



# south african Jewish Report

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■ Volume 27 – Number 23 ■ 29 June 2023 ■ 10 Tamuz 5783

www.sajr.co.za

## Israeli doctors save Swazi boys' lives

NICOLA MILTZ

Israeli doctors have saved the lives of two little Swazi boys who had congenital heart defects, ensuring that these boys would forever share a bond with each other and a small country in the Middle East.

The boys, Liyabonga Zwane, six, from Mbabane and Snothando Mkhuleko Dlamini, five, from a village near Piggs Peak in the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), didn't know each other before embarking on a miracle journey together to Israel in May.

Both boys were born with ventricular septal defect (VSD), a serious yet common congenital heart defect. It meant that they struggled almost from birth to breath and lead a normal life. The hole in their hearts made it difficult to survive let alone thrive.

After enduring years of ill health, uncertainty, and hopelessness, their plight was brought to the attention of Save A Child's Heart (SACH), an Israeli-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) that saves the lives of critically ill children suffering from heart disease in countries where access to paediatric heart care is limited or non-existent.

"My beautiful boy is super fine, he's healthy, he's alive," said an excited and grateful Nozipho Sakhile Magagula, Snothando's mother, who like Liyabonga's mother, Senamile Sukoluhle Thwala, travelled to Israel with her little boy for the surgery. Both moms have renewed hope that their sons will finally have a second chance at life after years of heartache.

"He's coping well. I'm seeing small improvements every day," Magagula told the *SA Jewish Report*.

"Having a sick child has been a painful journey, living life without knowing what the future holds, and always yearning for him to be healthy," she said.

"When I heard that doctors in Israel could do something to save him, I was so excited. Going on an airplane with him for the first time was a beautiful experience. Coming here and experiencing the people's kindness and care, it's another feeling altogether. What Israel is doing for our African children is amazing. All I knew about Israel was that they were a people who

believed in G-d. This is true. I thought I was going to lose him, but with G-d's grace, here we are now."

The boys' successful life-saving cardiac surgeries were done at the Ida Cabakoff International Pediatric Cardiac Center for SACH at the Sylvan Adams Children's Hospital at Wolfson Medical Center in Israel.

SACH Deputy Director Tamar Shapira said, "Both children are doing well. Snothando, who had his surgery on 28 May, has been back in the children's home for three weeks and he's recovering nicely. He has made friends from Zanzibar and Zambia, playing with them and our volunteers who come to the home on a daily basis. He looks good and happy, and will probably be discharged soon."

Liyabonga, who had the operation on 19 June, is still recovering in hospital in the paediatric surgical department.

"He's walking and playing in the playground of the department," said Shapira.

The boys' condition, VSD, refers to the hole in the heart which occurs in the wall – the septum – that separates the heart's lower chambers – ventricles – and allows blood to pass from the left to the right side of the heart. The oxygen-rich blood then gets pumped back to the lungs instead of out to the rest of the body, flooding the lungs, and making the heart work harder.

"Eswatini has no solutions for children born with heart disease," said Shapira.

She said Snothando was two months old when Nozipho, a teacher, noticed something was wrong. He was always coughing and short of breath. She and the boy's father, Lwazi, were heartbroken as their child's conditioned worsened and medical options weren't available to treat him.

"After some time, he seemed to get better, but he

wasn't growing like other children and didn't speak well. It was painful for me to see," she said.

Liyabonga was three days old when local doctors noticed that he wasn't breathing properly. His mother, Senamile, also a teacher, regularly took her son to hospital more than two hours away from their home.



Photo: Tomer Nueberg

Liyabonga Zwane and Dr Ahmed Amar

The boy's father, Mkhethwa, who studies in Rwanda, became worried about his son's health when told he wasn't thriving.

"I worried about my son's condition, I cried countless days and nights about how long he had in this world. I felt helpless," Senamile said. "SACH has performed life-saving surgery and some of the improvements are instant. I'm overwhelmed with gratitude."

The boys' condition reached the ears of SACH some time ago, Shapira said, and plans were put in place for them to receive life-changing treatment abroad.

Eswatini has become the 69th country to benefit from the expertise and care provided by SACH.

The children and their families are being housed at the Legacy Heritage Children's Home in Holon, while in Israel. They join children, family members, or caregivers from dozens of countries around the world.

The children are provided with the necessary medical evaluations, treatments, and post-operative care to improve their health and enhance their overall well-being, Shapira said.

SACH was founded by the late Dr Ami Cohen to help improve the level of paediatric cardiac care throughout the world. It brings children to Israel for care, performs medical missions abroad, and trains medical personnel, sharing expertise with

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# Neo-Nazis target two Georgia synagogues

ANDREW LAPIN – JTA

Two Georgia synagogues were targeted by nearly identical antisemitic protests over the weekend, both allegedly organised by a neo-Nazi group that has gained notoriety in recent months.

On Friday, 23 June, a group of about 10 to 15 protesters gathered outside Temple Beth Israel, a Reform congregation in Macon, a city in central Georgia. They carried crude signs, hung an effigy from a post, and spouted antisemitic vitriol before being broken up by police.

The next day, about 11 people waved swastika flags and displayed very similar antisemitic messages outside a Chabad centre in Marietta, Georgia, about 100 miles (160km) to the north. The signs blamed Jews for wielding control over elected officials or institutions, such as the media and the Federal Reserve. Another sign reportedly referenced the 1913 lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory owner, which took place in Marietta.

Both protests appeared to be the work of the Goyim Defense League (GDL), a neo-Nazi group that has spread its messaging and instigated other antisemitic incidents around the country. The organisation’s leader, Jon Minadeo II, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and public disturbance following the protest in Macon, and signs at the Marietta demonstration referenced the group’s streaming channel.



The Goyim Defense League demonstrate outside Temple Beth Israel on 23 June 2023

The group’s propaganda reportedly inspired shootings of two Jews outside synagogues in Los Angeles earlier this year. Last year, the group hung antisemitic signs over a Los Angeles freeway and, soon afterward, projected the same message onto a stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, the state where the group is based.

According to an audit by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the group was responsible for nearly 500 incidents

of antisemitic propaganda in 2022. Flyers bearing the group’s hallmarks had been found in Cobb County, where Marietta is located, days before the protest, and some were also discovered last week in the town of Warner Robins, near Macon.

“By spreading antisemitic myths and conspiracy theories, blaming Jews for everything from the COVID-19 pandemic to perceived grievances about immigration, pornography, and abortion, GDL hopes to turn Americans against the Jewish people,” read a statement from the ADL’s chapter in the southeastern United States following the attacks.

“The fact that there were protesters outside the temple on Friday night, saying horrific things, doing horrific things, tells me that there’s a tremendous amount of anger in our community,” Rabbi Elizabeth Bahar of Temple Beth Israel said in a sermon outside her synagogue that evening.

The next day, as Macon community leaders attended an anti-hate rally in support of the temple, antisemitic protesters gathered outside Chabad of Cobb in Marietta. That group quickly attracted a large crowd of counter protesters, some of whom began arguing with the neo-Nazis and yelling at them to go home, according to the *Atlanta Jewish Times*. Law enforcement also showed up to block the antisemitic protesters’ access to the synagogue.

“East Cobb has been a wonderful home to a flourishing Jewish community for many years. These individuals don’t represent the sentiments of the citizens of East Cobb,” said Chabad of Cobb.

Although the protesters arrived during a Shabbat service, Rabbi Ephraim Silverman told the *Atlanta Jewish Times* that he “didn’t sense any fear” during the service. The next day, Chabad held an open house for its synagogue as previously scheduled.

State-wide elected officials from both parties have responded forcefully to the antisemitic incidents. Georgia Senator Jon Ossoff, who is Jewish, said in a statement, “Georgia’s Jewish community will never be intimidated by antisemitism. Today, as symbols of genocide were paraded in front of synagogues, we continue to stand strong, proud, and unbowed.”

Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock tweeted, “This has got to stop. Praying for our Jewish community in Georgia and beyond. We must all raise our voices loudly against this vile hate.” Governor Brian Kemp tweeted, “There’s absolutely no place for this hate and antisemitism in our state.”

## Living after death



**Rabbi Sam Thurgood  
– head of Jewish Life  
and Learning at United  
Herzlia Schools**

One of the most famous topics of the double parsha of Chukat and Balak is the Para Aduma, the red cow that, when used correctly, has the power to redeem us from the impurity of death. What exactly the Torah means by the concept of “*tuma*”, usually translated as “impurity”, is beyond our focus today, but it relates to a spiritual state or experience that isn’t compatible with entering the highest levels of holiness in coming into the area of the Temple.

This is in fact why we are particularly careful about ascending the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, our holiest of all places, and why we usually content ourselves with prayer at the foot of the mountain, at the Kotel. Only one who has undergone various processes of purification may even ascend the Temple Mount, and only one who has been purified from contact with the deceased may enter the place where the Temples themselves once stood.

But I ask you, what’s so impure about death? Of course, death is tragic and a deviation from Hashem’s original plan for the world.

We remember the story of Adam and Eve and the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as well as death being far from the ultimate destiny of the world, as we quote at every funeral and *shiva* house, from Yeshayahu/Isaiah 25:8: “Death will be swallowed up forever, and the Lord G-d will wipe away tears from off all faces”. However, death can also be an honourable end to a good life, a well-earned retirement for a soul who has lived a full existence in this world and is now returning to the World of Truth to bask in the light of Hashem and to be reunited with loved ones who have passed. When death is a good end

to a good life, where then is the impurity?

One of the great Hassidic masters, Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner, also known as the Ishbitzer Rebbe, understood death to be a metaphor for some of the challenges that we encounter in life. Sometimes we’re sad because of a problem that we’re experiencing. This is called “sickness”. At other times, we’re sad because of something that happened that cannot now be changed. This is called “death”. We know what we must do with sickness – we must take all reasonable means to pursue health and engage with the relevant experts, treatments, medications, and recovery schedules until we’re

healed. We should also pursue a proactive approach of preventive medicine, leading a life that keeps us strong and healthy. However, death requires a different approach. It’s not about trying to cure it, but finding the right way to move forward. To acknowledge the loss, and live in the new world that contains it.

There are problems in life that cannot be solved, that we must now accept and make peace with in our lives. To get stuck in seeking solutions for these, says the Ishbitzer, is impurity.

May we be blessed with lives of goodness and health, honour, and peace.

Shabbat Shalom.

## Torah Thought

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Balak, the King of Moab, summons the prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel. On the way, Balaam’s donkey sees the angel that G-d has sent to block their way. Balaam attempts to pronounce his curses three times. Each time, blessings occur instead. Balaam also prophesies on the end of days and the coming of Moshiach.



# The Jewish explorer who befriended Shaka Zulu

TALI FEINBERG

Shaka Zulu was a formidable figure, but this didn’t deter Jewish explorer and traveller Nathaniel Isaacs from getting to know him and even fighting alongside him in the early 1800s. In return for his support, Shaka gave him large tracts of land, including what’s now Durban.

Isaacs also recorded in his diary at the time that he offered the members of the Zulu tribe the quintessential Jewish remedy of chicken soup when they were ill.

South African Jewish community leader Benji Shulman stumbled across Isaacs’ story and a letter from Shaka to Isaacs about his “reward” while researching Jewish history in South Africa.

He shared the letter with the *SA Jewish Report*, which was recorded in the annual general meeting minutes of the organisation that later became the South African Zionist Federation in 1905.

In the letter, dated 17 September 1828, Shaka wrote, “I, Tchaka [Shaka], king and protector of the Zooloos [Zulus], do hereby create in presence of my principal chiefs and strangers assembled, my friend, Mr Nathaniel Isaacs, *indunu incoola* or principal chief of Natal, and do grant and make over to him, his heirs or executors, a free and full possession of my territory from the Umlass River, westward of Natal, to the Umshloti, eastwards of Natal, with 100 miles in land from the sea, including the Bay of Natal, the islands in the bay, the forests and the rivers between boundaries here enumerated.” He wished Isaacs “peace and friendship”. It’s unclear how the letter came to be translated.

The information happens to coincide with the newly-released Mzansi Magic TV series *Shaka iLembe*, which looks at the life of the Zulu king in a whole new light. Though Isaacs doesn’t feature in the series, his connection to Shaka was recorded in his diary, which in turn shaped much of the West’s perceptions of the infamous warrior.

According to *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History* by professors Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, Benjamin Solomon, a non-practising English Jew, was

one of the first Jews to settle in the Cape, coming via St Helena. Isaacs was his cousin, who “became an intrepid adventurer, far beyond the Cape frontier and an associate of the Zulu kings, Shaka and Dingaan”.

They write that Isaacs was “a young Jewish adventurer and trader who lived among the Zulus in the late 1820s. He recorded his experiences in *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, first published in London in 1836. The book became a seminal text on the reign of Shaka, the founder of the Zulu kingdom. This flawed and self-serving account, driven by Isaacs’ desire to paint a negative portrait of his hosts to encourage colonial expansion, is nevertheless a valuable contemporary source.”

It is in this account that Isaacs described how the people came to him indicating that they were ill, and, “I directed them to make some chicken soup.” About King Shaka, he wrote, “We went towards the palace to pay our respects, when Chaka [as Isaacs spelled his name] with a jocose manner and an artificial smile, told me to point out the part where I was wounded. I complied, and when he observed, “That is a cowardly sign, you must have turned your back towards your enemy, and if you were my man instead of King George’s, I should have you killed, I was silent, and thanked heaven for making me a subject of the king of England

Isaacs wasn’t the only Jew to interact with the Zulu kingdom. Mendelsohn and Shain write that in December 1835, Benjamin Norden paid a semi-official visit to the Zulu kingdom on behalf of Sir Benjamin D’Urban, the governor of the colony at the Cape of Good Hope.

So how did Isaacs manage to get to the Natal region? According to the late writer Dr Louis Herrmann, “Nathaniel Isaacs was born in Canterbury in 1808 of a Jewish family of Kent. His father died when the boy was very young. His mother sent him to St Helena to stay with her brother, Saul Solomon, at the tender age of 14. Mr Solomon was a merchant at Jamestown on St Helena. In 1825, the brig *Mary*, commanded by Lieutenant King of the Royal Navy, arrived in St Helena with goods consigned to Solomon. Here, he met the 17-year-old ‘lively youth’ Nathaniel Isaacs, who convinced his uncle to join King on his onward voyage to the Cape. They arrived in Cape Town in the beginning of August 1825.”

In Cape Town, King heard that an old friend of his, Mr Farewell, an East India merchant, had been absent for more than 16 months and was stranded in Port Natal. King decided to undertake a voyage to Port Natal and left with Isaacs as a companion to find his “long absent friend”.

The brig *Mary* arrived at the bluff point, named Cape Natal, the entrance to today’s Durban Harbour, but she ran aground due to severe gale force winds. Everyone got on shore safely, but most of the equipment and baggage on the ship were washed overboard. They established that Mr Farewell and his party were alive and well, thus achieving the purpose of their journey, but ended up without a ship to take them back where they came from.

Isaacs then decided to explore the interior. His party reached Shaka’s kraal, 130 miles (209km) inland, and was received

by the monarch, who already knew King. Isaacs observed tribal life at close quarters, and wrote about it in his journal.

At one point, Isaacs found his way back to the Cape, where he called for the British annexation of Natal. On his return to Natal, he became acquainted with Dingaan, who confirmed Shaka’s grant of land to him.

English traveller Henry Francis Fynn, Farewell, and Isaacs established the town of Port Natal, later renamed Durban. Today, there’s a Nathaniel Isaacs Park, a Nathaniel Isaacs



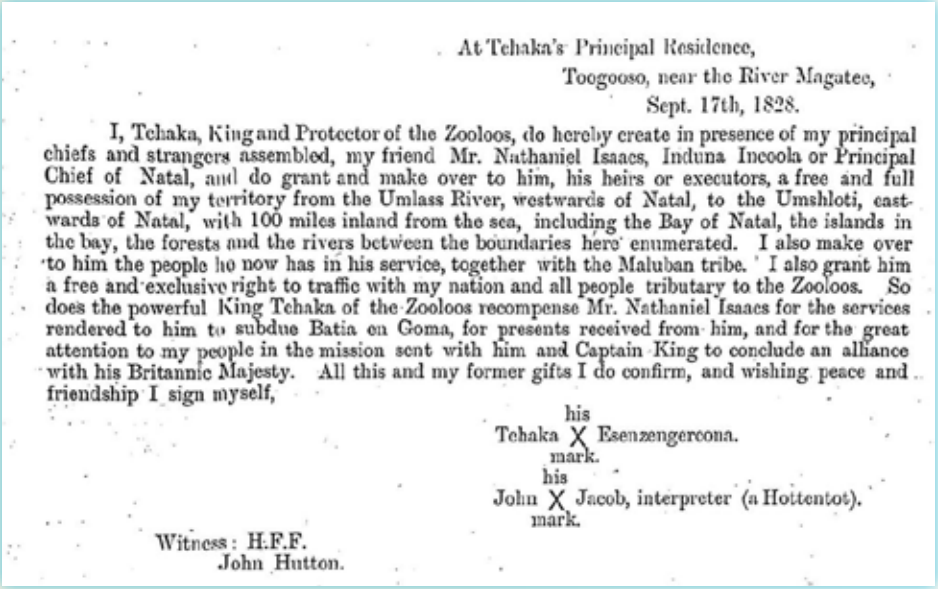
Crescent, and a Nathaniel Isaacs Road in Durban.

Isaacs ultimately left Natal in 1831 when he heard that Dingaan was preparing to massacre the few whites living there. In 1844, Isaacs abandoned his claim on the land granted to him by Shaka, and settled in Sierra Leone, where he built up a thriving business.

In 1854, he was accused of slave-trading by the governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy. Isaacs got wind of his impending arrest and left for Liverpool, where spent the last years of his life. Kennedy was appointed governor of New South Wales in Australia, and took the papers relating to the slave-trading charges with him when returning to England before taking up his post in Australia. The papers were lost when the ship in which he was travelling was wrecked. In the absence of the papers, the English courts refused to proceed with prosecuting Isaacs.

Isaacs died on 26 June 1872 in Egremont, and is buried in the Canterbury Jewish Cemetery.

In recent years, many academics have questioned the accuracy of Isaac’s writings. Dan Wylie, an academic at Rhodes University who has written books on Shaka, asserts that Isaacs deliberately exaggerated the extent of Shaka’s brutality to boost the sales of his book. But other historians have challenged Wylie. Petros Sibani, a historian and tour guide of Zulu battlefields, said there was no doubting that Shaka “was a cruel and ruthless man, but they were cruel and ruthless times”.



instead of the king of the Zoolas [as Isaacs spelled it].”

However, the two grew to have respect for each other. Isaacs accompanied the Zulus in an expedition against a Swazi tribe, in which he was wounded. He was given the name Tamboosa, meaning “brave warrior”. In 1828, Isaacs had rank and honours conferred upon him, and he learned to speak Zulu fluently.

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# UN human rights probe condemned for anti-Israel bias

NICOLA MILTZ

Twenty-seven nations are demanding that the United Nations (UN) Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem and Israel stop its “long-standing disproportionate attention given to Israel”.

On 20 June, the United States (US), on behalf of 26 other countries, condemned the ongoing UN investigation into alleged human rights violations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of its apparent bias.

“This long-standing disproportionate scrutiny should end, and the council should address all human rights concerns, regardless of country, in an even-handed manner,” read a statement put out by US ambassador to the UN, Michele Taylor, on behalf of the 27 countries.

The statement went on to say, “We’re concerned that the commission of inquiry will further contribute to the polarisation of a situation about which so many of us are concerned.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, “The UN Human Rights Council’s [UNHRC’s] inquisition against Israel is a tendentious, prejudicial, and open-ended attempt to demonise, delegitimise, and single out Israel amongst the community of nations. Twenty-seven countries have now condemned the council’s disproportionate focus on Israel and neglect of serious human rights abuses around the world. It’s deliberate that a former South African judge, Navi Pillay, was chosen to lead the commission because of her being a South African with long-standing antipathy towards Israel.”

The UNHRC established this commission of inquiry into “all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law” in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip in May 2021. This followed an 11-day surge in deadly violence between Israelis and Palestinians that month.

The commission is chaired by former UN Human Rights Commissioner Dr Navi Pillay, who is alleged to be vehemently anti-Israel. She has been working on the probe with India’s Miloon Kothari and Chris Sidoti of Australia.

Dr Navi Pillay

Photo: Erasmus University Rotterdam

The commission was charged with looking into “all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability, and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial, or religious identity”.

Taylor told the UNHRC that the group of 27 countries was “deeply concerned” about the commission of inquiry, which has an open-ended mandate with no closing date.

Though the commission of inquiry delivered its latest report to the UNHRC last week, it’s understood to be continuing its investigations.

“Our examination revealed that the majority of violations are being committed by Israeli authorities, as part of the Israeli

government’s goal of consolidating its permanent occupation at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people,” Pillay said.

International human rights lawyer Hillel Neuer of UN Watch has repeatedly accused Navi of anti-Israel bias, and claims that the UN rules require that all commissioners be impartial. “Pillay is the opposite. On repeated occasions, Pillay has publicly accused Israel of being an apartheid state. She has even signed petitions lobbying governments to ‘sanction apartheid Israel’.”

He has called the commission of inquiry an “anti-Israel inquisition”.

After attending last week’s session in Geneva, Neuer tweeted, “Racist murderers at the United Nations today took their turns stabbing the Jewish state with accusations of evil. The UNHRC’s commission of inquiry on Israel, impartial as the Spanish Inquisition, presented its report. I asked them some questions. The cowards refused to respond.”

In its report, Pillay and her investigators found that authorities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories were violating Palestinian civil society rights through harassment, threats, arrests, interrogations, detention, and torture. It went on to claim that Israel’s authorities were responsible for the majority of the violations.

“Our report found that Israeli authorities have used a variety of punitive methods intended to deter and interfere with the activities of Palestinian civil society members,” Pillay told the Human Rights Council on Tuesday, 20 June, via video link.

Polovin said that the third report, which was released this month, and the “kangaroo process” in which it was adjudicated, “is littered with anti-Israel bias, ignoring evidence of any Palestinian terror and culpability, and is written to portray Israel in a criminal light”.

“It makes ‘recommendations’ about Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, but never the other way round, reverses cause-and-effect, and ignores the entire context of Palestinian terrorism and extremism against Jews and the Jewish state,” he said.

“To paraphrase Groucho Marx, given the absurdness of the scenario, this isn’t a report to be cast aside lightly, it should be thrown with great force.”

Bafana Modise, the head of communications for the South African Friends of Israel, said, “Article 1 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states, ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood’.

“One would assume, based on this definition, that the commission of inquiry would have investigated Palestinian militants and terror organisations for playing a critical role in a number of these atrocities, contributing significantly to a tragic loss of life in the region.

“There’s no spirit of brotherhood to be found in the 1 000 rockets that were fired, by Palestinians, into Israel last month. Sadly, by omitting the facts, the inquiry fails to provide any relevant insights that could be used towards achieving the regional stability required to ensure the collective safety of both Israelis and Palestinians this year.”

Taylor said in the joint 27-country statement, “To be clear, no-one is above scrutiny and it’s this council’s responsibility to promote and protect human rights the world over. We must work to counter impunity and promote accountability on a basis of consistent and universally applied standards.”

Israel Foreign Minister Eli Cohen issued a statement calling the commission’s latest report “one-sided and false”.

Cohen said the commission of inquiry was “a stain on the UN and on the Human Rights Council. Its commissioners were selected for their anti-Israeli positions, and continue in their roles in spite of antisemitic statements.”

# Tel Aviv ranked world’s happiest city

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



Is it the sunshine, blue skies, and warm waters of the Mediterranean? Could it be the delicious food and top-class restaurants, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage architecture and vibrant nightlife? Maybe it’s the cultural diversity or even the dog beach – whatever the secret ingredient is, it has contributed to Tel Aviv being voted the world’s happiest city by *The Travel* magazine.

It’s often said that Israel’s cities each have their own unique personalities. Jerusalem is serious and spiritual; Haifa is intellectual and artistic; and Tel Aviv pulsates with an unmatched energy. If New York is the city “that never sleeps”, Tel Aviv is the city that may take the odd power nap.

Tel Aviv is more than a century old, founded in 1909 by the *yishuv* on the outskirts of the ancient port city of Jaffa. Tel Aviv was then known as Ahuzat Bayit (House Estate or Homestead) until 1910, when the name was officially changed to Tel Aviv.

The first suburb was Neve Tzedek, established by a group of Sephardi Jewish families seeking to move outside the overcrowded Jaffa. The family of Aharon Chelouche, who is immortalised on a mural in the neighbourhood, moved to the area in 1883, with about 50 families following suit in the next few years. Today, art galleries, boutiques, and chic restaurants are interspersed with the original buildings and newer residential homes.

Tel Aviv is a kaleidoscope of architecture – which also reflects the city’s diverse population. The Bauhaus buildings, which have earned Tel Aviv the moniker “the White City”, are a UNESCO World Heritage Site, interspersed with standard boxy apartment blocks that look like they are on stilts, and the super modern skyscraper. The iconic Azrieli towers, with their signature circle, square, and triangle shaped buildings are a much loved landmark, and have featured in many a “*Sex and the City*” – but in Tel Aviv” selfie.

Tel Aviv celebrated her diverse citizens long before diversity became the buzzword *du jour*. The embassies and consulars of the world jostle with hotels for prime real-estate position, and every June, they are decked out in their best rainbow Pride flag, ready for the massive parade and party. It doesn’t have to be Pride that prompts a party in one of the most open and tolerant cities in the world, it could just be

Wednesday.

It’s a dog’s life in Israel’s “Little Orange”. With restaurants making sure they are pooch friendly to dog walking being a perfectly profitable way to earn a living, Tel Aviv is going to the dogs. There’s even a beach dedicated to man’s best friend.

If Jerusalem has its own syndrome and you can bump into a number of “prophets” on any given day, Tel Aviv has her fair share of weirdos. I love the woman who dresses in a coat that looks like Big Bird was maybe mugged of his pelt, and talks to herself while cycling up and down. Rain or shine, she always wears her coat.



I love them all. The young and fit zooming around on their “korkinets” (scooters), the sun worshippers running on the beach, the innovators and dealmakers, the tourists and revellers. The ancient and the modern. The political and the apathetic. The visitors and pioneers. The four legged and the two legged. The sensual sunny days, and the pulsating, energetic nights. I love them all.

Tel Aviv is a wonderful study in paradox. All of the distinct features come together to create a city that really makes you feel alive. It’s bold, brash, and full of the wonderful *chutzpah* and attributes that define its personality. It’s easy to see why the city has been voted the world’s happiest. It’s a title well deserved.

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

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# Terrorist attack in Eli leaves residents shaken

**NICOLA MILTZ**

The West Bank settlement of Eli is reeling in shock following last week's terrorist attack, which claimed the lives of four Israeli civilians.

Eli resident, Noa Nebenzahl, 24, a teacher, whose parents made aliya from South Africa, said the area, home to about 1 000 families near the city of Ariel, is in mourning.

"Everybody feels this pain. It's very sad, very hard, it has left everyone shaken," she said.

Nebenzahl, who has family in Johannesburg and Cape

"My husband and I go to that gas station about twice a week. It's a popular place," Nebenzahl said.

Her husband attended two of the four funerals, and the couple have visited three of the *shiva* houses to pay their respects. People from around the country have made house calls offering support and love, which she says has been a comfort.

"We knew one of the victims, Ofer. He was a very friendly man. He used to greet everyone," she said.

Eli is a large Israeli settlement in the West Bank, located on Highway 60 north of Jerusalem, between the Palestinian villages of As-Sawiya and Qaryut. It's known



The settlement of Eli in the West Bank

Town, said she and her husband, Yonatan, had spent the past week visiting *shiva* homes to offer comfort to the mourners. The community continues to live in faith and hope for a peaceful future in spite of the recent violence which has upended their lives, she said.

Nachman Mordoff and Elisha Anteman, both 17 years old, as well as 21-year-old Harel Masood, and 64-year-old Ofer Fayerman, were at a hummus restaurant and an adjacent gas station on Tuesday, 20 June, when a pair of armed Palestinians affiliated to terror group Hamas opened fire, killing them and injuring four others. One of the terrorists was shot dead at the scene by an armed Israeli civilian, while the second fled and was killed about two hours later by special forces.

for the Bnei David pre army Israel Defense Forces (IDF) preparatory yeshiva, which provides training before army induction.

Nebenzahl said she would have been in the area of the attacks at the exact time of the incident, but because it was break-up day, she stayed behind to help clean the school before it closed for the holidays.

"The roads were closed, and I landed up staying till past 20:00. My husband was home, locked inside the house for three hours, while police searched the area for the second terrorist," she said.

"It was a terrible day. Everyone is upset. We all love living here. It's generally safe, with lots of security and children playing in the streets. We choose to live here

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because we want to contribute to the country, and it's our home," she said.

In retaliatory attacks, residents of Jewish settlements in the West Bank rioted and torched Palestinian property. In spite of calls by the IDF for Israelis not to take the law into their own hands, Jewish rioters threw stones, set fire to cars, damaged several buildings and agricultural fields, and committed numerous other acts of vandalism against Palestinian property. There were also reports of gunfire, and the provocations led to violent clashes. IDF soldiers were dispatched to restore calm, resulting in several Israelis being arrested.

Palestinians also took to the streets to confront the Jewish rioters and Israeli security forces, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at soldiers, who retaliated with riot-dispersal equipment.

The scenes were reminiscent of the riots in February, which took place in response to a terror attack that claimed the lives of two brothers, Hillel and Yigal Yaniv, in Huwara. In those incidents, angered Israeli settlers from nearby communities also descended on the Palestinian town.

The IDF condemned the violence and destruction of property. "Such events prevent the IDF and security forces from focusing on their main mission – maintaining the security of the state of Israel and preventing terrorism," it stated.

"I felt terrible when I saw people taking the law into their own hands," Nebenzahl said. "I understand that people are scared and angry, but if everyone does this, it

will be a dangerous situation."

She emphasised that those engaged in vigilantism are a small minority, and people are peaceful and law-abiding for the most part. "We have faith in the army and security forces to protect us."

Nebenzahl spoke of a sense of unity following the terrorist attack when last Shabbos, people from around the country visited the settlement to offer support.

"People from everywhere, total strangers as far south as Sderot, came to give us challot and cakes, and hugs of support and strength. It was a real feeling of *am Yisrael*," she said.

"Eli is a special place. People here want to build, work, and contribute to *eretz Yisrael*. We don't feel scared living here. There's a good army presence, and 99,9% of the time, we live a normal, regular life like any place. It's a place of *emunah* [faith]. We believe people need to try their best to live a good, meaningful life whoever they are."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel planned to build 1 000 new homes in Eli in response to the attacks. "Our response to terror is to hit it hard and build in our land," it said in a statement.

Tor Wennesland, the United Nations special co-ordinator for the Middle East peace process, has warned that new settlement projects are liable to increase friction. The announcement was also criticised by the United States, with the state department saying that it was "deeply troubled" by settlement construction in the West Bank, which Washington branded as an "obstacle to peace".

## Herzog and the Shabbos chief

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein met Israeli President Isaac Herzog earlier this week to mark the official launch of his book, *Shabbat – A Day to Create Yourself*, coinciding with Israel's National Book Week. "I've seen the power of Shabbat to be a source of unity – especially in Israel, where the Shabbat Project has transcended political divisions and has been embraced by Israelis of all levels of observance," Goldstein said of the warm welcome.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein with Israeli President Isaac Herzog

## Israeli doctors save Swazi boys' lives

>>Continued from page 1

colleagues in 69 countries. South African-born Morris Kahn is the honorary chairperson. The NGO has helped 6 600 children since 1995.

According to the organisation, of those children it has treated so far, 50% are from the Palestinian Authority and Gaza, Iraq, and Morocco, more than 40% are from Africa, and the remainder are from Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Americas. The organisation runs a weekly clinic for Palestinian children, and has treated more than 3 000 children there.

On average, SACH saves a life every 24 hours, Shapira said.

"SACH trains medical personnel from partner sites around the world at the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel

in all facets of paediatric cardiac care. They then return to their home countries to help children in need," she said.

The organisation also works with medical partners around the world to diagnose, teach, and perform lifesaving heart procedures.

Both Snothando and Liyabonga are looking forward to returning home to Eswatini soon. Snothando loves soccer, and is determined to play one day. Liyabonga enjoys mathematics and can't wait for his new lease on life.

"Save a Child's Heart has now expanded its reach to Eswatini, which is an exciting development," said Shapira. "The organisation is committed to making a difference in the lives of children worldwide, one country at a time."

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## Talking about Israel

A colleague pointed out last week that after many successive publications with stories dominated by Israel, we had a recent period in which we didn’t publish anything about it. He wondered if this was a problem.

I took time to think this through – although obviously it wasn’t a problem because we base what we put in the newspaper on the news. And recently, the South African news, which had an impact on our community, was clearly more important than what was going on in Israel.

And then, this week, we have a few key stories about Israel.

I pondered why we have so much Israeli news in the *SA Jewish Report*, because the publication is focused on the South African Jewish community and not on Israel or Israelis. Also, I understand that some readers believe we have too much news about Israel.

The truth is, and I have made this point before, Israel is an intrinsic part of South African Jewish life, being the Jewish state. And for the most part, what happens there has a direct impact on us, not least of all because of our own government’s bias.

Also, we focus on finding South African angles to stories in Israel, unless they are opinion pieces, which we believe are relevant to us and increase our understanding of what’s happening there.

As Israeli President Isaac Herzog has said on numerous occasions, our opinions on Israel matter because, though we may not live there, Israel is a Jewish state. Also, at the *SA Jewish Report*, we believe our readers have a right to know what’s happening there, particularly if there’s a South African element involved.

This week, we decided to put a story about Swazi children whose lives were saved by Israeli doctors on our front page because we believe that Israeli doctors saving African children, especially children from a country on our border, is telling and important.

The fact that Israel makes a point of helping people in African countries, be it by saving their lives or helping to ensure that they have drinkable water and agricultural know-how, says so much about the ethos of the Jewish state.

How many other countries in the world do this? I can’t think of one. And none of this is about payment or profit. It’s about *tikkun olam*, which is directly translated as “to repair the world”, but effectively means helping wherever necessary in places where help is really needed.

Imagine how much Israel could help in South Africa if our government wasn’t so anti-Israel and so determined to paint this Middle Eastern country as a pariah state. For our haters, including members of government, there’s only one side to the picture of Israel and it’s all bad. In terms of the Israeli-Palestinian situation, the Palestinian and Arab world is the hero, and the Israelis are pure evil.

However, the piece on the UN commission (page 4); Dan Diker’s opinion piece (page 8); and the piece on the Palestinian antisemitism webinar (page 9), make it clear that another side is being purposefully ignored.

Interestingly, in Israel, there’s much debate and disagreement, which just proves how democratic it is. And though one group of people will be vehemently opposed to what a minister might do, others will fight to defend him or her. True democracy!

I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised to see President Herzog calling the head of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, on Tuesday, 27 June, to convey his greetings on Eid al-Adha, the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice.

In their conversation, the Israeli president highlighted the importance of a forceful, persistent war against terror, incitement, and hatred. He emphasised the price and pain that terror inflicts on the country, specifically on families who lose loved ones.

He reiterated the need to thwart terror fiercely, as well as work toward finding a way to live peacefully side by side in the region and the broader Middle East. Herzog went on to denounce the recent assault on innocent Palestinians by Israeli extremists.

I know the idea of Israeli-Palestinian peace is a long way off, but it’s inspiring to know that the president of Israel has his eye on it in the country’s future and that, as much as he hates terrorism and will stop at nothing to deal with it in the harshest terms, he doesn’t accept Israeli extremists harming innocent Palestinians.

So, for all our haters who have nothing good to say about Israel, perhaps it’s time for them to take a leaf out of the Israeli president’s book and rethink their attitude. Perhaps they might see that if he can cross the great divide and speak about peace, they could potentially rethink their condemnation. Perhaps I am too much of an idealist.

Much like in the war in Ukraine, in which South Africa speaks about mediating while taking Russia’s side, our leaders push this to the extreme in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

I would find it amusing – if it wasn’t so biased – how our leaders talk about getting involved in mediating in the Middle East just after denouncing Israel as a genocidal maniac of a country.

Perhaps it might be wise for our leaders in South Africa to consider the open-mindedness of the Israeli president before their next verbal attack on Israel. Or is that too much to ask?

**Shabbat Shalom!**  
**Peta Krost**  
**Editor**



## The SA we leave; and the Israel we return to

OPINION

ZVIKA (BIKO) ARRAN



Most of the weekly *parashot* (Torah portions) we read lately, including this Shabbat, are full of the people of Israel complaining on their desert journey. They say that the journey is too long. There’s insufficient food. The promised land is not as promising as promised. There’s no water. Moses and Aharon’s leadership is questioned.

As my 94-year-old grandmother calls it, it’s “*krechtzen*”. You can hear from the sound of this Yiddish word that it means to grumble and complain. Us Jews are professionals at it.

My family and I arrived to live here temporarily four and a half years ago. My wife, Liat, took on the duty of heading up the Israel Centre to strengthen ties between Jews who live here and in Israel, to reinforce the community and its institutions here, and to help those who prefer to make aliya.

In so doing, we all fell in love. We were literally captured by the magic of this country and community. I think many of you forget or aren’t aware of this magic. But trust me, it’s there.

With eyes looking out for the potholes and dimmed in the darkness of loadshedding, it’s hard to identify the beauty and treasure what you have. But you have incredible history and cultures, views, and especially, people. The people here are the kindest and warmest I’ve ever met.

Don’t believe the statistics. You do have high crime rates, but your society here isn’t violent at all. Even after the trauma of apartheid and the regime change this country went through, it’s a positive and strong society. I have simple evidence. When you compare different cultures, you look at how people behave on the roads – this worldwide test obviously ignores taxis.

Drivers here are kind, obliging, and let you go first. They are calm, and never hoot. You can even drive through a busy junction with no traffic lights during power outages. Can you imagine what would happen in such a situation at a Jerusalem junction? Have you driven on Route 6 highway lately? It’s like being in a car chase in a PlayStation game.

It’s easy to hanker after the past and romanticise it as a paradise, believing everything after that is rotten and corrupt.

It’s not a competition between South Africa and Israel. Each place has its problems.

It’s true: there’s no place like home. And Israel, as the heart of every Jew, is our home, even if we don’t live there. And I agree that if there’s anything I miss for my four boys, it’s the freedom they have in Israel.

Here, you have an incredible, well organised, and united community, supporting its welfare, education, spiritual life, representation, security, and resources. As well as some kosher food and a newspaper. Don’t take it for granted.

I met Liat more than 20 years ago at a Jewish students’ camp, with participants from the United States and around the world, near Los Angeles. Back then, we promised to take our then-future-children on a *shlichut* adventure, much like we have just completed here. As the Israelis at camp, we organised an Israel Day, and used the catchy slogan: “Israel – the best place to be a Jew”.

Twenty years passed, and for me, it’s more than a question of whether Israel is the best place to live as a Jew, it’s a challenge. In that sense, the Israel we’re returning to in a few weeks isn’t the same Israel we left a few years ago.

The judicial overhaul and huge demonstrations of the past few months aren’t the reason for the shift. In my view, Israel has been at a junction for a while now. When we have had Jewish sovereignties in Israel in our history – the ancient united kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon, and the later Hasmonean kingdom – neither reached their 80th independence day. Their enemies weren’t the trigger for the loss. We can blame mainly ourselves for losing freedom and statehoods. Once again, the year Israel celebrated its 75th anniversary is a wake-up call. Our concern isn’t Iran or Hezbollah, nor the Palestinians and Gaza. Israel won’t survive without deciding exactly what it is – its character and direction.

Some think Israel is becoming too Jewish. Others feel it’s too liberal at the expense of its Jewish values. I don’t experience a contradiction between “democratic” and “Jewish” as our core values. If one principle explains the game rules, the other feeds the *neshomah*.

I think the question is different, namely, what will keep Israel Jewish? What version of Jewishness will enable Israel to stay prosperous, have superior military and technological power, be a light unto the nations?

- Can you stay an armed superpower and the people’s Israel Defense Forces when more than half of the population isn’t recruited to the army?
- Can we last as the leading country with billion dollars’ worth of start-ups per capita when a huge portion of Grade 1 pupils don’t learn English and mathematics?
- Can you stay righteous and honoured in the democratic world when angry settlers – with justified reason to be furious – day after day conduct raids on innocent Palestinian villages and burn houses, cars, and groves? Will we be able to maintain our integrity when we have our right to a homeland while others under our direct control live in Bantustan-like enclaves?
- Can you have flourishing creative and innovative universities and academies for long in a country with no real freedom to think, and for those with religious, race, or gender-based differences?
- Can we renew the world of *yeshivot* that was destroyed in the Holocaust in the only country on earth which funds Jewish scholars and modern sages, but in a state which will drive away its taxpayers and investors?



- Can we go on living tribe by tribe but as one united kingdom without a respectful Constitution like South Africa has to protect human rights, liberty, and its structure?
- Can we stay the heart of the Jewish people if most of the world Jewry won’t be eligible to make aliya, convert, or pray in the Kotel?

It doesn’t matter what your opinion is of Israel or Bibi. Whether you’re Orthodox, haredi, or love Israel unconditionally. I think the Israel you imagine, pray for, are proud of, and wish for is also the Israel I yearn for. It’s the Israel of prosperity, openness, and success, diversity and a mosaic of differences, a voice of generosity and justice. A light unto the nations!

I’m going back to Israel to make sure Israel won’t become a pale version of democracy like Hungary, Poland, or Turkey. And not a zealot, extremist interpretation of Judaism that brought our destruction.

This is my challenge in Israel, and yours here and there. I’m going back to Israel to make it the best place to be a Jew, while you live in a place where it’s great to be Jewish. We’ll miss you all. Thank you for letting us take part in your amazing country and community.

• *Zvika (Biko) Arran is a publicist, social entrepreneur, lawyer, and advisor to philanthropists.*



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# Does turmoil in Russia mean Putin won’t pitch?

OPINION STEVEN GRUZD



“A week is a long time in politics” said British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. It’s a long time in war too. Just a few days ago, South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa and six other African countries embarked on an unlikely peace-seeking mission to Ukraine and Russia. Since then, Russian President Vladimir Putin has fended off an insurrection that was the biggest threat to his 23-year rule. Speculation is that Putin has been weakened,

If he sends Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the BRICS Summit, that would be a huge relief for Pretoria. If Putin came to South Africa, the government would have been obliged under domestic and international law to arrest him, a man who controls nearly 6 000 nuclear warheads. Awkward! The *Sunday Times* reported last weekend, quoting anonymous insiders, that Ramaphosa appears to have convinced Putin that there

would be little to gain by him attending the summit and a lot to lose, especially for South Africa. Of the options of attending online, moving the summit to China, or sending Lavrov, the latter seems most probable. This angst could all

have been avoided if Putin had simply declined Ramaphosa’s invitation months ago. But that’s not his style.

I asked a Ukrainian friend how the Ramaphosa visit was viewed in Ukraine. He said, “South Africa is part of BRICS and isn’t neutral in the conflict. The South African minister of international relations and cooperation called Russia ‘a friend’. South African politicians are supporting Russia on social media. The other countries aren’t serious players. The whole ‘peace mission’ was about grain and fertiliser. And Ramaphosa isn’t Mandela.”

Meanwhile, Ukraine launched a withering verbal attack on Israel for choosing “a path of close co-operation” with Russia. The Ukrainian embassy in Israel posted on Facebook that Israel’s claimed “neutrality” is nothing but support for Russia. Hmm. This all sounds vaguely familiar.

Previously, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had told the *Jerusalem Post* that it wouldn’t arm Ukraine for fear of Israeli weaponry getting into the hands of Iran. Israel was stung by the embassy’s comments, having given \$22 million (R407.3 million) in humanitarian aid to Ukraine and consistently voting against Russia at the United Nations.

Ukraine also blasted Israeli officials for attending a Russia Day celebration in Jerusalem as “a blatant disregard for moral boundaries”. Ukraine says Israel’s ministry of foreign affairs has stayed silent on antisemitic remarks by Putin and Lavrov. And Ukrainian first lady, Olena Zelenska, was denied an audience with Netanyahu on her recent visit to Israel, meeting his wife, Sarah, instead.

Israel has been reluctant to side with Ukraine due to the complex military situation in Syria, where Israel needs to co-ordinate its actions against Hezbollah with the considerable Russian presence in the war-torn country. Netanyahu has reportedly had more meetings with Putin than with any other world leader. A delicate tightrope is being walked.

This week shows how this terrible war continues to cause ripples far beyond the battlefield.

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

# Iran’s ‘pincer war’ on Tel Aviv is no intifada

OPINION DAN DIKER



There has been a tendency in the West to categorise Palestinian terror assaults on Israel as “intifadas”. The nomenclature derives from the 1987 violence that raged across Palestinian Arab cities in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), which were triggered initially by local Arab demands for greater socioeconomic freedom and a higher standard of living, similar to those of Israeli Arabs.

Within months, the intifada was co-opted by Tunis-based Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat as a continuation of his decades-long commitment to total warfare to destroy the Jewish and democratic state, as stated in the 1968 PLO charter. The brand “intifada” would be carved into the consciousness of the international media. It would also be misapplied to future suicide terror campaigns by Hamas, Fatah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the 2001 to 2004 Second Intifada. That campaign was known as the “Al-Aqsa Intifada” – an Islamic war centred on the 100-year old Palestinian claim that the Jews were defiling the Al-Aqsa mosque, as the first Palestinian clerical leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, had declared in the 1920s.

In 2023, the latest upsurge in Palestinian terror in the northern Samarian cities of Jenin and Nablus is easier to recognise. That’s because Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has openly called for the regime’s Islamic revolution to be exported to the hills of northern Samaria. This is no intifada. It’s a premeditated Iranian regime “pincer” war now executed from the northern Samaritan hills.

Iran now outflanks Israel on three sides: from Gaza in the south, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operatives Hamas and PIJ have targeted Israel with tens of thousands of rockets and terror tunnels. From Israel’s northern neighbours Lebanon and Syria, IRGC Quds forces and Hezbollah’s proxy terror army has about 180 000 rockets and laser-guided missiles directed at Israeli cities. Hezbollah has even set up outposts on Israel’s side of the blue line with Lebanon.

Now, the Iranian regime has taken its 44-year-old war to Israel’s Samaritan hills that overlook Ben Gurion Airport and Israel’s main cities along the Mediterranean coast. The evidence is overwhelming. The week of 18 June 2023, Hamas and PIJ leadership visited Tehran for a meeting with the Quds force, the foreign arm of the IRGC, to discuss the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF’s) operation Shield and Arrow in Gaza, and to co-ordinate militant actions against Israel, continuing the multi-arena strategy devised by former IRGC Commander Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a United States drone strike in 2020, but whose strategic legacy remains.

The high-level meetings coincided with a surge of terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria, including some perpetrated by PIJ and Hamas. It encouraged Iran, which seeks to establish the West Bank as an additional battleground in its escalating war against Israel, a country they wish to encircle and destroy. A recent terror attack which killed four Israeli diners at the entrance to the Eli community in Samaria in the northern West Bank is just the latest Iran-backed assault. Since January 2023, about 30 Israelis have been killed in Iranian-backed terror attacks.

Iran’s terror campaign isn’t occurring in a vacuum. Historical context is important. Since 1979, Iranian leaders have branded Israel “the Little Satan”, and vowed its destruction. The Iranian regime has persisted in that aim. For years, the IRGC has supplied weapons and directed PIJ and Hamas. The IRGC weapons ships Karine A (2002); Calypso (2003); and Klos (2014), sent to supply the PLO and Hamas in Gaza with thousands of tons of weaponry, were soon forgotten by the international community.

Until recently, the Iranian regime’s IRGC and its Quds terror-export force had mostly focused their presence in the Gaza strip, where IRGC agents have been on the ground since the 2014 Gaza war, assisting Hamas in drone and rocket production. Former IRGC Chief Qassem Suleimani advised Hamas on its Great March of Return campaign, paying Gazan teens thousands of dollars to commit suicide by storming the Gaza-Israel border fence, drawing Israeli fire. IRGC terror operatives were also involved in the building of Hamas’ terror tunnels, built to

kill or capture Israelis, of which it currently holds four in captivity.

Significantly, Iran views the collapse of the secular, Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority’s (PA’s) governance – a competitor to the two Islamist militant organisations its regime backs, PIJ and Hamas – as an opportunity to pounce on the northern West Bank. Ironically, recent Palestinian polls reflect public support for Iranian-backed local terror militias such as Lion’s Den as a function of public frustration with the highly corrupt PA. Since the aging Abbas is unlikely to have a clear successor, chaos will ensue as these armed groups vie for control, while Iran will exploit the power vacuum to its own advantage.

The Iranian penetration in northern Samaria in the West Bank marks the most far-reaching sign that Iranian terror forces have penetrated Israeli territory and pose a strategic threat. IRGC officials assured PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah that Iran would smuggle additional weapons to the West Bank through Jordan, and that PIJ would receive more financial support. Iran also demanded the establishment of rocket production facilities in northern Samaria.

Nakhalah praised Iran’s unwavering support for Palestinians, saying, “No other country in the world takes such a stance so explicitly”, “a testament to Tehran’s support for the Palestinian resistance factions” that also “highlights strong ties between PIJ, Hamas, and the Islamic Republic.” Nakhalah also met Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the Majlis (Iranian parliament) speaker, on 17 June.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh also met both Supreme Leader Khamenei and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Haniyeh stated that the June terror attack in Eli that killed four was “just the beginning” of a renewed campaign against Israel. Haniyeh’s deputy, Saleh al-Arouri, the head of Hamas’ military wing in Judea and Samaria responsible for the attack, was also in Tehran.

In Iran, Hamas official Osama Hamdan also mentioned the important role of Israeli Arabs in the battle against Israel, evidenced in events during the IDF’s Guardian of the Walls operation in May 2021. He said the West Bank was entering a new stage of resistance, referring to Iran’s creation of 20 to 30 new “battalions” of 2 000 militants in northern Samaria, which aims to spread to central Judea and Samaria, around Ramallah.

As Iran intelligence analyst Micky Segal has noted in a recent Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs analysis, Khamenei reiterated the importance of the West Bank, saying that “Gaza is the centre of resistance, while the point that will bring the enemy to its knees is the West Bank”. Khamenei, who meets often

with PIJ, said, “The growing power of the resistance groups in the West Bank is the key that can bring the Zionist enemy to its knees, and it’s crucial that we continue along this path.”

Iran’s pincer war on the Jewish state has been a long time coming since 1979, with the violent takeover of Iran by the ayatollahs. In 2014, Khamenei declared, “I believe

the West Bank should be armed just like Gaza.” General Soleimani’s IRGC Quds Force has made an effort since then to arm Palestinians in the West Bank on orders from Khamenei.

Israel isn’t standing idly by. The Israel Defense Forces has been planning for the IRGC terror encampment and campaign on its three borders. The IRGC’s penetration into the hills above central Israel will probably be met in the near term with a massive, uncompromising counterterror campaign to secure Israel’s major cities and protect its citizens from Iran’s jihad.

• *Dan Diker is the president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Visit its website at <https://jcpa.org/>*



Photo: Screenshot YouTube

Yevgeny Prigozhin

and he now looks more likely to skip the summit meeting of the BRICS (the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in Johannesburg in August. It’s also been a week where Ukraine strongly rebuked Israel for its purported closeness to Russia.

The world has scrambled to find out more about Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the insurrection. An ex-convict who later sold hotdogs on the streets of St Petersburg, he’s known as “Putin’s chef” due to his catering empire and his former closeness to the Russian president.

He is said to be behind “troll factories” spreading online hate and meddling in elections. He runs a prominent media company, and is head of the shadowy, ruthless private military company, the Wagner Group, which has thousands of mercenaries deployed in Africa, Syria, and Ukraine.

It was these disgruntled soldiers of fortune that Prigozhin led on a march towards Moscow in a show of force to register their rejection of plans to integrate Wagner into the Russian army. They were also demonstrating their displeasure at how the war in Ukraine is being waged, and Prigozhin’s contempt for Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and other top brass.

On Sunday morning, Putin railed against the renegades. By the afternoon, the troops had turned back, charges were dropped against Wagner, and Prigozhin was said to be off to exile in neighbouring Belarus. He later denied that this was an attempted coup d’état.

News outlets have highlighted that Prigozhin’s father and stepfather were Jewish. Why does this matter? It’s part of his background and identity, of course, but it also can be fodder for conspiracy theorists who see Jews as malign, evil schemers – even if there’s little love lost for Putin.

There could be repercussions for Russia’s Jewish community in a divided and weakened state. Jewish people are always curious whether prominent figures have a Jewish connection, and maybe we make too much of this at times.

Since his indictment by the International Criminal Court in March for removing thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia, Putin hasn’t ventured beyond states of the former Soviet Union. The instability in Russia will probably make him even less likely to travel.



Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas

Photo: Sean Gallup/Getty Images



# Palestinian antisemitism is systemic and should be exposed

STEVEN GRUZD

"The image that Palestinians portray in the English media is very different from the messages they send to their own people in Arabic," Itamar Marcus said. "Incidents of Palestinian antisemitism aren't isolated examples; they are systematically disseminated by the Palestinian Authority (PA)." Jewish leaders have been criticised for not bringing enough attention to this reality, and Western governments have been castigated for continued support for the Palestinians in spite of their Jew-hating racism.

Marcus is the founder of Palestinian Media Watch, an Israeli non-governmental organisation that monitors incitement and extremism – usually in Arabic – in Palestinian media and schoolbooks. He was speaking at "Unmasking Jew-hatred within the Palestinian national movement", a live-streamed conference organised by Pulse of Israel on 25 June.

Marcus showed several examples, including from PA President Mahmoud Abbas, of Palestinian political antisemitism that propagates the myth that Jews are evil, threaten humanity, and have brought hatred on themselves by their actions and character. The PA also posits that Israel is an illegal, alien, settler-colonial implant in "Palestine" with no right to exist, created by Europeans who wanted to solve their own "Jewish problem".

Abbas has claimed that Zionists fabricated the Holocaust, and were in cahoots with the Nazis.

Marcus also gave examples of Palestinian religious antisemitism. Leading Palestinian Muslim clerics have declared on television that Jews are apes and pigs, cursed, and subhuman. Those who murder Jews are celebrated as heroes, martyrs, and role models.

Political commentator Caroline Glick said that the PA had created a "Palestine heritage trail", from Hebron to Schem (Nablus), which purports to expose those who walk it to the history of Palestinian civilisation. Glick called this trail

"complete nonsense, topographically and historically" – yet another attempt to falsify and erase Jewish history.

"They are attempting to annihilate systematically the historical record, bulldozing and destroying Jewish sites. No-one has ever found an ancient Palestinian coin, because there aren't any." She said the Palestinian campaign to deny any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was "an act of historical terrorism".

Glick said the Palestinian narrative that today's Jews aren't descended from the biblical Hebrews is readily taken up by sympathetic

academics who perpetuate further myths to demonise Israel. She said the Palestinian national movement is "worse than the Nazis – it's the most annihilatory Jew-hatred ever seen". It seeks not only to eliminate living Jews, but their history as well.

Palestinians cannot ever co-exist with a Jewish state, Glick said, and too many diaspora Jews were taken in by the two-state solution after the 1993 Oslo Accords.

"This said that the reason for the conflict was that Israel was too large, and that the Israeli government needed to cede territory in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria."

Glick said the strong Jewish connection to Israel appears throughout the Torah, and every ark in every synagogue around the world faces Jerusalem. The notion that Zionism isn't rooted in Judaism is totally preposterous.

Elan Carr, the Trump administration's special envoy for monitoring and combatting antisemitism, outlined the three ideological sources of antisemitism: the far-right, militant Islam, and the radical left. He said Palestinian antisemitism borrows the mythology and imagery of the far-right, as seen in the many hateful caricatures that echo the vile antisemitic cartoons of the Nazi-era newspaper *Der Stürmer*. Holocaust denial is rife in Palestinian schoolbooks and the media. The antisemitism of militant Islam finds fertile ground in Palestinian society. And the so-called "new antisemitism" of the radical left – which isn't so new after all – gives enormous support to the Palestinians. "All three disparate camps find common purpose against Israel and the Jews,"

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Carr said. "We must fight antisemitism no matter what, whether it's from neo-Nazis, Islamist terrorists, or the Marxism of the radical left. It's the most noxious form of racism – antisemitism is pernicious, widespread, and mainstream."

He offered six solutions to roll back antisemitism. These are tearing down any distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism; emphasising "Jewish peoplehood"; combatting all forms of antisemitism; ending donations and federal funding to antisemitic universities and protecting Jewish students; exposing Iran and its proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah; and going on the offensive, promoting a philosemitic narrative "to help people

understand the story of the Jewish people and its values that have shaped our civilisation".

Pulse of Israel founder Avi Abelow criticised Jewish leadership for its muted response to the antisemitism being propagated by Palestinians. Jew-hatred is being passed on to the younger generation through hate-filled textbooks and the utterances of political and religious leaders, he said. "This information is out there, but it's totally ignored." He also blasted Western governments for supporting the Palestinians but turning a blind eye to their hate-mongering. "It is time to call this out for what it is," he said.

# ANC's demise could spell chaos, warns analyst

TALI FEINBERG

Independent political and economic analyst Dr Frans Cronje has warned South Africans "not to wish for the ANC's [African National Congress's] demise [in the next election] until we know exactly what should replace it".

Cronje was speaking to Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein on 19 June as part of Goldstein's webinar series on the outlook for South Africa.

"We may have one shot as a free and open democratic society to transition from the post-1994 government to a new one. If the coalition in government is chaotic, shambolic, and disappoints people, that may raise to a dangerous extent doubts in the merits of democracy itself. And if that happens, we open the door to radical populism," Cronje said.

"It's a safer position to have the ANC in power for another five years and allow the opposition to organise itself properly than to throw the ANC and gamble on whatever is going to take its place."

If the election were held today, the ANC on its own would get just more than 50%, Cronje said, which was "essentially a function of an

aging rural demographic. Even if the ANC is slightly below 50%, it has enough friends and allies and proxies that it can call upon short of the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters] to get itself back over the 50% level again."

Though Cronje is a pragmatist, his message is one of hope and faith in South Africa's future.

When the pair spoke on the chief rabbi's webinar back in March, Cronje predicted a lessening of loadshedding, which was

He said his think tank, the Social Research Foundation, believed that South Africa had vast quantities of power stations with generating capacity – a significant proportion of which were lying idle and many of which were in the country's coal fleet. However, the government was pursuing a policy of decommissioning coal, letting the coal fleet run down, and seeking to replace lost capacity with wind power and solar.

It quickly became apparent that "at this point in time, South Africa couldn't use wind and solar power to fill the demand necessary to end loadshedding and generate enough electricity to enable economic growth so we could get out of the unemployment inequality and

poverty problems that are such a risk to our future."

It believed the easiest way out of loadshedding would be to refit the country's coal fleet – a short-term solution to eliminate some loadshedding and enable a modest amount of economic growth. A shift in government policy in this direction was the reason for reduced blackouts.

Cronje emphasised that it was a mistake

to be dogmatic about South Africa's energy choices. "It makes a great deal of sense to transition the South African economy out of coal, regardless of your stance on climate. But South Africa has a second environment, one in which 50% of young people don't have a job. If that's not addressed speedily, we run the risk of popular sentiment destabilising the country's politics to the point that we risk the survival of our democracy."

The chief rabbi noted that the improvement in loadshedding reflected a move by the government away from ideology to address human suffering.

Cronje agreed, saying the same movement was needed regarding the National Health Insurance (NHI), "which if implemented in the fullness of time as it's currently drafted, would cause immense damage to South Africa because the country wouldn't be able to sustain its middle class. The middle class would exit, and capital and skills on the back of that. The sentiment slump would do great damage."

However, we're still far away from final implementation, and one way to defeat the NHI is to understand that the ANC is deeply rooted in revolutionary ideology, Cronje said. "If you take a firm, well-argued, well-resourced position to say that this policy is so at odds with our best interests and those of the country, we're prepared to oppose it firmly, the ANC will initially probe your sincerity and test you see if you're going to

back down. If it sees that you're prepared to stand your ground and that you have backing, it will begin to negotiate.

"If political activity is about forcing a balance of power, and if you can force a balance of power on the question of NHI now and build up public opposition and resistance, you will stop the process and reverse it.

"Once you've reversed it sufficiently, you can introduce a new process that brings about much better healthcare access to all South Africans while maintaining the excellence of the private sector. There are many serious and pragmatic individuals in and around the ANC who would be grateful to use that opposition as an excuse to stop the dangerous drift of this policy and supplant it with something more constructive. We have more than enough time [to do this]." Cronje said every person could make a difference to move the needle away from the NHI.

Regarding South Africa's close relationship with Russia, Cronje said it was unlikely the West would punish or alienate South Africa, because of its strategic importance. Such alienation would only push South Africa further into the orbit of Russia and China. He also believes the Russia-Ukraine war will soon reach a stalemate or even come to an end, which in turn, will lessen South Africa's relationship with Russia as a point of conflict with the West.

Fixing many of South Africa's problems would require the ANC and its opposition to get their parties in order

hard to believe at the time. As other analysts and the media predicted a black winter – literally – Cronje saw light on the horizon. His prediction has apparently come true.

"In our opinion, corruption wasn't the primary reason for loadshedding," said Cronje. "The primary reason for the depth of loadshedding was a far-too-rapid exit from coal and, when that was reversed, loadshedding was much relieved."

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# Miracle of maroon handkerchief comes full circle

TALI FEINBERG

When King David pupil Noa Nerwich wrote a poem about a maroon handkerchief given by a father to his daughter before they were torn apart by the Holocaust, she never imagined the impact it would have on her life. She also never imagined that she would actually hold the handkerchief.

This tiny detail in a much larger story came to symbolise hope, survival, and the ties that bind Jews around the world. In 2020, at the age of 14, Nerwich wrote the poem for the 21st Annual Holocaust Art and Writing contest run by the Chapman University and 1939 Society, based on a Holocaust survivor’s testimony. She came across Ruth Halbreich’s recording, which briefly mentions the handkerchief.

Noa found this detail to be an extraordinary symbol, and wrote her poem about it, winning the competition.

A year later, Halbreich passed away. Shortly thereafter, her grandson, Reg Tigerman, came across the poem in a newsletter he received, and realised it was about his grandmother. Soon afterwards, he also found the maroon handkerchief. He made contact with Nerwich, who is now 17, creating a connection that spans generations and continents. And finally, this past June, she was able to make a long-awaited trip to America to meet the family and even see the handkerchief.

“WHILE THIS EXPERIENCE HAS HAD A DEEP IMPACT ON ME, IT HAS BEEN INSPIRING TO SEE WHAT IT HAS MEANT FOR THE FAMILY AND HOW TOUCHED THEY WERE BY THE TRIBUTE TO THEIR MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER...”

“I was overcome with emotion as well as shock that I was actually holding the hankie in my hand,” says Nerwich, of that moment. “Ruth didn’t speak extensively in her testimony about the hankie, but somehow, I connected with it and now, in my hand, was something she treasured from her late father. I couldn’t believe that she had actually held the hankie in her hands, and now generations later, across continents, so was I. When Ruth’s grandson reached out to me in 2021 after she passed away, it was such an emotional connection. However, meeting her family in the flesh took on a whole new meaning.”

The first prize of the competition was a fully paid trip for two to Los Angeles, on a study trip with other winners from around the world focused on Holocaust education and remembrance. At the time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nerwich was unable to take up the trip. “However, thanks to the generosity of Chapman University



and the donors, my father and I were afforded this incredible opportunity three years later,” she says.

“The trip was truly a life-changing, eye-opening, perspective-altering trip that exposed me to incredible people and deepened the responsibility of remembering the Holocaust,” she says. She was able to visit world-class Holocaust museums and exhibits and interact with Holocaust survivors. “The highlight was meeting Ruth’s daughter, Emily, as well as her great-granddaughters, where she shared much more about Ruth’s life.”

Nerwich felt a sense of connection because in spite of meeting for the first time, “we all shared a love for Ruth and a desire to honour her memory. The conversation flowed easily, and it was fascinating and emotional to learn more about Ruth and her inspiring husband, Siegfried Halbreich, one of the founders of the Holocaust Museum LA and the author of *Before During After*, about their life before and after the Holocaust.

“While this experience has had a deep impact on me, it has been inspiring to see what it has meant for the family and how touched they were by the tribute to their mother and grandmother,” she says.

“Not only has writing this poem exposed me to learning in depth about the Holocaust, it also gave me a personal connection to it that I didn’t have before,” says Nerwich. “It has unlocked the most incredible opportunities, exposure, and deep connections, and I feel forever changed. I’m so grateful to my school, King David, for giving me the opportunity to enter this competition and in turn the opportunity to engage with the Holocaust in such a meaningful and life-changing way.”

Her father, Craig, who accompanied Noa on the trip, says, “It was powerful and humbling to sit across the table

from Emily, Ruth’s daughter. She shared deeply with us, showed us Siegfried’s pictures, and gave us Siegfried’s book. In addition, it was moving to meet the great-grandchildren and witness Ruth’s legacy live on for generations to come.

“It was also moving to see how meaningful it was for Ruth’s family,” he says. “Emily messaged me a few times after we met, and it was clear from the messages how impactful and profound Noa’s poem and the meeting was for them.

“Meeting you and Noa today was quite remarkable for me,” wrote Emily. “I re-read Noa’s poem and couldn’t get over how beautifully it was articulated. I also re-read the story in the *SA Jewish Report*. It’s amazing. I so wish Reg and my daughter, Bobbye, could have met both of

you. Hopefully sometime in the future we can meet again. Till then, let’s stay in touch. Thank you.”

Craig says the experience made the importance of Holocaust education clear to him, as well as “the power of remembrance, the criticality of storytelling, and acknowledging the exceptional work that the Chapman University and The 1939 Society are doing”.

Closer to home, “The importance of our school, King David Linksfield, and the pivotal role that King David plays in keeping the Holocaust close to our children’s hearts and giving them these life-changing opportunities can never be diminished,” he says. “We’re forever indebted for this life-changing experience.”

## New film rouses National Wake from rock history

TALI FEINBERG

Growing up in Johannesburg, Ivan Kadey could sense the injustices of apartheid, even as a child. So it made sense that as a student in the late 1970s, he would form the interracial punk band National Wake. The band members and their music were a bold statement against the system, and came under intense pressure from security police. This eventually led to them breaking up, seemingly lost to history.

That is, until filmmaker and journalist Mirissa Neff, based in New York, saw the film *Punk in Africa*, which featured National Wake. She was so impressed, she decided to interview Kadey for a radio piece. On hearing there was to be an album re-release of their music, she returned to film the release party, and then decided to bring their story to the 21st century in her first feature film, *This is National Wake*.

The film had its New York premiere at the New York Jewish Film Festival on 14 January, and was just screened in Johannesburg at the Encounters South African International Documentary Festival. It will be shown at the same festival in Cape Town on 29 June and 1 July.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from his home in Los Angeles, Kadey says, “I had grandparents who lost family in the Holocaust, so I was aware of persecution. As a child, it was impossible not to feel the system and its effects. From a very young age, I was aware of civil-rights music, protest music. That’s what later drove me to form the band.”

Kadey’s father passed away when he was four, after which he, his brother, and his mother lived in the vibrant and multicultural suburb of Yeoville, which influenced his outlook. After she died when he was nine, Kadey lived with an uncle. His cousin in Durban was one of the first activists to be imprisoned under the 180 days of the Suppression of Communism Act, and his brother was also political. All this had an impact on him, and when he got his first guitar at the age of 12, he was drawn to folk and protest music. Then, when he got his first electric guitar, he became motivated to form a rock ‘n roll band.

The band started when Kadey was studying architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and living in an interracial commune in Parktown. He was introduced to two brothers “and we hit it off immediately”. The two brothers were Gary and Bernard “Punka” Khoza from Soweto, who would form the core of the band with Kadey, while others came and went.

Kadey wrote music that reflected his anger at the warped world around him. “If your eyes were open, it was all there to see. Writing music was the only way that I could breathe. In war, we all need to choose our weapon. Mine was the guitar and words.”

They released their first album in 1981, coming under escalating police pressure. “The album was suppressed by the Security Branch

shortly after its release.” But even before that, they were under surveillance. “At the same time, this was my mission in life. So I negotiated situations. For example, I would get home to see the police were there and had wrecked the house. I would engage with the police on a human level, and explain that this was our work.

“Once we released an album, we became a bigger threat, so to speak, and we were continually harassed.” Sometimes gigs booked by event managers would be cancelled when the owners of the venues realised they were an interracial band.

The pressure eventually got to some of the band members, their commune was evicted, and eventually they broke up. Kadey went on to found a music studio with Lloyd Ross called Shifty Studio. Aimed at providing a platform for independent music with a social message, Shifty was an outlet for South African musicians opposed to apartheid.

While working in his studio in Johannesburg’s Rockey Street, he was electrocuted while opening an iron gate. “My heart stopped, and I had burns on my hands and guitar strings burned onto my face. My girlfriend at the time, now my wife, Nadine, brought me back to life.”

Nadine, a well-known model who worked for the BBC Arena documentary division at the time, filmed the band and their compound, together with Robin Muir. This footage features throughout the movie, and Nadine is a co-producer.

When Kadey left South Africa in 1986, “things looked very bleak”, but if he had known the African National Congress would be unbanned four years later, “I probably wouldn’t have left.” He works as an architect and recently released an album under the iKD Band. He’s excited about the film and the celebrations around it.

He also remains rooted in Africa and his Jewish heritage. “My father’s parents were born in Lithuania, and my mother’s grandparents were born there. So, I’m a third generation South African and my son, in the few years he lived in South Africa, was the fourth generation.

“In the film, I speak about how 95% of the South African Jewish community is of Lithuanian extraction, which motivates you from some deep sense to have a wariness of the abuse of power. Both my grandmothers in particular instilled this in me.”

He’s thrilled to bring the documentary home to a South African audience, as is Neff. “To have the film’s African premiere at the Bioscope, with friends and family of National Wake in attendance, was profound,” Neff told the *SA Jewish Report* after the Johannesburg events. “Especially since the cinema is located mere minutes from the band’s old stomping grounds in Parktown. It was always a top priority to bring the film home to South Africa, but to do so with the Encounters Film Festival exceeded my expectations.”

The film will be screened in Cape Town at the V&A Waterfront Ster-Kinekor on 29 June at 20:30, and at the Vuma Pop-Up of the festival at Denis Goldberg House of Hope in Hout Bay on 1 July at 14:00.





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# Rising to new heights with Siya documentary

TALI FEINBERG

Johannesburg executive producer and the founder and chief executive of The Star Film Company, Adam Thal, is still in shock after a documentary he co-produced, *Rise: The Siya Kolisi Story*, won the prestigious first audience award at the renowned Tribeca Film Festival in New York on 18 June.

“When we were told that it was selected to be screened at Tribeca, it was surreal, as Tribeca is one of the top film festivals in the United States” he says. “Immediately, my business partner, Tebza [Malope], who directed the documentary, said he was going to go as he had a good feeling about it.

“However, we were told it was just a screening of the film, and wouldn’t be in the competition. So, when we got the email the night before saying that we had actually won the audience award for the most highly voted documentary, we were dumbfounded. Quite frankly, it still hasn’t sunk in what a big achievement this is. The winner of the audience award is chosen by filmgoers who vote throughout the festival, so it’s the best accolade to know that viewers loved it so much.”

It’s a defining moment for Thal, who has been fascinated by film from a young age. Born in Harare, his family moved to Johannesburg when he was six. “I started at Fairways Primary School, and in Grade 4, a man came to the school to teach us about cameras and editing. That’s when my passion began. I started videoing all our family holidays, functions, and events. I was instrumental at Glance [King David Linksfield’s in-house TV network], in high school.

“I then studied film production at AFDA [The South African School of Film] and started The Star Film Company in my fourth year of studies in 2003. We’ve been in existence for 20 years, with *Rise* being one of our latest long-form projects. I live in Linksfield North with my wife, Kerry, and our two kids who both go to King David Primary School Linksfield.”

He came to work on *Rise* after “I got a call out of the blue one day from a guy called Jon Day, who co-owns a company called Orange Films. Siya and [his wife] Rachel felt they needed a director on the project who understood South Africa, South African politics, and one who had lived a similar lifestyle to Siya’s growing up.

“Jon was asked by Siya’s management team to approach us and gauge if we would co-produce on the documentary, and for Tebza to direct it. We cleared our schedule to accommodate the project, and went back and forth in meetings and presentations. Since I was still busy producing commercials through Star, Jon took on the main producer role and I joined him as a co-producer.”

He says the documentary is powerful because “besides Siya’s story being a beacon of hope for all South Africans, Siya requested that the documentary comprise raw emotions, truth, and storytelling, and that it be as real as possible. He wanted us to show to the world everything he’s been through, from family politics to rugby politics, and absolute poverty.

“The ‘realness’ is what gets an audience to relate to the man behind the public figure. We aren’t sugar-coating anything, rather making him and Rachel more relatable. Also, the simple fact of a young boy who grew up with absolutely nothing being given the opportunity of a lifetime to play rugby and then not only enter a majority white-dominated sport but rose up and became the first non-white Springbok captain that took the team on to win the World Cup, it’s quite a thing!”



Adam Thal, Siya Kolisi, and Wade van Niekerk

As for the title of the film, it’s based on Kolisi’s book of the same name. “It’s perfectly apt, because Siya rose from absolutely nothing to a World Cup winning Springbok captain,” says Thal. As quoted by the Kolisi Foundation, the title, *Rise*, is inspired by the translation of Siya’s mother’s name, Phakama, as well as a celebration of his Xhosa heritage. Tracing his journey from the impoverished Zwide township, Kolisi’s compelling memoir reflects on the power of a positive mindset, and having the courage not only to dream, but to rise up and take action.”

The documentary took just more than three years to produce. “Unfortunately, the major delay was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and us being unable to film any rugby games or even do interviews during the hard lockdown. But we persevered, and got all the necessary footage,

re-enactments, and archival material, and made it a goal to get the film completed and premiered in early 2023.”

The most challenging aspects of making it “were probably having to work around the strict schedules of Siya and the Springboks, as they cannot stop their training or travel for filming purposes. Luckily, COVID-19 also helped us to an extent, as they weren’t travelling that frequently. When we started on the project, we didn’t dream that it would take three years. It was our first biographical documentary, and we learnt a fortune.

“The most exciting aspects, especially being a rugby fan, is that we got to work closely with Siya and also got to interview and chat to other Springboks, travel, and meet so many people and celebrities, not forgetting that the company that commissioned this job is owned by Jay-Z.

“On the other side of the coin, the most uplifting and inspiring moments were when we went to Zwide [township] to film, and also when Siya premiered the film to the Zwide community. To see the impact that this one individual has on our larger population and the hope he gives to kids is remarkable. It definitely hits home what Siya and rugby can do for our country.”

Thal’s Star Film Company is ranked among the top ten film production companies in the country. “We have an amazing roster of 11 creative directors, and we’re constantly producing television and digital commercials for the global advertising market,” he says. “We’ve travelled the globe from Los Angeles to Lagos, Cairo to Cape Town, Moscow to Maputo, and have created multi-award-winning campaigns for local and international brands.

“We were also one of the first companies to produce a television commercial for Samsung during the hard COVID-19 lockdown, and one of our directors, Tristan Holmes, was one of the first directors to produce a full music video using artificial intelligence. Watch this space for our next TV series that we are developing for one of the big global streaming platforms.”

For others wanting to go into this industry, Thal says, “As the saying goes, its 70% luck and 30% hard work to achieve your goals and ambitions. To any inspiring filmmakers or creatives, I would say, give it a go and give it your all. We don’t have to be doctors, lawyers, or accountants – our Jewish community has a phenomenal presence in the local film industry and many of our community members are making waves. So as long as the passion, creativity, and excitement exists, the world is your oyster.”

## Oppenheimer’s Jewish facet shines brightly

TALI FEINBERG

Prominent South African businessman, industrialist, and philanthropist Harry Frederick Oppenheimer – or “HFO” as he was known in the corporate empire of Anglo American and De Beers – may have converted to Anglicanism later in life, but his roots and childhood were deeply Jewish. Researcher, politician, and writer Dr Michael Cardo has delved into this history and more in his new book, *Harry Oppenheimer: Diamonds, Gold and Dynasty*.

Harry Oppenheimer’s family on his father’s side were German Jews. “His paternal grandfather, Eduard, was a cigar merchant operating just outside of Frankfurt in the second half of the 19th century. He encouraged his six sons to leave Germany. By the mid-1870s, he felt Germany was no longer ‘a country for Jews to live in,’” says Cardo.

“Many of the sons settled in England, found employment with a relative who was a diamond merchant, and spent time on the diamond fields at Kimberley,” says Cardo. “Oppenheimer’s maternal grandparents were Austro-German Jews who settled in England. His parents, Ernest and May Oppenheimer, were married in London in 1906 according to Jewish rites before they settled permanently in Kimberley.

“Their marriage certificate, issued by the West London Synagogue of British Jews, is in the archive at the Brenthurst Library,” says Cardo. “So is Harry Oppenheimer’s bris certificate. He was brisbed by Rabbi Harris Isaacs of the Griqualand West Jewish Congregation. For the first seven years of his childhood while he was growing up in Kimberley and attending Kimberley Shul, the contours of his home life were shaped by his parents’ Jewish faith and kinship networks.”

Ernest Oppenheimer was the mayor of Kimberley, but he was forced to flee the town in 1915 after the sinking of the Lusitania in World War I. “I think up until that point, and perhaps even for a few years afterwards, Judaism featured strongly in Oppenheimer’s life. But he was packed off to a public school in England – Charterhouse – at the age of 13, and of course the ethos there was hardly philosemitic.

“Harry began to lose touch with his Jewish roots as a teenager, and so did Ernest Oppenheimer at around that time. The broader political climate – and the cultural environment in which Ernest’s commercial empire evolved after his formation of the Anglo American Corporation in 1917 – steered the dynasty away from the synagogue towards the Anglican Church.

“Ernest eventually converted in the mid-1930s after a series of personal tragedies, most notably the deaths of his wife, May, and his other son, Frank. Then there’s the whole vexed question of whether Harry had a Barmitzvah or not. Successive generations of Oppenheimers came to believe that he would almost certainly have celebrated his Barmitzvah when he turned 13 in 1921.

“In later years, an apocryphal story circulated to the effect that Ernest and May had erected a plaque in Kimberley Shul at the time of Harry’s Barmitzvah, and that in adulthood, having become a Christian, Harry insisted that it be taken down. When the congregation refused, he offered to buy the synagogue, gut it, and rebuild it without the plaque.”

But Cardo says the story is entirely untrue. “There was no such plaque. In any event, the Oppenheimers left Kimberley when Harry was six, and never lived there permanently again. There’s no conclusive evidence that a Barmitzvah took place.”

“Harry Oppenheimer was a towering figure in South African history,” says Cardo. “He played a major role in South Africa’s 20th-century development. He is so often reduced in public discourse to the personification of ‘white monopoly capital’; in an earlier era, he was demonised by his detractors as [the Jewish caricature] ‘Hoggenheimer’ and the sinister embodiment of ‘die geldmag’ [the money power].”

But Cardo wanted to get to grips with the man behind these caricatures – to give historical context and grapple with him in all his complexity. “The fact that the Oppenheimers gave me unfettered access to all the family papers was a major drawback. I was able to draw on his letters, diaries, and a cornucopia of other archival material,” he says.

As he reflects in the book, “I felt a bit like one of those diggers who descended on Kimberley in the late 1870s. I set upon the archive as if it were the site of a diamond rush.”

It took him just less than six years to complete the book. “I worked on it part-time since I’m a Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament. The research was intensive because there was so much material to work through and interviews with Oppenheimer’s family members, friends, and business associates.”

Throughout his life, Judaism and Israel remained important to Harry Oppenheimer. “He and [his wife] Bridget [who wasn’t Jewish] visited Israel for the first time in 1968,” says Cardo. “Although the visit was low-key, the diamond-cutting industry attached great significance to it.

“Oppenheimer met David Ben-Gurion – a statesman he ranked alongside Charles de Gaulle in terms of impressiveness – and he subsequently became a steadfast friend to the Israeli nation. He visited Israel on several occasions. His friend, Ludwig Jesselson, a noteworthy Jewish philanthropist who had escaped Nazi Germany, served as his guide on one of these trips. In 1982, they travelled to Lake Tiberius, toured Jerusalem with the mayor, visited Yad Vashem, and enjoyed an hour-long audience with Prime Minister Menachem Begin.”

And in 1986, Harry Oppenheimer opened a facility established by the Israel Diamond Institute in Ramat Gan, which was named in his honour: the Harry Oppenheimer Diamond Museum. “I believe the museum was closed in 2018, but it served as a sort of information centre about all aspects of the global and Israeli diamond industries,” says Cardo.

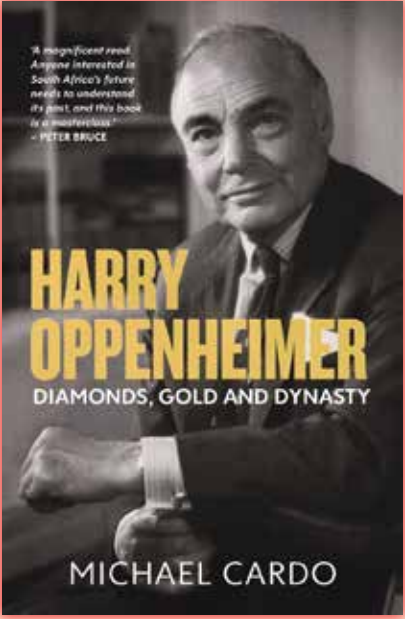
The book was launched at the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM) even though Oppenheimer had converted. “My parliamentary colleague, Michael Bagraim, suggested that the SAJM would be a fitting space to host an event given Harry’s Jewish roots,” he says. Cardo believes this history is an important part of Oppenheimer’s story.

“It was interesting for me to discover how, in the 1950s, when Harry Oppenheimer was a Member of Parliament for the opposition United Party, the National Party government weaponised antisemitism against him even though he had long since converted to

Anglicanism,” says Cardo. “Harry came to be depicted as ‘Hoggenheimer’ in the Afrikaner nationalist press, just as his father had been two decades previously. This antisemitic caricature symbolised British-Jewish imperialism and predatory mining-finance capital.

“The Jew-baiting reverberated through the House of Assembly,” says Cardo. “At that moment, the figure of ‘Hoggenheimer’ – much like the ogre of ‘white monopoly capital’ decades later – rallied the Afrikaner nation against a common enemy. This reinforces how malleable and persistent antisemitic attitudes can be. Antisemitism lurks below the surface in many societies, including South Africa, so there’s always a need for vigilance.”

• The book was launched at the SAJM on 26 June. Small Jewish Communities Association Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft discussed the impact of the Oppenheimer family legacy on the Kimberley Jewish Community.





# Shedding the crisis – experts get to grips with energy

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

You'd be forgiven for feeling a certain degree of scepticism when it comes to the reduced loadshedding we've been enjoying of late. Experts weighed in on the sustainability of our situation at a *SA Jewish Report* webinar last week, and discussed why we still need to explore alternatives.

This crisis is driving innovation and change like nothing else, said panellists on the webinar, "What to expect from Eskom this winter and solutions for your life". Developments include the uptick in solar power and green energy solutions, removing restrictions on independent power producers, as well as looking further afield to countries like China for innovative solutions.

"People have to make a plan – we cannot rely on Eskom," said panellist Chris Yelland, the country's top energy analyst. Nonetheless, the meaning of the recent loadshedding relief we've experienced has ignited debate around many a Shabbos table.

Yelland attributed the improvement to a number of factors. Loadshedding is essentially the balancing of supply and demand. Historically, he said, we've actually had the worst loadshedding in summer. That's because although demand is higher in winter – albeit not as high as we think – supply is also higher in winter. One of the reasons for this is because most of Eskom's maintenance is done in summer, which gets the plant in a better state to cope with winter demand.

"Wind power is stronger in winter months," he said, "especially in coastal areas where it helps significantly. There's also been a lot of rooftop solar PV and battery storage in commercial, domestic, and agricultural installations, helping to increase supply and



Chris Yelland

reduce the burden on Eskom.

"At the same time, demand has been significantly lower than last year," said Yelland. Though demand is higher in winter, large industrial energy customers have to pay Eskom approximately three times the price for electricity during June, July, and August, and this is something they simply cannot afford. Energy-intensive industries therefore stockpile during summer and cut back dramatically on production in winter, using those months to do intensive maintenance, thus dramatically reducing demand over winter. "So, though domestic electricity demand is higher, industrial demand brings it down again." And, as individuals become more energy efficient amidst loadshedding and high prices, more and more are switching from electricity to gas for heating and cooking.

As to whether reduced loadshedding is sustainable beyond and even during the rest of the winter months, Yelland says time will tell. Unplanned breakdowns are an ongoing reality. Yet, though Eskom has been unreliable historically, he hopes its plans to bring onstream four units at the Kusile Power Station by the end of the year will happen as promised. "In addition, next year, another two units, one at Medupi and one at Kusile will come onstream, so that's all going to add

more than 4 000 megawatts to the system, which together makes a big difference as long as there aren't huge breakdowns and all goes according to plan." As for summer this year, Eskom predicts a high probability of between stage 2 and stage 6 loadshedding.

Yelland also sees the appointment of Electricity Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, whom he said has brought "new energy" to tackling the crisis, as a positive development. "You have a minister who can cross all traditional boundaries between different portfolios so they can work together to solve the crisis," Yelland said. Ramokgopa has also brought new ideas to the table as head of the National Energy Crisis Committee, established by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

"With the election looming next year, political will is increasing, driven not by the crisis itself per se but the possibility of loss of electoral support and power in that sense," Yelland said. While there are some encouraging signs, Yelland stressed that we cannot become complacent. "Ultimately, we need to move away from thinking that government is here to do everything for us," he said. "We need to start taking ownership of our own future."

"That doesn't mean to say that we must all rush out and buy a rooftop solar PV and a battery system that can cost about R200 000," he was quick to add. We need to determine solutions based on our budget, objectives, and unique circumstances.

There are a variety of low or lower-cost solutions from a gas stove and rechargeable globes for cooking and light; to a Wi-Fi UPS to maintain internet supply; to a battery and inverter to power more appliances including

Wi-Fi, television; and more. If you do decide solar is right for you, you can either rent a system at a monthly fee that generally ranges below the R2 000 mark, or you can finance solar through your bond, savings, or a bank loan.

There are pros and cons to both options, said panellist Larry Nussbaum, senior technical advisor at technology innovation company DuPont Solutions. "Once you buy a solar system, you have to maintain it. So, if there's a problem with one of the components, it's your responsibility to either have a warranty claim or pay for the component to be fixed. The components do age, so even if nothing goes wrong, at some point you're going to have to



Larry Nussbaum

upgrade, another downside to buying. The upside, however, is that it's your system, so you can programme it according to your needs." You also own the system, so you don't need to worry about monthly fees.

With a rental, he said, outlays and maintenance are covered by the rental company. "There's a term to the rental which has to be suitable to your needs. If you cancel and remove the system early, you'll have to pay a fairly large penalty. But if you're planning to stick with it, it's a no-brainer in many ways."

Though one of the motivations for investing in solar is lower electricity prices, panellists agreed that whatever energy alternative you use, unless you're completely off grid, ultimately you have to reduce your electricity usage to save on costs.

## Celebrating tall poppies

STAFF REPORTER

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is unique in celebrating the successful in a community, paying tribute to the extraordinary and remarkable among South African Jewry.

"Many people say that in South Africa, communities don't celebrate their own," says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the *SA Jewish Report* and the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. "If you live in previously disadvantaged areas in South Africa and someone rises to success, their neighbours and community undermine them."

"In Australia, they even have a name for it – the 'tall poppy syndrome'. If you rise above the masses and succeed, they do what they can to cut you down to size. Those who are very successful aren't celebrated, to the contrary."

However, says Sackstein, this is the opposite of how the Jewish community works in South Africa. "We celebrate each other's successes and take pride in each other's achievements. In fact, we go all out to try and spread the success by helping make others more successful."

In this community, we have mentorship programmes and funds to help those who need help to get over the tough times and become successful, he says.

"We aspire to create role models to give our younger leaders something to work towards. We want tall poppies. We

say, you too can become a Brian Joffe [founder of Bidvest]; an Adrian Gore [chief executive of Discovery]; or a Stephen Koseff [former chief executive of Investec]. In fact, we encourage it and shout about their success from the rooftops."

Sackstein says it's not just in business that we applaud success. "We want [founder of community-driven organisation, Ikamva Labantu] Helen Liebermans, [Operation Hunger founder] Ina Perlman, and [The Angel Network founder] Glynne Wolmans, and we want them to know how much we applaud them and are proud of them. We want others to become like them or better with our full support."

It's rare to find communities in South Africa or in the world who celebrate their own quite like the Jewish community does. Have you ever heard of the Buddhist, Catholic, Greek, Portuguese, Anglican, Muslim, or any other community celebrating their community members' successes? This is what the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards are all about.

"These awards are all about celebrating those of us who are successful in their fields. We go all out every year to make sure they know just how proud the rest of us are of them."

So, make sure to nominate those in our community who are extraordinary and are doing remarkable things in business, society, in the community, and in all the categories we offer. Nominate now. Go to: [bit.ly/jaa23nom](https://bit.ly/jaa23nom)



Glynne Wolman



Helen Lieberman



Adrian Gore

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# Vital and beautiful – SA shuls photographed for posterity

Synagogues have particular importance for chazzan and photographer **Ivor Lichterman**. Lichterman followed in the footsteps of his father, chazzan Jakub Lichterman. Having started his cantorial career in Cape Town, he now lives in the United States. The SA Jewish Report caught up with him as his photographic exhibition opened this week at the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town.

## What was your childhood like in South Africa?

My brother and I had the most loving and happy childhood. Both our parents survived the Warsaw Ghetto and numerous concentration camps between them, and they raised us in a home imbued with love, Yiddishkeit, music, and community service.

## What drew you to become a cantor?

We were both drawn to be cantors since our father was one, with a legendary reputation throughout South Africa. G-d gave us both vocal and musical gifts, which we decided to devote to keeping his legacy alive.

## What made you emigrate in 1976?

I entered Yeshiva University in New York, having graduated BA Honours cum laude in Judaic Studies from the University of Cape Town, and wanted to further my studies. My original intent was to return to South Africa, but after the riots of 1976 and having married an American girl – my beautiful wife, Jan – there was no possibility of returning other than for visits.

## What drew you to photography, and what do you enjoy photographing most?

I was always a visual person. I loved architecture, especially synagogues, and decided soon after I emigrated to try to document as many synagogues in South Africa as possible out of fear that they might not be there in the future. Not only did I want to photograph them, I loved to see them, especially the ones I had only heard about.

## Describe the process of documenting (photographing) the shuls.

It was based on feasibility and accessibility. Hence it began in and around Cape Town, where I was born and raised. But on each return home to visit my parents after I emigrated, I went to great expense and devoted a huge amount of time to visit and photograph as many as possible.

On one visit back, I flew from Johannesburg to East London, Port Elizabeth, and then Kimberley. I would rent cars in each city, try to reach someone by phone who had

keys for the shul, or an active office. If not, I'd usually find a caretaker on the premises, give him a nice few rand, and have him open up and even turn on the lights. In those days, accessing the buildings was easier, they weren't gated, and it was easy to poke around.

On another visit, I drove all round the Witwatersrand, having heard about the beautiful synagogues, visiting Benoni where my father served from 1947 to 1950 as chazzan, Boksburg, Brakpan, Springs, and Germiston. Another time, I visited Krugersdorp, Vereeniging, Roodepoort, and so on. I was brave, daring, and some would say crazy, but also vastly determined.

## Which shuls were the most important to you?

It's hard to pick some out above others. They are all important, and their documentation critical

as a magnificent part of a significant South African Jewish history that's diminishing rapidly.

## Which were your favourites?

As an older building, I love Kimberley's design, reminiscent of a castle. As a modern building, I love Bloemfontein's. Its interior is beautifully coloured, and it's filled with light from multiple windows. It has motifs of five of the books of the Torah, and seven for the creation and branches of the menorah.

As a cantor, I'm aware what acoustical designs work well in large buildings without amplification, as is the case in most Orthodox synagogues.

The large size of the choir room above the ark is particularly conducive to good natural acoustics. Other beauties I photographed include Germiston, Brakpan, Springs, even the small Strand Shul near Cape Town was beautiful and unique.

## You obviously haven't lived here for a long time, but what does South Africa mean to you?

I loved growing up in South Africa. In spite of the racism and discrimination some population groups suffered, we Jews were fortunate. For example, I served a full year in the army. I can honestly say it was a positive and maturing experience. I suffered



no antisemitism whatsoever, had kosher food all the time, was off for Shabbat observance, and even put on tefillin in the presence of other soldiers. So, yes, I'd say we Jews did well in this country at a time of discrimination for some groups.

## How often do you come back these days? What do you do when you do come back?

I returned once a year to visit my parents. Dad passed 37 years ago, and then I considered it vital to

except a few distant relatives but many friends.

## What does this exhibition mean to you?

The exhibit was launched to coincide with my mom's consecration, on the same day. Although she was immersed in many aspects of the community, it all began with the synagogue, first Benoni, then Vredehoek, where she was active in the ladies guild right from the start. The synagogue was another home for both my parents, a vital lifeline.

## What do you want your audience to get from this exhibition?

On a personal note, I want them to understand how deeply we appreciate what our parents provided for us, their devotion, sacrifice, and love for us and for this country's Jewish community. South Africa's Jewish community gave them abundant love and a safe haven after everything they lost and the horror of their war years.

As far as the photographs are



visit mom as frequently as possible since she was left with no-one

to document it for posterity, as a labour of love.

# Pine Street Shul positioned for the future

CHARISSE ZEIFERT

It sometimes seems as if everybody I meet either belongs to Pine Street Shul, once belonged to Pine Street Shul, or has a close family member who attends the synagogue.

This probably isn't surprising when you think that the origins of the North Eastern Hebrew Congregation, as it's officially known, go back to 1948, and the current building was formally opened more than 60 years ago, on 11 June 1961.

The new building was swish, the architecture grand, and it had a particularly meaningful feature on its eastern façade: stone friezes depicting the 12 tribes of Israel by sculptor Eduardo Villa. It could seat about 700 people. A brochure from that time notes that the hall was available for all public functions, including "weddings, Barmitzvahs, dances, meetings, concerts, plays, etc".

Another unique claim to fame is that Pine Street Shul is situated on a site where Mahatma Gandhi lived for a time in the early years of the last century. The property and adjoining thatched building, now the Satyagraha House Museum, was owned by Gandhi's close friend and fellow political activist, Herman Kallenbach. Kallenbach, a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant, was one of the leading architects and property developers of the young city of Johannesburg.

The birth and rapid growth of the Pine Street congregation conjures up all kinds of nostalgic reflections. The Johannesburg Jewish community was then at its height, numbering about 70 000 souls by the early 1960s and still growing. Orange Grove, Highlands North, Orchards, and Norwood had become largely Jewish neighbourhoods. Pine Street was one of the main synagogues serving them..

Our shuls have always played a central role in our lives, from the large urban congregations served by such majestic edifices as the famed Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street and its successor, the Great Park Synagogue, to the modest yet dignified and elegant buildings that once were found in the smaller rural towns throughout South Africa. They not only provided spiritual guidance, but a sense of belonging and a connectivity to our heritage. They are the centre of our family milestones and a place where we receive strength and comfort.

Since peaking in the early 1970s, the Jewish community has been gradually growing smaller, and falling congregational numbers have reflected this. Pine Street is no exception.

However, those of us that choose to remain do so in the knowledge that we're part of a unique, tight-knit, vibrant, and caring community, and that bare numbers don't define us. Moreover, there have been encouraging signs of late of renewed vitality.

A year ago, Pine Street got a fresh injection in the form of power-couple Rabbi Motti and Rebbetzin Temmi Hadar. They are committed to growing the community in number and activities, to which end they have introduced women's events and shiurim, young adult dinners and gatherings, teen lunches, a senior social club with monthly brunches, and interesting speakers. To ensure that it thrives, the shul is also embarking on a fundraising initiative. (See What's On, page 16).

The daily and Shabbos *minyanim* continue to grow, and our social hall is now full every Shabbos morning for a delicious *brocha*. It's incredible to watch two, three, or even four generations sit together in shul and relish in the tangible rejuvenation and excitement for a vibrant future ahead.

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# Kids relish being the Who's who of *Dr Seussical Jr*

HANNA RESNICK

When 10-year-old King David Linksfield Grade 4 pupil Caiden Distiller steps onto stage in *Dr Seussical Jr* at the People's Theatre, he may initially be a little nervous, but once he's on stage, those nerves "go away", he says.

Distiller is one of four Jewish children in the show that brings Dr Seuss's books to life with colourful sets and catchy songs. The others are Sienna Epstein (Grade 4 at Yeshiva College); Nava Wolovitz (Grade 6 at Hirsch Lyons); and Zoe Fine (Grade 5 at King David Victory Park).

The children's musical follows the story of *Horton Hears a Who*, with elements of Dr Seuss's other stories, such as the *The Cat in the Hat*, in the narration.

Distiller plays the lead role of Jojo, who is "one of the Whos, the tiny people who Horton the elephant found on a speck of dust and put on a little clover", he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Jojo is a thinker. He questions stuff, but his mom and his dad, the mayor, don't want him to think. They want him to be a normal boy and do everything he's supposed to do. Part of the play is about his journey."

Though the rehearsals were fun, Distiller said he and the other young actors had to put in a great deal of work.

"We would rehearse every day after school until 17:30, and every Saturday from 10:00 until 17:30. But I made lots of friends and I enjoyed it a lot," he said. "I do have to miss school to perform, but luckily, it's only one day a week and then I perform on the weekend. When I do miss a day, my

teachers and I will work hard to catch up. "My favourite thing about performing is being on stage and inspiring little kids, who think I'm amazing," he said. Wolovitz (12), Epstein (9), and Fine (10) play Whos, as well as Wickersham Monkeys.

"The Wickersham brothers are monkeys who think Horton is a fool, and we make fun of him," said Wolovitz. "Then we try to get him arrested." Her favourite part of the show is her dance as a Who. "There's a quick change before one of the scenes which is really difficult because our costumes don't have a zip or Velcro or anything."

Wolovitz said that the most difficult part of performing was having to miss Saturday rehearsals because of Shabbat. One of her favourite memories was when the cast sang "Happy Birthday" to her.

"Since I was very little, I've loved watching plays," Epstein said, "and I've always wanted to be in one. My favourite thing about performing is knowing that I'm the one people are coming to watch, just like I would go to watch other people perform."

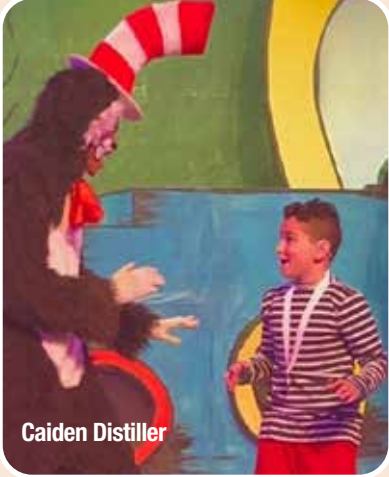
"At school and everywhere I go, I'm usually around Jewish kids only," Epstein said. "At the theatre, I get to learn about other people. That's been really good."

Epstein said she balanced school and performing by "coming to school in the morning on the days when I'm not performing, doing my work quickly, and then getting my other work done in time. My teachers have been very understanding."

"The rehearsals were intense. But we were separated into two groups," Fine said. "Half the time, they were working with the other group, and we sat watching, and the rest of the time, we would rehearse. The directors were strict. But it's nice because we were able to get proper feedback and experience."

"My favourite part of the whole thing was meeting new people," she said.

• *Dr Seussical Jr* is on at the People's Theatre until 30 July.



Caiden Distiller

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Unstinting commitment to survivors



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

As the name indicates, the Conference for Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference, as it's generally known) was established to facilitate the process of restitution and compensation for victims of the Holocaust. For many thousands of elderly survivors, particularly in the former Soviet Union, it's a critical source of support. These needs have only been intensified by the ongoing destructive impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

From the outset, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has represented our community on this body, assuming responsibility for all communication, liaison, and administration of healthcare and support on behalf of the Claims Conference. SAJBD Gauteng Chairperson Harold Jacobs represents South Africa on this body, while in 2020, our national vice-president, Mary Kluk, was elected to serve in her own right on the leadership council. Both participated in this year's annual board meeting recently held in New York, with Mary attending in person.

The complexity of the Claims Conference's work is underscored by how rather than being presented with a fixed annual sum to distribute, it's required on an annual basis to negotiate with the German government over what the upcoming year's allocation will be. How this is determined is dependent on the ever-changing needs and circumstances of the recipients, needs that are increasing and becoming more critical with each passing year. Alongside the urgency to negotiate for survivor care and compensation from a purely practical point of view, there's a powerful moral dimension as well. As Claims Conference Executive Vice-Chairperson Greg Schneider put it, "Each negotiation represents a near-last opportunity to deliver a measure of justice to survivors, provide them dignity in their final days, and secure their testimonies and legacy as lessons for the future."

The results of this year's negotiations were exceptionally positive, with a significant additional sum

in direct compensation and social-welfare services for survivors being granted. Another positive outcome was an increase in the allocation for Holocaust education, the need for which is only increasing as the number of first-hand witnesses declines.

Mary heads up the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, so this is something particularly close to her heart. She was further inspired to see first-hand the unstinting commitment of those who work for the Claims Conference, from her colleagues at the forefront of leading the organisation to those dedicated staff members at the coal face. In his report, Schneider paid tribute to those "ordinary" servants of the organisation, among them those connected with member organisations from across the conference. It's they who meticulously compile the required data, help survivors through the complex and arduous process of putting in claims under the various funds, and refine presentations to the German government to achieve the best possible outcomes. Over many years, Shirley Beagle has carried out this task on behalf of the SAJBD with the utmost skill and dedication. Largely, though by no means solely for this reason, she was presented with the Eric Samson Mendel Kaplan Communal Service Award at the SAJBD's 2017 national conference. Mary was therefore extremely proud to be told how much she is esteemed and valued by the Claims Conference staff who work with her. I commend and thank Shirley, as I do Mary, Harold, and all those other representatives of the Board past and present who have made South African Jewry such a meaningful, contributing part of this exceptionally important global Jewish organisation.

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

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

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1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



**30**  
1923 to 1964 = R5  
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000



# Being compared to a Hilux bakkie

He meant it as a compliment when in an email to the whole company, he thanked Bethanie and two others for their incredible work. Not done with the praise, in the same message, he added that he could always count on them because they were as “reliable as his dad’s Hilux bakkie”.

It was probably the first time that Bethanie, the one Jewish woman in the cohort, had been compared to a bakkie – Hilux, Ranger, or other. And she wasn’t quite certain how to take it. I told her that she shouldn’t be perplexed. Second only maybe to being likened to Kudu biltong, I couldn’t imagine higher praise.

The other two women credited seemed to understand without explanation that his was high praise indeed.

In my attempt to explain it further, I suggested that had he compared her to the back of a bus, then she could understandably be offended. But a Hilux is much loved, and never lets you down.

In considering why this was the case, I came across a BBC article that stopped me in my tracks. “Couples compete in a wife-carrying contest.” The idea apparently originated in Finland, where husbands were Vikings and women didn’t need Ozempic. It took no time at all for my mind to consider if this could ever be a shul fundraising event, and what would happen if it were.

If there was a shortlist of the most non-Jewish events since Sinai (even Canaan), I imagine that a wife-carrying competition would be in the top five. Think of how many Jewish men are likely to be suffering from some form of degeneration of the lower back (exacerbated by golf), have an ACL injury from running, and a torn ligament or two from Padel. The wives, in

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



better shape, will be hypoglycaemic from the eating disorder that they will have modified for the week or two prior to the event, not wanting to appear to have weighed their husbands down in front of the committee and other participants. And, G-d forbid, having tongues wag in speculation of how much weight had been gained.

That would be a disaster. And no funds would be raised. This in sharp contrast to the Finns, who no doubt are able to fling their better halves effortlessly over their shoulder, comb back their long blonde, non-receding hair, and without so much as a second thought, canter the length of the track towards the finish line, before gently and easily placing their wives back on terra firma.

Jewish women may not be Hilux bakkies. But then, Jewish men are hardly Jeep Gladiators.

Bethanie remains unconvinced about her “shout out”. Whereas she might accept in principle that the intention was the best and the gratitude was genuine, much like a wife-carrying contest, she still struggles to connect to it.

This proves, in the best way possible, how magnificently different and diverse we are. It proves once again that we have unique cultural experiences, and that each is worth celebrating for its unique flavour. More than that, it proves without question that one woman’s Hilux is another woman’s Lexus.

# Hirsch Lyons classrooms get Israel effect

Hirsch Lyons Primary School held an Israel Fair on Thursday, 22 June, which brought the country to life for pupils. Each class was allocated a

different city, which they researched from a Torah and general perspective, and the classrooms were decorated to represent the city. The children dressed up, and there were activities related to each city. Each attendee was given a Rav Kav card which was their ticket to each exhibition. Rands were exchanged for shekels on a 1-to-1 rate, which were then used to purchase falafel and other Israeli products from the Machaneh Yehuda. Visitors could choose between an Egged bus or Jerusalem taxi as a means of transportation.



Ryan Pirrie aka Rabbi Pirrie at the Kotel

# Yeshiva honours late teacher with acts of kindness

A team from Yeshiva College Primary School spent 60 minutes doing acts of *chesed* at the Chevrah Kadisha on 21 June in honour of the late Jo-Anne Lewis, a teacher at the school. Lewis would have celebrated her 60th birthday on 21 June had it not been for her untimely passing on 24 May 2023. The hour spent at the Chev was a fitting tribute to a friend and colleague who gave so much.

## Saturday 1 July

- The Union of Jewish Women will be hosting the play *The Undone – Resilience is a Choice* by Serena Steinhauer. Time: 20:00. Venue: Theatre on the Square. Contact: 011 648 1053 or info@ujw.co.za

## Sunday 2 July

- Pine Street Shul hosts its “Here We Grow” charity fundraiser campaign. Venue: Pine Street Shul hall. Time: 09:00. Contact: 072 033 5629 or https://charidy.com/PineSt

## Wednesday 5 July

- Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts a talk by Egonne Roth on her book *Searching for Papas Secrets in Hitler’s Berlin*. Time: 18:00. Contact: 021 462 5553 or admin@holocaust.org.za

## Sunday 9 July

- Second Innings hosts a talk by Gary Cohen on The merit of Yiskor – why we do Yiskor at the end of every Jewish festival. Time: 10:00. Venue: Sandringham Gardens. Cost: R60 (R40 for members). Contact: Grecia 082 561 3228



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SALAD FARM ASSTD 250G EACH

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