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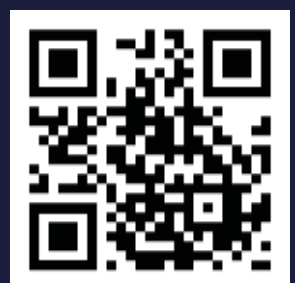
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Disgraced Hollywood director emigrates to Israel

Brett Ratner, the director and producer of Hollywood blockbusters who is seeking a comeback from allegations of sexual misconduct, has emigrated to Israel.

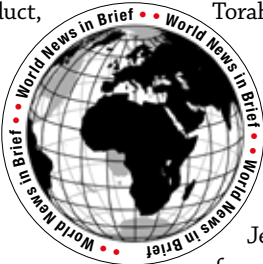
Last week, Ratner posted an Instagram story among other posts showing the passbook that Israel issues to new immigrants, granting them tax breaks and other benefits. He captioned it in Hebrew, "Brett Shai Ratner."

The posts came just a week after he published a photo of himself, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Sara Netanyahu, and pro-Israel figure Alan Dershowitz together at the United Nations. Ratner and Dershowitz were special guests of Netanyahu at his speech to the body. The director was for a time a business partner of James Packer, the Australian media mogul who is close to the Netanyahu family.

Ratner, who directed blockbusters, including the *Rush Hour* series, and produced others including *Horrible Bosses*, was swept up in the early wave of "#MeToo" allegations. In 2017, six women accused him of sexual harassment. He denied all charges, but major studios cut ties with him.

Israeli minister holds Sukkot service in Saudi Arabia

Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi held a Sukkot service in Riyadh on 3 October, a sign of warming ties as Israel and Saudi Arabia move toward establishing diplomatic relations.



A video and photos of the service on social media showed a group of men holding a procession with the *lulav* and *etrog* and reading from a Torah scroll.

"He had windows made facing Jerusalem, and three times a day, he knelt down, prayed, and made confession to his G-d," Karhi wrote on the social media platform X on Tuesday morning, quoting from the Book of Daniel. "Daniel's windows were opened toward Jerusalem for prayer, and here in Riyadh we merited to pray with windows opened toward Jerusalem."

A photo of the Torah scroll's cover, shared by journalist Shirir Avitan Cohen, showed an embroidered

inscription in English, Hebrew, and Arabic, reading, "The Jewish Congregation, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In honour of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and all of their ministers and advisers."

• All briefs supplied by JTA



The Hallel service for Sukkot in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 3 October 2023

Joyous ending, spiritual beginning Torah Thought



Rabbi Ari Kievman  
Kirsh Goodness & Kindness Centre

Chag Sameach! We are in the midst of celebrating some of the most joyous days in the Jewish calendar.

For the past week, we celebrated the joyous festival of Sukkot with our families and community. We recalled G-d's compassion during our ancestors' journey in the desert by enjoying all of our meals and spending quality time in our sukkahs. We held the Four Kinds, representing unity and the diverse personalities of our community. My family and I hosted a multitude of guests, took part in numerous gatherings, and brought the joy of this season to many seniors with a plethora of functions. For those who couldn't come, we went about town to them with the Sukkah Mobile.

But the holidays aren't quite over yet. We now ride into the culmination of this period with the festivals of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah.

For seven days of Sukkot, we revelled in the revelation of the deep bond we forged with G-d on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Shemini Atzeret is when we internalise its depth to be permeated by it. *Atzeret* means "to restrict", a reference to the unbridled flow of revelation by absorbing and internalising it. *Shemini* (the eighth) represents transcendence. Seven symbolises the cycle of creation, eight transcends creation and represents the Creator. Shemini Atzeret thus means "absorbing the transcendent".

Which is why this holiday

transitions into Simchat Torah. Before we begin a new Torah reading cycle, we want to channel this holiness into our ordinary routines, which is the hallmark of Sukkot – the mundane activities of our day become *mitzvahs* when performed in the Sukkah.

Hence we don't celebrate the completion of the Torah by opening and studying it. Rather, we celebrate it by dancing with it closed. This is how we show that the Torah belongs to all equally, learned and unlearned. Had we celebrated Torah with lectures, it would have been enjoyed by the more erudite among us. As Torah is divine wisdom far exceeding any human intellect, it transcends even the scholars. By expressing our celebration in a physical way, simpleton dancing alongside scholar, we involve the entire community in an expression of absolute unity.

As we conclude the Torah and prepare to start again, we declare, "*Chazak chazak vnitachzek!*" (Be strong, be strong, and let's be strengthened!) wishing each other the opportunity to return to the beginning and discover deeper inspiration to internalise teachings for our life mission. The more we study Torah, the closer we become to its author, G-d. When we finish the entire Torah and think we've comprehended it, we then return to the beginning and read again, "In the beginning", realising that whatever we've previously studied is inconsequential in comparison to Torah's true depth, and it's just the beginning of our journey.

Indeed, the year's journey has only just begun, and now after all of these holy days, we feel spiritually reinforced. May all of our experiences guide us in the right direction. Now it's time to hit the road!

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The four species are noticeably different from one another, and represent different types of individuals. This symbolises the intrinsic unity of the Jewish people. The *etrog* has a pleasant taste and a pleasant fragrance. The fruit of the tree from which the *lulav* is taken, the date, has a pleasant taste but no fragrance. The myrtle has a pleasant fragrance but no taste, and the willow doesn't have a fragrance or a pleasant taste. Chag Sameach to You and You You You You.

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# Lulav and etrog shortage causes *balagan* in Glenhazel

NICOLA MILTZ

The eagerly anticipated festival of Sukkot was thrown into crisis last week as Johannesburg Jewry grappled with a dire shortage of *lulav* and *etrog* sets.

Hundreds of celebrants endured lengthy queues outside the few available suppliers, with lines snaking around street corners in Glenhazel. As the days inched closer to Sukkot, anxiety mounted among those who had taken the annual availability of these essential symbols for granted.

supplies dwindled, some individuals capitalised on the scarcity, marking up sets to exorbitant prices. To combat the scarcity, resourceful travellers even imported sets from Israel in their luggage, seeking to alleviate the shortfall, again spiking prices in excess of R1 500, sometimes higher.

Said one community member, who preferred to remain anonymous, “I usually buy six sets for my family but this year, I was allowed to buy only one set per family as the shortage became apparent. When entry level sets ran out, the prices jumped significantly to about R1



The *lulav* and *etrog* sets complete one of the central observances of the joyous holiday, which involves holding together four plant species specified in the Torah. Every day of Sukkot (except Shabbos), one holds together a *lulav* (palm frond), an *etrog* (citron fruit), *hadasim* (myrtle branches), and *aravot* (willow branches).

Jewish unity is one of the central themes of the holiday. The four kinds of species symbolise four types of Jews, with differing levels of Torah knowledge and observance. Bringing them together represents unity as a nation.

However, at one point, unity appeared to be in jeopardy as people jostled for sets in what was described by many as a “real *balagan*”.

The crisis prompted communal rabbonim to advocate a spirit of sharing. They then praised congregants for uniting in the face of this predicament following the broad sharing of *arba minim* (the four species) when it became apparent that this was the only way.

The *lulav* and *etrog* are symbolic staples of the harvest festival, but this year, they assumed added importance as the shortage struck. Notably, these cherished items come with a hefty price tag, with a kosher set commanding prices starting from about R795. When entry level sets sold out fairly rapidly and pre-ordered

500, which is what I paid. The ones that were considered *mehudar* [ultra beautiful] sold for even more, I’m told.”

Or Chaim, one of the suppliers of these coveted sets through his company, the Etrog Centre, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the shortage could be traced back to another outlet that stopped supplying sets this year. In spite of proactive efforts to urge people to order early, Chaim said the community’s response was sluggish.

“We put out pamphlets, flyers, posters, and social media notices to encourage early orders so we could gauge our needs,” he said. “In the end, we ordered 10% more than in previous years to ensure an ample supply. However, this fell short of what was required. At the eleventh hour, we managed to secure an additional 80 sets, which alleviated the situation. We also provided free sets to some synagogues to help them. Considering the circumstances, I believe it all ended well.”

One woman voiced her dismay, saying, “I visited a shop on three separate occasions to purchase my set, but each time, I had to leave due to the stagnant queues and my other commitments. In the end, I gave up. This marks the first time in 25 years that my family didn’t

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have our own *lulav* and *etrog*.”

Owners of Sukkahmart, a longstanding institution that has supplied the community with *lulav* and *etrog* sets for the past 40 years, notified the community several months ago that it would no longer offer these perishable items. Instead, the owner, Rabbi Yehoshua Levy, opted to shift the company’s focus toward expanding its operations in the United Kingdom (UK), where it had been successful.

Said Levy, “I have loyally supplied the South African community for the past 40 years, starting in 1982. Over the years, I made sure that everyone who wanted a set got one. It’s a small family business, and we developed branches in the UK, Canada, Australia, and other places. The UK venture was successful, and my presence was required there to support operations. Thus, it was decided to continue selling hardware, such as sukkahs and *schach* in South Africa, but cease supplying the local community with perishable goods, knowing that there were about three other suppliers who could handle it. I notified the community six months ago that I wouldn’t be selling perishables this year.

“Sukkahmart hasn’t closed down,” he said. “It remains a vibrant company. We’ve had a good run this year. We just decided a while ago not to supply perishable goods.”

Levy shed light on the challenges of supplying these sets, citing their expense and the rigorous demands they imposed, including special permits and applications.

“These sets have a limited lifespan once they’ve been cut,” Levy said. “They are sourced from Italy, Morocco, and Israel, and require cold storage and very careful handling. After *yomtov* is over, anything not sold becomes a loss.”

While acknowledging this year’s shortage, he’s optimistic the situation will be resolved by next year.

Meanwhile, the departure of Sukkahmart left a gaping void in the local market, creating a frenzy among the community. The shortage threatened to disrupt the much-anticipated joyous holiday, with hundreds of people enduring lengthy queues outside the Etrog Centre in Glenhazel.

Nevertheless, it remains united and hopeful that this year’s challenges will pave the way for a more robust and resilient supply in the future.

Anglican Church declares Israel an apartheid state

>>Continued from page 1

the Palestinians and Israel. The Church didn't engage with SAFI regarding its decision. This is concerning as SAFI is a well-established member of several church-based organisations across South Africa. In fact, SAFI has received appeals from members of the Anglican Church who are outraged at the decision.

“James van den Heever has written a thesis on this topic, indicating that repeated attempts by members to contact the church leadership on the subject have been ignored for years. This tells us that the views of the leadership don't reflect those of its members. The majority of South Africans love the holy land of Israel, and would rather play a productive role in ending the conflict, as opposed to recycling the views of antisemitic organisations like the BDS movement.”

He says SAFI will meet South African churches over the next few months “to oppose this decision formally in numbers, and to provide a more educated view of the conflict. Furthermore, SAFI will continue to support individuals within the Anglican Church to share that this

decision in no way represents the views of the majority of Anglicans in South Africa.”

The national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, Rowan Polovin, says, “It’s appalling that ACSA has officially adopted an antisemitic resolution designed to isolate, demonise, and delegitimise the world’s only Jewish state. The church hasn’t adopted an official position on any other country. The only logical explanation for ACSA’s bizarre preoccupation with Israel is that she is the Jew among nations.

“The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism, which has been adopted and endorsed by 43 countries and more than 1 100 global entities, including the Church of England, is that labelling Israel remains a ‘racist endeavour’, and having double-standards against Israel is antisemitic,” says Polovin.

“Israel remains the only democracy in the Middle East, offering equal rights to all her citizens, including freedom of speech and religion, and is the freest and safest place for non-Jews to live anywhere in the region.”

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# Lasting peace ultimate victor of Yom Kippur War

**OPINION**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, which began on 6 October 1973, otherwise known as the Ramadan or October War. On that day, Syria and Egypt caught the Israel Defense Forces unaware with a co-ordinated, well-planned, surprise attack. Israel, at significant cost, eventually managed to fend off the Syrians, who had penetrated deep into the Golan Heights, threatening the Israeli heartland.

Thereafter, Israel launched a counter-attack against the Egyptians, who had conquered a swathe of Sinai in a daring crossing of the Suez Canal. The culmination of the Israeli counter-attack took it into Africa and brought it to the gates of city of Suez, effectively surrounding the Egyptian Third Army.

Much of what we know about the Yom Kippur War comes from the hundreds of books authored by Israelis and Americans or other Western sources. Books representing the Arab or Egyptian point of view are few and far between. Ironically, one of the better books on Egyptian operations from its point of view, *The Egyptian Strategy for the Yom Kippur War: An Analysis*, is authored by an Israeli, Dani Asher, who was a brigade intelligence officer at the time and derived many of his sources from captured Egyptian documents.

The most comprehensive Egyptian account, *The Crossing of the Suez*, comes from General Saad



el-Shazly, chief of staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces during the Yom Kippur War. Few other Egyptians have ventured to account for their side of the events. The lack of material from “the other side of the hill” creates a lacuna in a balanced assessment of this critical event in military history.

Fifty years have passed, and the participants' memories of this significant war have begun to fade away. Eventually, there will be no first-hand witnesses to these cataclysmic events that were so important to Israel's survival. It was also a war that reverberated far beyond the immediate participants in the Middle East.

A wider East/West conflict was narrowly averted, and the petrol crisis that followed caused major and lasting changes in the petrochemical and motor vehicle industries and negatively affected the worldwide economy for years afterwards. However, a positive outcome of the war was the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, in which full diplomatic ties were established between two former implacable foes. Perhaps with the passage of time, it's possible to assess the Yom Kippur War with less emotion and more critical vigour, and apply a balanced approach to the lessons learned on all sides of the conflict.

How is it possible that both sides, even today, claim

victory in the Yom Kippur War?

Warfare must be examined on three levels – tactical, operational, and strategic – to analyse the events and outcomes surrounding a specific battle properly. The tactical level is where the actual combat takes place (the event). The operational level describes the process behind the event. The overall plan is formulated at the strategic level, giving rise to operational planning. It's likely that those who take part in conflict at the tactical level – the ordinary combat soldier – may feel, validly, that they have won the battle, for they view events on the battlefield through a keyhole. Many American veterans will tell you that the United States never lost a battle in Vietnam, yet they lost the war. The same can be said for South African veterans who took part in Cuito Cuanavale and feel they bested the Cubans and FAPLA (People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola). The nature of warfare is such that one army can lose many battles, but still emerge as the victor at the strategic levels of war or vice versa.



From the Egyptian point of view, notwithstanding the fact that the Israelis were able to surround the Third Army in their daring invasion of Egypt in Africa, they, with some justification, feel that they won the war at the strategic level. The war's outcome restored Egyptian national pride and the prestige of its army after its humiliating

defeat at the hands of the Israelis in June 1967. Their meticulous planning and preparation caught the Israelis off guard, and their crossing of the Suez Canal rates as one of the more remarkable water crossings in military history. The ordinary Egyptian soldier emerged as a worthy opponent, who, unlike in 1967, proved resourceful on attack and bravely defiant in defence. Their improved conduct at tactical and operational level allowed them to sit down as equal partners with the Israelis during ceasefire negotiations.

The Israelis emerged from the Yom Kippur War with a sober and realistic impression of Egyptian military capabilities. Gone was the hubris and underestimation of Israel's enemies emanating from the miraculous victories enjoyed in the Six-Day War. The Egyptians had exposed some glaring shortcomings in Israeli military doctrine, and the much-vaunted Israeli intelligence. There was much soul-searching and finger-pointing in Israeli military and civilian communities. But, although hard-pressed and tested to their limit, the Israelis were able to lift themselves off the canvas, inflict a decisive blow against the Syrians, and restore their position against the Egyptians, albeit at enormous human cost.

Undoubtedly, the eventual Egyptian-Israeli peace deal initiated with Sadat's incredible address to the Israeli Knesset in 1977 was facilitated by the restoration of Egyptian pride on the one hand and Israel's determination to survive against incredible odds on the other. The military stalemate of the Yom Kippur War eventually persuaded the two former enemies to exchange diplomats in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and thereby gain a lasting peace. It matters little today who won the Yom Kippur War, with both sides, more importantly, eventually winning the peace.

• *Dr David Brock Katz is a research fellow at Stellenbosch University in the faculty of military science. He has published three books and numerous academic articles dealing with aspects of South African military history and military doctrine.*



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## Jewish immunologist wins Nobel for COVID-19 vaccines

**PHILISSA CRAMER – JTA**

Drew Weissman, a Jewish scientist who identified the technology that made possible the mRNA vaccines against COVID-19, has won the 2023 Nobel Prize in medicine. Weissman shared the prize with Katalin Kariko, his Hungarian-born research partner at the University of Pennsylvania.

Kariko and Weissman's story of collaboration became famous in 2020, when the technology they had started experimenting with more than two decades earlier allowed the swift creation of effective vaccines against the crippling pandemic.

The pair first encountered each other while photocopying research papers in 1998 and realised they were working on related topics. Kariko, who had been a low-level researcher for years, was trying to prove that messenger RNA, the genetic material that tells cells what to do, could be programmed. Weissman, a physician who previously worked under Dr Anthony Fauci, later the United States' (US) COVID-19 czar, at the National Institutes of Health, was working on a vaccine against HIV.

They teamed up and, in 2005, published a paper showing that mRNA could, in fact, be altered to instruct cells to take certain actions. But their breakthrough was widely overlooked for decades until it became clear that it could be used against COVID-19, which was killing hundreds of thousands of people and crippling the global economy. Their technology fuelled both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which arrived with unusual speed and effectiveness in late 2020, and together have been administered millions of times.

"Through their ground breaking findings, which have fundamentally changed our understanding of how mRNA interacts with our immune system, the laureates contributed to the unprecedented rate of vaccine development during one of the greatest threats to human health in modern times," the Nobel Prize

committee said in announcing the award.

Weissman is the son of a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother who grew up celebrating Jewish holidays at home, he told the *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent* in 2021. Together with his wife, Mary Ellen, who grew up in a more observant Jewish home, he sent his children to Hebrew school at Temple Beth Hillel/Beth El, a Conservative synagogue in suburban Philadelphia. Mary Ellen Weissman is heavily involved in Momentum, which seeks to engage Jewish women with Israel, and together with her husband, has spoken to and donated to the organisation.



Weissman told *Exponent* that his personal religious outlook wasn't specifically Jewish. "I'm more of a Daoist, in that point of view that I think that earth, nature, is the supreme, the main component of life," he said. "And that's what needs to be celebrated."

About a quarter of Nobel laureates in medicine over time have had one or more Jewish parents, according to Jinfo.org, a website that meticulously documents the Jewish lineage of prize winners across all fields. The site, which was updated swiftly to include Weissman, says nearly 40% of US Nobel laureates in medicine have been Jewish.

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# DRC breaks ground with embassy move to Jerusalem

NICOLA MILTZ

Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi’s recent announcement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC’s) decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, has been hailed as a significant diplomatic development. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met the DRC president in New York on Thursday, 21 September, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.



The two leaders agreed that Israel would open an embassy in Kinshasa, while the DRC would move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) welcomed this “bold decision”. The DRC is the first major nation in Africa to take this decision, and leads the path for others to follow, said SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin.

Steven Gruzd, an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs, told the *SA Jewish Report* that Israel would “be thrilled” that the DRC wanted to move its embassy to Jerusalem.

“Opening an embassy in Jerusalem is significant. It definitely signifies Israel’s strengthening relations with the DRC and Africa more generally,” Gruzd said. “Not many countries have done it since the United States [US], some small countries, but slowly, Israel is starting to chip away and get more countries to move their embassies to Jerusalem.”

He said it went in the opposite direction to the one taken by South Africa. “South Africa withdrew its ambassador in Tel Aviv in 2018, and he hasn’t been replaced since, whereas in this case, Israel and an African country are advancing diplomatic relations. South Africa remains loyal to the Palestinians. More ties are always better than fewer ties. I believe South Africa is missing out in many ways due to its hostile attitude towards Israel.”

Polovin said Israel and Africa were “coming back together in unison with the climate of peace and normalisation of the Abraham Accords. This auspicious occasion offers further testament to the strengthening of bilateral ties between African nations and Israel, which presents a partner of opportunity, growth, and sustainable development in Africa,” he said.

The announcement by Tshisekedi, the former chairperson of the African Union, again outlines how the African National Congress government is increasingly out of touch with Africa and the shifting sands of the Middle East, he said.

“In Africa, Morocco, Chad, and Sudan have normalised relations with Israel against a backdrop of historical peace agreements that have effectively ended the Arab-Israeli conflict. Malawi has already announced its intention to move its embassy to Jerusalem,” Polovin said.

“To date, Israeli technology and initiatives have brought clean running water and renewable solar energy to more than five

million people across our continent. South Africa stubbornly sits on the sidelines.”

With its new embassy in Jerusalem, the DRC will join the US, Kosovo, Guatemala, Honduras, and Papua New Guinea, the latter having been inaugurated at the beginning of September, becoming the fifth foreign embassy to establish a presence in the capital city.

Fiji will open an embassy in Jerusalem in 2024.

Soon after the meeting of the Congolese and Israeli leaders, Netanyahu said in a joint statement with the Congolese president, “We have just had a very fruitful conversation with the president of the DRC, and we have agreed that Israel will open an embassy in Kinshasa, and that the DRC will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

“These are two good announcements, and they reflect our shared desire to strengthen relations.”

Tshisekedi agreed, saying, “I can confirm that we had excellent talks with the Israeli prime minister which focused on our excellent relations and ways of strengthening them,” he said. “We also discussed how to bring the two countries closer together through the development of more investment projects in security and cyber defence. May G-d bless relations between Israel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

The two leaders also discussed strengthening co-operation between the two countries in the fields of agriculture and trade.

According to *The Times of Israel*, the Congolese leader appointed an ambassador to Israel in 2020 after a two-decade gap, and promised at the time to open a commercial section in Jerusalem.

He then visited Israel in 2021, telling President Isaac Herzog that his country wanted to “develop the best possible relations with Israel”.

During his visit to the US, Netanyahu reportedly secured pledges from both the DRC and Paraguay, reinforcing the move to open embassies in Jerusalem.

The move to relocate embassies to Jerusalem

is part of Israel’s efforts to solidify the city’s status as its capital, although many countries refrain from acknowledging Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state, creating complexities in international recognition.

In August, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen secured Paraguay’s commitment to reopen its Jerusalem embassy, reversing a prior relocation to Tel Aviv. According to reports, Paraguay President Santiago Peña confirmed the embassy’s return to Jerusalem by the end of the year, while Israel will reciprocate by reopening its embassy in Asunción.

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# Life is in the special moments

It's a new year, the flowers are blossoming, and summer is well on its way. Then, why oh why do we all seem so exhausted and jaded?

I don't believe it's negativity or distress in most cases, but it just seems we're all dragging our heels to the finish line, which still feels a way away.

It's actually simple, while we have just had Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and are in the middle of Sukkot, it's not really a new year for us in South Africa. It's the tail-end of 2023, and we have two and a half months to go before we hit the end-of-year holidays.

So, we're all doing our best to keep our heads above water through the *chaggim*, which generally take people away from work, putting pressure on them to catch up what they missed.

It is as it is because we don't live in a Jewish country, and so Rosh Hashanah doesn't fall at the end of our work or school year. So, we're all trudging along, trying our best to get everything done that still needs to be done before that December chill period. This is a time of lots of pressure for most people, and the *chaggim* give us wonderful relief from work as we let go of that pressure briefly so we can immerse ourselves in our religion and traditions. But we come out the other end with all the responsibilities we had before the *chag* and often, a lot to catch up.

And this year, with most of the *chaggim* falling on weekends, there's little downtime between *chaggim* and work. Having said all that, it's a special time of year that most of us get to spend with our families and loved ones. It's often a time to reconnect with people on a deeper level. It's also a time of renewal and introspection. A time to consider how we live our lives, and how we want to live our lives.

So many of us make grand plans for how we want to change things, and sometimes we fall into what I call the "January gym-membership dilemma". Ever asked the management of a gym when the best time of year is for people signing up? Inevitably, it's January, the beginning of the year, shortly after people have made grand new year's resolutions. And how many of those resolutions are about getting fit and going to gym so many times a week? It results in a big surge of new gym memberships, which may or may not result in people going to gym that many times a week, or at all.

Now is the time to begin fulfilling the commitments we made to ourselves. Often, those grand plans don't amount to much because they are honestly too big to fulfil. Deciding that you're going to get a new job that's going to pay double what you earn now and give you much more free time might be one of those.

I'm not suggesting that you curtail your new personal commitments, just consider if you can realistically manage them and then go forward.

We all appear to live such busy lives, but I believe we can always make time for things that are important. For example, I find it amazing how if you are committed to exercising, how easy it is to make time for that.

But isn't it strange that somehow it seems more difficult to find time to relax and enjoy the most precious and sometimes sweetest things in our lives? I believe it's because it somehow doesn't seem vital. It's not a job. It's not an obligation. It's not something apparently essential.

But it's what makes our lives special and brings us happiness. Like having a coffee with a friend. Taking the dogs for a walk in the park. Going for a lovely walk and a chat with someone special. Going to watch a movie at the cinema or just lying in the garden at night, looking up at the stars. I can name so many others, but you get the picture. These seem like small things, but they add so much to our lives.

When we look back on our lives, what do we remember? Certainly not crushing deadlines or rushing to get to meetings or the meetings themselves.

They are the moments when you share a good belly laugh with someone special. A snuggle with your son, who is usually too busy being a teen. Making a beeline with your child to buy ice cream on an icy cold winter day and laughing about how silly it seems as you walk home together, shivering.

These are memory-making moments. These are important to our lives, but we often neglect to incorporate them because it might seem like an odd thing to do to make time to be light and frivolous. But it isn't.

I have made a commitment to finding time for this. So, next year, when I look back at the memories I made in the year, I'll have a whole bunch of meaningful moments to include in between the deadlines and all the other commitments.

So, as we look forward to the summer holidays just a couple of months away, let's make an effort to find those light and bright moments every day or every week so we can enjoy what's going on now, not just holding our breath for that holiday up ahead.

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Peta Krost

Editor



# Is a Saudi-Israel deal imminent?

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



The Abraham Accords normalising Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in September 2020 seemed to come out of the blue. Soon after came normalisation agreements between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. In reality, these arrangements followed years of clandestine ties and painstaking negotiations.

The big prize for Jerusalem was always a deal with Riyadh, however, without whose acquiescence these others would never have happened. In contrast to the initial quiet around the Abraham Accords, there has been open talk by leaders from Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States (US) in recent weeks suggesting that an agreement is only weeks or months away. We look at what's at stake for all sides.

At the United Nations General Assembly last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel and Saudi Arabia were "on the cusp" of an agreement. This followed similar sentiments by Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudia Arabia and the country's de facto leader. The US has also confirmed that talks are advanced, teetering on the brink of a breakthrough.

The symbolism and substance of an Israeli-Saudi rapprochement would be enormous for Israel. It would profoundly change the dynamics of the Middle East, and show that the Palestinians no longer hold a veto over Israel's ties with Arab states.

Saudi Arabia is home to Islam's holiest cities of Mecca and Medina, and has a market of 36 million people, with a gross domestic product per capita of \$23 000 (R443 839). It's the world's 18th largest economy, at just more than \$1 trillion. It produces nine million barrels of oil per day, as the world's third largest producer. All this makes it an attractive trading partner for Israel in the region. As a trust-building measure, Israeli aircraft have been allowed to use Saudi airspace since August 2022. A deal would be a feather in Netanyahu's cap, and a foreign policy win.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September 2023



However, in March 2023, a Chinese-brokered deal to restore diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran – Israel's archfoe – seemed to make any hope of a Saudi-Israeli agreement remote. The plan to expand the Abraham Accords also appeared to run out of steam when Donald Trump relinquished the White House. Now, the Joe Biden administration is scrambling to regain geopolitical influence in the Middle East, where China has been making serious economic and diplomatic inroads. An Israeli-Saudi peace deal would bolster Biden's re-election bid in 2024 and help to outflank China.

The Saudis are said to have two key demands from the US: a military protection agreement, and assistance with developing peaceful-use

nuclear technology. The first would stop short of an agreement like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in which an attack on one is considered an attack on all, and could look more like the looser but still significant military support that the US provides for Japan and South Korea. The second would require firm guarantees that the Saudis weren't seeking to develop nuclear weapons. There has also been talk of the Saudis seeking to acquire sophisticated US arms. Time will tell whether the US wants to meet these demands – some may face considerable opposition in Congress. The Saudis' poor record on human rights could also be an important factor.

And what about the Palestinians and the "two-state solution" to the Israel-Palestinian conflict? Since 1967, the standard operating procedure in the Arab and Muslim world was no peace with or recognition of Israel until the establishment of a fully-fledged Palestinian state. This stance was eroded by Israeli peace deals with Egypt in 1978 and Jordan in 1994, and then shattered in 2020 by the Abraham Accords with the four Muslim-majority countries – Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the UAE. The Saudis have made it clear that any deal with Israel won't be held hostage by the Palestinians, in spite of the Saudi peace plan launched in 2002. But they would surely want to show some progress in tangibly improving the lives of the Palestinians and setting the moribund negotiations for a "two-state solution" back on track.

The Saudis are also said to want some power over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, surely the most volatile and sensitive patch of land in the world. This could create tensions with Jordan, which holds influence over the mosques and religious buildings there through the waqf (a religious council). These and any further concessions by Israel may, however, prove fatal to Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government.

If there is any doubt that these deals make a difference, the embassy of the UAE to Israel tweeted – or is it 'x'ed? – the following numbers. Bilateral trade with Israel reached \$5.6 billion in three years. Commercial flights went from zero to 106 per week. More than a million Israelis have visited Dubai and the rest of the country. More than 70 Israeli companies operate in the UAE; more than 120 agreements and memoranda of understanding have been signed; and Israel and the UAE have a bilateral trade deal. More balance is needed, for sure, to increase UAE investment in and visits to Israel.

If an acceptable agreement can be struck with Saudi Arabia, it would alter the Middle East dramatically. It will require compromises, but it will bring countries opposing Iran closer together. The dream of Israel living in peace with all its neighbours would be one step closer. Outright rejection of the Abraham Accords did little to assist the Palestinians' cause. They are now looking at ways to squeeze maximum concessions from any deals reached. And unless they want to be left behind, again, the Palestinians need to adjust to the new realities of the region.

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



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# Internal strife a greater threat, say Yom Kippur war veterans

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Israelis weren't sure their country would survive. American Jews weren't sure how to respond.

Fifty years after the Yom Kippur War, which broke out on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar in 1973 and lasted for about three weeks, some of those who lived through that time are witnessing another crisis play out again in the present day, as Israelis have been locked in civil strife over their government's effort to weaken the Supreme Court.

But those who remember the 1973 war say there are two major differences between now and then: the threat to Israel today isn't existential, they say, nor is it external. This year, Israelis are fighting among themselves.

In interviews, four veterans of the war and a Jewish American official who was at the centre of his community's response to it recalled vivid

memories of the events, and spoke about the war's echoes in the present day, as masses of Israelis view Israel's government's proposed judicial overhaul as a threat to the country's democracy. The Israelis who support the overhaul say that it will curb an activist judiciary, and allow the elected

government to better represent its right-wing base.

Israelis were caught off-guard by the war, in part because their leaders didn't heed the warnings from some intelligence officials who saw the Egyptian and Syrian armies build up forces that were poised to attack. The armies were positioned on the borders of the Sinai Desert and Golan Heights, territories Israel had captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

traumatised the American Jewish community was.

Allan Feldman, who was a sapper, tracking and destroying explosive ordnance, recalled that his mother in Baltimore managed to get through to him at a time when making a call often meant walking a considerable distance to pick up the phone.

"I'm an only child, and I had a hysterical mother," he recalled. "So, we were in touch."

Abe Foxman, then a senior official in the Anti-Defamation League, which he would later lead for nearly three decades, said the American Jewish community was beside itself at the time.

"After 1967, there was this euphoria, and after 1973, there was this sadness, this pallor," he said. "There was just this traumatic moment that, G-d forbid, we could have lost Israel."

Brook, who was born in Israel and who left eight months after the war to pursue

the country would change as a result of the war, becoming in his view more militaristic, more religious, and more committed to West Bank settlement. He sees those trends in the present day.

"This isn't the Zionist dream I had," he said, "what's going on with the extreme right-wing government. I'm too worried about where Israel is going to worry about where it has been."

Dave Holtzer, who served on guard duty during the war, also sees worrying resonances today.

"Then, it was a threat because the Syrians were going to kill us all," Holtzer said. "Here, they're not going to kill us, they're just going to take away our democracy."

Brook, in his presentations to Jewish communities, describes the moment he knew Israel would change forever.

"We evacuated a group of soldiers to a

An Israeli Centurion tank parks in the Sinai desert during the Yom Kippur War



Photo: Harry Dempster-Express/Getty Images

a medical fellowship in the US, said he was taken aback when he arrived stateside: American Jews had been traumatised, but with the passage of time, it was no longer as immediate as it had been for Israelis.

"Many American Jews didn't understand what Israel went through or what I went through," he said. He wrote a book about his experiences, *In the Sands of Sinai: A Physician's Account of the Yom Kippur War*. He has delivered

more than 200 lectures in person and via video chat to sustain the memory of the war.

field hospital, and as I walked out, I saw the sight of a hospital tent and a row of stretchers," he said in a presentation he prepared in 2020 and shared with JTA. "Each of them was covered with a blanket. All you could see was shoes. Some were brown – paratroopers; some were black – armoured corps or artillery."

He recalled thinking, "The families of those men don't know, and in a few hours, someone will knock on their door and change their lives forever."

As much as memorialising the Yom Kippur War has preoccupied him, Brook said he perceives a different and in some ways graver threat now.

"The threat to Israel isn't so much from the militaries of the major Arab countries, the threat is the nuclear threat from Iran, the terror from Gaza and Lebanon, and also the internal strife in Israel because of the controversy over the judicial system," he said. "That threat is even greater than the war. In war, everyone is united. Right now, Israelis are divided."

Instantaneous communication means that American Jews are more likely to be invested in the current crisis, Holtzer said.

"People ask what's going on. They're in touch every day," said Holtzer.

Feldman marvels at how he's in daily contact with his Israeli-raised son, who lives in the US. "We talk almost every day on the laptop or you know, we see him and the kids on screen," he said.

Schenker said his American friends and family have an immediate sense of the crisis. "We didn't have WhatsApp or Zoom or anything else," he said. "My daughter in New York sends me photos of herself demonstrating against Netanyahu."

**In war, everyone is united. Right now, Israelis are divided.**

"Israel wasn't prepared. In many ways, we didn't have military answers," said Itzhak Brook, an Israeli physician who was serving in the military, attached to a supply battalion in the Sinai. "A lot of it was arrogance, a society that felt invincible, the euphoria after the Six-Day War."

Hillel Schenker, who was deployed to the Golan Heights to lay mines, said the anger at the country's leadership was soon expressed in the streets – presaging the Israel of 2023.

"Soon, thousands of people joined the protests against [Defense Minister Moshe] Dayan," he said, "And soon, and to a degree, also against Golda" Meir, then the Israeli prime minister. The protests eventually helped bring down Meir's government, and led to her replacement by Yitzhak Rabin.

The three Americans who were among the veterans interviewed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency said communicating within Israel during the war was a challenge, and staying in touch with relatives in the United States (US) was much harder. They didn't know until after the war how

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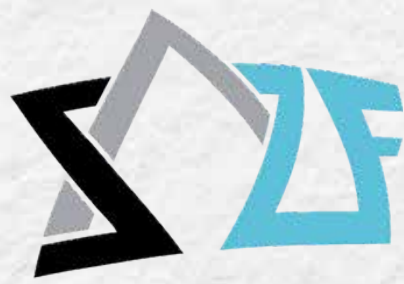


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# MK Kosher goes vegan at Woolies

TALI FEINBERG

The United Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) Beth Din hechsher is the kashrut certification consumers see on most kosher products in South Africa, but the market is diversifying. Until now, MK Kosher Certification Agency, based in Montreal, Canada, has certified products for several small South African businesses, but it recently took a bigger leap into the South African market by certifying parev tofu, tempeh, and paneer products in the Woolworths new vegan PlantLove range.

In an announcement on Facebook on 19 September, MK Kosher said, “Exciting news alert! MK Kosher proudly certifies Woolworths’ PlantLove line of tofu and tempeh delicacies. Let’s celebrate this delectable fusion of flavours, ethics, and tradition with #KosherSouthAfrica!”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, MK Kosher’s head of public relations, Kalman Emanuel, says, “The exciting journey of MK’s involvement with the kosher-certified products of the Woolworths’ PlantLove line is a testament to the remarkable support we’ve received from companies throughout South Africa.

“Woolworths recently introduced an extensive range of tempeh, tofu, and paneer products under the PlantLove branding, all proudly bearing the MK Kosher certification logo,” he says. “In their quest to expand their customer base, the producers of these products reached out to us. They sought our expertise to ensure swift and

efficient kosher certification, aligning with the renowned high standards that MK Kosher is synonymous with.”

The range includes tempeh balls, rounds, and cubes which can act as meat substitutes in various dishes, a masala paneer, plain tofu, and tempeh blocks, scrambled tofu, herbed tofu, BBQ-marinated tempeh, and mini tempeh “sizzlers” (sausages).

“At MK, we pride ourselves on working closely with any company seeking kosher certification,” says Emanuel. “Several months ago, the company behind these products approached us with the goal of achieving kosher certification. The plant-based market is thriving, and Woolworths’ PlantLove line has gained immense popularity among consumers. By obtaining kosher certification, it was able to extend its reach to a broader market. We’re thrilled to be a part of this venture and to contribute to South Africa’s kosher community by expanding the range of certified products. Remember, MK certifies the tofu, tempeh, and paneer products only when bearing the MK Kosher symbol.”

As for what this means for MK’s expansion in South Africa, he says, “Our presence in South Africa has witnessed remarkable growth, and we owe this success to the countless consumers who regularly reach out to us with inquiries and suggestions for new kosher-certified products. With the certification of these Woolworths’ products, MK’s reputation as a premier choice for kosher certification in South Africa is strengthened. We’re also proud to certify products with the Pick n Pay label, further emphasising our commitment to the South African

kosher market.”

Emanuel says it’s “absolutely” a possibility for MK Kosher to certify more Woolworths products. “We’re working with a number of companies across the country to bring an array of kosher products to consumers. There are some exciting developments on the horizon, including additional Woolworths products in the pipeline. To date, MK Kosher proudly certifies more than 350 products in South Africa. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the companies and consumers who have placed their trust in us.”

“The big winners here are consumers,” says MK’s kashrut co-ordinator for the African region, Rabbi Yossi Baumgarten. “When they see the MK brand, they are assured that the item is gold-standard kashrut. I’m delighted by the MK Kosher certification of Woolworths’ PlantLove line, and my commitment has always been to ensure that South Africans have a wide range of kosher options. That’s why I’m proud to be a part of the MK team, as we share a mutual dedication to working closely with food manufacturers and producers to uphold the highest standards of kashrut.”

In a statement, Woolworths said, “The decision which kosher certifying authority to use for our products is entirely at the discretion of the supplier. Consequently, the decision in this instance to use MK Kosher for the certification of the new Woolworths PlantLove products was made by the supplier. We’ve checked with them, and in this instance, the producer opted to obtain MK Kosher certification to broaden export possibilities in future. We understand how important this is to our Jewish customers, and will continue to be transparent about our certifications and display all logos clearly on our products.”

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, the managing director of Kosher SA, a division of the UOS, says, “Woolworths, sources a wide array of products from local and international suppliers. Some of these suppliers are associated with different kosher hechshers including Kosher SA, Orthodox Union, and Kosher Australia.

“Kosher SA certifies thousands of Woolworths products, which you can find on our website [www.kosher.co.za](https://www.kosher.co.za), or customers can easily identify and access these products by using the convenient “kosher” filter on the Woolworths website.

“Establishing and maintaining a strong and enduring relationship with Woolworths over many decades, we have daily communication between our respective departments and its compliance team, research and development, and procurement specialists,” says Goldstein. “We work with Woolworths on developing newly kosher-certified products, and regularly update the South African Jewish community of these newly certified products through our monthly newsletter and across our social media platforms.

“Woolworths shows an unwavering commitment to our community by introducing a multitude of new kosher-certified products to market each month,” he says. “This collaboration between us and Woolworths enables us to fulfil our mission of ‘more people eating kosher more often’. Evidence of this is the presence of our internationally recognised UOS Beth Din ‘diamond’ on the packaging of thousands of Woolworths products on its shelves and website.”

## Bird flu outbreak has suppliers on eggshells

NICOLA MILTZ

Suppliers of kosher chicken are concerned about the avian influenza or bird flu plaguing South Africa’s poultry industry, but insist that there’s “no cause for alarm” and that the kosher supply is being monitored carefully.

“There’s no cause for panic. Our community will have sufficient supply, but this is a very real problem. It’s not a joke,” said Ami Bolnick, the managing director of kosher chicken producer Tenderchick, the only kosher supplier in Gauteng. “This is the biggest outbreak South Africa has ever seen. The market is being hammered. I have never witnessed it to such an extent, and I’ve been operating for more than 30 years.”

He told the *SA Jewish Report* that “so far, the egg supply in the country has been more affected than the chicken supply”, but there are concerns about the reduction of fully grown chickens.

The shortage of day-old chicks is affecting Tenderchick’s contract growers, resulting in a reduction in their required volumes.

But Bolnick has urged consumers not to engage in panic buying, saying that there are contingency plans in place which offer reassurance for the next few months. However, he acknowledged the unpredictability of the situation and the potential for rapid change.

“We do have sufficient supply to meet demand at the moment, but we don’t know how long this flu will have an impact on the market. It’s a moving target,” he said.

The South African poultry industry is grappling with two bird flu strains – H5N1 and H7N6. The latest outbreak of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI/ bird flu) has skyrocketed. The strain H5N1 is mainly

Eggs out of stock at Norwood Spar

affecting poultry in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, mostly in wild birds, and hasn’t entered poultry units.

There’s more concern over the spread of the H7N6, which was initially picked up in a small scale farm in Mpumalanga and has spread to Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, and North West province.

Continued on page 13>>

south african

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# Finding a safety net in times of traumatic stress

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Trauma isn't a disease but an adaptive response that occurs when your body works to survive and normalise something that shouldn't be happening, said social worker Kirsten Thomson at a talk hosted recently by Chevrah Kadisha Community Social Services at The David Lopatie Centre.

When examining trauma, one needs to understand the context in which it occurs, said Thomson, who specialises in loss, anxiety, and trauma. For example, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our world has been significant. "Even though there's a sense of going back to normal, something has shifted, and we're still carrying more intensity around anxiety." We need to account for the impact of our different experiences during the pandemic, and how they have highlighted trauma, loss, and stress.

In the South African context, she said, there's a strong link between trauma and violence. The lasting impact of our apartheid history and institutionalised violence in our country still influences

our health departments and the services delivered in our country and communities. "We need to recognise that though change is happening, it's a slow change. Our systems have been hugely influenced by violence and trauma."

Thomson emphasised the fact that in treating and addressing trauma, one needs to understand what type of trauma we're dealing with.

A key term is post-traumatic stress disorder, she said. "For some patients, this term is helpful to understand the space and impact of trauma, but while many people may have some of the symptoms, they don't develop the disorder."

She also explained complex trauma which occurs in the relationship space – encompassing child and domestic abuse. "Here, the people who are supposed to protect and guide us are the ones that hurt us. Sometimes they do both, which illustrates the complexity around such trauma."

Many may also experience secondary victimisation when people in places designed to provide support like hospitals, police stations, or even therapy offices



subject us to additional trauma by making us feel like we're not being heard or believed.

People who don't experience direct trauma can experience secondary traumatisation. This is when someone they care about goes through trauma and it evokes a similar reaction in them. In the mental-health space, vicarious trauma occurs when a counsellor or therapist is adversely impacted by working with traumatised patients.

Continuous trauma is also a key concern, said Thomson, relating to ongoing trauma that can be experienced by individuals or societies. Over time, these trauma symptoms become normalised. South Africa, where our exposure to traumatic events is high, is a perfect example of this.

"Pervasive levels of violence in South Africa can lead to elevated levels of hypervigilance in the population in general," Thomson said. "We start to live in this state of hypervigilance, carrying a generalised fear in which we're waiting for something bad to happen. Everything starts feeling like a threat." One need not have been directly affected by a traumatic experience to carry this sense of fear – it's something our family, community, or society carries. "Continuous trauma will then start affecting our everyday spaces and relationships with others and with ourselves."

Often overlooked, continuous trauma can lead to a sense of hyperarousal, which becomes our means of survival. This can potentially result in increased anger, reactivity, and levels of aggression, all commonly observed in society today – especially in adolescents, Thomson said. Though such behaviour is commonly attributed to ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), before making such diagnoses, medical professionals need to ask questions about trauma to get to the root of the problem.

With the exception of wartime experiences, post-traumatic stress generally occurs around a single event, Thomson said, and refers to something in the past. The threat is no longer immediate, doesn't have an impact on our families, and doesn't destabilise our trust in state systems.

However, with continuous traumatic

stress, the threat hasn't passed. It's always present, and our safety is therefore difficult to establish. Our basic trust in the world is shaken, and we feel helpless.

Those experiencing trauma cannot engage with others as their patterns of connection are replaced by patterns of protection, Thomson said, quoting American psychologist and neuroscientist, Stephen Porges. Trauma evokes a physiological response. When we experience trauma our bodies go into fight, freeze, or collapse mode – we're constantly living in a reactive state.

"When our emotions are high, the messages to our thinking brain are cut off – it's all about survival," Thomson said. "We lose our sense of space and time, and start living the trauma as if it's present."

In terms of recovery, how we make meaning of the world is important. "Life is never about an either/or," Thomson said, "but rather a both/and." We need to integrate our different experiences. We do this through building a "window of tolerance".

This is where things feel safe and just right, where we are best able to cope with and respond to the lemons life throws at us rather than being overwhelmed by them. Here, you feel calm yet alert, you can think clearly and rationally. Accessing this window when you're in a state of hyperarousal – feeling extremely anxious or out of control, or hypoarousal – when you feel zoned out and physically and emotionally numb – is vital.

To navigate trauma, we need to move from living with alertness to living with awareness, Thomson said. If we're constantly in survival mode, we cannot live productive lives. "The secret to healing trauma is regulating the nervous system," she said. If we calm our bodies, our minds will follow.

Though we can't always escape how we feel, we can bring down the intensity of our emotions. For example, breathing out for an extended period and then breathing in activates our relaxation response. We can also calm ourselves by understanding the context in which our emotions arise and by turning to our safety anchors – our support systems, the safe people to whom we feel we can connect.

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# Torah cover closes family circle across the seas

TALI FEINBERG

When Etz Chaim Shul in Berea, Johannesburg, closed its doors several decades ago, Lily and Bernard Neuhaus bought various items from the congregation, including a beautiful Torah cover that in 1972 had been presented to the community by Fritz and Mary Rothschild, dedicated to their grandchildren.

A few years ago, Lily Neuhaus asked their niece, Karen Dodo, to reach out on Facebook’s Joburg Jewish Mommies group to try to find the Rothschild grandchildren so that she could give them the Torah cover, but at the time, they didn’t get any responses. Linda Lurie, their daughter, also tried within her network, but without success.

However, the stars aligned when Lurie and Dodo were visiting the Neuhauses the day before Yom Kippur this year, and Lily once again appealed to them to see if they would try once more to find the Rothschild grandchildren. Knowing how far social

media can reach, Dodo said she would try again by reaching out on international Jewish Facebook pages.

This time, the response was “immediate and huge – people from all over the world”, says Dodo. “I got a massive number of responses. People were offering to ask others and share and copy the post. And within about an hour, I got a message saying, ‘Hi, my name is Kevin Rothschild. I’m the grandson of Fritz and Mary.’

“The post reached a friend of mine, now living in Israel, and she gave my number to him. It was quite an emotional phone call.

“Kevin immigrated to Sydney in 2002, and he was touched that we had the Torah cover and wanted to return it to him. It was when Kevin’s sister, Carin, and cousin, Ilan, were born in 1972 in Johannesburg that Mary and Fritz donated this Torah cover to the shul.” Carin now lives in Israel, and Ilan lives in Canada.

Lurie has tried to find out what happened to the Torah that it covered, but hasn’t been able to find it yet. It was probably donated to another shul, or perhaps even buried if it



The Torah cover that Fritz and Mary Rothschild dedicated to their grandchildren

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was found to be damaged.

“It was an unbelievable, big surprise,” says Rothschild. Soon after Dodo’s message was posted on Facebook, Rothschild started getting messages from all over the world, asking if he was connected to Fritz and Mary. “Though my grandfather, Fritz, passed away in 1976, some people in Australia knew my grandmother, Mary, and made the connection to me,” says Rothschild. “I got about 30 messages.” No-one in his family had even known of the Torah cover’s existence until then.

When Rothschild sent the message, it was a “full-circle” moment for a family that has a bittersweet connection to its South African heritage.

Though he’s not on Facebook, Jewish geography again played a role in getting him connected to Dodo, with connections in Israel and Australia playing a part. When Rothschild sent the message, it was a “full-circle” moment for a family that has a

bittersweet connection to its South African heritage. “Mary and Fritz had two children, Manfred and Helen,” says Rothschild. “Manfred, my father, was killed in a hijacking in Johannesburg in 1994. Mary also passed away very soon after that. They say she died of a broken heart.” Helen is still alive, and lives in Canada.

The family is spread around the world, but Rothschild feels that this event has showed just how closely Jewish families and communities are connected, no matter where they land up. Dodo will now send the Torah cover to Rothschild, who plans to have it framed and hang it in pride of place as a precious family heirloom. “It’s wonderful to see Jewish geography in action,” he says. “My heritage is a big aspect of my life.”

Dodo says the Jewish community is “exceptional”. “We’re a tribe, a religion, a people, and we beat with a common heart. The South African Jewish community is particularly special. I don’t know why, but we’re unique in that we can be Orthodox without being religious and very proud of it, and if anyone needs help, Jewish or not, it’s in our nature, our DNA, to try to help. I’m grateful to be Jewish and proud to be a South African Jew!”

## Bird flu outbreak has suppliers on eggshells

>>Continued from page 10

The initial brunt of the outbreak has been borne by the egg supply, yet the shortages hatcheries are grappling with may cascade into a shortage of fully grown chickens for slaughter.

“There’s a shortage of day-old chick supplies to our growers,” Bolnick said. “Tenderchick has contract growers who supply fully grown chickens to our abattoir when they are 32 days old and ready for slaughter. Their supply has been cut drastically. Our supply is being affected by avian flu. Our required volumes are being reduced by about 30%. At this stage, we’ll still receive sufficient volumes to meet our demand.

“We’ll get through this and there’s no need to panic. It’s a dynamic situation and things are changing all the time as the disease moves,” Bolnick said.

He said it was fortunate that the situation didn’t have an effect on the peak Jewish holiday period. “Non-kosher consumers, however, may be affected in the next few months as demand increases over the Christmas holiday period.”

The South African government and the national poultry association has reported the culling of about 7.5 million chickens to contain the avian influenza outbreaks. These outbreaks have affected both egg and poultry supplies, leading to restrictions on egg purchases in some Johannesburg stores.

Gauteng has been the hardest hit, with more than half of the outbreaks occurring there. The culling of birds represents a substantial portion of South Africa’s chicken stock.

To address supply constraints, the government is expediting import permits for foreign eggs and considering a vaccination programme to control the spread of the disease. The impact of the crisis has extended beyond South Africa, with Namibia banning chicken and egg imports.

The poultry industry, already dealing with electricity shortages, has incurred significant losses. The hope now lies in importing vaccines, with a potential time frame of

two to six months for their availability.

According to reports, there has been an increase in bird flu outbreaks globally, with more than 21 000 incidents reported between 2013 and 2022. Human infection remains rare. In South Africa, eggs are an essential and affordable protein source, and the rising prices and shortages due to bird flu are expected to contribute to ongoing food inflation.

Agriculture Minister Thoko Didiza met retailers earlier

this week to discuss the unfolding impact in South Africa and the government’s efforts to contain the plague.

“The minister briefed the retailers on containment measures that have been taken to limit the spread of the disease as well as possible solutions to manage such outbreaks in the short and medium term, including vaccination,” an agriculture department statement said, pointing out that the main challenge was on the egg production side, where there were supply constraints in

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# From school to semicha – the rabbis that came from King David

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Jewish values and Zionism have been the core ethos of King David Schools over 75 years of existence, but for about 40 alumni, a King David education inspired them to become rabbis.

Sandton Shul’s Rabbi David Shaw completed his primary and high school career at King David Linksfield, matriculating in 1977. Shaw grew up in a traditional home, and he and his family became increasingly observant over the years. “I was one of three or four in my



year in high school who were religious,” he recalls. “I was inspired by my Jewish Studies teachers.”

Yet, Shaw’s Jewish Studies classes took an unexpected turn in Grade 10. “I was actually kicked out of the class by the rabbi who taught us,” he laughs. “He said there were four stages to doing *teshuva* (repenting), and I put up my hand because I was a top student in Jewish Studies, and said, ‘The first stage is that you have to sin if you’re going to repent.’ He thought I was mocking, but I was actually quite serious, and he *skopped* me out.”

Having trained in classical *chazanut*, Shaw started the King David choir during his time at the school. He also joined Bnei Akiva during his primary school days. “King David gave me many opportunities,” he said. “I was in the Eisteddfod when I was in primary school, which was helpful and gave me an advantage in terms of speaking. It was a nurturing environment.”

After school, Shaw studied in Israel and then in South Africa at the Jewish Students University Program, which he later led, which ran under the South African Board of Jewish Education. To date, Shaw has spent more than 25 years in education in South Africa and Australia, the former including time spent as the head of the Division of Informal Jewish Education, and the latter setting up an internationally renowned department of informal Jewish Studies.

Shaw said the influence of his King David teachers and connection to his King David contemporaries lingers to this day. “Between those of us from our year that are still here in South Africa, there’s a special bond,” he said.

Rabbi Shmuel Moffson grew up in

Emmarentia, a Jewish neighbourhood from which numerous Jewish students went to King David Victory Park (KDVP), including Moffson and his three siblings. Growing up in a traditional *shomrei* Shabbos home, Moffson says there were two specific school tours that fuelled his growth in Yiddishkeit: ulpan and encounter.

“On ulpan in Grade 10, we went to Israel for four months, which developed my Hebrew skills tremendously as well as my attachment to Israel and *Yerushalayim*,” he said. “Being away had a big impact.”

Attending the first encounter in 1975, called Counterpoint, had an even bigger influence on the path Moffson’s life ultimately took. “The organisers enlisted the top Kiruv outreach personalities from America as well as using the local talent at prominent religious organisations,” he said. Kiruv, a movement of Orthodox Judaism that reaches out to less observant community members, encouraging them to believe in G-d and live life according to Orthodox Jewish law, was already undergoing a revolution in the 1970s, said Moffson.

“Encounter had a tremendous impact on me and my grade. Fifteen students became and remain *shomrei* Shabbos,” Moffson said.



“Then there was lot of follow-up with the participating organisations – Kollel, Yad Shaul, and Chabad. They all motivated me to go to Yeshiva. Five or six of us from my grade went to various Yeshivot in Israel, which was unheard of at the time. I attribute a fortune of my growth and

motivation to go to Yeshiva and do outreach to King David.”

For ex-Davidian rabbis, Moffson said, there’s a familiarity that makes you more relatable to people of all levels of observance. Currently working with young professionals, Moffson has two religious centres from which he runs various programmes: the Arch, as well as a centre attached to his Glenhazel home. “Increasingly, my agenda has become to keep the community together,” he said.

Rabbi Danny Sackstein of Sunny Road Kehilla attended KDVP High School between 1984 and 1987. Coming from a more traditional than observant home, it was his school experiences that laid the foundation for his later rabbinical journey. “King David exposed me to the incredible Zionist dream of establishing a Jewish state,” he said. Participating in the school’s Zionist quiz, Sackstein was inspired by the miracle of Israel.

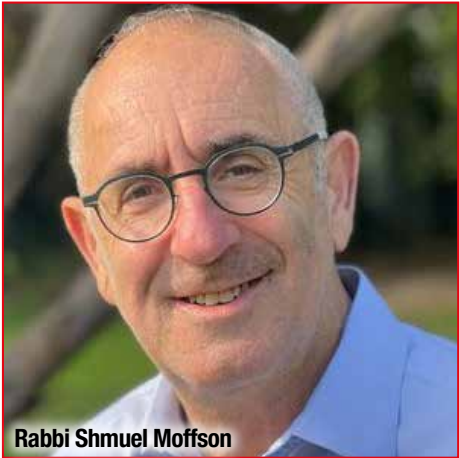
His ulpan tour to Israel furthered his love of the Jewish homeland. “The experience had a great impact on me, not only did I see the Zionist dream in reality, but it was there that I had my first real exposure to Shabbos and Judaism. A seed was planted deep inside of me that was later to flourish.”

Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education

(SABJE), the controlling body of King David Schools, exemplifies the enduring value of a King David education. Seeff matriculated from King David High School Linksfield in 1999, and later went on to work at both the high and primary schools at KDVP before taking on his current role. “I think I’m the only ex-Davidian to have been a teacher and a principal and now the director of the SABJE,” he said.

“I loved King David and everything the school had to offer, which is probably why I ended up working there.”

Though he initially had no intention of becoming a rabbi when he matriculated, joining friends on an MTA programme in Israel led Seeff on a path to more committed observance. After completing an engineering degree, he remained involved in Bnei Akiva and ultimately completed his *semicha* to become a rabbi.



When Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein asked Seeff to run a Beit Midrash for advanced Jewish Studies at KDVP High School, he grabbed the opportunity. The rest is history.

“That sense of connection at King David really fostered in me a passion for community, while the love of Yiddishkeit came from encounter and similar experiences,” said Seeff, reflecting on his experience as a student.

Speaking of the King David ethos today, he said, “It’s like an incubator for Jewish

values, Jewish awareness, and Jewish identity that affects our students, especially within the immersive environment we offer. There’s something for everybody.”

“All kids, irrespective of their observance level, are getting a Hebrew

education and a connection to community. There’s this overriding sense of: I’m a Jew, and I’m part of the community, and that’s invaluable.”

## Get voting for your favourite achievers

One of the most exciting parts of the run-up to the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, to be held on 22 October 2023, is the public voting, which has just been launched.

It’s a way of ensuring that the community has an opportunity to voice its opinion on the nominees. The community is most aware of the extent of the work of the nominees and their true worth. So that vote is important.

It’s also fun to participate in the process rather than just watching from the sidelines.

Though the judges’ decisions are final and based on a great deal of information

placed before them, they sift through the public votes and use it for guidance.

Though some people get upset by campaigns to push voting for certain nominees, some even offering prizes for the number of votes, the Absa Jewish Achiever team sees it as part of the enjoyment and participation in the run-up to the event.

“We love this interaction and don’t see it as disruptive or destructive,” says Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and the *SA Jewish Report*. “To the contrary, we see it as part

of the fun. Also, we want the community to know that it doesn’t harm the process of judging.”

What’s important to note is that the nominations listed on the voting website are received from members of the public.

On the site, you’ll be able to see all the nominees in the different categories, their videos in some cases, and we encourage you



to vote across all categories and as many times as you want.

The *SA Jewish Report* and Absa Jewish Achiever Awards teams haven’t notified nominees about their nominations. Should nominees be selected as a finalist or a potential winner, they will be notified or invited for an interview by our judges. At that point, they can decide whether to accept or reject the nomination.

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# Chief rabbi lauds Herzlia soccer stars

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Herzlia High School's under-14 soccer team was excited about playing in the provincial final of the Kay Motsepe Football Cup, until they found out it was to be played on Shabbat no matter what.

The final would be played in Saldanha Bay in the Western Cape, on Saturday, 23 September. The school learnt of this date in the week after winning the Kay Motsepe Football Cup regional tournament.

"The minute we heard that the date of the final was on a Saturday, we communicated our dilemma to SAFA [the South African Football Association] and requested that the date be reconsidered," said Shane Brorson, the principal of Herzlia High School. "When this proved unsuccessful, we immediately withdrew from the tournament so as not to compromise our Jewish values as a Jewish school."

It's so important when people stand up for our Jewish values with pride.

The team won their local league and the Kay Motsepe Football Cup regional competition to qualify for the tournament's provincial final.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein was impressed. "The team had the potential to go all the way and become national champions, and to give that up for Shabbat is an incredible example to our whole community of the importance of

Shabbat as a Jewish value," he said.

Brorson said a great deal of disappointment was felt by all after the team pulled out. "However, we're all aware of what our school stands for, and as our school song says, 'We are from Herzlia, we know who we are.' Thus, there was no hesitation to withdraw, in spite of extensive conversations with all affected parties to work through this."

The chief rabbi wrote on his communal Facebook page on 22 September about Herzlia's under-14 team standing up for Shabbat, saying that it wasn't "just any game" but a provincial final that they were pulling out of and "with it, the chance to become national champions".

The team's "principled stand", he said, reminded him of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's impassioned speech in the Knesset about introducing a law to stop EL AL planes from flying on Shabbat, even though this action came at significant cost to the national carrier.

"This is exactly what these young Herzlia soccer players are: proud Jews who don't play on Shabbat."

Goldstein said he was moved to write about it through "a sense of wanting to express my support publicly for the principled stand taken by the Herzlia school management, with the support of the board, the parents, and the boys involved. It's so important when people



Herzlia High School's under-14 soccer team receiving the Kay Motsepe Football Cup

Photo: Tanya Steyn

stand up for our Jewish values with pride. I wanted to tell this story to the community, and publicly give them support."

After the date of the final was announced, Rabbi Sam Thurgood, the school's rabbi and head of Jewish life and learning, sent a letter of appeal to SAFA and the tournament organisers, requesting that they move the match to another day.

"In communication with SAFA, sponsors, and organisers, the reality was that the logistics and change of the date would be incredibly difficult as 24 teams across different age groups were involved in the day of the finals, and arrangements for transport, accommodation, and catering for players and team management was difficult to change," Brorson says.

"One of the positive outcomes of this situation is that we now have a commitment from SAFA to bear Shabbat and other religious beliefs and religious

days in mind when planning future tournaments."

Andries van Renssen, the executive director of United Herzlia Schools, said, "Though we were saddened that we were unable to represent Cape Town, the decision was easy, being that this match fell on Shabbat."

"We're aware that this was a sensitive and unprecedented issue. We weren't looking to create controversy or unhappiness, and were resolute in approaching the matter with humility and dignity. We did make an appeal to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to make arrangements to accommodate us, but it regretted that it wasn't possible to make any changes at such a late stage. However, it has committed to taking this into account in future."

"For many decades, the WCED has accommodated Herzlia in many sporting code leagues by arranging matches during the week, for which we are grateful. We would like to participate in

all sports at the highest level, and appeal to all schools to accommodate us on days other than the Sabbath."

Shabbat "stands above it all", Goldstein said. "When we root ourselves to our eternal divine values, we connect ourselves to things which are so much greater than we are. That gives our lives meaning and the purpose that G-d gave us."

Herzlia's decision to prioritise Shabbat is also a "tremendous educational lesson for children", Goldstein said. "We want to teach our children that ultimately, life isn't just about taking personal, immediate benefit or gratification, it's about living with values and principles. Shabbat is one of our most important pillar values of what it means to be a Jew. It's our G-d-given *mitzvah* that underpins the foundations of the Jewish people."

The secret behind the success of Herzlia's under-14 team is "a combination of passionate and dedicated young players, a highly motivated coach, committed supporters, and parents," Brorson said.

"Herzlia High School's under-14 team has trained with a high level of commitment. This has ensured each practice session was productive," he said.

At the beginning of the season, the team's coach motivated the players to perform to the highest level possible, with the aim of winning the local regional league. Herzlia's under-15 girls' soccer team also won their league this year.





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# SA diplomat turns dramatic past into page turner

TALI FEINBERG

Barry Gilder has seen many things in his time, and they form the basis of the riveting events in his new novel, *At Fire Hour*. Born to Jewish parents in Durban, whose own parents had come to South Africa from Lithuania, he says Jewish history was one of the earliest influences on his perspective of the world.

“I learnt about the persecution of Jews, and I looked around me, and felt like the black population were going through what the Jews had been through,” he says.

This thinking set him on a trajectory that ultimately saw him join the African National Congress (ANC) in exile, train as an intelligence officer in Moscow, and have a long career in intelligence, including as deputy director-general of the South African Secret Service, deputy director-general of the National Intelligence Agency, and South Africa’s co-ordinator for intelligence.

He’s now South Africa’s ambassador to Syria and Lebanon and lives in Damascus. Having been in the role for four years, he has never feared for his safety, he says, not from the civil war that has long raged there, nor because he is a Jew.

His time in exile was one of the defining factors of his life, and it was filled with many contradictions: being outside South Africa but fighting for its future; the close camaraderie between struggle activists but haunting suspicions of infiltration and betrayal; and the tension between making an impact through art, politics, or both.

These are the themes that Gilder brings

to his new novel, his third book, which he says explores many of these opposites and in some ways stems from his own experiences. “I even feature as a walk-on character,” he says. However, the novel’s main character, Bheki Makhathini, is a man in his own right – a poet in exile suspected of betraying the ANC. The novel features Makhathini’s poems, making him all the more real, and Gilder says the story explores many themes, including loyalty, dedication to the cause, the role of the artist, and love in times of turmoil.

The hard-hitting and powerful prologue, set during the “twilight zone” of lockdown in 2020, is a breathtaking and riveting opening scene. The narrative then dives into the past, equally powerful and poignant.

Gilder says the novel’s title comes from the poem by South African poet Arthur Nortje: “And let no amnesia/attach at fire hour: for some of us must storm the



Barry Gilder

in 1991, he worked with the Matla Trust, set up by Nelson Mandela to provide voter education, and went into intelligence.

Gilder believes the ANC is still at war, but this time with itself, and that today’s ANC is completely different from the ANC that fought against apartheid.

He says his mother once visited him long after her own father had passed away, and revealed to him that her father had been a communist, deeply

involved in the Jewish Bund movement in Europe. “She had never told me that before. I had no idea,” he says. “She was always anxious that I could be in danger, and said that she thought his politics had been passed down to me genetically.” Gilder also remembers his grandfather’s furniture store on Jeppe Street, and the generous, respectful way he treated his many black customers during apartheid. “That definitely had an impact on me.”

He didn’t choose Syria and Lebanon when he took up the role of ambassador, but he quips that when he presented his credentials, they said, “You’re the right man for the job!” He has found the experience challenging but fulfilling, “and Syrian food is wonderful”. There’s also a long Jewish history in Syria, and he has even visited an old synagogue in Aleppo.

His novel formed part of his PhD in creative writing at the University of the Witwatersrand, and he wrote it between diplomatic commitments. It involved some planning, but mostly he just sits down, writes, and sees what happens. Often, he’s surprised by the characters he meets, the things they do, and what happens to them. He plans to continue writing novels. His advice to aspiring writers is to “just write”, as that will eventually open the door to a story you didn’t even know was there.

He hopes the book will appeal to people from all walks of life because it explores history, art, and politics, and is both “a love story and a human story”.

## Letters

### THE PERILS OF WINNER-TAKES-ALL DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL

Rabbi Ruben Suiza of Portugal penned a strong criticism of an excellent opinion piece by Judge Dennis Davis (“Davis’ judgement of Israel government untrue and offensive”, *SA Jewish Report*, 14-21 September).

For further clarity, perhaps the good rabbi might refer to another outstanding article in the same newspaper, by Oshy Tugendhaft, (“Israel judicial overhaul – exposing the myths”, 3 August 2023). Both these legal luminaries furnish readers with a profound understanding of the imperative behind genuine democracy and an acute appreciation of the role of a state organ in safeguarding minorities from government overreach and abuse.

Suiza reminds us that our government was indeed elected through democratic means. But Davis and Tugendhaft have presented cogent arguments elucidating how the government’s policies may imperil democratic principles. They emphasise the perils associated with the extreme right-wing, racially biased policies that stand in stark contradiction to the democratic values we cherish in Israel. Powerful members of the government have fervently advocated

for the annexation of the entire West Bank, effectively extinguishing any hope for a two-state solution. This not only undermines minority rights but also jeopardises the diplomatic safety net offered by the United States. Consequently, it places women’s rights, already under siege, at further risk, potentially fostering gender-segregated public events.

Suiza astutely highlights the hypothetical “standing ovation” that South Africa’s Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, in conjunction with the Economic Freedom Fighters and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions coalition, would accord to Davis’ column. The actions of the Netanyahu-led government inadvertently give these adversarial groups the ammunition required to intensify their censure.

It’s impossible to ignore recent global events, such as the Zimbabwean election, which exhibited a semblance of democracy marred by credible allegations of manipulation. This is a stark example of the winner-takes-all approach within democratic processes.

– Allan Wolman, Tel Aviv, Israel



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# Jewish pimps, prostitutes, and the gold rush

KAREN KALLMAN

From the late 1800s, young Jewish women and their families were deceptively lured by members of organised Jewish crime gangs in Russia and Eastern Europe who promised them a better life across the ocean. Instead, they were systematically raped and groomed for life in brothels in Argentina, Asia, and South Africa.

Until the late 1800s, there were relatively few Jewish prostitutes. However, a series of social, economic, and religious changes in this era set the stage for a new reality.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, prostitution in Europe and its international trade grew enormously, and this came about for many reasons, including, the industrial revolution, which resulted in women entering the workforce en masse in terrible conditions, causing social upheaval.

At the same time, there was extensive migration from villages to cities, which caused difficulties in adapting and a loss of direction, especially for vulnerable women who had no status. For example, those whose husbands died without witnesses or went missing without leaving a *get* (Jewish writ of divorce); or those whose husbands travelled alone to try their luck in America, and “forgot” to send their wives any sign of life.

In addition, the migration of men from Europe to the New World created concentrations of all-male settlements which led to an increased demand for prostitutes in those locations.

Four centuries of persecution and discrimination against Jews in Europe restricted their economic opportunities, land ownership, and residence rights. Pogroms in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland further exacerbated their plight. Poverty was pervasive among Eastern European Jews, with the majority living in dire conditions, and this poverty is the most compelling reason why Jews migrated out of Eastern Europe and Russia.

The traffickers preyed on these vulnerabilities of Jewish families and women. They used various scam tactics, including deceptive job advertisements, immigration certificates, and marriage proposals to lure women. The traffickers understood Jewish customs and traditions, exploiting the innocence of young Jewish girls. “Stille chuppah” or secret religious wedding ceremonies, which meant there were no civil marriage rights, were used to bring women into prostitution.

The victims, ranging from early teens to early thirties, suffered sexual assault, physical abuse, imprisonment, starvation, and torture. By the time they arrived at their destinations, they were broken.

Jews played a historically unprecedented and not insignificant role in what was known as “white slavery” – commercial prostitution – between 1880 and 1939.

Arthur Moro, an officer in the leading anti-white-slavery group, London’s Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, sketched both the geographical and political dimensions of the problem in 1903. “We have positive evidence that to almost

all parts of north and South Africa, to India, China, Japan, Philippine Islands, North and South America, and also to many of the countries in Europe, Yiddish speaking Jews are maintaining a regular flow of Jewesses, trafficked solely for the purpose of prostitution. We know that they were taken to brothels owned by Yiddish speaking Jews. We fear unfortunately this horrible blot on the reputation of our race exists in most places of the world where there’s the chance of these unscrupulous men and women making money by the sacrifice of young Jewish girls.”

Jewish involvement wasn’t exclusive. There were many other groups involved in international trafficking, and to put the story in context, there were more French prostitutes in Paris than Jewish prostitutes throughout the world, however Jews dominated the trafficking of Eastern European Jewish women. The Jewish community grappled with the issue, torn between raising awareness to rescue victims and fearing antisemitic repercussions. Bertha Pappenheim, the German-Jewish feminist, pinpointed the political problem. “If we admit the existence of this traffic, our enemies decry us; if we deny it, they say we’re trying to conceal it.” Some Jewish communities reacted with spontaneous violence against pimps and prostitutes, while others ostracised both pimps and prostitutes to the extent that in Buenos Aires and other places, they had their own cemeteries, shuls, and welfare societies.

The fight against white slavery was a central social issue of the time, and Jewish philanthropists and social workers played a pivotal role in the interdenominational anti-trafficking movement using their connections, energy, and resources to ensure the movement spread. Jewish organisations worldwide promoted committees against white slavery and set up structures to rescue women arriving at ports, particularly in America.

The story of Jewish prostitutes in South Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was dominated by Joseph Silver, a cunning Jewish trafficker born in Poland who had a long history of involvement in the trade. Silver had in the past trafficked women to the United States and even worked as an agent for a crime-prevention society but eventually migrated to England in 1895. There, he organised a gang responsible for recruiting girls and women from the East End’s rag trade for prostitution. However, in 1898, his notorious Stamford gang was facing increasing pressure from law enforcement and the Jewish Association, and it decided to relocate its operations to South Africa. Silver took 15 traffickers and 20 to 25 young girls, most of whom had already been forced into prostitution in London, with him.

South Africa at the time had a booming frontier created by the discovery of gold on the Rand in 1886. The influx of workers and adventurers led to a significant gender imbalance, with a high ratio of men to women in Johannesburg. Silver’s party arrived in Cape Town, but quickly moved to Johannesburg, where they reunited with acquaintances from New York

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who had also ventured to the Rand.

In Johannesburg, the vice scene was dominated by various groups, including the “Bowery Boys”, a term referring to pioneers from New York who controlled the Frenchfontein vice district with an iron grip, enforcing their control over prostitution and gambling. The city was home to a diverse array of pimps, including East European, French, German, and others.

The situation was further exacerbated by the arrival of Franco-American traffickers and others from Paris. This mixture of French and Jewish participation in the trade mirrored similar patterns in Buenos Aires.

Joseph Silver eventually consolidated his influence by forming the American Club, which later evolved into the Immorality Trust. This organisation allowed Silver to make decisions regarding the organisation of brothels, recruitment of women in Europe, and dealings with the police. However, the tight grip he had on the organisation eventually led to its instability, as some members broke away.

The turning point came in 1908, when a mass revolt of prostitutes occurred, marking

an unprecedented event where the exploited stood up against their exploiters. Economic depression on the Rand and increased demands from the Immorality Trust probably fuelled this rebellion. The authorities in Johannesburg used the testimony of more than 100 prostitutes to dismantle the Immorality Trust, ultimately deporting hundreds of pimps back to Europe and America.

The decline of the trafficking trade in South Africa can be attributed to changing legal landscapes, public exposure, and the revolt by exploited women.

“The best medicine for the crimes of the past is to cast the brightest light upon them; and once these crimes are beyond the reach of punishment, this illumination is the truest redemption, the only one that counts,” wrote Simon Sebag Montifiore in *The World: A Family History*.

• *This article was primarily informed by the work of historians Edward Bristow and Charles van Onselen, and is a summary of a talk presented by Karen Kallmann at Limmud Johannesburg in August.*

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# Jews and coffee: a rich history

ORGE CASTELLANO

On a crisp April morning at the intersection of Rutgers Street and East Broadway in Manhattan, Elise Lovaas, a tour guide with the Tenement Museum, remarked somberly to a man named Rob, “It’s all gone.” A 78-year-old Jewish New Yorker who had relocated to Florida in the late 1990s, Rob hadn’t set foot on the Lower East Side in more than four decades until he signed up for Lovaas’ tour. He was deeply moved, *verklemt* (overcome with emotion) even, to see how much of the Jewish enclave he remembered fondly had been absorbed into the annals of history.

“I really was looking forward to having a good old cup of coffee here,” Rob told me, while gazing through the windows of what was once the epicentre of Jewish intellectualism on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Yet, the nostalgic *mensch* wasn’t referring to the renowned Forward Building, the 1912 beaux-arts masterpiece that housed the offices of the *Forverts*, the pivotal Yiddish paper of the Jewish labour movement. Instead, his nostalgia was for the Garden Cafeteria a few doors down at 165 East Broadway.

In an era when Yiddish newspapers were a daily fixture and their Yiddish-speaking readers thronged the streets, the Garden Cafeteria stood as a nexus, much like the renowned Café Royal on Second Avenue in the 1920s. A self-service eatery offering an array of kosher delicacies, Garden beckoned Jewish intellectuals and the spirited neighbourhood folk alike. Among its regular habitués were Emma Goldman, Elie Wiesel, and the Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Before New York City’s coffeehouses became the egalitarian meeting grounds for intellectuals and played a pivotal role in bridging the city, Jewish immigrants, including numerous Jewish writers, poets, historians, and artists, had already tasted the liberating ambiance of similar European establishments.

“Coffeehouses served as a modern replacement for traditional *beit midrash* [Jewish house of study],” said Shachar Pinsker, the author of *A Rich Brew: How Cafés Created Modern Jewish Culture*. “They became a second home, and offered Jews a refuge from the anonymity of urban life. These places were inexpensive, democratic, and inclusive. But, most importantly, Jews were welcome.”

From the bustling lanes of Odessa and Warsaw to the refined boulevards of Vienna, Berlin, and even Tel Aviv, cafés played a pivotal role in the Jewish experience of the late 19th and early and mid-20th centuries as Europe underwent a wave of intellectual awakening.

Those Old World cafés, which began popping up in Europe in the 18th century, were small in number, but nevertheless significant. Not only were they social gathering places, they became street-level emporiums that nurtured a mentality, characterised not only by *joie de vivre* but associated with Jewishness. So much so that in Austria, where the Wiener Kaffeehaus was listed as a protected intangible cultural heritage site by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), coffeehouses were seen by the Viennese as an inherently “Jewish space”.

There were many cities where Jews congregated, moved from and travelled between. The Jewish community of Warsaw grew from 15 600 in 1816 to 72 800 in 1864. “With the migration from rural to urban regions, they offered sanctuaries, and became third spaces, besides home and synagogue,” Pinsker said of the European cafés.

“Sociability in the cafés wasn’t merely a product of leisure but a necessity driven by both economic and socio-cultural factors,” noted Delphine Bechtel, a senior lecturer and researcher of Eastern, Balkan, and Central Europe cultures at Sorbonne University in Paris. “With half of the city apartments lacking basic amenities like electricity and sewage, these cafés seamlessly transformed into living rooms, dining areas, reading spaces, and even offices.”

The creation of urban cafés has been recognised as playing an imperative role in the creation of European modernism, which later was brought to the Americas and played a pivotal role in the construction of culture, intellectualism, and bohemia in cities like New York.

The genesis of coffee, or more accurately *qishr*, a brew made from the husks of the coffee plant and not its beans, took place in Ethiopia. This early iteration of the beverage made its way to Yemen, and by the closing years of the 15th century, coffee beans and the drinks crafted from them had found enthusiasts in Mecca, Medina, Cairo, and Istanbul. By 1554, two enterprising traders from Aleppo and Damascus were credited with opening the premier coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire, sprinkled across the cities of Anatolia.

When tales of this invigorating drink reached European shores in 1582, coffee swiftly became a symbol of social interaction. Yet, in religious circles, the beverage faced scrutiny and debate. The luminous kabbalist, Isaac Luria, deemed coffee consumption forbidden. In stark contrast, Italian Rabbi Hezekiah da Silva, opining in the late 1600s, asserted, “One cannot attain presence of mind without the aid of coffee.”

Tracing the evolution of coffee and café culture, the role of Jews is both profound and expansive. In 1632, the first coffeehouse sprouted in Europe in Livorno, Italy, courtesy of a Jewish entrepreneur. The influence



The Garden Cafeteria

continued when, in 1650, a Lebanese individual fondly known as “Jacob the Jew” introduced the English to their first coffeehouse in Oxford. This wave of innovation soon resulted in Sephardic Jews partnering with Armenian and Greek merchants, leading to the inception of coffeehouses in the Netherlands and France.

By the 18th century, the allure of exotic commodities like coffee, tobacco, sugar, and chocolate was rising. Among these, coffee stood out for the Jewish community, as its trade wasn’t explicitly forbidden. Jews swiftly recognised this and embarked on coffee commerce.

Several Jewish families ventured into the coffee business during this period.

## Fans’ noses not out of joint over *Maestro*

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

Like many other fans heading into the 2 October New York Film Festival screening of *Maestro*, Alexander Gorlin was aware of the “Jewface” controversy that has plagued the film.

But acting is a “cross-cultural” exercise, said Gorlin, who is Jewish. His architectural firm has designed several Jewish houses of worship.

“If you’re talented enough to play the role, you should do so,” Gorlin told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in the lobby outside Lincoln Center’s David Geffen Hall. “You’re not limited by your birth identity. The greatest actors are the ones who transcend that.”

*Maestro*, a biopic about Leonard Bernstein starring and directed by Bradley Cooper, took heat for months over its non-Jewish star’s use of a prosthetic nose. Online discourse was so intense that Bernstein’s three children issued a statement defending Cooper, saying he included them in “every step” of the production process. The makeup artist who created the prosthetic apologised for hurting people’s feelings. Even the Anti-Defamation League got involved.

But the atmosphere in the David Geffen lobby between the film’s two screenings on Monday night – which marked the film’s North American premiere – was light and celebratory. Granted, many in attendance were avowed fans of Bernstein, Cooper, and classical music. Still, most were well read on the details of the nose controversy and decidedly over it.

“I thought it was appropriate, and I have no problem. The nose seemed right for the movie,” said Scott Drevnig, who is Jewish and the deputy director of the historic Glass House in Connecticut. He spent a large chunk of the screening that he attended trying to figure out if Cooper was sitting directly in front of him (he was).

Many ticket holders were more occupied with other aspects of the film and its plot, which focuses heavily on Bernstein’s marriage to actress Felicia Montealegre. Even though the two had an understanding about Bernstein’s love life and a genuine romantic connection, their relationship strains under the weight of Bernstein’s many gay affairs and his scrutiny in the public eye.

“I grew up loving Bernstein, and it felt totally fine,” Greg Outwater, who isn’t Jewish and works in fundraising for Northwestern University, said about the prosthetic nose. “I thought it was going to be a little bit more about the music and his conducting. That’s the only thing that I wasn’t expecting.”

Sarah Silverman, who a few years ago was one of the voices who helped amplify the “Jewface” criticism of non-Jewish actors playing Jewish characters, co-stars in *Maestro*, as Bernstein’s sister, Shirley. Silverman hasn’t been able to comment on the film publicly due to the ongoing American actors’ union strike.

The film makes Bernstein’s Jewish identity clear early and often. At the party where Bernstein first meets Montealegre, who is played by Carey Mulligan, the two bond over having Jewish parents. Montealegre, who was born in Costa Rica and raised in Chile, had a Jewish American father.

The Shoenholts established the Gillies Coffee Company in 1840. Other notables included Joseph Martinson with his eponymous brand, Samuel Schonbrunn, whose Savarin brand graced the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, and William Black, whose ventures metamorphosed into the famed Chock full o’Nuts coffee shops.

Beyond trading, Jews had a significant impact on how coffee was served. This influence is epitomised by the Anthora paper cup, a ubiquitous sight for New York coffee drinkers for decades. This iconic design was conceived 50 years ago by Leslie Buck, a Holocaust survivor, targeting the Greek-owned diners in the city.

Forty years ago, the Garden Cafeteria sold its last rice pudding and closed after 42 years in May 1983. The vibrant, discussion-rich coffeehouses that once dotted our cities seem to be a relic of the past. Though establishments like Blank Street Coffee and Starbucks are more accessible now, their modern incarnation offers a starkly different ambiance. Today’s coffee shops serve primarily as pit stops to

grab a caffeine fix or a quick bite for most of its denizens. With technology’s unrelenting march, it’s uncertain if the vibrant café culture of yesteryear will ever return in its erstwhile form. Yet, amid this evolution, one thing remains indelible: the enduring heritage of Jewish life on the Lower East Side; the contribution of merchant Jews; and the lasting contributions of Jewish intelligentsia. This legacy stands tall, impervious to the luxury condos and trendy bars that now rise from its historic grounds.

• *This story originally appeared in Tablet magazine, at [tabletmag.com](https://www.tabletmag.com), and is reprinted with permission.*



Carey Mulligan and Bradley Cooper in *Maestro*

As Bernstein’s career picks up speed, a Russian-Jewish composer tells him he’ll find much more success if he changes his name to the less Jewish-sounding “Burns”. (Montealegre convinces him that it’s bad advice.) And later in the film, Bernstein is shown wearing a sweater with Hebrew on it. The movie’s closing credits feature Jewish prayers set to classical music melodies.

Its opening credits feature some of Hollywood’s biggest names as producers, notably Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese. Spielberg had hand-picked Cooper to helm the project after watching *A Star Is Born*.

The Spielberg-Cooper bid to buy the rights to use Bernstein’s music ultimately defeated a bid by another prominent Jewish actor: Jake Gyllenhaal.

In 2021, not long after losing the bid battle, Gyllenhaal commented on the ordeal to *Deadline*. “That idea of playing one of the most pre-eminent Jewish artists in America and his struggle with his identity was in my heart for 20 odd years,” he said.

That storyline was more disturbing than the nose controversy for Melissa Tomczak, a 24-year-old who works at a literary agency.

“I don’t necessarily think that non-Jewish people can’t play Jewish people or make films about Jewish people,” said Tomczak, who isn’t Jewish. “But it kind of sucks that [Gyllenhaal] is someone who is a stage actor, and he admires Bernstein, and wasn’t able to make the film.”

Bernstein, who is widely considered the first great American orchestral conductor and who composed music in different genres, from classical to the Broadway style of his *West Side Story*, was engaged with Judaism throughout his life. In 1963, he wrote a symphony titled *Kaddish*, dedicated to the late John F. Kennedy. He and legendary choreographer Jerome Robbins collaborated on a ballet called *Dybbuk*, based on S. Ansky’s early 20th-century Yiddish play, *The Dybbuk*. And after Israel’s Six-Day War in 1967, Bernstein conducted a historic concert on Jerusalem’s Mount Scopus.

For Annalise Pelous, a 23-year-old film production co-ordinator at Monday night’s screenings, the Bernstein family’s embrace of Cooper’s vision went a long way. Bernstein’s elder daughter, Jamie, helped introduce the film at a podium before both screenings, saying almost breathlessly that the audience was “in for a treat”.

“The family was totally fine with it,” Pelous said about the nose backstory. “I don’t know, it’s like ... whatever.” The film as a whole seemed to split Monday’s audience. Some found it to be a masterpiece, others found it trite. Many were awed by the way the film’s soundtrack boomed through a specially designed Dolby sound system.

“It felt a little bit hollow. I feel like a lot of the things that Netflix is helping make kind of all have the same look, and I keep waiting for something to break free from that,” Pelous said of the movie. After the film debuts in theatres on 22 November, it heads to Netflix on 20 December. “But a lot of the music was incredible,” she said.



# Record prices for cricketers at first female-led auction

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“Sold for R1.6 million to Pretoria Capitals,” auctioneer Ariella Kuper declared at the SA20 Auction in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 27 September. A round of applause followed as Kuper had just sold 20-year-old cricketer Matthew Boast for about nine times his base price of R175 000.

Kuper, the first woman to conduct the auction of South Africa’s premier Twenty20 franchise cricket tournament since its inception last year, went on to get the Joburg Super Kings to splash out the same amount for 26-year-old Dayyaan Galiem, with the same base price of R175 000. Boast and Galiem were the most expensive buys of the 250 local and international players to go under Kuper’s hammer at the Wanderers Club.

The auction was shown live on SuperSport and representatives from the six SA20 franchises, including the Joburg Super Kings Captain Faf du Plessis and Pretoria Capitals’ assistant coach, Jacques Kallis, were in attendance.

“It was amazing,” Kuper says. “First, we’re starting a new era for Cricket South Africa [CSA]. We’re also giving an opportunity to franchises to scout new talent and get innovative. Third, we’re trying to create new household names. Having Boast and Galiem both sell at R1.6 million having started at R175 000 is incredible.”

Kuper says the auction was well received. Proteas legend Jonty Rhodes, part of the Durban Super Giants coaching staff, said, “It was good to see the focus was on the auction and not the auctioneer. You did an excellent job.”

Participants from various franchises also expressed their enjoyment of the auction, praising Kuper for being articulate, setting a consistent pace, and not dragging it.

CSA’s decision to appoint a woman auctioneer was in line with its efforts to be more inclusive, Kuper says. “It was opportune, knowing that there was a female auctioneer in South Africa who had international exposure, who was familiar with the foreign participants coming from my ship auctions, and who had an ability to understand that you’re doing a prolonged business transaction in the form of an auction. That’s certainly the experience I have from doing oil tank and big ship auctions.”

SA20 Commissioner Graeme Smith approached Kuper, saying they had read about her in an article in the *Financial Mail* which stated that she could do fast and slow auctions.

Smith was also aware of Kuper’s other work. Her Solution Strategists company auctions commercial vessels, oil tankers, break bell carriers, and fishing vessels. “I auction them around the world, and am probably the only person who handles such vessels in South Africa and Namibia,” Kuper says. “In the past 22 months, I’ve done \$85 million [R1.6 billion] worth of sales. On the other

side of my business, I do a lot of philanthropy, including charity auctions for Woolworths and Francois Pienaar’s Make a Difference leadership organisation. I’ve raised probably close to R130 million in the past 10 years.”

Kuper says the SA20 auction was “completely different to any auctions I’ve done. The bidders had spent the past few months analysing the players, so they knew who they wanted. Whereas in, for example, a ship auction, the participants all want that same ship, there’s only one ship on auction, and you’re going for the maximum price. With SA20, the franchises have a fixed purse.

“The six franchises are all effectively owned by the Indian Premier League [IPL] franchises. They each had to complete their squad for season two of the SA20, which kicks off on 10 January 2024. They had anywhere ranging between one to five slots for which they could choose African and international players. They also had to pick one rookie, a first for CSA, meaning that after we had

done the auction of the five specialised skill sets – batter, wicketkeeper, all-rounder, fast bowler, and spin bowler – we went to the express round where if there were any slots still open, they could select from 267 additional players who had registered. Once their 17 was complete, they were obligated to select a rookie.”

Smith told Kuper that CSA decided to follow the same steps as the IPL by conducting an auction, and had used British auctioneer Richard Madley last year.

She was excited, not nervous, even with the almost four-hour auction being televised. “On Saturday night, I did an auction in front of 700 people of which I did not know a single person,” she says. “I did FIFA 2010 in front of international participants, so I guess I have the same approach. Maybe it’s because I love what I do, and I’ve been doing it since 2008.”

Having been an international field trader for 10 years, “I was looking for a new industry to get into and in 2007, I saw that there were no women in the auction industry in South Africa,” Kuper says. “I got into Aucor, the oldest auction company in South Africa at the time. I also organised a black-tie event in 2007. We had a cap by Michael Schumacher to auction, and the auctioneer didn’t arrive, so I auctioned it. I started volunteering for charity auctions to practice my skill. Then, in 2010, for FIFA, I did a high-profile auction with international bidders and broke a million rand, setting a record in South Africa.”

However, Kuper, who has survived cancer three times in the past decade and even auctioned an oil tanker for \$26.4 million while on chemotherapy, says she has now been exposed to a whole new sport following the SA20 auction. “I’m more familiar with rugby, given the 16 years I’ve worked with Francois Pienaar for his organisation, so the cricket auction was certainly a learning curve for me.”



Ariella Kuper and Jonty Rhodes

## Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



There’s a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn’t necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we’re looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn’t exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn’t exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendents of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won’t be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I’m well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws.

I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

My next trip to South Africa will be 29 October to 9 November 2023

Contact me on

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# Israeli athlete conquers turbulence in World Rowing Regatta

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Israeli actress and avid rower Razia Israeli felt like she was in the wrong movie at certain times during the World Rowing Masters Regatta at Roodeplaat Dam in Pretoria last month.

at least one category but when you race, you always want to win all the races.” His doubles partner was from Australia, and an American rower partnered him for the mixed event. Israeli, who was asked to

before the regatta. “I liked the atmosphere, the drums, and dancing”. She was shocked by big waves and fierce wind at the start of a race, especially because she’s used to rowing on flat rivers in Tel Aviv. “I was so frightened that my legs were trembling,” she recalls.

During the race, Israeli was thinking, ‘Just breathe, and use all the force of the legs.’ She was concentrating so hard, she continued to row for a further 400m after crossing the finish line. She normally “doesn’t concentrate on anything but rowing. I wasn’t used to the waves and the wind. It was like a survival rowing”, she says.

Ahead of another race, she saw someone taking her boat to use for their race, and although she got it back, it unsettled her so much, she landed up finishing in third place and not second as she had done in her other races. Another time, “when I came back to the hotel, Michelle, who was from the house where I rented the boat, told me that I should go to the final I had qualified for.” I didn’t know there were still going to be a final, so I had gone back to the hotel. I rushed to get back for the final and only three women came instead of eight, so maybe the others also didn’t know.”

She finished second in her last race in spite of by then feeling the effects of having contracted COVID-19, which she thinks she picked up on the flight to South Africa.

Hatskin says rowing isn’t a very popular

sport in Israel. “We have three or four professional rowers, and the rest do it as a hobby. Twelve years ago, I was in the national team, and I’m one who prefers training and trains seven times a week, but the majority train a few times a week and just for fun.”

Hatskin took up rowing as a 15-year-old after a rowing coach saw him kayaking and asked if he wanted to give rowing a try. “I fell in love with rowing,” he says.

Israeli, who had the role of Aunt Hanna in *Fill the Void*, decided to start rowing after seeing rowers in a river while walking with her daughter in Russia.

“I said, ‘Well, it looks so nice.’ I thought that when I went back to Israel, I would tell my partner that we should start learning to row together. I became addicted. I don’t know what happened to me. My soul calls me to row.”

## Noa Nerwich wins prestigious award for social responsibility

Noa Nerwich has been announced the winner of the World ORT Gina and Joseph Harmatz Award for Social Responsibility for 2023. The award, announced by the South African Board of Jewish Education in collaboration with World ORT, is given to individuals who demonstrate extraordinary commitment to *tikkun olam* – shared responsibility to heal, repair, and transform the world.

Nerwich’s project, “Forever Kids Haven: A Lifelong Project-Changing Lives, One Child at a Time” was an ongoing endeavour aimed at supporting the at-risk children of Kids Haven Shelter in Johannesburg. Her engagement with Kids Haven began years ago, and evolved into an impactful partnership that involved hosting events; organising food and footwear drives; and creating educational activity packs, among other initiatives.

One of the standout moments, organisers say, was when Nerwich incorporated her own Batmitzvah celebration into the project. Instead of a traditional street party, she hosted 22 girls from Kids Haven for a pizza, pamper, and pyjama party at her home. The event transcended beyond a mere celebration; it was a true commitment to enhancing the lives of these young girls.

As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, Nerwich pivoted her efforts to create 28 educational activity boxes for the shelter focusing on maths and literacy. The boxes were donated in collaboration with her school and the local community.

“This year, World ORT received many excellent submissions and Noa’s dedication to her project was exceptional. Our decision to present Noa with this award is a reflection of her dedication and commitment to social responsibility,” said judges for World ORT.

“This award is a testament to Noa’s tireless efforts and her dedication to making a difference in the lives of others. We hope her story inspires more people to take proactive steps in bettering the world around them.”



Tom Johnson, Noa Nerwich, and Ariellah Rosenberg

- Sunday 15 October**
  - The South African Zionist Federation hosts its 50th national conference with keynote speaker Rabbi Leo Dee. Time: 09:00. Bookings: [www.sazf.org/50](http://www.sazf.org/50)
- Sunday 22 October**
  - New Beginnings hosts a talk by Hugh Raichlin and Roz Basserabie on sightseeing in Lithuania. Time: 10:00. Venue: Royal View Retirement Home. Donation: R50. Contact: [lynarch@worldonline.co.za](mailto:lynarch@worldonline.co.za)
  - WIZO Johannesburg hosts a talk by Arthur Mennigke for its garden day. Time: 14:30. Venue: Blue Skies, 2 Gordon Hill Road, Parktown. Donation: R260. Contact: [wizojohannesburg011@gmail.com](mailto:wizojohannesburg011@gmail.com) or 076 040 9614



Leonid Hatskin and Andrew Goldstein in the mixed race

Although Israeli, who appeared in several scenes in the movie *Schindler’s List*, placed in the top three out of about 14 rowers in each of her five races, she endured a few obstacles during the regatta that took place from 21 to 24 September. These included discovering that she had COVID-19, having someone take her boat just when she needed it to race, and almost missing a final.

The first-ever World Rowing event on African water turned out to be more plain sailing for the other Israeli participant, Leonid Hatskin, who won one race and came in the top five in his five other races, which were either single, double, or mixed category races.

Hatskin, who previously participated in regattas in Hungary, Slovenia, and Lithuania, says, “I was happy with winning

carry the Israeli flag at the opening ceremony, did three single races, one quadruple race, and one double race, with her partners being from Ireland, Argentina, and England. “In Israel, there are no women for me to row against, but I have a rowing coach,” says Israeli, who was acting in a movie just before coming to South Africa.

Hatskin and Israeli both speak glowingly of the regatta in Pretoria. “The organisation was of a very high level and above my expectations, even better than you find in Israel,” says Hatskin, who works in the hi-tech industry.

Israeli says the setup allowed people to spend time together overlooking the river



Razia Israeli

## KDVP pupils share top place at Israel Quiz



King David High School Victory Park (KDHSVP) retained the trophy at the annual Israel Quiz held at Beyachad in Johannesburg on 20 September, with Lior Hyman and Aidan Goralsky sharing first-place position following neck-on-neck competition.

Goralsky, Hyman, Daniel Segal, and Aimee Shull from KDHSVP competed in the final round of the quiz, the competition proving to be exceptionally challenging, testing their extensive knowledge of Israel’s history and current affairs.

After a tough battle, Segal secured third place, while Hyman and Goralsky achieved the same top score. To determine a winner, an additional round was introduced, in which Hyman and Goralsky continued to impress by scoring full marks. Ultimately, due to their outstanding knowledge and performance throughout the competition, it was decided that they would share first-place position.

- Sunday 15 October**
  - The South African Zionist Federation hosts its 50th national conference with keynote speaker Rabbi Leo Dee. Time: 09:00. Bookings: [www.sazf.org/50](http://www.sazf.org/50)
- Monday 16 October**
  - Chabad Seniors hosts a Q&A with Dr Adam Stern on allergies. Time: 12:15. Venue: 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy, or on Zoom with ID: 7017580458. Contact: 011 440 6600 or [rak@chabad.org.za](mailto:rak@chabad.org.za)



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# One is a door closer, another a half opener

There are three types of people in the world: those who close doors behind them; those who don't; and those who make a half-hearted, insincere attempt to encourage the door to close itself. They only do this in case others are watching, so that if challenged, they can feign surprise that the darn door displayed so little initiative and follow through.

Those door half closers are the worst. They are a drain on resources without acknowledging their role in it. But we'll get back to them.

My seat in synagogue is a great one. It's near the front, one over from an aisle, close to friends, and not too far from a large glass sliding door that allows in light and gives me a glimpse of a world outside the service. Especially in spring, when the creeping and blossoming jasmine reminds us of the glory of creation.

Open doors are magnificent in autumn and spring. But it can also get hot in summer and cold in winter. Unless the air conditioner or heater is functioning, it's more important that the large glass door remains closed to ensure we're not letting in cold or hot air.

This is hardly rocket-science. And it's not breaking science news. In 2023, we know this just as we have known it since sometime in the 1970s.

The days spent in synagogue over the festivals gave me ample opportunity to observe behaviour. The interesting thing is that it became easily predictable who would close the door, make no attempt to do so, or would do so half-heartedly.

Door closers have their life together. Their clothes match, their shoelaces are tied, and if they have hair, it's kempt. They have the appropriate prayer book in hand, and will often glance at their watch to determine if the

**INNER VOICE**  
*Howard Feldman*



service is running on schedule.

Non-closers, in general, look as though they have just stumbled into the venue and can't quite figure out how they got there. Their shirt buttoning is likely unaligned and there's little doubt that they clean forgot to glance at themselves in the mirror before falling out of their houses. They are the ones who might have a piece of toilet paper stuck to their shoe, and who might be blinking strangely because they're wearing their wives' contact lenses. They are the ones who have pushed an empty pram to shul and cannot quite recall who was meant to be on board.

And yet it's the half closers who need to be feared. They often appear as functioning members of society when this couldn't be further from the truth. They should be avoided both in marriage and in business. They are the ones who will wash their hands in a restroom only when others are present, who will litter when no-one is looking, and who won't leave a note when they bump your car in the parking lot. They never recycle, but will have colour-coded bins to create the impression that they do.

And then there's the next generation. The children of door closers close doors. The offspring of non-closers don't, and the half closers will go on to be functional alcoholics.

Unless their behaviour is corrected and they are taught that, whereas society might demand a lot of us and of our kids, being respectful of a closed door is hardly the biggest ask.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Season of peace and friendship

In Jewish tradition, Sukkot represents moving from a time of judgement and solemn introspection to one of celebration and togetherness. It's also a time when Jews broaden their focus to encompass all the nations of the world and their relationship with and duties towards them. It was therefore especially appropriate that during this Chol HaMoed week, the Gauteng, Cape Town, and Pretoria branches of the Board all hosted Sukkot-themed events aimed at sharing the message and spirit of the festival with the wider community.

Two such events were held in Johannesburg. On Monday, 2 October, we had the pleasure of hosting Johannesburg City Council Speaker Colleen Makhubele and her team for lunch in the Great Park Synagogue sukkah. It included a short tour of the shul complex given by its long-serving spiritual leader, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, who also sits on the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Council. Hazdan explained the meaning behind the various customs and practices behind Sukkot, stressing the importance of it being a time of rejoicing in bringing people together in a spirit of unity and friendship. The Board has forged a close working relationship with Makhubele in the course of this year, in which we have participated together in a number of disaster-relief projects in the inner city, including the Albert Street fire and Bree Street gas explosion. We received a warm message from her afterwards expressing her appreciation over having partners like us to help shoulder the challenges the city faces.

The Great Park event was followed two days later by an interfaith breakfast in the Pine Street Shul sukkah, where Rabbi Motti and Rebbetzin Temmi Hadar explained the symbolism of the holiday. The event was jointly organised by the



**ABOVE BOARD**  
*Karen Milner*

SAJBD through Communications Head Charisse Zeifert and SABC Religion. Pine Street Shul is adjacent to Satyagraha House, now both a museum and guest house. Mahatma Gandhi lived and worked there from 1908 to 1909, sharing the home with his close friend and ally, Herman Kallenbach, a distinguished member of the Jewish community who owned the property. The breakfast in the shul sukkah was followed by a guided tour of the premises.

Meanwhile, in Cape Town, our Cape Council hosted its annual Sukkat Shalom dinner at the Gardens Synagogue, the mother congregation of South African Jewry. Those attending included the United States and Spanish consul generals; the president of the Greek community; the supreme leader of the Goringhaiqua Goringhaicona Kingdom; Congolese civil society; and the media. For its own part, the SAJBD Pretoria Council hosted a representative of the Canadian high commission at its annual sukkah supper.

I wish our community everything of the best over the remaining days of Sukkot and the concluding Shemini Atzeret-Simchat Torah festivals over the weekend. Even more importantly, I hope the positivity, joy, and togetherness of this time will be carried forward in the weeks and months that lie ahead, helping us to negotiate the tests and challenges of those times in a spirit of renewed energy and optimism.

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

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

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Saturday 7 October	Shemini Atzeret	CLOSED
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