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Dis-Chem chief stepping down but 'not going anywhere'

NICOLA MILTZ

Dis-Chem co-founder and business icon Ivan Saltzman says he may be stepping down as long-time chief executive (CEO) of the business empire, but it doesn't mean he'll be slowing down any time soon.

Still with a spring to his step, he said he intended to remain on the group's board as an executive director and play a role in its growth.

"I may be 73 years old, but I'm not going anywhere," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Dis-Chem confirmed on 15 May that Saltzman would step down at the end of June 2023, and the group's chief financial officer (CFO), Rui Morais, 38, would take over the reins from July. The group's current executive head of finance, Julia Pope, 42, will succeed Morais as CFO.

A busy Saltzman was on holiday in Israel "for five days only" with his wife and businesses partner, Lynette, when the news did its rounds early on Monday. The formidable couple, who started the company together 45 years ago, turning it into the second largest pharmacy retail group in South Africa after Clicks, is celebrating their 48th wedding anniversary this week.

"Monday wasn't particularly momentous, we were quite busy and decided to take every day as it comes," said Saltzman, adding that Morais was effectively announced as Dis-Chem's chief executive-designate in August 2021 as part of succession planning.

"My duties won't change substantially. I'll have more time to focus on the part of the business I enjoy most – travelling to the various stores instead of being office bound," he said. Lynette will continue in her role as advertising executive and head of the beauty division.

Saltzman, the son of Lithuanian and Polish immigrants, was born and raised in Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha). He met and fell in love with Lynette while they were pharmacy students in Johannesburg.

When the couple married, Saltzman was the manager of a pharmacy in Mondeor and between raising their three sons, Lynette would join him



Lynette and Ivan Saltzman

at the shop on weekends, soon working half day, both as pharmacists.

Saltzman's late mother, Mary, gave the couple R10 000 to purchase the 75m² store.

"I saw potential, and the rest is history," said Saltzman, who in all likelihood learnt the tricks of the retail trade as a child helping his mother in the family's clothing store on weekends.

The couple attribute their enduring success to "passion for the business and focus".

They introduced the concept of a discount pharmacy with product categories not previously offered in South African pharmacies.

Their goal was to be the leading specialist in beauty, healthy food, sport supplements, health and well-being, "offering the widest ranges in these categories, as well as professional service", Lynette said.

With a brave, entrepreneurial spirit they opened their second retail pharmacy in Randburg, and began expanding its offering of non-pharmaceutical products or "front shop".

"The idea was to be constantly innovating and to provide a holistic offering," said Lynette.

Slowly, shop by shop, Dis-Chem grew and in 2004, the couple opened their first Cape Town branch, becoming national, then moving abroad. When Dis-Chem hit 100 stores in 2016, the business listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

"Over the years, Lynette and I have grown the business from a single store to what is today – the largest retail pharmacy chain by market share in South Africa, with a network of more than 300 retail stores and more than 20 000 staff," said Saltzman.

Dis-Chem was also recently featured on the *Financial Times*/Statista 2023 annual ranking of Africa's 100 fastest growing companies.

So, how have they managed to survive the twin roles of being life and business partners?

"Ivan was the ideas man, the one with drive and foresight. I helped with implementation. We balanced our individual roles," said Lynette.

"There was very little conflict because we were both attuned to the same purpose," Saltzman said.

Saltzman said he never expected the "unfortunate backlash" caused by last year's controversial leaked memo

Continued on page 4>>

Raise your head as a Jew



Rabbi Pini Pink
– Chabad Greenstone

This week, we read the parsha of Bamidbar in which we learn about G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people in the desert. G-d uses the phrase "raising heads", an interesting way of telling Moshe to count the Jewish people. It presents an intriguing perspective.

The census conducted at that time counted only men between the age of 20 and 60, as they were eligible for conscription into the Jewish army. However, the purpose of this census extended beyond military needs. It aimed to mobilise the Jewish people for spiritual battle against the desolation of the desert, the very place where the Torah was revealed.

By instructing Moses to "raise heads", G-d implied that to triumph over this adversary, they needed to elevate themselves consistently above it. This principle goes beyond mere advice; it's embedded in *halacha*. The Shulchan Aruch, the code of Jewish law, directs us not to be ashamed in matters of Jewish observance, whether in the face of external scoffers or our internal inclination towards evil.

Where do we find the strength to confront these battles? Chassidus teaches that the soul consists of five distinct levels. At birth, only a radiance of the soul enters the body, while its essence, known as the *yechida* (head) remains above in the spiritual realms. The *chaya* level of the soul connects the *yechida* to the other three levels within the body.

In spite of the soul's "head" residing "above", it's still affected by the actions of the rest of the soul below. By fulfilling G-d's commandments and embracing its mission within the body, the soul beneath "raises its head", attaining a heightened awareness of the divine in heavenly realms.

The soul's "head" remains pure and untainted by the desires and temptations of the physical world. It's the part of the soul that prevents a Jew from becoming detached from G-d. For generations, this strong part of the soul has empowered Jews to face persecution rather than renounce their faith. It's the everlasting spark that can transform into a blazing flame when a Jew rediscovers their heritage.

Embracing our Jewish identity unapologetically and facing any challenges with unwavering pride is key. By raising our heads, connecting with our spiritual essence, and living in accordance with our sacred heritage, we can inspire

ourselves and others to overcome adversity and embrace the beauty of our shared legacy.

The directive of the Shulchan Aruch reminds us never to be ashamed of our Jewish observance.

As we reflect on the significance of "raising heads", let's remember that our strength lies in our connection to the divine and our commitment to the timeless values of Judaism. By embodying our heritage, we can navigate the complexities of the world with confidence, resilience, and an unwavering sense of pride. Let's rise above the challenges, and inspire a renewed Jewish spirit within ourselves and our communities.

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Jerusalem Day, יום ירושלים, Yom Yerushalayim, on Friday 19 May, is an Israeli national holiday that commemorates the "reunification" of East Jerusalem (including the Old City) with West Jerusalem following the Six-Day War of 1967, which saw Israel occupy East Jerusalem and the West Bank, effectively annexing the former.

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ANC, Pandor in Nakba hate fest against Israel

TALI FEINBERG

South African communal leaders have called on the country’s political leaders to stop their “unique discrimination and hostility against the Jewish state” as they tore into Israel again this week.

It began with South Africa’s minister of international relations and cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor’s, off the cuff comment recorded on video on 10 May. “We want to hear the ICC [International Criminal Court] indicating that an arrest warrant would be issued for leaders of apartheid Israel, who are the ones who are supporting the massacre of the people of Palestine.”

the Arab population.

“By uncritically endorsing this ideologically-driven caricature of what really took place, the ANC yet again displays its reflexive antipathy towards Israel along with a typically uncritical knee-jerk adherence to outmoded Cold War-era tropes and loyalties.”

The ANC welcomed a high-level PLO delegation led by veteran PLO central committee member, Dr Faisal Aranki, to its headquarters in Johannesburg on 12 May 2023. The delegation was received by ANC first deputy secretary general and head of international relations, Nomvula Mokonyane.

“The PLO delegation is in South Africa to mobilise solidarity as the world commemorates



Nakba Day rally in Cape Town on 15 May 2023

Photo: Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa Facebook page

Then on 14 May, the African National Congress (ANC) put out a statement pledging “solidarity with the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO] on the 75th anniversary of Nakba, the catastrophic expulsion of Palestinians”. The PLO runs the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinians’ semi-autonomous government in the West Bank.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies Associate Director David Saks says, “The basic premise of the Nakba narrative is that Israel came about through the ruthless ethnic cleansing of the Arab population in an unprovoked Jewish war of aggression. This flagrant rewriting of history conceals the reality of how five Arab countries joined with local Arab militias in a failed attempt to wipe out the Jewish state at birth, and how one of the unintended consequences of this was the displacement, for various reasons, of much of

75 years since the Nakba during the formation of the state of Israel in 1948,” the ANC said of the visit. The PLO delegation also travelled to Cape Town to take part in a round-table discussion with members of parliament and in Nakba Day protests.

International Relations and Cooperation Deputy Minister Alvin Botes then addressed a Nakba Day rally in Cape Town on 13 May. The event included a “simulation of Israeli check points, regimentation, control, and caging of Palestinians as part of the experiential learning of the crowd”, according to organisers, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Representatives from the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), ANC, Al Jama-ah Party, and National Freedom Party (NFP) spoke alongside Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation Chief Executive Janet Jobson, Dr Allan Boesak, and Palestinian archaeologist Abeer Zayyad.

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While touring South Africa in recent days, Zayyad spouted a number of false allegations, including that the Israeli government planned to “build a synagogue on the Al-Aqsa compound, destroying Al-Aqsa Mosque” and that “the Israeli government controls the media. When it wants to make major changes to Al-Aqsa, it bombs Gaza and thus redirects the media’s focus.”

Sporting a black-and-white Palestinian keffiyah, Botes addressed about 1 000 people at a Nakba Day rally in Cape Town on 15 May, saying that it was unfair that the world called out Russia’s war on Ukraine, but not the “illegal occupation of Palestinian lands” by Israel.

That march included representatives from the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the EFF, Al Jama-ah, the NFP, ANC, the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and the department of international relations and cooperation. It was organised by the Al-Quds Foundation and the Muslim Judicial Council. Children from several schools and madrasas were bussed in to the march.

At the rally, the Dutch Reformed Church said it was “reaffirming its support for the Palestinian cause”.

each one a war crime, were launched by Palestinian Islamic Jihad from civilian areas in Gaza towards civilians in Israel, causing terror. A fifth of these rockets misfired, landed inside Gaza, killing Palestinians. Yet Pandor is blind to Palestinian terrorism and violence, notwithstanding Israel’s right and obligation to defend itself against these unprovoked attacks. Her remarks about the ICC should be contemptuously rejected. The SAZF continues to call on Minister Pandor and the South African government to cease its unique discrimination and hostility against the Jewish state.”

UCT shrugs off outrage over antisemitic cleric

>>>Continued from page 1

who felt unsafe on campus during IAW.

“We were made aware of Imam Al-Assi’s lecture at UCT prior to his visit. It was advertised that he would present on mental wellness. We take note of the display of a Hezbollah flag during his lecture, and will continue to engage with UCT accordingly.”

Regarding Al-Assi’s visit, Moholola says, “UCT reiterates that events hosted by any of the many recognised structures on campus – in this case by a students’ society – are not institutional events. It should further be noted that UCT management isn’t involved in the speakers’ invitation process for events hosted by staff and/or student structures who are autonomous in this context, nor does management necessarily align with any views held or expressed by any invited speaker.

“UCT is at this stage not aware of any complaints or concerns raised through formal university channels around the event in question.”

But the SAZF released a statement last month referencing the fact that an investigation had been requested into student societies hosting terror-cell representatives on campus on 20 March. The SAZF said on 16 May that it wasn’t free to disclose the findings of this investigation, and the media must contact the university directly for comment.

In response, Moholola says, “UCT has engaged with the organisation via the relevant university departments and/or processes. The university has provided the relevant feedback directly to the organisation.”

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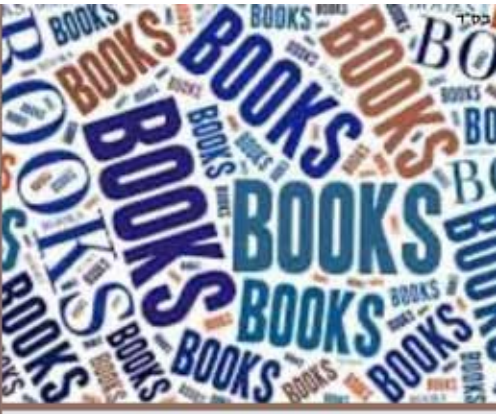


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Ship in the night – eyewitness account of Lady R

TALI FEINBERG AND NICOLA MILTZ

The visible docking and loading of Lady R, a Russian-sanctioned ship, in the Cape Town naval port of Simon's Town on the night of 6 December last year raises questions about South Africa's denial of sending weapons to Russia amidst an international uproar.

A Jewish woman, speaking on condition of anonymity, who was staying in the seaside town at the time, clearly witnessed this cargo ship arriving, carrying military cargo.

On 11 May 2023, the United States (US) ambassador to South Africa, Reuben E. Brigety II, accused the country of supplying arms to Russia for use in Russia's invasion of Ukraine during the December docking of the Lady R. He claimed the African National Congress (ANC) had been unresponsive to repeated American attempts at dialogue, and that the ANC's policy document on the war in Ukraine was "hostile" to the government of the US.

"We saw the ship in harbour," said the woman. "It was loadshedding, so it was pitch black, and we noticed bright lights on boats."

"We wondered whether something fishy was going on right away. First, why load or unload a ship at night, during loadshedding? Why not do it during the day? And it was a ship that isn't normally there."

"We were staying opposite the harbour gates, so we could see lots of comings and goings. We knew people were up to no good, as it was too mysterious. We felt like they were taking advantage of loadshedding."

She says that officially, the public cannot access the harbour because of navy security, but at the same time, "you see lots of cars driving in. Security is very lax. Sometimes the guards are even asleep. Or they go over to the pub across the road. I don't have much faith in our navy protecting us if it ever needs to!"

Although the events happened under the cover of darkness, "whoever we spoke to had [also] seen the boat. It was so obvious. You couldn't miss it. We're there most weekends, so it really stood out as something out of the ordinary. I don't know how they thought they could get away with this and that people wouldn't be suspicious."

The following day, the ship had already moved on, but friends of the woman saw it in the nearby waters of Muizenberg. "Once we heard about it in the news, we knew exactly what they were referring to. How do you go into that harbour and expect not to be seen?" she asked rhetorically.

South Africa's policy of non-alignment has been brought into question following the US ambassador's allegations.



Lady R departing from Simon's Town in December 2022

Opportunity Act as well as the continued status of PEPFAR (The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy responded to the incident by stating that he had spoken to Ramaphosa two days after Brigety's accusation about "the peace formula [for the Russia/Ukraine war], about justice, and about how our world should be united by the rules of international law". Zelenskyy also stated that "anyone who helps the aggressor [Russia] with weapons will be an accomplice with all consequences" in possible reference to the event.

Department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) Minister Dr Naledi Pandor met the American ambassador on 12 May. She told Radio 702 on 16 May that she had expressed the government's displeasure, and the ambassador should have followed the proper diplomatic channels if he was concerned and wanted to make these allegations.

"This is my first experience of an ambassador calling a press conference and then making very serious allegations in a most wild and inappropriate manner. I must say, I was shocked," Pandor told the radio station.

She said the South African government didn't sell arms. Arms are sold by private-sector defense companies and a legal procedure and arms-control process must be followed.

"To go to the public and say South Africa sold arms is actually totally misrepresenting our country and the government," she said.

US Embassy in Pretoria spokesperson David Feldmann told the SA Jewish Report, "We stand by the ambassador's remarks and we have nothing further to add."

Dis-Chem chief stepping down but 'not going anywhere'

>> Continued from page 2

instituting a "moratorium on the appointment of white individuals", insisting that while this was regretful, it wasn't the reason for him stepping down.

"The intention of the memo was to reinforce Dis-Chem's commitment to accelerate transformation," he said. At the time, he said there was no ban on employing and promoting white employees in the business.

The memorandum, which was written in September and leaked in October, resulted in a wave of outrage from many sectors of South African society.

In the company's 45-year trajectory, it has survived other controversies, like many leading companies, but has shown steadfast commitment to uplifting poorer communities through the Dis-Chem Foundation. Started in 2006, the foundation continues to address the dire need for the upliftment of disadvantaged communities throughout South Africa.

In a statement this week, Dis-Chem said that in order "to deliver on the group's strategic priorities" over the long-term, Saltzman had committed to divest 32.25 million Dis-Chem ordinary shares owned by

the Saltzman family, representing 3.75% of Dis-Chem's issued share capital, to Morais and a group of key senior executives, ensuring their ongoing commitment.

"I'm confident in and supportive of the future leadership of the group," said Saltzman.

"Together with Lynette, I look forward to doing what I enjoy – spending time in the stores and ensuring that our staff continue to provide the value and service that has made the brand what it is today. I will continue to identify opportunities to expand our store footprint."

"Saltzman transformed retail pharmacies," said Dis-Chem Chairperson Larry Nestadt. "Under his leadership, Dis-Chem evolved from a family business to a leading listed, and proudly South African, corporate business. Dis-Chem's leadership succession has been well managed by Saltzman, and we're confident in the leadership team's ability, under Morais' stewardship, to deliver on the strategic ambitions of the group," Nestadt said.

The couple have three sons, Saul, Mark, and Dan, and eight grandchildren. Saul is Dis-Chem managing director.



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South Africa and America – ripped asunder

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



Russian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz reminded us that diplomacy was merely war by other means.

Last week, a diplomatic war broke out in Pretoria. In a carefully stage-managed announcement, the United States (US) elected to fire a warning shot publicly across the bow of South Africa. The Americans had simply had enough of Pretoria, and decided that a public spat would bring the matter to a head.

The US spends about R9 billion a year in aid to South Africa, and funds much of the country's HIV/Aids programme. In spite of South Africa not technically qualifying to participate in the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, South Africa was granted duty free access to the American market. The US is South Africa's second largest trading partner. In 2019, trade totalled \$17.8 billion, with exports at \$8.0 billion and imports \$9.8 billion. US foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa totalled \$7.8 billion in 2019 and hundreds of thousands of South Africans work for American companies in the republic.

Last week was an indication that things had gone seriously awry.

The African National Congress (ANC) holds a deeply anti-Western ideology, opposing American interests wherever it can. ANC leaders educated in the old Soviet Union have been unable to break out of their cold war ideology, even as the Soviet Union collapsed. Ideologically, the ANC identifies with the revolutionary dictatorships of Cuba and Venezuela, has protected Iran

Western diplomats rallied to the support of Abravитova, and messaged home to their governments that South Africa was no friend of Ukraine or the West.

The world was watching, and in spite of having been invited to the G7 Summit in 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022, Ramaphosa didn't receive an invitation to join the G7 in 2023 in Hiroshima. South Africa was facing a degree of isolation from the West, and that should have immediately set off alarm bells in Pretoria.

In August 2022, during the height of Russia's attack on Ukraine, South African Defence Minister Thandi Modise jetted off to Moscow to address a security conference and meet her Russian counterpart.

A few months later, South Africa announced that it would be conducting war games with Russian and Chinese ships off the coast of Durban. Incomprehensively, the war exercises took place on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

On 3 October last year, the sanctioned 122m Russian Ro-Ro container carrier, the Lady R, sailed from the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Mysteriously, as the ship approached Cape Town, the transponders reporting the ship's position were turned off. Under cover of darkness, the Lady R slipped into the Simon's Town naval base, but was spotted by local residents on 7 December 2022. It has subsequently been reported that naval personnel were removed from the dock and in the darkness of the evening of 8 December, undisclosed cargo was offloaded and loaded onto the vessel.

As the ship sailed towards Beira in Mozambique, the

Relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate in February as, The Admiral Gorshkov of the Fleet of the Soviet Union, a frigate carrying Russian supersonic missiles, arrived in Durban for its war games and it was revealed that South Africa had invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) summit on 15 August



National Security Adviser Sydney Mufamadi

in Durban in spite of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant for the Russian leader.

Attempting to explain the South African position to Washington, President Cyril Ramaphosa dispatched a delegation headed by Sydney Mufamadi to the US. While National Security Advisor Mufamadi and DIRCO Director-General Zane Dangor put on a brave face, it was clear that behind closed doors their meetings had not gone well.

South Africa was unable to answer details of what had been loaded onto the Lady R, and rumours abounded about what South Africa had also loaded onto The Admiral Gorshkov and a sanctioned Russian cargo plane that had mysteriously landed at the Waterkloof Airforce Base, purportedly to deliver Russian "diplomatic mail". No one bought that story either.

But the real cloud that hung over Mufamadi's visit was the release in April of the ANC's international relations resolutions from its December 2022 elective and policy conference. While the Lady R was being loaded with mysterious cargo, the ANC said, among other things, that "US geopolitical strategy has identified Russia and China as the two powers that must be contained, according to the Wolfowitz doctrine which undergirds US foreign policy. This is why the US provoked the war with Russia over Ukraine, hoping to put Russia in its place".

American Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II was livid.

Following normal diplomatic and political channels was getting the ambassador nowhere. Undoubtedly with the authority of the state department, Brigety publicly stated, "We are confident that weapons were loaded onto that vessel, and I would bet my life on the accuracy of

that assertion."

The South African currency tanked on the ambassador's announcement. A significant part of the South African economy was now in serious jeopardy.

This was the second time in less than a year that a frustrated American embassy had decided to go public, over the head of its host nation. In October 2022, the US embassy publicly warned of a possible terror attack in Sandton, clearly indicating that South African securocrats weren't taking American warnings of such an attack seriously.

In an act of defiance, DIRCO announced that it would summon the American ambassador for a démarche, the equivalent of a diplomatic reprimand. South African Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Naledi Pandor and Blinken jumped on a hurried call. Neither of the parties issued a "read out" of the conversation.

DIRCO spin doctor Clayson Monyela issued a statement informing South Africa that, "Brigety admitted that he had crossed the line, and apologised unreservedly to the government and people of South Africa".

Brigety had a very different take on the meeting, posting on Twitter, "I was grateful for the opportunity to correct any misimpressions left by my public remarks. In our conversation, I re-affirmed the strong partnership between our two countries & the important agenda our presidents have given us."

No mention was made of any apology, and clearly Brigety wasn't sorry for taking the matter public, given South Africa's failure to address the issue behind closed doors.

As the crisis deepened, the South African Army chief jetted off to Moscow for meetings. Russia described the meeting as "combat readiness talks", clearly an attempt to deepen the rift between South Africa and the US.

Rather than ask his cabinet colleagues, Ramaphosa has promised the nation that he will dust off a retired judge to investigate what cargo was loaded onto the Lady R. Sometimes it's better to remain ignorant or kick the crisis further down the road in the hope that it will somehow disappear.

South Africa is a sovereign state, it has the right to choose its friends, withdraw from the International Criminal Court, and supply weapons to dictators, imperialists, and human rights abusers.

What Ambassador Brigety did last week was teach South Africa a very important lesson. Every action has a consequence, and R400 billion of trade, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and the support of the West isn't something you just take for granted. The real question is whether the ANC has the maturity to realise that the interests of South Africans are more important than its ideological throwback to an era long gone.

- Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the "SA Jewish Report". He has a BA in Law and International Relations and LLB and Master's degree in Political Advocacy and International Conflict Resolution.



US Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II



Ukrainian Ambassador to South Africa Liubov Abravитova

at the International Atomic Energy Agency, supported the colonial aggression of Russia, ignores the human rights abusing governments of China, Syria, and Myanmar, has called for the end of sanctions on Zimbabwe, and has supported Hamas and Hezbollah. The list of the ANC's close friends reads like a book of torturers, oppressors, and dictators.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, South Africa claimed neutrality, but effectively supported Russia. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) went out of its way to ignore Ukrainian ambassador to South Africa, Liubov Abravитova. Abravитova was unable even to secure a meeting with DIRCO until she created a public spat by appealing directly to the South African people, forcing an angry and undiplomatic DIRCO response.

immediately hit the press. The South African government offered no answers. On December 2022, Modise told the media that the Lady R had delivered ammunition but failed to answer what had been loaded onto the ship while in port. She reported that she was waiting for paperwork, which five months later, appears not yet to have arrived.

So concerned was the US, that a barrage of political and diplomatic activity began. South Africa was visited by both US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

It has been confirmed that Yellen informed South African Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana in February that Washington suspected that South Africa had loaded weapons and ammunition onto the Lady R while in port. South Africa offered no clarity.

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ISRAEL AIRLINES

The world of misinformation

It’s truly astonishing how easily history is rewritten to suit people’s personal rhetoric, and the impact of bias on the value of life.

Israel is still trying to enjoy the fact that it celebrated its 75th year as an independent Jewish state this week (14 May) in spite of internal conflict and 1 468 rockets launched at it from a terrorist organisation in Gaza between 9 and 13 May. It has phenomenal reason to do so.

It’s a country that has gone from a desert to an oasis, from a country with nothing to a country that is on the international map for high tech, as a start-up nation, and an economic giant.

However, instead of recognising that in 1948, the United Nations (UN) gave the go-ahead for the establishment of what is now the only democracy in the Middle East, Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas is trying to have the Jewish state unseated from the very same organisation.

Abbas is demanding that the UN oust Israel because it won’t grant Palestinians a state of their own. And his distorted view of the establishment of Israel is that the Nakba (so-called catastrophe) is what he commemorates when Israel celebrates Yom Ha’atzmaut.

Simplistically, the truth is that the UN gave the go-ahead for two states, one for Jews and one for Arabs, but the Arab nations insisted the Arabs in Israel leave and come back to take over both. Only, the war of independence didn’t end the way they wanted it to.

Abbas compared Israel to Nazis in his UN speech, which is antisemitism at its best, but it was not the first time he has done this. And way too many people just accept this putrid behaviour.

Abbas plays to his audience, distorting history to suit his own story by using this downtrodden, underdog personae.

It was great to know that 32 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Ukraine stayed away from this commemoration and Abbas’s talk. Ten of the 32 countries were European Union member states, and three were African. It’s a relief that so many won’t be hoodwinked by this fake history.

If it wasn’t so devastating to witness so many others buying into these lies – like our very own Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, and other members of our government – it would be laughable.

But it goes deeper than that.

Do you recall that this time last year, Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in the crossfire while covering an Israeli military operation in Jenin in the West Bank? The death of this veteran *Al Jazeera* journalist made huge news, and there was a dispute about who shot her.

However, on the anniversary of her death, Israel Defense Forces chief spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari apologised for her death, saying there was a “high possibility” she was shot by an Israeli soldier.

“She was a journalist, a very established journalist,” Hagari said. “In Israel, we value our democracy and in a democracy, we see high value in journalism and a free press. We want journalists to feel safe in Israel, especially in war time, even if they criticise us.”

I respect the fact that he did this, even though there has never been proof as to who shot her. One death is too many.

Interestingly, she wasn’t the only journalist killed last year. She was one of 68 journalists killed around the world, according to the International Federation of Journalists’ latest report. Of these, the report maintains that only 11 were killed accidentally.

Eleven were killed in Mexico; 12 in Ukraine; six in Tanzania; two in Syria; two in Yemen; two in Gambia; two in Somalia; four in the Philippines; five in Pakistan; seven in Haiti; and four in Colombia. I could go on...

The point is, do you have any idea what happened to all these other journalists? Perhaps in their own countries, a big deal was made about them in the media, but we certainly didn’t hear about them. Were there international investigations into their deaths as they were into Abu Akleh’s death?

These numbers are horrific, and no death is acceptable, especially when journalists are killed doing their job as messengers of the truth. We should be making a big deal out of each of these deaths but not selecting just one and making it a conduit for further hatred of Israel.

Abu Akleh’s death, I believe, was abused and turned into a political football instead of actually using this tragedy to pay tribute to a journalist who did a great job and died doing just that.

But then, that’s the story of Israel haters and their venom against the Jewish state. They’ll use whatever they can to skew the Israeli-Palestinian narrative. So, when you look at the situation in the region – and that isn’t to say that Israel does no wrong – it’s never what these people say it is. In fact, the real history is so often lost in the hateful rhetoric and misinformation put out there, so much so that it becomes hard for those who aren’t in the know to actually see the truth.

How does the fact that 1 468 rockets were launched from Gaza into Israel get lost in translation? How does the fact that 1 139 of these actually crossed into Israel get ignored? How come the fact that 290 of all the rockets (one in five) launched actually landed in Gaza, injuring those living there, isn’t made known?

Simple, it’s because it doesn’t play into the narrative of all Palestinians being innocent victims and doing no harm. Israel haters don’t want you to know that there are real Palestinian terrorists who do mean harm and truly want to rid the world of the Jewish state. They’ll go to whatever lengths they can to make the world believe them.

I’m truly grateful that most of the world isn’t taken in by them.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Yom Yerushalayim – another tense moment for Israel

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



On 28 Iyar, corresponding to 19 May this year, Israel and the diaspora will mark Yom Yerushalayim. This day commemorates the recapture of East Jerusalem from Jordan by Israel in the June 1967 Six-Day War, and the subsequent reunification of the city as Israel’s “eternal capital”.

The day has developed into a show of nationalism, especially by religious Zionists. They take part in a loud – some would say provocative – march and the “Dance of Flags” through the city’s iconic limestone streets to the Kotel. This year, as Israel reels from internal demonstrations against proposed judicial reforms and a shaky ceasefire with militants who recently fired hundreds of missiles on Israel from Gaza, the day could be another flashpoint for a country on edge.

Palestinians and their supporters have long resisted what they see as Israel’s attempts to “Judaize” Jerusalem. There are periodic – but entirely false – rumours that Israel intends to cause harm to or change the status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, known as al-Haram al-Sharif to Muslims. These sacred buildings are still under the auspices of the Jordanian *waqf*, with Israel controlling security. These lies raise the temperature on the Temple Mount, in the city, across the country, and through the Muslim world.

For instance, in January 2023, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel’s new security minister from the far-right Jewish National Front party, visited the Temple Mount. The terror group, Hamas, said this was “a deliberate provocation”, and several Israeli politicians advised him against it. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem told *Al Jazeera* that Ben-Gvir’s “storming” of Al-Aqsa was “a continuation of the Zionist occupation’s aggression against our sanctities and its war on their Arab identity”.

Ben-Gvir brazenly showed his defiance of Hamas, and did his walkabout. Representing a religious Zionist constituency that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs to keep his governing coalition together, Ben-Gvir wasn’t going to be told where he could or couldn’t walk. He’s in favour of Jews being allowed to pray on the Temple Mount, which they are currently not allowed to do.

Ben-Gvir will participate in this year’s ultranationalist Yom Yerushalayim march, which again could spark violence as it did in 2021. The police have been condemned by right-wingers for attempting to reroute the march away from Arab neighbourhoods. Senior politicians such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Transportation Minister Miri Regev are also likely to march. They are among those driving proposed judicial reforms that protesters across the country have said undermine Israel’s democracy.

A fragile ceasefire with Palestinian Islamic Jihad is in effect at the time of writing, following five days of fighting where almost

1 500 rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza. This could be in danger as the noisy march celebrates the defeat of Arab armies and their humiliation in 1967.

Jerusalem is never far from controversy. On 14 May 2018 – Israel’s 70th Independence Day – the United States under President Donald Trump finally moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, fulfilling a promise made in the Clinton Administration in 1995. Palestinians claimed this was tantamount to recognition of Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem. Jews maintain that they don’t need anyone to tell them where Israel’s capital is. On that day, 57 people were killed in protests at Gaza’s border with Israel linked to the relocation.

Only Guatemala and Paraguay said they would move their missions to Jerusalem, but the latter reversed this decision when the government changed after elections.

In 2021, disagreement again erupted over planned evictions of Arab families in the Sheik Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem, leading to clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians. It was seen as a miniature version of the whole Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the emotive issues of land, rights, and identity at its heart.

Back in 1967, Israel’s defence minister



Yom Yerushalayim in Jerusalem

Moshe Dayan said, “This morning, the Israel Defense Forces liberated Jerusalem. We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel. We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again. To our Arab neighbours, we extend, also at this hour—and with added emphasis at this hour—our hand in peace. And to our Christian and Muslim fellow citizens, we solemnly promise full religious freedom and rights. We did not come to Jerusalem for the sake of other peoples’ holy places, and not to interfere with the adherents of other faiths, but in order to safeguard its entirety, and to live there together with others, in unity.”

But this has never been easy in the city King David is said to have made his capital more than 3 000 years ago. It has been attacked and conquered numerous times over the centuries, and remains a holy city to three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Let’s hope tension doesn’t boil over into more deadly violence this year.

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

Photo: Ilan Ossendyver

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What on earth is going on in Israel?



RUTH WASSERMAN LANDE

Since the launch of the newly-elected Netanyahu-led coalition several months ago, Israel's politics have been roiled by a profound internal debate over a series of judicial reforms proposed by its new government.

At its core, Israel's ruling coalition seeks to "rebalance" the composition and authorities of Israel's Supreme Court to bring it more in line with and make it more subservient to the country's executive branch. That is, in the coalition's view, given the relatively strong activism which the judicial arm in general and the Supreme Court in particular has practiced in the past 20 years, perceived by some to override the will of the people and their elected politicians. In practice, since the transformation and strengthening of the Supreme Court, put in place by former Supreme Court judge and world-renown jurist, Aaron Barak, 22 decisions taken by the Israeli Knesset have been overturned by the Supreme Court until today. For some, that's "only 22" in several decades. For others, it's "22 whole decisions based on the will of the people".

Judicial overhaul is opposed by many in Israeli society, as the Israeli political system lacks the checks and balances to the executive arm which exist in many other Western countries, such as a second house of legislation, the senate, or a Constitution. Thus, the Supreme Court remains at times the only authority able to contest the actions taken by the political executive and/or legislative arm in Israel.

The resulting political crisis now engulfing the country is the most consequential in Israel's 75-year existence.

Though many Israelis agree on the notion that Israel's Supreme Court should be reformed to some degree, the way in which this transformation was intended to occur by the current ruling coalition took the public by surprise. An overhaul of the judiciary did rank as a priority for the current government when it took office late last year. Yet, the intensity and pace of the recent attempt to put this

significant legislation into practice, without what appears to be sufficient public and legislative discourse within the relevant legislative committees in the Knesset, has raised unprecedented havoc.

A distinct lack of trust between the country's political left and right, together with a strong opposition to long-serving Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, have also undeniably spurred on hundreds of thousands of Israelis to demonstrate on a weekly basis since January 2023. Nonetheless, demonstrators also include the older generation, which has had a hand in the creation and the establishment of the state of Israel; some of Israel's "salt-of-the-earth" Israel Defense Forces reserve officers and soldiers; significant high-tech engineers and young businesspeople; an unprecedented number of Russian speakers who had previously refrained from taking to the streets for any reason; as well as a growing number of Likud voters, who hold onto their right-wing political views but don't any longer see in the current government a responsible and trustworthy leadership.

The situation has a significant and growing impact on Israel's economy. In mid-April, credit rating agency Moody's downgraded Israel's economic outlook from "positive" to "stable". While last year, Israel's economy grew by more than 8%, suggesting that the fundamentals of Israel's economic performance remain sound, the future looks less rosy. The country has received virtually no foreign direct investment since the start of the year. Capital flight is also evident, with an estimated \$4 billion (R76.2 billion) departing until today. Thankfully, no other downgrades have been made, a fact which Netanyahu and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich hail as economic success, yet this trend may not continue if the reform does go through, and given the mounting financial instability which is exacerbated by the coalition's recent passing of a budget which includes unprecedented amounts of "coalition funds" to be forwarded to the ultra-Orthodox

sector, in which lack of economic growth is a factor.

Under immense pressure created by ongoing demonstrations coupled with many international and local analyses warning of significant economic repercussions, Netanyahu temporarily tabled the judicial overhaul, pledging to take up the issue once more later this year.

"DEMONSTRATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PERSIST WITH VIGOUR WHILE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN THE PRESIDENCY"

Negotiations between the government and Israeli opposition representatives continue under the auspices of President Isaac Herzog. However, massive protests against the measures continue, particularly given the acute lack of trust of large portions of the Israeli public in the fact that these talks are held in good faith. Messaging from certain, more moderate, factions of the opposition allow for the possibility that these talks will, indeed, lead to an agreed solution. Yet, that is coupled with significant scepticism even amidst the most moderate amongst them. Others, however, are outrightly distrustful of the sincerity of the talks, and voice their fear that this is yet another mechanism of manipulation orchestrated by Netanyahu to divert attention away from other disputable legislation that is simultaneously being pushed by the coalition.

Strategically, observers are adamant that the recent political unrest has emboldened Israel's adversaries, who are now actively testing whether the country remains as strong as it was before. Israel's recent strong retaliation to the Jihadist launch of rockets unto Israeli civilians was certainly an attempt to indicate that despite internal strife and division, Israeli military capability and willingness to protect its citizens, no matter who is at the helm, remains strong. While the military operation was taking place, most demonstrators didn't return to the streets, both owing to the security threat as well as to demonstrate that

there was no division when it comes to Israel's security. Those who did demonstrate were mostly hardcore Jewish and Arab leftist activists. However, with the operation over, demonstrations will undoubtedly persist with vigour while negotiations continue behind closed doors in the presidency. That is, in parallel with ongoing legislative moves promoted and led by the coalition which many civilians find increasingly disturbing.

The turmoil has also had an adverse effect on what is arguably Israel's – and more-so – Netanyahu's most important foreign policy achievement: the Abraham Accords. Two-and-a-half years old, the normalisation agreements signed in 2020 between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco have reaped enormous dividends for the Jewish state, including a surge in regional economic activity, tourism, and closer political contacts with once-inaccessible neighbours. Publicly, analysts have maintained an optimistic outlook about this "new era" of ties and of the prospects for future partnerships (including with Saudi Arabia). In practice, the agreements have entered a kind of "observation period".

Given the aforementioned developments, and for the first time in years, recent polls are unflattering to Likud, while showing growing support for the Centrist National Unity Party of former Defense Minister Benny Gantz. It appears that the Israeli public is tired of division, strife, and internal chasms. Yet with the volatility and constant change in the Israeli internal arena, not to mention the fragile security situation, it's still unclear how this will all play out.

• *Ruth Wasserman Lande is a former National Unity Party member of Knesset, former Israeli deputy ambassador to Cairo, and advisor to President Shimon Peres. She's also the founder of Ruth-Strategic Consulting.*

Orwellian dystopia descends on the Jewish state

OPINION

DR MARTIN SHERMAN



If the so-called "champions of democracy" succeed in obstructing the judicial reforms, democratic rule will be replaced by mob rule, and Israel will teeter on the brink of an Orwellian dystopia.

"The starkest indicators [of erosion of democracy], which presumably underlie the country's downgrading in international democracy ratings, involve elite decisions about rejecting election results." – James Druckman, professor of political science, Northwestern University, "Misperceptions, Competition, and Support for Democracy".

If the copiously funded mob succeeds in compelling the Israeli government to back away from its much-needed policy of reigning in the rampant legal establishment in general and the unbridled judiciary in particular, it will be the end of an era in Israel.

Blatantly absurd

For if they succeed, democratic rule will have been replaced by mob rule. A highly motivated and abundantly financed minority will impose its will on the elected majority and compel it to abandon a policy which it pledged to implement in the elections. In this regard, the accumulating signs of the government buckling under the relentless pressure of increasingly raucous and unruly street demonstrations are profoundly perturbing.

There are at least two remarkable aspects of the ongoing protests. One is just how manifestly ludicrous their professed motivation is; the other is how astonishingly effective their well-oiled, well-executed, and well-funded promotional campaign has been in hoodwinking well-off, well-educated echelons in Israeli society.

As for the alleged motivation – defence of democracy

from descent into dictatorship – the demonstrators have yet to present a persuasive causal chain linking the proposed changes in the judicial system to the demise of democracy in Israel. Indeed, it's highly unlikely that they – or anyone else – could.

After all, it's plainly absurd to claim that a system in which a dozen or so unelected and unaccountable officials have the ultimate authority on matters of vital importance is more democratic than one in which that authority is vested in the hands of 61 (or more) elected parliamentarians, regularly answerable to the public.

Descent into dystopia?

So, are the opponents of judicial reform claiming that, if it is implemented, Israel will metamorphise into a "dictatorial democracy", or is that a "democratic dictatorship"? Indeed, the allegation is no less oxymoronic than "tolerant tyranny" or "treacherously trustworthy".

Disturbingly, the opposition's calculated abuse of language is strongly reminiscent of the abuse of language chillingly depicted in Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In it, Big Brother, the totalitarian regime, imposed the use of a contrived language, NewSpeak, "designed to diminish the range of thought". Typical of the elements employed in NewSpeak is the juxtaposition of diametric opposites as in the official motto of the totalitarian regime: "War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength."

In a perturbingly similar vein, the promoters of the anti-reform protests are in effect asserting that "democracy is dictatorship", when decisions are shifted to accountable, democratically elected forums from unaccountable, unelected ones.

Thus, although the opponents of judicial reform are in the opposition, their modus operandi is to impose a dystopian aura on the dispute over those reforms, in which truth is cast to the wind, precluding any chance of sincere dialogue to reduce acrimony and reach consensual resolution.

Brazen, blatant hypocrisy

Of course, the claim that the implementation of the proposed judicial reforms will imperil Israeli democracy is clearly the pinnacle of hypocrisy. After all, those who today vociferously oppose the reforms, previously endorsed precisely the same measures.

Arguably, the most brazen, blatant display of barefaced double standards behind the anti-reform demonstrators is that of Yair Lapid, the leader of the opposition.

On 27 February 2023, during a plenary debate on judicial reform, Lapid railed: "Stop this insane legislation."

However, in a 2016 address to Kohelet Policy Forum, the organisation that played a pivotal role in the formulation of the proposed judicial reforms, Lapid laid out his views on the legal system, which almost mirrored those reforms put forward by today's coalition.

"I have opposed, and I still oppose, judicial activism of the sort introduced by [former Supreme Court President] Justice Aharon Barak. I don't think it's right that everything is justiciable. I don't think it's right

for the Supreme Court to change fundamental things in accordance with what it refers to as the judgment of 'the reasonable person'. That's an amorphous and completely subjective definition that the Knesset never introduced to the legal code. It's not right in my mind that the



Judicial reform opponents protesting across Israel

separation of powers, the sacrosanct foundation of the democratic method, should be breached by one branch of government placing itself above the others."

No accommodation possible

From the foregoing analysis, one thing should be depressingly clear: there can be no consensual resolution to the ongoing clash because the clash itself isn't just contrived, but in fact is the objective of the demonstrators rather than a means to achieve an end.

Paradoxically, there can be no consensual resolution to the dispute because there's no real substantive difference

Continued on page 9>>



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Celebrating 56 years of a reunified Jerusalem

OPINION

ROWAN POLOVIN

On Friday this week, we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. We honour 56 years of a reunified Jerusalem, the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people, and the united capital of the Jewish state.

We mark the anniversary of that miraculous day of 28 Iyar 5727 (7 June 1967), when Israeli paratroopers liberated the Jordanian-occupied Old City of Jerusalem, reunited the city, and reconnected the Jewish capital with the holiest sites in all Judaism, namely the Temple Mount and the Western Wall.

For almost 20 years prior to that moment, Jews were unable to live in the Old City or pray at the Western

the Temple Mount. And on Friday, we'll recognise 56 years of Jews not only being able to turn to, but physically be at the very place towards which they pray.

The importance and ongoing centrality of a unified Jerusalem to the Jewish people should never be underestimated or forgotten, nor should we ever allow enemies of our faith to destroy that unbreakable connection. Jerusalem has never been the capital of any other nation besides the Jews, going back three thousand years to when King David established the city as the united capital of Israel. Jewish scripture has more than 72 names for Jerusalem in Hebrew,

including *Ir Ha'Elohim*, *Ir Ha'Emet*, *Kiryah Aliza*, and *Kiryah Ne'emanah*. The Tanach references Jerusalem, or its alternate Hebrew name, *Zion*, more than 800 times.

In comparison, though there are 16 Arabic names for Jerusalem, not one of these are mentioned in the Koran, even though some have said that a more recent 12th century passage refers to the city. Almost daily, archaeological findings of Jewish artefacts in or around Jerusalem prove over and over again the many thousand year connection between Jewish people and our holy

city. At the end of the Pesach seder, and at the end of the *Ne'ila* service on Yom Kippur, over millennia, we say "*L'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim*" (Next year in Jerusalem). Even at the point of our highest joy, when we break the glass when getting married, we recall the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and remember the same psalm as above to keep "Jerusalem in memory even at the happiest hour".

Jewish South Africans have our executive capital in Pretoria, our judicial capital in Bloemfontein, and legislative capital in Cape Town. However, our spiritual and religious capital is and always will be Yerushalayim. Though we may be physically separate from her right now, she exists in our heart of hearts as the whole and undivided city that connects us every day to the core of our faith. And as people of the Jewish faith, we must continue to allow non-Jewish people the dignity that they have historically denied us: the ability to

exist and to pray freely in our city and land.

I recall the words of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan who said shortly after recapturing the city, "To our Arab neighbours, Israel extends the hand of peace and to all peoples of all faiths, we guarantee full freedom of worship. We've not come to conquer the holy places of others but to live with others in harmony."

With that, may Jerusalem remain forever indivisible, may we all find an opportunity to return to Zion spiritually or physically, never to part from her again. And may she be a city of peace, love, and joy for all who live there.

• Rowan Polovin is the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation.

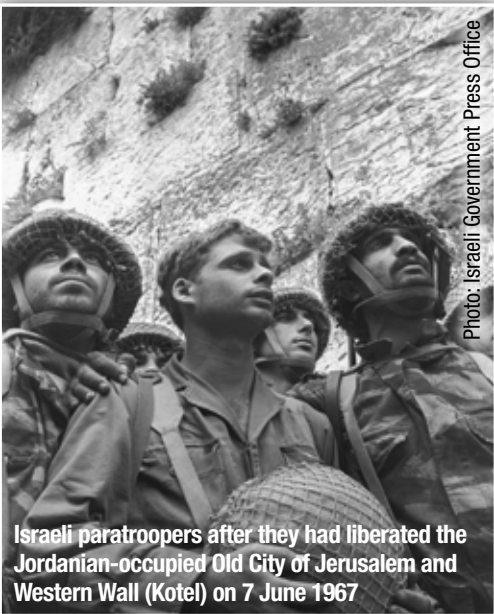


Photo: Israeli Government Press Office

Wall. Under Jordan's control, synagogues in the Old City were desecrated and destroyed, millennia of Jewish archaeological treasures were ruined, and Jews were forbidden from setting foot at these sacred areas. That historical injustice was transformed into redemption with the miraculous words of Motta Gur, commander of the paratroopers brigade, who declared that day over the radio "*Har Habayit b'yadenu!*" (The Temple Mount is in our hands!)

For two thousand years prior, Jerusalem had become a spiritual beacon in the soul of an exiled people, the Jewish diaspora, and it fuelled our collective desire to return to Zion in freedom and self-determination. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," recounts the famous Psalm 137, "let my right hand forget its own strength". To this day, Jews praying anywhere in the diaspora turn eastward to face Jerusalem. Jews praying *inside* Jerusalem turn to face

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Gruzd has last word in Scrabble championship

STAFF REPORTER

Steven Gruzd isn't just a political analyst and contributor to the SA Jewish Report, he's also the reigning Scrabble Masters and Collins Cup champion.

This accomplished wordsmith took home the Collins Cup after a challenging two-day tournament that ended on Sunday, 14 May.

"I was chuffed to win my first Collins Cup," said Gruzd. "I was nowhere before winning the last four games on the trot, including having to beat the leader, Dr Mushtak Esmail, from Tanzania, in the last game."

Gruzd was one of 18 of the country's top Scrabble players who competed in Pinelands, Cape Town, to contest this last "major" of the year. "The competition was fierce, and wonderful words graced the boards," said Gruzd.

This isn't the first Scrabble tournament he has won, and he says, "It doesn't matter if you win or lose. But it feels so much better to win!"

Gruzd started playing Scrabble at the age of eight with his late mother, and then took it as an extramural at Houghton Primary School, which he attended. "My mom loved words, and thought I'd be good at Scrabble. Turns out I was," he said.

He was drawn to the game because, he said, "I just love the poetry and science of the game, the fact that I can be competitive

with the best in the world. And I love language and words. It's a no-brainer. Every game is different and poses new strategic challenges."

He started playing competitively at the age of 12 in 1984. To date, he has won five national championships, the masters three times – including this year – and now his first Collins Cup. He also came sixth at the 1995 World Scrabble Championship in London.

Over the past 39 years, he has won many less significant event victories. So much so, he earned the nickname "Boy Wonder".

"I never give up, and have won some unwinable games," he says. "And I love the quirky, diverse motley crew that make up the players."

Though some may see it as fun games-night entertainment, many take it extraordinarily seriously. "It takes concentration, stamina, word study, and a competitive spirit. I have spent many years playing and learning words and strategy," he says. "Luck is not as big a factor, but it helps!"

Anyone interest in competitive Scrabble can contact Andrew Goldberg on +27 83 260 7530 or andrew@goldbergs.co.za.

Orwellian dystopia descends on the Jewish state

>>>Continued from page 8

on the issues in dispute, as evidenced by prior support for the reforms by those who now oppose it.

This absence of real substantive difference is underscored by the fact that, although opponents of the reforms almost uniformly concede that the judicial system does need some form of overhaul, they assiduously refrain from stipulating what measures they have in mind, thus averting any chance of comparing what the differences are between their proposals and that of the current coalition.

Democratic rule replaced by mob rule

It should thus be clear that the ongoing dispute, allegedly about a substantive difference of opinion, is nothing but a façade, a stage prop in a visceral fight for control of the reins of power in which

there's no place for any rational debate. Nothing will be acceptable other than abject surrender.

This is why the government must not, and cannot, back away from the reform proposal. If it does, there will be no point to any elections in future. Indeed, every time the elected government decides on something to which the opposition disapproves, they will take to the street until it yields to the opposition's demands, and democratic rule will have been replaced by mob rule.

• Dr Martin Sherman spent seven years in operational capacities in the Israeli defense establishment. He's the founder of the Israel Institute for Strategic Studies, a member of the Habithonistim-Israel Defense & Security Forum research team, and a participant in the Israel Victory Project.

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Matchmaker, matchmaker, what makes a Jewish match?

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

"She has to have blue eyes." "He must daven three times a day." Igniting discussion about dating idiosyncrasies, Netflix show *Jewish Matchmaking* also highlights what sets Jewish dating apart.

When we're single, regardless of our religious background, most of us have a relatively specific idea of what we're looking for in a partner, internally and externally. Though there are certain non-negotiables, our expectations may shift through time and experience. But, as is true of many cultures and religions, being able to connect through Judaism and its philosophies has an undeniable impact on the dating process.

"Finding our unique Jewish connection with our person is something that we can't do with anyone else," says *Jewish Matchmaking* star Aleeza Ben Shalom in an exclusive interview with the *SA Jewish Report*. A world-renowned matchmaker and dating coach, Ben Shalom says that though there are more than 15 million Jews with more than 15 million ways to be Jewish, our Jewish background binds us together.

"People are looking for what they've seen that has worked in their own homes," says Joburg-based dating coach and matchmaker Casey Shevel, who also hosts singles events. "People who come from happy Jewish

homes where their parents have been together forever want that. They want the tradition, they want the Friday night, they want to go to shul, and they want someone who has experienced that, who that's normal for so that they can recreate that in their own home." This also works conversely, she says, in that singles often speak in terms of what they don't want, the deal breakers they have experienced at home or with other partners.

Though using a matchmaker has historically been more common amongst more Orthodox Jews, the practice is becoming more established across the board, says Shevel, who has more secular than religious clients. "Maybe because of shows like *Jewish Matchmaking*, people are curious about how it works. Possibly they've been burned and realise that what they're doing isn't working, so they're happy to try a new avenue. I think any stigma around consulting a matchmaker is shifting."

Though many are dedicated to finding Jewish partners – as those who approach Jewish matchmakers inevitably are – for others, it's not as much of a priority. Regardless, Jewish thinking and trends around dating can add a different element to finding a match. For one, families are often quite involved in their children's love lives – for better or worse. On the show, many a mother – and sometimes entire families – join their sons or daughters

for the initial meeting with Ben Shalom.

Parental involvement is also common in the South African Jewish community, says Shevel. "I have parents who phone me and want to know if I have someone for their son or their daughter, and they sometimes hold their hand throughout the dating process."



Aleeza Ben Shalom



Casey Shevel

Sometimes that's great because there's that sense of support, their parents are looking out for them. But sometimes it's a bit of a hindrance because they are *noodging* them, putting in their two cents' worth, and adding extra pressure."

When it comes to Jewish dating, there's also *halacha*.

One practice highlighted in *Jewish Matchmaking* is *shomer negiah*, literally translated as "observant of touch".

Practically, it means that couples don't make any physical contact with one another until they are married.

While for the strictly observant, this practice is non-negotiable, some may attempt it at different levels while others may ignore it altogether or know nothing about it. Interestingly, Ben Shalom often suggests that less observant clients give *shomer negiah* a try. "I think that less religious people are open to trying different things because they don't have any preconceived notions about them," she says. "For the many who are open to trying something new, it's almost like an experiment in dating. They're saying, 'What I've been doing hasn't been working, so let's try a new way.'"

Ben Shalom says that *shomer negiah* promotes clarity. "When we don't touch hands or touch bodies, we can touch hearts and we can touch minds," she says. "We can focus on really getting to know somebody on the inside and understand our experience of them without confusing how we feel about them with how we feel about our physical interaction." That's not to discount the importance of physical attraction, she says, we have bodies and souls and need to connect on both levels. "Yet, we really have to make sure that the inside is aligned because without that, nobody would stay married."

When seeking the right partner, says Rabbi Ari Kievman of Chabad Sandton Central, we must ensure that we like as well as love them. "We shouldn't just fall in love, we should also be able to grow in love," he says. "There has to be mutual respect. There are enough differences between men and women already, so aside from the chemistry and romance, there must be values that are aligned with each other." We also both need the motivation, says Ben Shalom, to build something that we want to maintain for our lifetime.

Yet, though in Judaism we speak of finding our *bashert*, Kievman, Ben Shalom, and Shevel all agree that we don't get only one soulmate. "The word *bashert* literally means 'destiny' or 'meant to be', and from that perspective, it's possible to have more than one soulmate," says Kievman. "Certain people were meant to cross each other's paths even if their relationship has to terminate. *Bashert* is not only about 'the one', but a person who we connect with, and there has to be a reason why we connected."

We can have many soulmates, but only one soulmate at a time, says Ben Shalom. "Are there different levels of soulmates, different levels of connection?" she asks. "Yes. But if you get married, that's your soulmate in that moment."

Indeed, it's under the chuppah that soulmates are made in Judaism. "Before you get married, you have a potential soulmate," says Ben Shalom. "As Jews, we're all about actions, we 'do', which is why we have *mitzvot*. So there has to be an action that accompanies our thoughts and feelings. In this world, to make a soulmate, we literally have to make one, we have to have a chuppah – to have a ceremony to bind us together."

How to avoid letting Eskom ruin your eating habits

HEATHER DJUNGA

What began as the inconvenience of infrequent loadshedding in the early 2000s has become a crisis of daily power cuts, escalating demands on business and undermining nutrition at home.

Rising food costs; cold meals on winter evenings; and unprepared, often nutritionally-unbalanced meals, are some of the challenges South Africans face.

David Shapiro, Chief Global Equity Strategist at Sasfin Securities, says food costs have risen due to overburdened industries and are likely to continue to rise. Shapiro and his team have considered the crisis from an analyst's perspective, viewing the results of various companies and industries month-on-month.

"Don't get me wrong, food prices aren't a fixed entity and can be volatile," he says. "For example, a natural disaster overseas might have an impact on sugar costs. However, in this instance, all South African companies find themselves in the same challenging position. Simply, companies need energy to operate. "When the 'oxygen supply' – power – is short, it must be attended to as a priority before other company interests such as expansion and investment," and the cost is inevitably made up on the shelves.

He talks about a chain reaction which begins at ground level with farmers, who need power to irrigate and cultivate, now having to manage their budget to cover energy needs because of loadshedding. To make up for the increased expenditure, they have to increase the costs of their produce. Even the price of basics such as lentils and beans has risen as a result.

This increase in costs causes a chain reaction, from wholesalers, to retailers, and eventually to the consumer. "The stresses caused by loadshedding, compounded with economic and societal pressures, mean that more than ever, people need nutritionally-sound meals to maintain mental, emotional, and physical health.

"However, with the dramatic increase in food costs in recent months, many are now changing their food-buying patterns and choosing cheaper meal options or eating differently."

Adrienne Bogatie, the head of Kashering Your Life, cites statistics from the National Agricultural Marketing Council which show that food costs are up on average 9% since January this year, and will continue to rise due to the cost of petrol, transport, and lack of electricity.

Bogatie says her company, which helps the community to plan meals to reduce food bills and wastage, has been receiving queries on everything from how to prevent food from going off because of prolonged periods without power to how to prepare affordable, healthy meals without electricity.

Loadshedding has left an indelible mark on daily life, she says. "Whereas before I gave advice on buying in bulk and freezing to save on costs, I'm now advocating buying smaller quantities of food according to a pre-planned

cookers are useful as they stay hot for a while after they are turned off. You can also choose to cook foods which are affordable and retain heat well, such as maize meal or potatoes; and

- Keep ice packs in the freezer to keep food cold during prolonged cuts.

Bogatie says she's concerned about the long-term health impact of inconsistent eating and an increase in the consumption of highly processed foods including fast foods.

Registered dietician Shani Cohen shares Bogatie's concerns. She says following the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, when home cooking became a trend, loadshedding has resulted in an increase of fast-food consumption.

Professionals are noticing an increase in chronic diseases, even in younger age groups. "The number of patients seeking to lose weight or newly diagnosed with diabetes or high cholesterol has increased as a result of an increase in the consumption of convenience and take-away foods," she says.

She has also noticed that many people are eating fewer vegetables because of loadshedding. "Many are ensuring that there's a protein and a starch on their plate, but forgetting the importance of vegetables."

Like Bogatie, she believes the biggest hack to eating well during this crisis is to be prepared:

- Make use of the braai when the power goes out. Consider boiling up some butternut on the gas stove, adding cut up vegetables to your stews, or braaiing a mielie;
- Plan your weekly meals and grocery list to save on costs;
- On the weekend, spend an hour or two cooking two to three different grains and proteins, as well as roasting vegetables. These foods can then be stored in airtight containers and reheated with ease;
- Invest in a small two-plate gas stove. Gas heats up quickly and should save on cooking time and energy costs. Stews and soups are great, affordable winter meals, which can be cooked on a gas stove;
- Focus on more fresh salad-based meals when the power is off. Add a protein source to the salads, such as leftover chicken, tinned tuna, or tinned chickpeas. You can also add a grain, such as wholewheat couscous; and
- Keep a variety of healthier canned-food options in the pantry, such as lite baked beans, corn, lentils, chickpeas, peas, pilchards, tinned salmon, and tuna. Boiled eggs can also be stored in the fridge. These are all affordable sources of quality protein.



Farewell to gentle philanthropic giant, Ben Rabinowitz

TALI FEINBERG

"It's the end of an era," says Judge Dennis Davis, on the passing of his friend of 45 years, Benjamin Rabinowitz. Fondly known as "Ben" or "Bennie", this Cape Town icon left his mark on almost every aspect of South African society, from newspapers to the orchestra, cricket to education. His philanthropy, wisdom, expertise, and energy were directed to the past and future: from supporting a memorial to the Jews of Birzai, Lithuania, to saving the Cape's coastline from development.

Rabinowitz passed away on 9 May at the age of 89 after an illness. "I don't think there was anyone more generous in ensuring that organisations benefitting the public were supported," says Davis. "If others with the resources gave to the extent that Bennie gave, South Africa would be a very different place."

"How do you fill the shoes of a giant?" asks his goddaughter, Mia Feinstein. "You can't, but you can certainly learn many things from the life of Bennie Rabinowitz. He was a *mensch* and embodied *ubuntu* [I am because you are]. He practiced Yiddishkeit, fought like a lion, and had the heart of a teddy bear. He personally fought to save our magnificent Sea Point promenade when developers wanted to demolish it, and won. I know many generations will be thanking him."

Rabinowitz graduated as a top student from South African College High School (SACS) and obtained blues for cricket and athletics. He was the under-16 rugby captain, although he was notoriously shy. He went on to study at the University of Cape Town (UCT),

obtained a distinction in Constitutional Law, and then studied law at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He became increasingly involved in property, textiles, and finance. Semi-retired since 2005, he served as a trustee, patron, chairperson, and board member in numerous spheres, and essentially became a full-time "good Samaritan".

He did everything "below the radar", and even as he aged, "he always had the fire of justice in his belly", says Davis. He remembers how Rabinowitz "saved the *Weekly Mail* (now the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper) "when no other businessperson had the courage to do so", and how he was "a generous donor to the Progressive Party when it wasn't particularly popular".

"Our upbringing was very different to a lot of our friends," says his daughter, Lesley. "We were exposed at a young age to a lot of politics, people from different walks of life coming to the house, to music, art, theatre, and books. Albie Sachs was my dad's cousin, so from a very young age, we were aware of [the struggle]. My mother would take us to sit outside Roeland Street Jail while she went to take Albie food, and unbeknown to us, she was also smuggling notes out in the lid of the thermos flask."

"Bennie, my cousin on his mother's side, was my hero at school – a great athlete who broke the school record for the 100 yards [91m], a top cricketer and rugby player who also got good marks," says Sachs. "In the darkest days when I was in prison, Bennie and Shirley were anchors of affection. Bennie made one of my dreams come true – inviting me to attend the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. The story of how I persuaded Nelson Mandela to be there is for another day.

I spent 10 days in total delight."

"He loved jazz, and I remember going with him to Abdullah Ibrahim's final farewell concerts, which kept happening until [Ibrahim] left the country," says his daughter, Susan. He also became chairperson of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO).

"Ben was a powerhouse in the orchestra, not only because of his philanthropy and large personality but his powers of persuasion to garner support for it," says Louis Heyneman, chief executive of the CPO. "He couldn't say no to a request from a friend for a ticket to a sold-out concert. So, CPO staff had to make miracles happen because we couldn't say no to Ben!"

"He believed in the value of great music to give meaning to the lives of so many. He took great pleasure in entertaining many of our leading artists. He contributed hugely to the fiscal management of the CPO and Cape Town Opera."

"When Reverend Bernie Wrangmore was on a hunger strike at the Kramat on Signal Hill, we were taken up there to give our support. When I came out of school one day, there were my parents protesting outside St George's Cathedral," remembers Susan. Her mother, Shirley, who was a force in her own right, passed away in 2012.

"Bennie loved Hermanus and had a

holiday home there for many years," says community member Jonathan Lipman. "Had it not been for the foresight and perseverance of 'Uncle Bennie', there wouldn't be a vibrant Jewish congregation in Hermanus today."

He wasn't looking for accolades, says Davis, and yet they still found him. He received the Mayor's Medal for

on their feet," says Lesley.

He was the founding patron of LEAP Science and Maths Schools, which provides free maths and science-focused education to economically disadvantaged students. The organisation said Rabinowitz was a "generous visionary with the ability to connect people, and enabled LEAP to grow from its original concept to being a fully-fledged high-impact organisation". Service Dining Rooms, which has been serving hot meals to the needy since 1935, also thanked him for his support.

The co-founders of Inyathelo first worked from a back room of the Rabinowitz home when setting up the organisation. Through organisations like these, Rabinowitz helped everyday South Africans, every day.

"He was a father, husband, brother, grandfather, uncle, cousin, friend, colleague, sportsman, lawyer, godfather, and best joke teller," says Feinstein. "He had chutzpah, he loved to *kvell*, *kibbitz* and sometimes *kvetch*, he was *mishpocheh* to many, loved to *nosh* and *fress*, but overall brought so much *naches* into our lives."

His daughters say he lived by the words, "I expect to pass through this world but once, any good, therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now, let me not defer it, nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."



Benjamin 'Bennie' Rabinowitz with his daughters Lesley and Susan Rabinowitz and goddaughter, Mia Feinstein

Philanthropy; the Inyathelo Award for Lifetime Philanthropy; the Paul Harris Fellow Award from the Rotary Club of Sea Point; the Spectemur Agendo Award from SACS; and the UCT President of Convocation Medal. "We heard about that one only the day before," says Lesley. "He really preferred to stay out of the limelight."

He was on the boards of many Jewish and wider organisations, and supported "all manner of Jewish causes", says Davis.

"It wasn't always about him funding things, it was about him connecting the right people with the right people, and he was prepared to chair things until they were back

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Pelham reflects on a lifetime under the lights

Acclaimed opera singer **Aviva Pelham** has performed around the world, bridging many genres. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to her as she releases her autobiography, *My Musical Odyssey*.

What inspired you to write *My Musical Odyssey*?

After 50 years in the performing arts, I wanted to record some of the highlights. The book is a glimpse behind the scenes of artistic life and the journey I undertook, having the privilege of making music with exceptionally talented people.

How did your career begin?

I studied piano and clarinet in my teens, and was accepted for a teacher’s licentiate course at the University of Cape Town (UCT) College of Music. Although I was disappointed at being turned down for second-subject singing, I auditioned for the Performers Diploma in Opera two years later, and was accepted. Professor Pierre De Groote invited me to sing with the UCT Orchestra, after which I was hooked on the combination of terror and thrill.

Describe your first stage performance?

I was entered into the Eisteddfod in what was then Salisbury, Rhodesia, at the age of three. Apparently, I refused to start singing my solo until I had found my mother in the audience, and waved enthusiastically.

What do you love most about entertainment?

First, I’m passionate about the power of entertainment to connect with emotions. Whether it’s comedy or tragedy, when a transformation takes place and people tap into how they feel, that’s something special. Second, over the course of my career, I’ve loved serving the great composers by using my voice to transport the audience. Finally, I enjoy bringing artists from every genre together, and weaving all the threads of voice, dance, comedy, lighting, sound, props, costumes, and so much more, into one tapestry. Over the past decade, I have directed many concerts with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, and I hope to continue doing this for years to come.

In spite of your international career, you have stayed very much a part of the South African Jewish community. What does it mean to you?

I belong here. My family are all members of the Gardens Synagogue, my children all went to Herzlia, and I have sung and directed countless concerts and fundraisers for Jewish institutions in Cape Town. While it’s certainly complex, South Africa is alive with possibility, and I thrive on this energy and potential.

What does being Jewish mean to you?

We’re called upon to be a light unto the nations. As a professional performer who has been in the public eye, my Judaism means that I need to be an ambassador for the Jews in Cape Town. I take this responsibility seriously, and have always been guided by Jewish values.

Your family has always played a central role in your life. Why is it so important to you?

My life would have been

immeasurably impoverished without them. I learn from them every day, they fulfil me, and I could never have been on this journey without them.

You speak of having sung for the late President Nelson Mandela. What was that like?

It was always an honour to be chosen to sing for Madiba, and he ensured every occasion was special. He made time to talk meaningfully to us artists, and that will remain a highlight of my career. When an honorary doctorate from Ben Gurion University was conferred upon him, I sang a beautiful song specially composed by Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph, with Marcus Desando. Madiba loved the song, and joined us in the dancing afterwards.

Looking back on your career, what do you regard as your most exceptional experience and your most challenging?

An unforgettable highlight was singing the encore at a performance in Sydney of *Santa’s Story*, my one-woman show about my remarkable mother’s life. On the screen behind me, there was footage of my mother singing with me, while my son, Adam, and his daughter Noa, joined me on stage. Four generations together – amazing!

My most challenging experience must be the pressure of performing in an opera company. Not having understudies meant that we had to perform even if we weren’t well. I so desperately didn’t want to let the audience down, but there was one occasion when I simply had to cancel due to laryngitis.

Your journey has been an inspiration to so many young singers/performers. What words of wisdom do you have for others?

One of my greatest joys is passing on the experience and knowledge that I have garnered over the years. I encourage a healthy, balanced lifestyle, self-discipline, perseverance, and generosity of spirit.

You have crossed the musical divide and sing so many different genres. Which is your favourite?

Opera is my first love. It encompasses all the other art forms, and is the most demanding, complex, and exhilarating. The infinite reward of singing the compositions of great geniuses, with an orchestra, chorus, and other magnificent voices, is unsurpassable. But performing musicals, which are accessible to more people, with the dialogue, acting, dance, and fun is always wonderful.

You do a great deal of outreach work and upliftment. Describe what you have done in this area.

I work on musical projects in the townships, doing workshops and directing fundraisers, trying to create opportunities so that talent doesn’t slip away. I try to uplift, inspire, and



Aviva Pelham

have a positive impact on people’s lives.

Over the years, I have mentored a trolley pusher, petrol attendant,

policeman, caretaker, dustman, janitor, gardener, domestic worker, parking marshall, and countless street children. What a privilege!

What role are you most proud of?

Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* was my first role from a musical. Besides being demanding vocally from a frenzied, ‘Just you wait, ‘Enry ‘Iggins!’ to the soaring, ‘I could have danced all night’, it was Eliza’s growth as a person that taught me so much. She taught me that it doesn’t matter where you were born, what work you do, or the way you talk, if you have good values. Over 166 performances, I reached hundreds of thousands of people through Eliza. I’m beyond grateful for these kinds of opportunities.

What’s next for Aviva Pelham?

To mark Youth Day, I’ll be directing a concert called *Soundscape* with the Cape Philharmonic Youth Wind Ensemble. The theme is Movie Musicals Mania, so there will be many well-known songs from musicals. Next, I’ll be the guest artist at a gala concert in Sydney in early July with a fabulous Klezmer Band called Chutney. Back in Cape Town, I’ll be directing the 90th anniversary of the Eoan Group as well as the Amy Foundation Gala Dinner. I’ve also been asked to direct this year’s exciting Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra Community Gala Spectacular, and there’s another Morning Melodies looming – my 23rd annual concert at the Baxter. That’s what I have on my calendar ... so far!

Music to our ears: Amit Yahav returns to Joburg

TALI FEINBERG

Pianist Amit Yahav is only 35, but he has already won multiple awards and is in demand worldwide as a recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist. Now, he is due to play in Johannesburg at the Linder Auditorium on 21 May.

Yahav was born in Israel, and his first mentor was South African. “I moved to Amsterdam with my family when my father’s job took us there in 1997,” he says. “In 2005, I moved to London to study with the late Yonty Solomon, a South African pianist, after which I stayed on to live in London.”

However, his Israeli identity remains strong, and like many South African Jews, he also has Litvak roots. “My two grandmothers were born in Lithuania, and came to Israel with their families in the mid-1930s,” he says. “My mother’s mother, in fact, had quite a few cousins in Johannesburg, because two of her aunts emigrated from Lithuania to South Africa.”

His two grandfathers were born in Berlin and in Prague. “My grandfather from Berlin managed to make aliya shortly after Kristallnacht. My grandfather from Prague was one of four children, but his parents managed only to get him a place on the Kindertransport, and he survived the war in the United Kingdom as one of more than 600 children rescued by Sir Nicholas Winton. In 1948, he decided to make aliya, and in Israel, he met my grandmother.”

So how did Yahav come to be a musician? “Ever since I was born, there was a piano in our house. I remember being drawn to it from a very early age. I think I enjoyed the idea that I pressed the keys and it made a sound. So, in that way, music has always been in my life. From quite a young age, whenever we were visiting family friends and there was a piano, I tended to gravitate towards it.”

He didn’t grow up in a family of musicians, “but I grew up in a musical family: my mother played the piano as a hobby, and my father absolutely loves listening to music. It wasn’t until I was five years old that I started having lessons. This was in spite of the ‘usual’ age for starting lesson in Israel being six, but my parents found a teacher who made an exception. As soon as I was able to read music proficiently, I remember spending many hours sight-reading anything I could get my hands on.”

The pandemic was a particularly tough time for him, which he says was “one of the greatest challenges that I have had to face. There was the demoralisation of having concerts cancelled left, right, and centre, the uncertainty about whether we’d ever be allowed

to play live music in public again, and the scramble to find ways of sharing music through whatever means were available.”

There have been many highlights throughout his career. “I love playing in new venues, and every place has its own excitement. Some of the most memorable performances for me have been in places to which I have a family connection: I remember a concert in Prague, for which my then 87-year-old grandfather flew over. Playing there and seeing the city with him was an incredibly moving experience. One of the first live concerts I played after our first COVID-19 lockdown was in Berlin, and being allowed – finally – to have a live audience and to share music with it was an incredible experience.”

He says “South Africa has somehow always featured in my life. I had relatives there through my grandmother; Yonty Solomon, my first teacher in London, was South African; as was my teacher Niel Immelman later on. Visiting South Africa is always a great experience: the country is beautiful and the people are so kind and welcoming. I haven’t performed in South Africa since before the pandemic, so I’m enormously excited to be back!”

He’s excited to be able to collaborate on this tour with maestro Daniel Boico, who is also Israeli. “We’ve been looking forward to working together for a while now.”

Regarding the music he’ll be playing in South Africa, “My solo recitals on this tour feature a programme of Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin. Beethoven’s *Tempest* piano sonata is one of his most dramatic works, and I’m juxtaposing it with Schumann’s effervescent and sprightly *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* [Carnival Jest from Vienna].”

“I feel that each of these works – many parts of which the audience is likely to recognise – brings aspects of the other into relief,” he says. “In the second half of the recital, I’ll be playing a selection of works by Chopin, a composer who is incredibly dear to me. The works were all composed in the second half of his life, and really show his versatility as a composer and his tendency to explore the boundaries of musical form.”

His advice to aspiring musicians is “to listen to as much music as they possibly can, and to try and find opportunities to play chamber music. Particularly as solo pianists, our profession can be a bit lonely, and it’s always incredibly rewarding to make music together with other people. After all, that’s really what the word ‘concert’ implies.”



Amit Yahav

Restaurant offers kosher meal for R72 – or for free

HANNA RESNICK

Restaurants advertise all the time, but few market three-course kosher meals for “up to R72 if you can, free if you can’t.”

Such was a recent advert for the Jewish Community Restaurant (JCR) in Fairmount.

In the times we live in, few can put together such a meal for that price.

Mark Eilim, who said he had been involved in non-profit organisations for many years, and Rabbi Moshe Eckhaus from the Heichal Shlomo Shul, are behind this initiative.

Their idea is to serve healthy, quality meals to those who can and those who can’t afford a meal out, bringing the community together over a meal.

Eilim said he had wanted to start such an initiative for the past 10 years, ever since he returned from Israel. While overseas, he started the highly successful “Leket Israel”, a food bank that collects surplus produce. On his return, he said he couldn’t help but notice a significant economic decline within the community.

On mentioning his idea, “The feedback was that no-one will come, there’s no way we need it. Things aren’t that bad, et cetera. People are going hungry today in South Africa, and they’re still not prepared to admit it within the Jewish community.”

Eckhaus shared his vision. “The rabbi said to me, ‘You wouldn’t believe how often I’m getting calls from people who aren’t even asking for money for rent, for petrol, or school fees. They’re asking me for money for food,’” said Eilim.

The JCR opened on 15 January, and has become a welcome resource. According to Eilim, they now host between 35 to 50 people per day.

It offers a full three-course kosher meal from Sunday to Thursday, 15:00 to 18:30, providing a set menu on a weekly basis that features a different nutritious, well-rounded meal each day.

Each meal contains soup as a starter (usually a vegetable soup such as baby marrow or pumpkin), a main course (such as curries, schnitzel, chicken a la king, as well as some sort of salad and chips or rice), and a dessert. They also serve juice, tea, and coffee. Eilim says those who can afford it, pay R72 – 72 being symbolic of *chesed* (kindness) – and those who can’t either pay what they can or get their meal completely on the house. They also offer a free shuttle service for those who can’t get there on their own.

When the *SA Jewish Report* popped in at about 16:00, the space wasn’t filled to capacity. According to Eilim, the first round

of people usually come in as they open, and the second closer to dinner time. Among those eating there were families with three or more kids who struggle to feed their entire family a nutritious meal, as well as older individuals who come in a few times a week.

Many of these customers, whether paying or not, certainly didn’t appear impoverished, however, Eilim said that there were also a few customers who were living on the street.

The restaurant is set up in a hall next to the Heichal Shlomo Shul, with individual tables set with decorative tablecloths and cutlery. The surrounding stained-glass windows and chandeliers hanging from the ceilings create a welcoming dining space.

Patrons are served at their tables, so there’s no standing and waiting for one’s food, and they are welcome to have as



Schnitzel, salad and chips served at the Jewish Community Restaurant

many servings as they want. There are three kitchen staff, who appeared attentive and welcoming to every table.

Eilim said that though some customers did pay, the JCR was primarily funded by donors. They also have a website where anyone can make a donation, with options to feed a person, a family, and more.

Even potential donors didn’t believe that the idea would take off, he said. One told him that if the restaurant was able to attract 50 people, he would be proven wrong, and would fund the endeavour. They have had far more than 50 people to date.

“Concept is excellent. Food is brilliant. Everything is tasty,” said one of their regular patrons.

“It has become a real community,” said Eilim. “In the beginning, everyone sat as far away from each other as possible. Now there are groups of people that sit together and then go their separate ways. It’s like they know each other, and get strength from

being in the same boat.”

Eilim said that though there are quite a few feeding schemes in the Jewish community, this initiative fulfils a different purpose. There are no conditions, no strings attached. The sole purpose is to provide a meal for anyone who may need it.

It’s not only those who have absolutely nothing that require food assistance, he said, it’s those who need to decide between buying healthy food and paying their bills. He also notices more people coming in towards the end of the month.

The JCR provides a charming restaurant experience for those who can’t afford it, and encourages those who can afford traditional restaurants to enjoy the community space and help to bridge the gap.

Anyone wishing to support this initiative through donations can do so at <https://thejcr.co.za/>.

School play tells grandfather’s Holocaust story

HANNA RESNICK

“Behind the mask of every soldier – German, South African, Jewish – lies a human being. We can never forget what real people went through fighting for the world we live in today.”

These are the words of King David Victory Park (KDVP) alumnus Keren Katzew, who wrote one of the two Holocaust plays performed at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre last weekend. The script was based on her late grandfather, Joe Katzew’s, memoirs.

Performing the double-feature Holocaust performance at the centre became an annual event for KDVP High School’s drama department in 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic halted it, and it was resumed on 10 May with the Katzew play titled *Under The Fence* and a dramatised adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett.

The moving performance of *Under The Fence* tells the story of six soldiers brought together by their shared identities as South African, Jewish men during their military service in World War II. When one of the men, Katzew, is ordered to be the first to go under the fence into German territory, it appears to be a death sentence.

The plot follows Joe (played by Ben Lustig) as he experiences once-in-a-lifetime friendships with his fellow soldiers, confronts devastating grief as he watches lives being taken by the war, and learns invaluable lessons about acceptance and humility.

Katzew began writing around 2019 after reading her grandfather’s memoir.

“His stories about war, bravery, love, and friendship inspired me,” she said. “I felt that his story and my family’s story had to be told.”

In addition to the memoir, Katzew spoke to her father, discovering aspects of her grandfather’s personality, such as his positive outlook on life.

“The main character’s lines were actually exactly taken from the memoir; they are my

The Diary of Anne Frank) to finally bring the play to life.

This is Bonner’s directing debut, an experience he said was very different from acting. Nonetheless, it was an amazing opportunity, especially because of the wonderful team he worked with.

Bonner said that when he and Katzew began reworking the script, “the themes of



grandfather’s words to a tee. We took creative liberty with the other characters’ lines,” she says.

In her Grade 9 year, she began to edit the script with the help of Renos Spanoudes in the hope of taking it to the Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts. Unfortunately, that festival was cancelled due to the pandemic. Katzew continued to work on the play over the next couple of years, and this year, after matriculating from KDVP in 2022, she decided to work with Grade 11 student Sam Bonner (who also played Otto Frank in

love and death came through”. They found that “Each character has someone he loves and is willing to die for – very much like real life.”

“Originally the story was solely my grandfather’s, and I never knew much about the other characters,” Katzew said. “Sam and I took a bit of creative licence to give the other characters their own stories, [and] although those stories may not have been exactly true, they mimic the truths of many soldiers during that time. We wanted it to be a tribute to all the soldiers of World War II,

not just one.”

The five other soldiers, Norman Riskowitz (played by Daniel Kantor); Les Pincus (Daniel Segal); Rodney Murray (Ricky Kotton); Louis Schneider (Josh Woolf); and Issy Edgal (Giorgio Klein) are each given unique personality quirks and backgrounds that make them that much more relatable to the audience. Their found family is completed by their commanding officer, Major Julia Klenhans (Gabrielle Shapiro), who acts as a sort of maternal figure to the young soldiers.

Katzew, with the help of her grandfather’s memoir, was able to capture not only her grandfather’s story, but the story of so many who might otherwise have been overlooked. There are also moments of the story that are quite unique, such as when Joe crosses paths with a German soldier (played by Max Radford), who shares a South African background. The two strike up a conversation, and Joe realises that they aren’t so different from each other.

The Anne Frank piece contains a combination of moments inspired by Anne’s actual descriptions in her diary which reveal the lives of the Franks and the Van Daans during their time in hiding. Although the undertones of the play are devastating, it’s also full of hopeful and even humorous moments in Anne’s life. The audience gets to witness Anne’s (Gabrielle Shapiro) free-spirited nature and the heart-warming bond between her and her father, or playful fights with Peter or Margot. The familiarity created between the audience and these characters makes the ending of the play that much more gut-wrenching as Otto Frank describes each character’s horrific fate.



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NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

Love and war – Mandela marriage under the microscope

Acclaimed South African author, journalist, and academic, **Professor Jonny Steinberg**, recently launched his latest book, *Winnie & Nelson – Portrait of a Marriage*. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with him.

Why did you tackle this subject?

I planned at first just to write about Nelson Mandela. It hadn't been possible to write about him as a real human being while he was alive, and so his death opened interesting possibilities. As I began researching, it struck me that during his prison years, his sense of self began to revolve more and more around Winnie. He grew more deeply in love with her with each passing year. And yet he didn't really know her anymore. In his mind, she was forever 26 years old. I thought, wow, this is actually the story! This book is about the marriage.

What do Winnie and Nelson mean to you personally?

Winnie was a fellow student in my political studies I class at Wits (the University of the Witwatersrand) in 1988. She was very much in my world when I was a university student. It was pretty strange having this mythical figure so close. In retrospect, I guess I became interested then in people who are both myths and flawed human beings. That duality is very much what *Winnie & Nelson* explores.

What was it like researching and writing such deeply personal information about two heroes of our country?

I felt the burden of responsibility. I needed to present them both as proper human beings, not leaving out the horrible bits. And yet, I also wanted to show that the myths they made of themselves were necessary myths. I didn't want to destroy those myths. The challenge of the book was to get both of those things right.

This seems to be an unusual genre for you to tackle. How did you deal with it, seeing as your subjects are no longer here but there's a deep sensitivity to both of them?

It's the first time I've written about people who are dead, and so the sources are obviously very different. I revelled in the challenge. It was a revelation to discover how self-disclosing letters can be. People show so much of themselves when they are trying to keep alive the most important relationship of their lives through letters. Others sorts of sources were also fascinating in surprising ways. For instance, I found myself rediscovering both Winnie and Nelson anew when I sat down to read the 1950s newspapers and magazines that wrote about them. Old newspapers are amazing. Writing history is a process of sifting and thus forgetting, and I was amazed to learn how much of the 1950s had been forgotten.

What was your background with Nelson and Winnie Mandela?

I was a student activist in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), a United Democratic Front affiliate, when Mandela was released, and I regarded him and Winnie as my leaders. I shook Nelson's hand shortly after he came out, and I guess I was star struck. I felt privileged to be a proximate bystander to the making of history. But, along with many other people in my circles, I was also sceptical. Are these glamorous, larger-than-life people going to let us down, we all wondered.



Photo: Courtesy Jonathan Ball Publishers

Nelson and Winnie Mandela

How would you describe each of them?

Yikes, that's a big question for a small space. Let me stick to Nelson. His close friend and chief of staff in the early 1990s, Barbara Masekela, told me that he was the saddest person she'd met. Sometimes, she said, she felt emanating from him "a stillness, just a grim, frightening stillness". In researching his life, I think I glimpsed something of this terrible sadness. He believed in his depths that the story of his life was a tragedy.

How would you describe their relationship to each other?

Let me quote someone else again. A reviewer of *Winnie & Nelson*, Richard Stengel, said that "the pair are like twin planets that exert immense gravitational forces on each other. But the pull between them was not always for the good". I can't do any better than that.

Is there a reason you're producing this book now?

It's really about my own development as a writer. For the past two decades, I've been writing books about anonymous people. My aim has been to show that their ordinary lives can illuminate big questions about their world and ours. I needed to grow as a writer, and try something different. So, I chose to write about two very powerful, very famous, dead people. I wanted to see if I could write as intimately about such people.

In your book, you show a side to Nelson that few ever saw. A deep vulnerability and an openness to be "played" by Winnie. Describe this in more detail.

I'm not sure what you mean. By the time he was released from prison, Winnie meant everything to him. He was deeply aware that his life had been suspended for 27 years, and that the last time he'd lived a full human life was with her. And so, he couldn't imagine life without her. And yet he also knew that they had both been deeply damaged by what had happened to them, perhaps irreparably damaged. What a confusing situation to walk into after nearly three decades in prison!

You also bring out the fact that Winnie had much more than one indiscretion in her marriage to Nelson. Why do you think she did this?

Winnie was 26 years old when Nelson went to prison, and it was clear that he wouldn't be coming back for decades – if ever. No reasonable person expected Winnie to remain celibate. Nelson certainly didn't.

How have their families reacted to your book?

They've been informed about it, but as of this writing, they haven't read it yet as far as I know as it comes out in South Africa only on 19 May.

How much input did the families have in the book?

It's an entirely independent book. I didn't seek their approval.

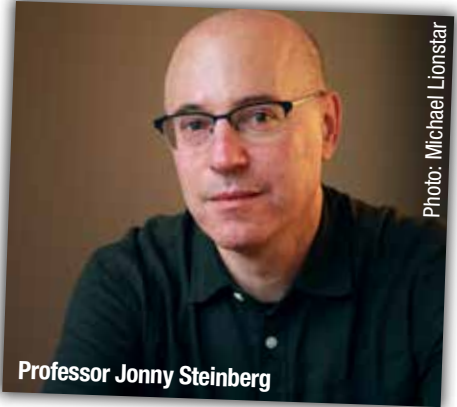
What has the general reaction to your book been from the public and those (other than the family) who knew them both?

It's much too early to say. The book has been out in the United Kingdom and the United States for just a few days, and comes out in South Africa only on 19 May. Just two or three people who were close to Nelson and

Winnie have read it, as far as I know, and they were all very moved by it, which is gratifying. Some people will be angry. It's that sort of book.

What impact do you believe showing this side of these heroes will have?

I'd be foolish to predict. I've learnt that people surprise you.



Professor Jonny Steinberg

Photo: Michael Lionstar

What do you believe the take-home message from the book is for our community?

Any writer who is thinking too hard about a take-home message is getting it wrong. Better to write a book that is sufficiently open to different

interpretations, different experiences. It's really quite thrilling to know that you just have no idea how different people will respond to what you've written.

What's next for Jonny Steinberg?

I'm writing a book about Cecil John Rhodes. His homosexuality, his diamond prospecting, his imperial project, and the connection between these things. He was a complicated man.

Letters

LITHUANIA BLAMING CITIZENSHIP GLITCHES ON MIGRATION IS NONSENSE

In an interview with Peta Krost for the *SA Jewish Report* about Lithuanian citizenship, the government shifts blame to the migration department.

I was the first Jew to apply to Lithuania for my citizenship restoration. I exposed its policy of refusing Jews citizenship then, just as I have exposed Lithuania's policy of Holocaust fraud now. Property could be reclaimed only if the applicant held Lithuanian citizenship, so Jews were rejected to prevent property claims. I exposed the conspiracy, attacked it, and Lithuania had no choice but to address it.

Now, the Lithuanian government presents low-paid workers at the migration department as the impediment to successful citizenship applications. Garbage! These are low-paid bureaucrats and functionaries who follow orders. More likely, they are frustrated workers who see an application coming from a Jew – yes, they know who the Jewish applicants are – and decide to exert some petty power simply because they can. A few well-placed firings and a few managerial meetings could negate this issue in a matter of days.

After the senseless and brutal slaughter of 96% of our families and 80 years of Lithuania's Holocaust deceptions since, if Lithuania wishes to build bridges with Litvaks, it should follow a five-step process:

- The government of Lithuania needs to revoke

- national honours for all its Holocaust perpetrator national heroes;
 - The president of Lithuania should go on national television and admit the full and complete truth of the Holocaust cover up;
 - Lithuania needs to create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tell the whole truth of who committed the murders, and how the genocide centre, government, and courts continue to cover up their crimes;
 - Judges who ruled on instruction rather than fact need to be exposed for their judicial misconduct and removed from their positions. Government workers who committed Holocaust frauds should be fired, and their state pensions revoked. Antisemitic government workers at the migration department who deliberately reject Jewish applications should be fired, and their state pensions denied; and
 - As an act of contrition, sincere apology, and redemption, Lithuania should welcome every Jew of Lithuanian heritage with a grant of Lithuanian citizenship. A mass grant would negate the application process, and be a genuine sign of reconciliation.
- Lithuania is a failing state. It needs us far more than we need it. We Jews should assert ourselves.
- **Grant Gochin, California, United States**

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Small solar (panel) syndrome

The wonderful thing about a Shabbat morning walk from Glenhazel to Waverley, aside from the time to catch up with one’s wife, is the number of solar panels that can be counted along the way. The expedition to a Barmitzvah across Louis Botha Avenue might have taken us an hour from our side of the suburb, but it passed in a numerical flash.

A friend recently mentioned that his wife told him that she sees no need to go to Kruger Park in July. Rather, she suggested, they should spend a few days of the holiday driving through Woodmead Springs to see how many panels they could tally. Although it sounds unchallenging, anyone who counts solar installations as I do will confirm that some houses make it quite difficult not only to identify, but also to number. Much like a maybe-leopard or maybe-branch in a confirmed tree in the park.

Although there’s a good chance that the conversation at lunch covered a variety of topics, the dominant theme was without question the many nuances of alternative and sustainable energy. Even though I’m not a very technical person, I was reasonably impressed by my ability to hold my own when debating battery sizes and inverters. But I did find myself being triggered and unnerved by those with way more panels than I have.

Maybe it’s a male thing. The most insecure moment was when a woman told us that they have enough to heat their pool at a constant 25 degrees even in winter. “We need to do that!” I whispered urgently to my wife who was more impressed by the precision of the temperature than the number of panels that would take.



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

“Howard, you haven’t swum in the pool since, like, 2015, and you only went in to rescue the dog! We don’t need to heat it. Besides, we’re contemplating filling in the pool or converting it into a JoJo water tank because no one, aside from the pool guy, has gone near it in years.”

It might be true. But I still felt much less of a man than her husband, who had gifted her all that spare electricity.

It took a few moments to recover from that blow when someone else, at the same lunch, flippantly mentioned that he had installed 40 panels on their rooftop. It wasn’t so much what he said, but how he said it – like it meant nothing and he would be surprised if anyone would even get out of bed for less.

The walk home felt longer. Not only was I tired from the post COVID-19 socialising, but on the way back, I had the sense that my 14 panels, 8kva inverter, and 2 x 5kva batteries just didn’t seem to sparkle the way they did on the way to lunch. My wife tried to assure me that I was no less a man and that she loved me for who I am, not for my panels. And yet even with her assurances, I felt only a little bit better when we passed through Highlands North, and I counted less than 10 panels per roof (on average).

They used to say that you can judge a man by the friends he keeps. I suspect that in modern day South Africa, it’s become more about the panels and the size of his inverter.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Long history of antisemitism

This year, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) marks 120 years of serving the South African Jewish community. The history of the Board is therefore also to a great extent the history of South African Jewry, beginning at the time when Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe was at its height. It was to facilitate the entry of Jews into the region that would soon become the Union of South Africa rather than fighting antisemitism that the Board was primarily established following the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War.

The subject of local Jewish history was at the forefront earlier this week with the launch of Milton Shain’s new book *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists: Antisemitism in South Africa from 1948 to the Present*. The book is the third in a trilogy of acclaimed studies by Professor Shain examining the nature and impact of antisemitism in South Africa from the early days of Jewish settlement until our own time. The trilogy constitutes what must surely be the definitive scholarly account of how this particular pathology has manifested in this part of the world, from the in-your-face crudity of the anti-capitalist “Hoggenheimer” era a century ago to the various – in some ways more complex – new forms it takes today. In addition, it constitutes a significant contribution to the study of antisemitism in general, a field in which its author is an acknowledged expert.

The SAJBD has had a long and fruitful association with Shain. His advice and expertise, not only on issues concerning antisemitism, but the broader history of our community, has been invaluable. He has further provided expert witness testimony at several of the most important antisemitism cases the Board has brought over the past two decades. Shain has also frequently written on antisemitism-related issues in the mainstream media, and regularly gives



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

informed comment on the topic to this newspaper. As with his previous books, Shain made extensive use of the SAJBD archives. This included the comprehensive dossiers on the now forgotten ultra-right-wing extremists of yester year that were meticulously compiled by the SAJBD staff at the time. At the launch, he paid a generous tribute to our professional staff in Johannesburg and Cape Town, who assisted him from his initial research through to the nitty-gritty process of final fact checking and tracking down sources. The Board’s archives comprise the largest collection of documentation relating to South African Jewry past and present. Regularly consulted by local and overseas researchers, they are one of the treasures of our community, and we take our role as custodians very seriously.

In *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, Shain reveals the continued presence of antisemitic ideologies and movements in post-war South Africa but characteristically, is careful not to overstate the extent to which this poses a threat to the Jewish community. As he points out, Jews today are “far more integrated in society than they were in the interwar years”, in large part because of the Constitution’s “acknowledgment and celebration of diversity”. This is a fundamental truth about the nature of our society, in spite of its undoubted problems, and the position of our community within it, and is something both my predecessors and I at the SAJBD have always made a point of stressing.

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

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

A column of WIZO South Africa

WIZO supports the ‘City of Gold’

Yom Yerushalayim, also known as Jerusalem Day, commemorates the reunification of east and west Jerusalem following the Six-Day War of 1967. Thursday, 19 May, marks 56 years since the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City, one of the most noble moments in the historic love between Jews and Jerusalem.

When the Jewish people were exiled from Jerusalem, King David said, “If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its strength ... if I fail to elevate Jerusalem above my highest joy.” But we Jews didn’t forget, and while exiled, we prayed toward Jerusalem to keep the memory alive. Amidst oppression, the Jewish people always said, “Next year in Jerusalem”, and they preserved the dream of a world in which love and justice would prevail. To this day, Jewish people say, “Next year in Jerusalem” and when praying, always face the city of Jerusalem.

Just as the Jewish people preserved a world in which love and justice would prevail, so too does the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) assist those who are oppressed and who preserve a dream of a world where love and justice will prevail. WIZO has always worked hard to improve the social welfare of the residents of Jerusalem. It operates 18 day care centres, one youth centre, one school, one shelter, and eight WIZO branches in Jerusalem. By managing these and uplifting Israeli society, WIZO continues to build up this special city, touching the lives of those vulnerable people who live there to overcome their challenges and live their lives to the fullest.

The name Yerushalayim has two parts, “yira”, which means “to see or vision”, and “shalem”,

which means “peace”. WIZO’s vision is to assist those most vulnerable in finding their peace so that they can live sustainable and upstanding lives.

Yom Yerushalayim celebrates those that fought to bring Jerusalem to where it is today, just as WIZO fights to bring abused women back to



Shelley Trope-Friedman,
President WIZO SA

prayers of thanksgiving, street parades, singing, and dancing. There are also lectures on the history and future of Jerusalem, and memorial services for those who died in the Six-Day War. WIZO assists the children we protect to learn about the past and celebrate the future. As we reinforce our deep ties to this special city, we encourage all the children to look ahead to their future as well.

David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, declared, “The value of Jerusalem cannot be measured, weighed, or put into words. If a land has a soul, Jerusalem is the soul of the land of Israel.”

On this day, WIZO joins in the celebration of Jerusalem. Let’s remember that this special city that’s forever etched in our hearts and souls is a city like no other. We will not forget her, and she will remain the holiest city for us, the Jewish people.

Yerushalayim shel zahav (Jerusalem of gold). It wraps itself around our past, affirms our present, and opens the door to our future and those who have been given a wonderful start from our WIZO projects.

WIZO South Africa wishes everyone joy and happiness on Yom Yerushalayim as we reflect on the past and future of Jerusalem, our beautiful city of gold.

This column paid for by WIZO SA

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Sunday 21 May 2023 at 19:00 SAST

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Silver-tongued Fox wins first prize for public speaking

Yeshiva College's Saul Fox outshone 96 schools to win first place for best individual speaker at the public speaking competition of the Speech and Drama College South Africa on 14 May. Fox, coached by Ronit Janet, won the coveted prize for both prepared and impromptu performances.



Saul Fox

KDL battles it out in Model UN Debate

King David Linksfield pupils participated in a Model United Nations (UN) Debate – an academic simulation of the UN – at St Stithians Girls' College on 10 May. Its two teams, representing the United States (US) and Lebanon, debated the



The King David Linksfield debating team at the model UN debate at St Stithians Girls' College

topic of water and sanitation. Pupils researched the status quo in the two countries, determined who their political and economic allies were, and made sure that they knew about the political tensions and grievances within their country and surrounds. Trained by Jamie Mighti, they arrived prepared to make alliances and draw up resolutions with the 16 other countries during the course of the afternoon. With participating countries such as Egypt, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Spain, China, and Germany, it was important to pre-empt friends and foes. Congratulations to Ariella Hirsch, Tayla Cohen, Demi Wulfsohn, and Emma Raff (Lebanon) as well as Noah Greenblatt, Benjy Furman, and Josh Galgut (US).

Art project breathes life into Pirkei Avot

Tzivos Hashem South Africa's national Pirkei Avot Arts & Culture competition has taken off again this year, with Jewish kids being given the opportunity to share their talent by producing art based on Pirkei Avot, Ethics of our Fathers. "Study, create, present" is the motto of the competition, which began in 2021, and is designed to bring the teachings alive. Devorah Leah Wineberg, the director of Tzivos Hashem said: "This year, we have been overwhelmed by the many sign-ups from Jewish kids from all the Jewish schools and beyond. It's amazing to see the excitement that the children have to be part of this unity Torah learning."

The kids are gearing up for their projects with interactive Pirkei Avot lessons. Megan Zetzer, a Sandton Sinai parent, said: "Benjamin fully engaged with programme in 2021 and approached the content with enthusiasm. After winning his age category in the competition, he's eagerly looking forward to submitting another novel presentation this year." King David Linksfield pupil Mira Reubenson joins the Zoom classes every Sunday. "The lessons are interesting and I have learned so much. I'm looking forward to making the project," she said. "I enjoy the learning on Zoom, and it's inspiring other kids to learn Torah, even when they could go play soccer. This is bringing

Moshiach closer," said Yedidya Finberg of Maharsha School. Mikki Steinhauer, a Torah Academy parent summed up the previous competition: "Our son would ask us every evening to learn together, and it was wonderful to see the enthusiasm to learn and grow as a family." The expo, from 11 to 18 June, will be open to the whole community.



Talya Franklin from Yeshiva College Primary School

Hair today, gone tomorrow in Herzlia charity drive

United Herzlia Schools in conjunction with the Eric Samson Legacy Fund hosted Lag B'Omer on 9 May in honour of Zichron Menachem, an organisation in Israel which supports children with cancer and their families. Fourteen women and young girls cut their hair to make wigs for the children, exemplifying that tzedakah doesn't need to be monetary, but can involve giving of one's self.

Sunday 21 May

- Hatzolah hosts a blood drive in collaboration with the South African National Blood Service and Life2Life. Time: 09:00. Venue: 29 Durham Street, Raedene. Contact: www.linktr.ee/Hatzolah or info@hatzolah.co.za
- Jewish Women's Benevolent Society hosts a R30 book sale. Time: 09:00. Venue: Genesis Shopping Centre. Contact: 011 485 5232 or gloria@jwbs.co.za

Tuesday 23 May

- ORT SA hosts a talk by Lori Milner on *Time Management*.

Time: 10:00. Cost: R200 (R100 for members). Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Wednesday 24 May

- Second Innings hosts an outing and a guided tour of Jan Smuts House in Irene. Time: 09:15. Cost: R260. Contact: 082 561 3228 or greciagabriel1@gmail.com
- ORT SA hosts an online talk by Terri Maselle on *How to Get Hired in 2023*. Time: 08:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za



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