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# Jewish Report

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# SA-Iran alliance – another Bric in the wall

**NICOLA MILTZ**

**T**he growing affable relationship between South Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran is distressing in the latter's ongoing determination to destroy Israel. This reared its head in the wake of last week's SA-Iran Joint Commission of Co-operation (JCC) in Pretoria.

A high-level meeting between Dr Naledi Pandor, the minister of the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), and her Iranian counterpart, Dr Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, took place last Thursday, 10 August, as the two co-chaired the 15th session of their JCC.

destruction of Israel, enjoy an historical relationship. Both countries interact regularly, notably through the JCC, which was established in 1995.

According to Dirco, this is the longest running and one of the most active structured bilateral mechanisms South Africa has with any country in the Middle East.

Iran, known for its gross human rights violations particularly against women and other minority groups, as well as its declared enmity towards Israel, has greased its ties with South Africa as Western sanctions continue to grip the oppressive theocracy.

Iran has asked South Africa to support its request for membership of Brics, the five-nation bloc of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, as South Africa prepares to hold a Brics summit later this month.

Iran is one of a number of nations lobbying to join the bloc, and it's understood that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Russia's close military ally, plans to attend the Brics summit in South Africa next week, from 22 to 24 August. Cuba, Venezuela, and 20 other countries have also applied to join Brics.

During the foreign ministers' meeting, they discussed strengthening ties to facilitate trade and economic co-operation and other issues including education, energy, environmental co-operation, security, and defence. They also tackled global areas of conflict, like Yemen and Israel, and future high-level visits, co-operation, and partnerships.

Ironically, they noted the increasing threat of terrorism and extremism globally, and called for the international community to combat this scourge. Both countries agreed to strengthen bilateral and multilateral consultations on human rights in international fora, in particular the United Nations.

They reaffirmed their commitment to human rights, and expressed concern at the double standards when dealing with human rights and combating terrorism.

They condemned Israel's expansion of settlements in the West Bank, and called on the world to strengthen support for the Palestinians in establishing a sovereign, independent Palestinian state including Jerusalem as its capital, and called for the lifting of the siege in Gaza.

Strengthening ties between the two countries isn't a new thing says Steven Gruzd, political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs.

"It has been incrementally building for years. Having Iran in Brics has the

potential to make the grouping more radical, and South Africa would have an anti-Israel ally in the bloc.

"Given that Iran wants to wipe Israel off the map, its support for Hamas and Hezbollah and its closeness to acquiring nuclear weapons, we should be concerned," he said.

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, said, "The African National Congress [ANC] government has always had good relations with Iran, but the possibility of Iran joining Brics has probably intensified co-operation between them."

"Specific issues relating to condemning Israel's settlement expansion and support for a sovereign, independent Palestinian state and Jerusalem as its capital might, by anyone else, have reflected some sort of idea of a two-state solution – which South Africa allegedly supports. However, knowing Iran as we do and its hatred of Israel, I suggest that's not what the Iranians have in mind," she said.

"They just want South Africa to become a more devoted ally. As for the 'siege' of Gaza, Hamas could resolve the problem if it stopped bringing arms into Gaza including those given to it by Iran."

Security experts have cautioned that Iran's proxy, the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah, operates in several African countries, including South Africa, posing a threat to these states' national security interests.

The ANC has already cozied up to Palestinian terror organisation Hamas, another of Iran's proxies, by hosting visiting senior Hamas figures.

Security consultant Jasmine Opperman, who specialises in extremism and political violence, said, "The Iranian Revolutionary Guard is active in the Middle East in Syria and in Nigeria in Africa. It's also present in South Africa, not in executing attacks but spreading Iranian influence and Shia interpretations. All to oppose Saudi Arabia and the influence of the United States. There are intermittent reports of Iran providing financial support to Hamas and Hezbollah, which have free rein in South Africa. Is it making use of proxies in spreading influence in the Middle East and Africa? Yes."

**Continued on page 5>>**

## Tour de force

Photo: Ilan Ossendraver

Torah Academy shaliach Avromel Hayman shows his enthusiasm at the outset of the five-day Cycalve bridge-building cycling tour from Johannesburg to Durban, along with students from Soweto and Orange Farm, Torah Academy, and Israel

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**Saudi Arabia appoints first Palestinian envoy**

Saudi Arabia appointed its first-ever envoy to the Palestinian Authority on 12 August in the midst of ongoing negotiations with Israel and the United States (US) about what would be an historic Saudi-Israeli diplomatic normalisation agreement.

Nayef Al-Sudairi, the Saudi envoy to Jordan, will now also serve as a “non-resident ambassador to the state of Palestine”, the Saudi

foreign ministry announced.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have been in US-brokered discussions for months about the potential for Saudi Arabia to join some of its other Arab neighbours in formally recognising Israel and establishing diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco have since 2020 signed agreements with Israel on trade, tourism, security, and more.

Saudi Arabia has made it clear in negotiations that Israel would have to make concessions that could lead to a two-state solution. The oil-rich kingdom recognises Palestinian statehood in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and it has historically maintained that it wouldn’t establish diplomatic relations with Israel until conflict with the Palestinians is resolved.

Israel’s current right-wing government is firmly opposed to Palestinian statehood. But the *Wall Street Journal* reported last week that the US and Saudi Arabia had agreed on the “broad contours” of what a deal with Israel could look like, with a possible timeline of nine to 12 months. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman wouldn’t agree to a deal as sweeping as the Israel-UAE

“The Saudis want to convey a message to the Palestinians that they weren’t forgotten,” Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said in an interview on 13 August referring to the appointment, but “the Palestinian issue isn’t the main issue within the talks.”

**ADL teams up with frat boys to fight antisemitism**

In its latest effort to combat antisemitism on college campuses, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is turning to a particular brand of college student: frat boys.

Israel on their campuses, the organisations said.

“Our members are on the front lines of this battle on college campuses,” Rob Derdiger, AEPi’s chief executive said.

The partnership reflects the ADL’s recent strategy of expanding its reach by collaborating with other groups. The two groups have a shared history. Both are marking 110 years in existence this year, and both were formed in response to antisemitic incidents. For the ADL, the catalyst was the Leo Frank case in Georgia that resulted in the US’ only antisemitic lynching. AEPi launched at New York University after a founding member was told that his Jewish friends weren’t welcome in an existing fraternity.

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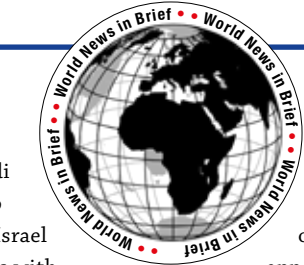
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**Holocaust ‘book box’ destroyed at German memorial**

German police are investigating a fire that destroyed a public book box dedicated to Holocaust history near a memorial at the site from which tens of thousands of Jews were deported to concentration camps and death camps in 1941 and 1942.

According to police, the fire at the “Bucherboxx” near the Track 17 memorial at the Berlin Grunewald train station was discovered in the early morning hours of 12 August. Witnesses told German news media they saw a man placing a box inside the former telephone booth that served as a street library for Holocaust reading material, and setting it on fire.

An antisemitic note was found on the site, Helmuth Pohren-Hartmann of the Stumbling Block memorial initiative in Berlin-Friedenau told the German news agency dpa. Police haven’t revealed the content of the alleged note.

The books in the Track 17 library were almost all destroyed, according to news reports. Plans are in place to replace them.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

**Which Jew am I?**



**Rabbi Yossi Chaikin**  
**The Oxford Synagogue Centre**

A chassid left his home *shtetl* for business purposes. Swiftly, he realised that his chassidic attire seemed entirely out of place amidst the bustling trade fairs of Leipzig and the corporate offices of Berlin. His *shtreimel*, long silk bekeshe, and knee-high white socks were quickly set aside. In their place, a business suit adorned him – a choice he believed was fitting for a person of his stature.

However, this transformation was confined to the city. During his visits back to his hometown, a different scene unfolded. Upon setting foot in his rebbe’s presence, he would once again embrace his chassidic regalia.

This carried on for years until one day, the chassid thought to himself, “Why am I being a hypocrite? Why do I need all this pretence for the rebbe? I must just be honest with myself and with him.” On his next visit, the man went home, *sans* chassidic garb. As was his custom, he set off for the house of his mentor, and put out his hand in greeting. “*Shalom aleichem*, rebbe. Please excuse my appearance. I’ve decided no longer to pretend and dress up for you, so I’ve come clothed the way I normally do.”

The rebbe gave his disciple a deep, long, penetrating glance. Then, with a sigh, he responded, “So it has been for me that you were dressing up. I’m truly disappointed. All along, I assumed you were getting dressed up for them.”

Starting on Friday, the powerful notes of the shofar are sounded every morning, right through the month of Elul, heralding the countdown to Rosh Hashanah. “Wake up,” the piercing, shrill sound tells us, “you are in the last month of the year. The Day of Judgement is drawing nearer.”

We indeed behave differently during this month of Elul. The soul inherently feels that the high holidays are coming up. The result is that we’re more careful and more deliberate in the way we speak or act. There’s less *lashon hara*, more attention to kashrut, better Shabbat observance, a better relationship with loved ones. Every action, each utterance, even our thoughts undergo meticulous evaluation against the backdrop of our Torah values.

Is this mere hypocrisy? Judgement on Rosh Hashanah is for the entire year’s behaviour, not just the desperate last-ditch attempts to win favour with G-d. And clearly Hashem cannot be fooled. So, why not

just be ourselves and be honest with our maker?

This raises the fundamental question: who, in fact, is the real me?

Is it the year-round Jew or the Elul Jew? Are we the individual who speaks without restraint, consumes whatever crosses our path, and yields to life’s whims? Or the conscious being who meticulously measures each action, each thought, and each word against a loftier moral and ethical scale?

If you listen closely to the shofar, it articulates a resounding message: “Embrace your genuine self.”  
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On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Moses began his ascension to Mount Sinai for the third time, coming down 40 days later on Yom Kippur with the second set of tablets and G-d’s complete mercy and forgiveness. Because of this, Elul has become the time for repentance and introspection.



# Crude and violent: ADL condemns ‘Kill the Boer’ song

TALI FEINBERG

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an international organisation that combats antisemitism and other forms of racism, has criticised Julius Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) after he led a stadium full of EFF members in singing *Kill the Boer* on 29 July complete with shooting actions and sound effects.

However, though the Equality Court in Johannesburg ruled in August 2022 that the song wasn’t hate speech or incitement, the case has now gone to the Supreme Court of Appeal and will be argued on 4 September.

The ADL, a global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism, and battling bigotry, issued a statement on 9 August in response to the debate over the song. Jonathan Greenblatt, the chief executive and national director, wrote, “While it’s a historic protest song that called for the dismantlement of apartheid in South Africa, its crude lyrics could be interpreted as a call for violence.

“At a time of intensifying political tension worldwide, we see time and again that words matter, and people, especially those in public life, should refrain from expressions that invoke the threat of violence,” he said. “Such rhetoric can prompt real-world consequences. This is true in the physical world. This is true on social media, including X. It has no place.

“At the same time, baseless claims of ‘white genocide’ have been made by right-wing extremists in the United States, particularly white supremacists, for years,” said Greenblatt. “Such wild charges have been used to excuse hate, justify harassment, and to rationalise violence. This is an issue the ADL has tracked for decades – and we’ll continue to call it out.”

The ADL statement appears to have been made in response to Elon Musk, the owner of X, formerly known as Twitter, calling on the organisation to comment. “They are openly pushing for genocide of white people in South Africa,” Musk posted on 31 July. Addressing South Africa’s president, he wrote, “@CyrilRamaphosa, why do you say nothing?”

On 4 August, Musk posted, “Why do you say nothing, @ADL?” Four days later, he wrote, “They absolutely mean literal genocide. Why are organisations like @ADL silent?” On 9 August, he wrote that he was “calling out *NY Times* & ADL in particular”. The ADL then released its statement.

However, local commentators say that, if anything, the ADL’s statement was “too soft”.

“Regarding the ADL statement, it’s important to draw a distinction between white genocide and farm murders,” says advocate Mark Oppenheimer, who represented AfriForum in the Equality Court

case. “There’s a danger in collapsing those two things. Every serious player in South Africa acknowledges that there’s no white genocide. But the fact that there’s no white genocide doesn’t mean that there isn’t a serious problem with farm murders – farmers are killed in disproportionate numbers, often the killings involve extreme torture, and the words ‘Kill the Boer’ are sometimes written in blood on the walls.”

Oppenheimer, who appeared in the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court in a series of cases to determine the boundary between freedom of expression and genuine hate speech, says the song *Kill the Boer* is clearly aimed at white Afrikaners and at farmers in circumstances when they are dealing with high levels of real-world violence. So the song is condemnable on that basis.



“The ADL statement describes it as an anti-apartheid song,” says Oppenheimer. “However, the song was first sung in 1993, at a time when apartheid was in its dying days. So, to give it this mantle of a song that was used to dismantle the apartheid regime is a dangerous thing to do when really, it’s used to persecute an ethnic minority.

“The fact that even Elon Musk, who is widely regarded as one of the most pro-free-speech people in the world, thinks that the song is objectionable, demonstrates how dangerous it is. This particular speech is an incitement of violence. It’s extreme.

“It’s interesting to note that the global reaction to Julius Malema singing *Kill the Boer* at a stadium filled with 90 000 people is so strong. People are horrified that the leader of the third biggest political party in the country would do that. There’s a genuine problem with the speech, and the global community is recognising that.

“It’s a pity that the local press has tread so softly on the issue and that it has given Malema so much slack that it requires a global response for local writers to acknowledge how deeply disturbing the chant is.”

Head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, Sarah Gon, says, “Whether *Kill the Boer* and Julius Malema’s machine gun antics play a role in farm murders is very difficult to tell. But the strand that has always run through Malema’s politics is racism – a hatred of whites. He has clearly decided that encouraging hatred of whites is a ‘vote catcher’ and his path to political glory.”

She believes the ADL’s emphasis should have been on condemning this racism. “Given how serious the situation is in South Africa – the nature of the torture and killings [in farm murders], and the effect they may have on food security – to over-emphasise American white supremacy was, to say the least, unfortunate.

“It may be a historic struggle song,” she says, “although the only reference I could find to it being sung was by African National Congress [ANC] activist Peter Mokaba at a memorial service for Chris Hani in 1993. The circumstances were understandable. The next record we have of the song being sung was at Peter Mokaba’s own funeral in 2002. Thereafter, the song has mainly been the domain of Malema both as ANC Youth League leader and EFF ‘commander-in-chief’. The song is now a racist blight on the country. Its purpose for the struggle has passed.

“Malema intended for the rally to have worldwide reach,” she says. “The huge attendance, the theatricalities of red attire, and Malema’s image as Mussolini-lite on the podium were, to say the least, disturbing.” Therefore, she thinks that “the ADL didn’t read the situation properly. The claim as to whether farm killings amount to genocide or not was secondary to denunciation of racism.”

Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), says, “With the 2024 elections around the corner, we’re seeing an intensification of dangerous vitriol. We call on our politicians to use words responsibly, especially in these highly volatile times. It has always been the SAJBD’s position that rhetoric has consequences, and words matter.”





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# Bittersweet farewell to Sugarman

TALI FEINBERG

For most of his adult life, Stephen “Sugar” Segerman believed that his musical idol, Sixto Diaz Rodriguez, was dead. The tale of how Segerman and others “brought him back to life” is one of the greatest stories of our time. So, when Rodriguez actually passed away on 9 August at the age of 81, it was a “sad and surreal” day for Segerman and thousands of fans around the world.

“I think he’s at peace because he achieved what he needed to in the end,” says Segerman. “I’m not surprised at the outpouring of grief, love, and affection, which he fully deserved.”

“Because he ‘came back from the dead’, we always thought of him as immortal,” says Segerman’s daughter, Natalia Rabinowitz. “It didn’t occur to me that he would actually die one day. I feel like he was one of the lucky ones – his story got a happy ending and he gets to live forever through his music and the movie.”

Segerman reports that Rodriguez’ daughter said he was in a hospice after having a stroke, and passed away soon after. “In July, he had a birthday party in Detroit, with musicians coming together to celebrate him. But he looked like a shadow of his former self,” he says. Years of making a living in hard labour took its toll on Rodriguez’ body, but never stole his genius.

Segerman reflects how he even got his nickname from the rock icon’s most famous ballad, *Sugarman*. “I was a huge fan, and in the army, they used to call me Sugarman. I then moved into a commune and there were three Stephens, so I became Sugar. It just feels *b’shart* [ordained] that the guy who was named after the song became involved in the story. I’m honoured that I got to be part of it.”



Stephen Segerman and Sixto Diaz Rodriguez outside Mabu Vinyl in Cape Town

Known professionally as Rodriguez, the American musician’s career was initially met with little fanfare in his home country. However, unbeknown to him, he was hugely successful in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, and his music encouraged white South Africans to question apartheid. Information about him was scarce, and it was incorrectly rumoured in South Africa that he had died by suicide. In the 1990s, determined South African fans managed to track him down, which led to an unexpected revival of his musical career.

This was told in the 2012 Academy Award-winning documentary, *Searching for Sugar Man*, which helped to bring his music finally to a global audience. Rodriguez lived his whole life in Detroit, Michigan, where he was eventually tracked down by fans Craig Bartholomew Strydom and Segerman.

When *Searching for Sugar Man*’s director, Malik Bendjelloul, went looking for “the greatest story on earth”, it was this one that grabbed his attention. “When we met for the first time, he said, ‘It’s a great story, but it won’t work if the music’s not great,’ recalls Segerman. “I played him *Cold Fact*, and he was hooked.” Looking back, Segerman feels that the film was like a “comet”, shining so bright and moving so fast, it had a life of its own.

The opening scenes of the film talk about how Rodriguez’ fans believed he had died by suicide, and he was eventually found alive and well. Yet it was the film’s director, Bendjelloul, who ultimately took his own life at an underground train station in

[about their journey to finding Rodriguez], we wanted to call Malik to clarify something. So many people miss him.”

They dedicated the book to him, and the final chapter is a tribute to this unassuming Swede, who found the story that the world didn’t know it needed about a famous musician they’d never heard of. “On days like today, [on Rodriguez passing], I really wish he was here to see the impact he made,” says Segerman.

For fans, it’s the end of an era. “Rodriguez was part of the soundtrack of my youth,” says veteran journalist Raymond Joseph. “I had *Cold Fact* on a four-track cassette that I had on constant replay for a while.”

Like many young men conscripted into the apartheid regime’s army, Rodriquez’ music offered Joseph an escape and a different narrative. “When I was conscripted in 1972 to the army, guys in my bungalow had guitars, and Rodriguez was part of their repertoire. Many of us knew his songs word for word and sang along. It made us feel free and rebellious as the army was trying to break us down.

“And when an earlier album, *Coming From Reality/After The Fact* was released in South Africa based on the success of *Cold Fact*, I fell in love with his music all over again,” says Joseph. “I met him backstage in Cape Town in 1998. He was shy and self-effacing and, it seemed, blown away by his fame in South Africa.

“But he was a different character when he came on stage. If I had died that night, I would have died a happy man. Two of my most prized possessions are CDs that he signed for me that night. In fact, I dug out *Cold Fact* and listened to it just a day or two before his death was announced. It was a great injustice that he received the recognition he so richly deserved only so late in life. But he lives on in his music and in the hearts of fans.”

“Rodriguez toured the world and had a fantastic career in the end,” says Segerman. “His daughters were so proud.” For Segerman, the greatest moment of the journey was when Rodriguez called him for the first time, in the middle of the night in Cape Town. When he said, ‘Hello, is that Sugar?’ it was a voice I knew so well ... that moment still resonates,” says Segerman. He later hosted Rodriguez in his own home.

Segerman believes the most important message of the story is that “many creative people don’t get the success they deserve, but that doesn’t mean you can give up. Be creative, because you’re blessed with it. Success can come later, and you never know when that will be.”

He says many people played a vital part in the story, especially “musicologist detective” Strydom, “who did a fortune of work” in finding Rodriguez and bringing his story to the world.

“It was a once in a lifetime thing, being part of this journey,” says Segerman. “At the *Vanity Fair* party after the Oscars when we won [best documentary], we were seated at the same table as Buzz Aldrin. I realised that, just like him, I had been to the moon, and I’m not going back. I’m just very grateful. Rodriguez’ legacy lives on.”

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# Farber-Cohen breaks stereotypes as ANCWL executive

HANNA RESNICK

“I was getting pretty irritated with being in South Africa and everyone complaining about the African National Congress government and, quite honestly, doing nothing about it,” said Gabriella Farber-Cohen, 25, who last week was voted onto the provincial executive committee of the ANC Women’s League (ANCWL). “Everyone was complaining about this at the Shabbos table while just going on and enjoying their privilege. I wanted to change this narrative. If I’m going to be part of South Africa, I’m not going to live here so that I can have a big house and a nanny, rather I’m going to live here because I want to make change in South Africa and use my privilege to uplift others and bring them to that same privilege.”

Farber-Cohen matriculated from Yeshiva College and is in her fifth and final year of an LLB at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She was previously head of the South African Union of Jewish Students at the university, however found that “no-one was really talking to us because they already saw Jews as an enemy. I decided I wanted to change this perception.

“Being someone’s enemy, you’re not going to make real change. Being someone’s friend, you’re going to be able to make the change. All of us have the power and responsibility to implement the change we want to see in the world,” she said.

The first time she got involved with the ANCWL was during the COVID-19 pandemic. “They were doing a prayer service for the country, and there wasn’t a Jewish person participating in the prayer session, so I sent them a message on Facebook saying that I was a Jewish student and part of the ANC on campus, and would love to run a prayer on behalf of the Jewish community.”

From then on, she began getting more involved in the Women’s League.

“I started to love it because we were making real change and I was able to break stereotypes, have a real influence, and go

out in the true South Africa and learn about what it means to be a white South African in a majority black impoverished country.”

She later began working on the Student Representative Council as an ANC deploy, and then started getting involved in the ANCWL’s Young Women’s Desk, leading the mental health subcommittee and doing programmes which addressed mental health in South Africa from a multiracial and multicultural perspective. She continued her involvement with the ANCWL, getting involved in court cases, lobbying for women’s rights, doing sanitary pad drives, and going into schools in townships and running education programmes.

In April 2022, the ANC’s national executive disbanded the ANCWL because its mandate was up, not having gone to conference in five years. Provincial task teams were then elected to hold a Gauteng provincial conference under the leadership of Maropene Ramokgopa, who at the time was the ANCWL national co-ordinator.

Farber-Cohen was elected with 24 other members from different provinces. She became the spokesperson for the provincial task team, and the youngest member of the team.

Leading up to the conference, she decided that she wanted to run for a position in the provincial executive committee of Gauteng.

“Around the province, each branch of the ANCWL had to send in nominations for you to be elected to the PEC [provincial executive committee]. I ran together with a group of people who I affiliated myself with, some of whom had the ambition of being elected to national positions, some into the provincial executive, and others in the regional executive,” she said. “Our slate was called the Renewal Slate.

“This all involved a lot of work,” she added. “We had meetings until about four in the morning, we ran the campaign across the province with all different women. We ran the conference and eventually got to the provincial conference, and it was highly contested. It



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ended up being a four-day conference. “I look forward to progressing in my leadership role and uplifting the women of our province by partnering with both private and public sectors so that we can bring equality, equity, and justice to all women in Gauteng,” she said. “Fifty-one percent of our population in Gauteng is made up of women, so I feel it’s essential that, in order to uplift the province, we need to uplift the majority of the population in the province.”

As a recently married religious woman, she had to keep the law of Shanah Rishonah, which states that a married couple has to sleep in the same household for the first year. Therefore, her husband was obliged to come with her to conferences and meetings. “No matter where we are, we should never compromise on our religious beliefs and religious practices,” Farber-Cohen says. “I feel extremely grateful to be in an organisation which encourages that. It feels really good to be able to tell the real story of what a Jew represents”.

Farber-Cohen hopes to continue her work and hopefully end up in Parliament, to “be

involved in the real changes of our country”. Her ambition is to help merge the private and public sectors, and create solutions “from the bottom up”.

“You don’t become a member of the ANCWL if you’re not a member of the ANC in good standing,” said PEC Secretary Teliswa Mgweba. “As a person, Gabi speaks to our character as an organisation in terms of making sure we’re striving for the emancipation of women as well as combatting any form of racial, tribalist, and ethnic discrimination or sexism.”

Community leader Benji Shulman congratulated Farber-Cohen on her achievement. “There are so many women’s issues that we need to handle, and I hope that a platform like this gives her the opportunities to address them. Gabi has a really good record of working on these sorts of things at a university level.” He also said that he “would really encourage young women in the community, whatever political party they have an interest in, to get involved because it’s an effective way of changing South Africa’s future for the better”.

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## SA-Iran alliance – another Bric in the wall >>>Continued from page 1

Rolene Marks, spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation, said the South African government, which ostensibly supports democratic values and human rights, ought to be circumspect about cozying up to a regime whose words and actions, including its suppression of women’s rights, are antithetical to South Africa’s democratic values.

“In fact, the Iranian regime is guilty of violently suppressing protest action, executing members of the LGBTQI+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning] community, and is the world’s foremost sponsor of state terror. It repeatedly calls for the destruction of the world’s only Jewish state, and Iran’s violation of human rights ranks among the worst in the world.

“South Africa’s cozying up to Iranian leaders is in direct contrast to our venerated Constitution, which protects the rights of all. These actions don’t benefit our country or people, and place South Africa at odds with much of the world, including the Middle East,” she said.

“The government is doing a disservice to South Africa

and South Africans when it builds ties to hateful, violent, and repressive regimes instead of growing relations with countries with an interest in a stable, positive, democratic future. That the ANC government obsessively bashes democratic Israel but befriends Iran is an entirely unacceptable and inconsistent basis for foreign policy,” Marks said.

In a moving speech to the US Congress last month, Israeli President Isaac Herzog urged American legislators not to remain indifferent to the Iranian regime’s call to wipe Israel off the map. “The Iranian regime, together with its proxies throughout the Middle East, is working towards destroying the state of Israel, killing the Jews, and challenging the entire free world,” he said.

Herzog said Iran wasn’t striving to attain nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

“Iran is building nuclear capabilities that pose a threat to the stability of the Middle East and beyond. Every country or region controlled or infiltrated by Iran has experienced utter havoc.”

The 16th JCC will take place in Tehran.







# Outpouring of Jewish support in fire-ravaged Hawaii

TALI FEINBERG AND  
RON KAMPEAS (JTA)

Having witnessed and enjoyed the magnificence of Maui island in Hawaii, South African-born Rabbi Michoel Goldman was horrified to hear of the devastation wrought by wildfires on 8 August, which left an entire town destroyed, hundreds of people dead or missing, and many unanswered questions.

Goldman lives on a neighbouring Hawaiian island, and is one of Rabbi Yossi and Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman's children who are carrying out Chabad *shlichut* in far-flung places.

He told the *SA Jewish Report* this week how he and his family recently visited the nearby island of Maui for a holiday. They really enjoyed the historic streets and visited stores owned by Israelis. Never did he imagine that a few months later, wildfires would rampage across this paradise.

"I visited there a few months ago with my wife and our kids. We actually walked through Lahaina [the town that was destroyed by the wildfires]. There were a bunch of Israeli stores in Lahaina, so we knew some of the people working there and went to visit them. We walked around and took a boat tour. So we actually know the area intimately. In the pictures, we see of all the destroyed areas – we walked on the streets a few months ago. So we know exactly where it is."

Goldman, who is travelling at the moment, said he felt devastated by a disaster that hit so close to home. "Kauai is 200 miles [321km] away [from Maui], but it's heart breaking and painful to witness, even from afar. Even though the islands are apart, the people of Hawaii all feel interconnected. So it hits home. We're in mourning with them. It's a tragedy of epic proportions.

"Everyone is trying to offer support to everyone affected. People are hosting the homeless. I know some Jewish people who took in some newly homeless people. People from other islands are dropping off supplies at local churches, stores, and even the shipping

companies are delivering to Maui from all islands. There's a thing in Hawaii called the 'aloha spirit'. It's a sense of human connection and honouring one another with care and love. There's an outpouring of *aloha* between people now that's legendary."

At the same time, he says, "There's a lot of resentment and hard questions people are asking, like why the government wasn't properly prepared for such a disaster. Some things are beyond our control, like hurricane winds spreading the wildfire but, for example, a better warning system to alert people to evacuate [would have made a difference]. There's an island-wide alarm system for potential tsunamis. I'm not sure why it wasn't activated to alert people to escape.

"Oddly police were blocking some exit roads from Lahaina intending to direct traffic but caused traffic jams and people couldn't escape the inferno. So, people are angry at the government's mismanagement. The national guard came in to help in the aftermath and also attempt to keep curious people out. It blocked access but also didn't allow locals to bring much-needed food and gas for their friends. So besides the tragedy itself, there are lots of tough questions people seem to be asking."

Jewish groups in the United States and in Hawaii are launching relief efforts. The wildfires have all but destroyed Lahaina, which Hawaii's Jewish governor, Josh Green, toured on 10 August with Brian Schatz, the state's Jewish senator.

"What we saw today was likely the largest natural disaster in Hawaii state history," Green said. There are 2 000 to 3 000 Jews in Maui with two synagogues – the Jewish Congregation of Maui, which wasn't in the evacuation zone, and Chabad of Maui, which was.

Congregants from both were among those evacuated.

Rabbi Mendy Kransjansky, known as Rabbi Krans, is the Chabad rabbi on Maui. Miraculously, he and his family weren't on the island at the time, and the fires stopped just short of the area where their shul stands. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Maui, he says, "The Rebbe sent my parents to Hawaii in 1987 to bring Chabad to the Hawaiian Islands. So I claim to be the first

short of our neighbourhood. There's a tremendous amount of devastation. Our hearts are heavy with the loss to the greater community and the loss of life. Thank G-d everyone we know from the Jewish community is accounted for, but many have lost their homes and their businesses, and got away with just the shirts on their backs.

"Chabad hosted some displaced people. There were people who weren't able to get back to their hotels and came to Chabad. We're organising places for people to be put up, and we've set up a fund to assist those with disaster relief.

"Our hearts are heavy, and our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who have lost so much," he says. "As we enter the month of Elul, which is the month of mercy, we prayed to Hashem to give us strength to soldier on and help those in need. There's a long road to recovery. The Jewish community of Maui has come together – helping each other, hosting, checking, and making sure everyone's okay."

Kransjansky and his family will stay on in Maui. "We're here to help for the long haul, and there's much rebuilding to do," he says. "We're touched by the outpouring of love and support from all over the world, Jews from every corner of the world reaching out to see how they can be of assistance. They give us much *chizuk* [strength]. Whatever anyone can do to help those in need is greatly appreciated. We take strength from our Jewish brethren around the world, reaching out to help, and we pray to G-d for much fortitude in the moment and going forward."

• To support Chabad's relief fund, visit [JewishMaui.com/Relief](http://JewishMaui.com/Relief)



The destroyed and burned homes and buildings in Maui, Hawaii

local-born rabbi from Hawaii in history. I was actually off-island, visiting family when the fires broke out, but I came back to the island as soon as possible.

"In the initial couple of days, there was a lot of chaos on the ground," he says. "Power lines were down, we were fielding calls from all over the world, people were trying to touch base with their loved ones to make sure they were okay, and we were putting people in touch with whoever we heard was safe.

"Thank G-d, the Chabad centre was under evacuation notice. We had a volunteer standing by to grab the Torah and the holy books and run, but the fire stopped

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# Law enforcement not the only route to taxi compliance

OPINION

GLEN HENECK



The sad irony of last week’s taxi strike is that the only parties who benefited were those it was intended to punish and confront. The leadership of the Democratic Alliance got to look like paragons of reason and decency, while their comfortable, car-owning supporters enjoyed a full week of low-stress commuting. No tail-gating, no red-light flouting, no cutting in – and correspondingly reduced levels of agitation, indignation, and homicidal ideation.

As for the losers and victims, the list is painfully long. Tens of thousands of working people were forced to walk home, after dark, exposing themselves to multiple forms of unpleasantness and risk. This while business owners faced not just no-shows and early closures, but also failed supply lines as transport vehicles were specifically targeted by strikers. It’s been a long while since major supermarkets have been denuded of basic supplies; to say nothing of their smaller equivalents.

There were, inevitably, cases of looting of shops, stoning of cars, and torching of “enemy” buses, but there were also, tragically, at least five fatalities. Lawyers and moralists can debate whether the organisers can be properly blamed or held liable in each case, but the unarguable fact is that there are five or more families who would not now be grieving were it not for the strike action taken.

Among them the wife and children of a British doctor who was shot dead in Nyanga while on holiday. His death is no more awful or poignant than any of the others, but it’s more consequential given that it got widespread coverage in the British press.

That brings up what’s arguably the worst aspect of the whole misadventure, namely its economic and psychological impact. The future of our beloved, fractured, tortured, ever-fragile country depends to a very meaningful degree on the right kind of investment, and there are few things more inimical to the requisite investor confidence than public displays of bloody minded, faux-revolutionary destructiveness.

Our stock had gone up quite nicely in July – reduced loadshedding, full dams, nice netball, “best-tourist-destination-in-the-world” again, but a week into August, and all the optimism was undone.

The whole wretched business was an unmitigated disaster, even by the union’s lights. That said, what we need to bear in mind is that this was just a single episode in a long running, real-world drama.

The taxi industry is an enormously important one, nationally, complete with 200 000 operating units and as many as 12 million regular users, so what we need to be focusing serious attention on is how to make it work better, for all concerned.

Fulminating about a culture of impunity may be cathartic, but it does precisely nothing in terms of improving the situation on the streets. On the streets where, in fairness, there are too many

operators, too few enforceable rules, and not a single old-fashioned bus stop.

If better law enforcement won’t cut it though, what other options are there, if any? Putting in speed governors has always struck me as sensible, but I do have two other suggestions, one of them borrowed.

In Kenya they have a system known as “heckle and chide”. Basically what it entails is passengers being encouraged and empowered to admonish drivers to slow down or stick to the rules. This is to say using social suasion to encourage better driving. That could be worth trying, but a better bet, on the face of it, is to make use of the cruder type of incentive touted by behavioural economists. That being financial.

What has already been tried, with little success, is government subsidies for selected (exemplary) drivers. What I’m suggesting is the reintroduction of taxi advertising, but not on the same basis as before. I get that no sensible corporation would want its brand to be associated visibly with driving delinquency, so the caveat here is that if the favoured taxi is badly driven,

the monthly fee is liable to summary revocation.

Drivers are incentivised, in other words, to do their work properly, and other road users appreciate that the branding is thoughtfully pro-social. With the rapid development of car-tracking technology, the necessary monitoring can be done without putting other drivers at risk from taking photos or writing down numbers while driving.

A model like this will doubtless involve hiccoughs, and quarrels. As Thomas Sowell reminds us, “There are no solutions, only trade-offs.” On balance, though, this feels like a good-for-everyone deal.

The brand people get great exposure. The taxi people, both drivers and owners, get significantly more money. The driving public gets to be safer and less triggered. And the roads get to be a lot more colourful.

Bears consideration, no?

• *Glen Heneck is a lawyer, a businessman, and an occasional OpEd writer. He is the vice-chairperson of the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies.*

# Strike one for rule of law in the Cape

OPINION

JACQUES WEBER



The Santaco (the South African National Taxi Council) seven-day stayaway in the Western Cape last week following the City of Cape Town’s allegedly unfair impounding of its taxis, created a transportation nightmare for commuters.

Unfortunately, protests often involve violence, and this strike by South Africa’s largest taxi union was no exception. More than 180 criminal incidents directly linked to the taxi strike were reported across the province. Communities in areas like Khayelitsha, Nyanga, and Langa couldn’t use alternative means of transportation and faced threats or assault if they attempted to try commute to work, as some individuals aimed to bring the city to a standstill.

Roads were blocked off by protesters, private vehicles were stoned, and four Golden Arrow Buses destroyed. Once again, the violence was linked to reducing the number of buses on the road.

The City of Cape Town took a firm stand against the violence and deployed thousands of security personnel to stabilise the situation, but the most important message conveyed during the strike

the law.

Minister Chikunga and Police Minister Bheki Cele would probably have accepted any terms requested by Santaco, even if it meant ignoring the rules and laws set out in the NTA. If such ministers took the same stance that the city did on most matters, we wouldn’t be sitting with the lawless country that we unfortunately have.

The strike had a significant economic impact on the Western Cape, costing millions, and tragically, lives were lost, for which there’s no price. Supplies were disrupted, resulting in most supermarkets not being able to restock their shelves with essentials, and of course, this was made worse by consumers, who went into panic purchase mode.

Once again, the city, through smart policing, began escorting key deliveries such as bread, milk, and such suppliers to ensure that they could deliver daily essentials to distributors safely.

Such a stance was necessary to enforce the rules of the country, something which South Africans tend to ignore, exacerbated by the fact that we have a national government which daily demonstrates that it accepts crime and the breaking of laws, especially considering the number of its politicians do so.

This said, the issue of impoundments will raise its head again, and as I write this, Santaco has expressed its dissatisfaction as more vehicles were impounded over the weekend. It intends to seek a court interdict against the City of Cape Town.

This is the view of someone who has been in politics and has private transport, but the views of those who depend on public transport to earn an income will be different, rightfully so.

For many, it’s about being able to survive and earn an income in a challenging country with high unemployment rates.

Over the past 30 years, the African National Congress-led national government has neglected the train infrastructure, which was once the most important transportation system. This has allowed the minibus taxi industry, a private sector, to gain considerable power as the primary mode of transport for millions of South Africans.

• *Jacques Weber was a councillor for the City of Cape Town for three years. He’s also the founder of JWI.News, a Cape Town news and alert platform. Weber has an extensive background in the safety and security sector.*



Glen Heneck stationary in his vehicle, sandwiched in-between multiple taxis

was that it wouldn’t negotiate with criminals or tolerate ongoing violence.

National Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga suggested that the City of Cape Town should return the impounded vehicles, indicating a lack of understanding of her role and responsibilities in enforcing the National Land Transport Act (NTA). Embarrassingly, Cabinet had to intervene and provide her with clear instructions on enforcing

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# ‘Impossible is nothing’ – tales of courageous women

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Confronting disease, loss, and addiction, five women shared their inspiring stories of courage and determination at a Union of Jewish Women Women’s Day breakfast last week. In doing so, they revealed the power of tapping into their innate strength in the darkest of times.

“It wasn’t a year that that we could have imagined in our wildest dreams,” said nursery school teacher Tammy Jutan. “Yet it’s also the year that we discovered the strength we didn’t know we had.” The day after their youngest son was saved by a passing motorist who saw him trapped under the wheel of a reversing car, Jutan and her husband discovered a lump in their middle son’s abdomen, which after some misdiagnoses was identified as a malignant tumour.

The family were spinning, but it was through the help of Neill Rayne, who became their life coach, that they adopted an optimistic attitude. Rayne, a cancer sufferer himself, who subsequently passed away, told the Jutans they had a choice in how they navigated their son’s diagnosis.

“He told us we could make this journey whatever we wanted it to be, and that not everyone dies from cancer. It forced us to pause and make a conscious decision about the kind of glasses we wanted to wear to get us through this journey.”

Jutan and her husband adopted a positive attitude, especially around their son, who ultimately made a full recovery. “I got dressed and put on makeup every day, and I showed up for him at the paediatric cancer unit,” said Jutan. “It wasn’t an easy year, but we made the choice to get through it the best way we knew how.” In sharing her story, as a tribute to Rayne, Jutan stressed the importance of paying it forward, something he taught her to do.

Rachel Ancer, just 14, shared the stories of the “seven women wonders” who helped her along her journey from being a sick child to a healthy young woman. When she was five years old, Ancer was diagnosed with a rare bone marrow failure condition called Pure Red Cell Aplasia. After more than 50 red blood cell transfusions, she had a lifesaving bone marrow transplant at the age of eight.

“I don’t really see myself as courageous,” said Ancer. “I didn’t have a choice. I had to struggle through a difficult situation, but what made it easier for me were all of the women of courage who helped me along the way. They made an active choice to be brave, and that takes courage.”

Among the women she honoured were her mother, Jean, who fought

Again”. Her determination kept her going, and she ultimately walked again and was declared cancer free.

“Through the unknown to turbulent skies and everything in between, I have learned the difference between alive and living,” she said. “Being alive is the beating of a heart and the flickering of an eye. But living is loving every moment and appreciating the journey



Nikki Munitz, Tammy Jutan, Hayley Brainin, Rachel Ancer, and Thando Madonsela

tirelessly alongside her, and her donor, a Polish woman named Magda, who accompanied a friend to an international bone-marrow donor drive, thought perhaps there was a reason she was there, and decided to register too. “That moment of courage saved my life,” said Ancer.

She also paid tribute to the sisters, nurses, and technicians who shared comfort and strength. “Courageous and compassionate healthcare workers like them, who hold the hands of very sick children with life-threatening illnesses, are the world’s unsung heroes,” she said.

“I realised that impossible is nothing,” said mother and cancer survivor, Hayley Brainin, who in 2020 suddenly could no longer feel any movement from the waist down. An MRI and CT scan revealed a compression fracture as well as multiple malignant lesions along her spine.

For Brainin, walking again was non-negotiable. With the support of a multidisciplinary medical team, she navigated the highs and lows along her journey to a destination she named “Tropical Island Paradise: Walking

and all life has to offer.” Leader, speaker, and educator Thando Madonsela’s passion for empowering woman and children was born of moving “beyond darkness” after the heart breaking loss of her mother. Though such a loss can trap you in darkness, she said, it takes courage to move forward. Madonsela was inspired by her mother who, shortly before she died on Madonsela’s 20th birthday, told her to be a “strong young woman” and wrote, “You need to love and support one another.”

Left to take care of her younger brother, Madonsela remembered these words and completed her teaching degree which set her on a career path that brings her joy. “My purpose in life is to empower and support women and children,” she said, “to encourage them never to give up and to follow their dreams. They must never allow any situation to trap their gifts and talents.”

The trials faced by self-esteem counsellor, addiction specialist, and global leader Nikki Munitz led her on a life-changing path to find her purpose. Not only did she battle through years of drug addiction, she also served a

prison sentence for fraud, a crime fuelled by her addiction.

*Fraud*, a book about her harrowing experiences and ultimate triumph, will be released later this year. “In addition to committing fraud, I lived my life always feeling like a fraud, like I didn’t belong,” she said. “I put on a great mask, no-one could ever know how I felt inside. I lived most of my life as victim or villain, not as a woman of courage.”

Having lost her father at the age of nine and left with a single mother raising four children, Munitz battled to find her place in the world. “When I was introduced to drugs, I felt that I had found something miraculous, that made me feel confident and like I’d found my tribe. I didn’t realise that it was just a mirage.”

Through multiple rehab stints, two beloved children, a painful divorce, and an overdose, Munitz eventually found the strength to get clean in 2008. Yet, she still faced her prior fraud conviction. When she eventually served her sentence in 2014, she had already turned her life around. Yet, she emerged from prison more lost than before.

“I didn’t have a war to fight anymore, it was just raging inside of me,” she said. “Learning to have a relationship with myself has been my biggest victory. My teenage children have been my biggest teachers and support.”

Reflecting on how she once had less than nothing to now empowering others and sharing her story of hope, Munitz emphasised that “literally anything is possible”.

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# Double danger, double courage of women in Holocaust

HANNA RESNICK

Jewish women faced a “double risk” in trying to survive the Holocaust, Dr Yaron Nir Freisager told the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, citing various testimonials.

Nir Freisager, who lectures at Tel-Hai Academic College as well as at a high school in Kiryat Shmona, was speaking in honour of Women's Day on 9 August.

He said the Nazis targeted men first to be eliminated as they were seen to be more dangerous, so men often had to stay home while the women went out to work and provide for their families.

Nir Freisager cited Emanuel Ringelblum, the head of the secret Oneg Shabbat archive in the Warsaw ghetto, who wrote in his diary at the beginning of January 1940, “The endurance of women. The main breadwinners. The men do not go out . . . [the woman] is not afraid of the soldiers. She stands in the long lines. When it is necessary, she goes to the headquarters of the Gestapo. The woman is everywhere since the man is taken to all kinds of works.”

Said Nir Freisager, “The women were now at the forefront. They were the ones who stood in line or turned to the Polish and German officials with a request to release the fathers from detention or deportation.”

He cited famous Holocaust researcher Raul Hilberg who referred to the ghettos as, “A new and isolated society [which] consists of men without power and women without support.”

Said Nir Freisager, “Starvation tore families apart, many died, and family stability was damaged. Evidence shows that men and women cope differently with hunger.” One example he gave of this was the testimony of Israel Aviram, which details how a fight between his parents arose over whether they would eat non-kosher meat, the mother wanting to maintain kashrut. This caused irreparable damage to their relationship.



Jewish women who were victims in the Holocaust

He told the story of David Shirakowiak, a teenager from the Lodz ghetto, who wrote in his diary about his mother sacrificing her portion of bread for his father, who was also stealing bread from him and his sister. “I am very worried about mother, because she is terribly emaciated, shrivelled, and weak,” Shirakowiak wrote. “Nevertheless, she still works in the vegetable garden, cooks, and does laundry.” The following day, his mother was deported from the ghetto to Chelmno death camp along with “those unfit for work. She kissed each of us goodbye, took a bag with her bread and some potatoes that I forced her to take, and quickly left to her terrible fate. I could not muster the willpower to look at her through the window,” he said.

“There is little evidence of fathers stealing food from their families, but no evidence of mothers doing so,” said Nir Freisager.

He also discussed the struggle that pregnant women faced in the ghettos. “The very act of starvation and humiliation reduced the chance of giving birth to a healthy baby [and] many women who gave birth aborted

the fetus to avoid punishment,” he said.

He told the story of Tova (Dubka) Waldhorn Freund, who was pregnant at the time when the Germans were prohibiting Jewish women from giving birth. “Her husband and the Jewish doctor asked her to terminate the pregnancy,” Nir Freisager said. “She refused because she was in love with her husband, Yulek, and wanted to give birth to his child. In the seventh month of pregnancy, she visited the hospital where the doctor urged her to deliver the baby and ‘get rid of him’ otherwise both she and the baby would die.” About a month later, she gave birth to a baby girl who was immediately taken away from her. Her husband was murdered at Kluga camp, but Dubka later remarried and had a son.

“The German treatment of Jewish men and women in the camps was apparently similar. Both sexes were uprooted from their homes, separated from their parents and children, and were brutally treated including shaving their hair, exposed to humiliation, hunger, and violence,” said Nir Freisager.

“However, gender was important, even critical already upon arrival at the camp, when a woman's chance of surviving selection was significantly lower. Pregnant women and women with children were sent directly to the gas chambers. Women who survived the selection were transferred to camps where they were persecuted – they were humiliated on the basis of being women, they were sexually assaulted, and in general, their chances of survival were low.”

He told the story of Aliza Tsarfaty and Ovadia Baruch, which he said was “a love story near the chimneys of the extermination camp” with tragedy, but also miracles.

Their story began in Auschwitz but was interrupted when Aliza was taken to Block 10, the medical-experiment block. “She was only sixteen and a half years old, and it was determined that she would undergo a sterilisation experiment,” he said. The surgeon was the Jewish doctor, Dr Maximilian Samuel, who Aliza begged not to go through with the experiment to no avail. “Dr Samuel told her to do her best to survive the war, and that she would remember him.”

Ovadia later asked for her hand in marriage, but Aliza refused because Ovadia was the only survivor of a large family and she wouldn't be able to bear children. Eventually, they got married and immigrated to Israel. When Aliza's belly began to grow, she was perplexed. “It turns out [that] Dr Maximilian Samuel took advantage of an anti-aircraft alarm that was on during the surgery. A few days later, he was executed because it was discovered that he was sabotaging the medical experiments that went on at Block 10.”

These are only a few of the many stories of immense bravery, compassion, and hardship that Nir Freisager shared from his research. Other stories include those of Sandra Brand, who saved her father's shul from destruction by the Nazis; Rokhl Auerbakh, who initiated the excavation of the Oneg Shabbat's buried manuscripts and wrote the important document “Yizkor, 1943”; Frumka Plotnicka, who worked for the Jewish underground in the ghettos; and Dr Adina Schweiger-Baldi, who administered the morphine that killed children who were hospitalised before they could be brutally killed by the Germans.

“Jewish women wrote a glorious page in history,” Ringelblum wrote. Women's aim was “for three lines in a history book”, Nir Freisager said, quoting Dolek Liebeskind from the Krakow underground in Gusta Davidson's Justina's diary about the Jewish resistance. “I suggest that the women mentioned here this evening are worth more than three lines in a history book, maybe a whole page, probably a whole book.”

# Looking back and giving back – Dora turns 100

PETA KROST

It's not often people celebrating their 100th birthday do so with a speech and a commitment to providing a bursary for a young Jewish person to get a higher education. But then, Dora Seeff, who celebrated becoming a centenarian on Women's Day (9 August) surrounded by many of her closest friends and family, is no ordinary woman.

Born in Lithuania, and the oldest Litvak in South Africa, she not only got a message from the Lithuanian government congratulating her on her 100th birthday, but from King Charles III too.

In the week of her birthday, Dora was also able to add one more great-grandchild to her posse of four children, 12 grandchildren, and 34 great-grandchildren.

In her speech at the party at Killarney Country Club, she said all that she had achieved, not least of all her longevity, was due to having had a wonderful husband (the late Morris Seeff, who passed away 25 years ago), wonderful children, and good genes.

Citing her own mother, she told the crowd, “When you marry, you don't marry a man, you marry a family.” She insisted that the most important thing she imparted on her family was to ensure *shalom bayit* as family was the most important part of her life.

She felt heartbroken that her oldest daughter, Ruth Fait, who passed away on 31 October 2021, was unable to be there. “My heart is breaking that she can't share this celebration with us,” Dora said.

For Dora, paying it forward was key to celebrating her birthday. “Education is always number one, and I want a needy child to enjoy a higher education and to benefit from it,” she said.

Dora, daughter of Berta and Jasef Miller, was born in the town of Ponevezh. She recalls life there as a “peaceful existence”. She and her family emigrated to Johannesburg when she was eight years old.

They first lived in Fordsburg, and her parents opened a fruit shop and milk bar near Johannesburg station. Dora told her children that she used to help in the shop, but read every comic before it was sold and added a little extra to the milkshakes she sold so she could have a sip before she handed it over.

“Her father complained she was eating his profits,” joked Dora's daughter, Joyce Levin, in her speech.

Dora attended Jewish Government School and then Athlone Girls High before getting a job as a secretary at the 20th Century Fox



Dora Seeff making a speech at her 100th birthday party

movie house. Around this time, she met her husband and married him when she was 20 in 1943. She went on to have three girls, Ruth, Denise, and Joyce and then a boy, Bernard, and the family moved from a small house in Yeoville to a large mansion in Houghton. “Initially, us children couldn't find our way around the place, especially the door leading downstairs,” said Joyce.

“Dora was a homemaker wherever she lived. She's a true *ballabosta*,” Joyce said.

Dora was involved in a number of Jewish communal organisations and loved sport. She first played tennis, and then became a keen bowler, becoming a Houghton Club bowls champion, according to Joyce.

She made entertaining look effortless, sometimes having as many as 45 people over for Pesach seders, Shabboses, and Sunday lunches. She would often have extended family members staying with them for long periods of time. And she and Morris loved travelling overseas and spending holidays in Muizenberg and Durban with family. She embraced her family as it grew, and invariably remembered everyone's birthdays. “You should see her talking to all her descendants, old and young. She engages with them at their level, even having learnt WhatsApp so she could keep in touch with them all,” her daughter said.

When Morris died in 1998 after they had been married for 54 years, she still didn't let anything get in her way, Joyce said. “She made numerous trips overseas to Israel, the United States, and Lithuania, among others. It was then that she got the nickname ‘Dora the Explorer’,” Joyce said.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, Dora drove herself around, last renewing her licence at 94. She played bowls and bridge, and lived on her own. She was so busy, it was difficult for family to pin her down to make arrangements. She was always the designated driver for her 90-plus bridge club or when it drove to Durban or Cape Town. This ended in 2020, when COVID-19 weakened her.

But though her hearing and sight isn't as it was, she still stands upright, does her somewhat strenuous daily exercises, and is always stylishly turned out. Her mind is sharp, and her memory exceptional. She still has the knack of making everyone she speaks to feel that they are her favourite person, and is happy to listen to everyone's problems and give sage advice to all.

When her son-in-law asked her at her last birthday what she wanted when she turned 100, she replied “one more candle”, and she got her wish. However, when those who know her consider their own ageing process, they all set the standard of wanting to do it like Dora Seeff.



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# Meatland’s closure knocks stuffing out of customers

TALI FEINBERG

From a place to buy meat to a meeting place for South African *olim*, Ra’anana’s iconic Meatland has been a beloved institution for South African *olim* for almost three decades. So, when the store’s marketing manager, Lisa Starr, announced on 9 August that it would permanently close its doors on 30 September, the news was greeted with shock and sadness.

“What a catastrophe!” says South African *oleh* Yitzchak Maron. “When we first came on aliya to Ra’anana, Meatland was Pieworks, which we loved. When we moved to Modi’in we would *schlep* to Ra’anana to buy our favourites. If we heard that someone was going to Ra’anana, we would ask to get a bottle of this or a tin of that. The recipes [in their newsletter] were always a winner – tried, tested, and made over and over again.”



Meatland in Ra’anana, Israel

“It’s a massive loss to so many who truly felt this was a family,” says Starr. The closure was purely an economic decision, she says. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the company was hit by an unprecedented increase in the price of imported products and chose to absorb many of those added costs. “The price of raw ingredients also sky-rocketed,” Starr says, “and we barely increased the prices on any of the Meatland-made dishes in years. We hoped to replace our range of ready-made foods with outsourcing, but weren’t able to find a manufacturer who could supply us with prepared meals at comparable quality and value.”

“We’ve considered moving to more competitively priced premises and expanding into fresh produce and a deli. If Meatland was in a less expensive location, perhaps it could have clawed its way back, but it doesn’t make sense to move at this late stage. Every effort was made to keep Meatland’s doors open. Sadly, a permanent closure is the most logical next step.”

Pieland, which later became Meatland, was founded by Pretoria-born businessman Maish Isaacson preceding his aliya from Johannesburg about 30 years ago. Maish, his wife Jocelyn, and their children all live on the same street in Ra’anana. “Meatland was only ever owned by Maish – it was a family business in every sense of the word,” says Starr.

“Pieworks became Pieland, which comprised of a factory in Netanya and three pie shops. Due to Israelis’ unfamiliarity with pies, the factory and two of the shops were closed, but the Ra’anana branch thrived. Many customers still talk of sitting on the pavement eating pies and *slap* chips.

“It wasn’t long before customers began commenting on the high quality of the meat filling and, recognising this opportunity, then-manager Geoff Mallach began selling the meat we used in our pies. Sales of meat soon overtook pies, so the pies took a backseat and our name changed to Meatland.”

With ex-Capetonian Mallach at the helm, “the range grew to include a wide selection of unique imported brands,” says Starr. “Hardworking Geoff was soon joined by his wife, Richella, who set up the Meatland kitchen where, together with a loyal team, she expertly prepared South African favourites including chopped herring, kichel, brisket, perogen, fried fish, kugels, pies, and more.

“Once Geoff retired, Maish’s daughter, Tali, took up the

reins as Meatland manager, while daughter Dina headed up the shop staff.” Meanwhile, though Starr’s background was in marketing, “my heart was always in food,” she says. “Prior to my aliya, I ran a busy cooking school in Sandton, and replicated this formula from my home in Hod Hasharon. Nine years ago, recognising the need for a fresh perspective, Maish recruited me to work at Meatland, and gave me complete freedom to refresh the brand. We updated the logo, storefront, product range, and marketing approach.”

Starr joined Meatland with a large mailing list from her cookery school, and soon grew this list to more than 5 000 subscribers. “This newsletter became the most effective form of advertising, with customers flocking to buy featured products and participate in tastings.

“Once Richella went into well-deserved retirement, I turned my attention to the Meatland kitchen, adapting existing recipes, adding new dishes, and growing a vegan range.” Homemade meals included chopped liver, brisket, potato kugel, chicken soup, vegetarian soups, curries, dairy dishes, and vegan options. “Everything was made from scratch using quality ingredients,” says Starr. “We were especially known for *chag* cooking, and our *kitniot*-free Pesach catering was ordered from Haifa to Jerusalem and everywhere in between.”

It carried Israel’s widest selection of imported products under one roof. “In recent years, we were successful in growing the range of South African products, and were thrilled finally to offer much requested items like Peppermint Crisp, Provita, ProNutro, and more,” Starr says.

“Some products like Appletiser, Marmite, Ina Paarman, and Nando’s sauces were widely sold. Nostalgic brands like Five Roses, Creme Soda, Rajah, Future Life, Crosse & Blackwell Mayonnaise, All Gold Tomato Sauce, and Tennis Biscuits found fans largely in the South African community. We were famous for our biltong, boerewors, and dry wors. We heard the words ‘it’s a taste of home’ daily.

“We would see customers practically camping outside when we brought in products like Flings and Simba chips,” Starr says. “Customers loved being able to shop in an English-only environment, and frequently bumped into old friends. I can’t begin to tell you how many happy reunions took place in the Meatland aisles. It wasn’t just a shop, it was a community.”

Meatland was loved by people in all ages and stages. “We made aliya two years ago, and we love living in Israel,” says Gerald Davids. “But there will always be something you miss about South Africa, and we loved the chutney, Nando’s sauces, Colman’s mustard, imported South African hake, various cereals, and most of all, the chocolates.”

“I’ve been living in Israel for more than 29 years and I have such fond memories of getting perogen and hot chips from Pieland, which became Meatland,” says Shely Cohen. “I’ve always kept a box of steak pies in the freezer for my soldiers; a ready-mix cookie dough bag for emergency cakes; and dry wors as a treat. Apple crumble took care of dessert on Shabbat, and my cravings for chocolate could be satisfied by Twirl and Cadbury buttons. I’ll miss Lisa’s recipes and Thursday tastings. I’m sorry to see the end of this era.”

“My mom, who lived alone in Ra’anana and made aliya in her 60s, would buy there all the time,” says Gayle Allen. “It was like a home away from home for her. She’d order food for Friday nights, and as she got older and was less mobile, she’d get it delivered.”

“I’ve had messages where people admit to crying [about the closure],” says Starr. “Sadly, this won’t change the decision, made with so much anguish.” She says most of the staff have plans in place after Meatland closes, ranging from retirement to studying to new jobs. “So, in spite of Meatland closing, I trust we will all find ourselves. But we’ll never find another Meatland.”



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# Patlansky sings the blues, shoots the lights out

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Oozing effortless rock-star charm, world-renowned blues rock guitarist and singer-songwriter Dan Patlansky says that for him, music is a calling. Named the fourth best guitarist in the world by the UK’s *Total Guitar Magazine*, Patlansky is currently touring the country while working on his upcoming album.

“My parents are both big music lovers so growing up, there was constant exposure to music – particularly in the genre I play in now like the blues and classic rock,” Patlansky said in an exclusive interview with the *SA Jewish Report*. “If you get exposed to it that regularly, it forms part of who you are, especially as a kid when you’re like a sponge. You almost can’t help but want to make music.”

More importantly, he says, having the support of his parents in his quest to make music a career was a game changer, especially early on. “I couldn’t have imagined doing it without their support. It would have been 20 times harder. There was a point where it may have been tough for them because it’s a very risky thing. There’s a certain amount of suffering and heartbreak in this industry, but I suppose my parents could see something in me that gave them some confidence to say, ‘Give it a go.’”

Though Patlansky got his first guitar at the age of 10 and briefly took lessons, he completely lost interest until he reached high school. Moving from King David High School Victory Park to the National School of the Arts in his last two years of schooling helped him to hone his musical talents and theoretical knowledge. “It was a great place for the direction I wanted to go in,” he says.

Playing professionally from the age of 18,

Patlansky, who’s now in his 40s, honed his innate talents to slowly build a profitable career. “It’s a calling more than anything else,” he says, speaking of what it takes to have the courage to pursue such an uncertain path. “The thought of not making it, starving, and not being able to look after yourself almost takes a backseat to the passion you have for it, especially when you’re younger. Whether it’s a success or a failure, you just want to create music. For me, it’s always been that.”

Having produced 10 acclaimed albums to date, including *Dear Silence Thieves*, which in 2014 was voted the number one blues rock album in the world by *Blues Rock Review* in the United States, Patlansky’s dedication to making music has more than paid off.

“I’ve been fortunate in that I’ve managed to make a living out of it my whole life, especially since blues isn’t just any music – it attracts a niche market. I feel blessed to still be here and doing this full time.”

Though blues artists may not have the biggest following in the world, Patlansky says the truly loyal following the genre attracts makes it all worthwhile. “Yet, it’s a scary thing too, because the other musicians with whom I share this space are absolutely world-class. It’s great though because it keeps pushing you to be better, especially touring overseas when you see the level of performance there. You never feel

content about where you’re at musically, and that’s a great thing.”

The release of *Dear Silence Thieves* sparked global attention, widespread radio play, great overseas reviews, and opened international doors for Patlansky. In the same year, he played to an audience of more than 65 000 at FNB Stadium when he opened for Bruce Springsteen, who personally approved him as his opening act. An unbelievable experience, the performance doubled his Gauteng fan base, he says.

Though Patlansky loves the rush of playing overseas with world-class infrastructure and the chance to perform in steadily bigger venues as his fanbase grows, South Africa remains home. “As cool as it is playing gigs and touring overseas, I think with all the problems we have in South Africa, it’s still a really good place to live,” he says. “My wife, kids, and other family are happy here, and while it can be difficult, it’s a good life. You



Dan Patlansky

Photo: Eve Mate

# The music of the amazing Yiddishe mammas

Soprano singer and storyteller **Leigh Nudelman Sussman** is showcasing the Yiddish songs of trailblazing female stars. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with her.

**What drew you to sing in Yiddish?**  
At Beit Emanuel where I sing, the rabbi suggested a few years ago that I should explore singing Yiddish songs. I started learning a few to record an album, and was hooked for life.

**What is it about Yiddish that resonates with you?**  
At first, the language and the songs were foreign. But the more I practiced them, the more I realised the language, the stories, the culture, and the music is coursing through me. Yiddish is in my DNA. The language reveals who we are as Jews, with our unique humour, wisdom, and resilience.

Words like *kvetch*, *kibitz*, *nokhshepper*, *farsh tinkener*, *farblonzher*, *nudnik*, *shmatte*, and, of course, *oy vey*, these are just a few of my favourites.

**Can you speak Yiddish? If so, how and where did you learn?**  
I’m always embarrassed to admit that I only sing in Yiddish! I went to Yiddish classes for a while with the Yiddish Academy in Johannesburg. It was way too advanced for me, but I learnt how to read in Yiddish, was privy to wonderful publications like *The Jews of Johannesburg* by Liebl Feldman, and got a feel for the comic banter between Yiddish speakers.

**In the upcoming performances, you focus on the stories and songs of several Yiddish women singers. How did you select them?**  
I made a list of the songs I love to sing, and some songs I’ve wanted to add to my repertoire, and then I tried to find a Yiddishe mamma behind each song. I researched using the digital resources of the Jewish Women’s Archive. I also dipped into Veronica Belling’s book, *Yiddish Theatre in South Africa*.

**Which most inspired you?**  
They’re all so inspiring! All the Yiddishe mammas, even though they wouldn’t have named themselves as such, were feminists. But Molly Picon is top of my list. She pushed so many boundaries as a female performer. In the early 20th century, she dressed up as a young boy, a character she named Yid’l, and this was something she did even up until around the age of 70! She even admitted once that she was Yid’l. This was certainly challenging gender norms of the time. She also challenged traditions and Jewish stereotypes. In one of her films, *Os un Wes* (East and West), she plays a modern American girl who visits her traditional Jewish family in Eastern Europe. It makes for fantastic comedy but also asks important questions about what it means to be Jewish. She not only performed but also wrote lyrics and music. She did all this while still having a wonderful marriage to her partner in life and work, Jacob Kalich.

**Which do you believe were the leading trailblazers?**  
Sophie Karp, the first professional Yiddish actress ever.

Sarah Sylvia, who Veronica Belling describes as the “grande dame of Yiddish theatre in South Africa”. Perhaps without her, Yiddish theatre here wouldn’t have existed.

Sophie Tucker, with her quite vulgar yet self-effacing humour, redefined comedy and paved the way for female Jewish comedians like Joan Rivers and Sarah Silverman. Using

a mix of stand-up and song, she would speak about the sexual appetite of women and about her weight. People say she not only forged a new Jewish comedy, but comedy in the United States in general.

And, of course, Picon. She was arguably the most well-known Yiddish figure of them all.



Photo: Caroline Suzman

**Tell us about Karp.**  
Born in Russia, she was discovered by and performed for Abraham Goldfaden’s company at the age of 16. Before that, she worked as a seamstress. Like so many other Jewish performers of her time, she landed up in bustling New York City. There’s a picture of Karp, at the age of 34, on a poster. It depicts a “Madam Sophia Karp” and describes her as a “prima donna”. Perhaps she should be considered

the original Yiddishe mamma not just because she was the first professional Yiddish actress, but because she also founded the Grand Theatre in New York City, the city’s first purpose-built Yiddish theatre.

**Chayela Rosenthal and Sylvia were in local theatre. Tell us about their acclaim.**  
Sylvia was a remarkable performer. People said her performances had a mystical quality and vitality even into her seventies. She was born in London and before coming to Johannesburg with her family, she played the leading role in Goldfaden’s play *Shulamis*, at the tender age of 12. In Johannesburg, she performed in Yiddish and English plays alongside famous stars and was a producer. She had two theatre companies in Johannesburg. They would bring out all the famous international Yiddish performers, and the shows were huge. One such show was Max Perlam’s musical revue, which played to 20 000 Jews in the first two weeks. Picon was another star brought out by Sylvia, as well as Rosenthal. Named “the wonder child of the Vilna ghetto”, Rosenthal was a Holocaust survivor. The song, *Zog nit Keinmol*, sung every year at Holocaust memorial ceremonies around the world, is a song first sung and made famous by Rosenthal.

**Why is it important to keep Yiddish songs alive?**  
Yiddish is part of our culture and heritage as Jews in South Africa. Yiddish culture is also important in relation to Holocaust remembrance. Yiddish isn’t all doom and gloom though. Yiddish and the songs are alive, embodying a unique wisdom, humour, resilience, and Yiddishkeit.

**To whom do Yiddish songs/music appeal?**  
One might think these old songs will appeal only to older Jewish audiences. But the songs are vibrant and diverse and appeal to young and old. In fact, klezmer, a particular kind of Yiddish music, is making a big comeback around the world.

**What does Yiddish represent for our community?**  
In Johannesburg, Yiddish has sadly been very much forgotten. In Cape Town, more seems to have been done over the years to connect to Yiddish through festivals and performances. In Johannesburg, there are a few Yiddish classes; on ChaiFM there’s a Yiddish show once a week; and there are collections of Yiddish books and newspapers, such as at the Yiddish Academy. Of course, in certain religious circles, Yiddish does feature. But for young Jews, nothing is done to help them feel connected to the language and culture. I would love young people to see that Yiddish isn’t just about the Holocaust. It’s fun and it’s engaging. I would love them to come and see the show.

**Why is it important to remember these women and what they represent during Women’s Month?**  
As leaders in their field, as trailblazers and as boundary pushers, they can inspire us. The Yiddishe mammas straddled the lines of power in a patriarchal world. In South Africa, with our painfully violent patriarchal society, and even in our own Jewish community, these women can get us to ask important questions about power and equality.

- Leigh Nudelman Sussman will perform her show at Limmud on the weekend of 25 to 27 August and then at Theatre on the Square in Sandton on 1 September.



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# Yeshiva boys net place on SA volleyball team

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Two Yeshiva College pupils, Reuven Crouse and Binyamin Sandler, have been selected to play volleyball for the South African Under-18 side. They were selected following their performance playing for the Gauteng Under-18 side in the recent interprovincial tournament in Limpopo, where they played with fellow schoolmates Da’el Basserabie and Ari Zlotnick. The four helped their provincial side finish third out of nine provinces.

Volleyball is a “big thing” at Yeshiva College, says Crouse, a Grade 10 student. “In primary school, you look up to the high school boys, and they’re playing volleyball,” he says. “We kind of grow up with it around us. The minute you get to high school, you start playing. We play all day – between classes, after school, and on Sundays.”

It’s a recipe for success. In 2022 and this year, the Yeshiva College Under-19 boys team won the Goliath Cup, a Gauteng high school volleyball league. In the first weekend of April, the school placed third out of 13 schools in the 2023 ISSA (International School of South Africa) Mahikeng Volleyball Tour tournament.

Practices for the interprovincial tournament were moved to Sundays from Saturdays to accommodate the Yeshiva students. The trials were initially on a Saturday, and no Yeshiva students could attend. “We couldn’t go because we all keep Shabbos,” Crouse says.

The Gauteng volleyball squad selected “was weak without our boys”, Yeshiva sports coach Kenneth Mather says. “I was contacted by Gauteng Volleyball. There were certain boys it really wanted, having watched them in the

league which we won earlier this year. I said, the only way that can happen is if it’s moved to a Sunday, which they did.”

The Gauteng team stayed in a hostel during the tournament. “We brought our own food from home, and we had time to daven,” Sandler says.

“We had left the tournament after our third-place match because we wanted to get home before Shabbos,” Sandler recalls. “As we arrived home, they phoned us and told us we had been selected for the national side. I was completely shocked. I thought I had such a poor performance the first two days of the four that I had no chance.”

They haven’t trained with the national team yet, but “there’s supposed to be a training camp near the end of the year before we go play for South Africa next year,” Sandler says.

At the ISSA school against school tournament, which included schools from Zimbabwe and Zambia, Crouse received the title of best attacker and his fellow Yeshiva College student, Jacob Hoffman, was named best receiver.

“We went to the ISSA with our school team that we won



Binyamin Sandler

Photo: Jolene Swartz

the Goliath Cup with,” Crouse says. “It was a whole new experience, way more challenging than the Goliath. The provincial tournament was definitely the hardest I and the other three players have ever played in, but it was a lot of fun and a bonding experience.”

Volleyball at Yeshiva has evolved from a break activity to a formal sport in the past two years, Mather says. “Now we do formal practices and matches.”

Yeshiva has qualified volleyball coaches as well as two sand volleyball courts and one grass court. However, in the tournaments, they play indoor volleyball, “which is six aside and on hard courts like basketball or badminton courts”, Sandler says.

“We would love to have more courts,” Mather says. “We just don’t have the space, so we’re trying to raise funds to mark the tennis courts so that they can also be used for netball and, of course, volleyball.”

Based on the number of students who play volleyball, Mather says it’s the joint second most popular sport at the school. “They just love the game. For the girls, the most popular sport is netball and for the boys, it’s football.

“We’ve started a girls’ team for girls in the girls high school with the intention for them to join the girls league next year.”

Sandler says it gets competitive among the students who play volleyball.

“We started playing when we began high school and all the older boys taught us how to play,” says Crouse.

“I and the three other boys I went to provincials with all just started at a club called Quantum Hydras. It has a lot more practices and game time, so it’s a new experience for us. Plus, we met a lot of people from provincials and from all these tournaments.”

Volleyball is simple to play, Sandler says. “All you need is the ball, a net, and a bunch of people to have fun with.”

But you need to be quite fit. “It’s not the most demanding sport on your body unless you play a lot of games on the same day. At the tournament in Mahikeng, we played three or four games on one day, so it can be quite demanding over the whole tournament.

“I don’t have any major goal in volleyball,” Sandler says. “I just enjoy playing the sport because it’s helped me to make a lot of friends. It’s allowed me to be more social. My whole goal is to have fun and play the sport as much as I can.”

Says Mather, “We’re pushing to have volleyball included in Maccabi Games in Israel. We’re waiting to hear if we’ll be sending a team in 2025.”

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Ensuring religious rights

In my previous column, I expanded on the various ways in which the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) works to ensure that Jewish religious rights and freedoms are upheld. Though we are privileged to live in a country where the right to practice one’s particular religion is respected and legally protected, the practical realisation of that when it comes to living in the wider society cannot be taken for granted. Often, it needs to be explained and motivated for, and therefore, as the representative voice of the Jewish faith community, it’s a core part of the mandate of the Board to intervene on behalf of members of our community when they are unfairly disadvantaged because of their religious commitments.

On Women’s Day, SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn gave a presentation to the rabbinical conference, held in Durban, where she briefed *rabbanim* from around the country on this vital aspect of the Board’s work and provided specific areas where they could assist and support us in this regard. It was an exceptionally lively and interactive session, with Wendy answering numerous questions from the floor and afterwards engaging further with those who had specific issues and areas of interest they wished to raise. Depending on the issue at hand, the Board often works closely with its affiliate organisations when acting on the community’s behalf. The Union of Orthodox Synagogues and the Beth Din are obviously vital partners when it comes to safeguarding Jewish religious rights, and this very positive engagement will have gone a long way towards solidifying this important relationship.

**Lessons from Cycalive**  
In 2002, Torah Academy Grade 11 pupils

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

**Sunday 20 August**

- New Beginnings hosts guest speaker Marion Dworcan on *The Mystery & Magic of Pearls*. Time: 10:00. Donation: R50. Venue: UJW House, 77 Sandler Road, Percelia Estate. Contact: lynarch@worldonline.co.za
- Malka Ella Fertility Fund will be hosting an online art auction and exhibition from 20 to 22 August. Contact: 072 035 4235. Register: [www.malkaella.co.za/register](http://www.malkaella.co.za/register)

**Thursday 24 August**

- The Jewish National Fund hosts the pre-release premiere of *Golda*. Venue: Nu Metro Cinema,

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

joined their counterparts from two local public schools in cycling from Johannesburg down to Durban to raise funds for education in under-resourced Gauteng schools. So successful was that venture, it became an annual event, bringing together young people from across the social and ethnic spectrum in celebrating their diversity and shared humanity. On 13 August, members of our Gauteng Council were among those who gathered to give this year’s Cycalive group a rousing send off before their departure. One council member, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, wasn’t there simply to wish the young participants well, but to take part in the journey alongside them. It was Hazdan who launched Cycalive more than 20 years ago, and he has headed up and personally participated in each event ever since.

The purpose of Cycalive is to raise funds for worthy causes. Far more than that, however, it aims to be a community and team-building exercise that brings together young South Africans from widely differing cultures and backgrounds. As Kahn stressed in her message from the Board, it’s ultimately about the journey, not the destination. Cycalive has accomplished so much in terms of generating goodwill and forging meaningful friendships between those who previously had no interaction with or even knowledge of one another. As for the event itself, it’s difficult to imagine a more inspiring way of bringing young South Africans together than through striving side by side in a journey across the beautiful, majestic land that they share.

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

WHAT'S ON

Hyde Park. Time: 19:15. Cost: R270. Contact: [info@jnfsa.co.za](mailto:info@jnfsa.co.za)

**Wednesday 30 August**

- WIZO Johannesburg hosts its *Yom Tov Cooking Coup* with Delores Fouché. Time: 10:00. Cost: R250. Venue: 103 Algernon Road, Norwood. Contact: [wizojohannesburg011@gmail.com](mailto:wizojohannesburg011@gmail.com) or 076 040 9614

**Second Innings** hosts an outing to Ngwenya Glass Country Village. Time: 09:30. Cost: R180. Contact: 082 561 3228

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# High noon over ‘High Glenhazel’

I’m not qualified to write about cannabis. I have no experience with it, and have never even been tempted to give it a try. It might be because I’m convinced that I’ll be the statistic who falls into a fit of depraved paranoia and never quite recovers from the single puff that ushers me through the gateway of hell into a narcotic nirvana that’s colourful but dangerous. That and the fact that I’m a bit of a nerd, always was. And because I judge people who do.

All this is why I’m so bothered by the opening of a drug store in the heart of Glenhazel.

At first, I thought it was a joke. I received a photo of a building in Glenhazel with a massive Canna Kingdom sign. In case there might be some confusion about the intention of the store, there’s a large poster that reads “High Glenhazel” leaving little doubt as to the goal of this particular kingdom.

Where’s the “drug store”? It’s about

100m from Northview High School, across the road from the Ohr Somayach campus and Shaarei Torah, Mesivta, near Achim, and Yeshiva College, not to mention at least 15 synagogues. It really is an ideal position, if ideal is defined by proximity to neighbourhood youth and adults.

According to Democratic Alliance ward councillor for Ward 72, Daniel Schay, there are no bylaws that govern where a cannabis store might open. As absurd as this might be, whereas there are rightfully controls in terms of the selling of alcohol, cannabis sellers get a free pass. As such, he was at a loss, aside from picketing outside the place, about what residents could do about it.

But picketing is exhausting – and dangerous – given that it’s a busy road.

The use of cannabis is regulated. It can be consumed only in private and by adults. While the use of cannabis for recreational purposes in private is legal, many aspects of producing, processing, storage, possessing, transporting, and selling remain illegal.

And where there’s nothing to suggest that anything illegal will occur at the new store, “High Glenhazel” does the venture few favours.

I’m quite certain that cannabis has many medical benefits. My Facebook feed is simply bursting with reports from so-called experts. They explain how cannabis made them live longer, run faster, lose 13kg that they never knew that they had, and sustain long lasting erections. (I made that up.)

Pharmacies also sell medication that assists with health. And whereas they are situated in the neighbourhood, they don’t taunt with promises of “High Glenhazel”. Pharmacies are regulated, audited, and will dispense goods only when they have been furnished with a script written in the doctor’s sweat and signed with their blood. And only then, and after they have written clear instructions – take with water, after hors d’oeuvres, but before mains – warning of the potential side effects suffered by one person in South Korea once.



**INNER VOICE**  
*Howard Feldman*

The arrival of a “drug store” in the neighbourhood is significant and extremely concerning. Drug use has become a real concern for parents and educators, and religious schools aren’t exempt. It’s a serious problem and one that will, no doubt, have repercussions. Where it might be true that cannabis won’t be sold to underage children, it’s also true that older friends routinely assist with this.

It’s also clear, from discussions with people who run addiction centres, that cannabis isn’t only a “gateway drug” but a drug itself.

We can blame the lack of bylaws and we can blame the landlord who should never have let the property in Glenhazel. But if we remain silent about what will follow, the blame for a “High Glenhazel” will be our own.

## Maccabi SA returns triumphant

Team South Africa returned triumphant from the JCC Maccabi Games in Fort Lauderdale in August, with its dancers winning gold for their Israel dancing performance choreographed by Talia Kodesh. The five dancers won 11 medals in total, including four golds.

The Under-16 Girls soccer team lost its first two games but went on to win the next two, beating Argentina 3-0 and LA West 3-1. It made it through to the quarter finals against Fort Lauderdale, but lost to a very strong host side.





The Maccabi dance team took home 11 medals

Photo: Maccabi South Africa Facebook page

Team SA was also awarded the JCC Midot (values) Medal by Ana Ehrlich, the head of the Fort Lauderdale JCC Maccabi Games, for teams or athletes who demonstrate the values of respect, kindness, sportsmanship, Jewish peoplehood, and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).




Under-16 girls soccer team made it through to the quarter finals of the JCC Maccabi Games



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# Torah Academy in record fundraising drive

Torah Academy's crowdfunding campaign on 8 and 9 of August broke South African records, raising R18 000 000 in 36 hours, along with generous matchers and donors. The funds will go to build a new girls' high, and to install a school-wide loadshedding solution.

With a powerhouse call centre filled with committed callers from students to staff members, parents, alumni, and board members, and a buzzing family fun day, the net result was much more than the phenomenal financial success. The school got a glimpse of what could be achieved when everyone pulls together and stays focused on the goal.

"In a general environment in which we encounter so much despondency and negativity, we had the Rebbe energising us to energise others to make a real difference," the school said.



MD of Torah Academy, Yossi Liberow (centre) among others celebrating the successful crowdfunding campaign

# New chiefs on the block

King David High School Victory Park



Daniel Kapeluschnik - Head Boy



Alexa Abrahamsohn - Head Girl



Christian Lees - Chief Whip



Shea Joffe - Deputy Head Boy



Liana Wes - Deputy Head Girl



King David High School Linksfield



Ben Ginsburg – Head Student Leader



Mandy Wu – Head Student Leader



Dovi Porter – Deputy Head Student Leader



Zoe Jay – Deputy Head Student Leader

# Positive parenting talks inspire Yeshiva moms

Yeshiva College moms gather weekly at 07:45 on Friday for the words of Rebbetzin Natalie Altman in her Positive Parsha and Parenting talks. More than a shiur, it's an opportunity to interact and feel empowered as Jewish women while acknowledging the huge responsibilities of parenting in 2023. The excellent attendance is testament to the vital space it provides for the community. We welcome all moms to join!

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