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**Politician and 'proud
homophobe' resigns from
cabinet**

Anti-LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) politician Avi Maoz has resigned from the Israeli cabinet, claiming that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu balked on letting him launch an initiative to shape Jewish identity.

Maoz heads the Noam Party, one of three in the far-right Religious Zionist bloc that helped return Netanyahu to office. He has served as a deputy minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, and was placed in charge of a proposed National Jewish Identity Authority. His resignation letter, sent on 27 February, said he wasn't withdrawing support for the coalition.

Maoz said in his letter he had hoped to "cancel the policies of the [previous government] in the ministries of education, labour, and health, policies that were aimed at changing our basic concepts of the people of Israel and the Jewish family".

"To my amazement, I discovered there was never any serious intention to fulfil the coalition agreement," he wrote.



26 February, burning dozens of cars and buildings and injuring dozens of residents. One Palestinian was killed in the riots in a town to Huwara's south. The riots came after a Palestinian gunman killed two Israeli brothers who were traveling through the village.



"Even in our place of deep rage and sorrow, we must never lose our humanity. That is not our Judaism," Fink wrote in his fundraising appeal.

Fink, a major in the army reserves, told *Haaretz* he was co-ordinating with the army to make sure that the money reached only victims, not anyone associated with terrorist organisations.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Orthodox Jew raises millions for victims of settler riot

An Orthodox Jew and Israeli left-wing political activist has raised more than \$400 000 (R7.3 million) for victims of a recent settler riot in a Palestinian West Bank town.

Yair Fink, a former Labor Party candidate known by the nickname Yaya, launched a crowdfunding campaign for the residents of Huwara, a Palestinian village in the northern West Bank where hundreds of settlers rampaged on Sunday,

The G-d within us



**Rabbi Sam Thurgood
– head of Jewish life
and learning: United
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In describing the goals of the Mishkan and the service of the Kohanim, Hashem uses a strange expression. "I will dwell amongst the children of Israel, and I will be a G-d to them." (Shemot/Exodus 29:45)

What does it mean that, through the Temple service, Hashem will "be a G-d" to us? Is Hashem not always G-d, regardless of our service? There's a cute line that I have heard several times and even occasionally used myself – when it was understood that it was sincere and not trite or disrespectful – when someone boldly declares to the rabbi, "I don't believe in G-d!" and the rabbi replies, "That's okay, because whether or not you believe in G-d, G-d believes in you."

Clearly, there's an aspect in which Hashem's presence and godliness is unconditional, but there seems also to be an aspect in which it is situational. One example of this is the Gemara's declaration "Whoever lives outside of the land of Israel, it is as if he has no G-d." (Ketubot 110b)

Some of our commentators elaborate that that "as if" is a key phrase – the relationship that one has with Hashem in the holy land is more real, vibrant, and holistic than it is outside of the land.

As a simple example, public debates and issues in Israel are often phrased in terms of how they relate to Jewish values and Torah principles. Hashem should bless us that we always live up to them, but the truth remains that they are a part of the discourse and the public mindset in a way that they can never be in a country that doesn't have a Jewish majority. Even in a country like

America, where religious principles are indeed a powerful political force, it's not our religious principles, and often Jewish values are quite far from those that religious Americans fight for. As a society therefore, it can be possible to have a relationship with Hashem and His word in Israel that we cannot have to the same extent elsewhere.

Similarly, in our personal lives. The Kotzker Rebbe famously responded to the question, "Where is G-d?" with the words, "Wherever you let Him in." I make a point of changing the words to the well-known children's song: "Hashem is here, Hashem is

there, Hashem is truly everywhere – up up, down down, left, right, and all around" to "up up, down down, in my heart and all around". Is that not the most important thing – to realise that Hashem isn't in the world, but in us? That Hashem is with us when we live with that consciousness and behave in a way that's conducive to goodness and godliness.

In both of these examples, the idea is that Hashem is a part of our lives when He is an active force in our consciousness and in our behaviour, as individuals and as societies. May Hashem be a G-d to us all!

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Queen Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah • Mordechai was the first person in history to be called a Jew • Haman was once Mordechai's slave • Mordechai, who refused to bow to Haman, was a descendant of Benjamin, the only one of Jacob's sons who didn't bow to Haman's ancestor Esau • G-d's name isn't mentioned even once in the entire Book of Esther.

SAUJS emerges victorious after extremist backlash

TALI FEINBERG

A small faction of the South African Students Congress (SASCO) released an unofficial statement this week condemning an agreement between the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) and the Student’s Representative Council (SRC) of the University of Pretoria (UP or Tuks) to work together as “an appalling and disgusting decision”.

Amidst a new working relationship between SAUJS and Tuks SRC, these few extremists were trying to preserve the previous hostile environment for Jewish students on campus.

“The Zionist lobby in South Africa intends to funnel money into UP as it was in Wits [the University of the Witwatersrand] three years ago – money covered in the blood of Palestinians,” the SASCO splinter group said.

The SRC and SAUJS planned to raise funds together for needy students, but the statement called the fundraising effort a “masked bribe, in the name of gaining more funds”. It called for a boycott of the SRC until it ceased relations with SAUJS and “acknowledged their mistake in working with supremacist agendas”.

The statement has been described as a desperate reaction to a new era of campus relations. “At the beginning of the year, I decided to start a relationship with the SRC as Tuks hasn’t always been a friendly place for Jewish students on campus,” says Tuks SAUJS Chairperson Sasha Said. “I met the SRC and at the end of the meeting, it took a vote, and two thirds voted in favour of working with SAUJS for the first time.”

Said explains that SAUJS had offered to help the SRC with fundraising to assist needy students who couldn’t afford to register for their studies or pay for student accommodation, and to collect stationery for them.

But this was quickly undermined when the small, unofficial faction of SASCO released its statement. Said was assured that it was only a small minority of SASCO

that believed these comments, and it wasn’t an official statement.

But it led to a knock-on effect, with the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) at Tuks releasing a similarly extreme official statement condemning the SRC and SAUJS

she wrote. “We call on all societies at UP to work together for the benefit of our campus.”

Milton Shain, an antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town says, “This faction of SASCO should reflect upon its use of a well-worn antisemitic trope – the use of money for bribery. One wonders what the real motivation is for their views. Could it be simple Jew hatred?”

“The ideology of Zionism has been mangled,” he said. “Zionism refers to the national liberation of the Jewish people. No more, no less. Support for that project, that is to say, acceptance of the state of Israel, isn’t outlawed in South Africa. Indeed, the African National Congress has called for a Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel. In that sense, it supports the Zionist idea.

It seems to me that these students wish to undo history. They have every right to criticise the actions of Israel, but cannot in principle condemn a university society that supports the Zionist idea.”

To prevent the SRC from working with SAUJS would constitute a degree of racial discrimination experienced only during apartheid.

However, only good things emerged from the furore. First, Said was assured that it was only a small, minority faction of SASCO that released the statement, that the relationship between SAUJS and the SRC still stood, and they would continue to work together to fundraise for needy students. Second, “our allies in Action SA stood with us, and another political party has also asked to work with us”, Said adds.

Said, who is in her second year of a social

work degree majoring in criminology, says that Israeli Apartheid Week in 2022 was a particularly hostile time for Jewish students at Tuks, and she hoped that this year there would be “co-operation between all societies on campus”.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner said, “We’re encouraged by the fact that SAUJS continues to develop relationships with student bodies. We’re hopeful that SAUJS UP will continue to work with the SRC, and that it won’t be bullied by the PSC, which wishes to further its own narrow, bigoted agenda at the expense of improving students’ lives.”

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) National Chairperson Rowan Polovin says, “The SAZF notes the wildly discriminatory and racist comments issued by the PSC at UP condemning the SRC for working alongside SAUJS. This couldn’t be more racist and discriminatory, as SRCs are fundamentally constituted to represent the views of the student body which in South Africa includes students of Jewish faith, heritage, and culture. To prevent the SRC from working with SAUJS would constitute a degree of racial discrimination experienced only during apartheid.

“The SAZF affirms that Jewish students have a right to access and work alongside their constitutionally mandated SRCs, and any deviation from this would constitute an abuse of these rights,” he says. “The SAZF calls on the PSC to end its hostility towards Israel, and requests that the UP SRC proceeds to take a de-hyphenated approach to the conflict to ensure that students aren’t racially profiled and discriminated against due to their affiliation to Judaism or the state of Israel.”

SAUJS national political officer and former Wits legal officer, Gabi Farber, says, “All those organisations [who released negative statements] have never engaged with a Jew or a Zionist. They’ve just been told what we are and what we stand for. And so, when you engage with them, they have these misconceptions, and it’s about proving them wrong, not only with facts but with actions. It’s about engaging and unlearning from both sides about who we are and connecting as people.”

Said “has courage, and is doing something not done previously at Tuks,” she says. “She’s an inspiration to me, other Jewish students, and the Jewish community, who should aspire to have her strength, bravery, and ability to work with people, even those who previously didn’t want to engage.”



Warrick Hirson and Sasha Said

partnership. This was followed by another statement from the Black Management Forum Student Chapter, calling the decision “dishonourable”.

Said points out that the three statements “tried to define what being Jewish and Zionist means. They were telling us who we are, and combating Jewish students just because we believe the Jewish people deserve a Jewish state. They are being discriminatory because they want Jewish students to be excluded.”

She released an official statement from SAUJS, saying that it was “appalled by the bigoted diatribe against our students”. She was responding to the PSC letter, as the SASCO statement wasn’t official.

“We further reject with contempt its racist and discriminatory call for the SRC to break off relations with SAUJS. Those who are against [this] are clearly putting their own political agenda ahead of the welfare of our students.”

In addition, “The SRC constitution states that all student entities are entitled to equal protection and no structure may unfairly discriminate against anyone,”

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‘Enough is enough’ say fuming DA councillors over hostile slurs

NICOLA MILTZ

Democratic Alliance (DA) councillors in the City of Johannesburg have taken umbrage at the constant barrage of antisemitic and other discriminatory, offensive, and snide remarks allowed to flourish during council meetings, and have raised their concerns.

“Enough is enough,” say councillors, sick, tired, and saddened by the level of toxic disdain displayed by councillors from opposition parties, and have accused Speaker Colleen Makhubele of allowing this culture to blossom.

“It’s extremely concerning,” said DA Councillor Daniel Schay

They are not only unacceptable but offensive and hurtful to say the least.

referring to the proliferation of “racist, sexist, homophobic, and antisemitic” utterances.

He said he had been called “the man in the hat” alluding to his yarmulke. He said he was rudely interrupted last week by a member of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) during the delivery of a speech in which he was talking about land

invasions in Eldorado Park. “The councillor interrupted saying, ‘The whites invaded South Africa, and the Jews invaded Palestine.’”

The councillors say that under the leadership of Makhubele, “a culture of prejudice and discrimination” has been allowed to take root in the chamber.

A letter of concern has been addressed to Makhubele, calling on her to reject any form of discrimination.

The letter is still in circulation awaiting further signatures before being sent to her office.

It cites several complaints, including incidents of sexism and “ongoing sexualisation and harassment of female councillors”; homophobic slurs; and an increase in “antisemitic attitudes”; as well as racist comments. It accuses Makhubele of “failing to act against the blatant discrimination in the chamber” unless called upon to do so. By not acting effectively to stamp it out as soon as possible, they allege that her behaviour has directly contributed to this culture, and they have called on her to take the necessary steps to improve decorum in the house.

DA Councillor Joanne Horwitz told the *SA Jewish Report* that the many antisemitic comments come mainly from members of the EFF but also members of the African National Congress.

“They are not only unacceptable but offensive and hurtful to say the least. They bring to mind what Jews were facing at the beginning of the Holocaust, when it was quite ok to abuse other people. The behaviour we see in the council against Jews and other minorities such as members of the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer] community has crossed the line. It starts with words and escalates from there,” she said.

“It’s all so demoralising,” Horwitz said. “On a spiritual level, I find I’m exhausted after a meeting. At the beginning of every meeting, we have a minute of silence for prayer. I always ask Hashem to guard me spiritually and physically.”

The letter states that there has



Daniel Schay



Joanne Horwitz

Africa, told the *SA Jewish Report* she is a born again Christian and accepts everyone.

“I stand with Israel, and don’t tolerate antisemitism, racism, sexism, or homophobia. There are underlying political issues around this. The DA isn’t happy with my move away from the multiparty coalition.

“I prayed with the previous mayor, Dr Mpho Phalatse, and I’ve never hidden that I stand with Israel, so I wouldn’t allow antisemitic

remarks. I do have to allow everyone to have a voice in council and for the DA to say this now, is disturbing. There’s a lot of miscommunicated information mixed in with politics. Now that I’ve moved, they are levelling these allegations against me.”

Apostle Kevin Reddy, in the private office of the speaker, said, “Speaker Colleen always does what’s right and not what’s popular. She’s indeed an ambassador that serves all of mankind, with the love and benevolence that it truly deserves.”

DA Member of Parliament Madeleine Hicklin said the abusive culture wasn’t new.

“When I was a Johannesburg city councillor, the mayor at the time did nothing to stem antisemitic remarks. It started with the EFF in 2016, and went unchecked. At the time, there were four Jewish councillors, and every time there were comments, we walked out in protest. There was some support from a few councillors who walked with us in solidarity. Sadly, now it’s the accepted norm from the EFF in both local and national government.”

Both Schay and Horwitz said that they had received a lot of support from their colleagues in the DA.

“When one of us stands up to complain, the whole caucus claps as a sign of support. Everyone rallies. If there’s an antisemitic remark, our colleagues close around us to protect us and the same goes for homophobic, sexist, or racist comments,” she said.

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Angola counters anti-Israel lobby with high-level delegation

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa and Angola may share a close relationship, but they differ sharply in their approach to Israel. Though South Africa sends high-level delegations to the Middle East who don't set foot in the Jewish state, Angola sent a high-level delegation to Israel in February.

The delegation was led by the country's minister of higher education, science, technology, and innovation, Dr Maria do Rosario Braganca, and senior staff from her ministry. Israel has traditionally had strong relations with the influential African nation. Angola and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1993. Then in 1995, Israel opened an embassy in Luanda and in 2000, Angola opened an embassy in Tel Aviv.

"Israel has had a long and strong relationship with Angola," says Dr Glen Segell, visiting professor and research fellow at the University of the Free State (UFS), and a research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran & Gulf States Research at the University of Haifa. "Both sides prefer to avoid media coverage, and simply want to get down to work. Since the visit of the Angolan president to Jerusalem in 2012, the focus of collaboration has shifted from education to further sustainable development. Agriculture and technology are also part of the deal, including solar energy."

It's also important for us to see how the theme of innovation is being developed so well in Israel.

"This is my first visit to Israel as minister of higher education, science, technology, and innovation," said Braganca during the visit. "I would like to learn from Israel how to advance our systems in Angola. In particular, Israel has been developing education systems from pre-school to higher education in order to fulfil the goal of having more than 50% of its population achieve a university degree. We can use this knowledge in our country. It's also important for us to see how the theme of innovation is being developed so well in Israel. We hope to enjoy the fruits of the future co-operation between Angola and Israel, particularly in the field of higher education."

Her delegation was accompanied by Focus Education, the education arm of the Mitrelli Group, which specialises in long-term educational projects in collaboration with governments, academic institutions, and private partners.

According to media reports, the Angolan minister's ambition is to promote the higher education system as one of the main pillars of digital transformation in the Angolan education system.

"We're lucky to have a company like Mitrelli to introduce us to new ways to promote innovation and technology in our work in Angola," said Braganca.

As part of her visit, which marked 10 years of large-scale infrastructure and development projects across Africa by the Mitrelli Group, the minister and her delegation held meetings with the Council of Higher Education in Israel, the foreign affairs ministry, Hebrew University, Afeka College, the Technion, and the Gordon College of Education. In addition, the delegation toured the Carasso Science

Park. It was working to create new ties with Israeli education leaders and engage with them on how to educate for innovation and create ecosystems to produce high-tech growth.

Says Haim Taib, the founder and president of the Mitrelli Group, "The visit aimed to give the delegation an opportunity to get acquainted with the Israeli academic system and its comprehensive approach towards higher education in order to strengthen connections and advance mutual interests between the two countries."

During the visit, the Angolan minister expressed her interest in the Israeli higher education system, and in particular in technology, innovation, and scientific research. She also expressed the ambition of strengthening the Angolan higher education system through a five-year plan she is leading. This programme aims to give public institutions of higher education and scientific research and development improved infrastructure, construction, rehabilitation, and equipment, including for the use of information and communication technologies.

Could Angola's approach to Israel influence that of South Africa? "South Africa has a strong relationship with Angola dating back to the liberation struggle," says local political analyst Steven Gruzd. "They are the two strongest economies and players in the Southern African Development Community [SADC]. But I

don't think Angola would have the slightest influence over South Africa on the Middle East. Those positions seem set in stone. Israel, once again under Benjamin Netanyahu, will steadily engage African states to enhance bilateral ties."

In regard to South Africa's view of Angola's close relationship with Israel, "Any malign words or acts against Angola by South Africa would be a case of 'cutting off one's nose to spite one's face'," says Segell. "Angola isn't a weak African state that can be coerced or insulted. Angola plays a significant role in



Angolan Minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Maria do Rosario Braganca with Mitrelli Group Founder and President, Haim Taib

the SADC and is a major trading partner with South Africa. Yet more importantly, Angola draws inspiration from Israel as it diversifies its economy. South Africa can expect Angola to be silent in the United Nations and the African Union (AU) on Israel."

Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political studies and governance at UFS, says, "While South Africa and Algeria push to ensure that Israel is excluded from the AU, on the ground, things are happening. At a bilateral level, Israel is making inroads. For example, in spite of the South African government's position, a partnership between the UFS and Israel will bring relief to the water crisis in the Maluti-a-Phofung municipality.

"My sense is that more and more African governments at a bilateral level are strengthening and deepening ties with Israel," he says. "This is purely for

pragmatic reasons and what we stand to benefit. The Angolan delegation trying to learn from Israel fits into that pattern. What's happening now, also in South Africa, is that in spite of the position of the South African government, ties with Israel are expanding on a number of fronts."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) National Chairperson Rowan Polovin says, "The SAZF welcomes the visit of several high-level Angolan politicians to Israel last week. Israel has traditionally had strong relations with the majority of states in Africa, with the aim of remaining a valuable partner for their development and economic growth.

"Minister Braganca's ambition is to use her relationship with Israel to help boost the higher education system in Angola. The SAZF is reaffirmed by her statements, and encourages all African states to visit Israel to achieve similar goals in education, technology, and innovation."

LITHUANIAN CITIZENSHIP THROUGH ANCESTRY POSSIBLE EVEN WITH EXTREMELY LITTLE-KNOWN INFORMATION

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If you could, I'd encourage you to ask around your family and relatives for any information they may have about your ancestor. Keep notes on everything you find, including information about siblings or other family

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If you find out that your ancestor fled Lithuania before 1918, it doesn't necessarily mean a dead end for you. Ask around in your family if perhaps you have an alternative ancestral line and explore it.

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I love Israel deeply. More than anything, I want it to succeed as a country, a people, and, above all else, to be a light unto the nations. What happens to and in Israel has an impact on me, and I'll go as far as to say it has an impact on every one of us in the South African Jewish community.

I consider myself to be a South African Jew, and I have no intention of leaving my home. I love this country, and want to live out my life here. All the *tsorres* that goes with this country upsets and angers me, but it's 100% my problem and yours.

But though I don't live in Israel and have no aliya plans, what happens there also feels personal. I accept that my views on Israel aren't as relevant as my views are on local, South African, issues because I live here.

But do I have a right to have an opinion on what's going on in Israel? I believe I do. I also believe that everyone of us Jews living on the southern tip of Africa is entitled to our opinion about what happens in Israel, just as we are entitled to love the country deeply and want it to succeed.

And it's not strange that the very basis of this newspaper is fundamentally Zionist in its ethos. Zionism means believing in the state of Israel. It doesn't necessarily mean that as Zionists, we believe that everything and anything that takes place in Israel is 100% correct. It also doesn't mean that we have to support every decision the government makes there.

Again, we're entitled to our opinion. The truth is, as Jews, we're opinionated, and have lots to say about what we think and feel.

And though we have lots to say about a lot of things, many of us believe that we daren't say anything critical about Israel. I understand that some people were upset about our extensive portrayal of Israel over the past few weeks.

We've tried our best to get as many views as possible from all sides. But it's often the case that when we ask experts, they aren't happy to put their opinions out in public. This is particularly in the case when we are dealing with such a controversial situation.

And as things in Israel seems to worsen, there are fewer truly logical experts who are willing to be open about their perspectives in public. There are some folk who are happy to put forward their somewhat libellous views – attacking those who have put forward their views – who would do damage to the newspaper and themselves. They aren't what we're looking for.

Suffice to say that from a newspaper perspective, we aren't giving you necessarily what you want to read but views that might potentially challenge you but are still worth reading.

What we won't do is ignore the issues in Israel. We won't be quiet about them. We'll keep on writing about them because what happens in the Jewish state is personal to us.

We're intrinsically joined at the hip to Israel. And when Israel sneezes, our eyes tear up. When Israel loses a leg, we get phantom limb pains. It's as simple as that.

In our lead story last week, we spoke of how the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) had joined international Jewish organisations in calling on Israel not to change the Law of Return. Many criticised the SAJBD for doing this and disapproved of us reporting on it on our front page.

The critics' sentiments were – and I'm simplifying here – that if Israel does make changes to its laws and policies, it obviously must have excellent reasons to do so, and it's not for us to criticise or challenge.

I agree that every person in power believes that what they are doing is right and ultimately for the benefit of their citizens. But are they always right? It depends on the impact it has on the country. It depends on how it affects the people concerned. And when someone makes decisions, no matter their power base, they make them as humans who are fallible.

I know South African Jewry have views from the far right to the far left and all along the spectrum in between. The pendulum also swings both ways when it comes to religion and other beliefs. So, at any given time, there will be a host of people disagreeing with something, not least of all in Israel. We surely can't ignore that.

I believe it's incumbent on us to keep telling you as much as we can about anything that has an impact on our community.

We dare not ignore Israel's problems, much like we can't ignore the load shedding and water issues that have changed the way we live our lives here.

In the same way, as much as I would love to wish away the anti-Israel lobby in this country and the ugly taste it leaves in our mouths, we can't. Again, we dare not.

Sometimes we write about them reluctantly because we believe you have a right to know.

To be honest, on this newspaper, we spend an inordinate amount of time searching for good news stories, stories that will uplift you and us, stories that will bring us *naches* and joy.

They're generally quite hard to find, but we keep looking.

However, we can't ignore the tough stories that we don't necessarily want to accept or believe. That's part of our job and commitment to you.

And as we head towards the festival of Purim (on Monday and Tuesday), we must consider the importance of remaining aware of the threats to our nation. We dare not ignore the Hamans out there. We must ensure that we don't become ostriches, put our heads in the sand, and wish them away, because it won't happen.

We have to stand up for our rights, here and in Israel, and ensure that we're heard. We also need to stay abreast of what is happening so we remain on our toes and ready for anything.

Chag Purim Sameach and Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



SA dangerous place for whistle blowers as De Ruyter case shows



OPINION

MANDY WIENER

André de Ruyter turned from chief executive to official whistle blower the minute he sat down with broadcaster Annika Larsen and recorded *that* interview.

He laid bare the extent of corruption at the power utility, the degree of political involvement, and the sheer failure by law enforcement agencies and other authorities to hold extraction syndicates and criminal networks to account. He also divulged the details of the attempt made on his life, and attempts to follow and intimidate him.

De Ruyter's candid, bombshell-like account of the situation at Eskom also expedited his departure from the parastatal. Within 24 hours of the broadcast, the Eskom board had met and resolved that he should leave his position with immediate effect.

Although De Ruyter has long been a polarising figure with some arguing that he has been a failure as chief executive and simply didn't manage to fix load shedding, he quickly became the target of very vociferous personal attacks. De Ruyter found out what it's truly like to be a whistle blower in South Africa.

This is the modus operandi of the accused and the implicated. Don't answer the allegations. Rather go on the offensive and attack the credibility of the accuser. And the attacks were venomous and vicious.

The African National Congress (ANC) was one of the main targets implicated by De Ruyter as he suggested that the party was using Eskom as a feeding trough. ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula spearheaded the attack on De Ruyter's credibility. He labelled him "right-wing", a "failure", and a "naysayer". Minister in the Presidency Mondli Gungubele also attacked the former chief executive, saying he had "a right-wing attitude". Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan was furious, and said he was "disappointed" by De Ruyter's comments. The ANC has threatened to file criminal charges against him if he doesn't report his allegations to law enforcement and back them up with evidence.

This is the lived reality of whistle blowers in South Africa. They are ostracised, intimidated, and vilified. Many of them are dragged through the courts for years and bled dry by endless litigation. They are seen as problematic and difficult. Many are pushed to the fringes of society, and treated as *impimpis* or troublemakers. Whistle blowers, on their own admission, land up with mental-health problems, their marriages fall apart, and they develop dependencies. They are seen as unemployable.



André de Ruyter

Photo: Screenshot

In spite of South Africa enjoying something of a golden age of whistle blowers with so many individuals speaking up about state capture at the Zondo Commission, there's still very little support and protection in the country for those who decide to expose corruption. In the worst-case scenario, whistle blowers like Babita Deokaran are killed for pushing back against the rot. In the case of Athol Williams, he had to flee the country for his safety.

The legislation in the country is ineffectual. There's no physical protection or legal or psychological support. In short, South Africa remains a dangerous place for those who choose to blow the whistle.

Following recommendations in the Zondo Report, the justice ministry has begun the process of reviewing the legislation. Research is being done into global best practice.

A draft discussion document will be finalised by April this year, and it is hoped that a new Bill will be introduced by October.

But for now, De Ruyter, like so many other whistle blowers, remains vulnerable. Although he has received some support in the wake of the resounding attacks on his credibility.

Business Unity South Africa and Business Leadership South Africa released a joint statement saying that they condemned the attacks irrespective of which quarter they came from.

"Reactions like these add credence to accusations that whistle blowers are often treated as the criminals they unmask. We will not comment on reactions from political parties but urge the government to act responsibly and give our country the confidence that it will address the allegations speedily and responsibly," they said.

Energy expert Chris Yelland believes the interview was an act of whistle blowing and De Ruyter's turning to the media was necessitated by the failure of conventional channels.

"He spoke truth to power, and power doesn't like it. And he's been forced out. Now, some might say that that interview was an outrageous political act. I believe a citizen and business leader has a duty and obligation to serve the public interest and to – when necessary – blow the whistle."

The ANC Veterans League even called on the president to give him whistle-blower protection. The Whistleblower House Director Cynthia Stimpel, herself a whistle blower at South African Airways, urged De Ruyter to take precautionary steps because he could be at risk.

Trillian whistle blower Bianca Goodson, who wrote an open letter to De Ruyter in 2020 asking him to acknowledge her efforts to help Eskom recover funds lost through state capture, also expressed her support and concern in a voice note she sent to the radio show I'm on.

"As a whistle blower, it's heartbreaking to see what's happening to André De Ruyter. He did exactly what I did. He basically spoke up about something that he was concerned about and now he's effectively being made a pariah. In my opinion, we need more people like this. What's happening now is so concerning. My heart goes out to him because I can see what's happening to him is on a grander scale than what happened to me. I just wonder as a whistle blower, who is going to support him? Who is going to take on the legal challenges he may or may not face? Who is going to give him a job? Can you blame people for not speaking up when they get annihilated for doing the right thing?" asked Goodson.

De Ruyter may have failed as chief executive of Eskom. We remain deep within the worst extended period of load

shedding the country has ever experienced. He was clearly not the panacea to the country's energy crisis.

But he was also facing a near impossible task. Years of mismanagement, poor maintenance, a reliance on coal, and failure to advance the plan to move to renewable energy, all contributed to the current situation. This has been compounded by deeply entrenched criminal networks and the looting of power-station infrastructure.

Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe disparagingly called De Ruyter a "policeman" for trying to expose the criminal networks

feeding off Eskom. He then went so far as to accuse Eskom of treason.

De Ruyter's public outing of the cabinet and its failure to act was absolutely necessary and an act of patriotism. It was probably fuelled by sheer frustration and desperation and was mistimed, but it did require courage.

The only way we're going to win the fight against corruption is if those with inside knowledge, with proximity to wrongdoing, speak out in the way that De Ruyter did. We need whistle blowers to raise the alarm. We have to protect and reward them if others are going to do so in the future.

• Mandy Wiener is a journalist and author. She hosts The Midday Report on 702 and Cape Talk. Her recent book, The Whistleblowers, will be republished in April this year.

Tempers flare in Israel amidst rising extremism

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



Ha'il and Yagel Yaniv were two brothers from Har Bracha. On Sunday afternoon, they were in their car going somewhere, when they were ambushed by a terrorist from nearby Huwara, who shot and killed them. Yagel would have turned 20 in two weeks.

Yaakov (6) and Menachem (8) stood with their father, patiently waiting for a bus in the suburb of Ramot, Jerusalem, when a terrorist rammed his car into the busy bus stop.

Two sets of brothers mercilessly killed. Two families with massive, gaping holes that can never be repaired. Two families that will go through the rituals of funerals, then *shivot*, where politicians will promise all kinds of things.

They will then get up and try to pick up the pieces of their ravaged lives. They will join other Israeli families, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian, who have all had family members killed over the past year. Meanwhile, after the death of their loved ones, across Gaza and the West Bank, cries of jubilation could be heard as sweets and delicacies were handed out in celebration.

Following this, in horrific scenes that sent shock waves through Israel, settlers took justice into their own hands and embarked on riots, burning Palestinian property and cars.

Border Police, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, Fire and Rescue Services, and Israel Police arrived at the scene to try to restore order, evacuating as many Palestinians as they could. Reporters on the scene said a Jewish gunman dressed in black clothes and a military vest and helmet fired and threw stun grenades at them as they were covering the violence in Huwara.

I'm a reporter. My job is to try and report the news in as neutral and impassive a manner as I can. However, I'm angry. I'm angry that I'm reporting on an ever-growing list of victims of terror. I'm angry that the cycle of violence is getting worse, and that extremists on both sides are emboldened by the rising temperature and growing chasms in Israeli society.

Speaking to Galei Tzahal radio, Zvika Fogel, Otzma Yehudit member of the Knesset (MK) and the chairperson of the Knesset's national security committee said, "Yesterday, a terrorist came from Huwara – Huwara is closed and burnt. That's what I want to see. Only thus can we obtain deterrence. The act that the residents of Judea and Samaria carried out yesterday is the strongest deterrent that the state of Israel has had since Operation Defensive Shield. After a murder like yesterday, villages should burn when the IDF doesn't act."



Responding to what can only be seen as inciteful comments, Yesh Atid Chairperson Yair Lapid the leader of the opposition, tweeted, "This isn't a fully right-wing government, it's a fully anarchist government. MK Fogel should go to jail for incitement of terror." Israeli leaders, including Otzma Yehudit chairperson and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, called for citizens not to take action into their

own hands.

Israeli society is growing ever more fractured. The voices of protest against the government's planned judicial overhaul are growing louder and the crowds are growing larger. There's growing concern that we're headed towards a dangerous collision, a sentiment voiced by President Isaac Herzog in his address to the nation just weeks ago.

Tempers are flaring in our region, and many are concerned that the genie is out of the bottle and will be difficult to contain. It's alarming to see a significant increase in incitement from both sides.

We take every murder caused by terror attacks personally in Israel. It wrenches at our combined heart, and there's a seemingly never-ending stream of tears and sorrow. But we cannot become vigilantes and take the law into our own hands no matter how angry and frustrated we are. We have the IDF and police to maintain law and order.

Israel is fighting battles on many fronts, not just on the security front, but also for the country's soul. We need cool, calm heads to prevail. We cannot allow for extremism, which has already taken root, to flourish. Israel deserves better than that.

•*Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV, and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.*

AU resolution against Israel ‘nonsensical and one sided’

STEVEN GRUZD

A blatantly biased and anti-Israel resolution was passed almost unnoticed at the African Union (AU) summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, just days after the forced removal of a senior Israeli diplomat grabbed headlines last month.

The five-page draft statement of this resolution blames Israel entirely for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The statement calls on all AU member states not to "recognise the status that Israel has established in the Palestinian and Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, which perpetuates the system of colonialism and apartheid".

It also calls on them to "end all direct and indirect trade, scientific, and cultural exchanges with the state of Israel" and pushes for Israel to be brought before the International Court of Justice.

It was passed in spite of Israel having been recognised by 84% of Africa's states and having made solid progress in bilateral collaboration with Africa countries. However, the language used in this statement shows how far Israel still has to travel to win over the continental body.

The draft statement is part of the AU's 86-page "Decisions, Declarations, Resolutions and Motions" document, the final version of which has not yet been circulated. This is known to take weeks or more to happen, but there are seldom major changes made.

The "Draft Declaration on Palestine and the Middle East" was tabled at the summit, according to an AU insider. "Yes. It was discussed. Every year it's the same thing – the declaration on Palestine. It wasn't discussed much. It's a standalone agenda item of the African Union," the source confirmed.

The draft statement expresses "full support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle against the Israeli occupation, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, in order to restore their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, return of refugees,

and independence in their state of Palestine existing side by side with the state of Israel".

It rejects Israeli settlements, and calls on AU members to "refrain from any action that would undermine the principles of solidarity with the Palestinian people", perhaps an oblique reference to the Abraham Accords that normalised Israeli relations with four Muslim-majority countries.

It calls for an end to "continued desecration and attempts to Judaize the Islamic and Christian holy sites ... in an effort to create a single racist state that promotes religious intolerance". It also lauds Algeria and Egypt for efforts to unify feuding Palestinian factions under the PLO umbrella.

According to Professor Hussein Solomon from the University of the Free State, "This AU resolution isn't going to fly, and it doesn't even make sense. I find it interesting in terms of cutting off ties with Israel. Forty-six African countries have relations with Israel. Chad just opened its embassy outside Tel Aviv.

"In many ways, Algeria is the outlier," Solomon said, "and has been with South Africa in various attempts to block Israel in terms of its observer status." He said land grabs and attacks by settlers alongside Israel's new right-wing government set back any peace process.

Terence Corrigan, project manager at the Institute of Race Relations, said, "What we've got here is essentially a narrative in which all blame and fault are apportioned to Israel. It's very much in the historical line of the AU being an anti-colonial body. The danger – and we see this all the time in South Africa – is that the situation in and circumstances of the Middle East and Israel/Palestine are filtered through an inapplicable set of assumptions.

"The sense of Israel as an illegitimate colonial presence in the region comes out strongly in the references to 'Judaising' religious sites," Corrigan said. "Religious impulses contribute to making the conflict so damnably intractable – no tradition has been exempted from that in this part of the world, not historically and not now. Certainly, Jews could make the same claim about a number of sites ... I'd say that dismissing competing claims in this way only contributes to

hardening positions."

There's nothing in the document "that recognises any legitimate Israeli security concerns, such as rockets flying in from Gaza", Corrigan said. "Interesting too is that it presents the Palestinian population as a political monolith under Mahmoud Abbas. This is ludicrous, given the prominence that Hamas has assumed, so much so that even South Africa and the African National Congress (ANC) have been courting the latter.

"Perhaps the most interesting thing about this is whether anyone really takes this seriously. It calls for what amounts to a complete freeze on all 'direct and indirect trade, scientific, and cultural exchanges' with Israel. This is a ridiculous proposition, since Israel's reach in Africa has probably never been more extensive."

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) said, "The draft declaration was tabled without any further reference to it, and appears similar to those that have been submitted every year to date. The SAZF maintains that Israel's participation in the AU continues to benefit the continent in a number of innovative ways, and calls on the ANC government to end its obsessive campaign against Israel's observer status in the regional body.

"Logically, Israel's participation within the organisation is simply an extension of what's happening at bilateral level between member states and Israel as Africa-Israel relations continue to yield increasing levels of economic co-operation between countries.

"The same applies to South Africa, with several Israeli non-profit organisations recently concluding solar, water, and technology-based projects in our country. These have provided clean running water, renewable energy, and access to technology for thousands of citizens and students," said Shulman.

While it says little that's new – and much that's familiar from South African government statements – this document makes it plain that Israel still has much to do for the success of its African charm offensive

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Olim in firing line of Israeli tech industry layoffs

TALI FEINBERG

It was an ordinary morning on 4 January 2023 when South African *olah* Sarah Cohen* received an email saying that the high-tech Israeli company she worked for was conducting retrenchments. Within the next hour, she and her entire team from all over the world were laid off.

“There had been no inkling that there were to be mass layoffs in the company,” she says. She and her colleagues enjoyed the benefits of a business that showed no signs of struggling. “It was abrupt – a huge shock and very unnerving, followed by sadness to lose the stability and a job that I loved.”

All in all, her company laid off 10% of its workforce – about 8 000 people that day, including about 100 in Israel. It was one of many mass layoffs that Israel’s high-tech sector has experienced over the past 18 months. And, English-speaking *olim* and job seekers could bear the brunt of the implosion.

“Tech layoffs hitting hard the #startupnation. Thousands of professionals losing their jobs. The picture is certainly not a shiny one. However, expect amazing new ideas and start-ups to rise from this dark moment,” wrote Edoardo Levy, a New York-based expert on innovation and tech investing on LinkedIn at the end of 2022.

“The hi-tech market in Israel, like everywhere else in the world, is going through challenging times, but there’s no reason to panic,” says Udi Wiesner, the chief executive of Israel Tech Challenge (ITC), a non-profit paving the way for *olim* to join the hi-tech industry in Israel. “The market is going through a correction phase, but this isn’t yet a crisis”.

Wiesner, who has served as a chief executive of start-ups, local, and global tech companies and on boards of directors, was there in the crisis situations in 2000 and 2008. “This time is different,” he says. “There’s a slowdown and about 5 000 to 8 000 employees have been laid off, yet it doesn’t testify to a fundamental problem. The market condition is an outcome of several causes: global inflation, the rise of interest rates, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, China conflicts, and other macroeconomics factors. It’s a pendulum effect on the irrational race to invest in start-ups during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The capital raising and evaluation of companies and money spent irresponsibly by start-ups with no clear business model went way out of line,” he says. “The good news is that not only will start-ups and companies with clear vision, strategy, and good products survive, they’ll be more successful as they’ll have to compete with less irrelevant competitors.

“As for employment, yes it would be more challenging to find a job now. However, there are still about 10 000 to 15 000 vacant jobs for software developers in Israel. Hence, those who have the right skills and experience and more importantly, the networking and introduction to the market, will find a job for sure, it just might take a little longer.

“The strengthening US dollar versus the shekel is good news, as the cost of employment in Israel was expensive for foreign companies, but now it becomes more attractive,” he says. “There’s also some turbulence regarding the planned reforms to the justice system that may affect some investment, but it sounds more frightening than it actually is. If you planned to make aliya and join the start-up nation, it’s still a great option. I’m optimistic that things will get back on track in a relatively short time.”

The Israeli Employment Service says jobless claims among hi-tech workers were up almost 20% in December 2022,

with software developers and analysts bearing most of the brunt of job losses with a 19.1% jump in jobless claims. Meanwhile, claims grew by 17.6% among ICT (information and communication technology) technicians and engineers.

According to an article in *Globes*, “The layoffs that took place in June 2022 aren’t the same as the layoffs taking place in January 2023. If at first the layoffs were in small companies making losses and without a stable business model, the trend has now spread to the entire industry – even to profitable companies that serve huge organisations.”

Cohen had worked at her company for four years as a training developer. “I created courses to teach our internal professional services about our product. It was a valued position but not a business-necessary position, so the business can continue without the training,” she says.

“I underestimated how difficult it would be to find a job in this position at this stage,” Cohen says. There used to be a lot of job openings for this, but now there are far fewer compared even to a year ago.”

Cohen thinks the situation will have an impact on English-speaking *olim*. “Now that there are so many job seekers flooding the market, companies can insist on a Hebrew speaker. The few that have contacted me wanted Hebrew as well. It’s scarier now that so many of us are competing against each other.”

Local tech industry expert Arthur Goldstuck says, “Sarah experienced a common phenomenon in the tech sector. Companies



that are doing well and rewarding investors want to keep doing so as the economy slows down. The easiest way is to cut a large number of non-essential staff. It’s expedient but not strategic, and can highlight where companies may soon find themselves vulnerable due to prioritising short-term gain over long-term strategy.

“We’re seeing some companies increasing their workforce, but it’s a small minority that are willing to be courageous right now and clever about their strategic investments. During lockdown, we saw companies like Amazon hiring tens of thousands of additional staff to cope with the demand. Now, we’re seeing a vast

withdrawal of those hires.”

Telfed employment advisor Yael Strasz says, “We definitely have more people contacting us [after being retrenched from the tech industry]. There was a bubble, and the bubble burst.”

She says there’s a difference between *olim* who have been in Israel for a few years and those who are just arriving. “We’re seeing *olim* who have been here a while being retrenched, but often they are rehired soon afterwards [at different workplaces], at lower salaries. Because they have Israeli experience and references, Israeli employers are more likely to hire them. South Africans are also known to be hard working employees.”

Those working on the business side of the tech sector, like sales and marketing, “were getting ridiculous salaries” and now these are a more “rational number”. Those with technology backgrounds like engineering, coding, and IT are still being hired if they have experience.

“It may take a bit longer for them to find work, but it’s not impossible. Fresh graduates may have more difficulty finding work. The catch is that they may not be able to get enough experience in South Africa or Israel.” Yet, she emphasises that Telfed is there to help with free employment advice and career counselling.

*Not her real name

Settler leaders unmoved by violent attack on Palestinians

BEN LYNFIELD – JTA

In spite of resounding condemnation from across the world and efforts by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to denounce the outbreak of Jewish violence against Palestinians in the West Bank on Sunday, 26 February, settler leaders remain defiant and are backing members of their community involved in what has been described as the one of the worst events of Jewish mass rioting against Palestinians.

“In no way whatsoever do I condemn them,” veteran settler activist Daniella Weiss told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA).

“The shocking thing is that the government is unable to provide security for residents. I’m not surprised that there was such an outburst,” said Weiss, a former mayor of the Kedumim West Bank settlement. “The pressure kept building up, and the murder of the two brothers influenced people, as did the [recent] murder of two brothers in Jerusalem.”

It’s forbidden to take the law into one’s own hands and create a dangerous anarchy which could cost lives.

The settlers’ attack centred on the Palestinian village of Huwara near Nablus, hours after a Palestinian gunman killed two young residents of the nearby Har Bracha settlement, Hillel Yaniv and his brother Yagel, 21 and 19. Hillel had just concluded his military service in a special programme for yeshiva students, and Yagel was due to finish a Magen David Adom emergency training course next week.

Following the terror attack, hundreds of settlers gathered to seek revenge from the neighbouring village, unleashing their rage at residents who weren’t involved in the attack on the Yaniv family. They set alight 11 houses, damaged many others, and burned 32 cars, according to initial data from the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

One settler said in a video clip from the scene as the rampage was underway that it was “a very moving experience”. With flames rising in the background, the settler, identified only as Rafael, added that the settlers were “torching everything that comes to hand”. In another video

that was shared widely by critics of the settlers, a group of settlers is seen praying outside a Palestinian home on fire.

A large number of settlers also proceeded to Burin village, where they were “escorted” by soldiers, Burin resident Munir Qadoos told JTA. The settlers broke windows, slaughtered two sheep and stole others, burned a barn, and pelted homes with stones, he said.

“I felt that it was going to be my last day alive,” Qadoos said. “Settlers have attacked us many times, but never have they gone so far into the village.”

Human rights organisations have documented a steady increase in settler violence directed at Palestinians in recent years, citing hundreds of cases of vandalism, harassment of Palestinians working their fields or harvesting olive trees, and nightly raids into West Bank villages. Settler leaders have disputed these claims, noting that most claims were dismissed by the Israeli police. They have also argued that only a small group of extremists, mostly teenagers, are responsible for these violent attacks.

Qadoos said that on Sunday night, rather than stop the settlers, Israeli Defense Forces soldiers “fired tear gas at residents who were trying to defend themselves”. Two people were transferred to hospital after being struck by stones and five treated locally, he said. “Everyone in the neighbourhood is afraid, but they also say we won’t be moved from here.”

The army didn’t respond to a request for its account of what transpired in Burin.

By Monday morning, as the extent of the damage became apparent, Israelis began to grapple with the consequences of the attack, described by some in the media as a “pogrom”, and whether it was an ominous sign of authorities losing control over Jewish extremists in the West Bank.

Palestinian Authority officials said about 400 settlers joined the attacks. Eight Israelis were detained, but all had been released by Tuesday morning.

The violence marks a significant “escalation” because of the large numbers of settlers involved and the sense that they have backers in the government, foremost Religious Zionism leader Bezalel Smotrich and Jewish Power leader Itamar Ben-Gvir, said Menachem Klein, professor emeritus

of political science at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Klein predicted that there would be further such attacks. He said it was a test for Netanyahu’s two-month old government, made up of the centre-right Likud in partnership with Smotrich and Ben-Gvir’s far-right parties.

“There’s no place for anarchy. We won’t accept deliberate harm to innocent civilians,” Netanyahu told the Knesset on Monday. But his coalition partners, who are aligned with the settlers, didn’t all share this sentiment. Smotrich, who serves as finance minister but also holds the portfolio of settler affairs in the defence ministry, endorsed the idea of harsh vengeance in the immediate aftermath of the killing of the settlers, liking a tweet by a settler leader, Davidi Ben-Zion, that called for “erasing Huwara today” and for “no mercy”.

Palestinian health officials said that settlers also attacked other nearby villages on Sunday night, and that a 37-year-old man was killed by Israeli gunfire in Zaatar, two others were shot and wounded, a third stabbed, and a fourth beaten with an iron bar. Ninety-five other Palestinians were treated for tear gas inhalation.

The umbrella group for settlers, the Yesha Council, remained silent about the violence, offering no response to a query by JTA. The council serves as the political arm representing more than 500 000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank (but not in East Jerusalem and the surrounding neighbourhoods, where another 375 000 Jewish Israelis reside).

By Sunday night, Smotrich changed tack, saying, “It’s forbidden to take the law into one’s own hands and create a dangerous anarchy which could cost lives.”

But Ziv Stahl, the director of Yesh Din, a human rights group which promotes legal action against violent Jewish settlers, claims that Smotrich’s action on social media was significant and could guide their actions.

“Even though it’s not an official policy to be violent towards Palestinians, if Ben-Gvir is in charge of police and enforcement against settler violence and Smotrich is in charge of illegal construction, you can do the math of what message the settlers get from that.”

Weiss indicated she had no misgivings that the 37-year-old Palestinian, identified as Sameh Akatsh, who had just returned from participating in an earthquake relief mission in Turkey, had died. “If he was killed, he was killed,” she said.

Why Purim needs to be more popular

OPINION

As a rabbi, a large part of my role is ‘selling Judaism’ to Jews. Some might say that selling ice to Eskimos is easier. . .

The truth is, it’s not only a rabbi’s challenge. It’s the challenge of every parent and educator: how do I impress on the younger generation the importance and privilege of Judaism?

It’s a tough challenge that numerous individuals have struggled with over centuries.

Let’s be clear: No individual knows THE ultimate answer to that question. (Although you often find people pontificating as if they have the solution to all life’s problems.) After all, humans are complex. Each generation has its unique makeup and method of engagement. Each society has its own flavour. And, of course, we are all different as individuals. So no single approach can touch and inspire the heart of every child.

“Educate each child according to their own way”, says King Solomon. (Proverbs 22:6) There does not exist a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to any complex problem, definitely something as tremendous as inspiring millions of children to proudly carry the banner of Jewish life into the present and future.

So, while I cannot offer THE answer, we could try to offer an answer, one of many solutions offered by our people’s great minds and hearts over millennia.

Here goes:
Think of the five most popular Jewish observances across the world:
Bris (circumcision).
Pesach Seder.
Fasting on Yom Kippur.
Not eating certain foods (often pork, seafood).
Getting buried in a Jewish cemetery.
Obviously, these are super important and indispensable parts of Judaism, and we can be very proud of how enduring these parts of our tradition are.
And yet, do you notice what is lacking in this list? Any of the many observances that scream ‘fun, excitement and



celebration’. These five are on the more serious side of our glorious tradition.

Imagine that we threw in Purim in the top five Jewish observances. Yes, Purim! The parties. The costumes. The cheer. The music. The celebration. The gifts. The dancing.

Imagine that Purim was as celebrated as Yom Kippur! The Kabbalists teach us that Purim and Yom Kippur are deeply connected. They are two sides of the same coin. They are both about uplifting ourselves and accessing the deepest and purest level within us. The difference is in approach. On Yom Kippur, we dig deep by avoiding physicality (no food, no indulgences, and spending the day in shul). On Purim, however, we dig deep and find our purity within the physicality. Within the food, drink, celebration, and party!

Rabbi Shneiur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) teaches that, in at least one way, Purim is even higher than Yom Kippur, as we achieve the greatest level of spiritual ecstasy by living within the physical world rather than needing to escape it! We reveal how the physical and spiritual are actually both the same thing – G-dliness.

And yet, Purim is not nearly as known and commemorated as his twin Yom Kippur!

‘spirits’ are consumed). It’s not even in the same league.

I remember Purim at the Yeshiva. It was so much fun. During the night and the following day, we would run around the city, finding Jews to read the Megillah to and celebrate with. Then we would return to the Yeshiva at the end of Purim and celebrate throughout the night until the early (or late hours of the morning).

I remember one Purim while learning in Israel that we spent with Israeli soldiers on their bases. We drove from base to base on the most dangerous roads. We danced and celebrated (no alcohol) as we felt the joy of Judaism.

Growing up, I never felt that Judaism and fun were mutually exclusive. But, unfortunately, I have many young people who think so. I believe that Purim, Simchas Torah, Chanukah, Friday night Shabbos dinner, Jewish weddings, acts of *chesed* (goodness and kindness), Sukkot, Shavuot, Lag Ba’Omer, the whole month of Adar with its fun and dancing, must surface to the top of our Jewish life.

The truth is that even Yom Kippur need not be commemorated as a day of fear and guilt and that we often misrepresent even the ‘heavier’ dimensions of our faith, but that is an article for another time.

Back to the future: If we are to sell Judaism to ourselves and our children, we need to relook at how we sell the product with fresh eyes. We need to stop *kvetching* about the hardships of observance (yes, kosher chicken is expensive, but when your child hears you *kvetching* about that and the cost of Pesach food, you can only imagine that their thoughts are, ‘who needs this in my life’). If we tell them that Judaism is heavy, we make it much less appealing for them.

We have the most remarkable product in the world. All we need to do is share its beauty and joy. I believe that it will make a world of difference. Do you agree?

• Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the rabbi at Linksfeld Shul.





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Family casts net worldwide to find match for dying father

NICOLA MILTZ

The family and friends of an Australian father are appealing to Jewish people of Ashkenazi descent around the world to donate blood stem cells in a last ditch bid to save him from a rare blood cancer.

Murray Foltyn, 41, married to ex-South African Claudia (nee Milunsky) has myelofibrosis, and urgently requires a blood stem-cell transplant to help save his life.

The father of two, a son, Jamie, aged three, and a nine-month-old baby girl, Georgia, lives in Sydney Australia.

Claudia’s family, some of whom live in South Africa, are appealing to the community for help in finding a match so that a much-needed transplant can proceed.

Myelofibrosis is an uncommon type of bone marrow cancer that disrupts the body’s normal production of blood cells. It causes scarring in the bone marrow, leading to anaemia that can cause weakness and fatigue.

A bone-marrow transplant also called a stem-cell transplant, is a procedure to replace the diseased

bone marrow using healthy blood stem cells. For myelofibrosis, the procedure uses stem cells from a donor.

According to the family, previous searches on the worldwide bone-marrow database have been unsuccessful. The best chance of life is a match with a person of a Jewish background.

“Time is of the essence,” said Yael Sneider, a first cousin of Claudia, who lives in London.

“Murray is the most wonderful, kind, gracious man, a true mensch who is generous and thoughtful. My husband, Ben, and Murray are the closest of friends. We’re desperate to find a match,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Sneider has appealed to Jews worldwide on social media platforms in a bid to find a potential donor.

“We will be doing a donor drive during the many Purim parties at shuls held in London next week where people can register and obtain swab kits to swab their mouths,” she said.

Moriah, a school in Australia of which Foltyn is a past pupil and which his son also attends, has also appealed to its school community to

register.

Anyone who is aged between 18 and 35 and has parents or grandparents who are Jewish and who came from a Czech/Slovak, United Kingdom, or Russian background could potentially be a match.

The chances become higher if the potential donor has links to Illford, England, or a village, Halmesh, outside Trnava (today part of Slovakia), or Morava Ostrava (today close to the border of Poland).

If there’s any chance you fit into the above, the family is urging you to register to be tested as soon as possible. Giving stem cells is a non-invasive process – similar to giving blood. It’s like a normal blood test, and doesn’t take long.

“If you don’t fit the criteria, you can still help by sharing this information. You never know who could be a match,” Sneider said.

Hatzolah Medical Rescue is aware of Foltyn’s need, and representatives from DKNS-Africa (the German Bone Marrow Donor Centre) will be present at its next blood drive on 19 March. DKNS is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to the fight against blood cancer and



Murray Foltyn with his wife Claudia and their children Jamie and Georgia

blood disorders. It’s a world leading stem-cell donor centre. To become a potential blood stem-cell donor, you need to check your eligibility and request a swab kit.

Hatzolah’s Life2Life banner contains the relevant information on www.Life2Life.org.za or <https://www.dkms-africa.org>. You can also visit the following website for further

information <http://www.bmdw.org/> According to the South African Bone Marrow Registry, if you are between the ages of 16 and 45, you are eligible to register as a bone marrow donor. Registration is done in a few minutes through its online platform, and then a cheek swab test will be arranged. Go to <http://www.sabmr.co.za>

Helping ‘people on the move’ regain their dignity

STEVEN GRUZD

Julia Oduol hails from Nakuru, Kenya. She has been an asylum seeker in Cape Town since 2008. Her husband, a politician, was forced to flee from Kenya due to post-election violence in which 1 200 people were killed. Eventually, he made his way to Cape Town and she joined him with her very young son. “I never thought I’d leave my home,” Oduol said. “No one chooses to be a refugee. I had to search for safety.”

Oduol was speaking at a webinar hosted by the Mensch Network on 27 February, which delved into the experiences of refugees and the people that assist them. With more than 120 social entrepreneurs as members, the Mensch Network is the largest organisation of Jewish change makers in South Africa.



Julia Oduol

In designating February “Refugee Awareness Month”, Mensch drew inspiration from HIAS (formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), an American organisation that originally assisted Jewish immigrants to the United States (US) more than 100 years ago, but now focuses on all communities. HIAS hosts an annual Refugee Shabbat. “It’s based on the Jewish injunction of helping the stranger,” Mensch Executive Director Gina Flash said. “HIAS is a huge inspiration to Jewish organisations in South Africa, to see the work being done through a Jewish lens.”

“Everything was a struggle, from documents to finding schooling, a home, a job,” said Oduol of her time in Cape Town. “And in 2008, there were xenophobic attacks in South Africa.”

She went on to enrol in higher education, studying through the Global Education Movement, and today, is part of Oxford University’s Refugee-Led Research Hub. She described her experience as a fight to get her humanity and self-esteem back. “As a woman, a refugee undergoes double discrimination. I hope to inspire others. We must look beyond the labels, and see the beauty of every human being.”

Shingi West, originally from Zimbabwe, runs the Women’s Platform at the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, an organisation

that offers paralegal advice, engages in advocacy, training, and development and helps integrate “people on the move”. The Women’s Platform helps women to deal with trauma in a safe space and adjust to their new home. It empowers them with information about their rights, and assists them to find jobs.

Leah Mundell, a social anthropologist at North Arizona University, used to work at the Scalabrini Centre. She spoke about conditions on the US-Mexico border, and how the control of national borders has increasingly become militarised in both the US and South Africa.

“Borders seek to keep some people in and others out. They are immoral and futile, especially in a world affected by climate change where we are all impacted,” Mundell said. She clarified definitions of various words applied to “people on the move” such as “refugee”, “asylum seeker”, and “undocumented migrant”. She thanked HIAS and other organisations for alerting the public to changes in US immigration policy that makes applying for asylum much harder, including through a poorly functioning app that must be used before people enter the US.

Mensch board member and psychotherapist Romi Kaplan spoke about how she had been able to help Ukrainians in the current crisis from afar. She was involved in an Israeli initiative called EmotionAid, a network of therapists that provided services to Ukrainians to deal with the trauma of forced migration. They worked in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany, among others.

She said the five to six million refugees from Ukraine had been welcomed by the European Union in ways that are unusual with large flows of people, ensuring they could find work and had access to healthcare and education. Many have been housed in private homes. “Europe has been shocked by this war,” Kaplan said.

Finally, Amanda Solomon spoke about the H18 Foundation, an organisation that she founded in Cape Town that helps women create and sell crafts to support their families, including crocheting with plastic bags. She has worked with about 120 women since 2016, most of them economic migrants from Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Many had young children with them, having left their older children back home. In 2021, H18 moved to the premises of a pre-school that had closed, where Solomon opened the Mana Pre-School (from the Maori word for “spiritual enlightenment”). The children of the mothers at H18 and others in the area receive an excellent pre-school education, improve their English, and have three meals a day.

This work is much needed in a society like South Africa where unfortunately, xenophobia thrives. With Jews having been “people on the move” so many times in our history, the efforts in this sector by Mensch Network members and others is something we can all be proud of.

American terror victim killed on way to SA family wedding

>>>Continued from page 1

story echoes that of Eli Kay, the beloved son of South African Jewry who was killed at the age of 25 by a terrorist in Jerusalem in November 2021.

Like Kay, Ganeles was deeply involved in his shul, community, and volunteer work. Both played musical instruments – Ganeles the saxophone, Kay the guitar. Both served in the Israeli Defense Forces as lone soldiers, and both lived on a kibbutz. Both had a deep love of Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish people, rooted in their upbringing, Jewish education, and families. And both had a wonderful way with people from all walks of life, leading to an outpouring of grief from individuals, organisations, and politicians at their tragic deaths.

Ganeles was buried in Ra’anana, and the funeral was streamed to a heartbroken community and mourners around the world. The family will return to West Hartford to sit *shiva*.

“We are snowed under, but from the messages going around, I can sense the huge amount of shock and grief,” says Bloch. “In spite of fears of COVID-19 and a six-inch snowstorm, people are going to be lining up out the door to comfort them. I’ll be one of them. Dr Ganeles has been there for me,” she says, her voice filled with emotion. “Now I’ll be there for him and his family.”

She describes the Ganeles as “lovely, down-to-earth people, which is why I chose Andrew as my doctor. In his rooms, he has photos of his family, including trips to Israel. The family are so beloved in this tiny, close-knit Jewish community.”

South African expat Lesley (Wolk) Meisler’s children also visited Carolyn as their paediatrician, and their children grew up together. They live a few streets away from one another. “My youngest child would often go to their house on a Shabbos afternoon. We shared birthday parties and many happy times together,” says a devastated Meisler.

She heard the news soon after landing in Johannesburg, where she is visiting her daughter, Jordana Sevitz, who is married to a Capetonian and lives in Johannesburg. “We’re heartbroken,” says Meisler. “Their three boys are the most beautiful children. I remember when

each of them was born. Our kids all went to the same schools. Seeing his photo in the media makes me feel like I saw him yesterday. It’s so hard to imagine that a child I watched grow up alongside mine has been taken like this.”

Sevitz says she was a few years older than Elan, but “I knew him my whole life. He was quiet and confident, always feeling comfortable to talk to anyone and making them feel at ease. He was funny and clever and always had a joke. He loved making people laugh.” She has also experienced tragedy – her sister-in-law, Hayley Sevitz Varenberg, was killed in a bus accident in Israel in 2019.

Meisler says Elan was “a role model to other kids. He came from a very involved family which gives so much to the community. Andrew and Carolyn are committed to their Judaism and their professions, and are respectful and modest – and that’s how they raised their boys.”

Both mother and daughter “could hardly talk” when they heard the news. “We were shaking,” says Meisler. “I’m encouraging my kids to talk to each other and support each other.”

She says that when she returns to West Hartford, she will immediately visit the family and be there to support it on the long road ahead. “His parents’ and brothers’ generation are extremely close-knit, and will support the family.”

Nancy Krisch, who lives in Cape Town, lived in West Hartford for a number of years. At the time, she knew the Ganeles as acquaintances as well as Rockland when she was a young girl.

“West Hartford is a very close Jewish community with several synagogues representing Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform streams of Judaism, and has strong ties to Israel,” she says. “The community is no doubt reeling from Elan’s death. It’s a warm, caring, and supportive community in its entirety, and I’m sure all will come together to support the Ganeles family.”

Sevitz believes a support group should be set up to help families from the diaspora whose children, like Ganeles and Kay, have had their lives taken senselessly in terror attacks just because they were Jews.

Why real-life rapport protects kids from online missiles

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Sucked into an online world that glorified self-harm and suicide, British 14-year-old Molly Russell committed suicide in 2017. This week, her father, Ian Russell, now an online children's safety campaigner joined Terry Rubenstein, the founder of mental health and resilience non-profit organisation iHeart in a webinar to discuss how to empower our children to withstand the effects of potentially harmful online content.

Headquartered in the United Kingdom, the iHeart programme has been rolled out in 22 countries, including South Africa, where it is being introduced to King David primary and high schools this year. Founded by South African-born Rubenstein, iHeart supports young people, parents, schools, and educators by providing a range of specialised courses and programmes on mental health education, resilience, and well-being.

Russell revealed how an inquest into his youngest daughter, Molly's, death for the first time held tech platforms formally responsible for the death of a child. It sparked his tireless campaign for better internet safety.

Unbeknown to her family, Molly had viewed extensive graphic images and videos about suicide, depression, self-harm, and anxiety on social media before taking her own life. Investigating how the tragedy could have occurred, Russell unearthed the shocking content she'd been exposed to.

Following this case, social media platforms were ordered to submit explanations of what they were doing to make the internet safe. Though they made submissions, Russell says basically nothing has changed. "From what I've seen of their responses, it seems pretty much business as usual," he said. "We all need to work together to help make the digital world safer for our children."

Discussing what we as parents can do to stop our children disappearing into this virtual world, Rubenstein shared a quote from school psychologist John Scardina, "Prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child."

"Generally, as parents, our intuition can be to dive in and try and save, fix, and solve, what's commonly known as helicopter parenting or snowplough parenting, in which we clear the pathway so that children can have a smooth way forward in life," Rubenstein said. She believes such an approach is disempowering for children "because it prevents them from having to struggle, learn, adapt, and uncover the innate resources that they need for life and the challenges that life will inevitably throw their way".

Russell believes that before we prepare our children for the road ahead, we have to understand what that road is – especially in the context of social media, with which they are generally more familiar than we are. "The problem is the road is twisty, it's full of potholes, it could unexpectedly become something completely different, and it's quite hard to navigate," he said. "That's because in tech, the pace of change is fast. One of the biggest problems, as a parent, is keeping up."

We need to accept that the digital world is here to stay, and it does do tremendous good, said Russell. However, it can be misused. "For example, harmful content can be posted by individuals, and platforms can then suggest this content to vulnerable users to amplify it algorithmically to such an extent that it can move people away from a happy life towards contemplating suicide." Even those who don't search for harmful content are frequently exposed to it on these platforms.

"We need to be prepared to talk about it so that if kids do find harmful content, they feel able to come to you as a parent, a teacher, and a friend to seek advice

about what to do about it."

Yet even if children have a good relationship with their parents, coming to them with such issues isn't instinctive, said Rubenstein. This is why the onus is on parents to start these conversations.

"It's far safer to talk about it than not to talk about it," said Russell. Though we may worry that bringing up harmful content may cause our children to seek it out, it's up to us to work together with them to navigate the information superhighway as safely as possible, especially when there are no "road signs" in place to protect them. It's vital to keep the channels of communication open, and to empower children to contribute to the conversation.

"We should be our children's biggest influencers," Rubenstein said. "We need to teach our children that they have everything they need to deal with life's challenges inside of them." So, if the world pushes against them, they have the innate ability to push back. And no-one can take that away from them.

Rubenstein also stressed the value of creating a good rapport to influence our children in a positive way. "Rapport is a mutual feeling of warmth, of goodwill," she said, "It's what allows us to listen and interact without judgement." It makes us feel allied to one another.

Nurturing a good rapport is important because this is what facilitates true human connection as opposed to the superficial connections that happen on social media. So, while your child may still be somewhat influenced by social media, their rapport with you will keep them anchored.

With this rapport as our foundation, we also need to be okay with our children not being happy with us, Rubenstein said. "If you want to win the war, then you're going to lose the battle. Your child won't be happy in the short term, but in the long term, there will be huge gains. Our children will then receive a strong message that we have faith in their ability to get over that upset and return to their state of well-being."

It all comes back to educating children about their innate well-being. Regardless of whether they're being trolled online or being criticised for bad exam results, their well-being is within them. "The more we share this message with young people, the more empowered they will be to go out and feel that they're bigger than life, life's not too big for them," Rubenstein said.



Ian Russell



Terry Rubenstein

'Day of Hate' against Jews – a damp squib

PHILLISSA CRAMER – JTA

A "National Day of Hate" against Jews planned by white supremacists that triggered sweeping warnings from law enforcement and Jewish security officials came and went without significant incident on Saturday, 25 February.

Synagogues and Jewish institutions across the United States had spent the preceding days shoring up their security procedures, reassuring their congregants, and requesting extra patrols from local police.

But the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which monitors hate, wrote on Twitter that a meaningful escalation of antisemitic activity didn't come to pass in spite of some white supremacist actions and propaganda drops around the country. "Despite concerns over increased antisemitic activity, 2/25 has so far been a pretty typical Saturday in America," the organisation tweeted.

Some Jews had said they were staying home or taking other precautions against the threats of synagogue vandalism issued earlier in the week by a small extremist group in Iowa. Police published bulletins about the threats, but law enforcement officials in New York and Chicago said ahead of Saturday they saw no indication of concrete threats. That assessment was echoed by the Secure Community Network, a group that co-ordinates security for Jewish institutions nationwide.

"This is yet another example of how social media is contributing to the rise in antisemitism, this time by spreading and amplifying the activities of what is surely a very small group of people," Julie Platt, the chairperson of the Jewish Federations of North America, wrote in an email last Friday.

Reports from synagogues suggested that the pews were crowded on Shabbat with Jews who said they wouldn't be deterred by hate. In some cases, they were joined by non-Jewish allies who wanted to show their support.

"It was packed," said Rabbi Eric Woodward of Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven, Connecticut, where a pre-planned Silly Hat Shabbat was transformed at the last moment into an act of defiance.

"We're wearing silly hats tomorrow because it's the first Shabbat of Adar, the month when we're supposed to 'increase our joy' and get ready for the costume

holiday of Purim," Woodward had written to his congregants on Friday. "Normally, it's hard to know how to fight these abstract forces of hate. But tomorrow, you can do that."

Communities demonstrated defiance in other ways, too. Temple Emanu-El in New York City, for example, held its Shabbat morning services on Fifth Avenue rather than inside its majestic sanctuary on the block. Among those attending were non-Jews who wanted to show their support.

That was exactly what Jewish advocates had urged as Shabbat neared. The ADL had encouraged Jews to turn Saturday into "Shabbat of peace, not hate". Meanwhile, social media influencers exhorted their followers to demonstrate their Jewish pride and support for Jews under threat.

"Some fringe white supremacist groups have planned a national 'day of hate' against the Jewish people on Saturday," read a widely shared Instagram

post by Jessica Seinfeld, who previously went viral by offering non-Jews a way to signal online that they rejected antisemitism by rapper Kanye West. "We're hoping our friends will help us counter this idea with their love and light," she wrote.

"Will you consider joining a Jewish friend at synagogue for Shabbat? Help us fill our sanctuaries with courage and friendship."

One of the most prominent non-Jews to join a synagogue service on Saturday was New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who was at New York City's Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, which primarily serves LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) Jews.

"When there are people out there who think that by their words alone, by declaring a day of hate, that the rest of us, particularly those in the Jewish community, would cower and say, 'Well, we're afraid of them. We're going to stay home,'" Hochul said in brief remarks to the congregation. "They certainly misjudged the situation."

The ADL said there had in fact been protests by antisemitic groups in Ohio and Georgia on Saturday, and antisemitic material distributed in at least four other states.

"We know the threat doesn't magically disappear as the sun sets on this so-called 'Day of Hate,'" the organisation tweeted.



Photo: Drew Angerer (Getty Images)

Security cameras at the Park East Synagogue in New York City

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Let’s talk about sex – taking the taboo out of the bedroom

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

A religious young woman dedicated to sex education before marriage and a lawyer-turned-sex-coach helping people achieve their “pleasure potential”, Galya Falkson and Nicki Brivik believe that a healthy sex life starts with communication.

“My mother was very open in the way she educated us about sex and body changes,” says Falkson, a sex and intimacy coach. “Whenever we had any sort of questions, she would always answer thoroughly, and as we grew older, she would add more information in a beautiful way.”

Falkson slowly developed a passion for sharing this knowledge by educating others. “As I grew older, I could see how much miseducation there was,” she says. After she got married, Falkson became a *kallah* (bridal) teacher, but soon identified the additional need for extensive sex education before and after marriage.

Seeking to broaden her knowledge, she became a certified love, sex, intimacy, and relationship expert, getting her qualification from a United States-based university and becoming a professional member of the South African Sexual Health Association.

“There’s a fine balance when it comes to Judaism because there are so many misunderstandings and taboos around the subject,” she says. “People don’t know what questions they’re allowed to ask, and they worry that if they’re even having those questions, there’s something wrong with them. Studying was very eye opening for me, and I wanted to share the knowledge I gained.”

Falkson started an Instagram page which shares advice, sex education resources, and the ability to ask questions anonymously. It has grown steadily to more than 8 100 local and international followers. She believes her platform is the best way to connect to young adults, in addition to private practice.

“My clients come from different age groups,” says Falkson. “Most single people who come to me want to

understand more about their bodies, sexuality, sexual health, and relationships, and some want to understand what it means to be a religious person with these feelings. I help them to recognise whether something is holding them back from achieving their goal in creating the relationships they desire, and to give them the sex education they deserve.”

Falkson advocates healthy and ongoing educational talks with children about sex, body image, body changes, respect, and consent, in an age-appropriate manner. She’s working on a guide to empower parents to do this.

Post-marriage, Falkson helps couples navigate sexual and relationship problems, body image issues, specific postpartum-related issues, and any dysfunction that may arise through to menopause. “Often couples come to me and say they have all these sexual issues, and it’s just a lack of education,” she says. “Sometimes all I do is give them the skills to communicate, a little basic sex ed, and all the issues fall away.”

Intimacy and sex aren’t the same thing, she says. Aligning the two is about that emotional connection, which comes with the kind of vulnerability and empathy that most people forget or don’t know is important.

Sex should be a holy, beautiful experience, Falkson argues. “The torah calls it ‘the *mitzvah*’. We want to focus on giving people the best possible education so that when they go into marriage, into a sexual relationship, they feel confident and empowered and have an intimate, pleasure-filled experience that is spiritually and physically connecting.”

Regarding the inevitable judgement she faces in the community about the work she does, Falkson shares the hundreds of success stories she’s helped facilitate. She has the full support of her family and her husband, who is a rabbi himself. “Though some rabbis are against me, a lot

support me,” she says. “I send people to a lot of these amazing *rabbonim* in our community, who are down to earth and connected to today’s generation.”

“We need to break the stigma,” she says. “The Torah itself speaks about sex, so I believe what I’m doing is right. To own your sexuality, to understand who you are as a sexual being, and to have a space where it’s safe and healthy to express that with your spouse, is empowering.”

Sex coach Brivik agrees. “I want to liberate the conversation around sex,” she says. “It’s so important in a



Galya Falkson



Nicki Brivik

relationship because it’s what keeps alive that sense of excitement, pleasure, and adventure that we sought in the beginning. Yet, there’s so much shame, and many people are unable to talk about sex. Even among couples who have been married for many years, there’s real discomfort.”

A qualified attorney who started her own practice specialising in personal injury law, Brivik eventually left to become a full-time mom. Upon returning to the work she’d loved, she realised she needed a change. “I couldn’t go for that ‘fight, fight, fight’ when I was enveloped in love all day,” she says. Having informally assisted people to tackle sexual challenges, Brivik realised she could use these skills to fulfil her passion

for helping others. She therefore qualified as an internationally accredited integral practitioner coach, and applied that modality to her sex coaching practice. “I chose coaching as opposed to therapy because it’s intuitive, forward looking, fast-paced, and goal-orientated,” she says. “I see my clients every two weeks and give them homework, and you can see the changes so quickly, which feeds my soul.”

People often get mired in myths that can shroud sexual expression and fulfilment, she says. “We all have our own unique sexual roadmap, and I’m trying to help people traverse that and ‘sexplore’ themselves and their partners again,” she continues. “Often, creating your ideal sexual life is just about communication.”

Knowing that your challenges and desires are normal can make a massive difference.

Brivik helps people to allow arousal to flourish, whether they have deep-seated issues or are simply looking to spice things up. “Even if you’re very fit, you can still learn something from going to a fitness coach,” she says by way of example. “Like anything, you don’t want to stop working at it.”

She also sells sex toys, helping people to navigate an area that can sometimes be overwhelming but is ultimately liberating. “Why limit yourself?” she says. “We learn about sex, but not about pleasure,” she says. “That’s the problem.”

A mother of three, Brivik says her children are proud of her. “My 18-year-old daughter helps me with my Instagram reels. Initially she worried about it, but she’s seen how passionate I am about my work and how people respond. I can’t go anywhere without people opening up to me. My superpower is that I’m able to talk about sex so comfortably and openly. As long as it’s safe and consensual, whatever you’re doing is ok. Don’t shame yourself, revel in it, and bring it into your life – it adds so much colour and joy.”

SA youth leader has unplanned Shabbos with US kingpins

HANNA RESNICK

When Kayla Diamond set off to Washington for the American Jewish Committee’s (AJC’s) leadership conference from 4 to 6 February, she didn’t anticipate that a private Shabbos lunch would bring her a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

She landed up being hosted by Anne Neuberger, the deputy national security advisor for cyber and emerging technology in the Biden administration, and breaking bread with top politicians.

It was all because being *shomerai Shabbos*, she asked to spend Shabbos with an observant family while at the conference.

Diamond’s first encounter with the AJC was in June last year, when she attended one of its conferences in New York as a member of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS). A few months later, she was elected to its newly founded National Global Board to represent South Africa.

The AJC’s national leadership conference began on Saturday night (4 February). However, she and three other students who keep Shabbat contacted a shul to ask to be placed with an observant family over Shabbat. After spending Friday night with one family, on Saturday morning, they set off to their assigned home for the rest of the day.

It was only when she arrived at the Ritz-Carlton penthouse, that she realised she would be spending the day with Neuberger.

Among the guests at Neuberger’s Shabbat lunch were Elliott Abrams, who served in foreign policy positions for George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Donald Trump; and Maggie Goodlander, the deputy assistant attorney general of the United States (US) justice department, married to Jake Sullivan, US national security advisor.

She was party to their lunch-time conversation,

discussing the contrast between American and South African politics as well as international relations with Israel, and how both countries’ governments and citizens reacted to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

However, what struck Diamond most was the realisation that these distinguished political figures weren’t just “normal people”, they were religious Jews like her.

When asked about her experience of being a religious woman in the White House, Neuberger told Diamond that though there’s a lot of antisemitism from the public, most of her colleagues are very accepting of her religion. Moreover, “they have a lot of respect for her diligence in her own religious practice”. Diamond admired the fact that “she goes into the White House



Kayla Diamond (front) with delegates from the AJC leadership conference outside the White House

almost every day and yet still takes the time to prepare a Shabbos meal.”

The conference began after Shabbat. The group met Ted Deutch, the chief executive of the AJC, as well as the board of governors and other leading members of the committee. They discussed the issues surrounding antisemitism on university campuses around the world, and highlighted the rise in antisemitism experienced by Jews aged 18 to 30. “There’s a massive gap between [the board’s] generation and ours,” said Diamond. “They’re eager to help, but a lot of the time, they don’t know how to. At the end of the day, they’re not on

Continued on page 14>>

south african

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Anti-apartheid detainee delves into dark past in new memoir

TALI FEINBERG

In 1969, at the age of 21, John Schlapobersky was arrested for opposing apartheid, primarily through poetry. He was tortured, detained, and eventually deported. Interrogated through sleep deprivation, he later wrote a diary secretly in solitary confinement.

Titled *When they came for me: The Hidden Diary of an Apartheid Prisoner*, his newly released book, based on his diary written on toilet paper and hidden inside a pen while in prison, tells this little-known story of survival and defiance.

After being forcefully deported, his return to South Africa for Cape Town's Jewish Literary Festival on 21 March allows him to come full circle and share his riveting, devastating, and hopeful history.

"I was supposed to be a man by the time I turned 21, by anyone's reckoning. By the apartheid regime's reckoning, I was also old enough to be tortured," he writes in his introduction. "Looking back, I can recognise the boy I was. The eldest of my grandchildren is now approaching this age, and I would never want to see her or the others – or indeed anyone else – having to face any such ordeal. At the time, my home was in Johannesburg, only about 30 miles (48km) from Pretoria, where I was thrown into a world that few would believe existed, populated by creatures from the darkest places, creatures of the night, some in uniform. I was there for 55 days, and never went home again."

He experienced a week of sleep deprivation, most of it standing on a brick under a bright light, and six weeks in a cell near the gallows in prison "listening to the condemned sing through the nights before execution, and then in the terms and nature of deportation. In spite of having written a book about it now, as I put it all down 54 years later, it's still an extraordinary ordeal.

"While in detention, my survival was shaped by the belief that I could protect my life by describing what was happening," he says. "I stole a pen from the interrogators' desk and took it with me into solitary confinement. There I kept a daily chronicle on toilet paper, kept

from my cell in Pretoria local prison, given half an hour to say goodbye to my family, and put on a plane to Israel. I didn't appreciate that this was to be the end of my life in South Africa. A free return was impossible until after the Mandela government came to power 25 years later."

The ripple effects of these events had a profound impact on Schlapobersky's life and that of his family. "My parents' marriage broke down in the aftermath of my detention. It was one of the casualties of those terrible times." He settled in London, where his siblings came to live with him and his girlfriend, whom he later married. "So I was not only a displaced refugee, but was also in *loco parentis* to two teenage children."

The one positive outcome of the experience is that it led him to become a leading psychotherapist and author. He is a training analyst at the Institute of Group Analysis, and was a founding trustee of Freedom from Torture in 1985. His publications include *From The Couch To The Circle: Group-Analytic Psychotherapy In Practice* (Routledge, 2016), which won the American Group Psychotherapy Association's Alonso Award in 2017 and is in translation to other language editions.

He could have become a different kind of writer. He was close friends with South Africa's poet laureate, Mongane Wally Serote, long before his name came to the attention of the public, and their earliest poems were drafted together. "But my arrest and deportation cost me my own developing voice as a poet. I still write poetry when deeply moved, but have published little," he says.

Why write a book now? "Over the years, I've been approached by many journalists and some of them have done a reasonable job with their versions of my experience. But I've always wanted to tell my own story, on my own terms, and in my own way," he says.

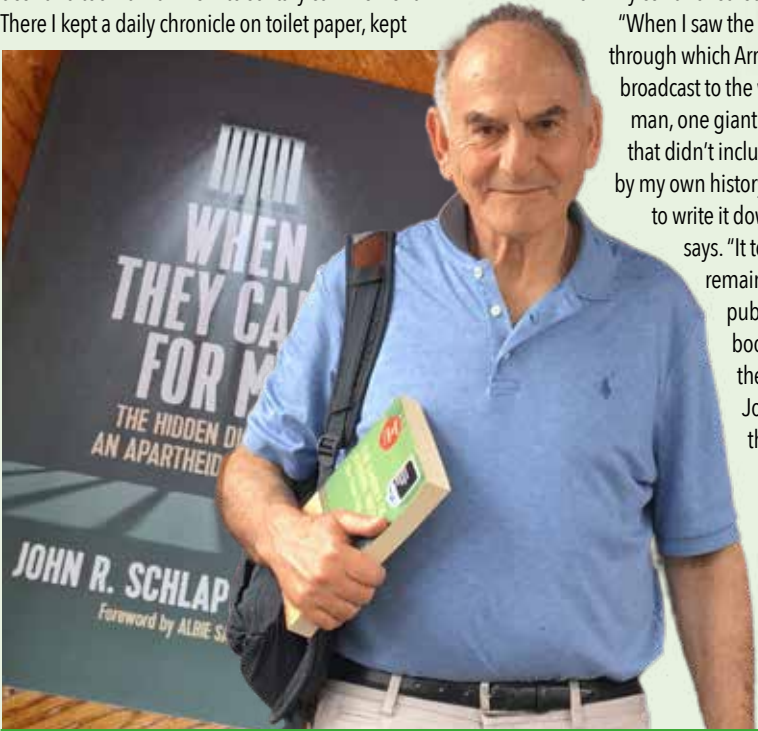
It was a visit to the NASA Space Centre and the Apollo Museum that really prompted him to write a book. "Neil Armstrong and his crew walked on the moon on the 39th day of my detention, which a prison warder told me about in passing. That night, I tried and failed to view the moon from my cell and feared I might never see it again.

"When I saw the little speaker in Houston through which Armstrong's voice was broadcast to the world – 'One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind' – a world that didn't include me, I was overwhelmed by my own history and came home resolved to write it down, once and for all," he says. "It took about two years, and I remain deeply grateful to the two publishers who produced the book – Berghahn Books for the international edition, and Jonathan Ball Publishers for the South African one."

Recalling the experience brought up feelings of sorrow, horror, and disbelief. "Reliving it is like eating nails," he says. "I could get to grips with it only for limited periods of time, and would then find I had to return to the present to recover. When immersed in this narrative, holding the old Bible, or looking at the toilet paper diary, the material had a strange quality that corroded my well-being. I found I could get distracted and moody and become careless about people, arrangements, and possessions. Now that this task is done, I look forward to being on better terms with my past, without so much threat from its shadows."

Schlapobersky is a practicing and observant Jew. "I belong to a wonderful Masorti (Conservative) community here in London," he says. "I regard Israel as my spiritual home. It's also the country that helped to save my life. South Africa is still my home, so coming to the Jewish Literary Festival in the port that my grandparents came to at the beginning of the 20th century brings together just so much. I'm grateful and delighted."

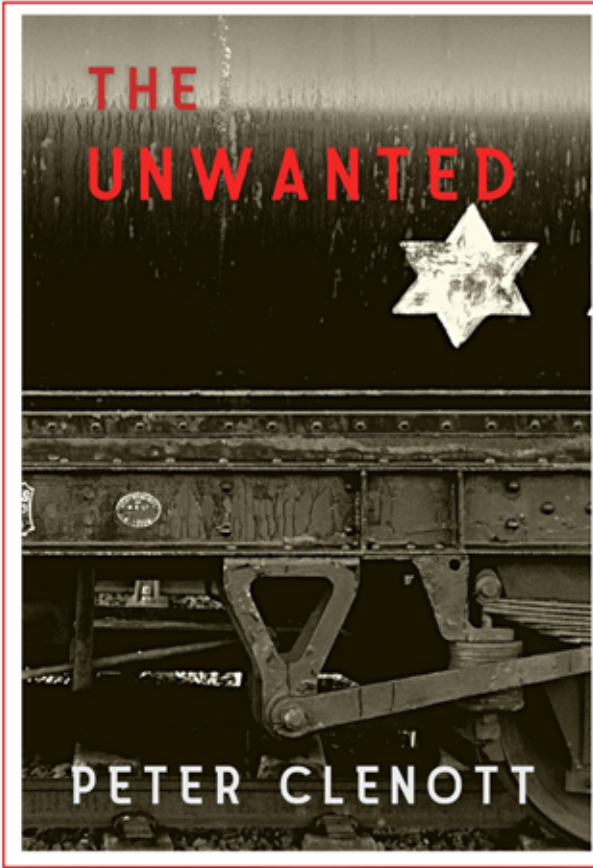
- John Schlapobersky will be a special guest at the Jewish Literary Festival 2023 in Cape Town on 21 March. He will be addressing "The personal in the political". To book or find out more about the festival and special hotel offers, go to www.jewishliteraryfestival.co.za or call Beryl on 082 490 6652.



John Schlapobersky

ADVERTORIAL

The Unwanted: An excerpt



It is September 1939. War has just begun. The Nazis have begun an extermination program – against their own children.

Late summer. The first day of September, to be precise. And, to a young girl about to die, time, running out, matters above everything.

In the past, on a fine day such as this, this girl, now hunched over her notepad in the back seat of a BMW, might have visited a museum in Berlin. She might have crossbred flowers with her grandmother, studied her precious textbooks, or hiked through her native Bavarian forest looking for plant samples. But this first day of September in 1939 is an unusual day. At 04:45 this very morning, the German army under General von Rundstedt and General von Bock have invaded Poland. World War II has begun.

Does she even care, this girl? She's only 14 years old. Mind on lock-down, does she notice the forests passing by on either side of her grandfather's car? The war is distant. Turbulence at home is daily. Does she hear the radio playing, already touting the magnificence of Der Fuhrer's lightning strike? Does she hear her grandfather's satisfied grunt – "Hitler is making Germany unrivalled again" – or catch his eye as he darts a worried look toward the female creature whose blood he denies is akin to his? No. She's too intent on her notepad to notice anything. Writing with a manic intensity that neither of her male attendants understands, she's bent over her paper as if some weight is forcing her down, never taking her eyes off her work, keeping her creations a secret from the world.

"Esh-vie-zet-vie-geh-vie. Esh-vie-zet-vie-geh-vie."

She mumbles this rhythmic chant over and over, "Esh-vie-zet-vie-geh-vie", until her grandfather, Friedrich, can no longer tolerate it and turns the knob of the radio to raise the sound, to drown out her existence.

She's crazy, this one, her grandfather is thinking. Not of my blood. I've a clear conscience about this. Not of my blood.

Her name is Hana Ziegler. And though she does have a family, grandparents, and two uncles, Edward and Walter, she's very much alone in the world. Mother deceased, father an unknown, she has borne her existence through her intellect, her curiosity, her studies of a world that her family, apparently, doesn't want her to inhabit much longer.

"Esh-vie-zet-vie-geh-vie."

Her lone suitcase sits at her feet, her few possessions thrown in at the last minute. Papers, schoolbooks, gnawed pencils, an eraser, and a sharpener. The sun had barely risen three hours earlier when she was rousted from her bed by her family's maid. Money isn't the problem for the Zieglers. Hana is.

In Peter Clenott's new mystery thriller, *The Unwanted*, 14-year-old Hana Ziegler is being driven by her grandfather and her psychiatrist to a euthanasia centre; 16-year-old Silke Hartenstein graces the covers of Nazi propaganda magazines; Avi Kreisler is a Munich police detective condemned to Dachau; David McAuliffe's patrician father wants his son elected the first Catholic president of the United States. In *The Unwanted*, in the aftermath of war, revenge brings these four people together in ways unimaginable.

WARNING: Do not skip ahead to the last page.

The book can be purchased on Amazon, Barnes & Nobles and Level Best Books

Chess prodigy named Amayanga-Yanga athlete of the year

STAFF REPORTER

Twelve-year-old chess prodigy Caleb Levitan won the award for the most promising sportsperson of the year in Gauteng at the 11th annual Gauteng Sports Awards on 18 February, beating other top sportspeople from the more physical sporting codes.

He's also one of youngest to win this award, known as the Amayanga-Yanga Athlete of the Year Award, which recognises young athletes who have displayed exceptional performance in their respective sport and show great promise for the future. The Gauteng Sports Awards is hosted by the Gauteng department of sport, arts, culture, and recreation to honour the province's sports stars for their efforts in local and international sports events.

In the run-up to this award ceremony, all the sporting codes put forward their most promising contenders, and Levitan made

the top three and then unanimously won because of his achievements.

Levitan surpassed the 2 000 rating by gaining 123 points playing in the grandmaster section of the Czech Open in Pardubice, Czech Republic, in July, and was awarded the Candidate Master Title. He has also achieved the provisional title of FIDE Master, and is the youngest player in South Africa to obtain this accolade.

He won gold medals at the Gauteng Inter-region Chess Championship in October 2021, and at the SA Junior Chess Championship in April 2022. He was the joint gold medal winner at the African Chess Championship in Zambia in July 2022. He



Caleb Levitan with the Amayanga-Yanga Athlete of the Year trophy also came fourth in the World Schools Chess Championship in June 2022 in Panama, which is the highest placing any South African has achieved in any world chess championship. He was also board 1 for the Under-16 Olympiad team when he represented South Africa in Azerbaijan.

Speaking at the ceremony, Levitan said, "I hope to inspire more young people to play their respected sports." He said his aim was to become a "grandmaster and travel the world and play tournaments".

Late last year, Levitan, who is a pupil at King David Sandton, was the first South African chess player to achieve the title of Candidate Master by recording a FIDE rating of 2000.

"I'm happy that chess is being valued and recognised as a sport. Not many people know the physical and mental stamina needed to play games of four or five hours at a time," Levitan told *South Africa Today*. "The training and competitive schedules are in line with any competitive athlete. I'm proud to represent the sport, and I am really grateful to my parents, coaches, school, and the chess federation for helping me reach this point."

Levitan is part of a chess power twin. His brother, Judah, also aims to become a grandmaster one day. Both Levitan and Judah played board 1 for the South African A and B teams respectively at the recent Youth Olympiad held in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan, during October, according to a previous article in the *SA Jewish Report*.

Judah and Caleb are the current Under-12 and Under-16 South African Chess Champions. They have played against American grandmasters Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So, and Levon Aronian – honours for any chess player.

SA youth leader has unplanned Shabbos with US kingpins >>Continued from page 12

campus facing those issues." Together, they brainstormed "how funding and resources can be used to actually make a difference".

Though campuses in America often have better access to resources, she felt "a strong sense of pride" in discussing some of the actions that SAUJS has taken to combat antisemitism on campus. She even found herself being asked for advice by other members, such as how to deal with the so-called "Israeli Apartheid Week".

"In America, 'Israel Apartheid' is often brought up in conversation, but not always fully understood," she said. "For us [in South Africa], it's a touchy subject, but also very much ingrained in us. After all, South Africa was the epicentre of apartheid, so there's a different view on that narrative".

That night, the group went out for dinner, and each was able to select an ambassador they would like to sit next to for the evening. Diamond sat with the deputy chief of mission for the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus, Maria Savvidou. "We spoke about the situation in Cyprus and its ongoing conflict with Turkey," she said. "We also discussed Israel-Cyprus relations. She spoke

positively about Israel, and the relationship with their ambassador in Israel."

On the last day of the conference, they attended a seminar on antisemitism. The AJC presented some of the research it had garnered in communities around the US. "One survey in the black and Hispanic communities in the US found that more than 50% had never heard the word 'antisemitism,'" Diamond said. They also found that "more than nine in 10 US adults [91%] said antisemitism was a problem for everyone and affected society as a whole. And yet, only 47% of US adults surveyed said that antisemitism had increased over the past five years compared to 82% of American Jews."

Diamond was also able to get a glimpse of America's Jewish communities, which she found to be far more polarised than in South Africa. "In America, there are so many different sects of Judaism and everyone's views are so different," she said.

However, "going to shul and hearing the same tunes that are sung here after a 16-hour flight halfway across the world" reminded her that "our traditions and pride are what unite us".

Sunday 5 March

- Johannesburg**
- New Beginnings hosts a talk by Rivka Chaiken, *Why is Purim such a happy yom tov?* The talk will be followed by a music concert by Adam Davis. Time: 10:00. Venue: Union of Jewish Women House, 77 Sandler Road, Percelia. Contact: lynarch@worldonline.co.za
 - King David Victory Park and King David Linksfield host *Purim Fest*. Time: 17:00. Venue: King David Victory Park. Contact: vpmarketing@sabje.co.za
- Cape Town**
- Bnei Akiva Cape Town hosts a Purim carnival. Time: 16:00. Cost: R30. Venue: Ohr Somayach Shul. Contact: capetown@bnei.co.za or 072 332 2772

Monday 6 March

- Johannesburg**
- Sandton Shul hosts a Purim megillah reading and family function. Time: 19:00. Cost: R100. Contact: sandtonshul@sandtonshul.co.za or 011 883 4210
 - Sydenham Shul hosts a children's Purim carnival. Time: 17:30. Cost: R60. Contact: sydshul@sydshul.co.za
 - Linksfield Shul hosts a Purim carnival. Time: 17:00. Contact: admin@linkshul.co.za or 011 640 5812
 - Edenvale Shul host a megillah reading and Purim party. Time: 18:45. Contact: Tamara 076 993 7767
 - Greenside Shul hosts a mincha, maariv, and megillah reading. Time: 18:00. Contact: 011 788 5036 or info@greensideshul.co.za
 - Torah Academy Boys High hosts a Purim party and dinner. Time: 19:00. Contact: boyshigh@torahacademy.co.za or 011 640 7565
- Cape Town**
- Sephardi Hebrew Congregation and Marais Road Shul hosts a Purim party and megillah reading: Time: 18:15. Venue: Marais

- Road Shul. Contact: 021 439 7543 or kerry@maraisroadshul.com
- Temple Israel Cape Town hosts a megillah reading and party. Time: 19:00. Venue: Pier Place Rooftop Bar. Cost: R90. Contact: 021 762 1745
- Union of Jewish Women Cape Town hosts a women's megillah reading. Time: 19:30. Venue: 7 Albany Road, Sea Point. Contact: admin@ujwcpe.co.za or 021 434 9555
- Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts a talk by Dr Nicole Fox on her book, *After Genocide: Memory and Reconciliation in Rwanda*. Time: 18:00. Contact: 021 462 5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za

Tuesday 7 March

- Johannesburg**
- Sandton Shul hosts a Purim lunch and megillah reading. Time: 15:00. Contact: sandtonshul@sandtonshul.co.za or 011 883 4210
 - Sydenham Shul hosts a megillah reading and Purim *seuda*. Time: 17:00. Contact: sydshul@sydshul.co.za
 - Edenvale Shul hosts a Purim *seuda*. Time: 17:30. Cost: R180 (R100 for children under 12). Contact: Tamara 076 993 7767
 - Greenside Shul hosts a women's megillah reading followed by lunch. Time: 14:00. Contact: 011 788 5036 or info@greensideshul.co.za
 - Torah Academy Boys High hosts a megillah reading followed by a breakfast and learning programme. Time: 08:45. Contact: boyshigh@torahacademy.co.za or 011 640 7565
- The Johannesburg Sephardi Hebrew Congregation hosts a Purim *seuda*. Time: 17:00. Contact: secretary@jhbsephardi.co.za or 063 485 8267
- ORT SA hosts an online talk by Arthur Goldstuck, *Local Small Business – The Lifeline of SA Economy*. Time: 09:00. Contact: admin@ortjet.org.za or 011 728 7154



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- Cape Town**
- Ohr Somayach Cape Town hosts a Purim party. Time: 17:30. Cost: R200 (R100 for children under 12). Contact: awesome@ohrsom.co.za or 021 434 6772
 - Chabad Centre Cape Town host a Purim party at the Rollercade. Time: 17:30. Contact: 021 434 3740 or pauline@chabad.co.za
 - Constantia Hebrew Congregation and Claremont Wynberg Hebrew Congregation host a Purim carnival. Time: 16:30. Venue: Constantia Shul. Contact: office@constantiasul.co.za
 - Temple Israel Cape Town hosts a children's Purim carnival. Time: 17:00. Venue: Temple Israel Wynberg. Contact: 021 762 1745

Pretoria

- Pretoria Hebrew Congregation hosts a megillah reading and Purim party. Time: 17:00. Contact: 012 460 7991

Wednesday 8 March

- Community Security Organisation Cape Town launches an eight-week adult body and mind self-defence course. Time: 18:00. Venue: Oranjezicht, Cape Town. Cost: R360. Contact: training@csocape.org.za or 087 820 4949
- ORT SA hosts a talk by Ariellah Rosenberg on ChatGPT. Time: 09:00. Contact: admin@ortjet.org.za or 011 728 7154

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Why networking in the diaspora matters

Every year, a high-powered delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations (COP) visits a particular part of the world, meeting political leadership as well as the local Jewish community. COP is the umbrella organisation of the 50 most important Jewish communal institutions in the United States, and one of the most effective advocates of strengthening American support for Israel and working towards furthering peace and stability in the Middle East. This year's meeting took place in Dubai, after which the delegation moved on to Israel for a packed programme of discussions and meetings with top Israeli leaders.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) traditionally close and amicable working relationship with COP was significantly boosted in February 2010 when the Board hosted 65 delegates from both COP and the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress in their visit to southern Africa. Since then, National Director Wendy Kahn has regularly been invited to attend as well as sometimes speak at COP's annual gatherings. Wendy again attended the Israel leg of this year's COP trip, in addition to many other important leadership gatherings, meetings, and consultations that she took part in during her visit.

As Wendy always stresses, it's important to take part in major Jewish leadership gatherings not just because of the value derived from the events themselves, but perhaps even more for the opportunities to network and build partnerships with our international Jewish colleagues. Over the years, these trips have exposed Wendy and other Board professional and lay leaders, myself included, to an impressive range of organisations that have shared the outstanding models and best practice they have developed. Depending upon the work and functions such organisations perform, these, in turn, can be introduced to other South African Jewish communal bodies. Wendy was able to lay the groundwork for future potential partnerships with local communal bodies

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

during her trip. This was in addition to discussing and developing partnerships relating to the SAJBD's own core work. Though our community is, geographically speaking, quite isolated from the greater Jewish world, we have so much in common with our counterparts elsewhere in the diaspora. Like us, they are constantly required to safeguard their communities against antisemitic attacks, whether involving physical violence, threats, intimidation, or unfair discrimination. They also confront continual attacks on Israel's integrity and legitimacy, which in addition to defending Israel itself, is also inextricably bound up with defending the right of Jews to identify openly and proudly as Zionists in an environment where such voices are increasingly being silenced.

While in Israel, Wendy was on a panel of country representatives who spoke at the foreign ministry conference. She took the opportunity to share the strengths of South African Jewry as well as the challenges it faces and how it's dealing with them. It was fascinating to hear how other communities are dealing with similar challenges, and how we can learn from and assist each other in that regard. More sobering insight was provided into the escalating severity of antisemitism in many other diaspora countries not just in terms of the bare number of incidents but the increasing instances of attacks involving serious violence. This is becoming a genuine crisis for global Jewry, and underlines how essential it is for Jewish communities around the world to work together, sharing best practice, resources, and experience, assisting one another wherever possible, and maintaining sound channels of communication.

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



All hail the Republic of Glenhazel

It's time to start issuing passports. Not the ancestral ones like Lithuanian or German or Polish, but from the independent Republic of Glenhazel. It's time for the Greater Glenhazel Area (GGA) to secede and go it alone.

Like Lesotho.

Cape Town might have toyed with this idea for years. Hout Bay has flirted with the concept since it started catching fish and tourists, and Orania would have loved to. But they make us comfortable. The reality is that if any area would be able to pull it off, it's the GGA.

It would be surprisingly easy.

For a state to survive and thrive, it needs security, schooling, medical support, electricity, water, and a robust economy. It needs a foreign policy, leadership, and a social infrastructure. With private schooling, private hospitals and doctors, with Hatzolah as support, with CAP keeping a close eye on the criminal element of the country, with the Community Security Organisation responsible for the safety of state installations, and with multiple synagogues, private schools, and infrastructure, the GGA Republic is already putting its tax money to work.

Add private electrification plants atop almost all houses in the area (if not all, then many), with "Jojo" tanks becoming the norm in the backyards across the area, and utilities are well taken care of.

On a practical level, the many road booms and security guards could easily be deployed to man passport control at the entrance to the state, and the neighbourhood dogs could be repurposed to act as customs agents. A simple word to "pimp my pooch", and the custom bandanas could reflect the colours of GGA. Whatever they are

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



determined to be.

Maybe Jacaranda purple?

Checkers 60/60 riders would be allowed to enter and exit the zone at will and without hindrance.

The new GGA passport would obviously have a "Freezo" embossed on the outside, and passport photos could be taken and then printed at PostNet in Long Avenue. Taxes would be raised through Charidy events, and high school pupils, as part of community service, would be employed to call, call, call, and call anyone who hasn't yet paid. Payments would be made through Walletdoc.

Pothole identification and reporting would be the responsibility of the over-60-year-old morning walkers, with quality control performed by the sunset crew. They would never be satisfied.

There would be no contested elections because no one would ever agree on leadership. But everyone would concur how terribly everything is being handled. And that leadership is simply not what it used to be.

Because they just don't make them like that anymore.

The people of GGA would be trained for all eventualities. Combat training and extreme driving courses would be held at the KosherWorld traffic circle, and active hand-to-hand experience would be offered at Moishes, with the advanced training scheduled ahead of Jewish holidays at Freshfellas.

There's no timeline for succession and for declaration of GGA independence. But what we do know is that it will be later than anticipated.

WIZO celebrates service and excellence

ADVERTORIAL

The centenary celebrations of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) Port Elizabeth took place on Sunday, 19 February, with an enthusiastic audience of more than 80 WIZO members and friends.

Chairperson Merle Katz gave a report highlighting the outstanding achievements of the past 100 years, mentioning the remarkable women who shone as workers and leaders of the Women's Zionist League in Port Elizabeth. She mentioned successful WIZO projects like the Bargain Shop, Collectable Markets, fêtes and kosher catering functions. She spoke about the 50 years of publishing and distributing the

Michael Bagraim, accompanied by his wife Patsy, gave an informative analysis of the situation of the Jewish community in South Africa.

It was a wonderful opportunity to get together after three years in which no community gatherings were held. Rabbi Lewis Furman, who gave the opening prayer said, "It was really uplifting



Rabbi and Rebbetzin Franklin and Executive WIZO CT

Trope-Friedman said she appreciated the effort that WIZO PE went to organise this outstanding event, which brought together Jewish and Christian friends. New energy has been injected into the PE WIZO society. Congratulations to co-chairpersons June and Merle, and to Janice for their contribution to this memorable day.

WIZO Cape Town hosted a wonderful event on Sunday, 19 February, with Rabbi Selwyn Franklin as keynote guest speaker. Rabbi Franklin has been spiritual leader of congregations in South Africa, Australia, and United

States. Rebbetzin Eileen Franklin, an active member of WIZO Australia, was also present.

The first talk, hosted by WIZO Ruth Branch,

was by Rabbi Franklin on "Jerusalem - the centre of the Universe". Telfed Director Dorron Kline said a few words, and Cantor Ivor Joffe played beautiful songs on the piano.



Merle Katz, Shelley Trope-Friedman and June Kaplan



Michael Bagraim Shelley Trope-Friedman, Andrew Whitfield MP Port Elizabeth

WIZO Cape Town hosted the second session which included their 121st annual general meeting. Rabbi Franklin spoke about "The miracle of modern Israel".

Trope-Friedman sent warm greetings via video, saying, "Congratulations to WIZO Cape Town on a successful event which had a great turnout of WIZO members and Christian Zionist supporters."



Shelley Trope-Friedman with WIZO PE Executive

PE Jewish Chronicle, as well as the WIZO online Rosh Hashanah greetings booklet that elicited generous donations.

The audience was touched by the warm, empathetic presentation by WIZO SA President Shelley Trope-Friedman on the work WIZO does, and her recent visit to Israel as part of the World WIZO Meeting of Representatives.

for our community - a great social event!" An excellent tea, made by the Theodor Herzl catering staff, rounded off a special afternoon!



Hazdan conquers Kilimanjaro for child welfare

Great Park Synagogue rabbi and Torah Academy Dean Rabbi Dovid Hazdan climbed to the top of the Roof of Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro, in February, taking a Torah to the summit.

He did the climb to raise money for children with special needs, raising \$130 000 (R2.4 million) of which \$15 000 (R275 860) was raised by the South African community for children in South Africa. Although climbing Kilimanjaro was on his "bucket list", he was inspired to do this by a local friendship circle after it did a hike to raise money for special needs children.

"It was gruelling and spectacular; painful and inspirational," said Hazdan. "It was a life-changing experience achieved with the power of the mind, focus, preparation, and absolute commitment."

The unique logistics of the trip, including kosher food and implements, meant that he did the climb with a sherper, who carried the eruv for Shabbat.

"We constantly learned and shared life messages derived from the experience," said Hazdan. "We



Rabbi Dovid Hazdan on the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro

carried a Sefer Torah and completed a tractate of Talmud and shared a chassidic discourse in honour of my father's *yahrzeit* on Shabbos. We sang and shared words of Torah and stories of divine providence at a *farbrengen* [gathering] that lasted most of the day in the shadow of Mount Mawenzi."

He described the night sky as "spectacular, with thousands of stars piercing through the darkness", and said the walk to the summit began before midnight on the Sunday night in order to reach the highest freestanding mountain in the world and the highest peak in Africa in time for sunrise."



Joyous pranks at Yeshiva on Rosh Chodesh

Pranks, gags, antics, larks, and escapades were the order of the day for Yeshiva College Grade 11s on Rosh Chodesh Adar on 21 February, who lived up to their reputation and didn't disappoint in bringing joy and hilarity to campus. The students and staff were surprised and entertained all day with their joyous approach to Purim.

If music be the food of love, Hirsch Lyons plays on

Hirsch Lyons Nursery School students warm up their violins on 28 February during their weekly Kindermusik class.



Uri Carr

SA girls have once-in-a-lifetime experience at BBYO conference

Ella Rose Boolkin and Sara Rachbuch attended the B'nai B'rith Youth Organisation (BBYO) International

Conventions, and participated in fun activities with other international delegates at the local Jewish Community Center. At



Ella Rose Boolkin and Sara Rachbuch

the International Convention, they were exposed to speakers such as Maddie Ziegler, Jodi Kantor, and former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. They went to several concerts that featured celebrities, and saw performers from the cast of *Hamilton*. They made friendships with people around the world, learned leadership skills, and were taught more about the values and origin of BBYO.

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