their stores have reported “plenty of Muslim customers buying ice cream”. “I refuse to hide that I’m Jewish – it’s their problem, not mine,” Ballen says.

He has advised that other Jewish business owners be proudly Jewish, never hiding who they are. He refused to make his profile private, and would rather ignore the trolls than let them make him feel he has to hide any aspect of his identity.

He notes that some Muslims have criticised the social-media onslaught. At first, Fatima Asmal wrote “Kudos to all the people voicing their support for Palestine on Paul Ballen’s Instagram page.” However she then backtracked, and shared another post by Mohamed Kharwa.

Kharwa wrote, “I think someone has jumped the gun here. Does his visiting a place that’s important to his faith imply support for the government of that country? I haven’t seen pics of pro-Zionism. Could be pics of almost any tourist. I don’t know the person or his beliefs, but if we jump to conclusions based on pics, what happens when people do the same to us? All we are using is a set of pictures to determine what a person stands for. The same could be

said of someone who visits Saudi Arabia, supporting what its government stands for. Our shoot-from-the-hip approach hasn’t worked. This could be a picture any tourist takes visiting Jerusalem. We need to find out first, and engage people before we jump to boycotts.”

Asmal described this post as “food for thought”.

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), says, “The

attack on Paul’s personal social-media accounts clearly shows the antisemitic intent of the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions organisation’s] campaign and its followers. What triggered the incident was an innocent image taken on holiday of a religious man praying at the Kotel.

“This sparked a boycott call, leading to a swarm of trolls aggressively commenting on posts in an attempt to create a groundswell of public hostility and undermine the business. Their sole intention is to target the Jewish community and its associated institutions, which evidently has nothing to do with the fight for rights or support for peace.

The SAZF continues to work proactively to combat hatred against Israel and assist community members who have been affected by these bullying tactics.”

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn says, “Once again, we see these tuggish tactics being used to attempt to bully and silence any individuals who don’t conform to the views of these BDS trolls. We affirm our right as South African citizens to visit Israel, and cherish our proud connection to the Jewish state. With these temperatures rising, it’s never a better time for a Paul’s Ice Cream.”



Photo: Paul Ballen



Photo: Paul Ballen

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Will Israel face another Groundhog Day?

OPINION

ZVIKA (BIKO) ARRAN



Machaneh Yehuda market in the heart of Jerusalem is one of the oldest authentic local “fortresses” of the Likud party. Whenever a right-wing candidate wants to get the support and affection of the general public, “Machne Yuda” (as it’s affectionately pronounced) is your destination as a politician.



Machaneh Yehudah

Photo: Ian Ossendryver

election soon.

- As soon as you can, check the turnout at the polls among Arab citizens. Almost a fifth of Israeli voters are non-Jewish. Most of them vote for Arab parties. The Islamic one even backed the last coalition (and its prominent, brave leader, Mansour Abbas, who accepts Israel as the Jewish homeland). More than the rest of the Israelis, they are frustrated by high crime rates and violence, poor infrastructure, and have low confidence in their leadership that despises one another and can’t work together. All the signs indicate a record collapse in Arab voter numbers. Two elections ago, meaning two years ago, Arab parties occupied 15 seats in the Knesset. With luck, they will occupy eight seats in the coming election. This will obviously have a direct effect

on the anti-Bibi bloc.

- Threshold surprises: As always, there are some parties with a huge question mark around whether they can reach the minimum number of votes to reach the Knesset threshold. Those threshold surprises in the coming week’s election are mainly from the anti-Bibi side, which is chaotic, with a number of smaller and not dependable parties. On Netanyahu’s side, it’s only Ayelet Shaked’s HaBait HaYehudy party that’s under threat of not making the threshold. This is the party of the previous premier, Naftali Bennett. However, as we have said, just one surprise, and the map can change completely. It takes just one party of many not making the threshold to make the difference. Polls this week show that four different parties (on the anti-Bibi side) are teetering on the threshold, and their results can go either way next week. It takes a drama of a few hundred votes to make the difference.
- The overall sum of the blocs of pro and anti-Netanyahu are the only bottom-line parameters. But one terrifying rock star is ruling this time, soon to become a huge surprise of this campaign: Itamar Ben-Gvir (this election’s coalition kingmaker). He is a far-right-wing follower of the late far-right-wing ideologue Meir Kahane, who was once convicted of racist incitement. Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema is a pale moderate compared to Ben-Gvir. He’s a racist, fundamentalist, extremist, but a straightforward, eye-level talker on Israeli hot topics. At least 10 seats or more would be a tremendous

victory for him and a frightening sign for Israel. However, it will also be a burden to Netanyahu in forming an effective government.

Most Israelis today dream of a clear-cut win for either side and not a draw. People are eager to have a winner that will either make Bibi king again, or some kind of surprise that Lapid gets 61 seats.

But their worst nightmare is Groundhog Day yet again.

- *Zvika (Biko) Arran is a publicist, social entrepreneur, lawyer, advisor to philanthropists, and is in Israel at the moment working on the elections. He lives in Johannesburg with his wife and four sons.*



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- Between now and 1 November, there are a number of things to watch out for. First, spot the small parties at risk of either achieving the minimum votes needed to make it into the Knesset, which is 140 000, or not. If they pass the threshold, they secure four seats, if not, they have none.
- Watch this election for a new and different star or kingmaker who gets all the attention.
- Since this election was declared in June, there has been a complete freeze in the polls and a totally balanced picture being portrayed. This picture portrays almost 60 Knesset seats being likely to go to those obviously supporting Bibi and about 60 seats likely to go to future Knesset members who oppose Bibi’s potential new government. This is an uncomfortable balance because one seat here or there can mean the difference between Bibi as leader or a totally different government. Inside each bloc, crucial changes have been made since the last election, but at the end of the day, these changes make absolutely no difference. However, if the seesaw balance is slightly heavier on one side with one or two more seats, it will change the country’s leadership totally. If Bibi and his solid partners (haredim and extreme right party) get 61 seats, Netanyahu can form a government. It would be weak, fragile, and backed by the fascist Kahana supporters – but King Bibi will be crowned again. Any other scenario may be preferable, but leaves Israel in an era of uncertainty and maybe another

CITIZEN REINSTATEMENT POSSIBLE EVEN WITH THE EXTREMELY LITTLE INFORMATION KNOWN

The belief that having too little information about one’s Lithuanian ancestry will make it impossible to apply for Lithuanian citizenship by descent is a typical myth spread by the younger generation. Young people are often somewhat embarrassed that they aren’t fully aware of their ancestral roots – where their ancestors came from and when. Generally, their knowledge is limited to the information that someone, such as a grandparent or great-grandparent, was from Lithuania.

This is absolutely enough to initiate the process by booking an individual consultation with me. Most clients are pleasantly surprised to see how effectively and rapidly, even with such a small amount of information, their Lithuanian ancestral family picture can be restored.

The goal of the consultation is to assess the client’s eligibility for Lithuanian citizenship reinstatement. I review all the information and documentation that the client presents, and most often, I conduct a primary online archival search to check for possible Lithuanian citizenship loss and other information. If you do not have any documents pertaining to your

Lithuanian ancestry and just bits of information - that is totally fine - I will ask questions that will guide you the right direction and will help you uncover what’s needed for the process. Often, I’m able to indicate future challenges, and I guide clients in the most effective way to navigate these challenges. Last but not least, I answer all the questions a client might have on the topic of ancestral citizenship reinstatement.

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“We did not have any documents directly confirming that our ancestor used to be the citizen of Lithuania prior to 15.06.1940, other than a certificate of naturalization. [...] The advocate collected and submitted all the necessary documents, which were needed to prove our right to reinstate the citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania.” D. Grusd, SA

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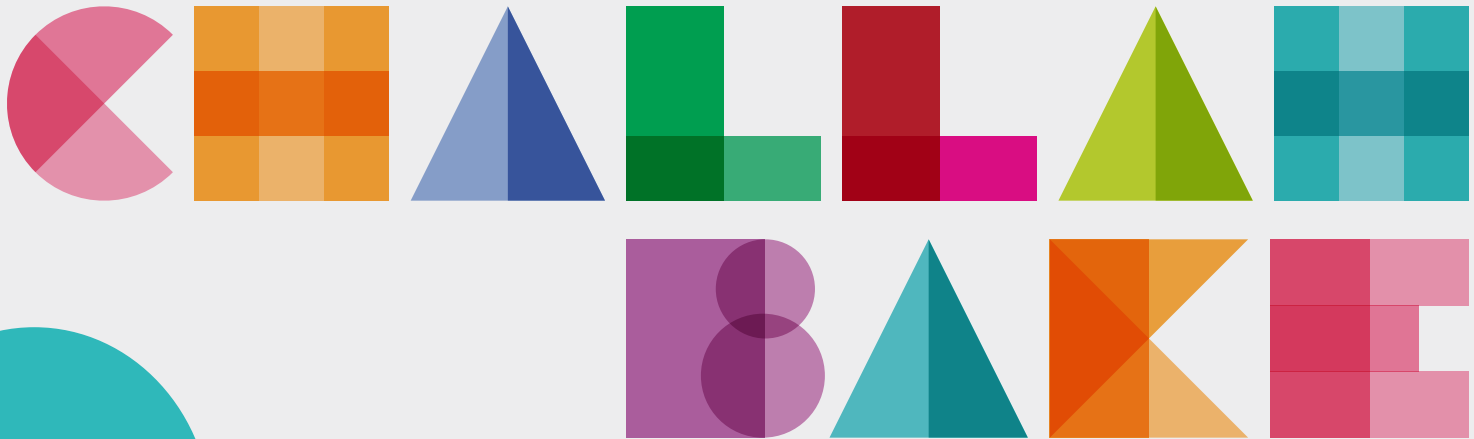
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In the matter between: **MBERGENI JOSEPH MULOVHEDZI**, Applicant and **STEPHEN MELAMED N.O.**, First Respondent, **JULIUS OSCAR LEVITAN**, Second Respondent, **CHARLES FREDERICK SIMMONS**, Third Respondent, **SYDNEY ELLIS HURWITZ**, Fourth Respondent, **THE REGISTRAR OF DEEDS JOHANNESBURG**, Fifth Respondent, **CITY OF EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**, Sixth Respondent

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT the abovementioned Applicant intends to apply to the above Honourable Court for an order in the following terms:

- TAKE NOTICE THAT** the Founding Affidavit by **MBERGENI JOSEPH MULOVHEDZI** with annexures attached thereto and the Confirmatory Affidavit of Marina Naydenova will be used in support of this application.

KINDLY TAKE NOTICE FURTHER that the Applicant has appointed **MARINA NAYDENOVA ATTORNEYS**, at the address set out hereunder, as its attorneys at which it will accept notice and service of all process in these proceedings.

KINDLY TAKE NOTICE FURTHER that if you intend opposing this application, you are required:

- (a) To notify Applicant's attorney in writing within 1 (ONE) month of service hereof;
- (b) And within 15 (fifteen) days after you have so given notice of your intention to oppose the application to file your answering affidavit if any;
- (c) And further that you are required to appoint in such notification an address referred to in Rule 6(5)(b) at which you will accept notice and service of all documents in these proceedings.

If no such notice of intention to oppose be given, this application will be made to the above honourable court without further notice being given to you on a date to be allocated by the Registrar of the Court.

MARINA NAYDENOVA ATTORNEYS, 15 ORLANDO ROAD,
KENSINGTON, JOHANNESBURG, 2094,
TEL: 011 615 4777, EMAIL: MARINA@MRNATTORNEYS.CO.ZA

NICOLA MILTZ

On the second day of Sukkot, members of Community Active Protection (CAP) were doggedly tracking the notorious Johannesburg arsonist after a vital breakthrough in the case lead them to his elusive whereabouts.

“Hashem works in mysterious ways,” said CAP Chief Operating Officer Sean Jammy, without giving away too much as the case is sensitive and still under police investigation.

This week, Alfred Maphutha, 36 – allegedly South Africa's first ever serial arsonist – is due to appear in the Randburg Magistrates Court charged with murder, robbery, and at least 24 counts of arson.

He had been out on parole for a 2014 charge of housebreaking and robbery while these crimes were committed, and is expected to apply for bail.

He is believed to have terrorised Johannesburg residents for at least two years, randomly breaking into and setting fire to homes in the northern suburbs during the middle of the night, most often while occupants were fast asleep.

In some cases, he would burgle homes without setting them alight.

Maphutha was arrested on 11 October, after a multidisciplinary team consisting of the Serious and Violent Crimes (SVC) Gauteng operations team, Counterintelligence Investigations head office, K9 Unit, CAP Security, and Fidelity Specialised Services acted on information about his location.

Fidelity Security had received information from a source regarding his whereabouts via its specially set up tip-off line after offering a reward of R100 000 for information. Around the same time, CAP independently received separate updated information through other means, and both companies corroborated information, alerting and working with the police to set about locating and apprehending him.

“We received information on the morning of 11 October, and after verifying the information, deployed our special operations teams,” said Jammy.

According to CAP, their information led them to the Hillbrow area within a 600m radius between Clarendon Place and Blanket Street on the eastern boundary and between Goldreich Street and Jager Street on the western boundary.

A CAP field tracing unit and covert special surveillance team was deployed to the area on foot and in vehicles armed with fresh photographic images to assist them in identifying him.

"It's almost impossible to locate a single man on the streets of Hillbrow," said Jammy, "We tried many things, but eventually we spotted him on foot at about 17:00," he said.

CAP and the police followed the alleged perpetrator. He walked from Hillbrow via Empire Road and Barry Hertzog towards Emmarentia, where he was eventually apprehended near the old Emmarentia Synagogue and arrested by police at about 18:00. According to police, “the team executed a tactical take down, and arrested the suspect”.

“There were no shots fired and no injuries to report,” said a police report.

“This is a highly complex case of many moving parts,” said Jammy.

“For the past two years, CAP has worked relentlessly to identify, trace, and now arrest the suspect that has become known as ‘the arsonist’. We’re immensely proud of our teams and grateful for the opportunity to be able to do this work,” he said.

“What stands out for me is the sheer terror he created in our community. Young children were scared to sleep at night, one in particular had nightmares after her friend’s

home burnt down. People were driving around at night looking for the guy, just doing their bit to try and find him,” said Jammy.

Insiders say the alleged arsonist is intelligent, and there seems to be a correlation between the frequency of incidents and the increased amount of media attention he received.

“He seemed to set more and more fires the more publicity he received,” said one insider, who wished to remain anonymous.

“He also started out small, setting fires to empty houses, and progressed to homes with occupants,” said the insider.

It's understood that several psychological profiles have been conducted, which will be made available to the court.

Meanwhile, residents have breathed a collective sigh of relief following the man's arrest.

A husband and wife are still reeling from the trauma of



witnessing their house go up in flames in the middle of the night in April, and are grateful every day to be alive, believing that their lives were in danger.

The husband, who wishes to remain anonymous, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, "It was the most terrifying and harrowing experience of our lives. There was a real possibility that I may have died in the flames if confronted by the arsonist downstairs, and this thought terrifies me daily."

The couple said there was pandemonium and chaos as they tried to escape.

“There was a sense of poetic justice seeing him arrested on the very same day that extensive repairs started on our home,” he said.

One Jewish Johannesburg homeowner, who wishes to remain anonymous, told the *SA Jewish Report* that she was “relieved and grateful” that the man had been arrested.

She said he allegedly set fire to her upmarket home in January while her tenant was asleep alone in the middle of the night with her dog. The incident had left them all rattled, initially thinking it was caused by an electrical fault but realising only afterwards when it was pointed out to them by CAP that it was the work of the alleged arsonist.

“My tenant awoke to the smell of smoke soon after discovering a fire in the study and lounge area. She managed to escape with her dog, but the damage to the house was extensive, taking six months to rebuild,” said the homeowner.

She said video footage placed the arsonist in the house at midnight. He set fire to the house only at about 04:00.

“He can be seen from video footage walking around the house. He looked into the fridge, walked into the laundry, and for a while went off camera.”

She said he set fire to sofas in the study at about 04:00 using an accelerant. "We suspect this because there was a burnt-out bottle of whiskey in the ashes," she said.

“We’re beyond grateful to CAP for being there for us through this entire ordeal,” she said.

Jammy told the *SA Jewish Report*, “We’re incredibly grateful for the teamwork displayed by all role players, especially the SAPS Gauteng SVC unit. We understand the public’s thirst for details, but the most important thing is that the legal process is respected and that justice is served.”

Home Affairs assures “nothing has changed” on rabbis’ visas

TALI FEINBERG

South African Home Affairs Director General Livhuwani Tommy Makhode has reassured South African Jewry that our foreign rabbis have nothing to worry about in terms of getting visas to work here.

Makhode insisted that nothing had changed for rabbis despite Home Affairs Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi’s announcement in mid-September that 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.

He assured the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) leadership that nothing had changed in terms of visa provision for religious leaders.

Makhode said “the same process would be followed in terms of the provisions that were published in 2018”, says

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn. His assurance came after she and members of the SAJBD met Makhode and members of his department to clarify the issue.

“Religious leaders could enter South Africa on a tourist visa with a work permit, which could be renewed after three years,” she adds. “After five years, a waiver could be applied in order to get permanent residency.

“Officials from the department of home affairs advised that many *rabbonim* had been granted this status. The minister’s comments were in relation to individuals who were abusing the current system, as well as corrupt officials in the department. They would be clamping down on these people.”

In his original announcement, Motsoaledi had said, “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.”

Adrian Roos, the Democratic Alliance shadow deputy minister of home affairs, welcomed the clarification and reassurance.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, the chairperson of the South African Rabbinical Association, said, “I’m pleased with the clarification. Foreign rabbis have formed part of the South African rabbinate for as long as there has been a Jewish community here and have contributed in a big way.”

The South African Association of Progressive Rabbis also expressed relief. “We’re grateful to the ministers who worked to clarify this issue, along with the SAJBD, which took the issue seriously and ensured that the

Jewish and rabbinic community were able to get information swiftly,” said Rabbi Emma Gottlieb.

But Member of Parliament Michael Bagraim, a labour law expert and the deputy shadow minister for employment and labour, isn’t reassured. “It is all very well for the director general to reassure the SAJBD leadership about changes in the regulations. However, this reassurance isn’t reflected in any of the regulations, and won’t be reflected in the way in which they are going to structure the visa applications.

“The minister has made it absolutely clear that he’s going to crack down on visas for religious leaders. Too often, we have seen reassurance from officials which falls by the wayside as soon as an issue arises. It won’t help in later cases to raise an informal discussion with the DG,” he said.

“I realise that the initial reasoning by the minister was because of individuals who were abusing the system,” says Bagraim. “Unfortunately, as is always the case, once the system is changed, then everyone falls into the onerous new conditions. Regulations are there to be interpreted by the immigration officials, who will put everyone into the same basket. It doesn’t help at this stage to assure the Jewish community that it will be treated more favourably. Not only is this incorrect, the regulation should be clear and should treat everyone equally. If there are individuals abusing the current system, then they should be clamping down on those individuals instead of making it far more onerous for all religious leaders.”

Photo: LinkedIn

Home Affairs Director General Livhuwani Tommy Makhode

Be vigilant, but don’t panic, security experts say

>>Continued from page 1

“When these warnings are issued, local authorities and services normally follow up and investigate and try to prevent any such event,” says Els. “The local community should be diligent, and it should enhance situational awareness. Be on the lookout for anything or anyone out of place, and so on.

“It’s also important that people should restrict movement and attendance of events where large crowds gather, as these areas will be natural targets. The key is not to panic. Should anything happen and people are caught up in a situation, depending on the type of situation, they should try to remain calm, act

rationally, and listen to the instructions of the security personnel on the scene.”

“This isn’t new, the threat remains. South Africa is extremely vulnerable because the South African government looks the other way,” says Hussein Solomon, senior professor of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State. “That area in Johannesburg, including the embassy and the stock exchange, is always a target. Our intelligence services are in a terrible state, being highly politicised and generally incompetent, resulting in this being wide open.”

Says Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson

of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “We’re engaging with the relevant local security authorities and will remain in close contact with them. We’re monitoring the situation together with the CSO, and will advise the community accordingly. The notice was issued by the US government with the full knowledge of the South African government. We urge the community to abide by any warnings put out to the public in general, and any specific warnings that may be relevant to the Jewish community.”

For any emergency, suspicious activity, or potential threats specifically related to the Jewish community or Jewish installations, contact the CSO on 086 18 000 18.

MY GRANDPARENTS WERE BORN IN LITHUANIA. BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY DOCUMENT TO PROVE THAT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

There is a false notion that to successfully obtain your Lithuanian citizenship through descent you should have historical documents such as your ancestor's birth certificate or Lithuanian passport proving that your ancestor was from Lithuania.

Be assured that in 9 out of 10 cases, my clients DO NOT HAVE such documents. This is completely normal, and definitely not a problem. Knowing that at least one of your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents was from Lithuania is the only essential condition to successfully initiate the process.

Here are my tips for gravitating out of despair:

1. Ask around your family and relatives about your ancestor. Usually someone knows something. Keep notes on everything you find;
2. If you're unable to gather information about your immediate ancestor, perhaps something is known about his/her siblings or other family members. Make a note about it;
3. If you find out that your ancestor fled Lithuania before 1918, it doesn't necessarily

mean a dead end for you. Ask around in your family if perhaps you have an alternative ancestral line, and explore it;

4. By all means, don't hesitate to contact me and schedule a meeting. Consultations on assessment for eligibility are done absolutely free of charge. During the consultation, I will assess all the information you have, I will ask questions that guide you the right direction, and if possible, I will check the online archives for you.

Moreover, you don't risk anything in starting your ancestral citizenship reinstatement process with us at IN JURE as we work on 100% success fee, in other words, no result, no payment.

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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 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

Bus accident victim leaves legacy of love and language

TALI FEINBERG

Sixty-year-old Ra'anana book editor, Naomi Nathan, was on her way to visit a *shiva* house on 20 September when the unthinkable happened: a bus turned a corner and ran her over, killing her instantly.

This former King David Afrikaans teacher, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and friend had built a beautiful life in Israel with her husband Mickey and four sons.

Now, her elderly mother in South Africa and people around the world are grieving in the wake of her senseless and sudden passing.

"It's like a bright light has gone out. We never even got to say goodbye," says her sister, Ruth Johnson, in Johannesburg. "Why did Hashem let me live and not her?" asks her distraught mother, Rona Milstein, also in Johannesburg, who miraculously survived COVID-19 at the height of the pandemic. "She died on my late husband's birthday, and on my late mother's *yahrzeit*. She loved them both, and I hope she's with them now."

Nathan, the eldest of five siblings, was in fact named after Milstein's late mother, who came from Tzfat. Nathan's story went full circle as she was an ardent Zionist who chose to live in Israel. All of her sons went to Yeshiva, and served in the army. Her youngest son had his army *tekes* (welcoming ceremony) at the Kotel in Jerusalem just five days before his mother was killed. "Everyone came to celebrate. That was the last time most of the family saw Naomi," says Johnson.

Milstein has endured much tragedy – one of her children is mentally handicapped and has needed care her entire life, and she lost her husband to a brain tumour 30 years ago. Still, she managed to raise successful children who in turn raised their own thriving families.

"We grew up in Delmas, Mpumalanga. Naomi and our brother, Lionel, went to high school at King David, staying in the hostel," says Johnson. "She then did a Bachelor of Arts degree at Wits, majoring in Afrikaans and Biblical Studies. She was especially talented in Afrikaans, and went on to teach it at King David Linksfield. She was incredibly smart and had a talent for languages."

The Nathans decided to make aliya when their children were young. "She spoke a beautiful Hebrew," says Milstein. "She worked at Eric Cohen Books, which is a leading publisher in English language teaching materials. She was leaving work when the bus turned the corner, speeding, and hit her. I'm only grateful she didn't suffer."

Her four sons have all made their mark, the most well-known being Raphael, known as "DJ Raphi" or "DJ Four Eyez". All of them are *frum*. Nathan was enjoying being a grandmother to four grandkids, "and had so much more living to do", says Johnson. She and her mother describe Nathan as a "matriarch" of the family and wider community. Her home was always open to anyone who needed warmth and nourishment.

"For example, a young man in the community lost both his parents, and she allowed him to sit *shiva* in her home," says Johnson. Milstein remembers arriving on a visit and finding soldiers sleeping on every bed and couch as Nathan had said the soldiers in her son's unit could stay whenever they needed.

Nathan's son got married in May, and she visited South Africa in February for her mother's 81st birthday. After so many *simchas*, the family are in shock at the tragedy that has hit them.

Johnson's siblings told her the news, which she had to break to her mother. "It's surreal. We've all been in a daze." She and Lionel (who also lives in Johannesburg) managed to get to Israel in time for the funeral. Their brother, Alan, flew in from London. "Although there was an almost 13-year age difference between us, Naomi and I were very close," he says. "We chatted often and WhatsApped each other almost daily."

"As a teacher at King David Linksfield, she was loved by her pupils and her colleagues. We always had a wonderful time when we visited her in Ra'anana. Naomi used to take us for long walks on Ahuza Street. Her two favourite shops were Meatland and Roladin.

"We shared the same love for South African chocolates,

biscuits, and rusks. Every South African visit ended with a second suitcase of South African goodies. We also loved reading the same genre of books. I always tried to find a book which I knew she would love but hadn't read yet. It never happened!

"My eldest son, Joshua, spent two weeks in Israel in July. The tour organised an evening in Jerusalem where they could meet their relatives. I gave Naomi the details, and knowing how long and costly the bus and taxi ride would be from Ra'anana to Jerusalem in peak-hour traffic, I said she really didn't need to stress about getting to Jerusalem. But Naomi, Mickey, and their son, Moshe, travelled to and spent time with Joshua. The happiness on their faces eating pizza in Jerusalem will forever be in my mind. Naomi and Mickey have raised a wonderful family, and Naomi's legacy is immense."

"It was one of the biggest funerals in Ra'anana," says Johnson. "Hundreds of people came, plus hundreds joined online."



Naomi Nathan

After *shiva*, the family had to go straight into the high holidays. "I know *yom tov* is a happy time, but my heart is broken into pieces," says Milstein. She says the community has been incredibly supportive, and she and her family are grateful for that.

Johnson says she knows the driver of the bus was arrested, "and he's going to be charged. He was going so fast, I don't think he even saw her." This isn't the first time a South African *olah* has been killed in a bus accident in Israel. Thirty-five-year-old Hayley Varenberg died when the bus she was travelling on crashed in December 2019.

"When it comes to traffic fatalities, Israel is the 20th safest country in the world, with 4.2 deaths for every 100 000 inhabitants," says Telfed Chief Executive Dorron Kline. "This is ahead of Australia, Canada, and South Africa. Nevertheless, every death is a tragedy, and a life lost is a world lost. Israel must aim to reach Hong Kong's statistics of 1.3 deaths per 100 000 inhabitants – the lowest in the world."

Kline says "Naomi was a beloved and active member of the South African community in Ra'anana. Her son, Raphi, participated in the Telfed scholarship programme during his university studies. Telfed volunteers are in regular contact with the family."

Milstein usually spoke to her daughter every Sunday and Wednesday. The Sunday before the accident, she ended their chat with, "Speak to you on Wednesday." But that phone call never came, as her daughter was killed on a Tuesday evening.

Nathan's love of Afrikaans persisted, and whenever she visited South Africa, she would ask her mother to buy her a copy of *Huisgenoot*. "I still have the two copies from when she visited," says Milstein tearfully. "When she was here we had to make appointments – there were so many people who wanted to see her!"

Milstein spent 28 years working at Sandringham Gardens. But even after witnessing many people pass away, nothing could have prepared her for the loss of her own daughter. "I remember all the faces of the elderly people who died. Now I have to remember my daughter's young, beautiful face. We'll always think of her with great love in our hearts."

Weiner’s appointment to top court “a dream come true”

NICOLA MILTZ

Judge Sharise Weiner described her appointment earlier this month as a judge in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), the second highest court in the land, as “a dream come true”. “It’s satisfying knowing that I’ve shattered a few glass ceilings and all my years of experience have been recognised,” Weiner told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Being appointed to the bench of the Bloemfontein-based court marks the pinnacle of her career, she said, following years of slog and robust determination to make it in a traditionally and stubbornly male dominated profession.

This is a big deal considering the odds: white, female, Jewish (not necessarily in that order) and not exactly a spring chicken – in fact the oldest member appointed to the bench.

Weiner told the *SA Jewish Report* that she had come a long way from her early days at the Bar in her twenties when her male peers viewed her as a “young, little blonde creature”.

Echoing a previous speech she made in 2018, she said it had been tough being one of the only females doing commercial law, and there were many times she considered throwing in the towel were it not for a few generous men who believed in her.

“I was 24 when I joined the Bar. I battled through my junior years, lucky to find a few attorneys who believed me capable of doing commercial work. It was an uphill battle, almost always having to work harder than my male counterparts,” she said.

Deputy Chief Justice, Judge Mandisa Maya, who chaired the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) interviews, described Weiner, 68, as an “experienced, hardworking, efficient judge ... committed to transformation and the mentoring and training of women and young upcoming lawyers”. Yet in spite of this, she wasn’t recommended by the JSC last year,

with her relatively advanced age being of concern. This was highlighted by Sylvia Lucas, African National Congress member of parliament who quipped, “You are well preserved, like wine and cheese, you seem to get better with age.”

So, when asked by Maya why the commission should change its mind a year later and recommend her, Weiner said that over the past few years, the SCA had lost 11 senior judges for various reasons (retirement being one of them) and that with her 33 years of experience at the Bar, 15 years as a silk, and coming from the busiest division in the country, she believed she had the knowledge, wisdom, and experience to benefit the SCA.

“The more experience a judge has, the more resourceful and productive they can be,” she told the JSC.

During her previous interview, Weiner cited the example of the United States Supreme Court’s octogenarian justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who worked until she died in 2020 at the age of 87, still writing “scholarly judgments” to the end.

Weiner scored high on the issue of race and gender transformation, which was prioritised by the JSC.

Steadfastly committed to the development of skills, and advocacy training throughout most of her career, Weiner told the commission that though there had been positive changes, transformation had been slow in the legal profession, especially in the judiciary. She pleaded with

senior colleagues to “give young women a chance”.

Lauded by commissioners for her role in training young, black female advocates and attorneys, Weiner quoted author and scholar Peggy McIntosh who said “white men are considered competent until the opposite is true, whereas blacks and females are considered incompetent until the opposite is proved”.

Weiner, a mother, grandmother, and the wife of attorney Darryl Ackerman, grew up in Johannesburg, attended Cyrildene Primary School, and matriculated at Athlone Girls’ High School. She holds a BA (1975) and an LLB (1977) from the University of the Witwatersrand. The law was a natural choice for Weiner, as justice and equality for all was something she valued deeply from a young age, having gleaned it from her ultimate role model, her late mother, Hassia Weiner, a teacher and “one of the kindest and most compassionate human beings” she’d ever known.

Her parents’ influence guided her to live by a code of ethics “core to Jewish values”, Weiner said. Moral and ethical Jewish teachings, as entrenched in the Constitution and the

Bill of Rights, were foremost in her mind as she considered taking up the position of judge years ago.

Appointed to the bench in 2011, Weiner was one of the trailblazing women advocates at the Johannesburg Bar, becoming an advocate in 1978 and senior counsel for 15 years before her elevation to the bench.

She was a founding member of Lawyers for Human Rights in 1979, and vice-chairperson of the General Council of the Bar from 2000 to 2010, where her service in the cause of advocacy training as chair of the Advocacy Training Committee has been applauded by many in the profession.

Weiner was shortlisted for the position of public protector after Thuli Madonsela’s term ended in 2016.

During the JSC interviews, commissioner Carol Steinberg acknowledged Weiner’s “extraordinary contribution to women”.

“It’s sad, but not all women support women in a profession where we compete with each other,” Steinberg said. Weiner had “truly been inspirational to generations of women”.

Weiner navigated the invisible barriers to success “with a sense of humour”, she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“Being able to laugh with my male counterparts and always encouraging social cohesion amongst my colleagues, junior and senior. Dinners, lunches, and workshops, where we’d gather and get to know each other were all so important.”

Apart from Weiner, of the 11 candidates who vied for one of five positions on the SCA, the commission recommended Eastern Cape High Court Judge Glenn Goosen, and Gauteng High Court Judges Piet Meyer, Keoagile Matojane, and Daisy Molefe for appointment as justices of the SCA.

Before the recommended candidates can be appointed, President Cyril Ramaphosa needs to confirm their appointment, which is a formality, said Weiner.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Judge Sharise Weiner



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Examining dynamics of hate on social media

STEVEN GRUZD

"I'm shocked at how much hatred and racism there is on social media in South Africa," said Cristoph Plate, the director of the Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). "Insults, slurs, threats. That's why we decided to do something about it."

Plate was speaking at the launch of a new study titled, "The dynamics of racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia on social media in South Africa" held at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) on 19 October. The study was produced jointly by the University of Cape Town (UCT), the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, the JHGC, and KAS.

"The media played a huge part in the Rwandan genocide in 1994," said Tali Nates, the director of the JHGC. "There was no social media in those days, but as a historian, I know that genocide starts with words."

Nates said the same ancient metaphors that spur hatred – tropes, comparison to animals, "othering" – are spread and amplified by social media. "With new technology, you can influence millions," she said.

Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, said that racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia on social media in South Africa had never been studied systematically before, hence the importance of this new work. He said that although physical antisemitic incidents are rare in the country, hate abounds in cyberspace.

The phenomena of racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia are often studied in isolation, Mendelsohn said. In that respect, this study is a major contribution to understanding the dynamics, which recur and overlap, "The haters use the same stratagems," he said. "They are savvy, and work out how to evade the moderators, for instance by using vernacular languages."

Dr Gavaza Maluleke, a lecturer in the department

of political studies at UCT and one of the authors of the study (along with Mendelsohn and UCT's Dr Thierry Rousset), joined the conversation by Zoom from Chicago. She noted that social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok can be used to mobilise people for good and bad purposes. Social media thrives on controversy and polarisation, and this study noted how it had amplified racial divisions. It sometimes unites those on the black far left with those on the white far right, for example in derogatory commentary about foreigners in South Africa.

Maluleke remarked that what starts online can often manifest offline, as extremists find common cause and create a hate-filled community. When mainstream social media act against them, they re-emerge on smaller, unmoderated channels like Telegram and Signal.

Rousset, who is from Mauritius, emphasised that social media allows so many forms of connection and identity but can also reinforce boundaries, such as between black and white, left and right, settlers and indigenes, and citizens and outsiders.

All the speakers stressed that legislation to combat online hatred exists, but many people don't know how to access it. Social media companies make it difficult to flag extremist content and users feel the effort that it takes to report abuses isn't worth it. "Social media is built to encourage people not to flag," Rousset said. "Social media companies are commercial enterprises. They want us to get angry,

spend more time on the platform, and get others angry and so on. They have made us the gatekeepers, as they invest a pitiful amount in content moderation." Rousset noted that Meta (which owns Facebook) has less than 20 000 content moderators worldwide, dealing with billions of posts each day. Melanie Fuma, one of the coders and annotators for this study, said she was shocked by the online antisemitism she encountered dealing with the raw data. "I didn't realise white people could be so mean to other white people. I learned that there are varying degrees of whiteness."



Melanie Fuma speaking to Cristoph Plate

Photo: JHGC

Jewish Achiever Award named after remarkable humanitarian

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Humanitarianism was a focus of late philanthropist and business leader Bertie Lubner's life, so his children believe it's fitting that the Jewish Achiever Humanitarian Award is being named after him.

The newly named Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris will be bestowed for the first time at this year's Absa Jewish Achiever Awards on 19 November. The award itself has been in existence for the past 23 years.

The Lubner family are proud to sponsor the award, says Bertie's son, Tony. "Like my dad rolled up his sleeves, got stuck in, and played a meaningful role in changing people's lives for the better, we hope this award will recognise a worthy [humanitarian or humanitarian organisation] that's making huge inroads in changing lives.

"It fits perfectly to name this award after Bertie, who was so interested in the creation of the *SA Jewish Report* and so committed to giving to all the people of South Africa," says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report*.

Bertie, who died at the age of 85 in April 2016, lived his life by the motto, "We make a living by what we earn, but we make a life by what we give," according to his son, Marc, the chief executive of Afrika Tikkun.

Bertie founded Ma Afrika Tikkun with the late Chief Rabbi Harris in 1994. This leading non-profit organisation, today named Afrika Tikkun, serves more than 20 000 youngsters directly and another 20 000 indirectly through its outreach efforts, Marc says.

Dr Dorianne Weil, who is involved with the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and a lifelong friend of Bertie, secured the sponsorship from the Lubner family. "It was easy. I made one phone call. It occurred to me that it would be something the family would jump at with alacrity," she says.

Marc says Bertie always wanted to be of service to others. One of the projects he founded with his brother, Ronnie, was the Field Band Foundation. It started with a band in the East Rand in 1997 before developing 48 college-style bands in townships across South Africa. It helps underprivileged children to develop their musical talents and life skills.

"The other wonderful project that was very close to my father's heart was the Morrie and Bella Lubner Kibbutz, a farm in Midrand that my father and Ronnie purchased in honour of my grandparents," Marc says. "The more highly functioning kids from Selwyn Segal could take up residence there. My father would regularly visit that facility, and the residents became our family."

Bertie, a founding member of the Great Park Shul, was a founder and a director of the *SA Jewish Report*, and was very fond of it.

He occupied many roles including chairperson of PG

Speaking from the audience, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), Wendy Kahn, explained how difficult it was to get the police and authorities to act against antisemitic posts on social media. SAJBD Chairperson Professor Karen Milner said the recent letter issued by Dis-Chem regarding race and hiring policies "caused every antisemite to crawl out from under their rock" to lambaste the company's Jewish owner.

Nates related how she and other museums have written many letters to social media companies to counter Holocaust denial and distortion, prompting excuses and equivocation. She acknowledged, however, that this pressure had led to minor improvements. "Now with this serious research, which I will send to social media companies, we have a weapon to use that we never had before," Nates said. "We simply cannot give up." She said the rigorous methodology developed for this report could be used in other contexts.

The JHGC intends to work with schools to introduce the study's findings to the classroom. It's available online here: <https://bit.ly/3N0xs6x>

Group, which he and Ronnie transformed from a small family business into a building materials conglomerate.

Bertie also silently helped others, says his daughter, Sue. "He would meet people, such as a taxi driver in London, and pay for their children's education."

Bertie obtained numerous awards including the state president's Order of Meritorious Service.

He was passionate about his work, and kept going five days a week until just weeks before he passed away, a day before he and his wife, Hilary, would have celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary.

He was survived by Hilary, their children, Richard, Tony, Marc, and Sue, six grandchildren, brother, Ronnie, and sister, Pam.

Bertie motivated his children to lead a life of giving, Marc says. "I've spent 17 years of my life perpetuating the work of Afrika Tikkun. My dad also gave me the impetus to start the Smile Foundation 20 years ago. It provides psycho-social support to about 400 children and their families."

Tony's daughter, Sabrina, was born with a physical disability and passed away about 19 years ago. "To

perpetuate her memory and help others who didn't have the base we could offer our daughter, we started the Sabrina Love Foundation," Tony says. "We look after 98% of all children with disabilities in the Plettenberg Bay region."

Sue is involved with the Union of Jewish Women. "I'm also on the board of a crèche, and chair the board of the Kensington Educare Centre. I've developed and run a project for Afrika Tikkun, work with people with

Parkinson's, and write music for campaigns."

Richard ran a centre of spiritual awareness and life coaching in Australia.

Marc says the values he and his family learned from his dad include the fact that, "nothing matters as much as people. Whether you were a caddy, a cleaner, or head of state, Bertie's approach to people was identical."

Sackstein says Bertie's belief system is what the renamed Jewish Achiever's humanitarian award recognises, namely, "not just remarkable people or organisations building the new South Africa, but those doing so with compassion, love, and in a sustainable manner".organisations building the new South Africa, but those doing so with compassion, love, and in a sustainable manner".

Sackstein says Bertie and Harris worked closely together in creating Afrika Tikkun, "which has been the Jewish community's answer to how we can make a difference to the people of South Africa. Of course, Bertie and Cyril had remarkable relationships with Nelson Mandela."



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Bertie Lubner

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New film gives voice to Lithuanian Holocaust victims

TALI FEINBERG

When thinking about the Holocaust in Lithuania, some of us can only think about the horror from a distance or in small doses. But filmmaker Michael Kretzmer has made it his duty to look up close in a new documentary that exposes the depravity of the killing, and questions Lithuania's Holocaust denial.

The documentary, to be released in Australia in November, looks at the "murder of children in front of parents; the smashing of babies' skulls against trees; girls being loaded onto trucks for deadly rape parties by Lithuanian gangs; the imprisonment of thousands of Jews in their own synagogues and their murder either by fire or starvation and thirst amidst human filth and the stench of their loved ones' rotting bodies; the beheadings; the immolations; and the thousands of lethal humiliations".

This is what Kretzmer found over the past three years, during which his life was "entirely absorbed" in the making of the documentary that "attempts to tell the truth about the Lithuanian Holocaust".

Kretzmer was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 1954 to Litvak, South African parents. "My dad was from Heilbron – I still take special pride in the 'Vrystaat Yidden' – and my mom from Krugersdorp. My grandparents were Yiddish-speaking shopkeepers. My parents immigrated for political reasons, and although we always had the proverbial bag packed, they stayed.

"This community sparkled with Litvak energy and created a generation of young Jews who have left their mark across the globe," he says. "I was active in Habonim South Africa and a graduate of Wits University in law. I left in 1975 and became a journalist in the United Kingdom, writing for the *Sunday Times* and making documentary films. I retired about 12 years ago and built a little farm."

Three of his grandparents came from Lithuania, the fourth from Riga. "My father's family lived in Birzai, in northern Lithuania, for centuries. Very few of my family managed to immigrate to South Africa. The rest – hundreds of them – were murdered."

His passion for the past began when, in 2019, "I went to Lithuania for the first time to say kaddish at the unveiling of a monument naming the victims of the Birzai slaughter – and special gratitude to Abel and Glenda Levitt for making this possible. So thorough was the killing, that our experts were able to name only 550 of the 2 400 Jews who were mercilessly murdered on that day. Of that number, scores were Kretzmers. Since then, I have felt it my duty to tell the story of what happened then, and what's happening in Lithuania today."

Initially, he thought Lithuania "was doing everything it could to come to terms with the Holocaust. At one stage, a Lithuanian production company offered me a commission to make a well-funded film about it. I refused, as I was becoming aware of the excellent work of Efraim Zuroff, Ruta Vanagaite, defendinghistory.com, and especially Grant Gochin and Silvia Foti, who are the heroic protagonists of my film. These people opened my eyes to the scandal of Lithuanian Holocaust denial.

"This realisation affected me deeply,

and I decided I had to do what I could to fight back," he says. "From that moment, I have spent every day fundraising, writing, researching, directing, producing, and completing my documentary, titled *J'Accuse!*"

He admits it has been "a terrible task that has exacted an immense personal price. Many times, I bitterly regretted taking it on. But the injustice of what happened to our people, and even more importantly, what's happening today, cannot be ignored."

His film will premiere in November at the prestigious Jewish International Film Festival in Australia. It tells of "the destruction of a dazzling 600-year-old civilisation – 220 000 Jews, the highest murder rate in all of Holocaust Europe" and "gives voice to the murdered – it's their cry for justice from the killing pits of Lithuania".



Elaborating on the sacrifices the project demanded, Kretzmer says "financial and time sacrifices were endurable because of my supportive, loving wife of more than 40 years, Joanna. But the most difficult sacrifice was the emotional exposure. Like many Litvaks, my family avoided the specifics of the Lithuanian Holocaust. Of course, the Holocaust was the backdrop to our lives, but we avoided thinking too much about the horrendous fate of our 'missing' families.

"This was a survival mechanism and an act of courage on the part of our parents and grandparents, who were thinking of us, their children, 'How can children move forward with such terrible knowledge?"

"But once I'd committed to making the film I was obliged to understand and internalise everything that happened – all the depraved torture, rape, humiliation, and mass murder. One reason that Lithuania gets away with what it does is because we're all – Jews and non-Jews – fearful of this exposure. Three generations on, we have to face it. In light of Lithuania's cynical hero-worship of mass murderers, we Jews have no option. Nor does Lithuania, actually."

He was motivated to keep going to "bear witness and powerfully affirm Jewish honour".

"The Lithuanian Holocaust was characterised by its determination to utterly dehumanise us prior to our murder. I want my film to stand as a demand for the restoration of Jewish honour in its profoundest sense, and to tell the Lithuanian government, Europe, and the world that there are Jews who won't allow countries to get away with the hero-worship of our killers.

"The second reason was an obligation to honour Silvia Foti, the amazing Lithuanian woman who has written the truth about

mass murderer Jonas Noreika, who was her grandfather. It's not often that we Jews get a person who stands up for truth and risks everything. If we don't support this good woman, then how can we ever expect other people of conscience to stand up for us? The final reason was to honour a promise I made to G-d and my own murdered family."

He says what makes his film unique is its "voice". "This voice belongs to the children of the Plunge kindergarten, featured on the film's heartbreakingly vivid poster. They are the 'scriptwriters'. My film asks the questions they would ask. It makes the demands they would make. And it tells the unvarnished truth. The voices of these children are those that matter most."

He says South African Jews will find the documentary "painful, empowering, and very interesting. It will help my fellow Southern African Jews understand our glorious origin and contribution to modernity. I also hope it will reveal something of the immense impact Lithuania had on Jewish institutions and culture in South Africa. But most importantly, I hope the film will enable South African Jews to support our murdered families, if only by articulating the demand

that Lithuania shouldn't get away with this unnecessary and cruel insult."

After its premiere in Australia, Kretzmer will be working hard to distribute the film across the world and in South Africa especially. "If anyone wants to help me, please get in touch!" he says. "The South African audience is, for me, the most important."

To the South African Jewish community, he says, "South African Jews of a Litvak background should be proud of their Lithuanian heritage. Whatever rights we may have to citizenship are legal and inherited. We should remember our history, and act with strength – we have nothing to be ashamed of. Quite the opposite, in fact."

"It's important to recognise that the Lithuanian people are the victims of what's happening in Lithuania today. As Foti puts it, they are 'held hostage' by their government's support for mass murderers like Noreika, and made complicit in his crimes. Can you think of a more terrible inheritance? Lithuania is suffering, and Foti offers a path to redemption and true reconciliation with the Jewish people. Our fight isn't against the innocent Lithuanian people, and we should make this clear."

On the other hand, "the civilised world mustn't allow Lithuania to get away with this outrage", says Kretzmer. "The Lithuanian government's practice of manufacturing lies in order to hero worship the mass murderers of innocent Jews is unforgiveable. If this is permitted, then the Holocaust has become meaningless. It's an existentially important issue for Europe and the world. It's time to fight back."



Michael Kretzmer

Joburgers urged to move to the Cape rather than emigrate

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

For Gauteng residents considering emigration, “semigration” to Cape Town can offer new hope within South Africa’s borders. So said Cape Town Executive Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis and Western Cape Premier Alan Winde, at the “Move Down to Cape Town Expo” hosted by the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape Board) in Johannesburg this past weekend.

“This is a first,” said Winde, speaking of the Cape Board’s Western Cape Semigration Project, which encourages Jewish Joburgers seeking greener pastures overseas to move to Cape Town instead. “I thought it was a great initiative, and the mayor and I both jumped at it immediately.”

Hill-Lewis agreed. “We’re constantly engaging communities around the country and around the world to sell Cape Town as a place to live and invest,” he said. This applies to religious groups, businesses, and any form of organised community. “We’re competitive about promoting Cape Town.”

Primarily aimed at Jewish students, young families, empty nesters, or migrant workers, the Cape Board’s Western Cape Semigration Project positions Cape Town as a viable option for those looking to leave Gauteng, and also facilitates networking and support once they make the move. Attracting more than 100 families who connected with multiple Jewish organisations involved in education, religion, property, and employment, the expo illuminated the opportunities and community structures that await those who choose to make the move.

Cape Board Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson explained what makes Cape Town’s Jewish community special. “We’re a kaleidoscope of opinions, experiences, diversity, talents, and passions,” she said. “We’re welcoming, and we’re *haimish*. We have a strong sense of togetherness, and when there’s a crisis, we don’t stand on ceremony.”

Jacobson emphasised the importance of such support structures when facing the challenges that come with moving to a new place, something she said the Cape Town Jewish community provides in abundance.

The expo also allowed the Joburg Jewish community to engage with the city and provincial leadership. Cape Town is actively investing in programmes and incentives to ensure that it functions optimally, said Hill-Lewis. Joking that he’d put in a budget recommendation for a Jewish padel club to sweeten the semigration deal, he said the Cape Town government was actively working to address the challenges the country faces.

“There’s a Hebrew word that I think perfectly describes what sets Cape Town apart and that’s what we’re trying to do here,” he said. “That word is *aleinu* [it’s on us]. We’re saying that it’s not good enough to sit around and wait for all of South Africa’s problems to be solved by someone else. We’re trying to solve them ourselves.”

“We’re determined to address every one of the things that make us as parents and as South Africans anxious and concerned, and that make us question where we want to raise our kids. If we’re assertive and ambitious enough, we believe that we can address these issues. It’s up to us to show that South Africa can work, that we can do something about it.”

Hill-Lewis also spoke of how hard the city pushes to attract and retain the business community, especially when it comes to curtailing emigration. His government is dedicated to making Cape Town the easiest place in which to do business on the African continent. Security of electricity supply is vital in attaining this goal, he said, and it’s a fight Cape Town is winning. Indeed, the first aspect of his government’s electoral mandate is to end loadshedding.

Though Cape Town always offers one stage of loadshedding protection, 65% of the time it provides two stages of protection. This is done through the local Steenbras hydroelectric power plant. So, if the country is on stage four, Cape Town will most often be on stage two. “We have a clear plan and budget that we’re executing with



discipline to get to three stages of loadshedding protection and eventually four stages, so we can, over time, say goodbye to loadshedding,” said Hill-Lewis.

The Western Cape is also attracting massive green energy investment, has concluded independent power procurement deals, and is the only South African city to have launched a wheeling pilot programme, with sources of power generation to sell to third parties inside the city through the existing

power grid.

The Cape Town government has also made great strides in its initiatives to make the city safer. “There’s only one city in the whole country where violent crime is coming down, and that’s Cape Town thanks to the interventions we’re rolling out in most crime-ridden parts of the city including increasing police presence,” said Hill-Lewis. “We’re pushing hard for more policing powers in the province and city.” They’re also rolling

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Deborah Lipstadt is a historian, academic and the author of award-winning books: “The Eichmann Trial”; “Denial: Holocaust History on Trial”; and “Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory”. She made headlines when notorious Holocaust denier, David Irving, sued her for libel. That trial was depicted in the 2016 film ‘Denial’, with Rachel Weisz playing Lipstadt. As special envoy, Lipstadt leads efforts to advance US foreign policy to counter antisemitism around the world.



Farm Killings shines spotlight on SA’s culture of violence

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Farm killings make up only half a percent of all homicides reported each year in South Africa, but they say a lot about society and go to the heart of the problems in the country. That’s why they dominate the national narrative on violence, says Dr Nechama Brodie.

Brodie challenges many of the myths used to narrate farm killings in her new book *Farm Killings in South Africa*. This compelling and heart-rending book includes almost a century of news reports, legal cases, and expert research to try and gain insight into South Africa’s legacy of violence on agricultural land.

“Researching this book has been without question the most unpleasant and distressing content I’ve ever read on mass,” Brodie wrote in *Farm Killings*, her second book about death.

She said she nevertheless took a macabre interest in writing the book because of her deep-seated desire to set right the things that are wrong.

“I think this is a goal journalists share,” she said during a discussion about her book at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on 13 October. “A lot of the time we cover social injustice or wrongs because we hope through coverage to enable improvement. Crime is a massive problem for South Africa because it derails every aspect of our lives. It undermines our confidence in each other and the country. So, several years ago, I started researching crime to try and understand it better in the hope that research would enable us to develop better strategies.”

She said her research consisted of the most violent content she had ever encountered because the coverage was very detailed. “Even femicide stories don’t get that level of coverage.”

Professor Anton Harber, who asked Brodie some questions at the discussion, said, “I was struck that it’s a book by somebody who is both a journalist and researcher academic. It has the characteristics you expect from both. Very readable with some remarkably

interesting, new, and valuable research. It’s an important book because it goes to the heart of some important South African issues.”

Brodie didn’t interview people affected by farm killings. “That would be a journalistic instinct – to find people to tell the story to humanise it. Why did you take this approach?” Harber asked.

Brodie responded, “A number of reasons. First of all, dealing with death on paper is much easier than dealing with the fallout, the emotional toll on the people whose families have been completely devastated through acts of violence. It’s really about choosing a kind of methodological approach that removes me. I’m doing it for my own protection. Dealing with death at the volumes that I do, violent death in the thousands, it becomes overwhelming.”

She said her ability to be objective may have been affected if she had to choose which people to interview, and hear them relive their trauma.

“One of the things that struck me is Afrikaans media articles about farm killings. They have tended to cover it much more extensively. The same journalist’s names appeared over and over again. They covered one event after another from month to month. I could imagine very much as a journalist what it must have been like to be sent out to another farm on another weekend to go interview a family who had just lost one, two, or three family members in one act. I was trying to imagine the

absolute terror or trauma those journalists felt at once again having to go into that hole.”

Brodie said her research shows that farm murders are rarely committed for political reasons, but the management and discussion of how they are investigated is usually heavily politicised.

She wrote about farm killings instead of doing another book about a much larger category of murders in the country, because of the events that transpired in Senekal following the murder of 21-year-old Free State farm manager Brendin Horner in 2020.

“At the time, we had white farmers gathering, protesting, running into the jailhouse and the court building, singing *Die Stem*. On the outside, you had Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] supporters come into town, chanting ‘Kill the Boer’. I realised how invested politicians are in this narrative. They do nothing to solve it because it’s suitable for them. For politicians, polarisation is much more likely to drive people to the polls and to

make people vote for them. Unity and community are much less likely to make somebody vote for the African National Congress, EFF, or Democratic Alliance. None of these parties are invested in the solution. They are all invested in maintaining this problem because it’s useful for them. It produces massive media coverage and massive hype.”

Brodie wrote about farm killings instead of farm murders in the book, so she’s not looking for a legal finding of murder.

“I’m looking at deaths of farmers, farm workers, and other people. One of the big questions is what is a farm? The government over the past several years has tried to broaden the definition of farm killings, but there’s no murder category called “farm killings”. The government has now broadened the definition of farms from agricultural areas to the rural areas.”

Brodie’s book tries to categorise these kinds of things. It also draws attention to South Africa’s poor counts of farm killings. “In the 1980s, only about half of black deaths in South Africa were documented. There’s a huge amount of information we don’t have. We have no way of recouping it, so I use journalism sources as a way of kind of connecting little bits. We don’t know where we’re counting them because there’s no concept of what a farm is.”

Brodie found South Africa’s situation troubling when she researched violence in the country. “I don’t have an answer to why we are so terrible to each other. There are other countries that have very similar historical profiles of terrible violence which aren’t in the same state of violence we are now, but there’s something specific about South Africa that has dehumanised us and allowed us to dehumanise others.”



Professor Anton Harber and Dr Nechama Brodie

Antisemitism, epidemics, war and opium, the Jewish families that dominated Asia

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The legendary Sassoon and Kadoorie families not only achieved huge business success in India and China, but also dominated trade in Asia for 150 years, starting in the 19th century.

The various rulers of Baghdad in 1800 turned to the Jewish community, including the wealthy Sassoon family, for help with taxation and in building trade routes, said Pulitzer Prize-winner Jonathan Kaufman, the author of *The Last Kings of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties That Helped Create Modern China*.

Kaufman, speaking at a recent *SA Jewish Report* webinar about the Sassoon and Kadoorie dynasties, said, “When the head of the Sassoon family would be taken to meet with whomever was in charge of government, he was carried through the streets of Baghdad on a sedan chair. Everybody in Baghdad, Jew, Gentile, or Muslim, would bow their head respectfully as he passed.”

Politics soon turned against the Baghdad Jews, however. The 37-year-old David Sassoon, the treasurer of Baghdad between 1817 and 1829, “was about to take over the Sassoon family empire, but he was put in prison because the government wanted to get some ransom money”, Kaufman said. “David’s father quickly got him out of the jail. Realising it wasn’t safe for the Sassoons anymore, he put his son on a ship.”

David washed up in India no later than 1832. “He began to work with the British there, and quickly became a millionaire. One of the ways he built his fortune was through the opium trade. Opium was legal at the time. It was grown in India and sold in China.”

The rest of David’s family settled in India, started making money in many ways, and

invested in steamships and *The Telegraph* newspaper. “David deployed his eight sons across China, and then stayed in touch with them via *The Telegraph*.”

The Sassoons had taken over the opium trade within a few decades, making about \$1 billion (R18.3 billion) from the opium trade. “With that money, the Sassoons were able to expand into factories, real estate, and so on.”

Flora Sassoon, David’s great-granddaughter, turned out to be a brilliant businesswoman at a time when women in India not only didn’t have the right to vote, but couldn’t even be seen in public.

“Flora ended up running the Sassoon empire from her living room.” When a plague came to Bombay, Western doctors developed a vaccine at Flora’s request, but the Indian workers who staffed the Sassoon factories were afraid to take it.

“So, Flora took the vaccine first. The idea that a Western woman would take a shot, that she would bear her arm in a photograph, all these things kind of broke all the rules in India, but it ended up being very effective. The workers took the vaccine, and the company was saved. Her brothers-in-law in London began to think she wasn’t going to be so easy to control, so they staged what was a boardroom coup, which took all her power away. Ultimately, she ended up moving to London, became a philanthropist, and a bit of a Jewish scholar.”

The Sassoon dynasty fell apart as the

brothers stopped working productively together, says Sarah Sassoon, a historian of the David Sassoon dynasty (but not related to David). “It’s a whole saga covered in the book, *The Global Merchants*, by Joseph Sassoon, one of David’s many descendants around the world today, but none live in South Africa.”

Roland Sassoon, who established Sasfin Bank and Sissy Boy Jeans in South Africa, isn’t a descendant of David, but his grandfather, Ezra Ishayek, changed his surname to Sassoon when he bought his textile business from the family who came from David Sassoon.

Roland’s father, Sydney Sassoon, was schooled in Baghdad, and after World War II, took his family to South Africa where the warmer climate could help his malaria.



Elly Kadoorie and his sons, Lawrence, left, and Horace

Elly Kadoorie left home at the age of 14, and made his way to India. “He showed up in China at 18 years old in 1880 and worked for one of the Sassoon branch offices,” Kaufman said. “He then made his way to Hong Kong, where he ended up doing business deals and working with all sorts of people. By the time he was 30, he was a millionaire.

“He married Laura Mocatta of an eminent British Jewish family. She announced that she was going to travel with Elly throughout China as he pursued his business deals. Even better for me, she kept a diary of her adventures. While Elly negotiated business deals, she was in a rickshaw going through war-torn parts of China.”

Laura concluded that China was being held back by its prohibition of education for girls. “This is kind of an astonishing declaration in the early 1900s. She persuaded her husband to start funding schools for Chinese girls. She became the conscience of the Kadoorie family.”

After the Kadoories settled in Shanghai with their two boys, a fire broke out in their mansion. “Laura escaped convinced that their Chinese servant was trapped inside, so she ran back into the burning house to look for the Chinese servant.”

Laura was disoriented by the smoke. She collapsed and died. “The Chinese still talk about this today. The idea that a wealthy British woman would rush into a burning house to save a Chinese servant is something unbelievable to them.”

Victor Sassoon, David’s great-grandson, was a British playboy and hotelier. “He

decided to go to India and China where the Sassoon money was being made. He took all his money out of India and put it all into China. He built an incredible hotel. Many of the art-deco buildings today in China were built by Victor or others trying to emulate him.”

Jewish refugees who fled Europe started arriving in China via ships in the late 1930s.

“Victor tried to house them in some of his buildings. The Kadoories set up a school staffed by refugee teachers. Victor soon embarked on almost a con job with the Japanese. The Japanese had invaded China already and were antisemitic. Victor told the Japanese colonel who was put in charge of ‘the Shanghai Jewish problem’ to come to his hotels. Victor’s waiters and bartenders spied on the Japanese and reported on them. His goal was to stop the Japanese from refusing to allow the immigration of Jewish refugees into China. Ultimately, after Kristallnacht, the Japanese realised what was going on and closed the gates. Victor fled the country. The Kadoories didn’t get out in time. They were arrested by the Japanese. Elly died in Japanese captivity.”

Elly’s son, Lawrence Kadoorie, rose from a Japanese prison camp to restore his family’s fortunes.

South African businessman Shaun Matisonn’s great uncle and aunt found themselves sitting opposite the Kadoories while on a train in the United Kingdom. “The Kadoories invited my great uncle to represent them in Hong Kong, so they went to Hong Kong, and lived there for many years,” Matisonn said. “My uncle was the *chazzan* in the shul, and became a lawyer for one of Kadoorie’s sons.”

Kadoorie descendants can be found worldwide, but there are none Sarah knows of in South Africa.

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Women bring peace to violent Cape gangland

TALI FEINBERG

Debby Silver and Kashiefa Mohammed may come from different religious, social, and economic backgrounds and live in different parts of Cape Town, but when they work together to empower women, those differences fall away.

Silver, fellow social worker Glenda Mark, and Mohammed have set up support groups for mothers who live in the Cape’s notorious ganglands and have lost children to gang violence.

Silver and Mark do this work as volunteers under the banner of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW). Mohammed met them after her son was killed. Because of the support she received from them, Mohammed was inspired to start her own organisation, Cycle of a Woman, in her neighbourhood of Hanover Park. Silver and Mark came on board to offer counselling and support groups for grieving mothers. In turn, they have trained these women in basic counselling skills so that they can help their communities.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* the day before her 70th birthday, Silver says she prefers to stay out of the limelight and avoids accolades, but admits she has been “working in these trenches for 30 years. It’s my passion.”

She has always worked in the broader community, beginning by supporting political prisoners in Johannesburg during apartheid. After she moved to Cape Town, she teamed up with Joan Rubinstein, who was working at Lifeline at the time. They pair felt a need to further women’s empowerment, and joined the UJW, which they believed would help them achieve these aims.

They opened a women’s empowerment centre which dealt with all aspects of women’s lives. They also offered support groups and courses for the Jewish community. At the time, the HIV/AIDs pandemic was ravaging the country, and they worked with desperately ill babies and their families.

They were then approached to work with women in Cape Town’s infamous Pollsmoor Prison. “For eight years, we ran support groups for female prisoners. We loved it, and were loved. They would announce each session by saying, ‘The Jewish are here,’” she smiles. “It ended only because of bureaucracy.”

All of this work was voluntary, but Silver found it energising and uplifting alongside her work in private practice. “After a period of time, Joan emigrated, and soon after, Glenda and I were approached by Kashiefa. We liked the idea of empowerment work, based on the #MeToo movement, creating a space for people to tell stories.”

But pretty soon they became aware that there was a need for a bereavement group. “Out of the 10 women we met, eight had lost kids to gang violence. In the very first group, we met in the library, and one woman was crying. When we asked her why, another woman asked, ‘Can’t you hear?’”

She was referring to the gunshots that they could hear ricocheting past as they

were conducting the group. “It was bringing up memories for the mother, whose child had been killed only the week before. We realised there was work to do.”

In addition to bereavement counselling, Silver and Mark wrote a programme called “Who Am I”.

“It’s about women discovering who they are and how to grow stronger through their hardship,” Silver says.

They realised that training the women as volunteer counsellors could help expand their impact. Silver and Mark have since conducted similar workshops and training in the nearby township of Gugulethu. “It’s rewarding to train and pass skills on,” says Silver.

The bereaved women also support one another when they go to court or deal with the police, and they try to ensure that children are safe when bullets are flying in the streets.

Silver and Mark also bus the women to their UJW premises in Sea Point, which is a literal breath of fresh air. “They say they love coming there because they get to hear birds singing. Because of all the shooting, there are no birds singing in Hanover Park.” She says that if people want to assist the project, funding transport would be a huge help.

Silver has heard horrendous stories, such as one mother who lost not one but two children to gang violence. Along with the loss, most of the women have endured abuse or seen other women and children being beaten, raped, and killed.

Silver says that some women have lost children who joined gangs and then were killed in gang warfare, while others had children killed by stray bullets. “It doesn’t make a difference – loss is loss,” she says. Most women don’t receive closure or justice. Even if a killer is convicted, he’s often released early and returns to the community, reopening old wounds.

She says the communities have been very receptive to them, and for the women themselves, who don’t have the luxury of attending therapy, “it’s been a dream come true”.

The fact that Silver and Mark are Jewish and most of the bereaved women are Muslim isn’t an issue. “We’re all women, and we all want the same thing – to feel safe, for our kids to be safe, and for our voices to be heard,” says Silver. At the same time, she contemplates that she has, perhaps, created an interfaith forum without naming it or forcing it, creating genuine connections that might never have been forged.

She’s inspired by the women she works with – from those in the group, to Mark and Mohammed. “These are salt-of-the-earth women who are just trying to raise their families and live their lives. We are all so similar. If we can make things just a little easier, then we’ve made a difference.”

Her Jewish values are at the root of all she does. “My father was accepting of all people. Both my parents emphasised the importance of our responsibility to our fellow man and woman. It was deeply instilled, and I’m grateful for that.”

Though she says the work is “taxing”, and requires a specific set of skills, she encourages others to get involved in the UJW’s many projects.

To anyone who feels overwhelmed at the thought of trying to make a difference, she suggests they “start by helping just one person. People who do this know the reward. It has enriched my life.”



Where does new UK prime minister stand on Israel?

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

The past few years have been tumultuous at 10 Downing Street, the residence of the British prime minister in London. Last week, Liz Truss, who lasted just more than six weeks in the role, became the third prime minister to resign since 2019.

But the succession of Conservative Party leaders has kept some things steady: they have all had strong ties with mainstream British Jewry and have professed a right-leaning foreign policy that’s staunchly pro-Israel and hawkish on its enemies in the region.

Rishi Sunak, a former treasury secretary and the United Kingdom’s first-ever person of colour to assume the role when he was elected by his party on Monday, 24 October, continues that trend.

In fact, Sunak has shown a willingness to discuss moving Britain’s Israeli embassy to Jerusalem – a move that has historically been shunned across the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) political spectrum, including by Conservatives.

Speaking at a Conservative Friends of Israel event in August, he said there was a “very strong case” for the move, which would imply the UK’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Although former President Donald Trump’s administration moved the US embassy to Jerusalem and inspired other countries to follow suit, much of the international foreign policy establishment argues that the shift disrupts the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and hinders the eventuality of a Palestinian state.

Sunak admitted that he would face strong opposition to an embassy move from within and beyond his own party. After Truss’ economic policies worsened an already ballooning inflation crisis, Sunak will probably first seek to tackle domestic concerns.

Sunak seems to belong to a new generation of Conservative Party leaders who have shown themselves willing to diverge with the decades-long policies of the kingdom’s foreign office, which is widely perceived to favour keeping Israel at arm’s length not to anger the Arab world. Prince William ended what was perceived as a decades-long unofficial boycott of official visits to Israel by senior members of the British Royal House in 2018. The government of Theresa May, the predecessor to Boris Johnson, had a central role in facilitating the visit.

In an interview in August with the *Jewish Chronicle* of London, Sunak, a former hedge-fund manager who has amassed with his wife (the daughter of the founder of Infosys, an Indian IT giant) a fortune of hundreds of millions of dollars, rejected claims that Israel was an apartheid state.

“The apartheid claim isn’t only factually incorrect but quite frankly offensive. Like any nation, Israel isn’t perfect, but it’s a vibrant multi-ethnic democracy with a free press and the rule of law. It stands as a shining beacon of hope in a region of autocracies and religious extremists,” Sunak said.

Sunak’s family has first-hand knowledge of colonialism in Africa. He was born in Southampton, a city situated about 70 miles (113km) southwest of London, but his father, a physician, was born in Kenya, and his mother, a pharmacist, was born in Tanzania. Sunak’s parents moved to Southampton, which has a sizable South Asian minority, in the 1960s.

The Abraham Accords, which since 2020 has established diplomatic relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Bahrain, “proved that peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours is possible”, and has “demonstrated the tremendous benefits that normalisation brings”, Sunak told the *Chronicle*. Britain, he said, “is in a strong position to leverage its historic relationships with other Gulf states to widen the Accords, and I would like to see UK diplomats place a greater focus on this”.

At home, Sunak has supported plans to erect a large Holocaust museum near the parliament building in London. He has also expressed concerns about antisemitism, and voiced support for funding Jewish community security groups.

Sunak, who is Hindu, is additionally the first non-Christian in the PM role – taking into account that Benjamin Disraeli, who served two prime minister terms in the 19th century, converted from Judaism to Anglicanism as a child with his family.

Sunak’s election has “enormous importance for Jews, who can see someone from a minority, who has religious observance, as prime minister”, Jonathan Sacerdoti, a British journalist, told *Jewish Insider*.



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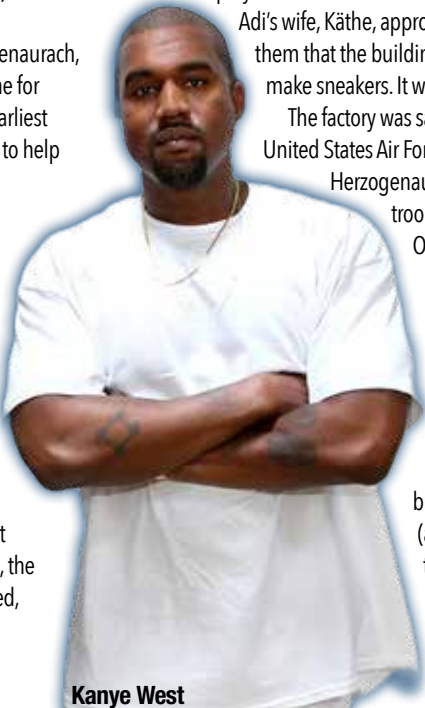
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Adidas breaks ties with West amid pressure over antisemitism

PHILISSA CRAMER AND ANDREW LAPIN – JTA

Athletic wear company Adidas is ending its relationship with Kanye West, days after the rapper boasted that he could “literally say antisemitic sh** and they cannot drop me”. The brand faced growing criticism of its continued relationship with West, who is known as Ye, as other brands affiliated with West broke ties with him. Adidas reportedly brings in \$2 billion (R36.6 billion) a year through its Yeezy brand, accounting for about 10% of the company’s revenue. Now, the brand will stop making Yeezy products and stop all payments to West and his companies, Adidas announced in a statement on 25 October. The company said it expected to lose up to \$250 million (R4.6 billion) in revenue in the next three months, in part because of the onset of the holiday season. “Adidas doesn’t tolerate antisemitism and any other sort of hate speech. Ye’s recent comments and actions have been unacceptable, hateful, and dangerous, and they violate the company’s values of diversity and inclusion, mutual respect, and fairness,” the company said in the statement. “After a thorough review, the company has taken the decision to terminate the partnership with Ye immediately.” The decision came shortly after a United States-based marketing executive at the German company criticised her employer for not acting in response to the antisemitism espoused by West, who vowed on social media to “go death con 3 on Jewish people” earlier this month. It was the latest in mounting public pressure on the company, whose founders were Nazis and which produced weapons for the Nazis during World War II. “As a member of the Jewish community, I can no longer stay silent on behalf of the brand that employs me,” Sarah Camhi, a director of trade marketing, wrote on LinkedIn on 24 October. “Not saying anything is saying everything.” A number of other major brands have cut ties with West since his original posting and in the wake of

subsequent tirades against Jews. Twitter and Instagram shut down his accounts. The fashion tastemakers Balenciaga and Vogue have announced they will no longer be working with him. Hollywood talent giant CAA has dropped him, and a planned documentary about him has been scrapped. His ex-wife and the mother of their children, Kim Kardashian, took to social media to condemn antisemitism, albeit without naming West. Neo-Nazi groups used West’s words to go after Jews, unveiling an antisemitic billboard in Los Angeles that was condemned by the White House earlier in the week. Adidas said in its announcement that it retains ownership over past designs in the Yeezy line, and would share more in a call with company stakeholders next month. Although Adidas has Nazi origins, its founding pre-dates the Nazis’ rise. The company was founded in 1924 in Weimar-era Germany as the Gebrüder Dassler Schuhfabrik (Dassler Brothers Shoe Factory), or Geda for short, by cobbler brothers Adolf (“Adi”) and Rudolf Dassler. Based in the Bavarian town of Herzogenaurach, the Dassler brothers quickly made a name for themselves by pioneering some of the earliest spiked shoes – drilled through with nails to help runners on uneven terrain. On 1 May 1933, with the company’s fortunes on the rise and Hitler having just assumed power in Germany, the Dassler brothers formally joined the Nazi party, according to journalist Barbara Smit’s book *Sneaker Wars*, a history of Adidas. The Nazis embraced sport as a tool both to boost Germany’s public profile and to train its future armies of young men, so the pioneering shoe company fit nicely into their schema. Under Nazi rule, the Dasslers’ sneaker sales promptly exploded, and they grew the size of their company several times over. During the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympic games, orchestrated by Hitler in an attempt to demonstrate Aryan athletic supremacy on the world stage, many of the German athletes sported Dassler shoes. But so did Black American track and field star Jesse Owens, whose very presence at the games was a thumb in the eye of Hitler’s race theories. Rudolf was a more ardent devotee of Nazi ideology than Adi, according to Smit, but both brothers carried their party membership cards and signed off their letters with “Heil Hitler”. During the war, the brothers’ shoe factories were converted into munitions factories for the Nazi military. (Other German shoemakers would test their products on forced labourers in concentration camps.) Rudolf was called to join the war effort, but went AWOL as part of his bid to wrest control of the company from his brother, whom he became convinced was scheming against him. According to *Der Spiegel*, some American troops were poised to destroy the Herzogenaurach factory, which employed some forced labourers, in April 1945, before Adi’s wife, Käthe, approached them and convinced them that the building was only being used to make sneakers. It worked. The factory was saved, and when the United States Air Force took over the Nazis’ Herzogenaurach air base, American troops who were fans of Jesse Owens bought Dassler shoes and helped spread the word about the company back home. Ironically, the end of World War II was only the beginning of the fight between the Dassler brothers, each of whom (along with their wives) tried to wrest the shoe empire away from the other. When Germany entered its post-war denazification period,



Kanye West

Allies forced the town of Herzogenaurach – including, presumably, the Dasslers and their factory employees – to watch documentary footage of the horrors visited upon Jews at Nazi concentration camps. Rudolf was also arrested, suspected of feeding information to the Gestapo, and briefly sent to a German prisoner-of-war (POW) camp for his role on the frontlines, but was freed one year later owing to the backlog of cases against POWs. Meanwhile, Adi was accused of having actively aided and supported the Nazis during the war, but was able to put together a dossier of people – including the town’s mayor – to support his claim that he was far from a party loyalist. The siblings’ relationship suffered a permanent rift in 1949, leading Adi to form his own company as Adidas, while Rudolf went off to start rival sportswear company Puma. Both companies remain headquartered in Herzogenaurach, and the town’s residents remain bitterly divided over brand loyalty to this day. Jewish athletes have worked with the company in the decades since the war. In 1972, at Adidas’ suggestion, American Jewish Olympic swimmer Mark Spitz carried a pair of their shoes to the podium during his medal ceremony. And last year, Adidas Israel built a campaign around a haredi Orthodox marathon runner. Adidas has also occasionally waded into geopolitical waters with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2012, the company was boycotted by Arab states for sponsoring the Jerusalem Marathon, which ran through disputed territory. And in 2018, the company ended its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association, a development celebrated as a victory by the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement because the association had included teams representing Israeli settlements. (Puma took over the sponsorship.) In spite of the “corporate social responsibility” movement that many companies have embraced in the aftermath of 2020’s racial-justice protests, the idea of corporations like Adidas having a sense of social responsibility remains elusive, according to Josh Hunt, the author of *University of Nike: How Corporate Cash Bought American Higher Education*.

SA JEWS OF LITHUANIAN & POLISH HERITAGE ARE ELIGIBLE TO OBTAIN EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP & EU PASSPORT

A common misconception people have is that European citizenship and EU Passport can only be obtained if one has documents proving lineage. The fact is that not having documents proving lineage, does not lead to your disqualification of eligibility. In many cases the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin!



Having European citizenship offers more than one benefit, besides the fact that it makes traveling far easier than with a South African passport...

As we are all fully aware of the current situation in South Africa where we face many uncertainties not just for today but for our children’s future too. While we are still having it relatively good here. We know that the time will come where as Jews we will look for alternative options. Then having a European citizenship will be that tool we are looking for. As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore you are now entitled to reinstate it and obtain your EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is understanding that prior to the end of WWII, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and till 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Great Russia Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Until 1918 residents of these territories were of Russian citizenship – as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships did not exist. Therefore applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on if one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. However, a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 – will not be eligible. In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after WWII, one’s eligibility for a Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the City from which his/her ancestor lived in. Where borders shifted and cities changed nationalities Jews who left Vilnus and its region will be declined where as a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. With only a 4 hour flight to Warsaw and Vilnius this enables me to arrive quickly and safely to Poland and Lithuania, where I closely collaborate with local professionals in assisting me trace required documents for your successful applications to reinstate you as an European citizen. “Having lived in Poland for 7 years I have great 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 3-4 months which will allow us to meet in-person.

I will be in South Africa from 6-20 November 2022. 6-13 November – JHB 13-20 November – CT

YOU CAN REACH ME ON: +48 783 953 223, adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com

Dramatic success for Gavshon’s *Reyka* on international circuit

TALI FEINBERG

When local filmmaker Harriet Gavshon produced the eight-part television drama series *Reyka* through her production house, Quizzical Pictures, she never imagined that it would get International Emmy nominations. Lead actress in the series, Kim Engelbrecht, was nominated for the Best Performance by an Actress category, and the show was nominated for the Best Drama Series category. “I was delighted, and frankly quite amazed,” says Gavshon. “There’s so much brilliant drama around right now. It was such a surprise that ours was recognised out of the hundreds of submissions from all over the world.”



Harriet Gavshon

ensemble cast in the series. *Reyka*’s mother is played by Anna-Mart van der Merwe, the police captain by Hamilton Dlamini, and the pastor



Kim Engelbrecht in *Reyka*

Photos: Patrick Toselli

by Desmond Dube. Sadly, the wonderful actor Khayaletu Anthony, who played a cane cutter accused of the murders, died at the end of September.”

Asked about the most exciting and positive aspects of making *Reyka*, Gavshon says, “Often in television, the challenges are what make it exciting – especially when you manage to pull it off.

“It was enormously exciting to finally make the series after working on it for so long. We started pre-production at the beginning of 2020, but then had to shut down because of lockdown. We started up again in November of that year, and ran slap bang into a massive COVID-19 wave in KZN where we were filming.

“In spite of making the show under extremely difficult conditions – the excessive heat of the cane fields, the constant anxiety of encountering snakes, and everyone masked up because of COVID-19, the team worked so hard and so well. I think everyone realised it was a very special series, with brilliant scripts, and we felt blessed to be given the opportunity to show what we can do as South African television makers. We were lucky to have sufficient resources to make this very ambitious story, and give it the time and care that it demanded.

“It’s also wonderful to see the work of some of my colleagues, like directors Zee Ntuli and Catharine Cooke, flourish,” she says. “We all stretched ourselves and it obviously paid off – both because it has sold widely and also because it’s been recognised. It paves the way for other South African work to rightfully take its place in the world.”

Quizzical Pictures has, in fact, been nominated for Emmy awards three times before this – twice for *MasterChef South Africa*, and once for a mini-series called *Hopeville*. “This feels special though because it comes at a time when television drama series from all over the world can be appreciated and seen by audiences open to all sorts of drama from around the world. *Reyka* generally has smashed many

boundaries. This is because it’s a really quality and intriguing drama series, and because the world is finally ready for us! We’ve been

of the talent and skill of South African film and television makers. South African filmmakers make brilliant work on tiny budgets and consequently very tight schedules. The result is that we have skilled crews and creatives. I really hope that more and more projects from South Africa get made and recognised.”

Meanwhile, “Quizzical Pictures is working on a number of international co-productions, also with international talent, a great film for Netflix, and a number of series for South African television and

international streamers. We have a wealth of stories in South Africa, and it’s exciting to share them with the world. “My personal goals always centre on the work,” Gavshon says. “Is it good enough? Can it stand up to scrutiny here and around the world? Does it change something in people who see it or in society at large?” Her advice to upcoming South African filmmakers is that “success often comes from just keeping going. I have been working in this industry for nearly 30 years. There have been great successes and disappointments. But each time, I pick myself up and keep going on that path. I seldom look back. Each project I tackle, I say, ‘How is this going to be better than anything I have done before?’ So keep going. Immerse yourself in the work you’re doing now. Make it your best.” South Africans catch *Reyka* on Showmax. It’s also available on HOT Israel, Britbox in the United States, Channel 4 streaming in the United Kingdom, SBS in Australia, and CBC Gem in Canada.

Capetonian surf ski champion and lifesaver takes gold

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When 18-year-old Capetonian Naor Lombard surf skied across the finish line at the same time as New Zealander Jayden Murphy in the final of the youth men’s surf ski event at the 2022 Lifesaving World Championships, he looked around with uncertainty.

He wasn’t sure which of them had won gold at the coastal town of Riccione, Italy, on 29 September. The winner would be decided via a photo finish, but looking at the footage, the judges couldn’t separate Lombard and Murphy.

“It was declared a tie, and we both took home a gold medal,” Lombard says. “It felt incredible. It was crazy. I didn’t expect to win it because it was my first world championship. I didn’t know what my competitors would be capable of.

“As a South African, we hear about how the Australians train non-stop. They receive a lot of funding for the sport, and it’s huge there. It’s kind of intimidating at first to go up against these guys. They’re all pretty much a head taller than me. I was just there for experience. But when I won, it was amazing! I even cried when singing the national anthem.”

Behind Lombard and Murphy came Australian Jake Morris. Lombard’s fellow South African, Levi Trevor Mayes, just missed out on a medal, coming fourth out of the 16 surf skiers from 11 different countries competing in the final.

Earlier that day, Lombard started the event by coming fourth out of 11 in his preliminary round before placing third out of 12 in his semifinal.

Lombard, who trains at Clifton and other beaches in Cape Town, put in many hours of hard training leading up to the event. “On some days, I did four sessions a day. I would swim in the morning, then I would do gym and a bit of endurance training like running. I also did a lot of paddling, but surf ski paddling was the hardest training I did.”

Surf ski is an event that falls under the sport of lifesaving. “I wasn’t training specifically for surf ski. I was training for the hardest event in lifesaving, the Ironman [triathlon], in which you do the board rescue, the swim, and the ski. Ski was my strongest discipline.”

Lombard took up lifesaving when he was about seven years old. “One day, I saw nippers training. Way before you start practising as a lifeguard, nippers is focused on the early stage, just like playing around in the water. There are competitions for it as well, but it’s nothing serious. It looked like lots of fun, and I decided to give it a go.”

Lombard has performed several rescues as a lifesaver. When he was only 13 and still a nipper, a 15-year-old had a stroke in the ocean in Big Bay, Cape Town.

“I put him on my board, and I paddled him about 300m back to the beach. Then I ran to call the lifeguards who got the oxygen and assisted him further.”

In a more recent incident at Big Bay, a group lost their paddle while in the sea and were caught up in a current under the

darkening sky. Fully clothed, Lombard jumped on a surfboard with the devotion of a dolphin jumping out of the water, and paddled about 500m out to them. They grabbed onto Lombard’s paddle, and he managed to save them with the help of some friends.

Lombard came second in the run, swim, run and third in the surf swim at the African Lifesaving Championships earlier this year while competing for the Proteas senior team.

Surf lifesaving started in Australia before spreading to South Africa in the 1930s. The first world championship was held in Durban in 1974.

Surf skiers sit in surf skis while paddling at high intensity and as often as possible to ride waves. Surf skis, sometimes called sit-on-top kayaks, are generally the longest of all kayaks. They are designed for speed on open water, and are most popular in South Africa and other warm coastal countries such as Australia – where the sport originated – New Zealand, and Hawaii.

An early version of the surf ski was used by Harry McLaren and his brother, Jack, in 1912 around their family’s oyster beds on Lake Innes near Port Macquarie, Australia.

Lombard says surf ski and lifesaving have grown in leaps and bounds over the past three years in South Africa. “Just at our club in Clifton, we’ve gone from having about 40 active competitors and members to now having about 300. The COVID-19 pandemic

was a big hit. It slowed down the sport because people didn’t want to travel, but now we have a lot of competitors. At the South African Championships, the participants were in the thousands.”

Also a lifeguard, Lombard says lifesaving is a sport like no other. “We train not only for

the sport but to improve our ability to save lives. When it comes to doing lifeguard duty on the beach or just doing whatever you’re doing on the beach and you see someone who needs help, you’ve got to go as strong and as fast as you can to get to that person and rescue them. It’s a way of life.”

Lombard says to compete in lifesaving at any level, you must attain a lifeguard qualification. “From the age of 14 to 16, you get your junior lifeguard qualification. When you turn 16, you have to upgrade to a lifeguard award. Then you can work as a lifeguard.”

Lombard, who finished his online schooling through GED (an internationally-recognised high school equivalency) in April this year, loves free diving (descending below the water’s surface while holding your breath) and surfing in his spare time. “When I’m not training and not on duty, I love going for a free dive along the coast,” he says.



Naor Lombard

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Former chief justice talks of covenant between Israel and SA

ROLENE MARKS

"And we will build an altar, a spiritual altar, and a covenant between our two countries." These were the words of former Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng during a tree planting ceremony in the picturesque Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael/Jewish National Fund Eshtaol Forest Nursery, nestled in the hills of Beit Shemesh.

South Africa's former chief justice spoke with passion about Israel and South Africa and their connection.

He was in Israel with his wife, Mmaphefo, and a 90-member delegation as part of the annual Feast of the Tabernacles. This was his first visit, one that he said had had a profound impact on him.

Mogoeng, a devout Christian who served as chief justice from 2011 to 2021, was excited that this visit coincided with the annual Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, which organises the annual gathering of Christians from around the world, presented Mogoeng with its Nechemia Award "for his courageous biblical stand with Israel, which has contributed greatly to the just and moral cause of the Jewish nation and people".

In response, Mogoeng said, "I'm overwhelmed. It's a great honour. What better present can you get than to be recognised for your little contribution and to be appreciated by fellow Christians and in the holy land?"

At the nursery, Mogoeng acknowledged the risk to his safety from visiting Israel, an activity that South Africa's ruling African National Congress government doesn't encourage.

He spoke about the death threats that had received from angry parties in South Africa, and said in spite of the risk, nothing would deter him from his purpose.

He touched on the divide between South Africa and Israel, and expressed hope that it would be healed and ties restored.

He expressed grave concern about ongoing divisions



Former Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng

and tensions in South Africa. "South Africa has never been more divided along so many lines. It's time to heal," Mogoeng said.

He elaborated on the many areas where Israel could help South Africa, and how other African countries had recognised this and were growing bilateral relations with the Jewish state. He emphasised that his words weren't on behalf of the government or even political, but rather came from a spiritual place.

Perhaps the most moving moment was when Mogoeng also spoke about his intention to bury coins and stones in sacred soil as a covenant between the two countries. He spoke about the importance of building an altar, a covenant between Israel and South Africa, that would result in the restoration of ties, the healing of the past, and would bless both countries. His sentiments were extremely well received by the delegation, many of whom had never visited Israel before.

They were also well received in South Africa. Jewish National Fund (JNF) South Africa Chairperson Michael Kransdorff said the JNF of South Africa was grateful to the former chief justice for his courage in morally defending the rights of the Jewish people and promoting peace in the Middle East in spite of the enormous risk to his safety on return.

Kransdorff said he hoped the tree of honour that Mogoeng had planted in the hills surrounding the holiest of cities, Jerusalem, would grow to become a symbol of the former chief justice's deep-rooted biblical values.

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, welcomed the planting of the tree by the former chief justice, saying that he hoped that the agricultural lessons learned during the trip would be applied to South Africa, a country where food security is a daunting challenge. It's a possibility, he said, considering that the former chief justice had been quoted as saying that Israel was much more than he expected.

School's out – forever

This is how it ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper. After five children, our youngest has just started to write her matric finals. And whereas of course we care, there's a sense that it's only muscle memory that has us nag her to work, and that we're more stressed in theory than we are in practice. It's as if we really want to be anxious about matric, but just can't seem to modify the behaviour.

Luckily for us, there have never been parent's prize giving ceremonies at the end of each year. Because we would never have bagged a thing. Not one certificate. Not for making sure that our children showed up to school, not for signing and checking homework, and not even for WhatsApp group participation. We wouldn't even have achieved recognition as being the most improved parents. And after five children at school for 12 years, that's shoddy.

In all the years, not once was my wife class mom. Not once was I asked to tone down my support on the side of the soccer field. And many a time I would forget not only who taught our children, but what grade they were in. In my defence, they do change years at a remarkable pace.

I also found parents evening to be one of the most painful and unbearable experiences. On more than one occasion when the teacher mistook us for my brother and sister-in-law and reported back on a nephew instead of our child, we never corrected them, allowing us to feel like normal adult parents for that short time. We would leave the table inspired and content and for once, not with a list of assignments that one of our broods hadn't bothered to hand in.

Our approach might be slightly unconventional, but it comes from somewhere. When our eldest son was in



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

Grade 5, we left him with my mother-in-law for a few days. She promised to do his homework with him and keep an eye on things. On our return, we were asked to sign an Afrikaans test that he had failed miserably.

"What happened?" we asked, horrified (we were still young). "Bobbie said that I don't need to learn for it! She said I'll never go and see a circus in Afrikaans." I don't often agree with her, but in this case, it was hard to fault Bobbie's logic.

We've been told that it's a sad day when one's youngest finishes school. Whereas I'm sure that for some that might be the case, the thought of never having to sit through a very serious Grade 1 orientation, or never having to feel like we have failed parenting because we forgot a child at school (again) or because we had no idea when school goes back after the holidays, isn't something that I will miss.

I won't miss the nursery school plays that are adorable for the first 20 minutes, tolerable for the next 20, and torturous for the last 20, or urgent meetings with justifiably exasperated educators who care for our children as much as we do.

But that doesn't mean that I'm not grateful. Our children have had the privilege of being schooled in an environment that's bursting with love, with people who are passionate about education and who would do anything to make sure that they are equipped to travel the road ahead.

To all those who have educated – or at least tried to educate – our children, I say thank you. And sorry, we won't do better next year.

Read the South African Jewish Report online www.sajr.co.za

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies Gauteng Council pays tribute to outgoing execs

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) Gauteng Council held its last meeting on Monday, 24 October, before its biennial conference in November. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to outgoing chairperson Harold Jacobs, who with the staunch support of his executive, vice-chairperson Danny Mofsowitz, and Leslie-Anne Gatter, has done an exemplary job in taking the organisation forward after I stepped down last year to step into the national position. Under Jacobs' quiet and unassuming yet hands-on and innovative leadership, the Gauteng Council has gone from strength to strength, and done so moreover in an unflinching spirit of warm friendship and mutual respect among its members, in spite of the diversity of their backgrounds, activities, and areas of expertise.

Another distinguishing feature of the outgoing council has been the unusual extent to which individual members have been involved in its activities outside of the monthly council meetings. Practically all who sit around the table have at one time or another been involved in initiating, planning, organising, and participating in the wide range of events run by the Gauteng Board. These have included interfaith initiatives, political engagements with the Gauteng provincial government and mayor's office, on-campus activities with Jewish students, social-outreach projects, and the #MakeUsCount 2021 municipal elections campaign. They make up an outstanding team, and we look forward to working with them all on further exciting projects over the next two years.

At the same meeting, tribute was paid to two long-serving Gauteng Council stalwarts, Marc Pozniak and

ABOVE BOARD Karen Milner

Liza Essers, who have relocated to other cities and hence didn't put themselves forward for re-election. Pozniak also sits on the Board's national executive, on which he serves as one of the three national vice-chairpersons, and is a former executive member of the World Jewish Congress. Both Pozniak and Essers were in their own way an invaluable resource to the Board and also provided unstinting support to the lay leadership and professional staff. We wish them all success in this new phase of their lives, and have little doubt that they will continue to involve themselves and contribute to Jewish communal life in their respective new homes.

The new council will be elected at the first, official, leg of the conference on 6 November, at which outgoing members will report back to our affiliate bodies on the activities of the Gauteng Council during its two-year term of office, and delegates will have an opportunity to comment and ask questions. This will be followed on 10 November by the second part of the conference, which is open to the community at large. As previously reported, we are privileged that Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the United States Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism, will be keynote speaker for the occasion. Such has been the interest generated that the event is almost fully booked. Look out for further details over the next two weeks in this column and on the SAJBD Facebook site.

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



Sunday 30 October

- The SA Jewish Report hosts a webinar, *Creativity to blow your mind*, with Ann Nurock. Time: 19:00. Contact: bit.ly/jrlive141 or editorial@sajewishreport.co.za

Monday 31 October

- The Chevrah Kadisha hosts a talk, *Dealing with Dementia*. Time: 19:30. Entry: No charge. Contact talyab@jhbchev.co.za

Tuesday 1 November

- Union of Jewish Women hosts *Brain Boost – A brain stimulation group*. Time: 10:00. Entry: R100. Contact: info@ujw.co.za or 011 648 1053.

Wednesday 2 November

- ORT SA hosts its annual golf day at Killarney Country Club. Time: 12:00. Contact debbie@ortsa.org.za or 082 822 0772

- The Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre presents a pre-release screening of *J'Accuse* by Michael Kretzmer. Time: 15:00. Contact: hazel@rchcc.org.za
- Second Innings hosts a movie morning at the South African National Museum of Military History with the screening of *The Student Prince*. Time: 09:15. Entry: R120. Contact: 082 561 3228 or greciagabriel1@gmail.com

- Melton Midrasa presents an online course on antisemitism. Time: 19:15 to 21:00. Contact: 082 880 2257 or lauren@snitcher.org

Sunday 6 November

- Second Innings hosts a theatre outing to see *Who Killed Virginia Woolf*.



Time: 14:30. Entry: R190. Contact: 082 561 3228 or greciagabriel1@gmail.com

- New Beginnings presents Janice Liebowitz on *Must Reads for your Relaxation in December*. Time: 10:00. Venue: Pine Street Shul. Contact lynarch@worldonline.co.za

Monday 7 November

- Aish hosts its annual gala dinner with guest speaker Rivka Ravitz. Time: 19:00. Contact: 073 486 4104 or charmaine@aish.org.za

Letters

THANKS FROM ESTONIA FOR THE SA JEWISH REPORT

I'm writing to you from the southern Estonian city of Võru, a small town with 11 000 inhabitants but beautiful and rapidly developing.

I'm glad I recently had the opportunity to learn about Jewish life, religious beliefs, and practices.

About 2 000 Jews currently live in Estonia. There's a great Estonian Jewish Museum in Tallinn. Jews are treated with respect in Estonia, they are always represented at big events.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to read your digital newspaper. It's meaningful and

interesting, and there's a lot to read.

From what I've read, I understand that Jewish people are benevolent and united, and don't forget the past. They cherish religious traditions – as can be seen with the latest holiday.

It was interesting to read about Britain's King Charles III and the Jews.

It's great that you have your own newspaper, and even Estonians can read it. Thank you again.

I wait for the next instalment.

– Astrid Hurt – Võru, Estonia

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2022



KDL takes Guinness World Record for sandwiches

King David Linksfield broke the Guinness World Record for the amount of sandwiches it managed to make in one hour just before Heritage Day, on Friday, 23 September.

The school went out to break the record for sandwiches made in one hour. The staff, parents and students from Grades 4 to 12 broke the previous record of 57 662 sandwiches by almost 10 000 sandwiches. The auditors confirmed, the school made 65 596 sandwiches in one hour.

The sandwiches were then distributed to various charities around Gauteng. More than 90 charities received between 200 and 20 000 sandwiches.



KDL matric students making sandwiches

The Nashua Children's Charity Foundation posted on Facebook, "The foundation can with deep gratitude confirm that 45 612 sandwiches were collected by 86 of our assisted charities. A weekend of celebration with Heritage Day tomorrow and Rosh Hashanah on Sunday certainly takes on new meaning."

A year of opportunities for moms



Rebbetzin Natalie Altman has recently undertaken a weekly Friday morning learning session with a group of Yeshiva College moms. The school hopes more moms will join so more can benefit from the learning and that the sessions can grow into other exciting opportunities.

KDL pupil wows world with wildlife photo

King David Linksfield pupil Jaime Freeman won the Youth in Africa category at 2022 Benjamin Mkapa African Wildlife Photography Awards for a wildlife photograph. Freeman's photo was selected out of 10 000 entries from more than 57 countries around the globe. His image will be displayed in the Nairobi National Museum in Kenya, and he will receive \$1 000 (R18 306) in cash amongst other incredible prizes.



Picture taken by Jaime Freeman

Torah Academy passes ball back to alumni



Torah Academy hosted an alumni soccer tournament on Sunday, 23 October. Ex-students young and old joined in the tournament, supported

by their families. It was a great day, full of energy and spirit, and it was heartwarming to see past and present students bond over soccer.

MANY MORE SPECIALS IN-STORE

75⁹⁹

VILLA CAPE CABERNET SAUVIGNON & PINOTAGE 750ML EACH

96⁹⁹

BACKSBERG MERLOT & CHARDONNAY 750ML EACH

8⁹⁹

FRUITREE GUAVA, MEDITERRANEAN & TROPICAL PUNCH DRINK 350ML EACH

69⁹⁹

CAPE POINT HAKE FILLETS SKIN-ON 800G

59⁹⁹

FRY'S VEGAN CHUNKY THICK CUT STRIPS ORIGINAL 380G

27⁹⁹

SERENA LINGUINE & MACARONI PASTA 500G EACH

21⁹⁹

IMBO BLACK LENTILS 500G

42⁹⁹

CLOVER CHEDDAR CHEESE 200G

72⁹⁹

CLOVER CHEESE CHEDDAR 400G

Feigels

Yummy!

Beef Curry family size pie (Serves 4)

114⁹⁹

Hometown Pharmacy

For Relief from a Blocked Nose and Sinus Congestion

Salex XS Nasal Spray

Triple Action Formula

Free 20ml 20ml

SALEX SALINE NASAL SPRAY 20ML + FREE 20ML REFILL

39⁹⁹

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Special events

Corporate team building

Party Shoppe

Rushka 079 176 2716

Mobile Putt Putt

rushka@mobileputtputt.co.za

Montagu

54⁹⁹

MONTAGU PITTED PRUNES 250G

29⁹⁹

MONTAGU GOLDEN SALTANAS 250G

39⁹⁹

MONTAGU MIXED NUTS RAW 100G

42⁹⁹

KELLOGGS CORN FLAKES 500G

61⁹⁹

PESTO PRINCESS ASSORTED FLAVOURS 130G EACH

45⁹⁹

CARDIN TUB 500G

32⁹⁹

OKJA OAT MILK 1L

13⁹⁹

OK MIXED VEG & OK TOMATO AND ONION MIX 410G EACH

15⁹⁹

CIAO ITALIAN PEELED TOMATOES 400G

42⁹⁹

ALBEX BLEACH SPRAY FLORAL & LEMON 750ML EACH

32⁹⁹

GARBIE HEAVY DUTY BLACK REFUSE BAGS 10'S

14⁹⁹

TUFFY FLIP TOP SANDWICH BAGS 25'S

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