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Palestinian gunman shoots five in Maaleh Adumim

A Palestinian gunman shot and wounded five people at a hamburger restaurant in the Israeli West Bank settlement of Maaleh Adumim before a policeman shot him dead.

One man was seriously injured and four had moderate wounds in the terror attack on the afternoon of 1 August, the *Times of Israel* reported. An off-duty policeman getting a haircut at a barbershop in the same shopping area shot the gunman as he tried to get away.

"When I arrived at the scene, I found several people who were injured with gunshot wounds," said Meir Bogot, a local volunteer with the United Hatzalah first responder service. "Together with additional first responders, I provided them with initial treatment which included bleeding control and bandaging, after which they were all transported to the hospital."

Maaleh Adumim, one of the larger settlements in the central West Bank, functions as a Jerusalem suburb. The attacker, a cleaner, had permission to enter the settlement.

Times of Israel said the attacker was from the nearby Palestinian town of al-Azariya.

The shooting comes after more than a year of increased Israeli-Palestinian tension which has led to the deaths of dozens of Israelis and more than 100 West Bank Palestinians.

The escalation in violence comes as Israel's government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and including far-right partners, has moved to expand West Bank settlements. Groups of settlers have also rioted in Palestinian West Bank villages.

Jury for Pittsburgh shooter asks to see weapons

Less than an hour after heading into deliberations, the jury considering whether to give a death sentence to Pittsburgh synagogue shooter Robert Bowers asked to see his weapons.

The request on 1 August was a signal that the jury is proceeding to its final verdict in the two-month trial of the shooter, who killed 11 Jews at prayer on 27 October 2018, the worst antisemitic attack in United States history.

It's not clear why the jury wanted to see the weapons, but in weighing a death sentence, one of the statutory aggravating factors jurors must consider is the risk the gunman's attack posed to others.

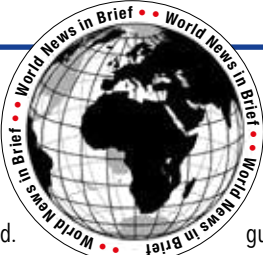


Photo: Chaim Goldberg Flash90

He entered the synagogue carrying three Glock pistols and an AR-15 rifle. Prosecutors have argued that the recklessness and breadth of the attack posed risk to others in the Tree of Life synagogue building, which housed three congregations, and to law enforcement.

It took the jury less than five hours on 16 June to find the defendant guilty and less than two hours on 13 July to determine that his crimes merited the death penalty.

Since then, jurors have been hearing evidence that mitigating factors, including the gunman's alleged mental illness and his difficult upbringing, should keep him from death. A death penalty determination must be unanimous; a single juror opposing the penalty means the gunman will automatically get life in prison without parole.

West's reinstatement on Twitter/X causes outrage

The social media company owned by Elon Musk has once again reinstated Kanye West, the musician and artist whose antisemitic spree last autumn twice cost him his account.

Accounts that have tracked West's presence on X, the platform known until last week as Twitter, first noted his reinstatement, disappearance, and then reinstatement again on 29 July.

An anonymous source told the *Wall Street Journal* that West had agreed to the company's terms for

reinstatement – he couldn't post antisemitic or offensive comment and he wouldn't be allowed to monetise the account. West has yet to tweet since being reinstated.

Major Jewish civil liberties groups denounced West's return, saying he was unrepentant about the antisemitic invective he unleashed last year that led to his first and second bans.

"Absolutely sickening that antisemite Kanye West was unsuspended from Twitter/X and given a gold verification check mark," which signifies a verified business account, Jonathan Greenblatt, the chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, tweeted. "He's done absolutely nothing to make amends."

The American Jewish Committee said the reinstatement "sends a terrible signal to Jew haters on the platform and everywhere".

West was banned last October after posts that were interpreted as threatening Jews, reinstated in late November, and then banned again in December after he posted a swastika on the account.

West also expressed antisemitic ideas offline at the same time, at one point joining conspiracy theorist Alex Jones on his *Infowars* podcast in December to proclaim repeatedly, "I like Hitler." The outburst cost him relationships and jobs, including a lucrative deal with Adidas.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Gratitude in good times

Torah Thought



Rabbi Motti Hadar – Pine Street Shul

When do we think of G-d most? At which moments in our lives are we most cognisant of the creator? And does Hashem ever seem to fall off our radar?

As a rabbi, I've noticed a trend among people who come to shul particularly when facing difficult times such as illness, loss, and mourning – G-d forbid.

As human beings, it's only natural to find it easy to forget about G-d when life is smooth sailing and things are going our way. In times of plenty, when we don't feel an immediate need for divine intervention, our prayers may become more routine, less frequent, and not as heartfelt as during moments of desperation and suffering.

In this week's Torah portion of Eikev, we find the commandment to bless G-d after we eat. The Torah explicitly states, "And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the Lord, your G-d."

According to Biblical law, the requirement to bless G-d is specifically after we've eaten and are satisfied with our meal. The sages added a rabbinic law to recite blessings before eating as well, which is clearly appropriate.

It's human nature to turn to G-d in times of need, and rightfully so. G-d encourages us to turn to Him with our requests and during challenging periods in our lives. There's no prayer too trivial or insignificant with which to "bother" G-d. Every plea we make of Him is at the same time a declaration of our faith that He is in control and that our life in all its detail is in His hands.

However, this particular commandment from

parshat Eikev brings to light something equally, if not more, important. It emphasises the significance of expressing gratitude and praise for Hashem when life is good and we feel content and happy with the blessings bestowed upon us.

In moments of plenty, when we acknowledge G-d with gratitude, we remind ourselves that the blessings in our lives aren't solely the result of our talent, effort, and hard work. This mindset serves as a reminder to avoid becoming arrogant or looking down

on others. Instead, it fosters a sense of humility and gratitude, and a desire to share our blessings with those around us.

Let's take this commandment to heart, and strive to express our thanks and praise to G-d in times of abundance and blessing.

May we be fortunate enough to have numerous opportunities to acknowledge and appreciate the divine gifts in our lives, and humble enough to pay them forward and share them with others.

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Moses describes the land they are about to enter as "flowing with milk and honey", blessed with the "seven kinds" (wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, and dates), and as the place that is the focus of G-d's providence of His world. He commands them to destroy the idols of the land's former masters, and to beware lest they become haughty and begin to believe that "my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth".



Zambia cements ties with presidential visit to Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema visited Israel this week to strengthen relations with the country, and met Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“Zambia and Israel have maintained enduring relations since Zambia’s independence in 1964,” Hichilema said. “We aim to strengthen this relationship by tapping into Israel’s advanced technology, particularly in agriculture, to bring in investment, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for our people.”

The large Zambian delegation included senior government ministers. Israel’s foreign minister, Eli Cohen, met his Zambian counterpart Stanley Kakubo in Jerusalem on 31 July, where they discussed bilateral relations and establishing Israel as an observer to the African Union (AU) and in the regional arena. They signed several co-operation agreements to strengthen ties in the spheres of medicine, communications, agriculture, and culture.

When Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog hosted the African president and his wife, Mutinta Hichilema on 1 August, he emphasised this potential for growth, saying, “Zambia is a great country with which Israel has enjoyed outstanding relations for many years. We believe in this co-operation and in the economic advancement of our relations. There are so many things we can share in technology, agriculture, science, health [and more].”

He noted the importance of Israel’s role as an observer state at the AU, and asked for Zambia’s help to improve relations between Israel and South Africa.

Said Hichilema, “Israel and Zambia’s relationship is government to government, people to people, and there’s an important Jewish community in Zambia. We’re grateful for this relationship, and would like to build on it.”

He said that in his meeting with Netanyahu, they had discussed a wide range of matters

Israel has proven to be an inspiring partner, willing to walk the journey with Zambia in igniting a future of innovation and disruption.

of mutual interest and benefit. The meeting emphasised the importance of the relationship between the two countries, which “ continues to grow stronger”.

After landing in Israel, Hichilema wrote about visiting the Kotel, posting a picture on

social media of himself wearing a kippah and placing a note in the wall. “We were profoundly honoured in visiting the Western Wall. Beyond the strengthening of our personal faith, this pilgrimage further emphasised the essence of social justice, peace, and unity for all humanity,” he said.

Jewish entrepreneur and Johannesburg resident, David Akinin, accompanied Hichilema on the trip, having been invited by the Zambian Development Agency. “As a tech entrepreneur in Zambia and proud Jew, I was invited to represent the Zambian side in multilateral conversations that will help define the roadmap for innovation in the country.

“Israel has proven to be an inspiring partner, willing to walk the journey with Zambia in igniting a future of innovation and



Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema and Israeli President Isaac Herzog

Photo: Haim Zach (GPO)

disruption,” said Akinin, who is the founder and chief executive of tech start-up JABU, which has a branch in Zambia.

After meeting Israeli companies in the technology sector, Hichilema said, “They talked us through Israel’s journey in creating

a successful ecosystem for innovation. Their market-driven model works closely with the

private sector to ensure financing and market linkages. The technology sector also works with academia in research and development to ensure the country has the expertise and resources it needs.

“We were particularly interested in some

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of the smart agriculture solutions to increase farming productivity,” he said. “We look forward to collaborations that bring economic and job opportunities for our people.

“Zambia is unique in Israel’s relations with Africa,” says Glen Segell, visiting professor

ties with Israel have befitted in political, economic, and security relationships, and value these,” says Segell. “States that shun Israel, such as South Africa, are now the minority in Africa, and should see how this is ‘cutting off their nose to spite their face’. South Africa could benefit as Zambia is now doing in water and electricity technologies.”

Akinin says he came as one of six CEOs from the private sector to conduct business diplomacy in Israel. “I’m filled with pride and emotion to see that Zambia, a country where I have invested my time, energy, and soul is building tangible bridges of progress with Israel,” he says. “The discussions have been proactive and focused on replicating innovation in Zambia.

“President Hichilema is a man of action – a visionary leader who brings an entrepreneurial spirit” says Akinin. “It’s clear that he’s not just hoping for a brighter future for Zambia, he’s actively paving the way for it. As an entrepreneur in Zambia, it gives me a sense of pride and security knowing that the country is in such capable hands.

“President Hichilema’s visit to Israel, I believe, was driven by both personal faith and strategic foresight,” he says. “It marks a new chapter in our relations. This trip serves as a testament to his vision of transforming Zambia into a powerhouse for the continent.

“This trip will yield numerous positive outcomes for Zambia and Israel,” he says. “For one, the minister of commerce has received a direct mandate from the president to establish an innovation model for Zambia. I’m honoured to be part of the special working committee, alongside the chief executive of a Zambian bank, that will help shape the next steps for this ambitious initiative.”

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UOS warning about Cape diner causes uproar

TALI FEINBERG

When Kosher SA, the kashrut department of the United Orthodox Synagogues (UOS), announced on 28 July that Avron's Place, an iconic kosher restaurant in Sea Point, would no longer be kosher as of 31 July, the local and international Jewish community were shocked.

After demands from the community for greater transparency, Kosher SA released a statement saying that the restaurant had been unable to pay *mashgichim* (kashrut supervisors), and that the Beth Din had assisted it by paying for the *mashgichim* at its own cost.

The statement angered many, who claimed that it shamed the restaurant's owner, Avron Almeleh. It caused an uproar on social media and beyond, resulting in a crowdfunding endeavour for Avron's Place.

The community was up in arms because Avron's is an iconic kosher institution, having been operating since 1999, and for many years being the only *fleishik* (meat) restaurant in the Mother City.

Many claimed Kosher SA's release was "airing our dirty laundry", "shaming", and "*lashon hara*" (negative or harmful speech). However, Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg, a dayan of the Cape Town Beth Din, told the *SA Jewish Report* that "in certain instances, Jewish law requires the sharing of negative information. In this case, there were numerous reasons why the information had to be shared and these are set out in a comprehensive Hebrew *halachic* ruling drawn up by dayanim on the Cape Town Beth Din."

Granting kosher certification and allowing production and trade in kosher food is a matter in the public domain, he said. So, when certification is granted, it means that the *halachic* authority of the Beth Din is broadcasting to the public that an establishment is kosher. "The credibility and authority of the kosher administration is based on the trust of the community," Liebenberg said.

This means that any establishment certified kosher knows that the kashrut administration has the right to let the community know about any changes or cancellations of this certification, the dayan said.

Consequently, if there has been a breach in kashrut laws, the public must be informed immediately, and this is commonplace. "The kashrut administration must state the reason for the suspension in the interests of transparency so as to maintain its integrity in the eyes of the community," continued Liebenberg.

"In this case, the proprietor of the business was also given ample opportunity to send a communication in his own words to explain why his certification was going to be suspended. He was informed that if he failed to do so, Kosher SA would send its own communication.

"When the deadline arrived, no communication was forthcoming, and Kosher SA was then required

to inform the community of the suspension of the certification and the reason thereto in the most transparent manner," said Liebenberg.

The UOS statement, written by UOS Cape Town Executive Director Joel Merris, explained that the organisation was ultimately stuck "between a rock and a hard place" as the establishment was unable to pay the UOS for the service of *mashgichim*, which it deploys to kosher restaurants. While the UOS employs the *mashgichim*, the restaurants reimburses the UOS for this cost. Having *mashgichim* is crucial for a restaurant to be certified kosher.

"A kosher food service cannot run without the services of a *mashgiach*," said Merris. "We have been assisting Avron's Place over this period by supplying *mashgichim* at our cost. This is way beyond the mandate of the UOS Cape Town, and places us in a very difficult financial position as an NPO [non-profit organisation] and a communal organisation."

He said that if the restaurant were to reimburse the UOS for the service of *mashgichim*, "we would be able once again to certify its kashrut".

Merris explained that the statement was released "for the sole intent and purposes of transparency on all matters of kashrut in the community".

The response to the statement was swift and angry, with many messages of support for the establishment and emphasis that Almeleh had gone above and beyond in serving the community.

Others suggested that there were alternate ways of dealing with this issue. "It's unfathomable to me that in a diminishing community with few kosher restaurant options that a more tasteful and sustainable solution couldn't have been thought up. We're a people committed to welfare and assistance. In such a vein, I hope that members of our community were approached to mentor or sponsor or open a line of credit for a business in need. We're only as strong as our weakest link," wrote one community member.

Others considered the UOS perspective. "People ask for transparency but complain when transparency is shown," another community member pointed out. "The *mashgichim* are always the ones who have to fight for pay, benefits, job

security, and many other things afforded to regular staff. If there's no pay, there are no employees. I guarantee that this was a long time coming, and everything was done to rectify [the situation]."

Though the UOS hopes to get "more people eating kosher more often", kosher restaurants have been hit hard by loadshedding, the pandemic, rising food prices, kosher costs, and fierce competition. Though some restaurants have adapted, others have battled.

The outpouring of communal goodwill resulted in Rabbi Hillel Bernstein of the Milnerton Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town starting a BackaBuddy crowdfunding page for Avron's Place on 30 July. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Bernstein said, "When the ruling came out, I was asked as a rabbi to discuss the situation. I was quite worried because I didn't want to be involved in any negative conversations and statements.

"My wife suggested that it was actually an opportunity to turn it into something positive and use it as an opportunity to fundraise. I was excited about that, took it to the committee of my shul, and it was very encouraging. It was set up and that night, we sent it out and I was overwhelmed at the response. Baruch Hashem!"

As donations poured in, so did messages of support and gratitude for Almeleh's service to the community. "Thank you for all your dedication over the years and to your pioneering kashrut in Cape Town. Please G-d, this is just the beginning!" wrote Rabbi Nissen and Ariella Goldman of Chabad on Campus Cape Town. Many donations came in from beyond the Mother City. By 2 August, the campaign had raised R94 535.78, with its goal being R500 000.

"I was happy that something positive could come out of the situation, because *tzedakah* is the greatest merit that the Jewish people can have," said Bernstein. "And, please G-d, all the wonderful generosity should be a merit, and Hashem should bless our community."

The *SA Jewish Report* repeatedly reached out to Almeleh, but he chose not to comment.

The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the United Jewish Campaign met representatives of the UOS and Avron's Place on 2 August to discuss the situation. A joint statement will be released in due course, according to the Cape Board.



Moshal puts money on better SA leadership

>>>Continued from page 1

didn't have hope for South Africa. But he stresses that time is limited. "I would like a future like that which we were all hoping for in 1994 – a growing economy, with security, great opportunities for all, and continued improvement of citizen's lives. The passion, energy, and innovation of South Africans remains extraordinary. People deserve a country where they can harness that. Given South Africa's young population, the potential, given good governance, is enormous."

These particular political parties can deliver a better future, he says, because "they won't steal from their own citizens and will provide competent government compared to the incumbents, which is, quite frankly, a pretty low bar to beat!"

However, if South Africa continues on its current trajectory, "It's on the way to becoming a failed state. I'm not trying to be overly dramatic, and it might take some time before we reach that point, but the signs are there," he says. "A government that's corrupt, cannot provide basic security and opportunity to its citizens, together with failing infrastructure and an inability to keep the lights on, alongside its ever-declining moral stature in the world isn't going to suddenly become an overnight success. We need the change of government and leadership that these parties can provide."

Growing up in the South African Jewish community had an impact

on who he is today. "The South African Jewish community is almost unique in the world – a blend of tradition and pragmatism without the lowering of halachic standards. This unique combination, together with my Jewish education at Carmel in Durban has, for me at least, provided a solid foundation of identity and meaning from which all else flows."

His Moshal Foundation does much good work around the globe. "Thankfully, we've been fortunate to be involved in many great causes over the years," he says. "Some that I am most proud of in South Africa would be the Moshal Scholarship Program, which funds students' university fees and assists them to get jobs, my sister's CHIVA Africa (an HIV charity), as well as donations to Innovation Africa, which uses Israeli technology for the provision of water to rural communities."

To the community, he says, "Have faith that the future can be better, but don't just sit back and hope for the best. Actively work to make it happen, be it through time or monetary support, particularly to these parties. Individuals can make a difference – for good and bad. We've seen this frequently in South Africa's recent history. At the same time, be aware of the warning signs. Try to understand what a sinking ship looks like, and if we get there – *chas vashalom* – don't be afraid to take the appropriate action quickly." But he feels that we're not there yet.

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Desai appeals his judgement, defiant in anti-Israel stand

NICOLA MILTZ

Retired Judge Siraj Desai has formally lodged an appeal against a June ruling by the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC) that found he was guilty of unbecoming behaviour by becoming involved in a political controversy. An active supporter of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, he has remained defiant in spite of the ruling and has remained unapologetic for his outspoken criticism of Israel.

apartheid, and the planned annexation of parts of occupied West Bank. "The SAZF is currently in the process of reviewing the appeal, and will communicate further in due course," said SAZF spokesperson Rolene Marks. Desai's appeal challenges Dambuzas findings, and was lodged on the basis that the statements made weren't controversial, not political, and there had been no finding of wilfulness or gross negligence on his part. Dambuzas said in her ruling that though judges are entitled to hold political views, they exercised these rights subject to the rigours of their calling, including applicable ethical constraints. "This is one of the sacrifices the judges of this country have made," she said.

"The reason for stringent ethical constraints in relation to judges has been repeatedly pronounced. The Judicial Service Commission Act and the code seek to maintain and promote public confidence, integrity, and the independence of the office of a judge and the judiciary as a whole. "It's therefore not open to Judge Desai to assert the right to freedom of association or human rights activism when provisions of the code are invoked," she said. At the time of the June ruling, Desai, who is South Africa's legal ombudsman, described it as a "gagging order", saying that the order made against him was "surprising to say the least". "I'm effectively muzzled from expressing any view on an ongoing crime against humanity," he said, adding that in granting this order, the judge placed herself "on the wrong side of history". "She fails to realise that the violent repression of the Palestinian people by apartheid Israel is the most significant human rights issue of our time. I'm ethically bound to speak out against it, and I intend to pursue the order she made in other forums of the Judicial Conduct Committee," he said. The JCC dismissed some of the complaints against Desai. However, it found him in violation of the judicial code for his support of campaigns calling for the boycott of Israel. Desai was cautioned not to get involved in any political controversy or activity in the future unless it was for the discharge of judicial duties. In spite of this, he has been seen at anti-Israel protests in Cape Town. The appeal contends that the statement signed by Desai wasn't controversial or political, and says the question whether Israel is perpetrating the crime of apartheid isn't primarily political but legal, concerning international law, and nothing precludes judges ethically from expressing themselves on legal questions. According to the appeal, there's also no evidence that Desai had been wilful or grossly negligent, as required by the code of conduct to justify a breach finding. His appeal, dated 7 July, concludes that if the Appeal Tribunal were to dismiss the

appeal, it "must declare clearly for all judges that they may never publicly condemn the practice of apartheid or other international crimes, that they may never engage in extrajudicial activities to promote the realisation, and condemn the violation, of fundamental human rights". The appeal has yet to be set down for hearing.



Judge Siraj Desai

The finding by Judge Nambitha Dambuzas followed a lengthy complaint by the South Africa Zionist Federation (SAZF) in 2021 relating to the retired Western Cape High Court judge's decades-long criticism of Israel. The actual ruling relates to the signing by the judge in June 2022 of a BDS statement condemning Israel's practice of

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In our front-page story this week, we bring you a coup – an open-hearted interview with Martin Moshal, well-known for never giving interviews. Moshal is very wealthy, but he has changed so many people’s lives by using his money to give them a university education through his Moshal Scholarship Program.

His focus with the programme is to “create a world where every child can live up to their potential and prosper”. There are more than 1 000 university alumni in South Africa and Israel whom the Moshal Scholarship Program has educated and given all the soft skills to excel in their chosen careers. This is not what the story in our newspaper is about – we’ll get to that – but it does speak to the type of person Moshal is.

I have been fortunate enough over the years to meet and interview many young adults given a new lease on life by Moshal, people who mostly would never get the opportunity even to go to university. They graduate and prosper, all of them paying it forward to others who need help. Paying it forward is part of the ethos of this organisation.

This is clearly a deeply ingrained belief for Moshal.

Many might say he has money to burn, so why not help others. The point is that it’s what one does with one’s money that counts. He could spend it all on frivolous things, but he chooses to spend it very carefully. The good that he does with his money isn’t just in the area of education.

In our lead story, we talk about the fact that Moshal is doing everything he can to ensure that this country has a future. He’s putting money behind opposition parties that he believes have some value to offer.

Some may pooh-pooh one or two of the parties he supports, but the fact is that Moshal is putting his money where his mouth is. He believes in this country, and is willing to do what he can to try and get the right leadership in place to make it work.

I must be honest, I’m not sure who the right leaders are, but I no longer believe they are in the African National Congress. And I’m grateful that someone like Moshal is doing this ultimately to help find a decent and ethical alternative government.

In this same edition, on page 11, we bring you the story of Sivan Yaari, who was in South Africa this week. This remarkable Israeli-born woman refocused her life from working as a quality controller for a clothing company to finding ways to provide electricity and water for millions of people on the African continent, including in South Africa, who desperately need it.

She has made this her life’s work, and is now providing water to 250 villages each year. She’s changing more lives on this continent than any government can do, or is doing. And she does it all because she’s determined to help people and has found a way to do it.

Last week, we wrote about Dr Andy Kuper, another person who believes that money is only worth something if you can help others. His original idea for his business, LeapFrog Investments, was to build a company dedicated to changing lives at scale in Africa and Asia. It’s that simple, and that’s what he has done.

The investment companies it has invested in have reached 450 million people with healthcare, financial services, or climate solutions. Yes, that’s 5% of the world’s population. I could go on, but you get the picture of who he is and what he does with his money and time.

I understand that we cannot all be Martin Moshals, Sivan Yaaris, or Andy Kupers. They are few and far between, but just like them, we can all do something good.

We have a country wide open for people who want to uplift others. We even have a community in which there are so many who could use a little or a lot of help.

Look at Saul Fox, who is writing matric this year at Yeshiva College. This teenager is creating 3D printed prosthetics, which are already changing another teenager’s life. And, I have no doubt that this is just the beginning for Fox. He’s clearly a determined person and will change the lives of many along his chosen path.

There are so many within our community who do the most incredible work to help others – way too many to mention.

But there are also many of us who love the idea of doing good, but have difficulty finding the time. Or it could be that we believe that we don’t really have much money or energy to spare. I get it. Our lives are hectic, and so many of us have far more month at the end of our money than the other way around.

But it doesn’t take much, just a little thought and sometimes a bit of innovation. None of us are expected to be Moshal, Yaari, or Kuper, we are who we are, but we could all give a little of ourselves to make a big difference. It’s often the little gestures that count.

And the truth is, it’s difficult to be angry at loadshedding and potholes when you’re helping people. We uplift ourselves when we give a hand up to someone else.

Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



A battle for Israel’s very soul

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



It’s a balmy night in Tel Aviv. At 21:00, the temperature hovers above 30 degrees and the humidity clings to you like nylon. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are marching with flags to Democracy Square, the renamed Kaplan Street of Tel Aviv. Along the way, at the base of the Fiverr building, the Israeli tech start-up “unicorn”, a loudspeaker broadcasts the voice of David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s founding father, reading Israel’s Declaration of Independence.

But times have changed, and today, Israel is at war with itself. Two hundred thousand people gather in Democracy Square and another 300 000 demonstrators in 149 other locations around the country for the thirtieth week of pro-democracy protests. Each week, the crowds get bigger and bigger.

The protests are loud, patriotic, frenetic, and jubilant. Almost everyone carries a flag, and when *Hatikvah*, the national anthem, is played, the crowd joins in proudly, boisterously, and defiantly. This is a battle for the very soul of Israel!

Bands perform, and the audience joins in singing “*Ein li erez acheret*” (I have no other country). That evening, the podium is occupied by the former governor of the Bank of Israel, who repeatedly asks, “Why are we doing this?” The audience screams, “*Busha! Busha!*” (Disgrace! Disgrace!)

The protesters aren’t young. Many in the crowd appear to be in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. They are the founders of Israel, the heirs of its liberal democracy, fighting to preserve what they believe to be the only democracy in the Middle East. Some in the mosh pit of humanity are in wheelchairs, others look like they’ve just walked out of the gym, sinewy muscles and tight spandex – Israelis are a fit, good-looking lot.

The loudspeaker intones, “They will not divide us, we are here, left and right, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, religious and secular, this is our country. We are not going anywhere.” Yet, opinion polls show that 28% of Israelis are now actively looking to leave the country in the wake of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s intention to neuter the Israeli Supreme Court.

Hundreds of drummers lead the crowd. On one occasion, a marching band struggled to parade through the throng of people. One protester carries a sign that says merely “1933”, a reference to the year Adolf Hitler assumed power, democratically, in pre-Nazi Germany. Its poignancy isn’t lost on the crowd.

Big trucks brought in by the police block access to the Ayalon Highway. Inevitably at some point in the evening, a handful of protesters will spill on to the freeway. Police will arrive on horseback, as will water cannons and machines that spray “skunk” spray, a noxious odour on demonstrators.



From the outside, it may be difficult to understand why hundreds of thousands of Israelis spend each Saturday evening protesting on the streets of Israel. Netanyahu and his far-right extremist government have taken the opportunity of their new majority in parliament to re-draw the judicial landscape in Israel. They do this without broad support or consensus. Polls indicate that 62% of Israelis oppose the judicial reforms, only 38% support it

When you cut away the propaganda, the battle boils down to two legal philosophies.

Netanyahu’s governing coalition now believes its election majority empowers it to do as it will. No court has

a right to oppose the democratically elected choice of the electorate, it claims. Protesters on the right often chant “64”, the triumphant number of seats Israel has cobbled together for the coalition. Key to retaining power is Netanyahu’s undertaking to appoint twice convicted fraudster and bribery recipient Aryeh Deri to the cabinet, a move blocked by Israel’s Supreme Court as unreasonable.

The Supreme Court has a far broader view of the rights of Israelis than many of the religious parties that make up part of Netanyahu’s extremist government. It’s a clash of civilisations, religious doctrine against secular liberalism.

In Western democracies, courts are empowered to protect the rights of citizens, often against the excesses of government. For this reason, power is split between the executive (president and/or prime minister and cabinet), legislature (parliament), and the judiciary (independent courts). These three centres of power counterbalance each other in a careful dance meant to reflect the will of the people and guarantee that transient radicalism or political expediency doesn’t derail society.

In more normal societies, citizens’ rights are guaranteed in a nation’s Constitution, a document that Israel has yet to draft. Israel’s courts have relied for the protection of individual rights on the principles enshrined in Israel’s Declaration of Independence and upon a set of semi-constitutional parliamentary acts known as, the “Basic Laws”. These basic laws allowed the Israeli Supreme Court to test government decisions for reasonableness and rationality.

But Netanyahu and his cabinet, some of whom were even denied the right to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces because of their radicalism, don’t wish to be encumbered by a court that can question the will of his coalition and majority.

For them, reshaping the political landscape would be easier if state institutions were hollowed out and the government unfettered in its actions. It’s the path to lesser democracy followed by Vladimir Putin in Russia, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, and Viktor Orbán in Hungary. It’s a path to a strong-man view of the world, an unfettered downward spiral away from democratic values.

So, why do I care? I’m not Israeli, I don’t hold an Israeli passport, and don’t live in the country. Why would I spend so much of my vacation attending protests?

As a Jew in the diaspora, Israel represents my values, aspirations, and ideals. It’s the ingathering of the exiles after 2 000 years of dispersion. It’s the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, that defeated British and Turkish colonialism and re-established the third Jewish state in the land of our people. It was a democracy in a sea of Arab dictatorship, it was a liberal country that protected

women’s rights, minority rights, that respected all people. It took in not just Jewish immigrants but also Cambodia boat people and refugees fleeing Eritrea. It represented me and my beliefs.

Israel was a symbol of what we as a people could achieve in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Much of my adult life has been spent supporting Israel and defending it against delegitimisation from a group of antisemites who have usurped the Palestinian cause to target the Jewish people rather than attempt to solve the Palestinian problem itself.

But when Israel no longer represents my values, when Israel is no longer a beacon of democracy, when Israel slides into racist, bigoted politics, unfettered

and unrestrained by a Supreme Court, I can no longer stand silent. My holiday becomes a battle for the future of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel to our lives.

I’m privileged to have joined hundreds of thousands on the streets of Tel Aviv, to keep alive the Zionist dream of a free, democratic, liberal Jewish state in the land of our ancestors.

As the protesters taught me – “*Ein li erez acheret*” (We have no other land). We have to make this right!

• Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report. He writes this in his personal capacity.

‘Israel has answers for SA’, say unrepentant political leaders

NICOLA MILTZ

Patriotic Alliance (PA) President Gayton McKenzie is unphased by criticism from Israel haters over his party's fact-finding visit to Israel last month, calling members of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement "*shysters*".

The controversial politician and former bank robber turned motivational speaker said he was unafraid of a backlash from critics of Israel including the ruling African National Congress which condemns Israel as an apartheid state, describing himself as a "friend of the Israeli people".

"I will be restoring the status of the South African embassy in Israel when I form part of a national coalition here as a condition of whoever wants to be in partnership with us. I will agitate for stronger ties between South Africa and Israel without any fear of any backlash," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

His remarks follow heavy criticism from the South African BDS Coalition, which accused McKenzie and the party's deputy president, fellow ex-convict and socialite Kenny Kunene, of being "reactionary ideologues".

The pair travelled to Israel on 23 July to learn about coalition governments and water management and wastewater treatment. Their visit coincided with widespread protests in Israel over the coalition government's decision to pass the controversial judicial overhaul bill.

BDS SA condemned the visit and criticised the politicians, saying, "Convicted bank robber McKenzie resigned as mayor of the Central Karoo District after questions were raised about millions of rand that were meant for the eradication of bucket toilets in the area. Kunene, his robber side-kick and a convicted fraudster, is a notorious misogynist, hosting parties in 2011 where guests ate sushi off the bodies of half-naked women. These are Israel's new South African friends."

It further accused the PA of "reproducing the disingenuous claims of Israeli propaganda for its management of water resources and other technological innovations".

In response, McKenzie told the *SA Jewish Report*, "BDS SA should go and find day jobs like the rest of us. Their gig is becoming irrelevant as more and more Muslim countries are starting to work with Israel and not these *shysters* calling themselves BDS."

He said his party's decision to visit the Jewish state was correct. "Israel has many of the answers to the problems being faced by South Africa, and we need to work with each other. South Africa needs friends, not enemies," he said.

He said Kunene was misunderstood and unfairly criticised when he said the late President Nelson Mandela had received no criticism when he visited Israel.

"He wasn't comparing himself to Madiba, he was pointing to the fact that Mandela showed the example of building bridges and opening dialogue, which we also believe in doing. Being pro-Israel doesn't mean you have to be anti-Palestine. That's a false dichotomy that will take us nowhere. We cannot – and should not – wish for Israel to stop existing, which unfortunately is the starting point for many of those who are ostensibly on Palestine's side. That cannot, and will not, happen. What's important is to look at solutions to improve life for Palestine and everyday Palestinians without needing to wipe Israel off the map."

The controversial politicians met Israeli President Isaac Herzog, from whom they gleaned valuable information about coalition governments. McKenzie is adamant that the PA will be a key player in coalitions next year.

"Israel has never had one party get a majority of the votes. Even Labour couldn't achieve that, in spite of enormous momentum. South Africa is destined to become a true multiparty, coalition-driven democracy, and we learnt a great deal about coalitions such as the kinds of agreements that need to be signed by different parties, how coalitions with vastly different aims can be held together for a full term, and the compromises that have to be made on all sides. It was truly enriching

for us as PA leadership."

He said Israel's lessons on water management were "appropriate for South Africa".

"So many of our towns and cities are losing half of the bulk water before it even reaches our residents for consumption. In Israel, they lose 2% at most, and process all the wastewater in a truly cyclical system. The sewage gets turned into fertiliser for farming, the wastewater is used for irrigation, and the sludge processing produces methane that powers 80% of the needs of the water treatment plant. Israelis don't waste anything. That's a powerful lesson for South Africa, whatever your politics may be," McKenzie said.



Gayton McKenzie and Israeli President Isaac Herzog

Being in the country during the widespread protest was "eye-opening", he said.

"Israeli democracy is loud and fractious, but it's robust. It was eye-opening to witness the anger against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government and its decision to rein in the power of the courts. The protests made me feel

right at home, and the constant electricity made me realise I wasn't at home," he said.

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), said, "The SAZF welcomes the PA's recent trip to Israel and encourages all political parties to engage regularly with their Israeli counterparts. Israel remains a dedicated and committed partner for sustainable development in our country, and as such, we should seek to leverage the best that Israel has to offer South Africans today. To date, Israeli innovation, technology, and organisations have been mobilised to provide access to clean drinking water to more than half a million people in our country. There's absolutely no reason to inhibit our collective access to life-changing resources from the holy land of Israel."

Their visit included meetings with various politicians including Ruth Wasserman Lande from the Blue and White Party and Tzachi Hanegbi, the head of the National Security Council of Israel in the prime minister's office.

"I had an incorrect perception about Israel before going there. As a Christian, my visit gave meaning to the Bible. I have no regrets about visiting, I will be going back with my family and friends," McKenzie said.

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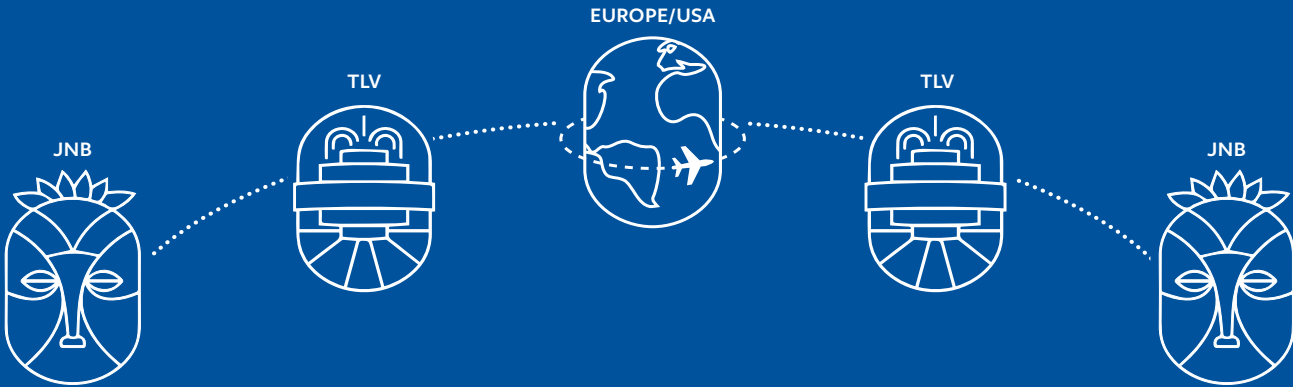
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Israel judicial overhaul – exposing the myths



OSHY TUGENDHAFT

OPINION

“The first thing we do is, let’s kill all the lawyers.” So proposed Dick the Butcher in William Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*.

United States Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens shared this reading of the line in a 1985 decision: “As a careful reading of that text will reveal, Shakespeare insightfully realised that disposing of lawyers is a step in the direction of a totalitarian form of government.”

The Israeli government’s judicial overhaul objective is to “kill the judges”. It’s designed to give the ruling coalition an overriding say in the selection and appointment of judges, and to significantly circumscribe the Supreme Court’s power to review laws passed by the Knesset.

To stifle criticism of this reform, two myths have been perpetuated by the government. The first is that the judges appoint themselves. The second is that in a democracy, the will of the elected majority in the Knesset shouldn’t be frustrated by judges not elected by the people. We need to expose these myths.

The judges don’t appoint themselves. Israel has a judicial selection committee comprising nine members, four representatives of government, three Supreme Court judges, and two representatives of the Israeli Bar Association. The appointment of a Supreme Court judge requires a majority of seven of the nine members of the judicial committee. Accordingly, representatives of the government have an absolute veto regarding any such appointment, and so do the three judges. A most balanced and equitable system.

The second myth is even more egregious. It garners support from the thesis that because a government which holds a majority in the Knesset is representative of the will of the electoral majority, the Supreme Court shouldn’t have the power to strike down laws passed by that government. But that precisely is what a liberal democracy demands – that the courts must enforce the rule of law and hold government to abide thereby.

In addition to increasing the majority vote required of the judges to invalidate any law, it’s further proposed that any law which the Supreme Court invalidates on constitutional or unreasonable grounds, the Knesset, by simple majority, must have the right to override that decision. The government would thus arrogate to itself the unlimited power to determine the validity of its own laws. In addition, if

the government determines that a particular law is a Basic Law, it can pre-emptively, in advance, preclude that law entirely from judicial review.

The ruling coalition in the Knesset would have absolute power. The Supreme Court, which for 30 years has served as the only check on that power, would be emasculated.

The separation of powers is a fundamental principle of a liberal democracy. In Israel, that separation is achieved only by an independent court that can review and set aside legislation and administrative conduct which violates constitutional principles or lacks rationality. Absent that constraint, we encounter the tyranny of the majority, about which the renowned French political scientist and philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, expressed concern nearly 200 years ago. So, too, John Stuart Mill, in his 1859 book *On Liberty*, warned about the inherent weakness to majority rule in which that majority pursues exclusively its own objectives at the expense of minority factions, resulting in their oppression.

Since Israel, unlike other liberal democracies,

laws passed by the ruling African National Congress government and the unreasonable exercise of administrative powers.

The controversy created by the government’s intended judicial overhaul is the most profound and critical internal issue that Israel has faced since its establishment. The divisiveness and rancour that this proposed legislation has created is as unparalleled as it is tragic. The implementation of the proposals will forever adversely change the fabric of Israeli civil society.

Disregarding Netanyahu’s personal agenda in the face of his criminal indictment, his protestation that the judicial overhaul won’t destroy, but rather strengthen, democracy, is, ironically, the mantra of every demagogue justifying the erosion of the courts and the rule of law on the pretext that a governing majority must be the only and final arbiter of its exercise of political power. That, precisely, is the recipe of every authoritarian state. Unsurprisingly, therefore, immediately after the initial law was passed last week removing the power of the court to apply the reasonableness standard, Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir crowed glowingly and chillingly that this was only the beginning and “the salad bar is open”. Beware the slippery slope.

We must never take democracy or democratic values for granted. They don’t self-regulate. In every democracy, it’s the responsibility of the people, hence the valiant, indefatigable, 30-week protests to guard against the potential disintegration of that democratic order through the concentration of hegemonic power, which finds expression in Lord Acton’s famous quote:

“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

The Israeli Supreme Court, which for decades has enjoyed international respect and recognition for its independence, integrity, and profundity, has provided and must continue to provide the necessary protection against any abuse of power by any government *du jour*. If the judicial overhaul proposals are introduced, it will forever be stripped of that power, and Israel will cease to be a liberal democracy.

If you want to be a democracy, there can be only one solution. You need broad consensus for anything that dramatically shifts the balance of power and increases its concentration in the hands of the government. Any radical changes must be resisted because they don’t allow for careful reflection over successive parliaments. If there should be any room for improvement of the Supreme Court, absent rational deliberation and ultimately consensus, it will lead to civil disobedience and revolt.

• Oshy Tugendhaft is an attorney in Johannesburg.



Photo: Facebook

doesn’t have separate legislative and executive arms of government, nor a bicameral legislative body, the only effective check against government exploiting its majority to pass whatever laws it may choose is the Supreme Court’s review power to strike down laws which offend constitutional values and the rule of law. It’s Israel’s only protection against the tyranny of the majority. That was precisely Tocqueville’s concern, that unchecked political power will eventually always lead to tyranny.

We, in South Africa, can readily appreciate the legal position under apartheid, with absolute parliamentary sovereignty and our courts bereft of any judicial review power in respect of any laws passed, not least the pernicious arbitrary detention laws. In contradistinction, our Constitution guarantees personal rights and freedoms and entrenches the power of the courts to invalidate any legislation or exercise of power which violates the Constitution. Many judgments of the Constitutional Court have declared unconstitutional and invalid

Sinead O’Connor – the incomparable nemesis of Israeli right

ANDREW LAPIN – JTA

Over the course of Irish pop singer Sinead O’Connor’s career, she made her fair share of enemies, most notably the Catholic Church, after ripping up a picture of the pope on *Saturday Night Live*.

But five years after that incident, she also found herself in the crosshairs of Israel’s future national security minister.

O’Connor, who died on Wednesday 26 July at the age of 56, had in 1997 planned to perform a concert in Jerusalem sponsored by a women-led activist group promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. But she cancelled the show after receiving scores of death threats from right-wing Israelis, led by Itamar Ben-Gvir, who today is a key figure in the country’s far-right coalition pushing a contentious series of judicial reforms into law.

At the time, Ben-Gvir wasn’t accepted in mainstream Israeli politics. He was an anti-Arab provocateur and the protege of extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane, who advocated for racist policies. The 21-year-old was also an outspoken admirer of Baruch Goldstein, the American-born physician who had murdered 29 Palestinians in Hebron three years prior.

Ben-Gvir and his cohort, who believed Israel should give no land to the Palestinians, opposed O’Connor’s concert – part of a festival called “Sharing Jerusalem: two capitals for two states” to be performed in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords – for its promotion of coexistence. And he insulted the singer in colourful, vulgar terms on Israeli radio.

O’Connor, he said, was a “singer who preaches and calls for the division of

Jerusalem and who spreads gentile culture”, adding that she “has no place in Israel”. Though Ben-Gvir denied issuing the death threats, he viewed his group’s pressure campaign on the singer as successful after she pulled out of the festival.

Also opposing the festival was then-Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert, who would later go on to become Israel’s prime minister from 2006 to 2009. Olmert called it a “provocation”, and suggested that the concert had actually been cancelled due to poor ticket sales, according to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report at the time.

O’Connor later went after Ben-Gvir directly in an open letter. “G-d doesn’t reward those who bring terror to the children of the world,” she wrote. “So you have succeeded in nothing but your soul’s failure.” Supporters of hers in Israel also took to the streets to back her over Ben-Gvir.

Fifteen years later, O’Connor was again conflicted over a scheduled performance in Israel after learning that pro-Palestinian activists were pressuring her and other artists to boycott the country. But she criticised both sides of the debate, noting that she was the sole breadwinner for her family and had a responsibility to support them.

“I don’t appreciate being bullied by anyone on either side of this debate any more than I appreciate not being properly informed by my booking agent of the potential ramifications of accepting work in war zones,” she wrote in a statement on her website that she later deleted.

After her death, Ben-Gvir’s office denied this week he had ever threatened her, and said he would remember her “favourably because of the difficult life she lived”.

O’Connor, whose biggest hit was her 1990 cover of Prince’s *Nothing Compares 2 U*, struggled with mental-health issues throughout her life. After speaking out against abuse in the Catholic Church, she later converted to Islam.



Sinead O'Connor

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Remarkable Israel more than news headlines

OPINION

RABBI DOV LIPMAN



Political unrest. Protests. Polarisation. Terror attacks. Security threats. Diplomatic difficulties. The news coming out of Israel isn't positive, to say the least. Many are speaking of doomsday scenarios.

Though I don't negate that Israel is facing significant challenges, I harken back to two episodes involving my grandmother, and I'm filled with hope and optimism.

It was February 2004, and we had just decided to make aliya. I had to call my grandmother to tell her that we were moving. We lived in Maryland and she lived in New York, and we made

an effort for her to see our children quite regularly.

A survivor of Auschwitz, she was in the golden years of her life, enjoying her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. And now I had to tell her that we were moving her great-grandchildren thousands of kilometres away.

I picked up the phone and put it down a few times and then I finally dialled. After some small talk, I said, "Bubby, I have some news for you. With G-d's help, we're making aliya this summer. We're moving to Israel."

There was a pause on the other side of the line, and I braced myself for my grandmother to say it like it is, as she always did. I prepared myself for her to be legitimately upset. But she broke the silence with this blessing in Hebrew:

"Baruch ata Hashem elokeinu melech ha'olam she'he'cheyanu v'kimanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh." (She thanked G-d for keeping her alive and bringing her to this special time.)

It took my breath away. I said, "Bubby, where did that come from?"

She said, "It's going to be very painful to have you so far away and not to see your children growing up. But when we were on the boat coming to America from the displaced persons camp in Germany after the Holocaust, I asked myself the entire way, 'Why are we going in this direction to another foreign country to the Jewish people when we could be going in the other direction, where a new Jewish state is being established in our biblical and ancestral homeland?'" She said she appreciated how America welcomed the Jewish people, but "to see my grandchildren and great-grandchildren settling in Israel, I have nothing but thanks to G-d".

Fast-forward 10 years later, and my elderly Bubby mustered up the strength and came to Israel. She visited me in my Knesset office, close to 70 years after her liberation from Auschwitz. She sat down, looked around, and said, "Dovele, this doesn't make any sense. A Jewish state? Israel? The Jewish capital? Jerusalem? A Jewish parliament? The Knesset? My grandson as a member of the Knesset? This just doesn't make any sense."

Seventy years earlier, she arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau in a cattle car along with her parents, some of her siblings, and many nieces and nephews. That night, Shavuot 1944, all but she and one of her sisters were exterminated in the gas chambers. And here she was in my Knesset office 70 years later.

My Bubby was right. It doesn't make any sense. G-d is "hard at work" making the impossible come true in the holy land.

Think about how many times Israel has been on the brink of destruction. In 1948, when larger and stronger Arab armies

attacked us from all sides after we declared our independence; in 1967, when mass graves were prepared throughout Israel as the Arab armies again amassed along Israel's indefensible borders; during the Yom Kippur War, when the Syrian forces seemed to have an unabated path to Haifa. Though these were all external foes whose plans to annihilate the Jewish state were squelched by our army with the help of G-d, it's clear that we're living in miraculous times in which biblical prophecies are coming true before our eyes.

Prophets in the Bible spoke about the "ingathering of the exiles", when Jews from around the world would return to make Israel their home. I'm blessed to lead Yad L'Olim, an organisation that has assisted more than 32 000 olim families from 40 different countries of origin in just two years. The Jews are returning home from all around the world exactly as the prophets foretold.

The Bible speaks about a barren land that will lay fallow as long as the Jews aren't there. But once the Jews return, the land will flourish again. Just look at lush Israel, filled with trees and flowers. For 2 000 years, nothing could grow there. And now it's a "garden of G-d", as predicted in the Bible.

We're blessed to live in the most remarkable of times. Yes, there are challenges. But the very existence of the state of Israel is an open miracle. I often wonder what my great-great-grandparents would have been willing to give up simply to breathe the air of Jerusalem for just a few minutes.

And yet here we are, with Jerusalem and all of Israel available for all Jews to visit or to move to whenever they choose to do so.

Yes, there are challenges. And yes, we must learn from the past and never allow ourselves to be so polarised, we cannot govern and function.

So, let's zoom out from the minutia of the daily news and remind ourselves of what my Bubby saw and knew - that the G-d of Israel is "working overtime" on behalf of the Jewish people in Israel, as He promised He would. And then, let's work to find solutions to our problems and challenges with positivity and the confidence behooving of a special people, living in a special time, in the most special of places.

- Limmud South Africa will be hosting Lipman in August 2023. He will present at Limmud Cape Town (Sunday 20 August), Limmud Durban (Monday 21 August), and Limmud Johannesburg (Friday 25 to Sunday 27 August). For information or to register, visit limmud.org.za.
- Lipman was elected to the Knesset in 2013. He has authored nine books about Judaism and Israel. He focuses on Israel education, and the integration of the ultra-Orthodox population into Israeli society. He founded Yad L'Olim, which assists new immigrants with acclimation to Israel.



Rabbi Dov Lipman's grandmother, Ethel Kleinman, with her great-grandson Shlomo Lipman

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Time to celebrate the heroism of SA women

STAFF REPORTER

As we step into Women's Month and the very last chance to nominate for the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, we celebrate the power and bravery of South African women.

Women are so often unsung heroes as they quietly get on with what they have to do, whether it's running companies, saving lives, bringing up children, or a combination of these and others.

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards has honoured women in leadership since 2015, ensuring that we recognise women in our community who have made a real difference as leaders.

These women are role models and, in most cases, they had a tougher rise to the top than their male counterparts because the leadership world isn't

close to being an equal playing field. At this point, less than 10% of executives on JSE-listed companies are women.

"Women have been reared to be nurturers and caregivers, but in the process, they often don't feel entitled to recognise their own needs and ambitions," says clinical and organisational psychologist Dorianne Weil, who is one of the judges of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award.

Because of this, Weil says, it's vitally important to recognise women who have stepped into their power, women who have understood that they need "to take care of the needs of their husband's wife and their children's mother".

Weil longs for the day when we no longer need to have an award specifically for women because there's complete egalitarianism, however that day is

yet to come.

"So, we seek out those formidable women who have risen to the top and coped with lots of obstacles and set the bar higher and higher," Weil says. "Our women in leadership are the epitome of possibility, and act as an inspiration for those to follow."

Former Europcar Chief Executive Dawn Nathan-Jones was behind her company originally sponsoring this award when it was launched saying, "I've been nominated twice for a Jewish Achiever award for leadership of a listed company and both times, I was the only woman in the running. It occurred to me that women weren't putting themselves forward for this, nor were they being noticed. I wanted to give women a platform to be noticed for what they do.



Judge Sharise Weiner

Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

"I wanted to give women leaders the self-assurance they deserve and a sense of confidence. This award has done just that for its winners," Nathan-Jones says.

In the past eight years as a judge for the Europcar Women in Leadership Award, Nathan-Jones says she has been "blown away" by the calibre of women nominated, and how people don't know who they are or what they have achieved.

"I've seen the strength and resilience of women, and how they achieve as leaders against all odds," she says.

"Women so often go under the radar, but they don't give up, stay out of politics, and are action oriented."

She says she keeps thinking that every year, they will run out of women nominees and every year without fail, the numbers of nominations increase and the women nominated are even more impressive.

"The winners are powerhouses in their own way. They don't make a big noise and they aren't looking for accolades, which is why it is so satisfying to bring them to the fore and recognise them," she says.



Dawn Nathan-Jones

Some of the women we have honoured in the Europcar Women in Leadership Award are:

- Judge Sharise Weiner (2016). Weiner is now a judge on the Supreme Court of Appeal, the second highest court in the country. She told the *SA Jewish Report* that when she was selected for the position, it was "satisfying knowing that I've shattered a few glass ceilings and all my years of experience have been recognised".
- Professor Bonita Meyersfeld (2018). Meyersfeld was honoured for her efforts to promote human rights and fight gender-based violence. She's a human right's lawyer, activist, and academic and was also named a Knight of the Order of Merit by the president of France for her work.
- Advocate Carol Steinberg (2022). Steinberg won the award after arguing before the Constitutional Court in the Bongani Masuku antisemitic hate-speech case and winning. Steinberg said on winning the award, "You can't moan from the sidelines. Put on your armour, and try and do what's right."

Nominations close at 17:00 on 4 August, so if you haven't nominated that woman you know deserves to win the Europcar Woman in Leadership Award, do it now. Go to: bit.ly/jaa23nom

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The philanthropist who is opening taps for Africa

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

“The solution exists, it’s time to act,” says Israeli-born social entrepreneur Sivan Yaari, the chief executive and founder of Innovation: Africa, an organisation addressing Africa’s crippling water crisis village by village.

“The main challenge in much of Africa is lack of energy, which means there’s no electricity in medical centres or schools,” says Yaari. “Most importantly, because there’s no energy, there’s no access to clean water. Yet the sun exists, the water exists, and with only a few solar panels, we can make a change.”



Sivan Yaari, through her organisation Innovation Africa, provides access to clean water throughout Africa

With this in mind, Yaari set out to address the challenges she observed while working in Madagascar as a quality controller for renowned clothing company Jordache Jeans. Though she grew up in Israel and France and studied in America, it was Africa where Yaari found her calling. “I reached the continent, I spent time in the villages, and really, I’ve never left,” she said at a Young Presidents’ Organization breakfast held in Sandton last week.

Visiting villages in Madagascar, Yaari quickly realised two things: children weren’t going to school, and medical centres had no refrigerators to safely store vaccines and medicines. “I continued travelling across the continent to Jordache’s factories there, and in all of them, I saw the same situation – no electricity,” she says. “Even today, more than 600 million people in Africa don’t have access to electricity.”

Determined to bring electricity to the continent, Yaari set out to further her education and applied to Columbia University in New York. Here, she attained her masters in energy. Asking a professor for input on how to help provide electricity to African villages, he said she would need only two solar panels. Attaining a grant from the university, she returned to Madagascar armed with the panels, and installed them at a school and medical centre.

Powering 12 light bulbs and providing a small refrigerator to safely store medicines and vaccines, she observed an immediate impact and knew she had to continue. Yaari found a donor, who advised her to open a non-profit organisation, and so in 2008, Innovation: Africa was born.

Still a student, Yaari returned to America only to realise that she’d made a mistake in not considering how the village would fund new light bulbs. Returning to the village, she hit upon the idea of using the solar energy to charge cellphones which ultimately became a business, gave rise to other businesses, and covered the energy maintenance costs.

Continuing to bring electricity to schools and medical centres across the continent, Yaari hit another challenge, one that ultimately changed the face of her organisation. “At a school in Uganda where we had recently installed a solar system, I was told that the school wasn’t using the energy. The children weren’t coming as they were too weak to walk.”

Yaari deeply regretted not being curious enough to find out why the children weren’t coming to school when she first observed this in Madagascar. “If I’d asked, I would have understood that the source of the problem was that they had to collect water. This was often not safe for drinking, and they’d get sick,” she says. Yaari now knew that she had to provide access to clean water. Investigating solutions, she thought of Israel’s pioneering water and solar technology.

Today, through this technology, Innovation: Africa has delivered access to clean water and electricity to more than four million people across 10 African countries. “From working in Madagascar to running this very large organisation with a \$20 million [R362.2 million] budget, we’re now providing water to 250 villages a year,” says Yaari.

Though this may be significant, she says that compared to what’s

actually happening on the ground, it’s still a drop in the ocean. “The situation is just growing, and we have to find ways to reach the villages and pump water. By doing this, we’re not only helping those in need, we’re helping ourselves as well because a lack of water creates a lot of conflict – I’ve seen it.”

Yaari was initially sceptical about branching into South Africa, which she knew had electricity, but she was convinced to visit the country’s rural villages by former Investec Chief Executive Stephen Koseff five years ago. Investec funded her work in the first few villages she assisted.

“What shocked me the most in South Africa’s villages were the women’s stories,” she says. “They said, ‘We’re scared, we’re being raped at night when we fetch water.’” As in the rest of Africa, South African women, often together with their daughters, wake up early to reach water sources so they can be home in time to send their children to school. On the way, they’re often attacked.

Seeing the impact of these and other harrowing stories takes its toll, but the ability to make a change keeps Yaari going. “Knowing that I can do something about it, that it won’t take too much to provide clean water, and that their lives will be transformed just motivates me to move faster,” she says.

“Villages in South Africa are much bigger than in the rest of Africa, housing up to 10 000 people, with no access to clean water,” she says. “Yet, there’s water everywhere, we just need solar energy to pump it from the aquifers.” To bring water to such large South African villages costs about R1.5 million. Through one South African donor who funds the organisation’s overhead costs and triples donations from other sources, the non-profit organisation has made a significant impact in South Africa and around the continent – but it aims to do much more.

The process of bringing water to a large village involves drilling into the aquifers; the construction of water towers; and the installation of solar panels that provide the energy needed to power the pumps. These pump water to the tanks and through gravity, water flows to the taps they install throughout the village.

“Before we start construction, we work with the community to get everyone involved. We hire 10 local villagers to work with a contractor for four months, after which they get a certificate. They learn everything about maintaining, operating, and fixing the solar water pump system. This is one of most important parts of our work – they need to be able to fix it themselves if something goes wrong.”

Throughout Innovation: Africa’s growth, Yaari has remained dedicated to working on the ground. “It’s the best part of my work. It’s what I love the most,” she says. “It’s priceless to be in the villages and to see the immediate impact of access to water. Just that moment of opening the taps and seeing the hope in the eyes of the women, children, and villagers is so rewarding.”

Once there’s clean water in a village, everything changes, she says. “Children go to school, education improves, and fewer people are sick. What inspires us the most is when we return to a village and see agriculture and brick making, creating economic independence. Energy is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.”

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Learning from Poland – Holocaust Centre gets new director

TALI FEINBERG

The incoming director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC), Jakub Nowakowski, may not be Jewish or South African, but he comes from Poland, the country where much of the Nazi genocide took place, and has a passion for Holocaust education and learning from his country’s past.

Nowakowski, who goes by the nickname Kuba, was born and raised in Kazimierz, the former Jewish district of Kraków. Coming from a non-Jewish family that has lived in that region for generations, he felt compelled to research its history from an early age. This led to a lifelong quest of trying to understand the Holocaust and educating about the tragic consequences of prejudice. Now, he has chosen to bring his expertise and passion to Cape Town, and by extension, the South African Jewish community.

It has been a long journey to get to this point. “When I was brought up in post-war Poland in the 1980s, no Jewish story was present,” he says. “There was no pride in the fact that the oldest synagogue in Poland was around the corner, and that some of the most important Jewish scholars, rabbis, philosophers are buried in the cemeteries [in Kazimierz]. Poland is unique because for centuries, it was a centre of Jewish civilisation. At the end of 18th century, about 75% of all Jews lived in what was then the Kingdom of Poland. And then, 200 years later, it became the ground zero of the Holocaust.”

Growing up, “We lived in this ‘Atlantis’, not knowing what surrounded us,” he says. “At some point, I discovered fragments of that past. I realised that these were things that survived the Shoah and had somehow found a way into our lives. Since then, I’ve been looking for answers. To be honest, I’m still looking for answers, perhaps to different questions, but it’s something that has always pushed me forward.”

Nowakowski graduated from the department of Jewish Studies at the Jagiellonian University in 2007, where he wrote his thesis on Jewish resistance in Kraków during World War II. His interest in Jewish history and Polish-Jewish relations led him to become a student volunteer and member of the Polish-American-Jewish Alliance for Youth Action, creating dialogue between young Poles, Jews, and Americans.

In 2005, Nowakowski joined the staff of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, which opened the previous year. In 2006, he joined the museum’s education department, and in 2008, he became its manager. In 2010, after an international competition, Nowakowski was appointed the Galicia Jewish Museum’s director. He has also curated exhibitions, written books, and given lectures internationally on the Holocaust.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Kraków shortly before he and his young family made their way to

Cape Town, Nowakowski said, “I’ve been the Galicia Jewish Museum director for 13 years and it’s been an amazing time. They’ve been intensive years. In 2010, we had about 20 000 visitors. In 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had more than 70 000 visitors to the museum. On top of that, we’ve worked with more than 40 000 people across Poland. Then the pandemic and the war in Ukraine hit, with thousands of refugees coming to Kraków.

“My wife and I thought it might be time for a change, and we’ve been looking for a place where we can make a change. In Poland, we were able to change how non-Jewish Poles perceived Polish-Jewish history and Polish-Jewish relations.”

He has worked with Holocaust educators in South Africa over the years, had exhibitions travel to South Africa, and has hosted groups from South Africa in Poland. “I’ve been interested in the context of South Africa – how to teach the Holocaust in a place that has so much trauma and pain. When I learned about this opening at the CTHGC, I thought perhaps this is the next place.”

He’s excited about many aspects of the new role. “One of the biggest questions we’ve been



Jakub Nowakowski

asking ourselves is why non-Jewish Poles should be interested in Jewish history and the Holocaust. I guess this is the same question that people are asking in South Africa: why non-Jewish African people that often haven’t met a Jew in their lives and are far away from Europe, Poland, and Auschwitz should care? And, what are the universal lessons of the Holocaust that are important for people all over the world?

“This is one of the challenges, and it’s also one of the things that excites me, that we’ll be able to try to find answers to, and work within this new

context.”

He “believes in evolution rather than the revolution”, he says, and he’s not rushing headlong into making changes. “Certainly, the first months will be for me to learn, soak in everything, and get to know everybody. The centre has been doing amazing work for years and its educational programmes are impressive. What I’ll be able to bring with me is a bit of a different context, coming from Europe and having worked with institutions from Europe and the United States.

“In many ways, the centre is different from most others around the world,” he says. “Most of the people that are coming to the centre are non-Jewish Africans. And again, we need constantly to ask ourselves how to make this relevant. What are the unique lessons of the Holocaust that will be important for them beyond the basic facts? The centre is unique in its location, its audience, its special community of [Holocaust] survivors, and the wonderful community that surrounds it.”

He has visited South Africa, and from what he’s seen so far, “the community is strong and proud of its identity. I find it fascinating and impressive. The community is diverse and the infrastructure of life – schools, synagogues, museums – this is all very impressive, especially when one comes from post-Holocaust Eastern Europe. We’ve been taken by how generous and friendly people have been, both Jewish and non-Jewish. We’re excited to be coming to Cape Town, and we hope we’ll be able to become part this wider family and community.”

Cup runneth over for mighty duo in Morocco

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Johannesburg octogenarian Roz Bernstein and her younger bridge partner, Sharon Lang, are heading to Morocco next month in the hope of becoming the first South Africans to win the Venice Cup at the biennial World Bridge Team Championships.

The 84-year-old Bernstein, who works as a bookkeeper, and her fellow former teacher, Lang, are two Jewish players in a South African team of six that will represent the country at the Cup, which is taking place in Africa for the first time.

The championship is being held at the luxurious Mövenpick Mansour Eddahbi Palais des Congrès Marrakech Hotel in Marrakesh, Morocco, from 20 August to 2 September.

South Africa’s three pairs, one being Bernstein and Lang, will each play an equal number of the three two-hour matches that the team will play on each day for seven days.

Eight countries qualify for the knockout stages after the seven days. “It’s a bit like a soccer league where they have a round robin and then quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals,” Lang says.

Morocco, as the host nation, as well as South Africa and Egypt will be three of the 22 countries from across the world at the championship.

The winning country will lift the prestigious Venice Cup trophy, which has been awarded to the winners on 22 occasions since the first edition in 1974 in Venice. The Bermuda Bowl is awarded to the winners of the open event and the d’Orsi Senior Bowl is awarded to the winners of the seniors’ event.

Bernstein competed at two previous championships, in Shanghai and Bali, and Lang is gearing up for her debut at the tournament. The pair made the South African team for the 2020 championship in Italy, but it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lang and Bernstein, who have been playing together since 2015, played in two sets of trials, first to qualify for the South African Ladies Team in February, and then to qualify as one of the two countries to represent Africa at this year’s championships.

In the latter trials, they came up against Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Kenya, and Réunion in June. “We played against those countries online, as has been the case since the onset of the pandemic, but monitored at the bridge club in Linksfield,” Bernstein says.

At the championship, the players will be seated at tables in a very large hall, Lang says. “It’s quite strict. The players will be subject to drug testing and won’t be able to eat or smoke inside the venue. No cellphones are allowed either.”

Bernstein and Lang have been “very successful” as a pair, the former says. “We’ve won three out of the four times we’ve participated in the trials for the South African team – in 2017, 2020, and this year. Before the pandemic, we

played mainly at the club. Now, we play probably three or four nights a week online and once a week at the local bridge club.”

Bernstein’s late husband, Michael, was a good bridge player and taught her how to play the game in 1960, the year they got married. “We played a lot together, although not as partners. It takes a long time before you really play serious bridge. At that stage, I was young and I had children. I would say I probably started playing seriously in 1980. After Michael passed away, it became more important for me to play.”

Lang started playing the game seriously in 2000 after working as a secondary school French teacher for 10 years. “When I stopped teaching, I became a desperate housewife and was bored, so I took up bridge to be able to socialise with my friends and keep myself amused and stimulated. I found it very difficult in the beginning because I hadn’t studied since university and it was difficult to retain the knowledge. But it’s become easier as I’ve gone along. It’s certainly a game that wakes your senses.”

Lang has “tremendous admiration” for Bernstein. “She’s the most phenomenal person in terms of stamina and the knowledge she maintains. She’s older than me, but by the way she conducts her life, you wouldn’t think so.”

Bernstein says she doesn’t feel her age. “I’ve just carried on playing and fortunately, I’ve been able to. I’ve put a lot of effort in. One has to at this level.”

She says the game has “progressed enormously” over the years. “It has become a science almost. It’s just not the same game that I started learning 60 years ago.”

Lang says you learn a lot about yourself as a bridge player – how competitive you really are, and how resilient you are, “because there are a lot of disappointments in bridge, and you have to learn how to handle them”.

Bridge is a game you never master, Bernstein says. “However good you get, you’re always learning and there’s always someone better. You can play it for fun. You can enjoy it at any level. That’s what’s incredible about the game. You can play it as you wish. When you take it seriously, you need to put a lot of effort in, work with your partner, and have stamina.”

She says team spirit is important. “We’ve realised over the years that the best team doesn’t always consist of the best players. It consists of the most harmonious mix of people.”

It’s crucial to find a “congenial” partner, she says. “They don’t have to be your best friend, but you need to have some kind of rapport with them at the table.”

Playing bridge gives you “a massive social passport in terms of meeting people in your own city and from overseas,” Bernstein says. “Somehow, you just know somebody wherever you go. Bridge is such a such a worldwide preoccupation.”



Photo: Michael Salomon

Roz Bernstein and Sharon Lang

Post-traumatic stress counsellor **Debbi Rozowsky** has just released a book, *Having to Step Up*, that focuses on dealing with trauma. The SA Jewish Report caught up with her.

I've experienced so many of the issues my clients face, and this book, while primarily a memoir, offers the reader many practical and inspirational ways to step up in their own lives. With all the information I've gleaned from studying and from my clients' input over 25 years, I have a lot of knowledge relatable to every reader to share. I use case studies of sessions I have had with my clients to highlight similar issues that I've faced in my life, but I changed names and put in a few "red herrings" to guarantee client confidentiality.

In a crisis, we can step up, step aside and pretend it's not happening, or fall down. I am by nature someone who has stepped up to the many traumas I have had to face in my life, and have overcome them by doing so. I show the reader how they too, can step up to life's challenges.

I was a victim of a bomb blast in Johannesburg in 1989, which I write about in the book. As a result, I developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which lasted seven years. I sought help, but in South Africa at the time, there was hardly any professional who had knowledge of PTSD. I moved back to my home city, Cape Town, and through a psychologist there, learned about volunteer counsellors that the South African Police Service (SAPS) was seeking to train. I joined, and only in training by psychologists from the Trauma Centre for Violence and Torture, did I learn about PTSD. I worked for the SAPS for six years before opening my own practice. I didn't want anyone else to question why they were feeling so dysregulated after surviving crime.

I believe was mentally unstable; the bomb which was planted on the outside wall of my bedroom; parenting a child who is on the autistic spectrum; dealing with a gambling addiction; and surviving cancer and multiple losses, most notably that of my husband.

I'm an extremely positive and resilient person. I had to deal with what I faced, and I did it with courage, knowledge (and humour!)

There are a limited amount of emotions, behaviour, and somatic responses that we share as human beings. Having experienced a great deal of these, I can relate, and most importantly, I can offer my clients insights and knowledge that I might never have gained other than through clinical learning.

A client will generally have dysregulation of the nervous system after trauma and an excess of adrenalin and cortisol in the body. They don't feel like their usual self, and have emotional, physical, and behavioural changes such as hyper-vigilance, which they haven't experienced before. They come to the session in a state of despair and after the session, they are much more contained. This is done by unburdening themselves about what's happening to them. I explain the symptoms that may follow and how to deal with them, normalising their appropriate



reaction, and when appropriate, they box my boxing bag and release their adrenalin, and just this action will make them feel more grounded and like their old selves. Information and practical ways of dealing with their trauma brings it down considerably. In further sessions, we explore other issues that have come up as a result of their trauma, and deal with those too.

I wrote the book for those who, perhaps, had imperfect parenting, struggled with self-esteem, self-soothed at times, and felt invisible, shamed, or not quite good enough. This book is for all readers as all of us can relate to many of the topics in the book. I hope that they'll gain insight into how to overcome their own challenges, courage, and the knowledge to step up.

I wrote parts of the book three times over. My computer wiped out my first two manuscripts for some reason. I was really upset about it the first time but the second time, I decided to believe that it wasn't good enough and I was meant to start again. I learned from a fellow author about editing. There are parts of my life that I have left out of the book, but in my quest for authenticity and vulnerability, I have exposed my past in the hope of giving others permission to share a little of themselves to safe people. Disclosure brings about intimacy and connection, and that's what everyone wants in their lives.

We think we can plan how we'll deal with traumatic events. We think either we'll be Superman or we'll

freeze. The wonderful thing about our brain is that we're equipped with an innate survival mechanism that tells the conscious mind exactly how to survive the trauma while it is happening. We can fight, physically or verbally. We can flee, we can freeze and become obedient and go with the flow, and we can also fawn, which is people pleasing. All these options aren't conscious, but once the unconscious has selected the most appropriate reaction to the circumstances, we go with it for our survival. If you think about how old you are today, every choice that you have made consciously or unconsciously has kept you alive until today. We're more resilient than we think. Counselling is extremely important for the trauma or crime survivor as it offers a way back through understanding and a confidential space to say your truth without judgement.

Traumas include car accidents, fires, train accidents, crime, divorce, death, illness, retirement, acute problems in the marriage, teenage angst, addictions, and dealing with or witnessing these in other people close to you. It's essentially a sudden negative experience but there is also CPTSD (complex post-traumatic disorder) which is trauma and PTSD in which the events have been repeated over a long time. This could include childhood abandonment, abuse, feeling physically or emotionally unsafe, and it could include people who have been kidnapped and held for some time. Trauma comes from many triggers, and we don't compare, because everyone's trauma is real for them whether or not it's perceived to be pertinent in relation to other people's.

I hope to assist others. I added information from worldwide experts on the brain, relationships, addiction, and other topics, and I believe it's going to be a valuable and interesting book for all readers.

- To order the book, go to: debbirozowsky.co.za

A woman in a pink shirt and yellow sari is running through a crowd of water, with the India Gate in the background. The text "INDIA'S DAUGHTER" is overlaid in the top right corner.

Super Jews need effective deputies

"You are the super Jews of the world" was how demographer Barry Kosmin summed up the results of the 1998 survey on the South African Jewish community conducted by the University of Cape Town's Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research and the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research. As that survey showed, compared with its diaspora counterparts, South African Jewry scored remarkably highly by every measure of what makes a Jewish community strong and vibrant, among them levels of religious practice and affiliation, communal involvement, availability of Jewish education, social-welfare reach and infrastructure, and connections to Israel. Two subsequent Kaplan Centre surveys, the most recent of which was conducted in 2019, produced similar results.

The amazing Jewish life that we lead in South Africa has much to do with living in an environment in which such a life is able to flourish. We should celebrate how religious practice is respected and protected in this country. Because of this, strictly observant members of our community are able to live in full compliance with what halacha requires while also being fully engaged members of the wider society.

However, upholding religious rights doesn't just happen. A core part of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' (SAJBD's) mandate is to ensure that observant community members can practice their religion without being unfairly disadvantaged, and accordingly, the professional staff working with the elected leadership are at the call of South African Jewry whenever these rights are challenged. Most are familiar with what we do in terms of combating antisemitism, but our work in upholding our community's religious rights is less well known, hence I will share some examples.

When observant Jewish students at local universities have exams or other study requirements

Karen Milner



on Shabbat or the *chagim*, it's the Board that works with the relevant institution to find a fair accommodation. On average, the SAJBD deals with about 300 exams a year. Resolving such cases often necessitates much creative thinking and compromise, as well as many logistical challenges. There's no convenient one-size-fits-all solution, each individual case needs to be carefully assessed. It would be no exaggeration to state that without the SAJBD, it would be difficult for observant Jewish students to study in South Africa, and hundreds of graduates wouldn't have graduated without our intervention.

Another religious-related question that the Board must sadly involve itself with from time to time is in helping bereaved families to repatriate the bodies of loved ones who have passed away overseas. This is an exceptionally complicated and bureaucratic process, but thanks to the networks we have built within the departments of health, home affairs, and international relations, we have been able to address these situations as speedily as possible. Other halachic-related matters we have addressed include issues around *brit milah*, and more recently, threats to *shechita*, something that our fellow communities in the diaspora have to fight for on a regular basis.

All this and other SAJBD activities obviously don't pay for themselves, so I take the opportunity to thank our wonderful donors who recognise the importance of what we do and ensure that we have the wherewithal to continue doing it. Those interested in learning more about our work and who may likewise wish to make a contribution, small or large, are most welcome to get in touch with me on sajbd@sajbd.org.

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

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THOUGHTS TO LOVE, TO LIVE

Sensitive husband? In your dreams!

Although in the real world I might have done nothing wrong, the fact that my wife had had a dream that I did makes it immaterial.

I needed to apologise to her for having been so awful to her. In her dream.

This is how the conversation went. “I had such a terrible night.” She said. “Oy!” I respond. “What happened?” “I dreamed we had such a fight, and I couldn’t believe the terrible things you said.” She’s clearly disturbed by the memory of it all. And in recalling it is becoming even more upset and angry with me. “Wait!” I say. “You do know it was a dream. It didn’t happen.” I’m now becoming a bit hysterical as I can see no way to defend myself and can also see the way this conversation is going. It’s like watching a train crash in slow motion with no way to stop it from happening. “I’m not demented!” She responds, matching my tone and anxiety, “I know that. But it was exactly something you could have said.”

And so, of course, I apologised. And,

of course, I promised never to do what it was that I did again. And being of kind heart, she graciously accepted my apology even though deep down she knew that as much as I meant it when I said it, there’s a great likelihood that I’ll do exactly what I said I wouldn’t again.

We went to a wedding a few weeks ago. The couple were young and in love and radiated the optimism only found at weddings. The groom, a lovely young guy, in addressing his shiny new bride thanked her for (already) teaching him to be “sensitive and vulnerable”. That she had achieved this in the few months of their courtship and engagement is remarkable. But I did wonder out loud what she was going to do with the next 50 years, being the overachiever that she clearly is.

When I posed this question to my wife, she rolled her eyes and suggested that maybe I could learn a thing or two from the couple. Fair comment, considering that she has been giving me sensitivity and vulnerability training for more than 30 years now – and isn’t convinced she has succeeded with either.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



There’s a fantastic scene in the movie *White Men Can’t Jump*. Woody Harrelson and Rosie Perez are in bed together; she’s studying for *Jeopardy!*, and he’s just lying around. She turns to him and says, “Honey, I’m thirsty,” so he gets up, walks to the kitchen sink, fills up a glass of water, comes back, lies down in bed, and hands her the glass of water. She takes the glass of water, looks at it, and tosses it in his face. He says, “What the hell, what did I do wrong?” and she says, “Honey, I said I was thirsty. I didn’t want a glass of water. I wanted empathy. I wanted you to say I know what it’s like to be thirsty.”

It’s apparent that although men and women seem to be of the same species, the reality is that they aren’t. And that no matter how long they might be married, it’s the differences that guarantee that life isn’t boring. Even if they dream otherwise.

Letters

ENCOURAGING ANARCHY ISN’T DEMOCRATIC, IT’S FASCIST

In a democracy, when a political party wins an election, it means that the majority of the voters in the country voted for it. And it has the legal right to govern until the next general election. In a democracy, if you win by even one vote, you have won. If you lose, you go back to the drawing board and plan to win the next election.

In a democracy, you don’t take to the streets, block highways, disrupt people’s lives, and harm those that won the election. That’s anarchy. And when you don’t get arrested for transgressing, something is amiss with those who are supposed to keep the peace.

Anyone who thinks that Israel today is a democracy is seriously misguided. The so-called left-wing, which has behaved like right-wing thugs, has ruined Israeli democracy. From now on, when a political party loses an election, there will be chaos. The people who have been demonstrating should be ashamed of themselves. They have ruined democracy in Israel for the foreseeable future.

For those soldiers and airmen who have stated that they will refuse to heed an army call-up, all I can say is that they don’t

deserve to don the uniform of an Israeli soldier. When I served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the party I voted for lost an election, the thought of refusing to heed a call-up never entered my head. The IDF will never be the same again. Soldiers will refuse to serve because they don’t like the political party in power.

I recently watched a documentary on the rise of Hitler, and the way that he used his Brownshirts to bring him to power is exactly what Lapid, Gantz, and Barak have done. Hitler couldn’t destroy the Jewish people, but the troika of fuhrers will destroy Israel unless a stop is put to their fascist plan.

To all those who have been demonstrating, I say, come to your senses! If you are unhappy, wait for the next election and if you win, you can change whatever it is that you are unhappy about. But I’ll take a bet that if the fuhrers come to power, they won’t change anything Netanyahu is doing. What they are trying to do is bring down the present government by encouraging mayhem.

They won’t succeed. The majority will continue to rule.
– Chaim Hillel Myerson, Cape Town

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