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Israel can stop cholera outbreak in its tracks

TALI FEINBERG

The cholera outbreak in Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria, in recent weeks, has resulted in the deaths of more than 20 people from an entirely preventable illness. And yet, while people continue to suffer, Israeli expertise could get the situation under control now and in the future to prevent such a man-made disaster happening again.

“The national government’s failure to ensure access to clean drinking water in Hammanskraal has resulted in the death of 15 South Africans over the past few days [now 24],” says South African Zionist Federation director of public policy, Benji Shulman. “Further engagement between our government and its Israeli counterparts could help us to find sustainable solutions to our country’s water crisis and help save South African lives too.”

“A cholera outbreak [in South Africa] was inevitable due to the collapsing sewer and wastewater infrastructure in the country,” says Dr Clive Lipchin, the director of the Center for Transboundary Water Management at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (The Arava Institute) and a South African *oleh*. “Unless this issue is addressed, further outbreaks are guaranteed. To address this, good governance, trained personnel, and good financial management is required. Unfortunately, this isn’t the case in South Africa.”

“An important aspect of this issue is the lack of ability to provide sewage treatment in areas that aren’t being serviced by the grid,” says Shulman. “A new South African-based research project is testing an Israeli water technology system that could help alleviate some of the challenges posed by

sewage treatment and its disease burden in underserved areas.

“The Arava Institute, a leading environmental studies and research institute in Israel, recently signed a research memorandum of understanding with the University of the Free State to look into off-grid sewage. As a result, sewer treatment technology from Laguna Water is being tested in South Africa, assisting researchers working across the Drakensberg, allowing access to dignified ablution facilities in remote locations.

“The project has been so successful, they are already developing a larger version of the system at a site in Mamelodi through a

partnership between the Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF SA) and the South Africa Israel Chamber of Commerce (SAICC). The system, which is powered by solar technology, could help prevent any future outbreaks of cholera in the most remote of South African communities with minimal water infrastructure.”

Says JNF SA Director Michael Kransdorff, “The JNF has an environmental-science centre in Mamelodi. It’s only one of 13 science centres in the country, and the only one in a township. Twelve thousand pupils from disadvantaged schools come to our centre every year.

“We work closely with the City of

Tshwane on environmental and greening issues in the city. Last year, in a meeting with the former mayor, we realised water was a major problem for the city. Given Israeli expertise as the world leader in water recycling, we thought we could help. Together with the SAICC, we funded a delegation led by Clive Lipchin to visit and advise the city on the situation at Rooiwal and Hammanskraal.

“While there are no quick or cheap solutions to rebuilding failing wastewater treatment infrastructure, Clive, with his ‘out-of-the-box’ Israeli thinking, has come up with some short-term actions that can mitigate the situation and reduce the risk of future cholera outbreaks.

“Just like electricity and drinking water, the best short-term option for sewage treatment is getting people upstream to treat their sewage on-site themselves. Clive had the technology that could make this happen.

“So, together with Afrika Tikkun and the SAICC, we will be launching a pilot of Clive’s system at our centre in Mamelodi. It will treat sewage from our centre and clean the polluted river that runs nearby and use the water for agriculture. We have an urban farm at the centre where we assist pensioners from Mamelodi to grow vegetables.

“I believe there will be huge interest in this decentralised wastewater treatment solution,” says Kransdorff. “Numerous municipalities around the country are open to using it. Funding, rather than ideology, is the biggest constraint. In addition, there are non-government organisations, water boards, and private developers that have already shown interest.”

“At the SAICC, we’re honoured and

Continued on page 11 >>

A lion called Zion



Zion-Neev in his
night enclosure

See story on page 3 >>

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2 SA JEWISH REPORT

Rabbis call on Russia to release US journalist

An umbrella association of American Orthodox rabbis is calling on the Russian government to release Evan Gershkovich, the imprisoned Jewish reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

The Rabbinical Alliance of America said on 28 May that Russia should "do immediate justice by releasing Evan Gershkovich". The alliance, also known as the Igud HaRabbonim, says it represents more than 950 Orthodox rabbis, and makes frequent statements on public affairs in the United States and Israel.

Gershkovich, 31, who is the son of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union, was arrested two months ago and charged with espionage, an accusation he, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the United States government deny. Last week, his pretrial detention was extended until the end of August, and he faces a sentence of up to 20 years in a penal colony.

"As Americans, we condemn how our fellow citizen, Evan Gershkovich, has been unlawfully arrested and detained by Russian officials. As Jews, we're offended by the apparent resurgence of governmental Russian antisemitism," read a statement by the group's executive vice-president, Rabbi Mendy Mirocznik.

Jews in America and around the world have taken action to support Gershkovich since his arrest, with some reviving practices that recalled the movement to free Soviet Jewry during the Cold War. Earlier this month, the Jewish Federations of North America held a rally calling for his freedom.

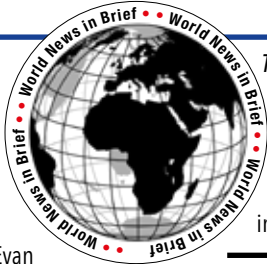
Israeli man killed as West Bank violence continues

An Israeli man was killed in a terror attack on Tuesday, 30 May, in the northern West Bank, the latest in a string of violent incidents in the territory this year.

The man was identified as Meir Tamari, 32, a resident of the nearby settlement of Hermesh. He was shot while driving on a road close to the settlement, and was treated by medics before his death was confirmed. Israeli forces have closed off roads in the area in order to find the attacker.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack. The brigade is tied to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party, and is designated as a terror group by the United States.

Since the beginning of the year, 20 Israelis and more than 100 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, according to the



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Times of Israel. On Monday, a Palestinian intelligence officer, Ashraf Ibrahim, 37, was killed during an Israeli arrest raid in the northern West Bank city of Jenin, and that night, Palestinian gunmen shot at an Israeli military ambulance near the settlement of Kiryat Arba in the southern West Bank.



Elon Musk

Israel slams Musk for sharing fake news

Israel's health ministry tweeted that Elon Musk was engaging in "fake news" regarding COVID-19 pandemic data, the third Israeli government ministry to comment on the Twitter owner's views in recent weeks.

Musk had replied to a tweet from Zero Hedge, a far-right blog site that features conspiracy theories and has been accused of spreading Russian propaganda. The tweet claimed that Israeli data showed "zero young healthy individuals died of COVID-19".

In response, the health ministry wrote, "Elon, unfortunately this isn't what the whole data shows. Fake news is dangerous. We know from clinicians that young healthy people did die from COVID-19 and hopefully, data on that will be available on the near future from our HMOs," the ministry said.

Twitter added a note to the Zero Hedge tweet that pointed out that Israel's health ministry had called this article 'misinformation'.

Israel launched a rapid mass vaccination drive soon after COVID-19 vaccines were introduced in late 2020, and it published data both about the country's vaccinations and COVID-19 cases. In addition to aiding public health practitioners, the data has been used by anti-vaccine activists and others intent on manipulating the figures to downplay the severity of COVID-19 or the efficacy of immunisation.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

The money trap



Rav Ilan Herrmann
– Soul Workout Jewish
Outreach

This week's Haftorah deals with one of Jewish history's most enigmatic characters, the mighty Samson. Samson strategically tackled the challenge the Jewish people faced at the time – the Philistines who waged ongoing war against the Jews. Samson was a righteous and holy judge of Israel for 20 years. He fell in love and married Delilah. Our sages offer two opinions. That Delilah was born a Jewess, while others hold she was a convert to Judaism. Scriptures' textual nuances show that Delilah was a virtuous woman, and that the love they shared was genuine.

How did Delilah then come to betray Samson? The promise of, and desire for, money.

Delilah was offered a large sum of money by the delegation of Philistine leaders who sought her help to capture Samson. What ensued after the offer of financial enticement was a string of moral lapses and vices that Delilah fell prey to in the course of pursuing the money – adultery, deception, greed, and a hand in torture and her husband's death.

Our sages analyse the power of the desire for money and the potential harmful effects it can have on one's character. Money can make monster of a man, becoming their g-d. It can foster selfishness and miserliness, and evoke egotism and conceit. It can, as in Delilah's case, shift one who is devoted to the other to become devoted to the self.

Yet, when channelled correctly, money can make of a mere man a righteous and G-dly individual. We can see both sets of individuals playing out these archetypal behavioural outcomes.

The Torah contains messages interdispersed across scripture and the oral tradition about the righteous

psychology that promotes the correct approach to bounty. These messages are meant to steer us towards the proper path that leads to greater virtue rather than vice. Here are just a few.

Psychology #1: The expression given by Jacob when he responds to bounty that he'd accumulated: "I am humbled." (Genesis 32:11). The righteous are humbled when there is bestowal in their life. The more they receive, the more humble and grateful they feel. Axiomatically, therefore, they give.

Psychology #2: The righteous don't think, "It's my might and talent that brought me this good," (Deuteronomy 8:17), but rather acknowledge G-d as the

source of this blessing. Therefore they give, using their means, towards a G-dly end.

Psychology #3: Consider yourself a stock trader. G-d wires you a certain amount of investment capital to make a profit. If you make Him a profit, in other words use the wealth for the right things – *tzedakah*, *mitzvot*, refining character – you are accrued a profit (in this and the next world) and He invests more with you to do more good. The biggest mistake would be to think the investment capital is yours, and use it for your own selfish gain.

These psychologies applied, realise virtue. We can infer what might be if the opposite is applied.

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East London	16:51	17:45
Jerusalem*	19:04	20:23
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When the Kohanim conclude their blessing, it's customary for people to thank them by saying "yasher ko'ach". Even though it's a mitzvah for them to bless the people, and they are commanded to do so, they can go to any shul they want and recite the blessing there.

South African Jewish Report

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From holy land to grassland, lion cub finds safety

TALI FEINBERG

It took an undercover operation in Israel to rescue a lion cub that had been illegally trafficked and kept in an apartment with a rope around its neck. It has now been safely relocated to a reserve in the Eastern Cape in South Africa.

The male cub had been ripped away from its mother as a birthday present for someone’s granddaughter, and was then sold multiple times, moved between various apartments, and filmed for TikTok videos.

“The lion cub’s situation was absolutely heart-wrenching, but the undercover operation was extremely successful,” says Israeli conservationist Dr Nicole Benjamin-Fink, the founder and director of Conservation Beyond Borders (CBB). Now, the lion cub has been given a second chance at life by being relocated to the Warriors of Wildlife Simbonga Reserve and Sanctuary in South Africa’s Eastern Cape.

Benjamin-Fink was there every step of the way, as the cub, now named Zion-Neev, was transported via an El-Al flight to Johannesburg and then another flight to Nelson Mandela Bay. From there, he was taken in a bakkie to the reserve. Benjamin-Fink was the one who opened his container and saw him take his first steps to a new life. In the period between his rescue and new home, he was held at a protected facility in Israel.

“He has to be in his own enclosure as the other lions would see him as a threat,” she says. But she’s already seeing signs of integration: at dawn, the other lions in the park all roar together, and in recent days, for the first time, Zion-Neev has joined in.

Speaking to the SA Jewish Report, Benjamin-Fink says her work includes rescuing illegally-held animals. “We ensure the conservation of endangered species beyond political borders. My PhD background is on mathematical modelling, so a large part of what we do is we provide governments and management with models that predict the probability of extinction given different case scenarios.

“So, for instance, if there’s a rhino on a property, we can model all the ecological



Dr Nicole Benjamin-Fink with Zion-Neev as he acclimatises to his new home

Photos supplied by Dr Nicole Benjamin-Fink

uncertainty, factor in expert opinion, and then advise on the best anti-poaching and biological strategy. We also try to reverse local extinction by moving populations across human-made borders.” And they work to resolve human-wildlife conflicts.

CBB deals in cutting-edge science, using artificial intelligence and game-theory “to make sure that the anti-poaching plans and strategies that we put together are feasible”, says Benjamin-Fink. “And that’s a big difference because if it’s not feasible economically and socially, it has low probability of acceptance.”

The lion cub was formerly named Abu-Malek, but was given his new name as a symbol of his new life. “Zion is another name for Israel, and Neev is after my son, who is very involved in conservation,” says Benjamin-Fink. “He’s only 13, but he has already been to Africa a few times and he’s responsible for our junior programme. He gives talks and has raised significant funds for conservation through his pictures of rhinos.

“CBB believes that we don’t own our wildlife, we’re the custodians of wildlife for future generations. This is why Zion-Neev is named after a 13-year-old advocate trying to

change the trajectory of extinction.” Benjamin-Fink became aware of Zion-Neev’s situation “when a TikTok started circulating of three men holding the rope that was around his neck, and one of the guys was talking to his granddaughter saying how proud he was that he had brought her a lion cub”.

Lions in captivity are often killed as they get older and more dangerous, she says. There’s a belief that tiger bones improve health, and although this is completely false, it has created a demand for tiger bones. “So, because the supply for tiger bones is decreasing because of poaching, tiger bones are now subsidised by lion bones, which creates a whole new market for lion bones. So I was determined to save this cub.

“It’s safe to say that he was smuggled into Israel as part of the illegal wildlife trade and captive breeding,” she says. “It’s a unique case. A lot of reptiles and birds are smuggled into Israel, but it’s uncommon for a lion to be smuggled in.”

She says the Israeli police and army worked together to track down the cub. “He was eventually found abandoned in the location that was similar to the location on that original TikTok video. The assumption is that people got word [of the raid] and abandoned him.” She cannot speak further about the details of the operation.

“People keep lions in captivity for two main reasons. First, as a status symbol, in other words, ‘Look at me, I have a lion, not only am I rich, but I’m capable of taming the king of the animals.’ So we’re trying to combat the social misconceptions of bravery driving people to hold these wild animals.

“In addition, this specific lion was brought as a present, [which is another reason for the trade]. You’ll see animals circulating as pets or for pictures until they grow too old and dangerous.”

How Zion-Neev came to find a home in South Africa is “a very interesting chain of events”, says Benjamin-Fink. “I approached the head of zoos in all of Europe and they explained that there was actually an abundance of lions and no need for more genetic diversity. There’s also no need for more genetic diversity or social attachment in Israel.

“Therefore, we had to find Zion-Neev a place outside of Europe and Israel. CBB researched quite a few places before we narrowed it down to Warriors of Wildlife. The sanctuary has expertise in the rehabilitation and integration of wild animals. We’re confident in its staff and caregivers. At the moment, they live there 24/7 and tend to the animals. There’s one tiger and 14 lions.

“I’m confident that Zion-Neev will live out his life in a habitat that’s his safest option,” she says. Though he cannot be reintroduced to a pride, a cub of about the same age should be joining him, and they hope the pair will bond. At first, Zion-Neev walked only around the perimeter of his 2 500 square hectares of space, but now he lounges under a tree and is much more relaxed.

This is why Zion-Neev is named after a 13-year-old advocate trying to change the trajectory of extinction.

Benjamin-Fink hopes that Zion-Neev can become an ambassador in helping people to understand the harm of the illegal wildlife trade and captive breeding. “Every animal counts,” she says. One of her organisation’s primary goals is to “bring back the rhino from the brink of extinction”.

Finally, she says South Africa and the people in it have touched her heart. “I feel privileged to be able to help both individual animals and a species as a whole,” she says.

- To follow Zion-Neev’s journey and support the organisations that have brought him to safety, follow Conservation Beyond Borders, Warriors of Wildlife and Simbonga Sanctuary on social media, or visit their websites.

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Al Jama-ah leader calls for arrest of Jewish leaders

TALI FEINBERG

The leader of South African political party Al Jama-ah has called on the South African Police Service (SAPS) to “arrest Zionist bodies in Cape Town”, claiming they are “after our students at UCT [the University of Cape Town].”

The call was made by Ganief Hendricks, a founder member of the extremist Al Jama-ah party and member of parliament (MP). He made the comments on a Facebook post, which was later deleted. Then on 29 May, he shared a video of clashes in Israel, saying, “This is why I asked [the] minister of police in the police budget vote to arrest the officials and members of the two bodies in Cape Town supporting all of this and not condemning.”

His remarks were in response to the firm stand taken by the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) against the Israel hatred which has been allowed on UCT’s campus, and the harassment by protesters outside the Cape Town Jewish community’s campus. This campus includes a shul, a library, two museums, and a kosher restaurant.

“It’s a criminal offence to support racism and apartheid Israel,” Hendricks said in parliament. “The United Nations resolution on apartheid makes it mandatory for all member states to support the resolution against apartheid; Amnesty International has recognised apartheid as a crime and has called for the Israeli authorities to be held accountable for apartheid crimes.”

Al Jama-ah publicly called on the SAPS to execute the arrest of the “two bodies” (assumed to be their leadership) which he said were “advocating for racism and apartheid Israel”. However, SAPS spokesperson Andre Traut told the *SA Jewish Report* that he couldn’t comment unless a case was actually opened.

“The Cape SAJBD is appalled at the false accusations and clear threats against the Jewish community made by the leader of the Al Jama-ah party, Ganief Hendricks,” said Cape SAJBD Executive Director Daniel Bloch. “His attack on the Jewish community in South Africa is unbecoming of a leader in parliament.

“The Al Jama-ah comments were in response to the Cape SAJBD’s recent statements, and there have been further comments made by PAGAD [People Against Gangsterism and Drugs]; the Palestine Solidarity Campaign; and the UCT Palestinian Solidarity Committee. As usual, these organisations spread misinformation and lies to make their case. This is a clear example of how anti-Zionism blurs with antisemitism.”

Hendricks also posted photos on Facebook of himself meeting the consul general of Russia, where he asked Russia to “arm the resistance in Palestine ... to take

sides and support Palestine with weapons to defend themselves so there’s only Palestine, and Muslims and Jews live together”.

Calling for the arrest of South African Jews is one of several extreme statements Hendricks made in the month of May. On 10 May, he was removed from parliament after calling the Democratic Alliance (DA) a terrorist party during the international-relations budget debate.

Hendricks’ outburst related to political divisions in the City of Johannesburg, where the party gave the DA 48 hours to provide evidence against newly appointed Johannesburg Mayor Kabelo Gwamanda, who is claimed to have been scamming members of the public.

Hendricks accused the DA of using “spy equipment”. He also refused to take his seat, and was told to leave the chamber.

“They introduced spying equipment in the City of Johannesburg. They should charge you for terrorism! The DA is a terrorist party,” Hendricks said.

DA Chief Whip Siviwe Gwarube called for action against Hendricks for hurling profanities.

Hendricks said that if the DA failed to withdraw the allegations against Gwamanda, they would approach the courts for remedial action.

“There are three members of the South African parliament who are insistent on mentioning Israel and Zionism on a regular basis,” said MP and deputy shadow minister for employment and labour, Michael Bagraim.

“Unfortunately, hatred of Zionism more than not deteriorates into antisemitism,” he said. “It’s easy to detect how the use of Israel and Zionism becomes a thinly veiled disguise of actual antisemitism. This veil has been crudely lifted recently by Hendricks. When he posted his remarks on Facebook, it was there for all the world to see the most vile antisemitism. Furthermore, while in parliament, he said it was a criminal offence to support ‘apartheid Israel’. This rabid antisemitism spews forth on a regular basis from Hendricks.

“I was absolutely gobsmacked on hearing Hendricks rant about the DA being a terrorist party,” said Bagraim. “At first, one could have thought he was having some sort of medical seizure and in spite of the chairperson desperately trying to call him to order, it got worse. Unfortunately, this modern-day form of antisemitism seems almost palatable. It’s now almost kosher to attack Zionism and Israel when you are actually wanting everyone to understand that it’s really Jews that you hate. With people like Hendricks, that thin veil of Jew-hatred is easily lifted.”

“[The National Freedom Party’s] Shaik [Ahmed Munzoor] Emam and Hendricks have used every opportunity they can in their speeches to lie about Israel, not defend Palestine,” said MP and shadow deputy minister of trade, industry, and competition, Darren Bergman. “When lines are being blurred between Jews, Israel, and Zionism, they are spewing hatred and clearly trying to incite violence.

“This is a time when leaders with constituents should be doing everything in their name to seek peace and resolve,” said Bergman. “More so, they have a moral obligation to ensure that when they say things at the podium, they should be fact-checked.

“Again, we call on all leaders, not just the Muslim community, to condemn these attacks on the Jewish community and support our rights as South African citizens,” said Bloch. “We would like to reassure our community that we are taking these threats extremely seriously. We’re still exploring all options available to protect our community from further threats. We will continue to fight for every Jewish person’s right to live, work, and practice our religion in a safe environment, free from discrimination, hate, and antisemitism.”



Ganief Hendricks

Photo: www.aljama.co.za

Entrepreneur hits a six with Forbes Africa 30 Under 30

TALI FEINBERG

Johannesburg entrepreneur Cody Gordon dreamed of becoming a professional cricketer, but a family tragedy led him in an entirely new direction, ultimately landing him on the prestigious Forbes Africa 30 Under 30 list, dubbed “Tomorrow’s Titans”.

That’s just the beginning for him and his business partner, Michael Dukes, also Jewish, who are taking mental health support into the digital realm and beyond.

The 26-year-old entrepreneur grew up in South Africa and attended King David Sandton in primary school, followed by King Edward VII in high school, where he pursued a professional cricket career.

“I received my education at Wits [University of the Witwatersrand], earning two degrees – a Bachelor of Arts and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management. In spite of my background in cricket, my true passion and calling always lay in the entrepreneurial world,” he says.

Now, he’s the co-founder and chief executive of CG Technology Group. “Our company has developed two remarkable enterprise-software platforms. The first one is called It’sOK (www.itsoktech.com), which is specifically designed to address mental well-being in schools from primary school to Grade 12.

“The motivation for creating It’sOK stems from my own personal mental health journey,” he says. “When I lost my father tragically to cancer during my matric year in 2014, I realised the critical importance of mental well-being in my own life. I wanted to extend this gift of well-being to others, starting with the youth.”

It’sOK allows students to check in with how they are feeling, receive tips and tools to assist with their emotions, and develop their emotional intelligence on a daily basis. “We also provide schools with proactive analytics to target specific grades and classes in terms of well-being interventions, instantly pick up at-risk students, and provide parents with reports on how their children are feeling. It’sOK has been rapidly adopted at top South African schools, making a significant impact on the well-being of countless young individuals.”

Building on the success of It’sOK, they recently launched Be Frank (www.befrank.tech). “Our mission has always been to make an impact at scale, and that’s why we added to our offering with Be Frank for corporates,” says Gordon.

“It’s an enterprise-software platform that focuses on improving employee health to enhance overall business performance. Be Frank allows employees to have an equal and honest voice about their experience at work and provide the correct people at the organisation with in-depth analytics to improve company performance, health, culture, and team effectiveness.

“Be Frank has proven its potential for massive scale in South Africa and globally, empowering companies from various industries to prioritise and foster a healthy work environment for increased productivity and success.”

What makes their company unique “is that our mission is to lead the way in terms of human health and effectiveness in schools and corporates. We do this with It’sOK by helping students develop their EQ [emotional intelligence] every single day. They learn that mental health is important and something they can develop from a young age, which is something I wish I had growing up in school.

“Be Frank creates a safe environment for employees to voice their true opinions in a constructive manner and allow for positive change in the workplace in order to improve effectiveness.

“What makes both It’sOK and Be Frank unique is in our ability to create highly engaging and user-friendly applications,” says Gordon. “Every aspect, from features to design elements is carefully crafted to provide the best user experience. We strive to create a safe space for students to express their emotions and for employees to voice their experiences within the work environment, facilitating effective and positive change. Our technology is quick and easy to use but extremely effective in the



Cody Gordon at the Forbes Africa 30 under 30 summit

comes to your business, and that judge is the market. We take this extremely seriously, and have a rigorous client feedback process. This allows us to iterate and innovate quickly according to market needs, and is a major reason why we have been so well received.”

Forbes Africa 30 Under 30 focuses on the greatest innovators and business leaders under the age of 30 who have created successful businesses and have had a major impact across Africa. Gordon was nominated “due to our business success and the significant impact we have made with our technology across Africa. Our ability to innovate and scale our solutions played a key role in the nomination.

“Making the list was a tremendous honour,” he says. “I’m aware that this achievement wouldn’t have been possible without the support of the brilliant individuals around me, especially my co-founder Michael Dukes. I felt humbled and grateful to be recognised among the world-class entrepreneurs and businesses on the list. When I received the news, I was with my girlfriend, Paige Butkow, and although I didn’t shed a tear, she certainly did. The entrepreneurial journey isn’t travelled alone.

“Growing up in the South African Jewish community shaped my journey,” he says. “It instilled values of resilience, community support, and the importance of education, which have all played a role in my entrepreneurial endeavours. It’s no secret that the Jewish community is filled with successful individuals. Growing up and seeing what’s possible is certainly inspiring and allows you to know that you, too, can reach those levels of success and even higher.”

He’s optimistic about South Africa’s future. “Though the country faces unique challenges, I believe that where there are challenges, there are also opportunities. Africa as a whole is brimming with incredible talent, and if we can get the fundamentals right, South Africa has the potential to be one of the best places in the world.”

Where to from here for him and Dukes? “Our goal is to continue to make a scalable impact with our technologies,” says Gordon. “We have a global mindset, and are already working towards expanding beyond South Africa. We believe in the potential of South Africa, and look forward to assisting more schools and corporations to create healthy and effective environments.”

Finally, he emphasises that “nothing in my life has been more beneficial than focusing on my own well-being. Prioritising mental health and well-being is crucial for personal and professional growth.”

The superstar who remained ‘just Tina’

NICOLA MILTZ

“Tina Turner was one of those special people who should have lived forever,” said Penny Stein, who worked closely with this trailblazing international star during her 1996 Wildest Dreams European Tour, on hearing that the musical superstar had died.

“She was so energetic, strong, vibrant, and agile, iconic – and boy, could she dance and shake her body,” said Stein who made a name for herself in dealing with the local publicity for international musical superstars, including Michael Jackson, Celine Dion, Elton John, Lionel Richie, Sting, Bon Jovi, Diana Ross, Pavarotti, Andrea Bocelli, ZZ Top, Meat Loaf, and Janet Jackson, to name a few.

Turner passed away from natural causes aged 83 last Wednesday, 24 May, at her home in Switzerland.

Turner, who was hailed as the queen of rock and roll and whose famous legs were insured for millions, visited South Africa twice, once in the late 1970s during apartheid, for which she later expressed regret; and again in 1996 in the heady honeymoon period after the lifting of the cultural boycott, when many headline artists were eager to appear on local stages.

Since hearing of her passing, Stein took a fond stroll down memory lane to the time when she interacted intimately with the star during her Big Concerts tour.

Before Turner set foot on Jozi shores, Stein’s client at the time, Peter Stuyvesant, sent her to meet Turner in Paris at the “super fancy” Ritz Carlton Hotel, where she delivered a press conference with her globally famous publicist, Bernard Doherty, and manager, Roger Davies, “who took me under their wing and became friends”, said Stein.

“I was young, and this was a big deal. Tina was major,” she said.

Stein was invited to Turner’s hotel suite

afterwards to talk about South Africa and the upcoming tour.

“She sat with me dressed in a gorgeous black cat suit drinking her favourite Cristal Champagne. From the moment she walked out of the Ritz, I knew this was going to be PR on another level. This wasn’t dry flower arrangements, this was full-on 5 000-roses stuff. This wasn’t Oros and water, it was Cristal Champagne, it wasn’t flat shoes, and fake jewellery, it was stilettos and an entire gold mine,” recalls Stein.

are for someone very important, and I have to get them to Sun City tonight.”

Forty minutes later, Stein found herself choosing bras, paying something like a whopping R3 000 for them, a fortune in those days; then searching around town for the closest thing resembling grapefruit juice, and racing to Sun City, “reaching there around 23:30 with the desired goods, to Tina’s absolute delight”.

“Tina was very warm, embracing, and inclusive,” recalls Stein.

“She oozed sex appeal. She had a voice that could wake up the neighbours in



Turner spent about a month rehearsing at Sun City before performing in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, during which Stein and her team took care of the star’s needs and publicity.

Stein recalls receiving a call from Turner’s assistant one night.

“She said, ‘Penny, Tina would like sugar-free grapefruit juice and two black French brassieres.’ Now in those days, we had never heard of sugar-free grapefruit juice and I had never worn or knew anyone who wore French bras,” said Stein who in spite of this, set about granting the star her wishes.

“I knew there was a fancy lingerie shop in The Firs in Rosebank, so I drove there and dialled the emergency telephone number for the shop.”

To her relief, the owner answered.

“I told her that this wasn’t a prank call. I promised I was for real, and told her what I was looking for. She said she would be open tomorrow, to which I frantically replied, ‘No you don’t understand, they

laughter, she was very funny, kind, and motherly. All those who saw her perform in South Africa were honoured,” said Stein, who became friends with Turner’s stylist, Jenny Bolton.

“Jenny designed a range of silk and cotton handmade glam pyjamas for the super stylish star to wear when she held early morning meetings in her hotel room. Tina gave me three pairs of these exquisite pyjamas, which I’ve kept. My late mother wore one when she passed away,” said Stein.

Tina later sent Stein tickets to her concert in Wales, and presented her with a package of memorabilia including her Wildest Dreams Dolce & Gabbana black tour jacket.

Lisa Smiedt Franck, who grew up in a musical family listening to Turner, was 25 when she worked for Stein at the time of Wildest Dreams.

“Tina would look you in the eye when she greeted you, and really engage. I was Lisa to

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her,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“Apart from her brilliance on stage and her raw talent, Tina was a shining example to me of someone who triumphed over adversity,” she said.

Turner, who was born Anna Mae Bullock, rose to prominence as the lead singer of the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. She left her famous yet violent husband, Ike Turner, with only spare change in her pocket, forced by circumstance to reinvent herself and forge a solo career against all odds.

“She could have crumbled, but instead went on to become an even bigger star in her own right. She radiated and epitomised the

was very special,” she said.

Sometime afterwards, she invited them to celebrate her wedding anniversary to Irwin Bach at the couple’s home in the south of France.

“So, there I was flying to France and having the experience of a lifetime at Tina’s mansion in a forest in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat,” said Smiedt Franck, “I stayed for three magical days. One day, Tina sat with her legs crossed on the lawn with a few of us and discussed her beautiful life and Buddhism under the trees. It was a blessing to be young and at the right place at the right time”.

The multi award-winning Turner

A photograph of three women smiling together. On the left is Tina Turner, in the middle is Penny Stein, and on the right is Lisa Smiedt Franck. They are all dressed in casual to semi-formal attire.

magnificence of the human spirit,” said Smiedt Franck.

“She presented each of us with an African beaded necklace with a silver charm to show her gratitude, which

may have been one of the world’s best-selling recording artists of all time, but she remained “simply Tina” to those looking out for her behind the scenes and backstage.

A close-up photograph of a pair of hands gently holding a small, white, paper-cut silhouette of a family consisting of two adults and two children.



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Power to the make-a-planners

There’s so much going on around us right now, but what dominates our dinner table chitchat? Solar. We’re all focused on keeping the lights on in any and every way we can find.

As I’ve said before, I view us as the “make-a-plan” nation, and right now we are so focused on figuring out whether we should rent, buy, or rent-to-buy solar. If that isn’t an option, what inverter works best, and how on earth to maintain lead-acid batteries without having to replace them with the expensive lithium batteries.

Though I really want to talk about the Rabbitt Reloaded concert that was going to happen but isn’t, and what it was like to meet three of the original members of the band 45 years after having been a Rabbitt fan, everyone wants to talk about solar.

I would have been irritated with this, but the truth is, I also need to hear what they’re saying because I’m trying to figure out my own power plans. And, as it happens, so is everyone else. That is, other than those who have already taken the leap and want to be able to convince you – and themselves – that they made the right choice.

It isn’t an easy decision, and in some cases, it’s a huge investment in the unknown. What if in a year’s time, the government gets its act together and we have power 24-7? Okay, I had to throw that in to be positive, but I can hear everyone looking at me as if to say, “Don’t be ridiculous!”

What I love about our people is that we have a limit to the frustration we experience before we make that plan. And once we have asked all the questions and done the research, we jump and don’t look back.

I have to chuckle every time I see my neighbour, who recently took the leap and installed solar, peering outside his house when there is loadshedding with a big smile on his face. He’s checking out who hasn’t yet got solar and is still in the dark. “Are you still on the grid?” he asks, smiling with what looks like an air of sympathy on his face. I’m sure he is thinking one of two things: When is she going to realise that she has no choice? Or, foolish woman, how much clearer does the government need to make it?

Either way, he’s not looking at me for advice or help.

Frankly, it’s just a matter of time before the next hot topic occupies our minds and hits our dinner tables – fresh drinking water.

As we speak, we have a cholera outbreak in Gauteng and the Free State and, at the time of going to print, 24 people had already died from this preventable waterborne disease.

This killer disease is mostly found in areas where there is inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

Apparently, in Hammanskraal, the worst-hit cholera area, poor-quality drinking water has been a problem for years. The area’s wastewater treatment works apparently haven’t been maintained and don’t have the capacity to deal with the volume of wastewater entering the system. It was a disaster waiting to happen, and now it’s happening. Isn’t it astounding that it was inevitable but nothing was done about it?

What’s shocking for me is that Israel has an immediate solution to offer. (See page 1.) South Africa just has to say the word, and this problem can be solved. Israel has the expertise to make this problem go away, but the Jewish state cannot – for obvious reasons – force it on South Africa. Besides, why would it? It’s not Israel’s problem, it’s ours.

I find it so frustrating to watch as people are allowed to die from something that is preventable but isn’t prevented because of sheer pigheadedness and political game playing.

Lives are way more precious than politics and people stuck in anti-Israel bias and prejudice.

While people are dying, Israel is offering its help. How does one justify not accepting help in such instances? How does the minister of international relations and cooperation (and whichever other ministers are concerned with this) sleep at night when she’s so determined to keep gouging Israel’s eyes out on the international stage, she won’t accept help for her own country? I cannot understand it.

When a government turns down help to save lives, there can be no justification. It has those lives lost on its hands. It must carry that guilt.

I know that ultimately we will all be looking at ways to ensure that we have water to drink and stay clean, but not everyone in the country is going to be able to do this. Those being sacrificed because of pigheadedness wouldn’t worry about who, or which country enabled them to have clean running water, merely that they have such water.

They don’t care about politics, and neither would any one of us if it was someone in our family who was sick from contaminated water.

But members of the government aren’t drinking that disease-ridden water, nor are their families. In the news, the government is said to be looking for solutions to this problem. Perhaps it is, but it simply won’t consider the solution being offered on a platter from Israel.

Israel helps so many other African countries with water issues. It has had such success up north, but here in South Africa, its help isn’t welcome because of some warped ideas that people have about the Jewish state.

The South African government would rather damn Israel – which really doesn’t care what this country thinks – and cosy up to countries with horrific human rights records who couldn’t help it if it asked. Talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face. So sad!

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



With rights come responsibilities

OPINION

ALANA BARANOV



Corrective rape and brutal murder. Vigilante groups harassing pregnant women and children outside government hospitals. Homes and businesses, hopes and dreams, set ablaze.

These horrific acts are just some examples of the violence and persecution facing members of the LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual) and refugee, migrant, and asylum seeker communities in South Africa. There has been an alarming escalation in incidences of hate in our country, indeed in the world. In South Africa, entrenched attitudes of racism remain while the epidemics of homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia run rampant. Each day, lives are in danger.

While the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill currently working its way through our parliamentary process won’t be a magic wand making these horrific forms of entrenched bigotry in our society disappear completely, its passing will be a symbolic step in the fight against all forms of hate in our country. The Bill, while certainly not perfect, will send a strong message to all levels of society that racism and discrimination cannot be tolerated.

The Bill will do several things: it will create the new criminal offence of a “hate crime” and “hate speech” and make rules for how these crimes will be punished in terms of the criminal laws in South Africa; and it will create legal obligations on the state to prevent, combat, gather, and record data on hate crime and hate speech.

people. The Bill states that “hate speech” is when a person intentionally publishes, shares, or promotes anything that a reasonable person could interpret as wanting to: (i) be harmful or to incite harm; and (ii) promote or propagate hatred. The “and” is very important because it means that both (i) and (ii) must be present for speech to be deemed hate speech. In the recent case against Jon Qwelane, the Constitutional Court ruled that wasn’t enough for speech to be offensive or hurtful, it must rise to the level of being harmful or inciting others to do harm or hate to be hate speech.

The Bill intentionally creates exceptions to hate speech to ensure an open society, and freedom of speech and religion remain protected in our Constitution. Before any alleged hate speech or hate crime can be prosecuted in a criminal court, the director of public prosecution will have to give their authorisation. The Bill also makes it a requirement for prosecutors to get a victim impact statement, considering the interests of the victim and the impact of the crime on them, which will play a vital role in deciding if and how to punish the offence.

Hate crimes are “message crimes”, traumatising not just the victim but sending a terrifying message to the broader group to which the victim is seen to belong. This is why hate speech and hate crimes sow division in communities, damaging our social fabric. An important aspect of the Bill is the recording of hate incidences, which will allow authorities to monitor trends and implement effective

solutions to deal with problem. Civil society has emphasised the need for restorative-justice mechanisms as well as multilevel educational campaigns to address the root causes of hate. South Africans are privileged to have many rights enshrined in our Bill



Alana Baranov at an anti-xenophobia march in Durban

Critics of the Bill have been vociferous. Some argue that South Africa already has laws on its books that address hate and indeed, we have the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) and bodies such as the South African Human Rights Commission and the Equality Court in place. The difference between PEPUDA and the Bill is that the former recognises these crimes as civil offences, which have proven to be insufficient in prosecuting hate. Our Chapter 9 institutions are buckling under a lack of capacity and resources to address incidences of hate. It can take years and thousands of rands in legal fees, time, and money not available to most South Africans, to utilise these tools. This is something civil society has asked for the Bill to address urgently.

Another argument against the Bill is that it will inhibit freedom of speech and religion, curtailing what is preached in pulpits, and chilling criticism of the government. These concerns have been taken seriously by legislators. The Bill says a hate crime is when a person commits a criminal act that is already a crime in our law, while motivated by hate, prejudice, or intolerance for certain kinds of

of Rights and remarkable Constitution. With these rights come significant responsibilities, and we must ensure that the freedom to express our opinions and beliefs doesn’t negatively impact on the rights, safety, dignity, and equality of others.

History has shown us – and as Jews we know this too well – that societies where hateful, dehumanising language and isolated acts are allowed to flourish create a breeding ground for violence and atrocities. The Holocaust began with “othering” propaganda and ended in the chimneys of Auschwitz. The genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda began with radio programmes describing “cockroaches” and ended with millions killed by the blades of machetes wielded by their neighbours. Hate in all its forms must be stopped in its tracks. It’s a matter of saving lives and it’s each of our responsibility.

• Alana Baranov is a writer and the political and social justice liaison for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. She is deputy chairperson of the Hate Crimes Working Group, and a steering committee member of the World Jewish Congress’ Jewish Diplomatic Corps.

US government funds restoration of SA’s oldest shul

TALI FEINBERG

The United States government was behind the restoration of the “oldest physical representation of Jewish life in South Africa”, known as the “Old Shul” which forms part of the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM) in Cape Town.

“Preserving the story of the first Jewish South Africans, the very first synagogue built in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the community that depended on it provides a view of history that illuminates the diversity of the South African people,” US Ambassador to South Africa Reuben E. Brigety II said at the reopening of the shul on 24 May. “The story educates us all, and, more importantly, corrects false narratives about peoples and nations and the value of diversity.”

The US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) provided a grant to restore the St John’s Street Synagogue or Old Shul. Ambassador Brigety was the guest of honour at the reopening of the shul.

The event celebrated the AFCP grant to support the restoration project, and was the official public reopening of this historic 160-year-old South African cultural heritage site. “Apart from gravestones, it’s the oldest physical representation of Jewish life in South Africa,” said SAJM Director Gavin Morris.

“The AFCP grant is a US state department-funded programme designed to ensure the maintenance of places of international cultural significance and to promote the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in US foreign policy and international relations,” said Morris. “Of 172 proposals received globally in 2021, the Old

Shul was among only 32 projects selected that year.

“The Old Shul, consecrated in 1863, is the first purpose-built and oldest existing synagogue in Sub-Saharan Africa, and symbolises the nascent South African Jewish community’s desire and commitment to set down roots and build a future in South Africa,” he said. “It also serves as the entrance to the SAJM. The building is architecturally unique, and in 2021, it became the recipient of the grant, valued at more than R1.2 million.”

Said Morris, “On 13 September 1863, a few months shy of 160 years ago, the then-rabbi to the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation (CTHC), Rev Joel Rabinowitz, led his congregants in and officially consecrated the synagogue. A choir burst into song as the congregation’s two Torah scrolls were placed into the ark.”



Photos: Guy Lerner

South African Jewish Museum director Gavin Morris and United States Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II

Morris then called on Rabbi Osher Feldman, the current rabbi of the CTHC (also known as the Gardens Shul), to reinstall the Old Shul’s mezuzah. This was followed by the Gardens Shul choir performing *Ma Tovu*

Ohalecha – the same song that was sung that Sunday afternoon 160 years ago.

The shul closed in 1905, and later became the site of the original Jewish Museum in Cape Town, which opened on 3 August 1958. “Towards the end of the 1990s, the late Mendel Kaplan approached the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the CTHC with a vision for a new, modern, Jewish museum,” said Morris. “The Old Shul began its third life as the entrance to the new museum. In December 2000, Mendel led the guest of honour, Nelson Mandela, into the Old Shul at the opening of the brand new SAJM.

“There was a tremendous amount of work done to restore the building,” he said. “The Old Shul was built above underground streams, and water has been its constant enemy. The entire floor had to be lifted as we found a huge amount of damp underneath it.

“At some point, concrete had been laid down under the timber. This had to be chopped up and carried away. We had to waterproof the entire substrate and then re-lay the original floorboards which we had sanded and cleaned.

“The marble Ten Commandments that stand above the entrance were held in place by crumbling mortar and would have fallen off the building had we not found this out. We restored the original timber windows, in some cases having to remake window frames where the wood had rotted.

“Thanks to the US Mission to South Africa, this beautiful old lady has been restored to her youthful beauty and new generations, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, will have the opportunity to visit and learn here.



Rabbi Osher Feldman reinstalling the Old Shul’s mezuzah

“This restoration and the associated public educational programmes supported by the grant enables the SAJM to continue educating youth and the public about values of tolerance, human rights, and dignity.”

Speaking at the reopening of the shul on 24 May, Ambassador Brigety said he wanted to answer three questions: What have we done? How have we done it? Why have we done it?

“Over the past 20 years, the US Mission to South Africa has supported nearly 20 projects funded by the AFCP, which in total are worth more than R26 million. Getting one of these grants isn’t easy. Every year, more than a hundred cultural institutions around the world apply. But the ambassador and a team of embassy advisors are allowed to select only one, maybe two, to pass on to Washington for final consideration. In D.C., a committee of scholars reviews the applications and selects the winners.

“Why do we do this? For the past 22 years the US government has demonstrated our support for the preservation of cultural heritage around the world. Synagogues and churches have been renovated, languages or traditional art forms are codified and taught

to younger generations, artifacts buried under hardened lava or at the bottom of the ocean, are recovered and restored.

“But it’s not about the item we recovered or the space we restored. It’s not about the roof that was repaired. Because when you repair the roof, you don’t just stop a leak, you save a story.” And restoring this shul, the ambassador said, was

saving a part of the Jewish South African story.

“Just as we have repaired the roof, not only to stop the rain from destroying the building, but to ensure our humanity and our stories aren’t lost. It’s imperative to repair our world – not just for ourselves, not just for our communities, but for all humanity,” the ambassador said.

“As we do so, we also become more able and more empowered to tell our stories. Stories that speak to the heart of a community; stories that teach us all about each other’s struggles; and stories that are powerful tools in building universal appreciation of all cultures and universal acceptance of everyone’s human rights. Because it’s not just a roof, it’s our story, and it must be told.”

Said Morris, “The Old Shul may belong to the CTHC, but it’s the museum that’s responsible for its upkeep. We’ll continue to care for the building as long as we’re here. Unfortunately funds are often lacking for necessary maintenance, which requires us to ask donors, foundations, or grants to assist us. We’ll continue to look after our communal heritage and tell our community’s story.”

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Rabbitt Reloaded holds its fire

PETA KROST

The excitement was mounting for the planned reunion tour of Rabbitt – South Africa's equivalent of The Beatles in the 1970s – 45 years after they disbanded. The band was ready, the dates and venues finalised, tickets were flying out the door, all they had to do was don their outfits and perform. Then, on Monday, 29 May, they had to postpone the tour indefinitely because a key band member couldn't perform.

Ronnie Friedman (who is best known as Ronnie Robot in Rabbitt) developed carpal tunnel syndrome and needed to take time to heal before he could play his bass guitar again.

The band members – and fans alike – are deeply disappointed because the tour was going to reignite so many wonderful memories and create new ones.



Rabbitt in 1977: Duncan Faure, Neil Cloud, Trevor Rabin, and Ronnie Robot (Friedman)

The members of Rabbitt were four young, good-looking, partly Jewish, and extremely talented musicians. They inspired in teenage girls and young women adulation that was characterised by hysteria and screaming during their concerts, and they were mobbed wherever they went in South Africa. Young girls used to sit outside the band members' homes and their studio, waiting for a glimpse of their heroes.

This had never been experienced in South Africa before or since.

After almost six intense and phenomenal years of fame and adulation from 1972 to 1978, the band members went their own way, mostly continuing to pursue musical careers. Trevor Rabin joined Yes, an international rock band, and went on to compose the music for more than 40 films and to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Neil Cloud went on to play for Peter Frampton before becoming a businessman, and Duncan Faure joined the Bay City Rollers and stayed in the international music industry. Ronnie Friedman became a music producer, creating Majors for Minors (classical music CDs for babies and children).

Now, 45 years later, these not-so-young men – or three of them at least – were convinced to regroup to tour South Africa this month as Rabbitt Reloaded.

Friedman, who lives on the Isle of Wight, got a call from a Cliff Marais, who runs an events management company in London, asking if he would be interested in the reunion of Rabbitt.

"My response to him was, I don't want to be disrespectful, but I get these kinds of calls every year, so the answer is 'No!'. Marais insisted that there would be demand, and presented me with facts and stats to prove it, then gave me a few days to think about it, and managed to persuade me. Unbeknown to me, he was already talking to Duncan in the United States," said Friedman.

Then they got hold of Cloud in Johannesburg, whose initial response was, "Are you mad?"

But Marais got them enthusiastic about the idea at the beginning of 2022, and the next thing, they were making plans to make

it happen.

In September 2022, Friedman (who plays bass guitar) flew to South Africa and convinced Cloud to begin rehearsing with him twice a week at a music studio in Fourways. "We got quite proficient, and it really got me – and us – back into the swing of things," said Cloud, who was Rabbitt's drummer. Faure had gigs in the US, so only joined them in April this year.

Rabin was unable to be part of the tour because his workload was way too heavy, but has given the tour his full support. "He speaks to me regularly, and helped us find the right people to stand in for him on guitar," Cloud said.

With his help, they brought in Marius Marais, a keyboard player who had played for Mean Mr Mustard, and Mauritz Lotz on rhythm guitar.

On Friday, when the *SA Jewish Report* met the Rabbitt trio, Cloud said, "We are



Ronnie Robot (Friedman), Neil Cloud, and Duncan Faure

Town and another in Durban. "We were ready to go, and were so looking forward to it," said Cloud.

They had already done some pre-publicity, with radio interviews on Cape Talk, Bok Radio, LM Radio, Mix 93.8, and others. "It was awesome. We experienced that old energy and magic again, and fans interacting. It's truly invigorating!" said Cloud.

As the concerts drew nearer, the trio were getting more and more excited. "We would go to sleep exhausted and excited, and wake up invigorated and terrified at what we had committed to," said Friedman.

They all had a laugh in retelling an experience they had recently as they were getting into their muso vibe and someone came up to the group, who were all wearing peak caps, and asked, "Where are you playing?" Cloud, thinking they were asking about the concerts, told him. The guy was confused as he was referring to where they were going to play golf.

Faure joked about a similar experience

in the US, when he went to a show with The Jacksons and saw a group of teenyboppers heading in their direction as they used to in South Africa, only they went right past him to his famous buddies.

But they had got used to that 1970s fame. "It was surreal," said Friedman. "We were four young guys who broke through into this literal stardom, creating something that had never happened before in South Africa."

Said Cloud, "At first, it was bizarre that we couldn't walk anywhere without being noticed and surrounded. It then started feeling like our lives. We had this chemistry that just worked, and we created something unique."

But then Rabin left to join Yes, and the other three stayed together temporarily. "We were at a point of exhaustion after years of going non-stop," said Friedman. "When we broke up, to be honest, I was quite relieved. I needed a break before we got back together again. I was so sure we would, but it just didn't happen."

They got on with their lives, careers, and

families. Today, both Cloud and Friedman are now adoring grandparents, but those days of Rabbitt were some of the best in their lives.

Friedman was responsible for gathering the members to launch Rabbitt back in 1972.

He, Cloud, and Rabin had played together as teens in a band called Conglomeration. "I was 18 and playing with bands in restaurants," said Friedman. "I went to the orchestra pits at His Majesty's [a theatre in the Johannesburg city centre] and took Trevor out of there. I collected Neil from the Coimbra, where he was playing, and I took them to a dive called the Take It Easy, and said we were going to play there together. Patric van Blerk [who became their producer] told me about the right guy for our fourth member, who lived in Pretoria. That was how Rabbitt was formed."

Said Cloud this week, "This isn't over, it's a temporary postponement. Rabbitt Reloaded just needs a little more time to reload. We'll be back!"

SA Jews list reasons to stay put in SA

HEATHER DJUNGA

"I love the endless blue sky and mild day-to-day weather. I love the warmth, inventiveness, and resilience of the people."

These are some of the reasons that Joburg-based voice and Alexander Technique coach Caryn Katz gives for wanting to stay in South Africa.

Though it might appear that a mass exodus has swept the country, there are many in the Jewish community who, like Katz, are holding their ground, and they have good reason, they say. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with some of them.

Yehuda Lazarus, the founder of non-profit organisation Fingertips of Africa, said he continued to believe that this country had a lot to offer and much untapped potential.

He gave the example of a woman who recently received a 10kg packet of maize meal from Fingertips of Africa. "We watched as she poured half of the packet into a container for her neighbour. It's this kind of compassion and beauty in South Africa's people which makes me want to stay."

Lazarus said South Africa's "beautiful" communities had those who had something to give in terms of finances and skills; and those who were in dire need.

"I see myself and Fingertips of Africa as a bridge between these two sides. The challenges in our country are an opportunity to find our purpose in making a difference. I love being able to give, and I love that I can do that in this country. I'm proudly South African."

Dr Adam Levin, a postdoctoral research fellow for the African Centre for the Study of the United States at the University of the Witwatersrand, agreed with Lazarus that South Africa's people have immense beauty and grit. "Past challenges have demonstrated that this country's people confront problems and look for working solutions," he said. "In spite of its issues, South Africa's people confront issues in ways that other countries don't. Also, there's a strong sense of community here; the kind that you don't get anywhere else in the world. That's why I'm staying."

Democratic Alliance councillor in Joburg, Joanne Horwitz, agrees that community is the reason she's proudly South African. As a councillor, she has seen the worst but also the very best of residents. "I regularly see really shady goings on in the city," she said, "but I'm aware of many people who are committed to serving their community to the best of their ability. As such, I harbour a deep well of hope that good will overcome."

Horwitz experiences South Africans as kind, resourceful, well-meaning, caring, and monumentally "gritty".

The grass isn't necessarily greener on the other side, Horwitz said, pointing out that she had spent six years in London, and though it was a memorable experience, coming home to Johannesburg was one of the best decisions she made.

She said she was convinced she wouldn't be able to find the same quality of life she enjoys here anywhere else in the world.

Horwitz is adamant that we need a shift in perspective. "These same challenges provide opportunity for potential

entrepreneurs," she said.

Her opinion is shared by Dan Stillerman, the founder of Excel Academy, who agrees that South Africans should embrace the challenges faced by the country as opportunities to explore business initiatives.

"I recently sat down to lunch with Rabbi [Shmuel] Moffson and a group of residents. We got to discussing South Africa and the reasons we would want to stay based on points the rabbi had raised," Stillerman said.

The first was community. "The support of the local Jewish community is really a privilege. To echo the words of the Chevrah Kadisha's slogan, 'No Jew gets left behind'. There's simply no Jewish community in the world quite like the Johannesburg Jewish community."

The second reason relates to loneliness. "In some countries like the United States, loneliness has been described as an epidemic," he said. "There are two factors involved: lack of community participation; and technology, which though it's supposed to bring people together, is having the opposite effect." Stillerman said the support of South Africa's communities, especially the Jewish community, had buffered him from this kind of loneliness.

Then, there's the outdoors. "South Africa has ample opportunity to spend time outdoors. Growing up, I was always outdoors – going to game reserves, playing sports



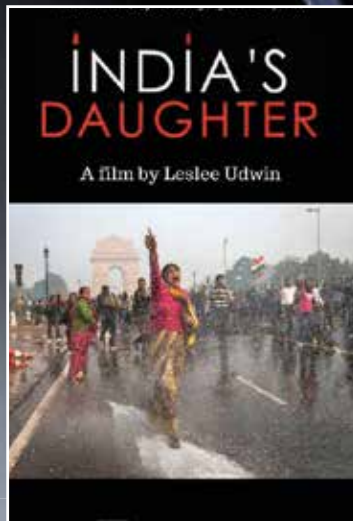
South Africa gives a unique opportunity to make a difference and leave an impact

Photo: Fingertips of Africa Facebook page

Continued on page 15>>

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Trendsetters – the ins and outs of influencing

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Whether they have 1 000 or a million followers, influencers have become the cornerstone of global marketing strategies with the global influencer marketing market valued at \$16.4 billion (R322 billion) as of 2022. But, what does it take to build and monetise your social media following?

People are far more likely to respond to endorsements of brands by people they feel a connection to than traditional paid-for advertising. “An influencer’s voice is much more powerful than the brand’s voice,” says Lori Weiner, the co-founder and director of agency Brand Influence, builders of brand-centred social narratives with explosive impact. This is especially true of influencers who are seen as credible and authentic, something that’s a core focus for Brand Influence.

An influencer need not have tens of thousands of followers to make an impact. There are various types of influencers, from nano influencers who have between 1 000 and 10 000 followers; micro influencers who have between 10 000 and 100 000 followers; macro influencers with between 100 000 and one million followers; and mega or celebrity influencers, who have more than one million followers. Brand Influence works with multiple nano and small-scale influencers, hustlers who have anything from 100 to 1 000 followers by “driving a massive conversation online in one go”. This is facilitated through mass sampling in the form of trade exchanges as opposed to monetary compensation.

“Nanos are exceptionally powerful and often have higher audience engagement than those with massive followings,” says Weiner. “They are credible and authentic because they do exactly what influencers should be doing,” she says. “They talk to their audience about what they’re about and what they believe in.” For them, relevance to and engagement with their niche

audience is their focus – which can potentially boost their earning potential.

While those working as influencers after hours may be content with trade exchanges, it can also be a stepping stone to growing their followings and creating paid-for content. Gabriela Demby, who has more than 2 400 followers on her Instagram profile @momsyandmee, has recently begun monetising her page. A copywriter, content



Gabriela Demby

creator, and social media manager for multiple clients across different industries, Demby never planned to become a “momfluencer” – moms who build their social media followings by sharing their motherhood experiences.

Yet, up late one night a few weeks after giving birth to her second child who wouldn’t settle, she turned to her keyboard. “I was pacing the nursery with an unsettled baby at 03:45, and I thought, ‘I cannot be the only one.’ That night, I created a mommy blog where I started to share the honest journey of motherhood.”

This soon morphed into an Instagram page that’s grown organically, attracting people with whom the content resonates and who are encouraged to share their struggles. “The goal of my page isn’t to reach a certain number of strangers, but to connect with mothers and fathers who want genuine support and who can relate to the content and feel more validated by it,” says Demby.

Though up until now she’s participated in trade exchanges or been given



Dean Horwitz

gifts to review, Demby recently began earning money through her page. “I had never felt comfortable charging for my posts or stories, but it’s really time-consuming and takes my skills of writing and design,” she says. “Now that it has grown into a trusted page, people value the reviews or suggestions and brands are reaching the targeted, engaged, potential buyers or clients they seek. I will never push a product that I don’t truly like, so I don’t feel that my page will become big advertising noise.” At the heart of it, she says, it’s not about the money but about connecting with parents through something that has become a passion project.

Influencer Dean Horwitz, known in his individual capacity on Instagram as @fitfoodtravelguy, has 8 735 followers and is also the founder of @instaetascapetown which has amassed a following of more than 50 000. A social media freelancer, Horwitz has been building @instaetascapetown, which helps food brands and restaurants with their social media presence, since 2016. “The idea originally was to create an Instagram page which showcased food in Cape Town, mainly at restaurants, and it grew from there.”

It was only two years ago that Horwitz turned his attention to his personal page. “I didn’t set out to become an influencer, but to document my daily activities, especially running, which I fell in love with through the COVID-19 pandemic,” he says. “I found that the community around that is incredible, so I combined that with the work I do on @instaetascapetown, and it’s taken on a life of its own.”

Though his food page is completely monetised, Horwitz’s personal page, which is personality focused and promotes a

balanced lifestyle, is only minimally monetised through brand collaborations. “When you work in the space, it’s quite difficult to divorce the influencer side and things I would get paid to do from things I enjoy doing,” he admits. Although it hasn’t always been possible when building his personal page, Horwitz says he now sticks to brand campaigns that promote products that he believes in.



Gina Myers

For micro-influencer and celebrity make-up artist Gina Myers, who has almost 60 000 Instagram followers, the work she does fits into being an influencer. “When you have a platform where you are able to educate and benefit people, to help promote certain brands, to have an impact on different generations, and to make a separate income, it’s really special,” she says.

“Anybody who has a platform has a responsibility to offer positive reinforcement,” she says. As such, Myers is now focusing on women’s empowerment through the business of make-up, and has recently launched a make-up school to educate women in feeling beautiful and confident.

Yet, she says, being an active influencer can be draining and time-consuming. “It’s not the life that everybody thinks it is, it’s hard work. Every job has its own challenges, and one of the challenges of being an influencer is it’s very hard to keep up. It’s tough to be fully present when you get to experience the most incredible things.” This is particularly true when you need to document them for your followers.

Yet, for Myers, it comes down to making connections. “You look to yourself as a brand, as something that’s invaluable, and that’s how you see your brand partnerships. You have to build them – the ones that work out become long-term relationships. When people become loyal to something or trust your word, it’s all about relationships, and that’s my goal in life, my passion is people.”

Food for thought on eating disorders

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“An eating disorder is a scary diagnosis and problem to deal with,” says social worker Erika Hugo who works with mental health and eating disorders. “It’s often what we call a systemic problem in that it’s not just the person who has the eating disorder that struggles, it often spills over to the family unit.”

Eating disorders, which are a real challenge in our community, can be effectively treated with early intervention, Hugo said at a talk hosted by Chevrah Kadisha Community Social Services at the David Lopatie Centre this week. She was speaking alongside registered dietician Eliana Dawood.

They work together to treat eating disorders as part of a multidisciplinary team at Tara Psychiatric Hospital, and now in private practice at Oxford Day Clinic, where the two are launching an outpatient eating disorder programme. Discussing practical measures to identify eating disorders and manage them – where they say problems most often arise – the two shed light on an area that’s often misunderstood.

The main aim, says Hugo, is to prevent hospitalisation. That’s why it’s so important to have resources and professionals that have worked in the field that one can consult. Though eating disorders have the highest mortality rate among mental health illnesses, with early intervention, the prognosis is good. “We just need to make sure that we end up in the right place at the right time with the right people,” Hugo says.

The most important thing to understand in starting the recovery process is what keeps the eating disorder cycle going. Yet this isn’t always easy to establish. “That’s why it’s so important that during our interventions, we include families as part of the recovery process,” says Hugo. There are so many dynamics, and that’s why we need open forums to discuss eating disorders and address the guilt and shame attached to them.

Through practicing cognitive behavioural therapy specifically for eating disorders, Hugo and Dawood target the behaviour and challenge the thoughts around it. “We take a dialectical behavioural therapy approach,” Hugo says, “which is really important because we also now don’t just talk about how we challenge thoughts and behaviour, but also give practical, concrete skills to regulate feelings and emotions. This is what eating disorders are actually rooted in, the inability to access and control what feels very uncontrollable in your internal world.”

There’s no single cause for an eating disorder, says Dawood. It’s something that develops over time and is usually shrouded in secrecy. “An eating disorder is a mental health condition where food and eating is being used as a means to communicate, to cope, and to control feelings and situations in a chaotic world.” Eating disorders are often associated with body dissatisfaction or dysmorphia, and have biological, psychological and social factors, which is why a multidisciplinary treatment approach is needed. Anxiety and depression are common co-morbidities that are either

present before or manifest after the eating disorder develops.

Full recovery is possible, Dawood stresses. “The longer it’s left unattended though, the poorer the outcomes, and those habits and behaviours become ingrained,” she cautions. “It takes on a life of its own.”

Challenging popular beliefs around eating disorders, Dawood highlights the fact that men are just as susceptible as women. Furthermore, eating disorders don’t just have an impact on teenagers, with a lot more people being affected later in life, often when they go through transitions like menopause. “Yet,” says Hugo, “we haven’t seen as many adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16 being admitted for eating disorders as we have in the past few years”. Schools, therefore, need to be part of the conversation.

Eating disorders don’t always look the way they’re portrayed on social media and in popular culture, Dawood says. Those who suffer aren’t necessarily emaciated. An eating disorder is also not something you choose, she stresses, and recovery goes far beyond just eating. People often label eating disorders as attention-seeking behaviour, which is a damaging way to define them.

Though such motivations may be an aspect of the disorder, it goes far deeper than that. “If you think about manipulation as a survival skill, that this person is so desperate, that they’re basically just trying to stay afloat, we feel more empathetic to those who suffer,” Hugo says. Similarly, we can replace the term “attention-seeking” with “someone who just wants to be seen”, the behaviour is

the tool that they use to make you see them when they feel like they don’t have a voice. “Eating disorders are about dysregulated emotions.” We need to re-evaluate how to respond to people who lose weight because we don’t know how they’re interpreting our comments, Hugo says.

“The initial positive response when you start losing weight is, ‘Wow, tell me what’s your secret?’” she says. That makes you feel good, reinforcing the behaviour until eventually physiologically, the body then starts taking over the weight-loss process and behaviour, which is why eating disorders aren’t a choice.” Families often carry a lot of guilt when their loved one develops an eating disorder, Hugo says. “As families or caregivers, we can unknowingly contribute towards keeping the eating disorder going.” It’s advisable to look at how you are perhaps subconsciously enabling certain behaviours, even with the

best of intentions. Yet, you cannot take on the burden of sole responsibility for the development of the illness. It’s not a one-size-fits-all.

The way we respond to loved ones who may suffer from eating disorders needs to be assessed. Rather than being reactive to the behaviour, go deeper to find the emotion in which it’s rooted. Instead of immediately trying to come up with a solution and fix the problem, listen non-judgementally and validate the person’s feelings. Ultimately, they want to be heard, and from there, treatment and healing can begin.



Dave’s Scrabblegrams light up Twitter

STEVEN GRUZD

Twitter can be a nasty place. Often, the worst of humanity is on display as users mock, insult, and publicly attack one another online. But there are pockets of light, like the witty, clever, and delightful daily Scrabblegrams posted by Dr David Cohen from Atlanta, Georgia.

A Scrabblegram is a poem or piece of prose that uses all 100 letters in a Scrabble set exactly once. This means that each entry will contain exactly nine As, two Bs, two Cs ... one X, two Ys, one Z (and two blanks which can be used as any letters). Cohen told the SA Jewish Report more about himself and his creative process.

“In 1997, Games magazine held a contest called ‘The Tale of the Tiles’ in which the objective was to write a story using each of the 100 Scrabble tiles exactly once,” Cohen said. “I was in graduate school at the time and had a lot of fun creating my entry, which was chosen as the grand prize winner.”

“After that contest, I never considered making another until 23 years later, when a wordplay writer wrote an article about Scrabblegrams [which have quite a rich and interesting history that preceded that Games contest by more than 20 years]. In the article, he honoured my contest entry by naming it as the best example of this unusual form of wordplay to date. A college friend of mine saw the article, and forwarded it to me. In response, I made my first new one in more than 20 years, called ‘A quiet, conscious, empty mind.’

The bug then bit Cohen again, and it became an obsession. “Once I started making new ones, I fell in love with the process and made them all the time, whenever I could, for close to two years,” he said. “I’d like to acknowledge my friend,

Steve Geller, who was one of the only people I shared these with during the early days, and who has been invaluable as an editor along the way. When the collection reached about 180 entries, I decided it

was a good time to share them in the hope that others might enjoy them too. I began posting them daily on Twitter under @dc_scrabblegram from 30 March 2022.”

“From the start, it seemed like a fun idea to connect entries to the date whenever possible ... either the anniversary of a special date [e.g. the original publication date of a famous book], or the birthday of a notable person, or a national day [e.g. National Hummingbird Day]. Finding connections to each day’s date has become one of my favourite parts of this project,” Cohen said.

His ideas come from everywhere. “When I first started making Scrabblegrams, I enjoyed choosing topics that were ‘favourites’ for me over the years – favourite books, movies, tv shows, games, or artists,” he said. “After that, I expanded the themes to anything else that seemed interesting and inspired genuine enthusiasm, like historic events, science themes, stories from mythology, and much more, including the challenge of additional constraints [such as Scrabblegram haiku, visual constraints like shaping the letters into a diamond or an hourglass, and others]. Following that, I had a period where I began creating entries that were themselves prose or poetry, or about more abstract or philosophical topics – while continuing to make fun and silly ones too.”

The Scrabblegrams take time and labour to make. “Originally, each would take about six to 10 hours to make. Now, nearly three years and more than 370 entries later, they usually take about three to five hours each. A handful have required fewer than two hours, while some of the most difficult

ones [often with additional constraints] have taken more than 20 hours to make.”

Cohen is an internal medicine physician. He has been working nights exclusively for more than 20 years. “Several years ago, I was able to switch to part-time, which has freed up more time for family and outside interests like Scrabblegramming. Also, because I’m an extreme night owl and keep that schedule even when I’m not working, I often have some free time each night after everyone else goes to sleep. That’s when I’ve done most of my wordplay these past few years,” he said.

“In our family, we’re all pretty good about encouraging and celebrating each other’s authentic interests in whatever unusual form they take. I always make sure to fulfil all my responsibilities to work and family first, so if I want to spend my free time doing weirdo wordplay, everyone is okay with that. As a dad, it’s important to continue to engage in enthusiasm-based activities and creative pursuits, even – or maybe especially – as I get older,” he said.

Cohen has also made a few Jewish-themed Scrabblegrams.

“The daily Twitter project has been wonderful for sparking new ideas. Contributors have proposed some great monthly challenge themes, and for many months, the unassigned dates on the calendar would prompt me to research

historic events or national days, and I have often created new entries based on those ideas.”

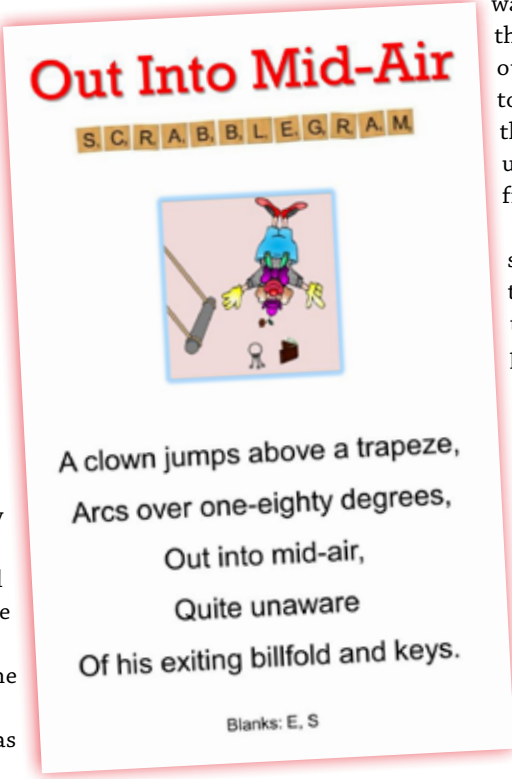
Dave’s Scrabblegrams has created a unique Twitter community. Fans interact with his posts, and some submit Scrabblegrams of their own. Said Cohen, “I love the positivity and creativity. I genuinely appreciate the comments. They often make my day. The group

is playful, fun, and quirky. Every day I’m inspired by the creativity of this kind-hearted and supportive community, including the Scrabblegrams they’ve been making. With the 100 Scrabble tiles, you can say almost anything, but not easily. It’s a nearly perfect balance of letters to play with.”

• Cohen’s full collection can be seen at davesscrabblegrams.com, and you can join in the daily fun by following @dc_scrabblegram on Twitter.



Dr David Cohen



Israel can stop cholera outbreak in its tracks

>>>Continued from page 1

privileged to act as the advanced link between South Africa to Israel, sharing our intellectual property, and assisting in the development of South Africa,” says board member Daniel Yakobi. “Together with our partners, we aligned with our mission statement: to promote businesses and the community, enhancing the economy and improving quality of life.”

Says Lipchin, “To prevent infections spreading, people need to be given specific advisories not to drink water that is thought to be contaminated [with sewage]. If they don’t have an alternative source of water, they must chlorinate the water first in order to disinfect it. Strict hygiene should be enforced such as washing hands. If vaccines are available, a vaccination programme may be implemented, depending on how widespread the infection is thought to be.

“From a water standpoint, improvements must be made in sanitation and sewer

treatment to avoid sewage water getting into the drinking supply. This is most likely what happened in Hammanskraal.”

He says there are “two assumptions” as to how this outbreak happened: “One, untreated sewage that was discharged into the Apies River, contaminating the Hammanskraal drinking water supply. Two, water tankers supplying drinking water to the residents were contaminated with sewage containing cholera.

“Israeli water technology can be rapidly implemented to treat sewage in conditions where sewer and wastewater infrastructure isn’t present or not functioning,” Lipchin says. “This is the case for the Rooiwal treatment plant, which isn’t functioning, and is discharging untreated sewage into the Apies River.

“Other Israeli technology that samples water quality can also be introduced to take quality tests at specific sites so as to quickly identify cholera that may be present.”

Lipchin says in order to implement such

technology, “support from South African government entities is required – in this case, for example, the City of Tshwane. Financing must also be provided so that it can be implemented. The first step will be to do it as a pilot project, and based on the outcomes, to expand the project.”

Lipchin emphasises that “the community should be vigilant in assessing the safety of its drinking water supply. Drinking water should be filtered and chlorinated before being consumed. If a person is showing signs of diarrhoea, they must immediately seek medical help.

“The cholera tragedy in Tshwane teaches us that when wastewater infrastructure fails, people’s lives are at risk,” says Kransdorff. “This isn’t something that can be ignored. It’s going to require a society-wide effort by businesses, municipalities, and non-government organisations working together. As the JNE, we’re committed to doing what we can to be at the centre of these efforts.”



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Novelist Gail Schimmel shares secret of two careers

South African Advertising Regulatory Board Chief Executive **Gail Schimmel** is an acclaimed fiction writer who has just brought out another book titled *Little Secrets*. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to her.

How did you find your way to writing fiction?

I have written stories since I could put pen to paper, and cannot remember a time I haven’t been writing something. However, when I was younger, my father (who was a well-known artist and really should have known better) pointed out that writing was very hard work – this was pre-laptop days, and he said that I would have to rewrite, retype, and edit, and it wasn’t all making up stories.

Well, I’m very lazy and that did sound terribly hard. So, I became a lawyer instead.

But the stories stayed, and I carried on writing in my spare time.

Why does it appeal to you?

I don’t know that there really is an appeal! Goodness knows, it’s neither the money nor the fame, because there’s very little of either!

But I think of these stories, and then they want to get out, and I’m really happy only when I’m writing as part of my day. So perhaps you could say that staying sane is the appeal. I also really love it when someone has clearly genuinely loved one of my books.

How do you manage to be a wife, the mom of two, an attorney working as chief executive of the South African Advertising Regulatory Board, and an author?

Most women (and people, but more women) have multiple portfolios and balance many different things – I’m not unique in this. I’m just lucky that some of my things are high-enough profile that everyone is awfully impressed when they know about it.

I do often joke that I manage by doing everything very badly, and I’m worried that there may be a kernel of truth in that!

I also believe the common wisdom that if you want something done, give it to a busy person.

How do your careers fit together?

They both stimulate me in different ways, and when I’m not feeling too thinly spread, I feel very lucky. In my day job, I use language for logic and to achieve some good things; and in my writing, I use language to make up worlds and have fun. Language and thinking are common themes, but they are very different at the same time.

Where do you find the time – or make time – in your day to write?

I often answer this by saying, “I don’t exercise.” What I mean by that is that I think we all make time for the things that matter to us. The theory is that I write as one of the tasks on my to-do list, like any other task, during the course of my work day. But this has been challenging lately, and I seem to do most recent writing curled up in a hideously uncomfortable chair while my son does jiu jitsu in the evening.

How would you describe the books you write, as this is far from your first?

The books written under my own name are domestic noir – the dark

side of domestic life. I also wrote cozy mysteries with my friend, Kate Sidley, under the name Katie Gayle.

What inspires your stories?

My stories all start with a “what if”. I find lots of writers look at the world like this – we’re constantly imagining how things might or could be. From there, I do one of the things we’re told to do by the books and teachers of writing – I complicate it!

What inspired *Little Secrets*?

Little Secrets started with the idea: what if you were googling someone, and they didn’t show up at all? From there, I worked backwards – why would you be googling this person; what were they to you; and why would it be so bad?

How do you get from inspiration to completion? What’s your process?

When I have a good idea, I actually get a tingling in my palms. It’s exceptionally useful, because I have lots of ideas and most are terrible. Once I have the idea, I spend some time thinking about it, and before I sit down to write, I’ll know how the book will end and where I want to be in the middle.

And after that, it’s “bum glue”. You sit down and you write. I try to write 500 to 1 000 a words a day, depending on the circumstances, and I often fail. But I keep going! The difference between a writer and the many people who claim to “have a book in them” is that the writers sat on their bums and wrote.

What do you believe will draw people to this book, and what do you believe they will take home from it?

I’m a story teller – people who read my books want to enter someone else’s world. And after that, I hope that the story just keeps them there. You have to have an interesting premise, interesting characters, and a bit of tension.

As to what they take home, I’m not really ambitious about that – no big life lessons. My best compliment is if someone says that they woke up thinkin g about the story weeks after finishing it, suddenly seeing another possibility or angle.

(I also really like to make people laugh.)

Of all your careers, which is the most important and why?

They are important in different ways. If I had to choose, I would probably choose the writing (and then would promptly starve to death), but I am glad I don’t have to choose. Writing is important to me because I love to entertain people and I almost need to write. But my day job is stimulating and, as I said, I achieve really important things.



Gail Schimmel

Photo: Karolina Komendera

You love reading fiction. Why?

I’m a bit controversial on this issue. Though I love reading, I don’t think there is anything morally superior about reading over, say, watching TV. Entering other worlds through stories broadens our knowledge, our horizons, and our empathy, but how you receive your stories might vary.

What makes a fabulous novel?

When it’s compulsive – you just have to keep reading, you don’t know what will happen, and you can’t wait to come back to it.

How do your kids feel about your books?

My daughter would say that I’m

always tired – she’d roll her eyes while she said it – and my son that I’m too stressed.

They love the fact that some people know who I am, but they are too young to have read them. My son isn’t a reader, so probably never will, but I think my daughter might.

What’s next for you?

This year, I have added a new project – a podcast with Fiona Snyckers that will start on 29 May, called “The Hidden Lives of Writers”. That has been fun to work on.

And then, the next book is actually almost done, so readers can look forward to that in 2024.

The ABC of turning digital devotees into readers

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

In a world dominated by digital media and instant gratification, cultivating a love of reading within your children is more challenging than ever. That’s why parents need to get creative, and actively expose their children to literature, experts say.

“If you imagine that tablets and phones are a bit like slot machines, where gratification can be that quick and that easy, then unless you love literature, why would you read?” Posing this question, Tiffany Markman, an award-winning copywriter, speaker, and trainer, identifies three different types of child readers.

There are those who love to read from a very young age; those who would read if they didn’t have the “slot machine” to play on; and those who simply hate reading whether it be because of learning difficulties, a preference for outdoor play, or any other reason, she says. Those who inherently love reading usually grow up among parents, siblings, or caregivers who love reading too. Most children fall into the other two categories, and extraordinary measures are needed to encourage them to start a new chapter.

First, says Markman, we need to give our children the chance to be bored. With the proliferation of technology, kids – and adults – today are never bored. Yet, those of us who grew up before the advent of cellphones had limited options when boredom did strike. “Many of us got into reading out of sheer desperation,” Markman says.

“Boredom is the biggest gift you can give a formative mind,” she continues. “If a child is never given the opportunity to be bored, they will never use their brain properly.” Even for adults, boredom is the perfect tool to evoke creative thinking – when one sits in silence, the answer to a problem eventually emerges.”

That’s why to encourage our kids to read, we need to under-schedule them. “If your kid is getting home at seven o’clock every night, you’re not going to make a reader out of that kid.”

What’s more, Markman says, we need to restrict their technology access. That’s not to say that they can’t ever use technology, that it doesn’t have value or that it isn’t something we turn to as multitasking parents who need to occupy their children, it’s simply about creating boundaries. In the time they now have, encourage them to read a book.

“The kids who hate reading, or find it stressful, are obviously the hardest ones to reach,” says Markman. Yet, there are some hacks that one can use. She suggests turning on subtitles on streamers and video content. “It’s the most unbelievable way to demystify words and to create phonemic awareness,” she says.

Audiobooks are also a great way to get a non-reading kid into books. “Start with the audiobook of a very simple, mainstream book that they like whether it be *The Wizard of Oz* or the *Harry Potter* series,” she suggests.

“Many experts say that if you give a kid who doesn’t like reading the audiobook and the book, they will follow along because they can hear the words pronounced confidently, fluently, and properly.” And so, you easily transition them onto books and allow them to watch the movie versions once they’ve finished reading. Even if audiobooks remain the staple, they still develop literacy, broaden vocabulary and ignite imagination.

Graphic novels are also a great way to attract more visual kids and get them to consume lots of text, Markman says. “The dialogue and action in a graphic novel is very fast paced, so it feels a little bit like YouTube, appealing to that ‘slot machine’ mindset.”

When your children are learning to read, drop everything and listen to them, she suggests. Children realise that it can be hard to get your attention when you’re distracted with work and other responsibilities. “But once they see that as soon as they pick up a book, you will listen, you’re motivating them by spending quality time together.”

Bedtime stories are also a great way to instil a love of reading and to bond with your children, who at any age should be encouraged to choose a story. As they get older, being allowed to stay up later than younger siblings to read is also an effective motivator.

Instilling a love of reading early on also involves bringing stories to life. This is what drama therapist Tammy Gordon-Roberts does through her business, Story Café, a children’s bookstore that offers arts-based workshops that actively explore a diverse range of stories and themes. “We develop a real love for stories by reading the story, and then engaging in a fully facilitated art-space process, whether it be through mixed arts, drama, dance, movement, or music,” she says. “We use art to explore the themes of the story and to create dialogue and understand meaning.”

Through developing a love and understanding of the meaning of a text, a very different kind of appreciation and love for books and literature begins to develop, says Gordon-Roberts. In this way, she says, Story Café also helps children to develop emotional, creative, and cultural literacy – some of the vital levels of understanding and empathy that come through engaging with stories.

Gordon-Roberts suggests encouraging your child to tell their own stories. “Narrating all the time, even by talking about what happened during the day, is all part of developing literacy,” she says.



Parents should make reading with their children part of their everyday routine



Tiffany Markman

Pam Goldberg, a qualified foundation-phase teacher with Learners with Special Education Needs training, also advocates daily reading. “Read your kids interesting, enthralling books and then let them start to read by themselves,” she says.

She suggests reading your child a book and leaving it at the most exciting place to encourage them to read themselves. “Children that read are a step ahead,” Goldberg says. “They have increased confidence and are empowered to go further in their academic journeys.”

It’s all about finding what works for your child, Markman says. “Don’t try and fit the child into the reading experience, craft a reading experience that fits the child.”

Lone Jew encounters ‘world without women’ in Afghanistan

PERSONAL STORY

DAN BROTMAN



“In the name of Allah and the Afghan people, we have triumphed over the US,” boasted a commanding mural in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. A cascade of American flag stripes tumbled like falling dominos. These were the eye-catching welcomes to a Jewish guy like me to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, once more under Taliban rule following the withdrawal of American troops in 2021.

My visit to Taliban-governed Afghanistan was part of a research trip organised by an adventure tour company specialising in off-the-beaten path expeditions to destinations like Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. This was the company’s first trip back to the country since the Taliban takeover, and our group of seven was there to test the viability of bringing groups back on a regular basis.

Our first port of call for entering Afghanistan was Peshawar, a Pakistani city close to the Afghan border. There, we chanced upon an antique store in the local bazaar. Among its myriad treasures, a tile with Hebrew inscription “Issachar” – denoting one of Israel’s 12 tribes – piqued my curiosity. Depicting a donkey in line with the



Dan Brotman at the gate of the Kabul synagogue

to visit their homeland or aid relatives in emigrating. We were issued with Afghan visas, mine in my South African passport, just hours before our scheduled flight to Kabul. We promptly changed into traditional Afghan clothing purchased in Peshawar, consisting of a loose-fitting shirt that falls to the knees, baggy trousers, and a woollen hat worn by Pashtuns, the largest tribe. The Taliban have outlawed Western clothing, thus our attire

generally barred from entering parks, markets, and restaurants. The conspicuous absence of mothers from breakfast cereal TV adverts, and all-male game shows mirrors this reality. Even the occasional female news presenter is obliged to veil her face with a medical mask. Two experiences in the city of Bamiyan highlighted for me the plight of Afghan women. While we were touring the remains of the Buddhas of Bamiyan (two 6th-century monumental statues carved into the side of a cliff that were blown up by the Taliban in 2011), I spoke to a local female for the first and only time during my visit. She was a young woman meant to be in Grade 12, who had her formal studies cut short due to the prohibition on females attending high school.

She spoke fluent English, and was continuing to study English online at home, taught by Afghans living abroad. We were the first foreigners she had ever met in-person, and she shared with us her dream of one day moving to Dubai to be a businesswoman. I knew just how many bureaucratic and financial obstacles someone like her would have to overcome to make that dream become a reality, and that failing to achieve that dream would likely relegate her to a life confined to her home, potentially as a second, third, or fourth wife. Her cousin chimed in and said, “There is no place for women in Afghanistan under the Taliban.” The second encounter was a brazen act of defiance. A woman in a truck spat at a Taliban soldier brandishing a Kalashnikov rifle at a major intersection, and then sped off. This tiny act of rebellion risked her and her family’s safety, perhaps a small glimpse into the depth of resentment Afghan

women must feel under a regime that largely excludes them from public life and the economy. Jewish life in Afghanistan, dating back to the 7th century CE, officially ended in 2021 when the last Jewish family immigrated to Canada. Through a mutual friend, I managed to contact one of the children living in Toronto, where they provided directions via SMS to Kabul’s synagogue. After getting a bit lost, my guide and I located

closed. Hours before our departure, we strolled down Chicken Street, famed for its carpets, handicrafts, and antiques. In a moment of déjà vu from Peshawar, I spotted a blue glass medallion in an antique shop, once part of a necklace, bearing the emblem of Israel. The shop owner was also unaware of its Jewish origins, and I used my remaining \$6 (R118) to acquire it. I can only assume that this medallion once belonged to a member of the country’s once dwindling Jewish community, which was down to 300 members in the 1970s. This relic, now back in a Jewish home for the first time in many decades, bears witness to the turbulent history and changing times in this ever-troubled country.

• Dan Brotman is a former member of the South African Jewish community currently living in Windsor, Canada. You can follow his travels on Instagram by following him at @danbrotman.

There is no place for women in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

a blue gate on Flower Street adorned with six Stars of David. I revealed my Jewish heritage to the neighbouring shopkeeper and pleaded for him to let me in, but was informed that since the Taliban takeover, non-Muslim places of worship remain firmly



Reminder for women to cover-up at the Kabul airport

Biblical representation, the tile, surprisingly, had originated from Herat, the former centre of Jewish life in Afghanistan. Unaware of the tile’s Jewish significance, the proprietor sold me this relic of an extinct Jewish community for a nominal \$50 (R985). The following day, our fixer bribed the security guard at the Afghan Consulate with jewellery to grant us entry and bypass the throng of refugees waiting patiently under the searing sun, as we had a flight to catch. As we waited for our visas, we struck up a conversation with Afghan refugees living around the world applying for the necessary documents

for the week served as both a mark of respect as well as a legal obligation. When the Taliban regained control over the country, they abruptly dismissed nearly all women from their employment and prohibited females from pursuing education beyond Grade 6. This was a stark shift for a nation that had adopted legislation in 2009 that made it a criminal act to hinder women from owning property, attending school, or working. A glimpse into a world without women – that’s the stark reality of present-day Afghanistan. Women, rarely seen on the streets, are

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Mrs. Maisel’s chequered Jewish legacy up for debate

SHIRA LI BARTOV – JTA

After five seasons, 20 Emmy awards, and plenty of Jewish jokes, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* airs its final episode on 2 June.

The lauded Amazon Prime show from Amy Sherman-Palladino has enveloped viewers in a shimmering, candy-coloured version of New York during the late 1950s and early 1960s – a world in which “humour” has meant Jewish humour and “culture” has meant Jewish culture.

But as it comes to an end, the show’s Jewish legacy is still up for debate. Did its representation of Jews on mainstream TV make it a pioneer of the 2010s? Or did it do more harm than good in the battle for better representation, by reinforcing decades-old comedic tropes about Jews?

The comedy-drama followed the vivacious Midge Maisel (Rachel Brosnahan) on a journey from prim Upper West Side housewife – left in the lurch after her husband has an affair with his secretary – to ambitious, foul-mouthed comic fighting her way through the male-dominated stand-up comedy industry. Her New York Jewishness coloured her jokes, her accent, her mannerisms, and much of her daily life.

That’s because the whole landscape of the show was Jewish, from the well-to-do, acculturated intelligentsia (such as Midge’s parents) to the self-made garment factory owners (such as her in-laws). Even the radical Jewish comic, Lenny Bruce, a countercultural icon of the mid-century, appeared as a recurring character who propels Midge’s success.

Henry Bial, a professor specialising in performance theory and Jewish popular culture at the University of Kansas, said the emergence of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* in 2017 exemplified a shift to more overt portrayals of Jews on TV – especially on streaming services. Although Jewish characters featured in TV shows throughout the 20th century, such as *The Goldbergs* in the 1950s, *Rhoda* in the 1970s, and *Seinfeld* in the 1990s, their Jewishness was often more coded than explicit. Network television,

seeking to attract the majority of Americans coveted by advertisers, feared alienating audiences who couldn’t “relate” to ethnic and racial minorities.

“If there are only three things you can put on television at eight o’clock on Tuesday night, then there’s a lot more incentive for networks and advertisers to stay close to the herd because you’re competing for the same eyeballs,” said Bial. “But when people can watch whatever they want whenever they want, then it opens up for a much wider range of stories.”

Other shows such as *Transparent*, *Broad City*, and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, which debuted in 2014 and 2015, are often cited alongside *Mrs. Maisel* as part of a new wave of Jewish representation.

Riv-Ellen Prell, a professor emerita of American studies at the University of Minnesota, argued that Midge subverts the stereotype of the Jewish American princess.

“She looks for all the world like the fantasy of a Jewish American princess,” said Prell. “And yet she’s more ambitious than imaginable, she’s a brilliant comic who draws on her own life. You have Amy Sherman-Palladino inventing the anti-Jewish princess.”

Bial said that Midge’s relationship with her Jewishness defies another stereotype – that identity isn’t a source of neurosis or self-loathing, as it often appears to be in the male archetypes of Woody Allen and Larry David, or in Rachel Bloom’s *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. Through the spirited banter, the pointed exclamations of “oy!” the titillation over a rabbi coming for Yom Kippur breakfast – Midge’s Jewishness is a source of comforting ritual, joy, and celebration.

“She has anxieties and issues, but none of them are because she’s Jewish,” said Bial.



Some critics argue the show’s depiction of Jewish culture relies on shallow tropes. In a 2019 review, TV critic Paul Brownfield said *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* repurposed stereotypes to appear “retro chic”. He pointed to a consistent contrast between the Weissmans (the assimilated, cultured Jews of the Upper West Side) and the Maisels (the boorish, money-focused Jews of the Garment District), arguing that these superficial types replace an exploration of what the period was actually like for American Jews.

Midge’s rise as a comedian is interlocked with her ally and one-time fling, the fictionalised Lenny Bruce. His character has a softened glow in the show, but in reality, Bruce was branded a “sick comic” for his scathing satire that railed against conservatism, racism, and moral hypocrisy. Between 1961 and 1964, he was charged with violating obscenity laws in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, and he was deported from England.

Driven to pennilessness by relentless prosecution, police harassment, and blacklisting from most clubs across the country, he died of a morphine overdose in 1966 at 40 years old. The real Lenny Bruce’s tragedy lends a shadow to the fictional Midge Maisel’s triumphs.

The United States that he struggled with until his death also looks comparatively rosy through the lens of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, whose protagonist battles misogyny but takes little interest in other societal evils – including still-rampant antisemitism.

“*Mrs. Maisel* takes place in a supersaturated fantasy 1958 New York, one where antisemitism, racism, homophobia, and even sexism are barely a whisper,” Rokhl Kafirissen wrote in 2018.

Reflecting on the criticism that had piled up by 2020, Sherman-Palladino and her husband, Daniel Palladino, also an executive producer and a lead writer for the show, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that trying to appease every Jewish viewer was a futile exercise.

“We knew that if we show a Jewish family at temple – if we show them and talk about Yom Kippur and all those kinds of things – there are going to be people who are going to nit-pick at specifics that maybe we didn’t get exactly right,” said Palladino, who isn’t Jewish. “But a lot of the feedback that we’ve got has been, ‘Thank you. Thank you for leaning into it and showing Jews being Jewish, as opposed to just name checking them as Jewish.’”

However *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* is assessed in the future, it will remain significant for thrusting a new kind of Jewish heroine into the mainstream consciousness, said Bial.

“Because of its popularity, its longevity, and frankly its quality, it’s going to be the example,” Bial said. “In the history of Jews and TV, this is going to be the chapter for the late 2010s and early 2020s – you have to mention *Mrs. Maisel*. It’s very clearly a landmark in Jewish representation, particularly for Jewish women.”

Protester storms Roger Waters concert

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

A man rushed the stage and unfurled an Israeli flag at a Roger Waters concert in Frankfurt on Sunday, 28 May, to protest against the former Pink Floyd frontman’s continued criticism of Israel.

Video circulating on social media showed a group of fans chanting “*Am Yisrael Chai*” (The people of Israel live) while the protester makes it to the main stage, where he lasts a few seconds before security guards chase him away.

Since at least last week, Berlin police have been investigating Waters over a costume he has been wearing at concerts for years that includes a long black trench coat with a red armband. Some say the outfit is reminiscent of a Nazi officer uniform and a glorification of the Third Reich, which is outlawed in Germany.

A Berlin police spokesman said on Friday that the findings of their investigations would come over the next three months.

Waters, one of the leaders of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement against Israel, has come under intense scrutiny during his current tour, after the cities of Frankfurt and



Munich unsuccessfully attempted to block him from performing.

Representatives from those cities, along with German-Jewish communal leaders and several Jewish organisations around the world, argue that Waters’ criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism. The screen at Waters concerts frequently shows a pig-shaped balloon emblazoned with the logo of an Israeli armaments firm.

Before Waters’ show on Sunday, local Jewish groups and politicians gathered for a protest outside the venue hosting the performance, the Festhalle. In November 1938, about 3 000 Jews were taken to the building, where many were beaten before being sent to concentration camps.

Protesters read aloud the names of Jews who were later rounded up on Kristallnacht, the “Night of Broken Glass” that many point to as the start of the Holocaust, in 1939. Frankfurt Mayor Mike Josef said “Hatred of Jews is to be condemned everywhere in our city,” according to the German dpa news agency.

Waters has also enraged critics by juxtaposing the names Anne Frank and Shireen Abu Akleh on the screen at his recent concerts. Abu Akleh was killed on an assignment in the West Bank last year, and the Israeli military apologised early this month for her death after admitting that she was probably hit by fire from an Israeli soldier during a raid.

The Polish city of Krakow cancelled a Waters concert last year after the British rocker came out in support of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

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Outrage over missing Monday

Soon after my morning show ended on Monday, the ChaiFM office received a call with a complaint. In of itself, this is hardly unusual, and I often joke that I should have a permanent parking at the BCCSA (Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa) given the number of times that I have been referred to it. In my mind's eye, there is a dedicated person for me at the commission, along with a file labelled, "Not him again".

This phone call, however, was different. The anonymous listener was apparently very upset that although I had announced the date (both in the Gregorian and Hebrew months), and although I had mentioned several events that were commemorated on that day, I had failed to confirm that it was Monday.

Confirmation that the listener clearly required from me.

Whereas this complaint is mild in relation to the others I receive, and whereas it would be easy to dismiss it as being about someone who was simply having a bad day, I'm intrigued at what the call indicates.

Perhaps it says something about lack of trust in news, information, and even diaries. Perhaps it's about the difficulty of navigating a world where we are told to question everything we read and that if there is a "trusted" source, then to rely on them and only them. And unless they confirm that it's Monday, there is a chance that it could, in fact, be Wednesday.

Alternatively, maybe it reflects the downright irritability of South Africans. Between loadshedding, a government which lies to us each time it communicates, a crumbling infrastructure, and the increased cost of

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



everything, maybe complaining to someone who will listen and even respond might be just the ticket? Or it indicates that we're becoming addicted to outrage and that we're not happy unless we're exasperated, fearful, and filled with indignation. We would think that it would be the opposite. That with all the terrible stuff around us, with enough negative South African news to sink the Lady R, we would demand a bit of tranquillity. Insist that no-one overreacts, and make sure that we respond to external stimuli with maturity and calm. Like adults. And yet, if you were to look at my wife's WhatsApp groups (I have been evicted from most), you would see message after message of dire warnings, hysterical premonitions, and end-of-life prophesies. That and *tehillim* groups, but that's for another article. The conclusion that I draw is that we're addicted to outrage and fear. And that much like we now know that we get a dopamine hit when engaged with social media, so we receive some sort of affirmation from these types of messages. They might predict death, but they make us feel alive. They are proof that we're still in this fight because dead people aren't outraged and angry. And it goes without saying that dead people will hardly be aware that it's Monday.

Letters

SA JEWS NEED PUSH-BACK STRATEGY AGAINST ANTISEMITIC GROUPS

Did I wake up and read an article in which the antisemitic parts could easily have been printed in the *Der Stürmer*, the fanatical and vile antisemitic Nazi publication? ("Cape Jews threatened as protests escalate", *SA Jewish Report*, 25 May 2023.) The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the entire South African Jewish population must confront the likes of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) and similar Muslim organisations that spew hatred, misinformation, and threaten the Jewish population in South Africa with violence. They are hell bent on targeting Jews in this country. And they are of the opinion that Jews in South Africa are soft, non-violent, and will offer no resistance of any kind, thereby making us easy targets. These South African Muslim organisations, which are vehemently antisemitic and obviously anti-Israel, have the support of a number of Arab countries in terms of funding as well as under the guise of providing madrasahs, imams, mosques etc. which champion a Palestinian cause that's vehemently antisemitic and anti-Israel. All with the South African

government turning a blind eye. The pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel African National Congress (ANC) government conveniently forgets that many Jews were vigorously anti-apartheid and showed this by joining the ANC, going underground, and going to jail for the ANC cause. So, don't expect help from the government to fight this scourge. We must unite; we must strategise and have a game plan in place that gives a hard push back, because action speaks louder than words. Because these people expect us to resist with words only. The Board and all Jewish organisations should set up a task team and consult with their fellow Jews, the specialists in Israel, how to address this serious problem the hard way, as we have a constitutional right to protect ourselves. We need to make world Jewry aware of this scourge in South Africa. Because if not, then is it really a case of never again? – **Geoffrey Freeman, Johannesburg**

an effort to recover its database, the shul appeals to all existing members and interested individuals to contact Alan Garlick 084 649 2846; Fay Peisach 082 928 7103; or Leonie 084 740 0786 for further information. – **Alan Garlick, Johannesburg**

BEIT EMMANUEL'S BIG BAND MUSIC SOCIETY IS BACK

Beit Emmanuel in Johannesburg is trying to revive its Big Band Music Society, which had legendary bandleader, 99-year old Benny Michel, as an honorary member. The society came to a halt at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In

SA Jews list reasons to stay put in SA

>>>Continued from page 8

outdoors," Stillerman said. "Our country also has a relatively large number of daylight hours compared to London, for example." He praised South Africa for its big houses and gardens. "In cities like London and New York, even Tel Aviv, apartments can be relatively small." Another aspect of the South African lifestyle which is taken for granted is the availability of exceptional domestic help. "We have access to great people," Stillerman said. "I grew up with a domestic worker who was like a second mother to me. I couldn't imagine raising a family without the friendly, motherly help from domestic workers." Stillerman believes we're at a unique place in South African history where we have the opportunity to make a difference, have an impact, and stretch ourselves as entrepreneurs. Katz said she couldn't give her reasons for staying

without highlighting the sentimental, subtle nuances of "home", which make South Africa unique in the world. "I love my garden. I love that my children sit with their grandparents every Friday night. I love our sense of humour, and ability to make fun of ourselves. I love walking in The Wilds every Sunday. I love how we greet each other, and that manners are important. I love the Jewish community – the wealth of available offerings; the on-the-spot support; the diversity; the commonality; the art; the 'mommies'." As far as it's possible for her to be interested in politics, she's interested in the machinations of what's happening here. "I couldn't imagine giving a damn anywhere else in the world," she said. Quoting human rights lawyer and thought leader, Lwando Xaso, she said, "To hate South Africa is to hate a part of myself. To love South Africa is to love a part of myself. To believe in South Africa is to believe in myself, and what is possible."

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Our roots go deep

Cape and national representatives of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) participated in a memorable evening on 24 May to celebrate the opening of the newly restored Old Synagogue in Gardens.

Consecrated in 1863, the building is the oldest existing synagogue in Sub-Saharan Africa. Fittingly, it forms part of the South African Jewish Museum complex today, which in turn forms part of a greater Jewish cultural campus that comprises, among other things, the Great Synagogue (which replaced the old shul building and dates back to the early 1900s), the Jacob Gitlin Library, the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and a popular restaurant, Cafe Riteve. Just across the street are the civic offices of the Jewish community, including the offices of the Cape SAJBD, South African Zionist Federation, and others. Having all these communal bodies concentrated within a small, easily accessible, and well secured area is one of the major strengths of the Cape Town Jewish community, and the fact that the area is located in the historic heartland not just of the Cape but South African Jewry as a whole makes it that much more significant. Whereas the SAJBD has been based at a number of different premises during its 120-year history, the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, the mother congregation of South African Jewry, has been located in Hatfield Street for most of its existence. Events like last week's function remind us how far back Jewish roots go in South Africa. They also further put into perspective the malign agenda of those who of late have gathered outside these premises and declared that Jews have no place in "their" country. The Old Shul restoration was made possible through the support of the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, in recognition of the building's historical and architectural significance.

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



In his address, United States ambassador to South Africa, Reuben E. Brigety II, spoke about why the US supports initiatives of this nature, commenting that buildings aren't just about bricks and mortar, but have their own stories to tell about those who built and used them. We extend our sincere thanks to the US Mission to South Africa for supporting this very meaningful project.

One step closer for Hate Crimes Bill

Last week, the SAJBD presented its written submission on the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill to the Select Committee on Security and Justice (National Council of Provinces). Our political and social justice liaison, Alana Baranov, has headed up this process ever since the proposed legislation was first introduced about eight years ago, and was responsible for updating and submitting our proposal. From the Board's point of view, anti-hate-crime legislation is of crucial importance when it comes to fulfilling our mandate of protecting the Jewish community and upholding its civil rights, hence we have been involved with this issue from the outset. Baranov was also part of the team which updated the submission of the Hate Crime Working Group, a body co-founded by the SAJBD and other human rights organisations in the wake of xenophobic attacks against foreign migrants in 2008. I congratulate her on her recent election as deputy chairperson of this important body.

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