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# south african Jewish Report

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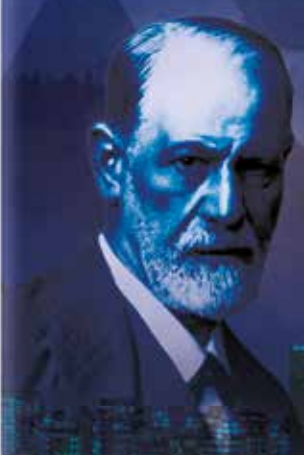
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Jewish Achiever Awards

2023



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To accommodate the Rugby World Cup semi-finals, the date of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards has been moved to Sunday 22 October at 16:00.

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# Absa Jewish Achiever Awards supports SA rugby

LEE TANKLE

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and the *SA Jewish Report* have shown their commitment to supporting South African rugby by rescheduling the annual awards ceremony to accommodate the World Cup semi-finals.

“We’re backing the Boks in the Rugby World Cup, so we’ve moved the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards to 22 October so that it doesn’t coincide with the rugby on the 21st, our original date,” says



WE ARE THE



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Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and the *SA Jewish Report*.

“We understand how passionate South Africans are about rugby and the Springboks, and we understand how special the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is to the community,” says Sackstein. “So, we’ve made sure there’s no conflict between the semi-finals, which we are sure the Springboks will be playing in, and the awards.”

Sackstein says the change was necessary because “it’s what good, patriotic South Africans do. We support the Springboks, and we want to ensure that everyone has a chance to support the team and join us in supporting the extraordinary people in our community.”

We understand how passionate South Africans are about rugby and the Springboks, and we understand how special the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is to the community.

“We’ve always joined the rest of South Africa in supporting our national teams – Bafana Bafana, Banyana Banyana, the Proteas, and the Springboks,” he said. “Sport brings us together as a nation and when we’re on the international stage, we all come together to support our own.”

There’s also a clear benefit to the awards ceremony being held on Sunday, he says, as it can start at 16:00 as we don’t have to wait until Shabbat ends. This also means that the ceremony won’t go into the wee hours, and those attending will be able to get a good night’s sleep to start the week afresh.

This year’s ceremony introduces a new award celebrating the new age of Jewish leadership in our community – those under 25 years old. “We’re honouring the rising stars in our community, and we have been astonished at the calibre of our young people,” says Sackstein. “In fact, the calibre of all our nominees has been truly inspirational and something so positive to be able to celebrate.”

So, while the community might have to wait one more day to celebrate the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, “We’ll be able to do so in the knowledge that we’re not missing out on watching the Bokke triumphing in the semi-finals,” Sackstein says.







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# SA Jewry providing care after the fire

OPINION

On 31 August we woke up to the news that another deadly tragedy had occurred in Gauteng, when a building in the Johannesburg CBD, 80 Albert Street, caught fire, killing 77 people at the time of writing, and injuring 50. This is the third traumatic event that the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has been involved in over the past eight months, following the devastating explosion in Boksburg over Christmas, and the explosion in Bree Street, also in the Johannesburg CBD, in July.



Survivors of the hijacked building on Albert Street in Marshalltown that caught fire and took the lives of 77 people on 31 August

WENDY KAHN



Each of the stories we heard were heart wrenching and devastating. It reminded me of the 2008 xenophobic attacks in our country, when thousands of foreign nationals were housed in police stations and other public buildings serving as temporary shelters – people who had nothing more than the clothes on their backs, their faces etched with fear. Nothing can prepare you for the bewildered and frightened faces of the victims of these tragedies. On our visits to the shelters, we saw people whose worlds have fallen apart. They have seen death around them, many are dealing with severe injuries and burns, all their possessions are lost, and some fear that at any moment, they will be deported to countries that for a variety of reasons, they fled from.

Continued on page 8>>

On Wednesday 6 September, we joined City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Speaker Colleen Makhubele and representatives of other faith groups, including several

bishops, in visiting the site of the tragedy, offering prayers, and meeting victims. We sat in the road speaking with some of the survivors. There were people with severe injuries and a number had very young children. One saved her life and that of her week-old baby by throwing the child out of a window and jumping herself. We then visited the shelters and delivered further supplies.

## Blessing of unity



Rav Ilan Herrmann  
Soul Workout Outreach Organisation

The penultimate portion in the lead-up to Rosh Hashanah is Ki Tavo. An essential message is contained in the "living Torah" to each of us in this important pre-day-of-judgement portion. The commandment states, "When the people shall arrive in the Promised Land and will settle in it, they must bring from the first of their produce [bikkurim] to the national place of worship and in a state of abundant joy, proclaim their gratitude for having reached this divinely blessed time and situation." A question arises. It took 14 years to settle fully into the land. There were seven years of conquest and seven of settling into the particular territories designated for each tribe. Certain tribes settled far sooner than others yet weren't obliged to bring bikkurim until all the tribes had settled. The mitzvah of bikkurim is an individual obligation for a farmer to bring his first produce and celebrate his blessing with thanksgiving. Why did the farmer who settled right away or soon after entry have to wait another five or seven years until all the tribes had settled and only then bring his bikkurim? Should he not bring his first produce right away, and express his joy and gratitude as soon as he could? The portion is always connected to the week that it follows into. Ki-Tavo preceded the important day of Chai-Elul on which one of Jewish history's most extraordinary and revolutionary figures was born – the Baal Shem Tov. At the core of his legacy lies his exposition of the essential unity of the Jewish people – how they are a uniquely bound entity, a singular collective soul. The collective soul is a composite of the splinter souls of each individual Jew. To be in unity is to be organically whole and aligned. To be the opposite

is to be soul fractured collectively and individually. Only when we operate with the mind and action of unity and brotherhood are we in consonance, do we fuse into the collective essence of who we are, and are we in a state of soul integrity. Naturally, then, our strength emerges when we're united. And naturally, divine blessing is channelled primarily when we're in unity. Our challenge is to embrace unity in spite of our individual differences. So why weren't those farmers who were already settled obligated to bring their first fruit right away? The profound answer is that even though the individual

farmer had his land and produce and was joyous and thankful, he none-the-less felt inadequate to celebrate until his fellow brothers were settled and able to bring their produce too. He was unable to be in full joy as his fellow – and therefore himself – was unable to share in this blessing. This mitzvah expresses the essential unity and brotherhood of am Yisrael (the Jewish people) reflective of the Baal Shem Tov. Vital to the lead-up to Rosh Hashanah is to calibrate towards unity – love for our fellow Jew in thought, deed, and action. The catalyst for the greatest blessings.

Torah Thought

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# Glenhazel angels give injured, abandoned teen wings

NICOLA MILTZ

Sandringham High School matric student Matjantje Ntwampe had a life marred by hardship that was exacerbated by a brutal attack in the Glenhazel area two weeks ago. But, just when Ntwampe (known as MJ) thought life couldn’t get any worse, a Johannesburg family stepped in to rescue her, turning her life around.

On Tuesday, 22 August, MJ, who was in the middle of writing her preliminary examinations, was viciously attacked by a stranger in Swemmer Road, Sunningdale, while walking home from school with a school friend.

According to her, the stranger tried to strike up a conversation with them and when they ignored his advances, he became angry and threw bricks at them, one of which hit MJ, 19, on her right elbow and broke it.

A nearby security guard, hearing her cries of distress, pressed a panic button that alerted residents in the area.

Nadine Surmany and her son, Adam, 28, rushed to see what was happening.

“She was writhing in agony and crying,” said Adam, who immediately sprang into action to try help her.

So began the start of a new beginning for MJ and a “transformative experience” for the Surmany family, who say that since that serendipitous encounter, MJ has crept into their hearts.

“She had nowhere to turn. It was heartbreaking. She needed someone, and we happened to be there,” said Nadine.

Without hesitation, Adam transported MJ to Edenvale Hospital, where they waited patiently until she was seen by a doctor, which took several hours, requiring Nadine to take over from him later that day. Following this, they accompanied her to the Sandringham Police Station to ensure the incident was reported.

“It was about 21:00 when we finally finished, and all she wanted was to go home. So, my husband and I drove her to Alexandra and dropped her at home, a single room near the Alex Mall,” said Nadine.

Since then, the family has shown her unwavering support and compassion, arranging transport to and from school each day and organising a scribe to help her complete her examinations. Adam accompanied her to see an orthopaedic surgeon at Sunninghill Hospital, who together with an anaesthetist has kindly offered to operate for free when she has finished exams.

There will still be further medical and hospital bills.

Three days after the incident, Adam posted a moving Facebook message, which has spread far and wide, appealing for help.

MJ was a young girl living on her own, fending for herself after her mother passed away, he said, describing her situation as “heartbreaking”.

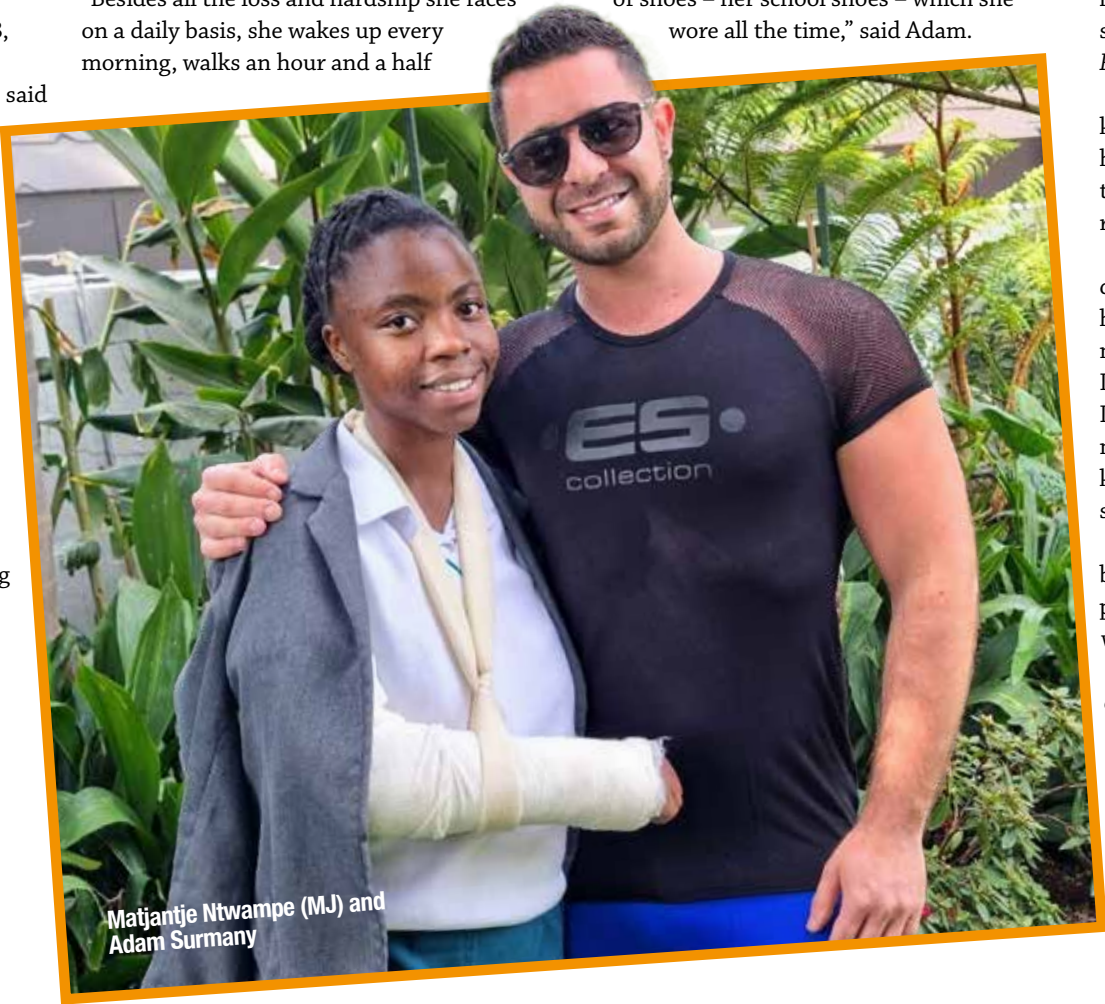
“It’s a situation that calls for us to step up and make a difference wherever we can,” he wrote.

“Her journey hasn’t been an easy one. She has no one. No one to call. No one to check up on her. No one to go home to. No one to talk to. No one to seek advice from.”

He was moved by her positive attitude in spite of her painful injury.

Appealing for help in any form, Adam said that MJ was appreciative of everything they were doing for her.

“She hasn’t allowed her circumstances to tarnish her outlook on life,” he said. “Besides all the loss and hardship she faces on a daily basis, she wakes up every morning, walks an hour and a half



to and from school, completes her studies, and then repeats the process. She’s on a food programme at the school, giving her one meal as it’s extremely tough for her to eat at home. I believe that together, we can turn this

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tale of adversity and struggle into a story of hope!”

Since posting this message, there has been a huge outpouring of help in the form of generous monetary donations and items such as shoes, clothes, and toiletries.

“There have been offers of help from social workers and physiotherapists. People have been incredible,” said Nadine.

“Before this incident, MJ had only one pair of shoes – her school shoes – which she wore all the time,” said Adam.

Along with generous help from the community, the Surmanys have gone above and beyond to assist her.

“My life has been turned around. It’s a miracle,” said MJ, “I’m so overwhelmed by all the love and help. Only two weeks ago, I was just a girl living on my own in a room with no idea where my next meal was coming from, apart from the one at school. All this changed following a horrible thing that happened to me, which strangely turned into something magical,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The Surmany family and the continued kindness and humanitarianism from others has marked the beginning of a profound transformation in MJ’s life, filling her with renewed hope and optimism for the future.

“I keep pinching myself,” she said. “On the day of the incident, I took a different route home from school so that I could go to a nearby park where there was Wi-Fi because I needed to use the internet for schoolwork. If I hadn’t done this, I would never have met these amazing people and experienced kindness that I never knew was possible,” she said.

“I can’t complain about the pain in my arm because I have never felt such joy. My mom passed away when I was 12, and I think she was the one who brought them to me.”

She’s hoping to pay it forward one day by completing her matric and furthering her studies to enable her to help children like her fulfil their dreams.

MJ’s teachers have expressed gratitude to the Surmanys.

“One teacher, who was aware of MJ’s home situation, hugged me when I fetched MJ from school, saying we were like angels,” said Nadine.

“This experience has taught me never to take what I have for granted and to be grateful for everything,” said Adam. “It has made me realise that my own problems, which may seem significant to me, are extremely minor compared to the hardships and life challenges faced by others like MJ.”

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# Tragic Joburg fire a wake-up call

NICOLA MILTZ

Jewish property specialists say last week's devastating Johannesburg inferno, which caused at least 77 deaths, sounded a final warning bell for the City of Johannesburg to clean up its act.

Joshua Green, the managing director of Mafadi Property Management, which manages about 8 500 residential units in the inner city and has thousands of commercial tenants across Gauteng, woke up to the news last Thursday, 31 August, of the tragic fire, which took place during the early hours, engulfing a five-storey

hijacked building on Albert Street.

As a volunteer operational director of the fire containment unit for Zaka and a volunteer for other communal organisations such as Hatzolah and the Community Security Organisation, Green felt a sense of foreboding and immediately called to see if there was anything he could do to assist and if it was one of the buildings in his company's property stable.

"There were enough resources on the scene, and it wasn't one of our buildings, which are tightly managed and looked after," he said.

The tragedy has shone light on the proliferation of hijacked buildings in the inner city and resultant squalor and deteriorating health and safety standards, as well as municipal incompetence and ineptitude.

"A hijacked building is a disaster waiting to happen, and should be prevented at all costs," said Green.

"These buildings are never maintained. There are no safety compliance measures in place. It's a ticking time bomb of trouble," he said.

"The hijackers, who often look like normal, well-dressed people, hijack the rental income that's due to the landlord and eventually water and electricity gets cut and who knows what happens when loadshedding occurs. Are there any fire-safety protocols? Are there fire hydrants

and extinguishers, hoses, emergency exits, working lifts? The list is endless.

"The residential property market in the inner city is like going to a massive bus accident every day. There are a number of things that can and do go wrong daily." But, he says, "The inner city is a beautiful place. It's a *cholent* pot of multiple races, nationalities, incomes, and cultures. There's endless potential."

Sadly, well intentioned and impressive urban-renewal projects suffer a setback when tragedy like this occurs, say other property developers in the space.

Perpetual crime, corruption, watershedding, and loadshedding also cause havoc.

"When the city cuts off power to a building on a Friday afternoon before Shabbos, or Joburg Water cuts water supply, it can be hell," said Green.

However, the bigger picture is the dysfunction at the very heart of the city, said Lael Bethlehem who worked for the City of Johannesburg and served as chief executive of the Johannesburg Development Agency.

"The current political coalition is disastrous. Politicians are more



Sheets that were used as ropes to escape the inner-city building inferno last week

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

preoccupied with coalition squabbles than they are with solving the immense problems of the city. It's this mismanagement and poor governance that creates conditions for further disasters," she said.

"Johannesburg is a difficult city to govern, with complex, large-scale problems. It requires resources, imagination, and determination. Even the best leadership would find it difficult to solve the complex issue of building hijackings and inner-city housing shortages, but it can be done."

Bethlehem is hoping this sorrowful tragedy will provide a turning point.

"More people died last week than during the Sharpeville massacre, and that was a huge turning point in our country. The tragedy of Marikana did give rise to changes in the mining industry, so we can only hope last week's fire will be the turning point in the way we experience the management of the city. Or will it be another in a series of disasters?"

"A tragedy of this scale sets the city back," said one property manager, who asked to remain anonymous for his security.

"Johannesburg CBD is a massive area made up of a collection of districts. There are pockets of excellence and pockets of decay. Some areas are perfectly clean and safe, with coffee shops, bars, and flower sellers. The part of the city where the fire occurred is the underbelly of town. All is not lost, but this is a serious warning bell.

"The shocking fire didn't surprise me. I'm amazed this hasn't happened more often – and it will," said one developer who specialises in inner-city student accommodation, who also asked to remain anonymous, also concerned about his safety.

"That building should have been shut down long ago and transformed into affordable city accommodation. Once a building is hijacked, it becomes part of a vicious cycle of neglect and decay as the city is incapable of enforcing by laws and basic law and order. Residents of these buildings use buckets for toilets, disposing the waste in basements, it's appalling. Where do our rates and taxes go?"

"I'm moving out of the city, it's too hard. Property values have dropped but rates and taxes keep rising, slowly eroding one's return, and there's zero capital appreciation on the property.

"Every developer will tell you about the sheer incompetence and ineptitude of municipal workers, and the lack of the city's ability to run things properly," he said.

Another commercial property owner who prefers to remain anonymous said he felt trapped by

circumstances.

"My building is only a few blocks from last week's tragic fire, so it came as a wake-up call to make extra sure all fire protocols are in place, which they are."

His main issues are that his tenants are low-income, small-time earners selling anything from fabric to electrical appliances, who can barely afford to pay rent.

"If they don't make turnover that month, I simply don't get paid. Whereas a few blocks away near Absa, it's like a different country. Big business, first-rate tenants who can afford massive rentals. Landlords of different areas, some with more affluent tenants than others, are charged similar rates and taxes, which keep rising so at the end of the day, I'm battling to come out."

He said his property had devalued because of the state of the city in that section of town, so he was forced to stay put.

"I can't sell my property because it's worth nothing, so it's better to stay here and work. It's been my whole life, it's what I know, but I'm not sure if I can sustain this. I feel locked in."

Two Jewish property owners in different parts of the city, one in Doornfontein and the other on the outskirts of the city, say their buildings have been hijacked.

"Three of my properties have been hijacked," said the one who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals.

"These are dangerous men who have come from another province who believe the property rightfully belongs to them. The law favours them over the landlord and no matter what I have tried – and believe me I've tried everything from the courts to the Red Ants to even unlawfully barricading doors – I feel powerless."

"I receive zero rent, but I still pay rates and taxes to try prevent the buildings from becoming derelict. I have switched off the electricity, but this doesn't stop them from bribing city officials to reconnect the power the next day," he said.

Another said, "My residential building has been hijacked for six years. The law isn't on my side, even though I own the property. There are so many hurdles, it's exhausting, nothing is simple. I've been trying to get a court order to evict the occupants, but it takes forever, and I'm losing hope. Last week's fire could have been prevented if only the city cared enough to maintain buildings and was more helpful. I would like to fix the building and create decent accommodation, but I'm losing hope of this ever happening as I see my investment going down the drain. I drive past, and don't even go inside because it's too dangerous there."

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# Swimming SA douses BDS call to boycott Israel contest

TALI FEINBERG

Swimming South Africa (SA), the governing body of aquatic sports in South Africa, has ignored the local Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) coalition's call for it to pull out of the 9th World Junior Swimming Championships, held from 4 to 9 September 2023 in Netanya, Israel.

Instead, a team of South Africa's best swimmers aged 14-18 competed alongside hundreds of other talented youngsters from a multitude of countries, who convened on the Wingate Institute for the event. South Africa sent about 27 swimmers, three coaches, and a team manager. On social media, many of the swimmers' families, friends, coaches, swimming clubs, and schools expressed pride and joy at them going to the event in Israel.

On the first day, South African swimmers Tom Truter and Milla Drakopoulos raced to personal best times to advance through to the semi-finals of the 100m breaststroke and 100m backstroke. On the second day, Tai Pearson set a new record in 100m butterfly, while Ricky Lottering won his 200m freestyle heat comfortably with a massive personal best. Many of the South African swimmers had also shone at the recent Commonwealth Youth Games (CYG) in August.

"The South African Zionist Federation [SAZF] celebrates all South African athletes participating in the championship," says SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. "The SAZF is delighted that Swimming SA, in line with other South African sports bodies, has refused to be bullied by the antisemitic BDS movement's desperate and divisive

attempt to prevent normalisation between South Africa and the world's only Jewish state."

Swimming SA followed in the footsteps of Black Coffee, Orlando Pirates, Chess South Africa, Tennis South Africa, and Miss South Africa, who have taken part in global events in Israel in spite of the bullying, threats, and intimidation tactics of BDS.

"The SAZF wishes to commend the leadership of Swimming SA for standing up to BDS' deplorable campaign to prevent South African swimmers from competing in an international swimming event simply because it took place in Israel," says Polovin. "The competition has more than 600 promising young swimmers from more than 100 countries."

World Aquatics Vice-President Sam Ramsamy is a South African, a former member of the International Olympic Committee, and the honorary president of the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee. During apartheid, he worked to ensure a sports boycott against the country. However, he too ignored BDS' call, which included a direct message to him.

The BDS movement also urged the department of sport, arts and culture "to implement policy guidelines on a sports and cultural boycott in line with the call made to us and the rest of the international community by the Palestinian people".

The championship was held under the auspices of the prestigious World Aquatics organisation, formerly known as the Fédération Internationale de Natation, the sole and exclusive world governing body for all aquatic sports. Since June 2021, under the presidency of Captain Husain

Al-Musallam, World Aquatics comprises of 209 national member federations on five continents.

World Aquatics said that The World Aquatics Junior Swimming Championships, or Junior Worlds, have served as a launching pad for some of the best swimmers in the world to get their first taste of international racing.

"This year's championships had a loaded field of some of the best 18-and-under swimmers in the world," said the organisers. "For some, this will be their first time racing in an international meet, while for others, this will be what sparks their dreams that they could be on top of the world one day." By taking part in the championship, South African swimmers didn't allow BDS to take that possibility away from them.

One of South Africa's swimmers, Jessica Thompson, twice broke Erin Gallagher's CYG 50m butterfly record, winning gold on 7 August. The 16-year-old said at the time that her main goal for the year was the Junior Worlds in Israel. "That's my main gala for the year. This is more a prep event for Israel. Next year, I'm going to try my hardest to qualify for the Paris Olympics. I know that 2028 in Los Angeles is a good opportunity,

but next year with the gift of G-d, I'm hoping to be able to get to Paris."

World Aquatics says its values are "in accordance with the principles of democracy, right to equality, and no discrimination between any race, skin colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation, language,

division in South Africa. Only South Africans can lose from this equation. Israel offers international experiences to bolster the careers of our young athletes, and yet, the hateful BDS movement would prefer to see our sport stars sink rather than swim. The SAZF welcomes the fact that sport and



The opening ceremony at the 9th World Junior Swimming Championships held in Netanya Israel

political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or any other reason, neutrality, transparency, accountability, fair play, inclusion, sportsmanship, and clean sport".

Its vision and mission are "a world united by water, for health, life, and sport, to ensure the ability to participate, compete in, and benefit from aquatic sport". By ignoring BDS' call, Swimming SA aligned with that mission.

Says Polovin, "The divisive and hateful BDS movement stirs up unnecessary

cultural exchange has triumphed over hate, and we will continue to welcome positive engagements between South Africa and Israel."

Meanwhile, according to media watchdog Honest Reporting, South Africa's oldest news site, Independent Online (IOL), printed a piece regurgitating many BDS lies which came from the press release calling on Swimming SA to boycott the championship. Honest Reporting has since filed a formal complaint with IOL.



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## This can never happen again

It’s difficult to imagine the depth of devastation and horror of last week’s inner-city fire in Johannesburg, in which 77 people including women and children were burnt to death and scores seriously injured.

The fear, desperation, and anguish of the people who got caught in the five-storey building during the fire is too awful even to contemplate.

Witnesses have described people being forced to jump out of windows because they had no other way out. These are images reminiscent of 9/11, when terrorists forced planes to fly into the World Trade Center in New York.

In this case, this nightmare was due to the total degradation of a building owned by the city. And the people who lived in this building, that wasn’t built or zoned for residents, were effectively refugees from their birth countries. Those who survived mostly lost every meagre possession they had, and in the chaos of the fire, mothers lost their children as they tried to escape.

I’m not sure if we’ve truly understood the implications of this.

Suffice to say, as Lael Bethlehem made clear in the story on page 6, more people died because of this fire than during the Sharpeville massacre, which was a huge turning point for this country. Sixty-nine people died in Sharpeville.

She went on to say that more people died in this disaster than at Marikana, when 34 people were killed. “The tragedy of Marikana did give rise to changes in the mining industry, so we can only hope last week’s fire will be the turning point in the way we experience the management of the city, or will it be another in a series of disasters?” she asked.

We can only hope that this is the catalyst for change and becomes the moment that woke the government and country up to make sure nothing like this can ever happen again.

One of the biggest problems in this crisis is the level of xenophobia or Afrophobia in South Africa, and the fact that most of the people who lived in this building were effectively refugees from other African countries. They are people who are hardly able to eke out a living or put their children through our education system. They are literally people who fall through the cracks here.

I understand there are many in South Africa and even in our own community who believe they should be sent back to their country of origin no matter what’s happening there. This is so dreadfully sad, as I have said before, as we Jews understand what it is to be a displaced people, a people who nobody particularly wants in their country.

I’m relieved and pleased that our South African Jewish Board of Deputies is out there, trying to help the survivors of this tragedy. Nobody asked the Board to do so, but it rushed out to do the right thing. Thank you, Wendy Kahn and your team, for representing us in doing what’s right. I’m really proud to be associated with you in this endeavour. *Kol hakavod!*

The devastation of this tragedy is three-fold. First, it’s about the horrific loss, trauma, and horror of 77 souls, 77 human beings, including women and children who lost their lives and those who survived with nothing. Then, the fact that South Africans aren’t as horrified as they should be because so many of the victims are from other African countries and aren’t South African citizens.

But finally, it’s about the fact that this country is being left to rot by our government, both on a national and local level. The upkeep of essential services is neglected, and has been for so many years. After all this time of being abandoned, it’s extraordinarily difficult to pick up the pieces and fix them.

For so long, so many in the ruling party, which fought tooth and nail for democracy and for the human rights of the masses, have lined their pockets rather than doing what they promised.

This is the sadness that’s South Africa right now.

Having said that, I’m inspired by the religious leaders who have now gathered to make it their business to fight corruption and turn this country around. It’s for this reason we chose to put this story on our front page. We need to know that, while we are living with so much that is negative including Stage 6 loadshedding, there are leaders pushing for change.

Last week, we brought you the story about Rabbi Gideon Pogrund’s business leadership initiative, and now we have another inspiring one coming from religious leaders.

So, though the government isn’t doing what it needs to do to fix our country, business and religious leaders are taking up the cudgels to make sure there’s change and improvement. I know that it’s early days and the initiatives are only starting. Some may say it’s just talk, but I’m an idealist and I believe in the good in people.

Having said that, we’ll be following what’s done to help change this country from being a corruption capital, in which people don’t seem to count in our national leaders’ eyes, to a country that can once again be an example to the world.

Remember when the world looked to us as the rainbow nation under the leadership of Nelson Mandela? Those were heady days, but this isn’t the time to lose faith.

As Mandela said: “The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

He also said – and I say this to all of us and our leaders – “It’s in your hands, to make a better world for all who live in it.”

I pray that this tragedy is the catalyst for change. I pray that we’ll never have to deal with the loss of life on this scale ever again. G-d bless South Africa!

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



## Eritrean riot intensifies exclusion of asylum seekers

OPINION

DR DIDDY MYMIN KAHN



In the Kuchinate studio, a sanctuary for asylum-seeking women from various African countries, a sense of shock and horror lingers after the unprecedented recent violence. Asylum seekers in Tel Aviv who are against the regime in Eritrea implored the police to cancel an event organised by the Eritrean embassy that was celebrating the country’s dictatorship.

This request fell on deaf ears, and what followed was an outbreak of unprecedented violence, with the police ill-equipped to handle the situation, resulting in dozens of injuries among law enforcement and rioters, including the use of live ammunition by the police.

This tragic event could and should have been prevented, and left many of Kuchinate’s families living in fear. One non-Eritrean artisan, leaving church, found herself caught in the police brutality, forced to flee amidst the bullets flying around her.

Caution prevails, as many are now afraid to leave their homes and venture out to work. The women are supporting one another, rewatching videos of the harrowing violence on social media, and have received many concerned calls from family members in the diaspora. Some parents kept their children home from school this week, shielding them from the haunting images of violence.

In Israel, Eritrean asylum seekers face a precarious existence, lacking legal status and access to rights and services. They aren’t “illegal infiltrators”, as the Israeli government labels them, but individuals who have fled the oppressive regime in Eritrea.

Escaping the clutches of the Eritrean dictatorship, enduring human trafficking, torture, and gendered violence along their migration journey, and facing policies in Israel that aim to make their lives miserable, requires immense strength and resilience.

For years, Eritrean asylum seekers have lived under a temporary protection policy, striving to build their lives and raise their families. However, they remain trapped in limbo, with no prospects for a future in Israel. They have resided in the country for up to 15 years without legal status, basic rights, access to healthcare, or stable employment.

Though only a few have been recognised as refugees by Israel, other countries in the global north have recognition rates as high as 90%. This context cannot be overlooked when examining the events of the weekend. These individuals have fled their homeland, leaving behind their families and lives, seeking safety and a chance at a better future.

The recent outbreak of violence within the Eritrean community, involving both police and protesters, is a tragedy that could have been prevented.

Similar events by Eritrean embassies abroad, seen as a celebration of the dictatorship, attracted both pro and anti-government protesters, and resulted in violent clashes.



regime back to their home country would subject them to imprisonment or even death, violating international law and the principle of non-refoulement.

These clashes are already being exploited to fuel racist extremism and anti-refugee sentiment, furthering the government’s agenda and narrative that these individuals are economic migrants, infiltrators, and criminals. Instead, we should use this moment to introspect, considering the plight of the 18 000 asylum seekers left in Israel without access to basic rights.

As a nation that has experienced persecution and once sought refuge ourselves, we should approach this situation with empathy and compassion, rejecting outright the idea of deporting asylum seekers to potential imprisonment or death. This community, already living in limbo and facing uncertainty, racism, and xenophobia, worries about the profound impact on itself and its families. It fears the policies being expressed by the government such as administrative detention and mass deportation.

To be clear, we don’t condone violence of any kind, and are advocating for the rights of the peaceful, hard-working, genuine asylum seekers living in Israel. These clashes have sadly only intensified the racialisation, criminalisation, and exclusion of asylum seekers, a community that already struggles with limited hope.

Now, more than ever, it’s crucial to stand up for the rights of asylum seekers. They, too, deserve to live in peace and dignity, to thrive rather than merely survive.

• *South African-born clinical psychologist and trauma specialist in humanitarian aid and intervention, Dr Diddy Mymin Kahn, is a King David Linksfield alumnus and the co-founder and chief executive of Kuchinate, an arts based economic and psychosocial collective of African asylum-seeking women.*

## SA Jewry providing care after the fire

>>Continued from page 4

The SAJBD is committed to assisting whenever and wherever a disaster occurs. We don’t get involved in the politics, the mudslinging, the blame games. We want only to find ways to ease the burden of these traumatised people, to bring some relief, and try to alleviate their suffering.

The SAJBD has a policy in these situations not just to arrive with aid, but ensure that we provide exactly what’s required and that our relief is targeted and effective.

For example, on Friday, we ascertained through our network at the CoJ that there was more than sufficient food and what was needed were blankets and nappies. The SAJBD’s Clive Mashishi found out the exact quantities and sizes of nappies required, which were delivered, along with 200 blankets supplied by Fingertips of Africa. When we reached the shelter, we engaged with the authorities and constructed a list of further items required which we immediately filled.

Seeing little children running around the

shelter touched us deeply. What these little ones had been exposed to in the previous 24 hours is shattering. We immediately arranged for balls and toys to keep them occupied.

We were able to engage with authorities from CoJ and the province, who are extremely grateful for help from South African Jewry, that we are committed to providing assistance.

As with the Boksburg disaster, the SAJBD will remain involved well after the cameras have lost interest. In Boksburg, we were there to support families with food and emotional support long after the explosion. We held the families through the funerals, providing catering, and working with the incredible Pastor Tshepo Mosala to give spiritual support.

There’s a long and traumatic road ahead. The SAJBD, working with the amazing outreach organisations in our community, will continue to provide assistance as the victims start to piece their lives together.

• *Wendy Kahn is the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.*



# From democracy to autocracy: Israel’s constitutional crisis

## OPINION

Israel doesn’t have a comprehensive Constitution. In 1950, the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, adopted the Harari Decision, according to which the Knesset would gradually enact basic laws that would serve as chapters for a future written Constitution designed to ensure the completion of the constitutional project. In 1992, two Basic Laws were passed – the Basic Law of Human Dignity and Liberty and the Basic Law of Freedom of Occupation. By 1993, Chief Justice Aharon Barak noted that, by virtue of these basic laws, human rights in Israel had become legal norms for a preferred constitutional state. Hence, ordinary legislation which contradicted the provisions of a Basic Law without stating specifically that it was doing so couldn’t be considered to be valid.

Because the Basic Laws don’t have entrenched constitutional status like, for example, the 1996 South African Constitution, Israeli courts generally don’t strike down any law because it deems the legislation to be unreasonable. On occasion, however, after evaluation of executive decisions by ministers and administrative decisions of government or officials, the courts will assess the justification for these decisions within the prism of reasonableness and, in some cases, strike down these decisions for want of reasonableness.

Reading certain decisions of the Israeli Supreme Court, one finds judgments that have held that treating Jews and Arabs differently was absolutely prohibited, and decisions which have provided greater human rights protection, mostly in issues of freedom of speech. Both these protectors lie at the very core of a democracy.

The implication of the abolition of reasonableness review piloted through the Knesset by the coalition of Benjamin Netanyahu is that it will substantially limit the independence of the judiciary and its powers. As a result, it will remove important legal restrictions on government action. If this law passes muster, Israel will have moved from a society bounded by the rule of law to one subject to the dictates of a simple majority, albeit transient.

The defence by supporters of this erosion of judicial review is that, prior to the development of the Basic Laws and the more entrenched conception of review, Israel was still regarded as a democracy, however imperfect. There are at least two answers to this canard. First, based on English common law, Israel always had a concept of review, albeit one that expanded following the passing of the Basic Laws. Second, it would be naïve to elide over the fundamental changes that have occurred in Israeli society over the past 30 years.

Any overlapping consensus about rights and respect for both secular and religious communities isn’t the same

as it was prior to the introduction of the Basic Laws. In an increasingly ideology ridden society such as Israel, it’s more likely that a transient majority will use its majority to impose its will on the entire population.

The abolition of a fundamental concept of democracy, which is legally accountable public power which should be subject to clear legal justification, will now allow the imposition of policy which imposes the will of some on all citizens. There can be little doubt that, absent a successful challenge to this legislation, the next chapter in this saga will be a move to disenfranchise – either in full or in part – the Israeli Arab population from voting in elections. If the courts are unable to review this move on the basis of discrimination, past echoes of a claim to democracy would have been eroded.



South Africans have first-hand experience of the erosion of the rule of law as well as the tendentious justifications for gutting the power of independent courts. It starts with curbing the jurisdiction of courts and ends with an autocratic system which works to the advantage of only some, in Israel’s case, the ultra-Orthodox, who claim authority from their exclusive



JUDGE DENNIS DAVIS

reading of our tradition.  
And, for sure, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezael Smotrich don’t regard the Palestinians as anything other than *untermenschen* who should have no rights in their expanded vision of Israel. The established South African Jewish community, unlike its counterparts in other parts of the world, has been stunningly silent in the wake of this fundamental attack on the democratic structures of Israel. It’s not only astonishing, but is a luminous illustration of how little they have learnt from our own history. With apologies to last week’s Parsha, they are obviously supporters of the view, “Justice, justice, we shall destroy for all other than ourselves!”

• Judge Dennis Davis is an honorary professor of law at the University of Cape Town, University of the Witwatersrand, and University of the Western Cape.

## Religious leaders to tackle ‘SA in crisis’

>>Continued from page 3

nationwide voter education campaign to share with citizens the moral importance of voting and how to exercise that vote with integrity.”

South African Jewry has an important role to play in all of this, Goldstein says. “Voter education, voter empowerment, active citizenry, getting involved, and appreciating the moral responsibility to vote with conscience, is going to be particularly important,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* after the event.

Although the community sometimes feels isolated, these discussions showed him how it’s part of the wider fabric of South African society and that we all have the same concerns. “We experience these problems like all South Africans do, and all of our concerns are shared by the other faith communities,” Goldstein says.

He emphasised that although the tone of the event was serious, “It wasn’t one of negativity, doom, and gloom. It was one of strength, hope in overcoming these problems, ownership, and defiance. As citizens, we’re saying, ‘We’re going to rally together. We’re going to hold government accountable. We’re going to exercise the right to vote with real confidence. We’re going to debate, and find solutions.’”

“The tone was to confront problems, but to do so from the point of view that we, the people, can achieve great things when we work together and when we have integrity. It’s a privilege for me to represent the Jewish community at the meetings beforehand, at the press conference, and in this initiative as it’s rolled out in the months ahead.”

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# Historic Anglo building underpins Blecher’s ‘education city’

TALI FEINBERG

Nhlakanipho Chiliza grew up in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal, raised alongside many siblings by his grandmother. When he finished high school, he worked as a taxi driver’s assistant and a gardener. Then he was given the opportunity to study for free at Dr Taddy Blecher’s Maharishi Invincibility Institute (MII), ultimately graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration and an MBA from Wits Business School. He now works as head of sales and business enablement at Absa Capital.

The MII will now be able to help even more young people like Chiliza because Anglo American has donated its iconic 45 Main Street building in the Johannesburg central business district (CBD) to the MII, an accredited and registered non-profit South African skills-to-work educational institution.

Blecher, a King David schools alumnus, qualified actuary, and management consultant, says he envisages the new building as being part of an “education city” that can have a positive impact on South Africa’s future.

“Education is that one thing that is proven to change the future, and with the new building, we can grow to educating 5 000 students a year,” he says. “The new ‘gold’ of South Africa is the youth – they are our greatest asset.

“The tragedy in this country is that 67% of youth aged between 18 to 24 are unemployed,” Blecher says. “That’s two out of three youth, and we’ve got to change that

statistic. Getting them into jobs across the digital sector, cybersecurity, finance, banking, insurance – it’s a socioeconomic game changer.”

As a registered private college created in 2007, the MII’s professional academies provide graduates with nationally accredited qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework, as well as sought-after industry certifications. These qualifications open doors to gaining scarce skills and hard-to-get jobs with leading employers.

Nolitha Fakude, the chairperson of Anglo American’s management board, says, “We firmly believe that Johannesburg’s inner-city regeneration hinges on nurturing the potential of its young people, who represent the city’s future. The MII has emerged as a driving force in paving pathways to opportunities for thousands of young people in the inner city, and it fills us with great pride to entrust them with the custodianship of the iconic 45 Main Street – a building that holds deep historical significance in Johannesburg’s evolution. Since its inception in 2007, the MII has offered critical skills training to more than 19 000 youth, most of whom are young black women, boasting a more than 90% job placement rate.”

Themba Mkhwanazi, Anglo American regional director for Africa and Australia, says, “When we look at the immense challenges that cities like Johannesburg face, they often mirror the challenges of our entire nation. As responsible corporate citizens, our duty goes beyond simply pointing out problems. We must actively engage and contribute to the solutions.



Dr Taddy Blecher

Photo: Blowfish Productions

visionary leaders committed to driving tangible transformation in the revitalisation of Johannesburg’s inner city.”

Blecher has never “dreamed small”, so his hope of an “education city” aligns with the impact he has already made on the country. In 1995, he received a job offer in the United States. However, the legend goes that after buying his plane ticket, he decided to remain in South Africa to create education and employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth. He hasn’t looked back since.

“Anglo American literally turned down four offers to buy the building for more than R100 million, and gave it to

“The building, which forms part of our former Johannesburg CBD campus, will allow the institute to extend its impact, more than doubling the number of students it can support. The MII focuses on access to on-the-job training for students and actively works to help graduates secure sustainable jobs at some of the country’s leading corporates. This model and the support of the institute’s long-standing partners translates to a tangible difference in the lives of talented youth, helping elevate communities.”

Anglo American Corporate Services Manager Anton Uys says, “Since entering the CBD, MII has trained 19 073 graduates in scarce skills, boasting a 94% job placement rate. We’re privileged to have supported the

MII’s vision by donating its current home in the CBD – 9 Ntemi Piliso Street – since 2004. This new donation ties in with our social-impact strategy, which focuses intensely on education, spanning early childhood development through to tertiary educational support, youth development, and youth entrepreneurship, among others.

“Following the donation of 45 Main Street, the MII has assumed full ownership of the building, including its upkeep and maintenance, while Anglo American continues its custodianship of the remainder of the precinct. Another achievement is our role in helping to establish the Johannesburg CBD Coalition, a platform that brings together several public and private organisations and

us to provide education and skills to youth forever in the city,” he says. “The building is absolutely magnificent, and it’s where we’ll provide free access to education at multiple levels. We’re deeply grateful [to Anglo American] for this incredible commitment to changing South Africa.”

They now have three buildings within a two-minute walk of each other. “Our dream would be to get to 40 000 students in the city and to bring in other educational institutions. There’s no great city in the world that doesn’t have strong educational institutions as its base,” Blecher says.

“Also, educational institutions can outlast businesses. For example, Oxford is turning 927 this year and Cambridge is turning 814, so this is for the long term. The city is a gateway between a huge amount of poverty in the south, and jobs in the north. The goal is to create a place of education, entrepreneurship, and employment for large numbers of people, and to bridge the southern and northern suburbs in this way, rather than millions of people commuting through the city to try to get to a job.”

Blecher says the MII has grown into a pre-school, a high school, a college, and 12 industry professional academies. “Our focus is to get youth into critical scarce-skill jobs. We have 45 national accreditations and offer more than 80 industry exams, and that’s growing all the time. Our goals are big. We also hope to take this model to multiple parts of South Africa as well as to other African countries.

“All challenges are surmountable,” he says. “We’ve never had a cent from government. We get only R200 maximum from students. Our high school students are on full scholarships. So, it’s about building a model that is financially sustainable. We’ve got a number of income streams. We leverage black economic empowerment as much as possible. We help companies get great score cards. And in the process, we help many youth.”

Blecher isn’t naïve, and says, “Clearly there are a lot of things to be concerned about in South Africa. However, I remain hopeful that South Africans can work together and fundamentally change the future. I remain an optimist because I see every day what we’re able to do in partnership with incredible businesses and communities.”

He believes the South African Jewish community has always played a vital role in building the country, and must continue to be active participants in its present and future. He’s deeply grateful to the MII’s many Jewish supporters. “We can be very proud. We’re a tiny community, but we’re robust and achieving way beyond our numbers. My belief is that the community is only going to add more value.”

## Africa in anti-democratic slide warns Botswana’s former leader

STEVEN GRUZD

The four “Ds” that defined his two terms as the fourth president of Botswana from 2008 to 2018 were “democracy, development, discipline, and dignity”. He was a fierce critic of Robert Mugabe, and he condemned the latest in a string of dubious elections in Zimbabwe. He’s also a champion of wildlife conservation.

Seretse Khama Ian Khama, known as Ian Khama, was the guest speaker at the 33rd conference of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) on Sunday, 3 September, held at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre (RCHCC) in Johannesburg. Founded in 1931, the UJW has been providing for the needs of the Jewish community and broader South African society ever since.



asking him to step down as president.

“SADC has guidelines on what is considered a free and fair election,” Khama said. “Zimbabwe has violated it and the other presidents say nothing. This club of leaders stand by each other.”

Khama said it was “refreshing” that SADC observers had condemned the recent Zimbabwean elections – in a very unusual move for them. “They stood up and called what they saw.” He regrets that Botswana’s president congratulated Emmerson Mnangagwa on his dubious victory. Though he didn’t mention it, South Africa’s president has done the same.

Khama also spoke about his early life, his military and political career, and his passion for the environment. He said he was motivated by being of service to others, especially the poor and disadvantaged.

Khama was born in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1953. His parents, Sir Seretse Khama, who would go on to become Botswana’s first president, and Ruth Williams – a mixed-race couple – were in exile from the British protectorate of Bechuanaland. This was at the urging of the apartheid government in South Africa, which threatened to withhold mineral exports to the UK. His parents had met at Oxford University, and struggled to find a church or a registrar in the UK who would marry them. Eventually, the British government allowed them to return. “It was a telling contrast for my mother to come from a developed country to the dustbowl and poverty that was Botswana,” Khama said.

He spoke about attending a one-room school in Bechuanaland. He then went to school in Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) where he was the first non-white pupil and “the boys there never allowed me to forget that, every day of my life”. Thereafter, he was educated at

a co-educational, multiracial school in Swaziland (today Eswatini), “much to the annoyance of the South African government, right on its doorstep”. He then went on to study at Sandhurst, the elite British military academy. He trained as a pilot and still flies today. He was foundational in the formation of Botswana’s army, eventually becoming its commander. “I was the only military-trained person in the country,” he said.

Khama said he had no intention of going into politics, but became vice-president and then president in 2008. One of his passions was nature conservation, and he deployed the army for anti-poaching activities, especially for extinction-threatened rhinoceroses. There were only five rhinos left in Botswana, and Khama moved them into a protected area in the centre of the country to allow them to breed safely. Later, about 50 rhinos were reintroduced into the wild, descended from the original five.

“I banned hunting. Without wildlife, there would be no tourism,” he said. He regretted that his successor has lifted the ban. Three-quarters of the rehabilitated rhinos have since been killed. He is today patron of several global environmental organisations.

Reflecting on the resurgence of coups d’état in Africa – with the latest being in Niger and Gabon – Khama said, “Some leaders embrace democracy only for as long as they are incumbents. Then, they rig elections.” He said some presidents considered themselves g-ds, who believe that only they could lead. “We’re seeing a mushrooming of anti-democratic leaders.”

Khama said South Africans should cherish their freedom to criticise government openly – a rarity on the continent.

He said he was “totally behind Ukraine, which is being brutalised by the Russians”, pointing to a pin on his jacket in the yellow and blue of Ukraine’s flag.

“We need more organisations like the Union of Jewish Women,” Khama said. “Maybe we need a Union of Women all over the world to join it in its good work. Its ideals resonate with my ideals and beliefs. I would like to commend the UJW for all the good work it has done consistently in South Africa for 92 years. It has changed lives for the better. I applaud them, and urge them to continue.”

An exhibition titled “Women of Action: A History of the Union of Jewish Women”, based on the new book of the same name by Karen Kallmann, was opened at the RCHCC.



# Israel warns of elevated terror threat over holidays

TALI FEINBERG

Israel's counter-terrorism division issued a travel warning on 31 August to Israelis travelling over the high holidays cautioning them of Iran's global terrorist threat which includes kidnappings and attacks on Israeli nationals. South Africa's Community Service Organisation (CSO) says all Jews need to take heed.

Israel's National Security Council Counter-Terrorism Division specifically cites Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean Sea basin, and countries in proximity to Iran as having the highest likelihood of Iranian terrorist activity.

In its updated terrorist threat assessment for Israelis abroad, it said, "Iran still constitutes the main global terrorist threat, and is continuing to promote attacks on Israeli nationals around the world, both directly and via proxies that it operates in various countries while violating their sovereignty.

"Iranian terrorists are continuing their attempts to contact Israeli nationals, in Israel and abroad, under business covers or by impersonating other elements, in order to attack or abduct them," the division said. "Several Iranian attempts to attack Israeli and Jewish targets have been thwarted in the past year."

Jevon Greenblatt, the director of operations at the CSO Johannesburg, told the SA Jewish Report, "It's common cause that Iran sees diaspora Jewish communities as the "soft underbelly" of Israel, and makes no distinction between Israeli targets and Jewish targets. Iran seeks to carry out attacks against Jewish individuals and communities where it sees a possibility for success.

"Since the nuclear deal between Iran and the West fell apart during the Trump administration, Iran has renewed its efforts to target Jews and Israelis across the world," he says. "In recent years, there has been a particularly concerning escalation against targets outside of Israel, possibly linked to Iran feeling emboldened by what it perceives as the growing weakness of the West and Israel.

"Iran's current modus operandi is to focus its efforts on easier targets such as prominent Israeli and, in some cases, Jewish individuals or groups," says Greenblatt. "Tourists, tour groups, and Jewish and Israeli businessmen have also been targeted. Additionally, Iran is expending huge effort to increase its reach and influence in Africa. It feels comfortable operating on the continent, and doesn't fear political repercussions should it decide to act against those it sees as its enemies."

Meanwhile, the South African government continues to cosy up to the Iranian regime. South Africa hosted the 15th SA-Iran Joint Commission of Co-operation in Pretoria in mid-August, and its next engagement will be in Tehran. Iran was also invited to join the BRICS (Brazil,

Russia, India, China, and South Africa) organisation from 1 January 2024.

Israel's warning went on to say, "Various global jihad and radical Islamic organisations are continuing to carry out attacks at various sites around the world. These organisations have recently shown greater interest in attacking Israelis and Jews, and have called on supporters to attack such targets around the world. Lone-wolf terrorists, who are inspired by these organisations and who are liable to carry out attacks against Israelis and Jews, are a principal threat. It should be noted that these organisations are focusing their activity in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe alongside more sporadic efforts in additional countries."



There is a risk of abductions of Israelis and Jews abroad, as per Israel's National Security Council Counter-Terrorism Division

The statement noted, "Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives have recently shown high motivation to carry out abductions in Israel in order to obtain bargaining chips vis-à-vis Israel. These organisations aspire to carry out abductions of Israelis or Jews abroad."

The statement said that Jewish communities as well as other minorities have been a principal target of terrorists, with religious and community institutions being a preferred target, especially during holidays. "In recent years, religious institutions have been attacked throughout Europe and [North] America for ideological and antisemitic motives."

According to Israeli law, Israelis are prohibited from travelling to the enemy countries of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran, even for dual nationals who hold additional passports. "Israelis in these countries are at very high risk of abduction or attacks on their lives," according to the statement. "For example, academic researcher Elizabeth Tsurkov, an Israeli citizen who also holds a Russian passport, was abducted by a Shiite militia while she was illegally present in Iraq. In high-risk countries, Israelis must show greater caution and avoid external indicators of their being Israeli or Jewish."

Greenblatt points out that in 1994, "Iran, through its terror proxies, used a vehicle bomb to attack the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association [AMIA] Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 85 and injuring more than 300. This attack was catastrophic for the Jewish community of Buenos Aires, with the after-effects still being felt today. It was just one example of the many successful and foiled attacks carried out by Iran against Jewish targets across the world."

Visiting professor and research fellow at the University of the Free State and research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran and Gulf States Research at the University of Haifa, Dr Glen Segell, also points to this attack as an example of Iran's capabilities.

"Generally, the threat level against both Israeli citizens travelling and Jews living in the diaspora increases during Jewish holidays," he says. "Enemies find these opportune moments, and there have been serious incidents, for example the AMIA bombing, the deadliest antisemitic attack outside Israel since the Holocaust.

"Israel, like many other countries, issues travel advice to its citizens. The warnings are constantly updated. South Africa has no travel threat at the moment," Segell says.

Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State and senior research associate of the Jerusalem-based Research on Islam and Muslims in Africa, notes that these terror groups have kidnapped in the past, and may do so again, especially as a bargaining tool.

"Regarding South Africa, there's a strong Islamic State presence here," he says. "Islamic State has made use of kidnapping as a means to fund its activities here in South Africa. Several businessmen have been kidnapped and then released on the payment of a ransom, which is then used to fund its various activities.

"Iran has several challenges on the domestic front, both in terms of its economy and the protests against it. If it can deflect attention to Israel or something like this, that would benefit the regime as well. The threat [of terrorism] is real and elevated, but not really for South Africa."

But Greenblatt says, "The risk is always there. Over the past year or two, we have seen numerous plots that thankfully have been foiled. Having said that, terror organisations assign great significance to symbolism and dates, so doing something over the high holidays would be a great coup for them.

"The CSO has developed a robust structure and systems to mitigate against such threats against our community," he says. "However, security is a collective effort requiring the whole community to work together to ensure that our facilities are well protected. Should you identify any suspicious activity around our communal facilities or become aware of any threats aimed at our community, please contact our 24-hour emergency control room immediately on 0861 800 018."



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# Price reflects on turbulent times at UCT

TALI FEINBERG

Though the title of the new book by Dr Max Price is *Statues and Storms: Leading through Change*, one of the alternate titles he thought of was “The Man in the Arena”. In many ways, as the then vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT), he was the man at the very centre of the historic student protests that gripped the university from 2015 to 2017.

No such moment captures this more than when Price calmly met students to hear their demands on 14 October 2016, but was assaulted as students closed in on him. He was the man in the arena, surrounded on all sides, trying to lead UCT through its most unprecedented, sustained, widespread, disruptive, and at times violent protests, triggered by the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements.

Price was vice-chancellor of UCT from 2008 to 2018, a decade that spanned a watershed period in higher education in South Africa. The Fallist movement spread, fragmented, degenerated, and threatened to ruin many South African universities. Price’s new book is an insider’s view of what happened, and is about making tough decisions in times of rapid transformation.

“The university went through turbulent storms – all universities in the country did,” says Price. “I don’t think it was a given that they would survive. It could have happened that we couldn’t graduate students or have new intakes, that we would have faced financial ruin if the whole university had to repeat a year of study. There could have been, at least at UCT, far more violence than there was. And I believe we brought the ship back to safe harbour.”

He wrote this book because, he says, he had a feeling he “had a story to tell”. Upon reflection, in the heat of the protests, communication wasn’t always clear, Price says. “The public and student activists didn’t understand the strategies we adopted. It was important to explain these in a more considered way, and to evaluate them with the passage of time.”

He also learnt many lessons from the crisis, and wanted to share these insights. “This is history that needs to be recorded. As an insider, I have access to details which others wouldn’t have. It’s a partial view, which must be taken into account together with the narratives of others.”

The most challenging aspect of writing the book was “undoubtedly reliving the experiences,” says Price. “Some were traumatic – being surrounded by a crowd; the uncertainty of not knowing how they would respond; the engagements with the police. Watching the visual material and reading the newspaper articles was challenging.

“In some ways, it was also cathartic,” he says. “That reflection was also the most positive aspect of writing the book – reminding myself how the executive team stood together and shared the burden of leadership, the experience of being in the trenches together, and the camaraderie that it generated.”

Because he’s writing about such a volatile time, Price does expect some backlash. However, he never considered it a reason not to publish. He expects there will be criticism from students “who think I acted harshly against them for bringing police and private security onto campus, and for interdicts and disciplinary charges. The book recounts that and explains it, and I hope they will read the book with an open mind, willing to hear the rationale of my actions”.

Then there are “people in the university and in the public who thought that I wasn’t being tough enough with the students,” says Price. “I haven’t had the opportunity to explain to that audience the logic of our thinking.”

His most difficult moment during his 10-year tenure wasn’t when he was assaulted, but when he had to disinvite Danish journalist Flemming Rose from delivering the annual TB Davie Academic Freedom Lecture at UCT. Rose was the foreign affairs editor of Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, and is best known for commissioning a group of drawings of the Prophet Muhammad that were published in 2005, causing global protest and riots.

“We felt that the resulting violence if he spoke would mean that he wouldn’t end up being heard. It would pose a risk to students, staff, and to himself,” says Price. “The damage done to the institution would be far greater in the short term than the damage done by disinviting him. I was severely criticised, and it’s a decision that I deeply regretted having to make.”

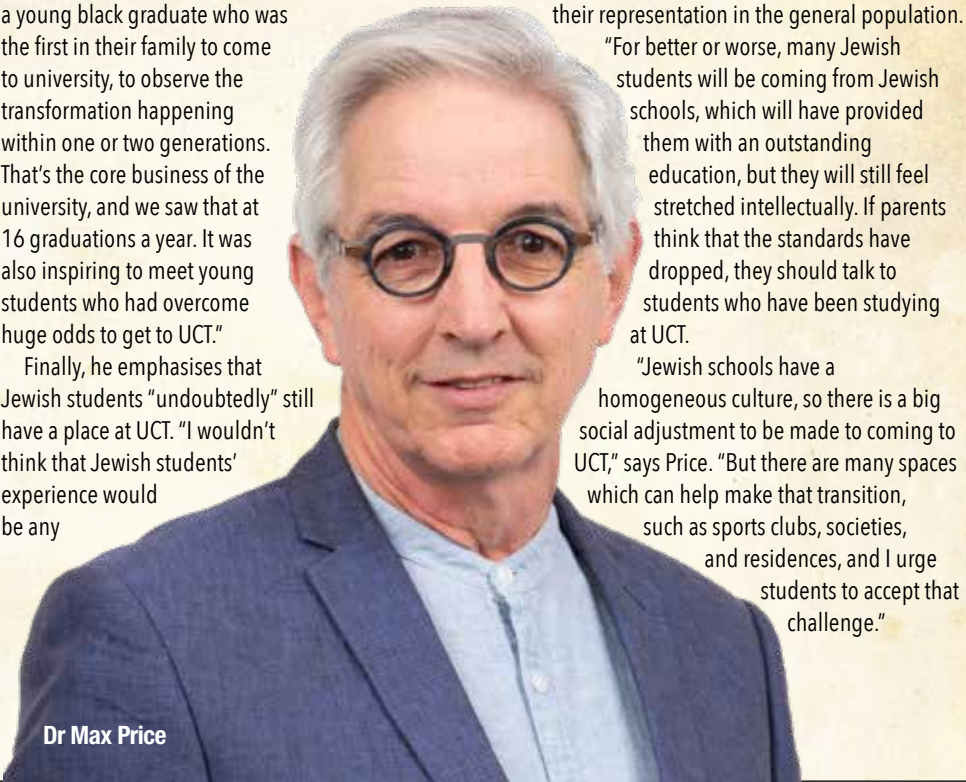
Looking back, he said, “The university survived [the protest period], but not unscarred. The one area which I think we could have always been better at was using social media. Even staff at the university were getting their news from the students’ social media posts because they were up to date. It took us a long time to adapt.”

When asked what his most significant achievement was during his time as vice-chancellor, he says, “I’m glad to have the question asked, because inevitably, the publicity around the protests overwhelmed my term of office as a whole.” He’s proud of several achievements during his term, especially in transformation; increased research; increased international collaboration; the university considering a wider set of factors when accepting and supporting students; and overcoming research and teaching happening in “silos”.

In the area of teaching, UCT, in a sense, “anticipated what would happen during COVID-19” and expanded online teaching and online learning resources. “We recognised that students whose first language isn’t English really struggle to take notes quickly and understand exactly what a lecturer is saying,” says Price. “UCT therefore introduced lecture capture, recording the lectures on video and audio.”

Though he’s generally pessimistic about South Africa’s challenges, the graduates he saw during his time as vice-chancellor have given him hope. “There’s nothing more wonderful than meeting a young black graduate who was the first in their family to come to university, to observe the transformation happening within one or two generations. That’s the core business of the university, and we saw that at 16 graduations a year. It was also inspiring to meet young students who had overcome huge odds to get to UCT.”

Finally, he emphasises that Jewish students “undoubtedly” still have a place at UCT. “I wouldn’t think that Jewish students’ experience would be any



Dr Max Price

different from other white students’ experience. White students continue to constitute about 20% to 30% of the student population, which is four times their representation in the general population.

“For better or worse, many Jewish students will be coming from Jewish schools, which will have provided them with an outstanding education, but they will still feel stretched intellectually. If parents think that the standards have dropped, they should talk to students who have been studying at UCT.

“Jewish schools have a homogeneous culture, so there is a big social adjustment to be made to coming to UCT,” says Price. “But there are many spaces which can help make that transition, such as sports clubs, societies, and residences, and I urge students to accept that challenge.”

## Chabad flips switch to individual miracle drivers

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“It’s up to you.” These words of the Rebbe were the overriding message of this year’s rebranded Chabad Miracle Drive dinner, billed Miracledrivers ’23. The event not only rebranded the movement, but shifted its focus to you and me, the people who make miracles happen.

Speaking of the spiritual energy that inspires people to increase small acts of goodness and kindness, Rabbi David Masinter, the founder and director of Miracle Drive, asked the dinner’s attendees to become miracle drivers. “G-d is pushing each one of us to become the people that we can become, to change ourselves and to change the entire world with the atomic energy within us,” he said.

Keynote speaker Michal Oshman (48), the former global head of company culture at TikTok, the author of *What Would You Do If You Weren’t Afraid?*, and a mother of four, lives this message. She shared her journey with the audience.

Born in Israel to a secular Jewish family and raised by her parents and grandparents who were all Holocaust survivors, Oshman was deeply influenced by her grandmother, Chana, who jumped off the train on the way to Auschwitz. Shot at and injured, she hid in a pig barn and ultimately lost her parents and siblings – only one brother survived. “She survived, made it to Israel, and built a new family, but she was hugely traumatised from the Holocaust,” said Oshman.



Michal Oshman

Oshman’s earliest childhood memory is hearing her grandmother screaming in Yiddish, begging for her beloved Michal not to be taken away. Oshman also recalls helping her grandmother hide tuna cans in preparation for the next horrible thing that would happen.

“From the outside, things looked beautiful in Tel Aviv in the mid-70s – it was a growing Israel,” Oshman said. “But inside, I became a sad, anxious young girl. Yet, I didn’t tell anyone. I wanted to be perfect, to be worth their survival, to please everyone.”

Having a father who was head forensic pathologist during a difficult time of terror attacks and *intifada* in Israel, Oshman also saw difficult things from a young age. She never slept more than three hours a night, constantly checking that her parents were breathing.

“I felt like their lives were on my shoulders,” she said. Yet she persevered, excelling at school, and eventually serving as an officer in the Israel Defense Forces for three years. “I did my best to fill a meaningful role there, but inside I was so scared. Every single day felt like the last day, and every single moment felt like the last moment.”

Through years of therapy, Oshman learned how to be more self-aware and to communicate, specifically about feelings. Yet, when she married her husband, Yair, and had children, she went from

being an anxious daughter to an anxious mother who was afraid of everything. “I did my best. I had three university degrees and this lovely career. But the inside world I was experiencing couldn’t have been more different to how my life looked from the outside, and I was so ashamed.”

Psychotherapy and medication weren’t the answer. She knew she needed something else. And then, at the age of 38, through social media, she found *Chassidut*.

“I discovered Jewish wisdom,” she said. “I explored all the ‘isms’ I could when I was searching for meaning, like Taoism and Buddhism, but the only wisdom that I had no interest or access to was actually my own ‘ism’ – Judaism.” Finding herself in a *shiur* on the Tanya, an early text sharing *Chassidic* philosophy, Oshman began to delve deeper.

Oshman’s first discovery was that every person has a unique, G-dly soul. “Even if life hasn’t evolved exactly the way you wanted it to, it never touches your soul,” she said. “Your soul is as pure, it has the same potential, the same beauty that it had from the very beginning.”

Then, Oshman learned that we’re here for a reason. “The world was created for you,” she said. “So, what are you going to do about it?” Realising that she had become self-obsessed, Oshman knew it was time to change. “I was spending so much time and energy on myself that I dedicated very little energy and thought to what I could do for the world.” It wasn’t about needing to save the entire world, she said, rather doing small but meaningful things for those who live in it.

Oshman said that time is holy, and each moment is an opportunity to do something meaningful, whether it be by supporting others in times of need or adjusting one’s behaviour. “Feeding the ego is the quickest way to starving the soul. When I focus on others, when I think not just about myself, it helps me heal.”

Fear is a normal part of life that we need to acknowledge, she said, yet it needs to be replaced with purpose. “The more we look inside and connect to ourselves, the more we’re kind to ourselves and others, the better that chance that we can grow and overcome

When I focus on others, when I think not just about myself, it helps me heal.

our fear. We have to choose to believe that while we’re afraid, we also have the strength and power it takes to overcome fear.”

Alluding to the question G-d asks Adam in the Bible when he first speaks to him – “*Ayekah?*” (Where are you?), Oshman said we need to ask ourselves constantly where we are in our lives. “Are you making the right decisions? Are you going on the right path? Are you fulfilling your potential? Are you behaving in a way that is aligned to your values? If not, how can you course correct?”

“Once we feel clear and proud of who we are, our identity, our values, what we believe in, and what we want to do here, once we feel comfortable in our own spiritual and physical skin, then the world will welcome us more,” she said. This self-acceptance will allow us to do something meaningful.



# You don't have to be Jewish to enjoy this movie

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

"A Batmitzvah movie? Finally!" Those were the words of Sammi Cohen, the director of Netflix's *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah*, upon hearing about the film. Cohen chatted to the *SA Jewish Report* about growing up Jewish, depicting this world onscreen, and working with Adam Sandler and his family.

"I was excited there was a movie being made about this big, crazy world that I grew up in," says Cohen. "Growing up as a Jew in Los Angeles, I went to more Barmitzvahs, Batmitzvahs, and B'naimitzvahs than I can count. And if that wasn't enough, in high school, my best friend and I started crashing Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs every weekend."

Though it's quintessentially Jewish, for Cohen, the film felt personal and universal all at once. "What's fun about being Jewish is you get together with people you love, you eat, you dance, you sing. And while that feels very Jewish to me, it's also something that's so universal. Yet, I love that this is a Batmitzvah movie that celebrates Judaism. It's the kind of movie I wish I had growing up."

For the girls in the film, throwing an epic party is a definite focus, but the film also depicts the Batmitzvah preparation, service, and *mitzvah* project that they're required to complete. "We wanted to approach the film as holistically as possible so that we could go deeper into this world, paint a bigger picture, and ultimately allow people to have a better understanding of what it all means," says the director.

Yet, Cohen is the first to acknowledge that the film doesn't represent everyone's Jewish experience. "I'm Reform, and grew up celebrating the high holidays, going to temple, and when I was old enough, I went on Birthright. I'm a queer, non-binary, very progressive Jew, and the Jewish

community I belong to is also progressive." As a result of Cohen's familiarity with this kind of community, the film is set in this world, but it aims to open the door to different kinds of Jewish representation. "I'm hoping it's the start of many more Jewish stories being told on screen," Cohen says.

Based on the book by Fiona Rosenbloom, *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah* follows besties Stacy (Sunny Sandler) and Lydia (Samantha Lorraine) who have been planning their Batmitzvahs for what feels like forever. Yet, with their big days looming, a massive fallout threatens to derail both their big days.

Not only does the movie tackle themes of female friendship and coming of age in a Jewish context, it's also making headlines for starring Adam Sandler's entire family. The actor, who also produced the film, plays Danny Friedman, father to Stacy, and Ronnie (Sadie Sandler), both his real-life daughters. His wife, Jackie, plays Lydia's mother, Gabi.

"The Sandler's made me part of the family," says Cohen, who has defended Sandler for casting his daughters amid the resulting 'nepo-babies' media debate. "It was this really beautiful dynamic in which everyone had space to do their own thing but always had support when they needed it. And there's natural chemistry you get with the Sandler's that makes everything feel real and slice-of-life."

The fact that the film mirrored real life also provided a dose of authenticity, Cohen says. In addition to Sandler playing dad to his daughters, just before filming, Sunny had her real-life Batmitzvah. "It felt like we were making a movie and memorialising these very real moments in life."

"One of my favourite scenes in the film is a sweet,

candid moment that Danny has in the car with Stacy," says Cohen. "He does this bit where he fake spills coffee on her to make her laugh. On screen, it's magic. It speaks to this idea that sometimes kids

connecting with the film is a source of pride for Cohen. "It's bringing people together on a human level. We celebrate being Jewish, but I think the film resonates with broader audiences because the story is driven by Stacy's emotional journey of self-discovery. She's Jewish, but she's also a human being learning how to exist in the world."

Part of this is rooted in Judaism and its teachings, but Stacy is a real kid and real kids contain multitudes. They're complicated and multifaceted, just like everyone else."

Cohen, who also recently directed a romantic comedy, *Crush*, set at high school, has always been interested in adolescent stories and the coming-of-age genre. "Kids are like raw nerves. As adults, we form these coping mechanisms that keep our emotions tempered."

Kids are less filtered, and they feel their feelings on a larger scale. Maybe it's because everything feels bigger the first time you do it. That's what I love about revisiting adolescence onscreen. It's a reminder of something we all go through."

"We come-of-age so many times throughout our lives," Cohen says. "However, it's watching Stacy navigate the highs and lows of entering adolescence that resonates with kids and provide a dose of nostalgia for adults."

"You don't have to be Jewish to understand what it feels like to feel the weight of the world at 13," says Cohen. "This is about bringing people together, and breaking down those walls that make us feel different. It's about reminding everyone that we all share certain feelings, life experiences, traumas, and personal challenges. We're all just trying our best. We're all just trying to figure it out."



are sad, and you feel hopeless as a parent. Stacy is experiencing this whole inner world of turmoil and Danny feels far away, so he makes her laugh. As much as that scene is Danny and Stacy, it's also Adam and Sunny. It's hard to put into words how special that feels."

The movie's focus on the love of friends and family, as opposed to romantic love, is also one of its strengths, Cohen says. "I love that we get to see the bond between Stacy and Ronnie as sisters, the bond between Stacy and Lydia as best friends, and the bond between Stacy and her dad. Your first crush is unforgettable, but all of these other relationships are really the foundation that you build a life on."

The fact that people outside the Jewish faith are

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# Stransky lists Boks’ ‘X Factor’ in World Cup

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The stars may have aligned for the Springboks to defend their Rugby World Cup crown at the showpiece in France that kicks off on Friday, 8 September.

That’s according to South Africa’s 1995 World Cup-winning hero, Joel Stransky, who says the current team not only have a similar playing style to the 1995 squad, but they also have an “X Factor” up their sleeve.

Stransky, who scored all of the Springboks’ points in their 15-12 victory over New Zealand in the 1995 final, says, “We had some exciting individuals in 1995, but this year’s team has real depth in the talent stacks when it comes to exciting individuals. When you think about Canan Moodie, Kurt-Lee Arendse, Makazole Mapimpi, Damian Willemse, Cheslin Kolbe, the list just goes on and on in terms of the exciting outside backs, so it’s a team with an X Factor.”

Should the Springboks win the World Cup, taking place from 8 September to 28 October, they will become only the second team to successfully defend it and the first to win four titles.

Kevin Musikanth, the head coach of the Israel national rugby team and Tel Aviv Heat’s director of rugby, also believes the Springboks are strong going into the World Cup.

The team’s 35-7 hammering of New Zealand on 25 August showed “how devastating the Springboks are when they get it right”, he says.

“We play a game plan that suits our strengths,” says Stransky. “We’re particularly fortunate as it’s a game plan that really suits knockout rugby. We’re big, strong, and powerful. We dominate the set phase, which has become an enormously important part of the game. Adding to that a strong defensive structure, and we are perfectly set up to play World Cup rugby.”

Stransky, who will be commenting for World Rugby during the World Cup, believes the Springboks are the favourites for all these reasons. “It’s very hard on a day when the pressure is huge to beat a team the way we play.”

France, Ireland, and New Zealand are the other favourites, according to Stransky and Musikanth. “The remaining teams from France, Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa will land up there at the end,” Musikanth says. “Two will go out in

the quarter-finals, but I believe that the winner will be from those four teams.”

Stransky says France plays similarly to the Springboks and also has “a big game team with a big heavy pack of forwards and a big emphasis on the tight phase. Their scrumhalf, Antoine Dupont, is probably the greatest player in the world at the moment. They have exciting outside backs. Add to that, the inspiration of the home crowd. Playing at home brings great support, but it also brings a lot of pressure. Whether they can cope in the pressure cauldron is the big question.

“New Zealand will bounce back, and they’ll still be a formidable team to beat. The other team is Ireland, whose starting lineup is unbelievable. They play a different brand of rugby compared to anyone else. They keep the ball, go through heaps of phases, and eventually try to wear you down.”

Musikanth will be watching every game during the World Cup and will keep a close eye on two of his Tel Aviv Heat players, Prince Gaoseb and Max Katjijeko, who have been included in Namibia’s squad. “They have both played a few warm-up games and have an experienced ex-Springbok and World Cup coach in Allister Coetzee. They are in a very tough group, but wonderful players.”

Stransky says playing at the World Cup “is where every single player wants to be. Playing with that pressure and on the global stage against the best in the world is certainly where I wanted to be,” he says.

Stransky says the 1995 win united the country and he saw “the significance of winning under the leadership of Siya Kolisi, our first black captain, in 2019. I don’t think this year’s World Cup can equal 2019 because that was unbelievably special, particularly having been no-hopers in 2018. This time, we are favourites, so it will be a different type of World Cup for us. But for Siya to captain this team to defend the Rugby World Cup would be just sensational and obviously massively significant for us as a country.”

While “enjoying one of the greatest rugby spectacles on earth”, Musikanth will be focusing on Tel Aviv Heat’s upcoming Super Cup against many World Cup players from Romania, Portugal, and Georgia.

This year’s Springbok team has a similar squad to the 2019 World Cup, Stransky says. “The challenge is to ensure that this team of world rugby stars is hungry and inspired to achieve something special again.”

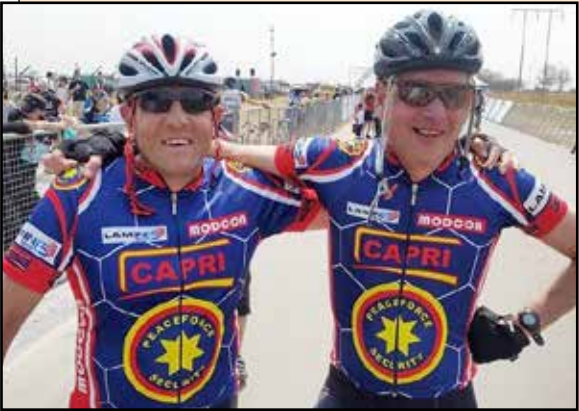


Springbok centre Jesse Kriel and Joel Stransky

# Memorial ride brings best of Blend in tribute

SAUL KAMIONSKY

It was a moving moment when 85 cyclists lined up at the start line last Sunday morning to pay tribute to their friend and cycling legend, Steven Blend, in the inaugural Steven Blend Memorial Ride.



The late Steven Blend with Selwyn Sanders

One of Blend’s three sons, Justin, said he was so proud of his father, who passed away in April 2022. “A year after his death, so many people still wanted to come out and ride in his memory,” Justin says. “It was heartwarming to see how people still feel so sad by my father not being with us, and how much they miss him.”

The riders, mainly Capri Wheeler members, rode a 60km route from Bedfordview to Benoni and back before having breakfast, and presented R100 000 to two organisations Capri Wheelers always supports, namely the Community Security Organisation (CSO) and DL Link.

Selwyn Sanders, a close friend of Blend and the chairperson of the Capri Wheelers Cycling Club, came up with the idea for the memorial ride. “Capri does a ride almost every year to raise money for DL Link and CSO,” Sanders says. “We used to call it the Celebration of Life Ride but this year, I said, ‘We’ve got to change the name’.”

Naming it in honour of Blend seemed obvious to him. “It was heart breaking when Steven passed away. Since he was taken from us, there hasn’t been a club ride when his name isn’t mentioned. We have a club ride every Sunday.”

Sanders says the memorial ride will take place annually. “Steven just cannot be forgotten. He lived for life, and rode every ride as if it was his last. He was a member of Capri Wheelers for 38 years, and most people in the cycling community knew him. A lot of people gave money because they knew it was in the memory of Steven Blend.

“The main reason for the ride was to

remember Steven and raise money in his name, so it wasn’t a competitive ride and the route wasn’t challenging. Afterwards, we had a stunning breakfast. It was an amazing day.”

They raised R100 000 in his name for both DL Link and CSO. “We raised it via raffle. What was amazing was that last week, the

DL Link had a fundraiser in which they had a matcher who tripled all donations they received. So, our money for DL Link became R300 000. Our main sponsor, Peaceforce, contributed to the ride. We had Peaceforce follow to keep the riders safe. We had four groups of riders, each with a follow vehicle.”

Justin, who rides about four times a week, says, “I vividly remember cycling with my father when I was a young kid, riding up the hills in Killarney, and him encouraging me to push until I reached the top of the climb and explaining to me how important it is never to give up.

“As a teenager, I used to cycle at provincial level. My father helped tremendously by taking me to all the races in outlying areas, encouraging me, and always making sure I had everything I needed.”

Sanders and Blend spent hours riding together. “Cycling is tough at times, and you suffer through it together,” Sanders says. “You really bond when you cycle with someone and spend three or four hours in a morning with them. We did so many races together, including a four-day race called the Panorama Tour, which is probably the hardest race one can do. We took part in many club rides from Joburg to Durban together. We did a ride from Joburg to Swaziland [now Eswatini], as well as cycling trips in France and Italy. Steven partook in every single race you can think of in the calendar.”

Blend was born on 23 September 1956, and grew up in Emmarentia, Johannesburg. Business ran deeply in his veins, and he collaborated with many in the South African business community.

He mentored his three sons, Justin, Darren, and Greg, in their business careers. For more than 20 years, he was a judge for the Jewish Achiever Awards. He convinced Absa to sponsor the awards. Last year, the Art, Sport, Science, and Culture Award was named in honour of Blend.

Blend’s passion was cycling. Having rode in an Israel cycle tour to raise money for children who had been through trauma, he decided to start something similar in South Africa, and founded the 361 Hatzolah Cycle Tour in 2015. There have since been nine tours.

# Hebrew and Jewish educators together again

SAJEP (the South African Association for Jewish and Hebrew Education Professionals), a project of The Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning, held its annual Jewish and Hebrew Educators Symposium on 1 and 3 August in Cape Town and Johannesburg in person for the first time since 2019.

The symposium, which aims to upskill, train, and nurture teachers and principals in the Jewish education system, was attended by more than 200 teachers, principals, rabbis and rebbetzins, and featured local and international speakers.

## Monday 11 September

- Chabad Seniors hosts an arthritis and gout Q&A with Dr Adam Stern. Time: 12:15. Venue: 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy, or on Zoom (ID: 7017580458). Contact: 011 440 6600 or rak@chabad.org.za

## Tuesday 12 September

- Bet David Progressive Jewish Congregation host a talk by Dr Taj Hargey on *Judeo-Muslim Solidarity: A Blueprint for the Future*. Time: 19:00. Venue: Bet David Synagogue. Contact: admin1@betdavid.org.za

## Wednesday 13 September

- Chabad Goodness & Kindness Centre hosts a Jewish Learning Institute course on *Give Prayer a Chance*. Time: 19:15. Venue: 8 Stella Street, Sandton. Cost: R100. Contact jli@chabad.org.za or www.myjli.org.za

## Friday 15 September

- The Hermanus Hebrew Congregation will be hosting Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services and communal meals. All guests are welcome. Contact: www.hermanusshul.co.za or 083 252 2594.
- Linksfeld Shul hosts its *Candy Land* children’s service. The service starts at 18:00 on both nights of Rosh Hashanah, and at 10:00 on both days of Rosh Hashanah. Contact: office@linkshul.co.za or 072 584 1708.
- Sandton Central Shul welcomes all guests to join its Rosh Hashanah service. Venue: Chabad’s Goodness & Kindness Centre, 8 Stella Street, Sandton. RSVP: www.sandtoncentral.org.za or 079 434 1293.



# WIZO cooks up yom tov inspiration with Delores

More than 60 guests attended a pre-yom tov cooking demonstration by caterer Delores Fouché on 30 August.

The event, organised by the Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg under chairperson Joceline Basserabie, was held at Fouché’s cooking venue.

Guests paid close attention to Fouché’s preparation of an array of exotic festive dishes. Fouché then treated them to a beautifully laid out, delicious meal of all the dishes shown in the demonstration.

All funds raised from the event will be donated to Neve WIZO, WIZO South Africa’s foster home project in Israel. Neve WIZO has five family homes for children who have been removed from their homes by court order. The homes are headed by foster parents, who

give the children health, love, and rehabilitative care.

Neve WIZO is one of several WIZO SA projects in Israel which support men, women, and children, the elderly and the vulnerable, implementing its motto, “WIZO changes lives”.



Delores Fouché and Joceline Basserabie

# DJ Raphi brings the moves at Yeshiva

Yeshiva College hosted DJ Raphi Nathan on Monday, 4 September. Nathan is also a professional dancer, influencer, and past pupil of Yeshiva College.

Globally recognised for his YouTube channel, DJ Raphi’s dance moves and songs were copied and sung by the pupils, who loved every minute of the event.



DJ Raphi Nathan signing autographs

# Torah Academy celebrates helpers


Torah Academy nursery school celebrated Spring Day with Helper Appreciation Day, in which the childrens’ helpers were welcomed to the school by making them bracelets, decorating cards, and making sandwiches for them and for them to share with those in need.



Helper Appreciation Day at Torah Academy Nursery School on Spring Day




**A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies**

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