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High rate of teen vaping sets off smoke alarm

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

With one in four matric students at high-income schools vaping, medical specialists are calling for the use of e-cigarettes to be banned, especially among teenagers, due to its sometimes devastating effects.

Heart and lung damage. Mood and attention disorders. Addiction. With these and other potentially devastating side effects, vaping is a far cry from the innocuous habit it's popularly believed to be.

"Vaping isn't harmless," says Dr Anton Meyberg, a specialist physician and pulmonologist at Linksfield Clinic in Johannesburg. "It's not water vapour, it's a drug, it's addictive, it's expensive, and it's dangerous." He argues that vaping should be banned, particularly amongst teens.

Professor Richard van Zyl-Smit, a professor of respiratory medicine at the University of Cape Town who conducted the recent study that revealed the high numbers of vaping students at private schools, is also calling for speedy implementation of regulations governing vaping among adolescents. Van Zyl-Smit is concerned about the detrimental impact of nicotine on developing teenage brains. The African Tobacco Control Alliance made a similar appeal in May this year.

Our community isn't immune. Though they're educating their students about such dangers, Jewish high schools say that vaping has become a massive issue on campus.

A popular alternative to smoking, vaping involves inhaling and exhaling vapour that contains nicotine, flavouring, and other substances through a battery-powered device – an electronic cigarette

– designed for this purpose. Unlike cigarettes however, there's no tobacco present, which is why vaping has been billed as safer than smoking.

Yet, when Meyberg is asked which is worse, vaping or smoking, he always answers by comparing getting hit by a car or a motorbike. "You're still being hit, and you're still likely to have a major injury," he says. "There are still dramatic negative health consequences from using a vape."

"You're taking aerosol, you're getting unfiltered chemicals into your lungs that leave toxins behind. These chemicals include cancer-forming agents that are added to these vapes, and flavours, which are damaging the body at a cellular level. As you inhale, the many substances in the vape damage your lungs, attack your blood vessels, and can cause heart damage and asthma."

There's even a name for the inflammatory response that the

practice triggers in the lungs – e-cigarette or vaping use associated lung injury (EVALI). "This can cause lung damage, pneumonia, a chronic cough, or shortness of breath," Meyberg says. "We've had patients go onto ventilators and even die because of it."

"In the beginning, vaping was a novelty, but we're beginning to find far too many students are bringing these gadgets onto campus," says Tom Johnson, the deputy principal of King David High School

Linksfield (KDHL), who says the phenomenon is a "major issue".

Finding students vaping is a daily occurrence, he says. "It's also quite difficult to police because whereas before, with traditional cigarettes, you looked like a steam train going down the tracks, now you can stand on the school grounds and no one would know that you're vaping – it's far more discreet than before and often odourless."

Vaping goes against the school's code of conduct, he says, which has an anti-smoking policy that includes e-cigarettes. Vapes are confiscated, students are given detention, and parents are informed and asked to collect the vapes as the school won't return them to the students.

At King David High School Victory Park, vaping is also dealt with firmly, and is regarded as serious misconduct. "As a school, we're concerned about the increased prevalence of vaping amongst our students," says counsellor Gita Lipschitz. "As such, Dr Anton Meyberg, an alumnus of our school, recently spoke to the students about the devastating effects of vape on the lungs, brain, and emotions of teenagers."

Nicotine itself, Meyberg told the SA Jewish Report, is highly addictive. "We're finding that teens who are

vaping regularly are getting addicted to nicotine much quicker. They don't realise that some of these mechanisms, like the Juul – a brand of e-cigarette shaped like a USB flash drive – has about 20 cigarettes worth of nicotine per cartridge, which is a big problem." It's particularly concerning since we're even seeing vaping in 12-year-olds.

Teenage brains are still developing, so they are far more susceptible to nicotine addiction. "When you take in large amounts of nicotine, it releases dopamine in the brain, which is a pleasure hormone, making you want more," Meyberg says. "Therefore, you get into a cycle of repetitive use. Nicotine exposure during adolescence can disrupt growth of your brain circuits, so you get attention deficit disorders, learning difficulties, as well as mood disorders, in which kids become angry, short-tempered, anxious, and lack impulse control." Many vapers add tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the principal psychoactive substance of cannabis, to their vapes – a major concern, Meyberg says.

"With aggressive advertising campaigns specifically targeting young people, some parents see vaping as harmless," says Lipschitz.

"Though a majority of parents are anti-smoking in any form, some will defend their Grade 11 or 12 children in these cases, saying they're under stress, they're writing exams," says Johnson.

Indeed, says Meryl Malkin, the head of counselling and the education support programme at KDHL, many kids talk about the sense of relaxation and lessened anxiety that comes with vaping.

"Parents often buy vapes for their children and prefer them to vape rather

Continued on page 3>>



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COVID-19 cases rise, but symptoms are mild

NICOLA MILTZ

Experts report an increasing number of COVID-19 patients, but while infectious, the virus is presenting fairly mild and manageable symptoms.

Though doctors expect infections to increase further, many say it's difficult to quantify as people aren't testing as much as they did in the past.

"It's difficult to say that this is a wave as we don't have a handle in terms of the quantity of infections," said Professor Barry Schoub, chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 vaccines. "Certainly, anecdotally, there seem to be a lot of infections. Many individuals aren't getting tested, or if they do get tested, it's usually the rapid test, which isn't done in a laboratory."

Schoub said some parameters did indicate an increase. "Nine percent of the specimens that go to a laboratory are positive. Normally in the quiet periods, it's about 5%."

Schoub said wastewater surveillance was another indicator of an increase. Last month, the South African Medical Research Council called attention to increases in the concentrations of SARS-CoV-2RNA in several wastewater treatment plants in the city of Cape Town as well as several Western Cape towns.

The increase in wastewater coincides with an increase in the proportion of positive COVID-19 tests reported by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, experts say.

South Africa experienced a mild fifth wave, which ended in June. Vaccination rates and immunity explained the mild caseload, health experts said at the time.

Schoub said the virus seemed to be more localised to the upper respiratory tract, and symptoms seemed to be a little different to the previous variants, similar to a common cold with a bit of flu.

"Previously, it might have involved the lungs with pneumonia, and a lot of people lost their sense of smell and taste. We don't get this often now." Hospitalisation levels are also low, he said.

Johannesburg General Practitioner Sheri Fanaroff told the *SA Jewish Report* that she had witnessed an increase in COVID-19 cases over the past six weeks, but instead of a rapid uptick, it was a case of a slow, steady trickle.

"Previously, almost everyone with respiratory symptoms got a COVID-19 test, whereas now, as we're experiencing many other respiratory viruses and influenza, only people with more severe

symptoms are generally testing," Fanaroff said. "We are probably missing many cases."

She said the majority of positive COVID-19 patients she had seen over the past few weeks were those who had never had COVID-19 before or who had it 18 months or more ago.

"I've hardly seen anyone who has previously had Omicron [the prevalent strain since December 2021] testing positive again now. So, previous infection with Omicron seems to give good protection against getting infected again."

Fanaroff said common symptoms included coughing, congestion and tight chests, severe fatigue and headaches, and body aches and pains.

"For the most part, although some people have felt quite sick for a few days, most patients haven't battled with low oxygen levels and haven't required hospital admission."

"However, although in general disease is mild, we have many patients suffering the effects of long COVID-19 for months after infection; some are left with debilitating fatigue, brain fog, and lingering cardiac or neurological

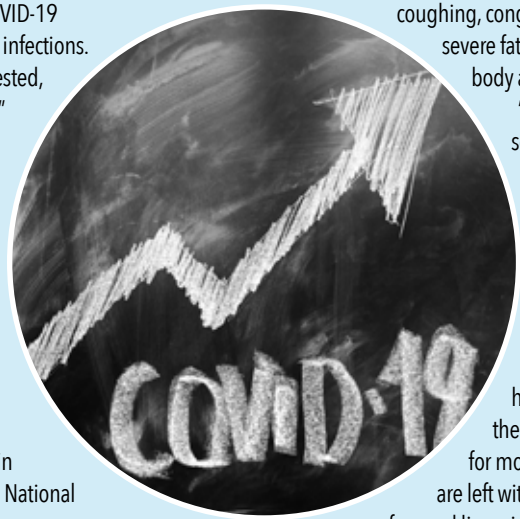
effects. There's a lot we're still going to learn about the long-term effects of Omicron."

Fanaroff encouraged those who are immunocompromised or who have underlying health risks to consider wearing masks in crowds and avoiding indoor spaces with lots of people.

More importantly, she said, people who do have respiratory symptoms (coughs/congestion/sore throats) should avoid close contact (particularly with the elderly) or at least wear a mask if it's unavoidable.

"Those who are symptomatic and positive should still isolate at home for seven days from the onset of symptoms," she said.

Uriel Rosen, operations manager of Hatzolah Medical Rescue, said, "Our numbers don't reflect [overall] cases in the community as the majority of our signups are those that are more at risk of getting ill. Thankfully, there have been no COVID-19-related deaths on the programme recently, and we continue to experience milder disease than previous variants."



How to be holy on earth

Torah Thought



**Rebbeztin Temmi Hadar
– Pine Street Shul**

It was a meeting of opposites. Holy angels visited our patriarch, Avraham, at the beginning of this week's parsha of Vayera. These celestial beings

were eager to see what life was like for a righteous person here on earth. They wondered what spirituality looked like down here in this physical world. Avraham was G-d's ambassador here on earth, and was willing to give up his life for his belief in G-d. It was Avraham who first shared the morals and values of monotheism.

Three angels arrived at Avraham's tent, waiting to see a beacon of g-dly light. Instead, they were met by a man, who rushed to offer them water to rinse their feet and bread to satiate their hunger. They saw their host, Avraham, running back to choose the best calves for their meal, and instructing his wife, Sarah, to bake rolls of fine flour. Instead of g-dly revelation, they were given food. Bread, cream, tongue, and mustard.

"Where is the holiness?" they wondered as they pretended to eat their meal. (After all, they were angels – they didn't need food for sustenance.) Perhaps they were mistaken. Maybe it was Avraham's wife, Sarah, who was a beacon of holiness. "Where's your wife, Sarah?" they inquired.

"She's in the tent," Avraham responded. Within that simple response was a more profound message – you won't find what you're looking for in my wife. Her holiness is even more concealed. Her true greatness is harder to identify.

The angels realised how wrong they were. They thought spirituality was found in the celestial realms and that greatness was found amongst divine beings in the heavens.

But Avraham was telling the angels that we find true

holiness and spirituality in this mundane world, in the acts of kindness, grace, and compassion we share with others.

In a dusty, barren desert, an offer of food and water to strangers is the ultimate act of g-dliness.

When we're able to extend ourselves and give to another, with no expectation of anything in return, it's the ultimate act of holiness.

The Torah records this story in great detail, down to the menu and the amount of flour used, to teach us this vital lesson.

We often think that to be spiritual, we must distance ourselves from this physical plane. We should go and

meditate in the Himalayas. We should disconnect from as much of this earthly world as possible. We need to be angelic.

But this week's Torah portion reminds us that to be holy, we need to live in this world. We need to invest in the physical world around us, but use it to make this world better, to use the material to uplift the lives of others around us. We need to distance ourselves not from the physical, but from an obsession with ourselves. To think about how we can be of benefit to others. And in simple everyday interactions, we can find a true state of holiness.

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In this week's parsha, G-d tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son.

A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place.

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‘Checkmate’ to BDS as Chess SA goes to Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Chess South Africa's excitement at being invited at the last minute to play at the 2022 World Team Chess Championship in Jerusalem was all too soon dampened by a call from the Israel hating lobby for it to boycott the event.

The national governing body for chess in this country wanted to share its excitement by posting the news on social media, which led to a backlash from the South African BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) Coalition and other international BDS organisations calling on Chess South Africa to boycott the event from 19 to 26 November because it was taking place in the Jewish state.

“A huge thank you to Emil Sutovsky from FIDE [Fédération Internationale des Échecs or the International Chess Federation] and Tshepiso Lopang from the ACC [African Chess Confederation] who made this possible. South Africa was invited last minute due to Egypt not participating. The air tickets are sponsored by FIDE, and Tshepiso made it all happen,” wrote the organisation online.

Chess South Africa and FIDE have ignored the calls for a boycott. “FIDE is an international chess federation recognised by the International Olympic Committee, and we won’t get involved in political battles but rather follow approved policies,” says Emil Sutovsky, the director general of FIDE. “The World Team Championship is to take place in Israel as planned, and we look forward to welcoming the South African team which will make its first ever appearance at such a prestigious event.”

Sutovsky was born in Baku, which was then the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan. His family moved to Israel when he was 14, where he still lives today. However, he emphasises that he’s not speaking as an Israeli, but as the director general of FIDE.

The event, organised by FIDE and the Israeli Chess Federation with the support of the Israel ministry of sport and culture, will be held at the Mount Scopus Hall in the Dan Hotel in Jerusalem. South Africa will compete against Israel, Poland, Ukraine, China, the Netherlands, France, India, Uzbekistan, the United States, Spain, and Azerbaijan.

Dr Zvika Barkai, the chairperson of the Israeli Chess

Federation, is also adamant that the tournament must go ahead. “Chess is the exact opposite of wars and boycotts,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “It’s a way to transform disputes and struggles into an enjoyable thinking sport.

“The Israeli Chess Federation has put in a lot of effort and money to gather the best national teams from all over the world to compete in this championship,” he says. “One of the main goals is to let people from all over the world meet each other, debate, and learn more about Israel and its citizens. Israelis and Palestinians are living together in spite of political disputes. The way to diminish disputes is to bring people to meet and speak to each other, not keep them away from each other.

“The South African team is welcome in Israel. I’m sure



it will enjoy the championship as well as touring and learning about Jerusalem and its holy sites. It will be a wonderful opportunity to meet different people from other religions: Jews, Muslims, and Christians. All of them are residents of the holy city of Jerusalem.

“The world of chess reflects in its essence a rare combination of high-order thinking skills, planning, appreciation, and mutual honour among cultures and peoples,” says Barkai. “Those who try to harm this activity try to tear apart all the above values embedded within chess. The Israeli Chess Federation will continue to hold international chess events in order to bring people together.”

The World Team Chess Championship is a prestigious international event, eligible to 10 countries whose chess federations dominate their continent. It’s played every two years. In chess, this tournament and the Chess Olympiads are the most important international tournaments for teams. The strongest national teams in the world participate, as well as some teams representing a continent. Each team plays against every other team.

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military occupation since 1967. Israel's illegal settlement regime is considered a war crime under international law. Specifically, by holding the tournament in occupied East Jerusalem, FIDE is reinforcing Israel's illegal military occupation and its claim of sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem as a whole,” said the SA BDS Coalition and Africa4Palestine.

But South African Zionist Federation Chairperson Rowan Polovin congratulated FIDE “for committing to keep the championship in Jerusalem in spite of pressure from the antisemitic BDS movement. We further commend Chess South Africa for accepting the invitation to go to Israel to compete against the best chess players from across the globe.

“Not only will the South African team have the opportunity to test its mettle against the cream of the crop of international chess champions in a country known for its high levels of competitive chess, it will have the opportunity to see Israel and meet people from different

walks of life,” says Polovin. “Events like this promote camaraderie, co-operation, friendly competition, and open dialogue, and BDS’s attempts to stand in the way of such a constructive meeting of the minds once again reinforces just what its political agenda is.”

Within Israel, the game is thriving, and many activities are carried out to strengthen coexistence between Jews and Arabs. In December 2021, the Kfar Saba Chess Club, led by Amiram Kaplan, held an interfaith chess competition for 12 youth teams. The event was attended by President Isaac Herzog, who commented, “Arab and Jewish youth, who occasionally meet for long chess games face to face will grow up in a different atmosphere to previous generations. From such events must grow restraint and moderation, mutual respect, and only positive things.”

Emphasising his love for the “game of kings”, the president even competed on the board against Sahar Mansour from Taibeh and Adam Peles from Tel Aviv.

In addition, a committee headed by Khaled Yunis was established in 2021, aiming to promote chess in Arab areas and integrate them into Israeli society while providing access to high-level training and competitions. As part of this, the Israeli Youth Championship is held every year, adjusting to the Arab youths’ holiday calendar and their place of residence in order to make it possible for them to play in the final of the Israeli Championship.

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Chess South Africa for comment, but didn’t get a response.

High rate of teen vaping sets off smoke alarm

>>Continued from page 1

than smoke,” says Herzlia High School Principal Marc Falconer. He says primary school students as young as 11 and 12 have been known to vape. He estimates that between 20% to 50% of the students at the high school vape, and says it’s a disciplinary issue. “Most schools, including ours, view vaping in the same light as smoking, and it carries the same penalties,” he says.

Psychologically speaking, says Malkin, adolescents are trying to figure out who they are in the world and as such, they sometimes try to push boundaries. “We know that the adolescent brain, namely the prefrontal cortex, isn’t fully developed and teens therefore make decisions that aren’t always fully informed or based on logic,” she says. “That’s why when they are taught about the dangers of vaping at school, their brains are wired to say, ‘It’s not going to happen to me.’”

“It’s a lot about fitting in and belonging to a group,” says Caryn Horowitz, a psychologist at Yeshiva College Girls High School. “It’s seen as cool and trendy. It could also be a form of attention seeking.”

There are no guidelines or regulations for vaping production in South Africa, although the government has tabled a Bill to regulate the sector. The Control of Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill was recently approved by cabinet to be submitted to Parliament in October, four years after it was first introduced by the health department. Yet, there doesn’t seem to be a timeline for when it will be passed or clarity around whether it will be enough to regulate the sector for teens. What’s more, the vaping industry has rejected this Bill, calling for separate legislation so it is not subjected to the same restrictions and regulations as the tobacco industry.

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Exposure of Durban ISIS cell raises security alert

TALI FEINBERG

The United States (US) treasury department's Office of Foreign Assets Control is keeping a close watch on certain individuals in "ISIS's [Islamic State's] network" in South Africa.

"They have played pivotal roles in enabling terrorism and other criminal activities in the region," says the department's under-secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, Brian E. Nelson. The men were said to be "designated", which means "their assets are blocked and US persons are generally prohibited from dealing with them".

Speaking on 7 November, Nelson said these men "have provided technical, financial, or material support to the terrorist group". Treasury also designated eight companies owned, controlled, or directed by the individuals in the cell.

Says Community Security Organisation (CSO) Operations Director Jevon Greenblatt, "This draws attention to the very real issue of terrorism in South Africa and the pivotal role South Africa plays in the recruitment, facilitation, and funding of terror groups at home and across the continent.

"The South African political and socio-economic environment creates space for individuals and groups with radical ideologies to exist and thrive. Many of these ideologies – which aren't limited to radical Islam – see the Jewish community as a legitimate target."

Professor Hussein Solomon of the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, says, "The terror threat in South Africa is growing, and this demonstrates that the international community is taking it seriously.

"Mounting a terror operation, securing fraudulent documentation, safe houses, or living expenses, all need money," Hussein says. "Cutting off their financing is a critical aspect of effective counter-terrorism." In addition, "the antisemitic ideology often driving these groups often makes the Jewish community a target".

Greenblatt takes this up, saying that it means that "our community should always be vigilant and apply the necessary measures to ensure we remain safe". He says this requires further investment in "effective physical security measures, adherence to security protocols, and ensuring there are teams of trained and proactive community volunteers and security personnel on duty at all key times".

As long as we do this and instil a non-alarmist but proactive culture of security, Greenblatt says, "We're much less likely to be targeted. It will also help in mitigating the effect of an attack."

Says Nelson, "ISIS continues to expand its terrorist network across the continent, as evidenced by the July 2022 United Nations Security Council report that highlighted the emerging importance of the country for funds transfers from ISIS leadership to ISIS affiliates across Africa.

"Treasury remains committed to disrupting terrorist

financing on the African continent. The US will continue to partner South Africa to deny ISIS the ability to exploit the country's economy."

This is the second time that the department has designated Farhad Hooper, the first being in March 2022. At that time, it also designated Siraj Miller, Abdella Hussein Abadigga, and Peter Charles Mbaga.

Nelson says Hooper "continues to pursue ISIS's objectives in southern Africa, and expresses the will and intent to attack the interests of the US and its allies". It designated Hooper along with brothers Nufael Akbar and Yunus Mohamad Akbar, saying they are "senior members" of Hooper's cell.

"Today's action also targets two other Hooper associates, Mohamad Akbar and Umar Akbar, who were arrested in 2018 by South African authorities along with Hooper for their involvement in a plan to deploy incendiary devices near a mosque and commercial retail buildings," says Nelson.

"We need to look at the history," says Willem Els, senior training co-ordinator at the Institute for Security Studies, noting a string of incidents in the Durban area from murder in a mosque to incendiary devices placed in Woolworths outlets, both in 2018. "People have been arrested, but due to less-than-adequate investigation and prosecution, the case was thrown out of court. This could be why this happened now – to put some pressure on the South African government to take this more seriously."

Says Greenblatt, "the motive [of these past incidents] appeared to be extortion. Two individuals included in these latest sanctions were also implicated in those attacks. In addition, media reports point to members of the Durban cell being linked to a kidnapping syndicate with ISIS affiliations operating out of Kliprivier in Gauteng. The Kliprivier cell was in turn linked to shootings across Johannesburg on New Year's Eve in 2020. If the reports are correct, it would appear that there's very strong co-ordination between the various ISIS cells operating across the country."

"The threat of terrorism in South Africa and the region is undeniable," says local terrorism expert Jasmine Opperman. "Our vulnerability relates to terror financing, the exploitation of organised crime activities by terror groups, and [the presence of terrorists] in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique."

She says the designations show "we have foreign intelligence services focusing on South Africa. This brings me to ask about South Africa's ability to provide active intelligence and to prosecute and conclude terror cases effectively. We're left with many questions about specific individuals, and that raises more insecurity."

Continued on page 6>>



Family sues Netcare for R20m over pensioner's death in hospital

TALI FEINBERG

It's been 18 months since Johannesburg Jewish pensioner Bernard "Bernie" Katz (83) was alleged to have been defrauded and murdered with rat poison in a private Johannesburg care facility, Netcare Rosebank Hospital. His family, who believe it doesn't have all the answers, have now legally taken on Netcare, suing the hospital group for R20 million.

The Netcare Group's representative say they fully support the process of determining the cause of death, and will go along with the legal process. Jacques du Plessis, the managing director of Netcare's hospital division told the SA Jewish Report this week, "We're deeply saddened by the passing of Mr Katz, and we again wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to his family. We recognise that their pain and loss isn't made easier by unanswered questions and ongoing uncertainties surrounding Mr Katz' tragic death. This is all subject to a legal process that's still underway, and we remain fully committed to supporting the authorities in their efforts to determine the exact circumstances surrounding Mr Katz's passing.

"The hospital will continue to co-operate fully with the authorities in this regard," says Du Plessis. "We remain confident that the person or persons responsible for any harm to this respected member of the community will be held accountable."

Katz's family, however, are determined to take this on legally. "It's been hard. We don't have closure – his death lays heavy on our hearts. We won't rest until the perpetrators are caught and put away," says his daughter-in-law, Linda Serebro. "He was so excited to be going home; talking about all the foods he was going to enjoy eating. But that never happened."

Katz was admitted on 26 January 2021 for bowel obstruction surgery, but passed away on 5 May 2021. In that time, his family claim that R153 500 was stolen from his account and that he was then poisoned with rat poison, as per a toxicology report.

The Katz family is being represented by David Swartz of SWVG Inc. Attorneys. In a summons to the High Court of South Africa Gauteng Division, dated 4 May 2021, the chain of events is laid out. It describes how upon admission to hospital, Katz was instructed by hospital staff to surrender possession of his personal belongings to the hospital for safekeeping. This included his wallet and cell phone.

On 13 March 2021, after he had been transferred out of intensive care (ICU), he accessed his online banking facilities using a laptop provided to him by his daughter-in-law. He discovered that "funds totalling R153 500 had been misappropriated from his banking and credit card facilities through a series of credit card payments, ATM withdrawals, cash transfers, EFT payments, and AutoBank instant money cash transactions on his bank account",



Bernard Katz

according to the summons.

Upon discovering the missing funds, Katz asked for his personal belongings to be returned. He then ascertained that funds had been stolen from him and that this theft "was perpetrated by persons employed by the hospital, or persons who had access to his cell phone or wallet, both of which had been given to the hospital staff". Upon discovering the misappropriation of funds, Katz and his family complained to the hospital.

On 6 April 2021, after eating breakfast, "he was rushed to ICU presenting with difficulty breathing, low heart rate, and hypothermia. Blood tests performed on his blood on the same day revealed that he was suffering from organophosphate poisoning. Organophosphate is a powerful nerve agent found in pesticides and insecticides such as Rattex [rat poison]."

In the summons, the lawyers state, "The plaintiff [Katz] was poisoned whilst admitted as a patient in hospital by persons employed at the hospital or with access to hospital facilities in an attempt to kill off the plaintiff in order to quash the complaints laid by him regarding the theft of monies." Katz died a month later.

Swartz now says, "Summons has been issued for the R20 million, and litigation has proceeded. We've recovered the stolen money, which therefore puts an end to any query as to as to whether or not it was stolen – as a fact, it was. Since his death, we have been waiting on the state and Ampath to perform an autopsy report – this takes quite a long time."

In addition, in a statement issued on 25 May 2021 in response to questions from the SA Jewish Report, Mulder said, "As is the case in all circumstances where a death in our facilities is considered of unnatural cause, we are fully supportive of the process to determine the cause of death, which must now take its course. The hospital as well as the clinicians involved will co-operate fully with the authorities in this due process.

"We were further greatly concerned about allegations that funds disappeared from the bank account of the patient and the insinuation that a member of staff may have been responsible for the alleged theft.

"Netcare looked into the matter to determine what transpired and to ascertain whether the hospital's strict procedures for safekeeping of patient valuables were adhered to. In consequence, we strongly dispute the allegations as well as a possible connection between the demise of the patient and the money which is said to have gone missing.

"We have encouraged the patient's family to report the matter to the South African Police Service [SAPS], and to open a case so that this matter can be fully investigated. We have zero tolerance for any criminal behaviour, and our hospital will co-operate fully with a SAPS investigation should a case be opened to bring any person or persons responsible to book."



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Jewish citizens drive e-tolls U-turn

STEVEN GRUZD

The government has finally agreed to scrap the much-hated electronic tolling of Gauteng's freeways (e-tolls) by 31 December 2022. After more than a decade of legal challenges, public protest, and widespread non-payment, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana announced on 26 October that National Treasury and the Gauteng provincial government would split the debt obligations of the South African National Road Agency Limited (SANRAL) 70:30.

Three Jewish men played significant roles in the original opposition to e-tolls. They were Jack Bloom, then leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) in the Gauteng legislature; the late lawyer Owen Blumberg; and advertising guru Louis Gavin.

Bloom told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that in 2011, when e-toll gantries started being erected all over the province, "it caught the attention of the public. It was all theoretical before this happened. People got very agitated."

Gauteng's highways were upgraded in time for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, with little public consultation. To pay for the improvements, the e-toll system was established. Road users were outraged.

Because of the public ire, Bloom held meetings with the Road Freight Association, businessman Wayne Duvenage, and various stakeholders, to find a solution. At the time, they believed that meeting the government would resolve dissatisfaction with e-tolls amicably and fairly. "I said we needed to take a strong stand," Bloom said.

This body soon became the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance (OUTA), and the DA initially donated some seed funding. OUTA needed to be a legal entity to mount a court case against SANRAL just before the e-tolls were meant to become operational. "We had to have a legal opinion ready. We needed to have our ducks in a row," Bloom said.

Based on a pro bono legal opinion by Blumberg, the Pretoria High Court temporarily halted the start date

of the system. "It was a significant win," Bloom said. "I think if it was a week later and the system was already up and running, we'd have lost."

Bloom felt that opposition to e-tolls needed to get on the front foot, and that the DA should call for a consumer boycott. He recommended that Gauteng's drivers not purchase e-tags – electronic devices that would pay for road use when passing under the gantries.

He had some convincing to do. Party leader at the time, Helen Zille, "wasn't comfortable with us asking people basically to break the law," Bloom said, but he eventually won the party's approval for this approach.

Bloom felt that opposition to e-tolls needed to get on the front foot, and that the DA should call for a consumer boycott.

Bloom then approached advertising guru Gavin, a Chabadnik who had worked on the African National Congress (ANC) election campaign in 1994, to help mount a civil-disobedience campaign. "We came up with the name 'Tollfree GP' and had stickers and t-shirts printed."

Gavin said that the campaign was important to get things rolling, but credits OUTA with doing the heavy lifting. "We started it off, but the credit must really go to

Photo: Wikipedia



Jack Bloom

OUTA," he said. "Once OUTA picked it up, it got real momentum. Jack did come up with the clever slogan, 'Stop Highway Robbery!' though."

"DA involvement gave it credibility," Bloom said, "even though people were reluctant to break the law to boycott the system. OUTA also committed to protect people against legal challenges for non-payment of e-tolls."

In a dramatic gesture immortalised on YouTube, Bloom publicly tore up his e-toll bill in the Gauteng legislature. "I was nervous – it's not normally how the DA operates. But I felt it was justified, and there were sound legal arguments why people shouldn't have to pay. The clip has had more than 10 000 views. People would stop me in the supermarket to congratulate me. You can see the then premier of Gauteng, Nomvula Mokonyane, smirking at the end of the video."

His involvement diminished over time as it was felt that OUTA should be non-political, but Bloom never gave up the fight.

Bloom said it was obvious from the start that e-tolls were never going to work. "There was such an outcry against e-tolls because of the lack of consultation,

people's voices not being heard, and, of course, the shlepp of the administrative burden and the extra expense. The mantra was that people could just take an alternate road, but it really wasn't practical in this case. And the collection costs were outrageous, especially as we were paying an Austrian company massive amounts to do it." Bloom said the debt could have been paid off already if a few cents had been added to the fuel levy at the beginning.

"I would like a full enquiry into the deals that were made," said Bloom. "I don't think the government has been honest about the real costs of the scheme." The DA has asked questions in parliament and the legislature and used the Promotion of Access to Information Act in an attempt to get answers out of the government.

When Gauteng Premier David Makhura came into office eight years ago, "the ANC tried to be government and opposition at the same time", Bloom said,

"by saying it would get rid of e-tolls as they were so unpopular and were costing the ANC votes. But they could never quite get it done. We could have saved billions in collection fees. That's the tragedy of this."

The scrapping of e-tolls "is a victory for civil society", Bloom said. "But it's not over. The province still has to figure out a way to pay its portion of the debt."

"It's obviously an achievement and a victory for transparency, besides the fact that SANRAL is totally bankrupt," Gavin said.

Gauteng citizens and perhaps those in other provinces will have to pick up the tab. This may make the ANC even more unpopular.

Both Bloom and Gavin expressed pride and satisfaction at what OUTA had achieved. It has kept the acronym, but changed its name to the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse to reflect its broader anti-corruption work beyond e-tolls.

"We were just good citizens fighting injustice who happened to be Jewish," Bloom said.



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The great return

For what seemed like an endless stretch of time during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to get involved in community events of any kind.

It was a strange time, one that looking back is almost hard to recall in its entirety. I don't remember exactly what it felt like not to be able to pop into a mall or go out for a coffee when it suited me.

My point is, we dreamt of going to shul or spending time with friends back then. Having a conversation with someone you didn't live with and being able to look them in the eye and read their body language was something we missed.

We lost a great deal over this time, but it has passed. And now, after two years of not being able to, we're having the Shabbos Project in person again.

Perhaps in the past, you may have found yourself calling this annual event passé, but what could possibly be passé about spending Shabbos with family, with community, with people who mean something to you?

What could be passé about doing something meaningful over a Shabbos with the local community and Jews around the world?

I've heard it said that this is the one weekend on which many people actually keep Shabbos. This means that over the Shabbos Project weekend, people get to experience Shabbat, something they don't otherwise make time for. Perhaps it will spark the flame to do it again another time for no other reason than it was meaningful and perhaps it felt spiritual.

Maybe it felt better than spending Saturday running around doing shopping or catching up on things you didn't get done during the week. Those Saturdays are exhausting and hardly feel special. They don't make you feel the unique difference between the rest of the week and Shabbos.

These are just my thoughts, and I'm certainly not anyone's Shabbos role model, but I do see the beauty of the Shabbos Project.

For me, it's about all that we missed doing as a community when we were at the height of the pandemic.

This project is yet another reminder of how fortunate we are to have this unique community, whose members, for the most part, really enjoy spending time together.

This sense of community is a reminder of my days first at Bnei Akiva and then Habonim machaneh. Those were some the finest holidays in my youth. I remember them with so much love.

Times have changed. When I was at Habonim as a teenager, we showered in open-air showers with cold water. It may sound terrible to you, but in my memory, the incredible feeling of that cold water rushing over you after a hot day on the beach was refreshing and wonderful.

But it was the camaraderie and friendships we made that made it worthwhile. I still remember some of the songs and war cries.

I recall eating in the outdoor *chadar ochel* with friends around – ones I had only just met and others I had made at machaneh the year before. I remember the laughter and so much fun. There were no cell phones or tablets. There was hardly time to read a good book because there was so much good, clean fun to be had with children of the same age, all of whom were there for the same purpose.

There was always someone to chat to, someone to have fun with, someone to pour your heart out to, and perhaps even someone to catch your eye.

That's machaneh – or my memories of it back in my day. However, having spoken to many teens who are involved now, it hasn't changed much. The fun and activities are the same, just a little more modern. One clear difference is that we definitely didn't have good coffee back then.

Machaneh is a life-changing and growing experience for any young person, and one that occurs within the community.

I spoke to a teenage girl in December last year just after the camps were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She was devastated. She had spent the whole year looking forward to yet another experience like the one she had two years before.

She told me that she was happy to go to Cape Town with her family, but it was much more work than camp. At camp, she said, your friends are around you and your days are planned. All you have to do is be there and be willing to get involved, and the fun happens.

In Cape Town or wherever you and your family choose to go, days may go by when you do almost nothing but hang out with your screen. On family holidays, spending time with friends takes effort to arrange, and then you need parents to make it happen. It's so much more complicated, and not even half the fun.

It's great chilling with the family after camp has ended, when you want to relax and spend time with the folks and siblings you may have missed. But there are few experiences that quite compare with machaneh. See page 10.

Why am I going on about this? It's simple. For two years, there were no camps. For two years, Jewish children made other plans because of the pandemic. And there are now many children who have no idea what they would miss by not going to camp.

All I'm saying is that it doesn't matter whether you go to Habonim, Bnei Akiva, or Netzer, what matters is that you don't miss out on this experience of a lifetime.

If it isn't for you, you need go only once. But I don't know many people who chose to go to machaneh only once.

Think about it – it's not too late to apply for this year.

May this be an extraordinary Shabbos!
Peta Krost
Editor



Journey to 25 – your path to emotional and spiritual fitness



OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN

Couch to 5K is one of the world's most popular fitness apps. Very simply, it's an exercise plan for beginners that motivates them to start running by taking small, incremental steps on the road to super-fitness.

The app's success is driven by a basic observation about human nature. Many people want the benefits of physical fitness – health, well-being, energy, optimism – but somehow never get around to it. It just seems too daunting. The goal seems too far off. So, the app proposes a simple methodology: start small. Begin with a manageable goal – a five-minute walk – and build from there. Within nine weeks, users are running 5kms without a break.

The secret is that each step by itself is completely manageable. You start from nothing (the couch!) and then, each day, you do a little bit more. In that way, the goal – seemingly so far off to begin with – is achievable.

This got me thinking. Right from the beginning of The Shabbos Project (this year is the tenth one), so many people have told me how much they loved keeping Shabbos on the project, how meaningful and enjoyable the experience was, how they wish they could keep Shabbos every week.

And yet, as much as they want it, many told me that it feels too daunting to start keeping all 25 hours of Shabbos, from sunset to stars out, every single week. In other words, there's a will to keep Shabbos, but people are looking for a way to get there.

The analogy to physical fitness is striking. Just like getting fit, keeping Shabbos is good for us. It's at the heart of being a Jew; it's one of our most important *mitzvahs*; it brings us joy; and we want to do it. Shabbos gives us the emotional, psychological, and spiritual fitness we all crave.

Emotionally, Shabbos gives us the time and headspace to nurture our precious relationships. Psychologically, Shabbos offers us respite from the pressures and demands of modern life, refreshing and restoring us so that we can face the world anew each week. Spiritually, Shabbos helps us reconnect to G-d, to our soul, to our sense of meaning and purpose in life. And vitally, it empowers us to inspire our children with what it means to have a Jewish home.

Then it occurred to me – why not use the model of Couch to 5K to help those who want to keep Shabbos? Why not map out an incremental process, a step-by-step journey to keeping Shabbos in full every week? Shabbos Project 2.0 was born – the Journey to 25 hours.

This year, The Shabbos Project is about starting this journey. It's a journey of becoming emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually fit by keeping a part of Shabbos every week.

Essentially, the Journey to 25 hours works exactly like the Couch to 5K app. It's a step-by-step programme that

you can do, incrementally, at your own pace, to reach this amazing goal of being able to keep Shabbos every week. The programme divides up Shabbos into manageable parts. Every Shabbos, you keep a part of Shabbos. The same part every week. And when you're ready, you add another part.

One example is to keep the part of Shabbos from candle-lighting until *kiddush*. The moment the candles are lit just before sunset, everyone powers down their phones. The family has a chance to bond and connect, to walk to shul together, to relax together at home, and enjoy that piece of time that's so tranquil and special.

Another part of Shabbos is from *kiddush* to *bensching*. Can you imagine an entire Friday night meal when no one is on their phones, with the entire family present? No one's running out. The car keys are down. And everybody is there to bond and connect. To connect with Hashem through *kiddush* and *hamotzi* and *bensching*. To connect with our



kids through the special blessings for children. To connect with everyone over good food, conversation, and words of Torah wisdom. It can be so magnificent.

These are just two examples. The 25 hours of Shabbos are made up of eight distinct parts. You can start with as many as you like – even with just one – and progress from there. Over the weeks and months that follow, keep adding more parts. Eventually, you'll build up the fitness to keep all of Shabbos, the full 25 hours.

The most important thing is that whatever you take on, do it every week, and when you do it, go all in. Don't dilute the experience or try half measures. Doing it fully is the only way to access the incredible gifts Shabbos offers us.

Just start, and keep it going every week. This Shabbos Project, let's resolve to take the gift of Shabbos with us into the year.

Let's do it together. We're ready for this next step as a community. To borrow another sporting reference – let's just do it.

• To join the Journey to 25 hours, sign up using this email address: journeyto25@chiefrabbi.co.za and the chief rabbi will send you a copy of his new book: Shabbat. A Day to Create Yourself when it's available to offer you extra inspiration and support on your journey.

Exposure of Durban ISIS cell raises security alert

>>Continued from page 4

Regarding the safety of the Jewish community, "If we talk about international terror groups, the Jewish community has always been a target, so Jewish communities are always vulnerable to organised or lone-wolf attacks," Opperman says.

"The sanctioning indicates that South Africa has an ISIS facilitation network," says Ryan Cummings, the director of security risk-management consultancy Signal Risk. "It's using its expertise and criminal undertakings to fund ISIS operations domestically or abroad.

"This also comes at a time when South Africa could potentially be greylisted by the Financial Action Task Force, which has stated that there are various kinds of non-compliance by South Africa in terms of countering extremist terrorism financing and money laundering. Hopefully this will prompt the government to take more robust measures in terms of countering extremist financing."

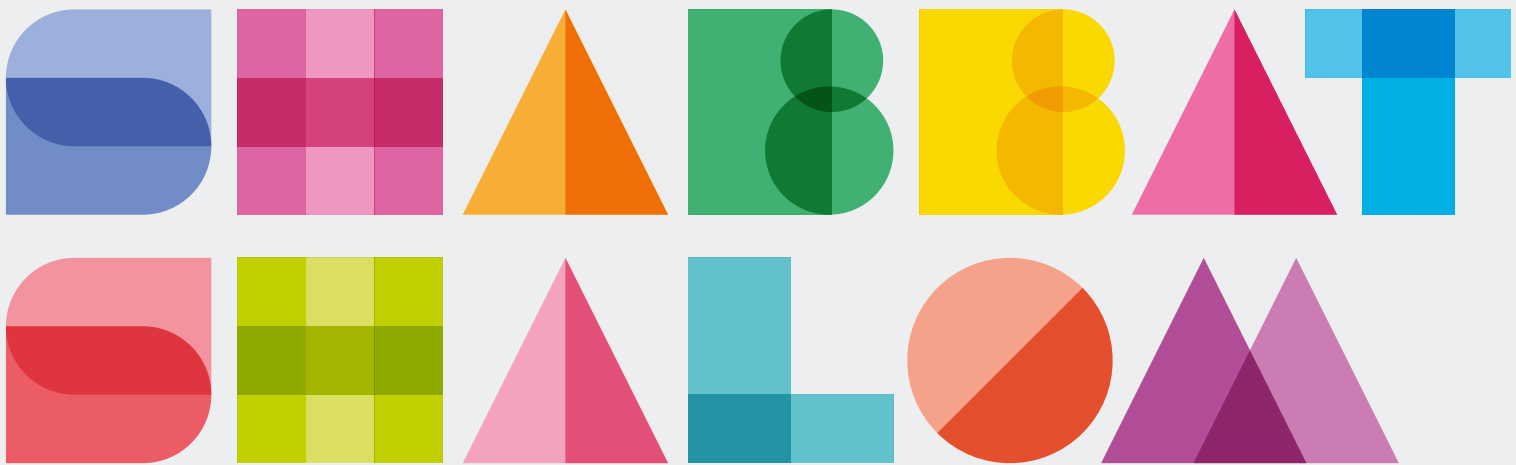
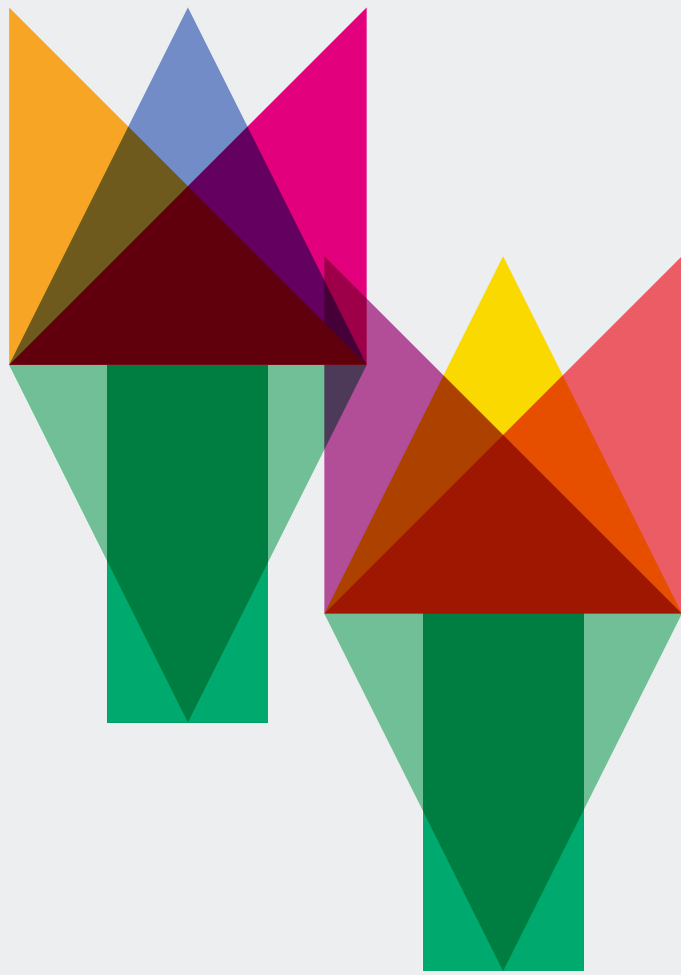
Cummings agrees that the "Jewish community is considered a 'high-value target' for extremist organisations across the world", and "ISIS sympathisers in South Africa such as the Thulsie twins wanted to target Jewish interests. So, the presence of any extremist organisation definitely poses a threat to the Jewish community."

Asked if this cell could be linked to the warning by the US government about a possible terrorist threat in Sandton in October, Solomon says, "My sense is that the different cells don't have integrated command and control."

Cummings agrees that "the cell in question has been designated to the Durban area, and suggests that the group is more of a financing network as opposed to engaging in militant activities. There isn't a lot of evidence to suggest that this could be associated with the perceived Sandton attack."

Greenblatt notes that "some reports have suggested the possibility that the cell may be linked to the Sandton threat, but we don't have information confirming this. That said, it's clear that ISIS is a growing threat, and an attack like that posed in the warning would fit its modus operandi. It's important to be vigilant and prepared. Next time there may not be a warning."

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.



LET'S KEEP THIS SHABBOS
TOGETHER!



PARASHAT VAYEIRA

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South Africans brace for backlash against right-wing Israeli government

OPINION STEVEN GRUZD

As the dust settles after Israel’s fifth general election in four years, voters have returned a resounding mandate to former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “Bibi” – as he is known to friend and foe – and his right-wing and religious allies won 64 out of 120 seats in the Knesset, Israel’s parliament. This is practically a landslide given the



Photo: JTA via Office of Benjamin Netanyahu

Benjamin Netanyahu

and Otzma Yehudit (with 14 seats together, the third largest party). Many in Israel and the diaspora are appalled at the naked anti-Arab stance and general intolerance (including of homosexuality) exhibited by the leaders of the latter two parties, Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The horse-trading by Netanyahu to form a government will place these politicians in pivotal positions in return for their support. They have intimated that they would be open to reforming the judiciary and changing laws so as to quash Netanyahu’s court cases.

This possibility has made Israel and Jews around the world worry about the resilience of Israeli democracy.

Jews in the diaspora are often more liberal and progressive than those living in Israel on human rights, tolerance for multiple streams of Jewish practice, and negotiations with the Palestinians. Divisive issues, like allowing mixed-gender prayers at the Kotel, have driven a wedge between the American reform and conservative movements and the Israeli

government, which repeatedly fudged its responses. The influence of the Orthodox rabbinate in Israel is formidable, and its parties are now back in power.

A right-wing Israeli government will be easily demonised by Israel haters, who will no doubt pounce on its every move, especially in an illiberal direction. Diaspora communities are sometimes embarrassed by their Israeli sisters and brothers, but nevertheless are called on to support them, and they usually do.

Some, like Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft of the African Jewish Congress, have said it’s the job of the Israeli ambassador to defend Israel not the job of Jewish communities. This is a hard sell in South Africa, where most Jews are staunch Zionists.

Diaspora communities face heightened antisemitism whenever violence erupts in the Middle East, such as during and after the string of Israeli operations against militants in Gaza for the past 15 years. This is no different in South Africa. Often, it’s worse here as the country is in the eye of the anti-Zionist storm. It also doesn’t take long for sentiment against Israel to become a backlash against Jews.

But let’s be frank – the anti-Israel crowd will criticise and demean any Israeli government for whatever it does. Does it really matter to them or us which government runs the Knesset? Witness the outcry over Israel’s Nation-State law a few years ago that sought to undergird the Jewish character and essence of Israel while protecting non-Jewish minorities.

Anti-Zionists ultimately desire the total destruction of the Jewish state and deny any legitimacy to the very basis of that state. A right-wing government is just a slightly easier target. South Africa’s Jewish community should be ready for the barrage of bile that’s about to come our way.

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



Durban activists shocked by accounts of xenophobia

OPINION ALANA BARANOV



“Profound, humbling, and disturbing” was the description of Anglican priest Reverend Canon Peter Houston of the xenophobia dialogue *Finding the Voices* held at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre (DHGC) on Thursday, 3 November.

The event was a response to the wave of hate and violence building against foreign nationals in our country, and hoped to pass the microphone symbolically and physically to refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeker communities in order for them to share their heartbreaking experiences. The epidemic of xenophobia and Afrophobia in South Africa isn’t just creating deep divisions and mistrust between communities, and profoundly traumatising refugee, migrant, and asylum seekers, it’s tearing apart our social fabric.

Mary Kluk, the director of the DHGC, opened the event with a quote from Menachem Rosensaft, a child of Holocaust survivors who was involved in the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. His words reflect the vision of the DHGC, namely that “Visitors to the museum come not just to mourn the dead but to recognise and learn from the resilience and marvellous human potential demonstrated by the survivors. That the survivors returned to being human beings rather than brutalised victims, humans with hope and aspirations who were able to resume dreaming rather than endure nightmares.” Mary shared, “And that’s what we hope for today. That we’ll be a tiny part of helping people to resume dreaming rather than enduring nightmares.”

The DHGC was opened in 2008 to support the inclusion of the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust in the national curriculum, and to create a more caring and just society in which human rights and diversity are respected.

Each year, thousands of school pupils from across KwaZulu-Natal take part in educational workshops; teachers undergo specialised training; and community events are held which use the history of Nazi Germany as an example of how a democratic society can descend into unspeakable atrocity through propaganda and prejudice. The centre’s work explores the past to better understand the power of hateful words to create violent action, and in this way, ensures that the events of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity don’t happen again.

“We’ve been talking about xenophobia for years and years, but there’s no light at the end of the tunnel,” said Theophilus Mukambilwa, a member of the KwaZulu-Natal Refugee Council since its inception and one of the speakers at the dialogue. “We’ve been trying to work in townships and rural areas because if you look deeply at what’s driving xenophobia, it’s poverty, it’s lack of information,” he said. “People live in fear, people live in a prison. There’s no freedom because you’re afraid.

“As we speak, in Pietermaritzburg, the refugees trading on the street have been removed. Families are suffering, they don’t have food or money for their children to go to school,” said Daniel Byamungu Dunia, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and secretary general of the Africa Solidarity Network. His organisation promotes social cohesion with the aim of ending xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

“We’re trying to engage all government structures, but no one is coming forward. There’s only policy, but people are still suffering,” Daniel said. “If the government won’t accept that there’s a problem, we’re not going to be able to resolve it.”

Reverend Mathias Bigirimana, who hails from Burundi and has been in South Africa for 22 years as a senior pastor of the All Nations Ministry in Durban and the chairperson of the Africa Diaspora Pastors Forum, shared his hopes for building social cohesion by creating trust and an emphasis on social justice.

S’bongiseni Vilakazi, the author and executive director of The Valley Trust, a non-profit organisation focusing on community health, shared a South Africa perspective on xenophobia with the audience, which included members of the KwaZulu-Natal Inter-religious Council and Religions for Peace, school principals, members of civil society, and local government as well as the media. He acknowledged the human stories shared, and expressed regret at the behaviour of fellow South Africans. “I feel ashamed,” he said. Vilakazi also read from his own book of prose and poetry titled *Who Shall Stand?* which ended with a call to see the beauty of those different to us and celebrate the diversity of our country.

The final speaker, Ashleigh Mapendo, a young Congolese woman who is part of the Favor Foundation working with refugee youth who live at Durban’s North Beach, shared harrowing testimony, including the frightening ordeal of being kidnapped by taxi drivers, and the heartbreak of losing friends to violence.

“My friend was killed simply because she



Ashleigh Mapendo shares her story with Alana Baranov

was a foreigner,” she said. Ashleigh’s brother, Arnold, spoke of how the brutality he had witnessed as a young foreign national had stolen his childhood and left him feeling hopeless.

Sadly, history has shown us what happens when hate is left unchecked. The DHGC permanent exhibition details examples from Bosnia, Rwanda, apartheid South Africa, and the Holocaust. Xenophobia is discrimination and hatred, and must be condemned and combatted. As educators and Jewish South Africans striving to take the lessons of the past and apply to them to the challenges of today, we cannot sit by silently while xenophobia engulfs our country. The message of the dialogue was loud and clear – that the DHGC centre is a safe space for anyone affected by xenophobia; that we are proud allies of the refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeker communities; and that we’ll continue to do all that we can to raise awareness and combat hate in all its forms.

As the United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt says, “In the fight against hatred and evil, neutrality isn’t an option. There are no bystanders.” We can’t and won’t be bystanders.

• Alana Baranov is a writer and the social justice liaison for the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre and South African Jewish Board of Deputies. She’s a steering committee member of the Hate Crimes Working Group as well as the World Jewish Congress’ Jewish Diplomatic Corps.

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Sachs Recalled the first case that raised the question in the Constitutional Court of the meaning of religious freedom. The 7-Eleven chain store wanted to sell beer and wine on Sundays. "The law said no sales of beer and wine on Sundays, Good Friday, and Christmas." Richard Goldstone, Arthur Chaskalson, and Sachs all had different opinions on the matter. "Arthur and three colleagues said, 'Where's the invasion of religious freedom? People can carry on with their prayers, organising their lives according to their beliefs?' Goldstone said, 'There's an inequality issue.



Sachs recounted a case about a Muslim woman receiving her lease from her late husband. "According to the lease, on the death of the registered owner, his surviving spouse could take over the tenancy. She said, 'I'm the surviving spouse.' The court said, 'No, you're not, a spouse has to be legally married. Muslim marriage isn't recognised.' I felt a kind of judicial rage in terms




Sachs also discussed the case of a Catholic family group asking the court to protect the rights of same-sex couples but not allow them to say that they were married. "We had to respond to the separate-but-equal

argument. Do you strike down the Marriage Act so that nobody can use the word? If same-sex couples can't, then nobody does. That can't be what the Constitution intended. A large portion of the judgment then stated that same-sex couples are constitutionally entitled, as human beings, to express their love and commitment publicly and undertake the same responsibilities as heterosexual couples do."

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Changing lives, making friends – machaneh back in business

TALI FEINBERG

“The camp experience is part and parcel of growing up as part of South African Jewry. The growth, development, and inspiration that happens on machaneh is unlike anything else,” says this year’s Bnei Akiva [Bnei] rosh machaneh, Dena Cohen. She’s one of numerous *madrichim* preparing for the three major machanot South African Jewish youth will have an opportunity to experience in December for the first time in three years.

“There’s a reason your siblings, parents, and grandparents have been going to camp for decades,” says Brad Gottschalk of Habonim Dror [Habo]. “Habo is unlike any space I’ve experienced, and I know people in their 80s who say the same. I can guarantee that machaneh will change your life for the better. It’s not some lame summer camp. Machaneh is the only place I’ve had impromptu parties or made a ‘bakuzzi’ (jacuzzi in a bakkie). Cape Town is going nowhere. Plett is going nowhere. Machaneh, however, is something you can do only now. Ask your family for stories about camp. It’s something that will stay with you forever.”

“Youth movements strengthen the foundation of Jewish communities,” says Netzer Mazkir Julian Gordon. “They provide new perspectives, and most importantly, a fun place to enjoy with close friends. The more the Jewish community can support us, the more we can support those around us.”

After the pandemic “we’re putting the heart back into the body, and the blood back into the veins of Bnei Akiva”, says Cohen. “We’ve been hard at work training our *madrichim* to gain the skills to be back at camp. We’re committed to recreating the connection between *maddies* and *channies*.”

“Bnei Akiva machaneh is a unique experience because of our incredible *madrichim*,” she says. “*Channichim* have the chance to connect to individuals whose way of life is based on Torah values. They are neither parents nor teachers, but role models who give

continuously. Most *madrichim* feel indebted to their own *madrichim* for changing their lives and wish to emulate it for their *channichim*. And so, the extraordinary cycle continues.”

“The fact that machaneh is happening this year for the first time in forever is surreal,” says Gottschalk. “I think about the first time the buses are going to enter the campsite, the late-night talks around the campfire, or hearing *Od Yavo Shalom* blast on the loudspeakers during havdalah, and I get chills. I can’t wait for a new generation of kids to experience it.”

For those who are hesitant to come to machaneh, Gordon says, “There’s no harm in putting yourself

setting. A change of scenery is incredibly refreshing.”

“The world has never been so complicated and scary – especially for kids,” says Gottschalk. “How lucky are we to have camp as it can help fix what was broken. The realisation that you can change the world is beyond description.

The fact that kids choose not to be on their phones on camp speaks to how important the space is. Without pressure to conform, Habo is a healthy space that’s an anomaly in the 21st century. Kids need to relearn how to socialise in-person rather than through a screen. I can’t think of a better place than camp to do this.”

After not having machaneh for two years, “It will be tricky to catch up and, in some cases, rebuild friendly connections,” says Gordon. But they plan to build on a long tradition. “There’s no better environment to facilitate coming back together than the campsite,” says

Gottschalk. “*Maddies* work tirelessly, constantly thinking what more they can do to make the environment better. With our winter camp and mini machanot throughout the year, we have focused on catching up a bit of what was lost for *channies*. For many, it will be their first time at the campsite, and they’re going to have an incredible introduction to Habo.”

“It’s daunting to come on machaneh especially after two years of being cooped up at home,” says Cohen. “But imagine being with your friends for three weeks, with awesome *madrichim*. Going to the beach, inspiring *tochniot*, sports tournaments, *ruach* sessions, empowering Torah learning, *tiyulim*, Israel education, high-level *kollel*, uplifting Shabbos, Zionism, and so much more. I can’t imagine a more unbelievable experience.”

“It’s always been the people that make Netzer unique,” says Gordon. “We have fewer people than other movements, but that allows us to build greater friendships.”

“On so many levels, Habo offers a space that empowers kids,” says Gottschalk. “Our education allows you to explore your Judaism, Zionism, and identity in an informal way not necessarily offered at school. We put so much effort, time, and thought into our *peulot* – Habo *channichim* always leave machaneh with the tools to understand themselves and the world around them better.

“And as serious as the educational side can be, I’ve never been in such a funny and silly environment,” he says. “It’s magical that inside the bounds of the campsite, the need to maintain social expectations and hierarchies goes away.”

Israeli park commemorates SA Jews who opposed apartheid

A memorial park was inaugurated in Israel on Monday, 7 November, to commemorate the many South African Jews involved in the struggle against apartheid, as well as those who supported Israel.

“At a time when some are trying to divide South Africa and Israel for their own sectarian interests, this garden will be a living testament to the bond between the two peoples in the struggle for freedom,” said Jewish National Fund South Africa Chairperson Michael Kransdorff at the ceremony. Kransdorff championed the garden in Tel Mond.

The 5 000m² memorial garden is surrounded by trees in Tel Mond park, a 22 000m² area located in central Israel. The community in Tel Mond is mostly English-speaking and is close to Ra’anana, where many South Africans have settled, and Netanya.

The park will commemorate the likes of Helen Suzman, who for many years was the official opposition to the Nationalist Party-led apartheid government, and the lawyer who represented Nelson Mandela and other African National Congress activists in the Treason Trial. It will also honour anti-apartheid Rabbi Myer Benjamin, and veteran *Rand Daily Mail* journalist Benjy Pogrand, among many others.

The garden will house a sculpture by a South African artist, 36 trees will be planted, and there will be stones throughout *Gan Siyabonga* (We Thank you Garden) for each activist with QR codes. When the QR codes are scanned, a short personal history of the activist will be revealed. The number 36 was chosen because according to Jewish tradition, each generation is saved by 36 righteous people.

“There were many South African Jews who

contributed to South Africa’s liberation and who were supportive of Israel’s establishment and development,” Kransdorff said at the ceremony. “These heroes have never been recognised, and many aren’t well known, yet they were instrumental in helping to build better societies in South Africa and Israel. We’re researching the stories of

government during the apartheid era and played a major role in the struggle for human rights. He held multiracial prayer meetings at a time when it was illegal. He housed hundreds of displaced people in his synagogue who were expelled from their homes by the Nationalist government. It’s heartening when people who never sought recognition are acknowledged for their actions.”

Benjamin was a staunch supporter of the state of Israel and emigrated there in 1988.

Said Ruth Wasserman Lande, a South African member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament), “As someone who grew up in South Africa and immigrated to Israel, I’m immensely proud to witness the bridging of those two worlds with the opening of this park, donated by the South African Jewish community, which is known for its staunch support for and loyalty to South Africa on the one hand and its love of Israel



Breaking ground at the Siyabonga Garden in Israel

honourees to be commemorated in *Gan Siyabonga*, which include artists, rabbis, musicians, lawyers, educators, doctors, parliamentarians, those who went into townships to feed the hungry, and even those who took up arms in South Africa against the apartheid government.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation said, “This memorial garden, a first of its kind, is a powerful testament to a group of South African Jews who fought against injustice in South Africa while also embracing the need for the Jewish state of Israel to exist and thrive.”

David Benjamin spoke at the event about his father. “My late father, Rabbi Myer [Sonny] Benjamin, was an outspoken critic of the

Mosaic steps pave way to colour and light at KDVP



Kira-Lee Mervis, the head of outreach at King David High School Victory Park, completed a mosaic project in bright colours which she hopes will “bring light into the school”.

The journey began with a mosaicking workshop run by Mervis at KDVP’s Arts and Culture Week. After doing some research, she brought her idea to life, creating mosaic steps at the school.

Kentridge reflects on a lifetime of fascination with the law

TALI FEINBERG

At the age of 100, Sir Sydney Kentridge KCMG KC has spent a lifetime in service of the law and has witnessed seminal events of the past century, from World War II to apartheid’s most heinous crimes. He celebrated a century on 5 November 2022 quietly at home with family and friends.

Though he has lived and worked in the United Kingdom for three decades, he says, “I still feel very closely connected to South Africa. I used to return frequently. One memorable visit was after the establishment of the Constitutional Court, when one of the judges was away and I was asked to fill in. So for the first few weeks of the court’s existence, I sat as a judge. It was absolutely fascinating to work with a new Constitution in a new court.”

Looking back, he says, “At the time of choosing a profession, I wasn’t sure what to do. Now, it all seems pre-ordained. Yet one always thinks one could have done better and more.”

It’s clear that Kentridge couldn’t have been more dedicated to the law, however. He’s a Knight Commander of the British Order of St Michael and St George and a Supreme Counsellor of the South African Order of the Baobab in Gold. He’s been awarded an Honorary LL.D. by numerous universities, and was elected an Honorary Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford – his *alma mater* – in 1986. The South African General Bar Council awards an annual prize, the Sydney and Felicia Kentridge Award, for excellence in public-interest law.

Sir Sydney recalls with crystal-clear memory how he had a “conventional upbringing in Johannesburg in a political household as my father, [Morris Kentridge], was a leading lawyer and member of parliament”. His father’s family originated in Lithuania and England, while his mother, May Shafner, came to South Africa from the United Kingdom. He was born in 1922.

“When I was two years old, my father was elected as a minister of parliament for the constituency of Troyeville, Johannesburg, and he held that seat for 34 years. So, politics was constant presence in my life,” he says. He witnessed the rise of Nazism in Europe and the strengthening of nationalists in South Africa, who “were vocally antisemitic. And the chief spokesperson who opposed them in parliament was my father”.

He finished school at 16, and went to university in 1939 to get his Bachelor of Arts. “At the end of 1941, I joined the army.” He went on to serve as an intelligence officer in East Africa and Italy. The experience had a profound impact on him, especially one incident while he was waiting to be repatriated.

“One day, a senior officer of the South African forces in Italy asked me to prosecute in a court martial. I knew nothing about the law. He said, ‘Well you have a university degree, haven’t you?’ I said yes, and he gave me a little book on criminal law, adding that he would assist me if needed. So I prosecuted in two court martials. I found the process so interesting, I knew the law was for me.”

Before the end of the war, the South African government said that any ex-serviceman could go to university on a grant, interest free, repayable only when they entered their profession. “So I went to Oxford. In those days, all it took was a letter of recommendation and there were no entrance exams. So in September 1946, I started reading law there.”

He “took to it immediately”, finishing the degree in two years, after which he came back to South Africa, where he qualified for the Bar in February 1949. He started as junior advocate, going to magistrate’s courts and acting in small criminal and civil cases.

“Then, when the Treason Trial came along in 1958, I was asked by the attorneys and senior advocates acting for the defence to come into the team as a junior. I had done ‘quasi political’ work before – Solly Sachs, the great unionist, had asked me to act for the Garment Workers Union

as junior council in some of its cases.

“The Treason Trial was a remarkable experience, defending the likes of [Oliver] Tambo and [Nelson] Mandela, and working with leading council such as Isie Maisels and Bram Fischer,” he remembers.

In 1978, Kentridge was asked to represent the family of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko at the inquest following Biko’s death in police custody. “We proved that the police account of how he met his injuries was false. Our case was that he had been assaulted by police, and that he was dying when sent to Pretoria overnight.

“I never felt under threat,” Kentridge

says. “One of the odd things about South Africa under apartheid was that one was completely free in the courtroom, one could cross examine and attack the police’s version, or call one’s own evidence. Justice was done in establishing the facts.”

His son, renowned artist William Kentridge, says, “From a very young age, I was aware of growing up in a house of lawyers. One early childhood memory was the Treason Trial. I remember Albert Luthuli, one of three Nobel Prize winners that my dad had as clients, coming to the house, having supper with the family, and I wondered who this person was

who elicited such awe and deference. Later on, during the Sharpeville inquest, I remember seeing the photos on my father’s desk. When I was in high school, I remember the Biko inquest, and the consternation about the arrest of Bram Fisher, who was a family friend.

“I also remember conversations when cases would be discussed, my mother’s rage at the terrible judges, the terrible prosecutors, and the terrible laws. He would keep working long into the night. I suppose this is a strange obsession that we share, that the default position is to be at work – and there’s always more work to be done than there’s time to do it.”



Sir Sydney Kentridge

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Jewish Achiever excitement reaches fever pitch

Excitement is at fever pitch with just one week to go for the most unique Jewish event yet – the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2022.

This year will be like nothing we’ve ever experienced before. We’ve pulled out all the stops to ensure that this extravaganza will be the party of the year. It will be the event that really makes everyone truly experience what it means to get “back to life”.

Make sure you’re one of the 800 or so people who will be in person having the time of their lives while celebrating those special few who have inspired us this year. This is the very last chance to book your table or seats on: bit.ly/jaa2022book.

But if you can’t be there in person, you don’t have to miss this incredible evening if you register to watch on: bit.ly/2022jaa.

If you’re there in person, you’ll be able to partake in the delectable 10-course meal while quaffing your favourite tipple at



one of the many bars around the magnificent venue at the Sandton Convention



Centre. There will be a wine bar, or if that isn’t your thing, you could choose to hang out at the whisky, gin, or even the Jägermeister bar.

And from anywhere in the magnificent ballroom, you’ll be entertained by the incomparable maestro with the velvet voice, Harry Sideropoulos, who will make you laugh, think, and simply enjoy the fantastic moment.

Then, you’ll feast your eyes on Chilean acrobats swinging from the ceilings, re-enacting scenes from *The Matrix* way above

your heads. You may not believe your eyes as you watch people climbing walls and dancers tapping to *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and so much more.

And just when you thought there couldn’t be anything else, you’ll get to see hip hop dancing before top DJs take over, feasting other senses.

However, without any doubt, the most spectacular part of the evening is what we’re all there for – to find out who has won this year’s 10 coveted awards.

“This year, we’re really coming out of our shells and the holes we were hiding in during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown,” says Absa Jewish Achiever Chairperson Howard Sackstein. “So, instead of a formal, staid, glittering, gala banquet, we’re coming ‘back to life’, back to reality, with the party of the decade.

“We want you all to join us in celebrating our award winners and being ‘back to life’. Join us in doing all that we were unable to do and dreamt of doing during lockdown. The time is now.”

Although there was the option to buy



tickets for the event online, most of the so far 800 attendees have booked to be there in person, and only three chose to have their meals and party delivered to their home.

So, if you haven’t booked to be there on Saturday 19 November, this is your absolute last chance.

Go to: **bit.ly/jaa2022book**

To watch the broadcast live online, register on: **bit.ly/2022jaa**

Shabbos Project expansive and energised

SIMON APFEL

This weekend, we'll experience our tenth Shabbos Project since it his weekend, we'll experience our tenth Shabbos Project since it was introduced in 2013. And, though it has become an annual event for South Africans, it's growing in leaps and bounds around the world.

To mark the occasion, four former Sinai Indaba speakers – Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Nili Couzens, Slovie Jungreis-Wolff, and David Sacks – will be delivering inspirational talks at South African shuls and a number of Jewish schools, around this year's Shabbos Project.

Events are happening across the community, involving 20 shuls, with communal dinners, lunches, *tischs*, special learning programmes, and havdalah concerts. About 4 000 women have booked for the Johannesburg challah bake, with close on 1 000 having attended the Cape Town equivalent.

This year's Shabbos Project will see the launch of Shabbos Project 2.0 – the “Journey to 25 hours” – empowering Jewish families to keep Shabbos throughout the year.

Once again, South Africa will be joining Jews in more than 1 500 cities and 110 countries worldwide celebrating this year's Shabbos Project. There will be more than 2 500 events taking place in cities across the globe, more than doubling pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels of participation.

In **Israel**, more than 250 000 participants are involved in The Shabbos Project thanks to an astonishing co-ordinated effort across civil society in more than 100 cities throughout Israel. Activities are taking place in schools, synagogues, and city centres, bridging the stark political and religious divides in Israeli society.

As one example, Zehut, an Israeli non-profit organisation focused on building Jewish identity among youth, will be organising Shabbos Project activities and



classes for 135 000 students in secular government schools in 35 cities in Israel.

Hundreds of Jewish communities in North America are participating. In **San Diego**, 180 diverse Jewish organisations are co-ordinating events for the entire Jewish community.

In **Los Angeles**, the Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy is running 10 events for children and their families, including a block party Kabbalat Shabbos service in the streets and a Shabbos lunch in the school gym, while religious and secular families will pair up for Shabbos dinner.

Project Inspire will host its annual “Body and Soul Retreat” in **New Jersey**, with more than 500 Jews from all over the United States, Canada, and Israel gathering for an unforgettable Shabbaton experience.

In **Strasbourg**, France, 20 young Jewish refugees from **Ukraine** will attend a Shabbos dinner along with hundreds of local youth. The dinner is the highlight of a full Shabbaton programme for the refugees. Currently living in Germany and Switzerland, they will travel as far as 900km to the event and will be put up in a local hotel. Most have very little Jewish background, and special Russian-language Shabbos guides have been printed to help them make the most of the experience.

In South America, **Buenos Aires** will host a mass outdoor challah bake in a park for about 3 000 women. Other Shabbos Project events are happening in Córdoba, Argentina, Guatemala, and Chile.

New countries joining the project this year include **Tahiti** and **Morocco**, with events taking place in Casablanca in the build-up to Shabbos, culminating in a community-wide Shabbos meal.

“After two years of disrupted celebrations, there's a real thirst for in-person events and real human connection,” Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said. “The Shabbos Project is a direct response to the call of our times, a chance to re-energise, reconnect, and unite in celebration.”



Expats beware: SARS can hold your inheritance for ransom

OPINION

MICHAEL KRANSDORFF AND LAURA SASSOON



Recent changes to the financial emigration process are causing unforeseen headaches for ex-South Africans receiving inheritances from South Africa.

Many South Africans who moved abroad didn't financially emigrate and didn't change their tax status to non-resident on eFiling with the South African Revenue Service (SARS), as they are required to do. In so doing, they evaded paying the required emigration exit charge to SARS. For many years, they have been able to fly under the radar, but no longer. Due to recent amendments to the financial emigration process, a change in tax status is a requirement for expats to be able to remit their inheritance and other income from South Africa abroad. The looming greylisting of South Africa by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is also contributing to the increased compliance burden.

Last year, as part of a drive to revamp South Africa's sprawling exchange control architecture, National Treasury linked financial emigration to tax residency status. Though financial emigration was previously a separate process done through a bank (as the authorised dealer on behalf of the South African Reserve Bank), the new process now requires formally becoming non-South African tax resident with SARS. This change in tax status is by no means automatic. Each case needs to be considered with reference to South African tax law, international tax law, and relevant double tax agreements, supported by official documents and evidence. These changes have had a major impact on South African expats receiving inheritances and other income from South Africa.

South Africa, even with the gradual liberalisation of exchange control over the past few years, still has hefty restrictions on South African residents when moving money abroad. Non-residents, on the other hand, have much more freedom in expatriating funds overseas. This is particularly so in the case of inheritance. Consequently, for an expat to receive an inheritance from South Africa abroad, they need to be formally approved as non-tax resident by SARS.

This is posing a problem for many ex-South Africans. Most of the major South African banks have in recent months been tightening up their controls and are now asking for certificates of South African tax non-residency in order to remit funds abroad. This is even happening in cases where expats have a long standing relationship with their South African bank and have been remitting funds abroad regularly for many years.

South Africa's looming greylisting by the FATF is contributing to banks' increased vigilance. Last year the FATF, the global financial watchdog, found serious deficiencies in South Africa's monitoring and prosecution of international money laundering and terrorist financing. South Africa has until the end of this year to address these issues. This will mean increased

compliance for money transferred abroad, including proof of being tax non-resident in South Africa.

Unfortunately, becoming non-resident and financially emigrating isn't a simple task. SARS doesn't make it easy to escape the South African tax net. First, one needs to be a registered South African taxpayer with SARS and have an eFiling profile. This has created an administration nightmare for those who emigrated many years ago. Some have never registered for tax in South Africa or have long since forgotten their tax numbers, while others are locked out of eFiling because their contact details are no longer relevant. Moreover, some people have subsequently married abroad and changed their surnames, but this hasn't been updated with SARS and



so their SARS files and latest identity documents don't match. In the worst-case scenario, people with apartheid-era ID numbers aren't even able to register, and need to apply for new identity documents before they can proceed to “tax emigrate”.

Heirs should beware that changing tax status could have financial implications as well. South Africa imposes an exit charge on South Africans residents leaving the tax net. This is achieved through a deemed disposal of world-wide assets for capital gains tax purposes. Fortunately, SARS still allows taxpayers to backdate their change in tax status to when they actually emigrated. However back taxes and interest still need to be paid. This needs to be done by way of a separate voluntary disclosure process. Timing your change in tax status and calculating the exit charge is complex and requires specialist advice.

South Africans with expat heirs should assist them to act now and proactively change their tax status rather than dumping them with additional financial and administrative burdens after they have passed. Seeking advice from a specialist international tax practitioner can help navigate the pitfalls in this new landscape of exchange controls and tax rules.

• *Michael Kransdorff is a Harvard educated international tax practitioner, and Laura Sassoon is a chartered accountant and former senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. They run the Institute for International Tax and Finance.*

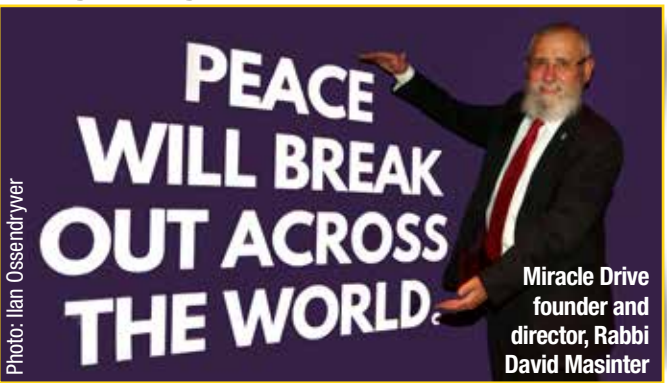
Miracle Drive dinner pilots changing the world for the better

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Bringing a wave of old-school glamour to Hyde Park Corner's NuMetro Cinema complex, the Miracle Drive Dinner with a Difference paid tribute to sponsors who allow Miracle Drive's projects to flourish, and illuminated the power of kindness. From delicious food from Catering by Riva to violin renditions of contemporary songs, to prize draws, the evening's entertainment included an immersive cinema experience exemplifying the power of imagining a new kind of spirit in the world. Sitting in cinemas, audiences wore eye masks as they were taken on a journey of sound

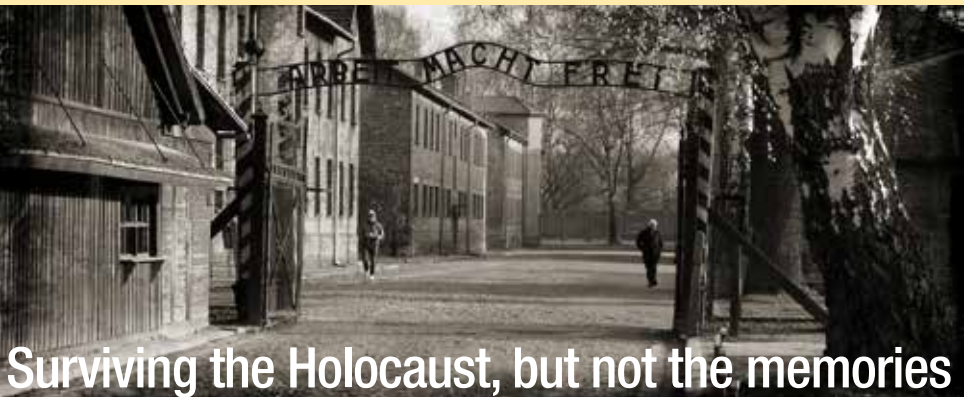
and sensation, illuminating the power of imagination. The immersive film highlighted the need to open our eyes to what isn't visible and make a difference. "It doesn't matter where you come from, we should never become blind to the poverty, problems, and troubles of others," was its key message. "We see the suffering and pain of others, but we also see our unique role in the world and the opportunity to make a difference, big or small. Every single one of us has the spirit to do something to change the world for good. Chabad House Miracle Drive helps us to see, to open our eyes to the educational needs of our youth, the directional

needs of our families, and the emotional and physical needs of our seniors. To see the real needs of those who have little but can grow a lot, those who have been overlooked, those whom we really need to see." The projects spearheaded by Miracle Drive have had an impact on thousands of people in the community and broader South Africa. Thanking donors and sponsors, Rabbi Michael Katz announced that Miracle Drive had raised R23.6 million since 1 September 2021. Sponsors including Balwin Properties, Yamaha, and Standard Bank were honoured. The dinner also served as the



launchpad for the first annual Meyer Kahn Lamplighter Awards. Celebrating the legacy of late Miracle Drive president, renowned businessman and philanthropist, Meyer Kahn, the Lamplighter Awards were given to a select group of individuals who have made invaluable contributions to the projects supported by Miracle Drive. Paying tribute to 50 years of Chabad activity in South Africa this year under the leadership of Rabbi Mendel and Mashi Lipskar, the event also highlighted some of Miracle Drive's upcoming projects. This includes Hakhel, which means "coming together". Chabad House will be holding a grand Hakhel event in April 2023 to celebrate uniting the community through Torah learning. Another upcoming initiative is Project Connect, using the power of prayer to empower everyone with meaningful interaction with G-d. This will be driven by

the publication of a user-friendly siddur, published in Kahn's memory. The world-renowned Rohr Jewish Learning Institute course, titled "My G-d" which answers the most pressing questions about G-d, will also soon be available. The event also officially launched Miracle Drive International, which was established to raise funds in the United States for Chabad House Johannesburg and to showcase some of the best that South Africa has to offer. This initiative exists in collaboration with sponsors Mdluli Lodge and Delta Airlines. Winners of the Miracle Drive's impressive selection of prizes including a Yamaha piano valued at R125 000, getaways at The Capital Hotels and Apartments, and a R25 000 Hirsch's Homestore voucher, were also drawn at the event. At the end of the night, Balwin Properties gave away Miracle Drive's grand prize – a R1 million furnished apartment at its new Waterfall development Munyaka, which features a crystal lagoon – to one lucky winner. Amidst the excitement, the meaning behind Miracle Drive remained central. "The vision of Miracle Drive is to help people find their worth and uplift every single person in our city and country," said Miracle Drive's founder and director, Rabbi David Masinter.



SAUL KAMIONSKY

The *Survivor*, which debuted at South African cinemas last Friday, 4 November, portrays the barbarism and inhumanity of the Nazis towards Jews during the Holocaust. It's realistic and nail-biting, yet sad and cruel. The Nazis forced Jewish boxer Harry Haft to box against hapless, emaciated Jews in the concentration camps. The captors saw these gladiatorial-like boxing bouts as entertainment. This history takes its toll on Haft long after the war. The film isn't solely about war or love, it's about lasting memories, how they affect us, and how we cope with them and try to move on from them. Academy Award-winning filmmaker Barry Levinson directed the film. Levinson himself is of Russian-Jewish descent. The production team visited Auschwitz before filming began. The Hollywood Critics Association Awards named it Best Broadcast Network or Cable Live-Action Television Movie for 2022. The story shifts between Haft's life in New York in 1949 and his World War II recollections, shown in black and white. The colours in the film become noticeably brighter and warmer during the story's conclusion in Florida in the 1960s. Ben Foster, the American actor who stars as Haft, lost 28kg to match Haft's recorded weight in the camps. Foster gives a brutally raw and emotional depiction of surviving Auschwitz, what it could do to a person, and the trouble faced by those with survivor's guilt. In documenting Haft's life over three decades and two continents, the film helps viewers understand and sympathise with those confronted with difficult choices in

order to survive. It shows what wretched situations can push a person to do, how a traumatic past can affect your relationships with your family, and why survivors often keep silent about their distressing experiences. Even in post-war America, people tried to hide their Jewish identity, for example, boxing trainer Charley Goldman, played by Danny DeVito, asks Haft not to tell anyone that his real name is Israel. The film shows that hope can be found amidst all this, from the belief that you'll see your true love again to living with a new-found peace. The cinematography and camera work often focus on the characters' faces, enabling the audience to perceive their feelings. With antisemitism so prevalent, the film serves as a timely reminder of the atrocities at Auschwitz. Levinson wrote in the August edition of Hollywood Reporter magazine, "The cry, 'Never again!' was meant specifically to coalesce us as a society around the common cause of not letting genocide return. In watching the film I made, I'm often reminded how as a society, we're failing at that. The effects of racism and fascism which lead to war should be intolerable to us, always." Foster told the same publication that to make the film "feel credible", he listened to the testimonies of survivors. "We surrounded ourselves with people who knew much more than we knew. We spent a great deal of time working with the Shoah Foundation. It opened up its libraries, and answered as many questions as we had." DeVito told *TheWrap*, "You see a lot of Holocaust movies. Rightly so, we should keep the education up so people understand what we have been through as human beings. [The Survivor] is a unique story."

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Nik Rabinowitz comes a-live with *Unmuted*

Comedian Nik Rabinowitz has recently been in the news for evading terrorist threats, but he's better known for being a phenomenal comedian and is currently performing *Unmuted*. The SA Jewish Report *chats to him*.

What was lockdown like for you, and how did you get through it?

It was a challenge, especially the initial part with no work or income for the foreseeable eternity. Ultimately, we got through it with breathwork, Urbanol, and Choni G.

What impact did it have on your life?

For a start, I discovered that we had three kids, not two! I mean, I'd noticed that there was a blonde boy, and a black-haired boy, but I thought they were the same boy who just loved hair dye. No! Two separate boys! So that was awesome. It also meant that when we played backyard cricket, we had a bowler, batsman, and a wicket. I was still man of every match though.

Not having to get on a plane for two years was also great, and then there was this weird juxtaposition of distance and intimacy with online audiences. Performing in my office, but then also being in people's living rooms was weirdly delightful. I didn't know how many middle aged white people had that coffee table Mandela book, but it turns out, they all do.

How do you think the Jewish community dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic?

We dealt with COVID-19 the same way we deal with everything: we stayed at home. There was a lot of toilet paper hoarding. I actually think we learned that our collective neurosis can be quite useful. If I remember correctly, Herzlia was the first school to close because of COVID-19. Then they closed Herzlia Constantia forever – just to be super safe.

What inspired *Unmuted*, and what did it take to put it together?

The show is a celebration of coming through the pandemic and finally arriving at the place where we're able to joke about it. It took sweat and tears to put it together. Blood I reserve for Padel grudge matches with my wife's cousin, Jonathan.

What research did you do during the pandemic, and what did you discover?

- I researched my ancestry, and discovered that I'm 5000% Ashkenazi (#inbred);



- I discovered there are multiple forms of paper folding arts, and I can't do any of them;
- I discovered that it's sometimes worse to perform an online show to no visible audience members other than your wife in the room than it is to perform to no visible audience members;
- I discovered that some of my friends shouldn't be allowed unsupervised internet time. Mostly when they discovered that COVID-19 was created by Jewish Space Lizards;
- I discovered that if you're really desperate, you can buy cough syrup with codeine in it, mix it with Energade, and you'll get a pretty good buzz, but if you do it more than three times, Clicks does put your name on a list;
- I discovered that I'm not the kind of man who can open a pandemic sourdough bakery;
- I discovered that Ivermectin was in fact not the name of an old Jewish man from Sea Point. (That cleared up a lot of things for me);
- I discovered that if I take too many magic mushrooms, I start channelling an old Japanese man, which isn't going to be printed because #cancelled, but can you be cancelled if you're simply a vessel?

What was the toughest part about the pandemic?

Home-schooling a three-year-old via Zoom. Just to clarify, I was the one using Zoom to teach her. I'd make her go into a different room with the iPad and Zoom call her and try to teach her the alphabet using found objects. It didn't work, and now she's six and thinks the iPad is her father.

Is there anything you miss about lockdown and the life we lived then?

I miss illegal beach swims, not having to worry about traffic on the M3, and the respite from loadshedding. I miss seeing Professor Barry Schoub on the TV every night, and our kids hanging out with their cousins, and

mountain walks with our golden retriever, Rafi Ress. I miss seeing my wife puzzling at the dinner table while simultaneously consuming a Cyril family meeting, a Tiger King episode, a Brené Brown podcast, and a bag of Ghost Pops. I also miss washing my hands. I don't do that anymore.

When you called your show *Unmuted*, what were you referring to?

As most of lockdown was spent on Zoom, there was always someone in a meeting who would speak while accidentally leaving their microphone on mute. Having come out of lockdown – *baruch Hashem* – I feel like I can get back to doing what I do best, in person and with an unmuted microphone in hand.

What was it like to be back in front of a live audience after the worst of the pandemic?

The build-up was nerve-racking, but once I got back on the horse, it was enormously enjoyable, especially the part of not being interrupted by my family members.

What's Nik Rabinowitz like when he's not making others laugh?

Off-stage, Nik Rabinowitz is a devoted husband and father. Additionally he's a gold-medal-winning, unshaven, former Maccabi cricketer. He has also been described (by himself) as a glass-half-full, climb-up-the-mountain-in-the-morning, garden-variety-suburban-Woolworths-hippie Jew.

What has the pandemic taught you about life and how best to manage it?

You can be as prepared as you like, but there are some things you can't plan for – like a global pandemic. And home-schooling a three-year-old. Also, it has given me a totally new perspective on wet markets.

What have you done with the remainder of your masks and sanitiser?

I've stored them in a jar (labelled #NeverForget) along with my homebrewing kit, my sourdough starter, and my Zoom login details. Basically I'm keeping them for the next pandemic. If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.

Do you still feel the need to keep a social distance, and what's your instinct when people come too close?

In spite of no longer socially distancing, I'm still partial to a fist bump or elbow-greeting. When people come too close, I kiss them. On the lips. Either I end up with a new friend, or an alarmed enemy. Both of which I consider wins.

What are your thoughts on vaccination, conspiracy theories/theorists, and coronavirus?

I understand the need to understand the world, especially when it gets really confusing. But maybe YouTube videos by a chiropractor with an online degree and an alarming number of tinted sunglasses aren't the best way to educate yourself about the complex field of epidemiology.

Then again, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the vaccine conspiracy theorists are a conspiracy by anti-conspiracy theorists to make us dislike conspiracy theorists.

Did you lose anyone you cared deeply about during COVID-19? What happened, and how did you deal with it?

Thankfully, I didn't lose anyone to COVID-19. I did, however, almost lose a close friend to YouTube videos. We dealt with it by limiting our conversations to birthday WhatsApps, but strictly in emojis.

- *Unmuted runs at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town from 17 to 19 November. Bookings at webtickets.co.za*

If only sharks could read

It's a lie, we've been told – the oft repeated notion that the loss of one of our senses heightens and refines the other. Remove my glasses, and not only can I not see, but my ears shut right down. I can't be alone in needing to put my glasses on to hear what one of my kids is saying.

Which is why ocean swimming can be so frightening. Some years ago, when Muizenberg was in its twelfth revival, I was in the sea with some friends. My glasses remained on shore along with my sight and my hearing, when I thought I heard a siren. "Is that the shark siren?" I asked. I've never been the bravest person, and didn't see the point in hiding it. "Naa," said my friend, looking ashore "I think it's the train." "So why are other people running out the water?" I responded, but left little time for him to answer as I turned in panic and scampered against the waves to safety.

Never the most athletic or the thinnest, I knew with the same certainty that I knew the wind would blow later that day, that I would be the Great White's first choice from the smorgasbord of swimmers.

A buffet that only Muizenberg could provide.

Which is why the two shark deaths in Plettenburg Bay this year has me unnerved. An actuary I spoke to told me that we need to reframe how we think of these things. He explained that a certain number of people will die on the roads each year. It doesn't mean that we'll stop driving. Why should two deaths in the sea prevent us from swimming?

Unsatisfied, I managed to get hold of a conservationist from some shark interest group. I asked her what could be done about this. I'm not making this up. She told me that they would be putting signs on the



INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman

beaches. "But how do we know the sharks read English?" I asked. "And surely, if they're already on the beaches, then that battle has been lost?"

She wasn't amused. Which is why I asked her to clarify the Great White situation. "I heard that like many other whites in South Africa, the Great White sharks had all left and gone to Australia." (I really did hear this). "No!" she responded, now exasperated, "they didn't all go, and they didn't go that far."

It turns out that conservationists take their subject very seriously and aren't amused by those who don't. Especially those who care more about their Granadilla shorts and Havaianas than they do about the shark population.

With the Durban coast dishing out E.coli as though it's a Black Friday promotion, and Plett feeding swimmers to the sharks like crudités at a family wedding, it's little wonder that South Africans are unnerved. If there's one thing not to be messed with, it's the December holidays.

The good news is that both the sharks and bacteria seem to be aware of this. Early reports indicate that the sharks have moved on, and that the E.coli levels are improving. Albeit slowly.

In the event that they don't, I have enough faith in South Africans to believe that given what they have dealt with over the past 11 months, it will take a lot more than these deterrents to keep them out of the water.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

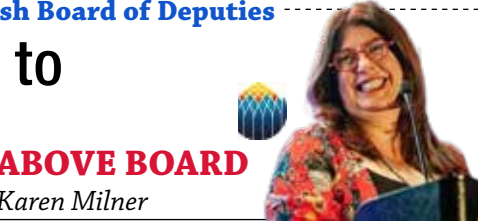
Board looks forward to 120-year milestone

In 2023, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) will mark 120 years of serving the Jewish community, a milestone we look forward to celebrating with you when the time comes. As the representative voice of the community, the role of the SAJBD has been to engage with government and civil society as well as with organisations within the community itself on all issues affecting South African Jewry. Outside formal communal structures, however, few are familiar with how the SAJBD is constituted nor the basis for its authority to speak and act on the community's behalf.

In summary, the mandate of the SAJBD to represent South African Jewry derives from its affiliate organisations. These comprise the full range of Jewish communal institutions, from schools and shuls to welfare, women, youth, Zionist, cultural, and others. It's from their ranks that the lay leadership of the SAJBD is drawn via organisations nominating candidates for election at regional conferences. Those conferences are also a forum where the Board reports back to its affiliate bodies, which are then able, through duly appointed representatives known as "deputies", to give feedback on the Board's work and raise their own issues.

On Sunday, 6 November, our Gauteng Council held its biennial conference for affiliates. Attendance was excellent, and the positive and enthusiastic spirit in which the event took place was most inspiring. I thank all the organisations concerned for their interest and support. It was most encouraging to see how much the Board is trusted and respected in the community at large, and how what we do is acknowledged and appreciated by those we represent.

After my message from the National Board and an elucidation of the Board's mandate by National



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Director Wendy Kahn, outgoing Chairperson Harold Jacobs gave an overview of the activities of the Gauteng Council since its last conference. Among the issues touched on were the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and what was done to assist the community during that time, and engagements with local government and the universities. Next, Vice-Chairperson Danny Mofsowitz reported on how the Board leads South African Jewry in identifying with and participating in South Africa's democratic culture through initiatives such as its #MakeUsCount election awareness campaign and attending commemorative events in Sharpeville and Soweto on Human Rights and Youth Day respectively. She also spoke about the Board's involvement in social upliftment in the wider society. Finally, David Saks spoke about the Board's work to monitor and respond to antisemitism, and detailed some of the more significant incidents it had been called upon to address over the previous two years. He gave examples of how the Board, depending on circumstances, preferred to resolve incidents through a process of "restorative justice", in which the guilty parties are helped to understand why their behaviour has been wrong and sincerely apologise for the hurt caused.

To all those who were elected to serve on the Gauteng Council for the next two years, particularly those who will be serving for the first time, my congratulations. I wish you all success, and look forward to working with you during your term of office.

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

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

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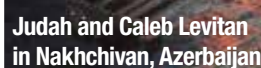
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SAUL KAMIONSKY

"Every time you play in a FIDE-rated tournament, depending on the strengths of your opponent and the results of that game, you gain or lose rating points," says Shaun. "If you look at Caleb's age and his trajectory, he's doing incredibly well, and we look forward to him potentially getting his rating to 2300, which will be the next milestone."

The South Africa A team recorded their best performance in the past 10 years, Shaun says. "But it was tough. Interestingly, we were there over Yom Kippur. We had to get permission not to play on those days. Even though the tournament was in a city called Nakhchivan, we had to fly to Baku so that we could daven at Chabad of Baku over Yom Kippur, and then fly back to resume the tournament. It was quite special, because you're in a strange country and yet, you're



During a ceremony that took place last Thursday, 3 November, Levitan and his family found out that he had been nominated for Amayanga-Yanga (Young Athlete of the Year) at the prestigious Gauteng Sports Awards to be held on

"Every year, Caleb seems to add about 100 or so points to his rating," says his dad. "He's one of the strongest players in the country. We don't see him as a kid anymore playing in an age group. Now, he's

Shaun doesn't want to put pressure on his sons, but says there's no reason to believe that they have reached anywhere near their potential. "They're by far the youngest, they're already pushing established players, and they're working hard at chess. I think that's not necessarily the case for a lot of other players. In many instances, they're working professionals, they've got other responsibilities, but Judah and Caleb have the ability to keep focusing on growth and learning. Can they reach the higher echelons? Absolutely. How high can they go? Their coaches believe that they have what it takes one day to represent South Africa in the men's team Olympiad which effectively means being in the top 10 in South Africa."

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