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Rob Reiner turns to Yiddish in Emmys tribute

To fete the creator of the TV series that made him famous, Jewish actor and director Rob Reiner turned to Yiddish during the Emmys on 15 January.

Reiner was paying tribute to Norman Lear, the Jewish creator of pioneering TV comedies who died last month at 101. Reiner came to prominence for his role as Michael Stivic on *All in the Family*, one of the shows that Lear created.

"There's a Yiddish word that describes Norman's genius: it's *kochleffel*," Reiner said. "For all you non-Jews out there, *kochleffel* is a ladle, a ladle that stirs the pot. And when Norman the *kochleffel* stirred that pot, he wound up changing American culture."

Reiner, 76, is the son of Carl Reiner, a comedy legend who died in 2020. He's a producer on a forthcoming documentary about the rise of Christian nationalism, which he has denounced.

Protesters accuse US hospital of abetting genocide

Pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated outside the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center on the Upper East Side, New York, during a rally on 15 January, accusing the hospital of abetting genocide.

Video showed the crowd of hundreds shouting at the hospital during a protest that included delegations of healthcare workers. It was led by a hardline pro-Palestinian group, Within Our Lifetime, that has echoed Hamas talking points and routinely calls for Israel's destruction.

Protest leader Nerdeen Kiswani, who leads Within Our Lifetime, called the hospital "another complicit institution" as the protesters walked past, with the crowd erupting in shouts of "Shame!"

Kiswani wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that the protest targeted the hospital because it had accepted a donation from billionaire investor Ken Griffin after he spoke out against Harvard students who signed a letter blaming Israel for the 7 October attack which killed 1 200 people in Israel, mostly civilians. Griffin has also donated hundreds of millions of dollars to Harvard, his alma mater.

Why the rush?



Rabbi Yossy Goldman
Life rabbi emeritus
at Sydenham Shul

Do you know that the Jews left Egypt in haste? Don't you remember? That's why we eat matzah on Pesach.

"They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes ... for they were driven out of Egypt and they couldn't delay."

But why couldn't they wait for the dough to rise? Do you know how long it takes for dough to rise? My dear wife, Rochel, has taught thousands of women to bake challah. Her home-baked challah is legendary in our community. So I asked her, "How long does it take for the dough to rise?" "About three or four hours," she said.

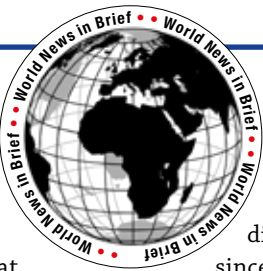
I don't get it. Our ancestors had spent 210 years in Egypt. They couldn't wait a few more hours to enjoy eating normal bread? Why the mad rush?

Conventional thinking suggests that they needed to hurry before the Egyptians changed their minds and reneged on their offer of freedom. But the rebbe offers a novel approach to this difficulty, arguing that it wasn't the Egyptians who were the problem, it was us!

"Better the devil you know ..." goes the old proverb. It must have been quite a leap of faith for the longtime slaves to leave the infrastructure of Egypt and head out into an unknown wilderness.

Imagine their thinking: "Here, we have a roof over our heads. True, there are no luxuries, but we do get fed every day. What will we have in the wilderness? No food, no shelter, not even water. Are we not better off just staying here in Egypt?"

So, when the moment of the exodus arrived, it was a dramatic window of opportunity. Had they not grasped it with both hands at that very moment, it's possible that these and other doubts might have crept



Turkey detains Israeli soccer player over 100-day message

An Israeli who plays for a Turkish soccer team was detained by police and suspended from his squad after displaying a message marking the passage of 100 days since 7 October.

Sagiv Jehezkel, 28, who plays for the top-tier Antalyaspor club, wrote "100 days" and "7.10" on a bandage on his left wrist at a game on 14 January, accompanied by a Star of David, referring to the day when Hamas invaded Israel. He showed the message to the camera after he scored a goal.



Sagiv Jehezkel

Pro-Palestinian sentiment is widespread in Turkey. After the game, Jehezkel was detained by Turkish authorities for "instigating hatred and enmity among the public", the country's justice minister said.

Antalyaspor's president said Jehezkel "insulted the values of Turkey", and the team has said it will release him from his contract.

Jehezkel was held for 10 hours and released after questioning from police and court officials. According to the Associated Press, he told police that he wasn't "pro-war" and said, "I want this 100-day process to come to an end. I want the war to end. I have never engaged in anything related to politics since my arrival. I have never disrespected anyone since the day I arrived."

After his release, Jehezkel returned to Israel, where he was met by fans who cheered and waved Israeli flags to greet him.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Torah Thought

in and delayed the whole experience.

As the Midrash states, "When the time of redemption arrived, G-d did not delay the exodus even for as much as the blink of an eye."

Frankly, it can happen to all of us. We all get comfortable in our little slaveries and daily drudgeries. There's an old Yiddish proverb for this: "May we never get used to what we can get used to." With the passage of time, we become tired, worn down, and what was previously intolerable becomes all too acceptable.

We've all experienced missed opportunities in life. The house we could have bought, the stocks we should have sold, even the man or woman we could have married. But we hesitated, and as another old proverb goes, "He who hesitates is lost."

In our Jewish lives, too, we should take advantage of the many opportunities now available to us that we may not have had when we were younger. Regular Torah study, more time in the synagogue, a new mitzvah. There's so much on offer today that we can easily make up for any lost opportunities.

It takes courage to grasp the moment and embrace new visions and horizons. When opportunity knocks, let's not miss our chance.

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Slain soldier had last memorable Shabbos with family

NICOLA MILTZ

Leutenant Yaron Chitiz, 23, had the best weekend of his life when he surprised his mother, girlfriend, and friends on the Shabbos before he was shot and killed by terrorists in Gaza. Yaron, whose parents, Clive and Debbie, were both King David Linksfield alumni, hadn't been home for 80 days as deputy commander of the Shaked battalion of the Givati Brigade.

A video taken by his brother that shows Yaron walking into his family home in Ra'anana to surprise his elated mother went viral. Debbie's unbridled joy at seeing her youngest of five children for the first time in weeks brought home the pain and anguish suffered daily by parents of soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

His last few days were lived as if somehow his soul knew they would be his last. He danced around the *bimah* during a special aliya for soldiers, saw his girlfriend, was present at a baby-naming ceremony, hosted a barbeque for his friends, and played soccer.

"He did everything that warmed his heart after being away for so long," said Debbie, who described him as "my *simcha* child, my lifeline, my talented child, who kept me young and on my toes".

"He did his rounds," said Debbie, describing Yaron as her "*laatlammetje*".

Speaking at his funeral, she said, "What an incredible Shabbat we just had. You got your *aliya l'Torah*, you benched Gomel, and the *kehilla* sang four songs for you. You danced in shul with your brothers, and I cried. I was so emotional, I didn't realise that those were happy tears."

Now she sheds tears of sadness. Yaron was shot on 26 December, a week before his 24th birthday.

His tragic passing brought Ra'anana to a standstill as the town erupted in grief following steady news of other soldiers' lives lost and the devastating effects of the war throughout the country. The toll of slain soldiers in the ground offensive against Hamas is now 192. The streets of Ra'anana were lined

with thousands of residents waving Israeli flags as a procession made its way from the family home to the cemetery, while roads were blocked off to accommodate the crowds and traffic.

The Chitiz family is well known and much loved in this central Israel city. Yaron's parents are intricately woven in the community, having been actively involved in Telfed and communal life since making aliya in 1987.

Their Shabbos table is renowned as the most *lebbedik* and lively. Yaron was known for his infectious, warm smile and his love for Israel, determined to fight for its existence, said his family.

During the week of shiva, they received more than 1 000 visits a day, said Debbie. "I thought I knew my son until I heard all the wonderful stories," she said.

On the Shabbos after his funeral, thousands gathered in the central square for a moving Kabbalat Shabbat.

The Chitiz siblings, ranging in age from 23 to 38, are known far and wide in the close-knit community, and have ties to South Africa.

The oldest, Doron, was on *shlichut* with his wife, Gila, to Johannesburg and Cape Town during the COVID-19 pandemic. He led the choir at Sydenham Shul, and the two worked at Yeshiva College.

"This is truly heartbreaking news, especially that it's so close to home," posted Rabbi Yehuda Stern of Sydenham Shul on Facebook.

Yaron's death has triggered dozens of initiatives of *chesed* and charity in his memory.

As a die-hard Liverpool supporter, hundreds of car stickers have been printed with the words, "You will never walk alone," demonstrating his love for the game and the team he supported.

One of his passions was hosting braais for family friends. To honour his memory, they are now hosting



Yaron Chitiz with his girlfriend Darah Ginsberg

braais for soldiers at IDF bases throughout the country and on the frontlines in his name.

When Yaron was home for his last Shabbos, he remarked how there was more singing in Gaza on Shabbos. Doron has now created an initiative to encourage families to take on one extra song on Shabbos, or even to start singing.

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Telfed Chief Executive Doron Klein, said, "Yaron connected to so many people in the community. He was loved by all who knew him. The Ra'anana community mourns the loss of such beautiful souls. Their memory will inspire us to be better people and work together for a better future in Israel. People feel sad and concerned but confident that we'll emerge stronger and more unified from this terrible period in our history."

Yaron's heartbroken girlfriend, Darah Ginsberg, said, "Everyone should remember Yaron as a smiley, happy, non-complaining person, always living life to the fullest. Yaroni was filled with life, light, and love bigger than words can explain. When he came home on the weekends, he always found a way to fit everything into such a cramped and short time."

His friends described him this week as fun loving, loyal, dedicated, and a leader. He loved reading, cycling, playing soccer, cooking, and entertaining.

"Yaroni was the best of us all. Not only was he the best, but he had the best of each of us," said his friend, Micha Shachat. "The legendary smile, the never-ending

zest for life, the huge sense of humour, the tremendous wisdom, one who didn't waste a single second of his life."

His family always called him the "masterpiece", said another friend, Eitan Shmukler.

"He was the youngest brother of five, absorbed all their best attributes, and was looked up to as a role model even though he was the youngest. Among friends, Yaron was always a dominant figure, leading, laughing, and joking and being at the centre of all social circles without trying to be. He always gave as much of himself to those around him without ever expecting anything in return."

Clive Chitiz described his heart break, saying, "I miss him so much. There was nothing I wouldn't do for him. He died defending his country, and I'm so proud of him."

He shared some words from a letter written by Yaron should he fall in battle, in which he expressed his gratitude to his family, friends, and girlfriend. He had written the letter on his phone, which was later given to the family to read.

In it, Yaron said, "I feel privileged to take part in the defence of our special and fantastic country. I feel part of the history that is being written now of the state of Israel.

"Mom, dad, Doron, Daniel, Dovi, Yaeli, thank you for educating me about sanctifying G-d, and kindness and love for the land. It's thanks to all of you. If it wasn't for the crazy family you are, who raised me and didn't give up on me, and raised me on values and love for the country, I wouldn't be where I am now!

"I feel proud to go in and fight Hamas under the banner of the Chitiz family and the people of Israel. Thank you very much for everything. You are a family bringing glory to the state of Israel!"

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Israel refutes South Africa’s genocide charges at the ICJ

STEVEN GRUZD

The world is waiting for 17 international judges to give an interim ruling on a critical court case. On 11 and 12 January, Israel faced off against South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. South Africa attempted to prove that Israel was guilty of contravening the 1948 Genocide Convention in its military actions in Gaza since 7 October 2023 – and much before, it claimed. South Africa’s legal team hurled serious allegations against Israel, and called for “provisional measures” to bring an urgent halt to the hostilities.

Israel’s lawyers strongly repudiated the charges, arguing that if any party should be tried for genocide, it’s the terrorist group, Hamas, which killed nearly 1 200 people on 7 October. Hamas, however, falls beyond the remit of this court as a non-state actor. With interim findings expected from the bench soon, much is on the line. And considerable damage has already been done to Israel in the realms of public relations and propaganda.

On 11 January, South Africa’s legal team claimed that the current operations in Gaza have a broader context, describing “Seventy-five years of apartheid, 56 years of occupation, and 16 years of siege.” South Africa said it was bringing the case as a concerned global citizen watching a genocide proceed.

The United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group”. Israel said South Africa sought to prove this intent through quoting – often out of context – controversial comments made by Israeli politicians and soldiers about the need to destroy Hamas.

Israel wanted to “turn the Gaza Strip into a slaughterhouse”, said one of South Africa’s lawyers, Tembeka Ngcukaitobi. He said the intention to commit genocide was “fully understood, chilling, overwhelming, and incontrovertible”.

Vaughan Lowe, Kings Counsel (KC), said this wasn’t “a carefully organised manhunt for Hamas” but a campaign to “kill, maim, and terrorise the Gazan population [through] ... bombs, starvation, and disease”.

South Africa laid out in detail grim statistics on the dead, injured, and displaced in Gaza and the grave humanitarian costs and consequences. Advocate Adila Hassim said Israel’s actions “form a calculated pattern of conduct indicative of genocide, specifically targeted against Palestinians in Gaza”.

“No matter how monstrous or appalling an attack or provocation, genocide is never a permitted response,” Lowe said. “Every use of force must stay within the limits of international law ... no matter what Hamas has done, an attack on the whole of Gaza and its population to destroy them cannot be justified.”

Arguing for Israel, Malcolm Shaw KC, said, “Genocide is a uniquely malicious crime, the zenith of evil, the crime of crimes, the ultimate wickedness. Here, there’s no genocidal intent. This is no genocide.”

Israel’s Dr Tal Becker added that Israel knew about genocide all too well from its history. He spoke about how Hamas used the Palestinian population as human shields, embedding themselves among the population.

Becker said South Africa had “a distorted factual and legal case” with arguments “barely distinguishable from Hamas’s rhetoric. Hamas’s responsibility [for the war] and Israeli victims are removed from view. South Africa seeks to weaponise genocide against Israel, and subverts the objective and purpose of the Genocide Convention itself.”

Speaking from The Hague, Lior Haiat, the spokesperson for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “South Africa



basically used the Palestinian people as ‘legal human shields’ for Hamas, and it’s representing Hamas in this court.”

Shaw showed how poorly South Africa had acted to manufacture artificially a dispute between the two countries, on which basis the case could be taken to the ICJ. Israel lawyer Gilad Noam said, “The court lacks prima facie jurisdiction – there was no dispute at the time of the submission. This misleads the court.”

“South Africa had the right optics,” said Benji Shulman, the director for public policy at the South African Zionist Federation. “A very diverse team, the South African and Palestinian scarves. They also took along media to cover this, like the editor of *News24*. For propaganda, it was structured very well. But I think it struggled to prove intent, and South Africa was shown up badly in terms of how it engineered this ‘dispute’.”

Gavin Rome, advocate and senior counsel, said there was a slim chance the case could be dismissed due to South Africa’s concoction of a dispute. “Then, the South Africans would have egg on their faces,” he said. “But on the substantive issues, this is likely to take years to adjudicate.”

“Israel’s response was thorough and robust, and highlighted the significant efforts

taken by Israel to protect and provide for Palestinian civilians, putting the lie to South Africa’s claims,” said Natasha Hausdorff, barrister and legal director at UK Lawyers for Israel Charitable Trust. South Africa hardly mentioned Israel’s actions to improve the humanitarian situation.

Israel has often shunned United Nations processes that put it on the defensive, but felt this case was important to answer. “Israel has supported the Genocide Convention from the beginning,” Haiat said. “It was created after World War II and the Holocaust. Our participation shows the international community and the UN system how baseless and ridiculous it is to accuse the victims of the 7 October massacre of genocidal intentions.”

Blinne Ni Ghráiligh, KC, appearing for South Africa, said, “Huge swathes of Gaza are being wiped from the map” with an average of 247 people killed daily, including teachers, medical staff, journalists, and UN workers. She said, “There couldn’t be a clearer case of urgency ... nowhere and nobody is safe.”

She urged the court to grant requested “provisional measures”, which include an immediate cessation of Israeli hostilities in Gaza, upholding the human rights of the Palestinians, and Israel ceasing to commit “genocidal acts”.

Netanyahu rejects claim ‘Amalek’ quote was genocidal

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected claims that his comments invoking Amalek, an enemy people of the ancient Israelites, suggested genocidal intent in Israel’s war on Hamas.

South Africa quoted Netanyahu and other Israeli officials in bringing genocide charges against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) this month. In particular, its charging document singled out Netanyahu for his statement as Israel prepared its ground invasion on 23 October 2023.

“The Prime Minister invoked the Biblical story of the total destruction of Amalek by the Israelites, stating, ‘You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember,’” the charging document said. It also quotes 1 Samuel 15, in which King Saul is instructed to “spare no-one” in attacking Amalek.

Netanyahu’s office said on 16 January that the

charge was one of a number of “absurdities” aired at initial hearings last week at the ICJ at The Hague. “This false and preposterous charge reflects a deep historical ignorance,” it said.

“The Amalekites mercilessly attacked the children of Israel after the Exodus from Egypt,” the statement said. “The comparison to Amalek has been used throughout the ages to designate those who seek to eradicate the Jewish people, most recently the Nazis.”

The statement from Netanyahu’s office noted that the phrase, “Remember what Amalek has done to you” appears at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and museum, and is inscribed on a memorial to Dutch Jews murdered during the Holocaust at The Hague, where the court sits.

“Obviously neither reference is an incitement to genocide of the German people,” the statement said.

Malcolm Shaw, the British barrister who led the team defending Israel at The Hague, noted during last week’s testimony that Netanyahu made clear in the fuller quotation that he was identifying Amalek

If all granted, the “provisional measures” would allow Hamas to rearm and to continue to hold its hostages, while tying Israel’s hands. “The Genocide Convention will be turned from an instrument to prevent horrors into a weapon in the hands of terrorist groups,” Noam said.

On why this case was brought, Shulman said, “In my view, South Africa is ‘running interference’ for Iran here and its allies, Hamas. This is like another World Conference against Racism and the ‘Zionism is Racism’ UN resolution. South Africa is using international forums to undermine Israel.”

Speculating why South Africa mounted the case, Shulman said, “This is an election year, and I wouldn’t be surprised if the African National Congress got some sort of monetary kickback – now suddenly the party’s coffers are full.”

“As absurd as South Africa’s allegations are,” said Hausdorff, “that it brought this case was perhaps unsurprising. It used its application to repeat the canards of many pre-existing reports, and it misrepresented statements by Israeli officials, seeking a judicial stamp of approval on these falsehoods.

“The fact that the United States, United Kingdom, German, and other law-abiding states have called out this meritless case is significant,” Hausdorff said. “It indicates that upholders of the rule of law are worried about the credibility of international legal institutions which is under threat with these lawfare initiatives.”

Rome outlined the three possible outcomes: the ICJ could dismiss the application; uphold all the measures requested; or – most likely – support just some measures. “It’s hard to predict and not a foregone conclusion it will hold for South Africa,” he said. “Both sides will try to spin the verdict.”

Most experts felt Israel would get a fair hearing from the ICJ.

If the finding goes against Israel, there’s a sense that Israel might just ignore the ruling. The matter would go to the UN Security Council, where Israel would rely on the US veto.

The ICJ’s interim verdict is expected within days.

with Hamas, not with Palestinians generally.

“There’s no need here for a theological discussion on the meaning of ‘Amalek’ in Judaism, which was indeed not understood by the applicant,” Shaw said.

The South African charging document also misattributed the source of Netanyahu’s quote, inaccurately suggesting he was referring to 1 Samuel 15. Netanyahu, however, didn’t quote that passage. Instead, “Remember what Amalek has done to you” is from Deuteronomy 25, and refers to how G-d saved the Israelites from the peril posed by the Amalekites in the desert. In the context of Deuteronomy, the phrase appears among a litany of commandments, and is seen by Jewish scholars as a commandment to remember that G-d is with the Jews even in times of peril.

The phrase as it appears in Deuteronomy has repeatedly been used since the Holocaust as a call to witness. Commentators said the calls to spare no Amalekites or to blot out their memory were to be understood metaphorically, not literally.

CSA ducks antisemitism claims in Teeger uproar

>>Continued from page 1

Former South African Jewish cricketers Mandy Yachad and Adam Bacher also oppose CSA’s conduct. “Its decision to remove David Teeger, an Orthodox Jew, as captain of the South African Under-19 team, ostensibly in the interest of safety, is deplorable and constitutes a sad day for sport and cricket in particular in South Africa,” said Yachad.

“In doing so, CSA has succumbed to pressure – if not instructions – from the government, which has openly supported Hamas, none more so than in bringing the case of genocide against Israel in the ICJ.

“If safety was an issue, of which I’m certainly not convinced, surely the correct way to deal with the issue would be to stand by the decision made to appoint Teeger as captain and, rather than bowing to pressure and threats, beef up security?”

“I can’t understand how [CSA] has come to this decision, especially when an independent inquiry into Teeger’s statement concluded that he didn’t violate the CSA code of conduct,” said Bacher, pointing out that CSA should have stood firm in

its decision to appoint him as captain. “I know David personally,” Bacher said. “He’s a young man of integrity and a proud South African who has always encouraged cultural diversity and respect via his acts at school.”

Actively opposing the controversial decision, the SAZF this week started a petition calling on CSA to reinstate Teeger as captain and apologise. Within hours, it had attracted more than 45 000 signatures and has since spread globally.

Meanwhile, on 16 January, the Democratic Alliance (DA) issued CSA with a letter of demand to reinstate David Teeger as captain. Should CSA refuse to do so before the close of business 19 January 2024, the DA will submit an official complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission.

• *The SAJBD has called for a protest outside the CSA offices on 18 January at 16:00. Visit <https://forms.gle/MZP9jqk9EkWoBr298> to sign up.*



Ra'anana terror attacks leave community united but shaken

NICOLA MILTZ

The safe streets of Ra'anana near Tel Aviv were rocked by multiple terrorist attacks earlier this week which have shaken a close-knit community still reeling from the ravages of a country at war.

Ra'anana affectionately known as Ra'ananafontein because of its popularity among ex-South Africans who have made aliya, has 1 250 former South African families, according to Telfed.

There are fears that the suburban attack may herald a wave of Palestinian terror from the West Bank, but residents are determined to unite and stay strong.

Ex-South African Robin Nussbaum witnessed one of the attacks from his office window, which overlooks one of the town's main intersections of Ahuza Street and Yerushalaim Road.

"I sit with my back facing the window. I heard an almighty noise that sounded like a huge truck crashing and dropping a heavy load of sand. I immediately turned my back and saw kids running away from the bus stop where I saw a white car crashed on the pavement. I wanted it to be a car accident not a terror attack, although deep down, I knew it was a car ramming. I didn't want to believe that a person would drive a car into a group of people, mostly school kids, waiting for the bus.

"My colleagues heard me shout and came running to the window. When I called the emergency number to report the incident, the operator thought I'd made a mistake because she was busy with reports of another incident elsewhere, and she wanted to speak to my Israeli colleague in Hebrew to make sure. That's when the penny dropped, and we realised there were multiple attacks."

Elderly Ra'anana resident, Edna Bluestein, 79, was killed and about 17 people were injured, several seriously, including at least seven children and teenagers, in a car ramming and stabbing attack by two Palestinian terrorists in separate areas of the central Israel city early on Monday, 15 January.

During the attacks, the terrorists, two West Bank Palestinians who according to reports were working in Israel illegally, seized three vehicles and rammed pedestrians in several locations in the suburb, also stabbing one or more of their victims, according to police, medics, and eyewitnesses.

The two suspects were named as Ahmed Zidat, 25, and Mahmoud Zidad, 44, both residents of the southern West Bank town of Bani Na'im, close to Hebron. According to the Shin Bet, both had been blacklisted for entering Israel illegally numerous times in the past.

The attack began at about 13:30, as schools were dismissing students for the day.

Casualties from the attack were taken to numerous hospitals and care facilities.

The head of the police's Central District, Deputy Commissioner Avi Bitton, said the attack was carried out by Palestinian relatives from the Hebron area of the West

Bank who had recently been working in the city's industrial zone.

Both the suspects were under arrest and being questioned, Bitton said, saying that the first was apprehended quickly and the second a few minutes later.

Police and the Shin Bet security agency are jointly investigating. Reports said the suspects had been working at a car wash in the city.

"My office is opposite that bus stop that was hit. Many of my colleagues use that bus stop and are now afraid to come to work by bus. I live in Modi'in, and now my wife and I are afraid to let our kids use the bus to get to and from school," Nussbaum said.

He is, however, encouraged by the unity and resilience displayed by people.

"The next morning, you could see people praying *shachrit* at the exact site of the terror attack. From fear and despair to courage and hope, that's Israel. Though I reel in horror and sadness for the victims of this latest terror attack and for the hostages still in Gaza, it's events like these multiple terror attacks that make us stronger and more determined to fight to be able to live in peace," he said.

Former South African Andi Saitowitz, who lives in Ra'anana, said one of the attacks happened directly outside her son's high school, Amit Kfar Batya.

She posted on Facebook, "I wish I could say that I'm ok. But nothing about anything is ok."

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, she said she had just got home from work, when she started getting WhatsApp messages which initially she thought involved a car hijacking.

"I soon realised when the school WhatsApp groups started exploding that this wasn't the case. This was very real and close to home."

The very next morning, however, children from the school prayed at the site where it happened.

"They responded to evil by going back to where it happened to pray, sing, and unite. In response to terror, they gathered to add light to the world. While we pray for three of the injured boys, this inspiring response to evil gives us hope.

"A country this size is small enough for everyone to know everyone. We're all connected somehow. We're like family. When my friend's children are in Gaza, it's as if my own children are there.

"Our children are an inspiring, resilient generation who have lived through a pandemic and now a war, and they're still going strong. It's remarkable.

"They have barely been at school because most of their teachers are in the army, but they continue to volunteer on farms, make sandwiches, look after families displaced by the war, and do whatever it takes to help. The unity displayed by the youth has created a sense of hopefulness, and we're seeing incredible miracles. These are hard times with no end in sight. We're putting one foot in front of the other, but in spite of this, there's nowhere in the world I'd rather be. This is our home. There's no place in the world like this."

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 descendants 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 will be from February 2024 in Johannesburg and in Cape Town.

WhatsApp: +48 783 953 223
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An icon of SA Jewry

David Teeger has just matriculated and yet this young man, no more than 19 years old, has become a symbol of what’s happening to South African Jewry. He has also become an icon in terms of the integrity and strength with which he has handled the debacle that surrounds him (see page 1).

Towards the end of last year, Teeger was head boy of King Edward VII School in Johannesburg and, being a phenomenal cricketer and natural leader, he was also the captain of the South African Under-19 cricket team. That wasn’t all, but it was the biggest reason people admired him.

His eyes were on the ball, including matric, his school, doing good, being a committed, observant Jew, and a cricketer. He needed no distraction as he had a lot to accomplish. His family, friends, team, and community were all behind him.

And then he was nominated in the inaugural Absa Jewish Achiever Rising Star Award 2023. It wasn’t something he sought, pursued, or needed, it just happened, and he and his family – being integral to the Jewish community – went ahead with the award out of respect for the *SA Jewish Report* and the community.

When Teeger won, he was more surprised than anyone because he had looked at the other finalists in his section and thought he didn’t stand a chance against those amazing achievers. But the judges saw a leader and a true rising star in him. They recognised his commitment to his Judaism, fighting gender violence, breaking unnecessary barriers, to serving South Africa as a cricketer, and so much else.

But when he won and took to that podium to accept his award, it was just days after the 7 October massacre in Israel and the Jewish state had been forced into fighting for its survival against terrorism. We were all emotional about what was happening in Israel, and Teeger bravely and articulately vocalised what so many of us were feeling. He made it clear that he believed in Israel’s right to defend itself, not least of all after the massacre, and that he saw the young people in the Israel Defense Forces as true rising stars because of what they were facing. Many of them aren’t much older than Teeger.

So many of us in the audience had tears of support in our eyes as we listened to him. We looked at him with such pride. And yet, it was this that led to a massive international political and antisemitic battle against a not-yet-adult cricketer in his sporting arena. This battle is so clearly a microcosm of the South African macrocosm.

When Cricket South Africa (CSA) faced a complaint from the Palestinian Solidarity Alliance about Teeger’s opinions, it found a way to deal with it. Rather than decide on the matter itself, the board commissioned an inquiry by acclaimed Advocate Wim Trengove. Teeger was exonerated and, to save face and without any real reason not to, CSA reinstated Teeger as captain.

He was all set to take his team to the Under-19 World Cup this Friday, but this was too good to be true. Those who were against Teeger captaining the national Under-19 side saw to it that he wouldn’t be able to do it.

At this point, the sports minister was said to have intervened. And more complaints from the Israel-hating lobby were heard. Teeger is understood to have been pressured to resign from his position, but he didn’t, and I honour him for that.

Not being able to get him to go quietly, the CSA stripped him of his captaincy under the ridiculous guise of his leadership of the team being a security threat. Somehow, him playing wasn’t a threat, only his captaincy. And the CSA wasn’t able to give the South African Jewish Board of Deputies any evidence of this threat being a reality.

If there was a real threat, why would it allow him to play at all? If there was a threat, surely it should upgrade security, not downgrade the captain?

Could CSA have been worried that the anti-Israel lobby is a group of terrorists and might orchestrate an attack at the games? Really? I thought the South African powers that be didn’t see Hamas as terrorists.

The truth is that the government, its antisemitic cronies, and CSA’s leadership wanted Teeger out because he’s Jewish and he holds opinions they don’t like and won’t apologise for them. He clearly falls into the group of Jews known by our enemies as “bad Jews” because they unapologetically support a Jewish state and Israel’s right to defend itself. So, they felt they had to punish Teeger because he wouldn’t kowtow to what they want Jews to be. *Kol hakavod* to him!

We cannot be the kind of people who hide who we are and what we believe or feel. As Jews, I like to believe we stand up for what we believe. We don’t apologise for believing in the state of Israel. We also don’t apologise if we don’t agree with something Israel does. However, that never means we don’t support the country and its right to exist and defend itself.

Why on earth should any of us have to hide our opinions? They aren’t genocidal. They aren’t hateful. They aren’t opinions destined to harm anyone. They are simply opinions in which we show our allegiance to a country that we pray for every day in shul. It’s a country that’s so intrinsic to us, it’s in our daily prayers written long before today’s state of Israel was established.

But young Teeger didn’t stand a chance against the hatred in this country.

I believe we all need to stand behind and alongside him and hold our heads up high. We have nothing to be ashamed of, but right now, in the face of this, we need to be united as a people. We need to stand and work together. *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Is it time to go?

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



I sit here staring at my suitcase, contemplating whether it’s time to leave the only home I’ve ever known. I imagine my ancestors, in the frigid cold of Lithuania, a mere 100 years ago, looking at the red flags of a rising tide of Jew hatred and wondering the exact same thing. Everything has an expiry stamp, and South Africa is looking like we’re fast approaching the “best before date”.

A year ago, an American Jewish non-governmental organisation visited South Africa to see whether it should begin planning a mass evacuation for South African Jewry. I laughed it off. I feel a little foolish about that now.

For Jews, this country no longer feels like a safe space or “home”. The government has been captured by radical Islamists and their sympathisers. We have normalised Jew hatred and justified massacres. Our country has lost its soul, and it’s time for our community to start a real and honest discussion about its future.

As a former anti-apartheid activist, the founder of the Jewish anti-apartheid movement, executive director of the Independent Electoral Commission, a cog in the president’s CR17 campaign, and involved in countless social and civic organisations, people have always held me personally responsible for the abundant failures of our government. But I also became the sounding board for many anxious families trying to navigate a very uncertain future.

Over the years, scores of people have asked me whether I believed South Africa held a viable future for them and their children. I always answered with a standard boilerplate reply, “No-one can tell you what to do, it’s a very personal decision, but for me, South Africa is and will always be my home, a place with a Jewish community, more engaged, more vibrant than anywhere else in the world.”

Many of those I counselled decided that South Africa didn’t offer them an attractive future and landed up as strangers in the plasticity of the United States, the tundra of Canada, the misery of London, the bareness of Australia, the obscurity of New Zealand, and more recently, the damp of Amsterdam. Many went back to claim their birth right in Israel, learning how to do their own laundry. True, many also became tax refugees, sipping wine from Franschhoek in their Tel Aviv penthouses, with a view of the Mediterranean.

Today, the South African Jewish community numbers but one third of what it did at its peak. Though our numbers have shrunk, the vibrancy of our community has remained intact.

In the 1970s and 1980s they used to joke, “When the Jews go; it’s time to leave, when the Portuguese go; it’s too late.”

The clock ticked, and stopped on 7 October 2023.

The behaviour of the South African government was nothing short of betrayal. President Cyril Ramaphosa’s failure to condemn the 7 October massacre; his failure to reach out to the families of the two South Africans massacred in the Hamas genocide; his failure to act on the two South Africans kidnapped by Hamas; and his smirk blame of Israel for deserving the attack two weeks after the massacre, while wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh, will forever be a symbol of his Judas moment.

In American politics, they talk of a “tortoise on a lamppost”. Sometimes, the tortoise mistakenly believes that it got onto the lamppost by itself.

Ramaphosa’s spineless leadership has allowed his jihadist foreign minister, Dr Naledi Pandor, and her

mujahidin director general, Zane Dangor, to direct foreign policy without intervention. Pandor mislead Parliament by claiming that there were no beheadings of babies and that Israel had attacked the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital. With no South African diplomats in Israel and *Al Jazeera* as her only source of information, Pandor meanders in the dark. Her ignorance, however, is self-inflicted. Her department was invited to view the 47-minute video of Hamas-captured atrocities, and declined to attend.

Hamas informs us that Pandor telephoned it to congratulate it on the success of its “Al-Aqsa Flood” attack on Israel. Pandor claimed that she was merely offering humanitarian assistance, but refused to release the “call-out” transcript of the conversation. As a convert to Islam, Pandor uses her own zealotry to pursue a pro-Hamas agenda to the detriment of South Africa.

In December, Hamas visited South Africa, was feted in our Parliament, and celebrated in the African National Congress’ (ANC’s) offices in Johannesburg. When Ramaphosa finally met the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, he sprinted to issue a statement and later, while meeting the Muslim community, stated that they had issued a statement as “we’re concerned there are distortions”. Given that the president’s statement was issued first, this both makes no logical sense and effectively paints the official representative body of Jews in South Africa as liars.

It’s a clash of civilizations. Jews have traditionally ascribed to the values of Western liberal democracy. In the ANC’s hard-left, revolutionary world view, Western interests must be opposed everywhere – in Ukraine, in Morocco, and in Israel. South Africa believes that it must be the vanguard liberation movement celebrating the imagined successes of Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, and Russia. Pandor is currently attending the 7th Africa-Cuba Solidarity Conference in White River.

But actions have consequences. The West is becoming increasingly disenchanted by South Africa’s antics.

Last year, South Africa’s invitation to the G7 Summit didn’t materialise, and the currency has lost 50% of its value under Ramaphosa. The renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act looks increasingly precarious together with the approximately 250 000 jobs it created. South Africa is increasingly isolated from those countries which could help it the most.

Ramaphosa had a choice to turn South Africa into a Singapore or a Sudan. He chose Sudan.

But the final straw for many has been the sacking of David Teeger as captain of the South Africa Under-19 cricket team. By even Cricket SA’s own account, Teeger did nothing wrong, but his presence as a Jew and Zionist as captain of the junior Proteas became untenable for it in case it would become a flashpoint for violent pro-Palestinian protests.

Effectively, the decision by Cricket SA means that no Jew could ever captain another South African sports team. Lawson Naidoo, the head of Cricket SA has effectively instructed Jewish South African sports people to “get into the closet”. His belief being, if you wish to play for us, hide your identity don’t tell anyone who you are or what you believe in, become the Marranos of South Africa.

Well Lawson got it wrong, we aren’t those Jews. His racist bigotry will forever haunt him.

South Africa today stands on trial, its belief that it can sacrifice its Jewish community on the altar of its own political expediency is laid bare before us.

As a community, we need some urgent dialogue about the red lines that have been crossed and whether South Africa still affords us the opportunity to live as free Jews in a society where we’re equals. Regrettably, it’s the question from which we can no longer hide.

As a community, we’ve contributed far more to South Africa than we’ve received, and if South Africa doesn’t realise that now, it will be too late

- *Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report.*

NICOLA MILTZ

Born Adrienne Kuritzky, she grew up with

Haunted by the memories of her ordeal, Siegel has described her captors as monsters, yet she refuses to succumb to despair, having promised Keith to remain

Siegel has been to the White House, met President Joe Biden, addressed the Knesset, and attended numerous vigils, including one organised by Telfed in Ra'anana, to

She told PBS NewsHour that for the 51 days she was held captive, she never believed she'd return alive. "We were sure we were going to die," she said. They were scared all the time, and witnessed lots of violence including sexual assault and

Said Flax, "It's a daily rollercoaster of emotions. We live day to day, minute by minute. We're happy when we hear good news, but there are many days when we feel depressed and despondent. We have had no word about the hostages, the waiting is agonising."

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Israel’s messy middle – a treacherous place to be

OPINION DR DAVID BROCK KATZ



Unsurprisingly, Israel has come in for a hammering at the strategic level of its war against Hamas. Previous articles alluded to the inevitability of a negative swing in world opinion. Long gone is the short-lived outrage many nations expressed in the wake of the 7 October barbaric massacres of Israeli civilians. A cruel, capricious world has all but forgotten about the fate of the Israeli hostages held in excruciating conditions. Hamas, a terrorist organisation in the minds of most sane people, has captured the headlines and holds the moral high ground. The likes of Norman Finkelstein, Cenk Uygur, and a host of pro-Palestinian reporters get hours of airtime peddling their barely disguised hate for the Israelis, indifferent to the plight of the hostages, Israeli dead, and incessant rocket attacks that continue daily.

Joining the ranks of those clamouring for Israelis to be brought to book for “genocide” is South Africa. It’s a particularly cynical charge levelled at Holocaust descendants who know all too well the face and lethal results of Jew hatred. The fact that it’s my beloved South Africa behind the latest moves to rob Jews of their tragic history and miraculous recovery makes it all the harder to endure. Frans Cronje mistakenly writes off South Africa as merely the political and legal wing of Iran in a recent ChaiFM interview. The topic of South Africa’s motivation for surrendering the middle ground and firmly endorsing Hamas is beyond the scope of this article. However, political analysts must desist from sweeping statements and fuelling the nonsense that passes for analysis and journalism. South Africa, punching far above its weight, has ambitions to assume the political leadership of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and Africa. Rather than trading off the miraculous settlement engineered in 1994, becoming the world leader in reconciliation, and gaining the world’s respect, the government chooses ideology over mediation. South Africa has abdicated her natural mediation role and has chosen expediency in a misguided quest to elevate her international status.



The strategic path ahead remains rocky and treacherous, regardless of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) findings. There’s no long-term military solution to the problem of ridding Gaza of Hamas. There never was. Formidable minds are needed to visualise the way forward out of this decades-old morass and reach a permanent solution in which the political aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians are catered for. It may seem premature to think of strategic solutions and enduring peace in the wake of the worst pogrom since the Holocaust. Failure to find a workable solution will lead to Israel’s expanding isolation. Ridding Gaza of Hamas is an operational objective that falls to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). A permanent solution can be reached only at political level, and compromise from all sides is fundamental for that to happen. A glimmer of hope is that the

Abraham Accords may eventually yield a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict if Hamas doesn’t gain further traction in derailing the process.

At the operational level of war, the IDF continues to struggle with a messy urban battlefield which overwhelmingly favours Hamas, which is holed up in buildings and tunnels and indistinguishable from the local population. IDF casualties are mounting, and many of the killed and wounded seem to be senior officers, indicating that this is a company commander’s war. True to the IDF’s tradition, officers lead from the front, and their casualty rate seems disproportionate. The IDF doesn’t enjoy free rein to conduct the war with a minimum loss of soldier’s lives. As Palestinian civilian casualties mount, the IDF has come under increasing pressure from the United States and its allies to curtail its air operations and resort to more surgical ground strikes. As a result, there seems to be very little territorial gain in the past month, and the Israelis seem content for the moment to hold the ground they conquered in the first weeks of the operation.

Freeing Israeli hostages remains paramount, and the need to gain their release has also shaped IDF operations. Every ceasefire brings fresh supplies to Hamas and increases the morale of its fighters. The IDF has had to remain aware that its conduct at tactical level can have far-reaching strategic implications. The pro-Hamas press and social media revelled in schadenfreude when the IDF mistakenly killed three Israeli hostages who managed to escape. Young IDF soldiers taking to social media and TikTok have found their silly statements served up as evidence at the ICJ, together with ill-advised proclamations by some of Israel’s political elite. Asymmetrical warfare calls for extra vigilance in its conduct, and the need for professional and co-ordinated press liaison.

Troop reductions beginning on 1 January have considerably reduced the IDF’s fighting power in Gaza as it moves toward a “more targeted phase” of operations and allows some recovery to an economy under the strain of conscription. *The New York Times* reports:

“US officials said they expected the transition to rely more on surgical missions by smaller groups of elite Israeli forces that would move in and out of population centres in the Gaza Strip to find and kill Hamas leaders, rescue hostages, and destroy tunnels.”

Has Israel succumbed to the enormous political pressure brought about by the international community? Have the understandable demands of those at home for the return of the hostages forced the IDF to modify or even abandon its desire to rid Gaza of Hamas? Does Israel remain resolute in its stated aim of permanently removing Hamas? To borrow from Winston Churchill, we’re by no means witnessing the end of the Gaza war, but perhaps we’re witnessing the end of the beginning. We may be approaching the messy middle.

- *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.*

ICJ genocide case – a slam dunk for Israel

OPINION DAVID BENJAMIN



“A tale . . . full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” (William Shakespeare)

Even before South Africa’s lawyers took the podium at The Hague to argue that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, it was clear that their case was a non-starter. Unsurprisingly, therefore, their oral submissions to the court provided a textbook illustration of the legal term “no case to answer”, denoting a situation where the charges made are so obviously without merit, they require no response.

If that wasn’t enough, by the end of the second day, once Israel’s lawyers had nonetheless responded, not only was South Africa’s case thoroughly demolished, but the tables had been turned – with South Africa now having to justify its own conduct in providing diplomatic cover to a patently genocidal terrorist organisation.

As an Israeli with South African roots, I confess to having initially viewed South Africa’s motives a lot more charitably than most of my compatriots and co-religionists. It was hard to contemplate a situation where one’s love for Israel and deep affection for South Africa could become incompatible. So, I rationalised that South Africa didn’t really believe its own genocide claim, but rather was using the only available legal avenue to exert pressure on Israel to stop its military operations out of a genuine concern for the casualties and suffering of ordinary people in Gaza. Though I’m convinced that a neutralised Hamas is the best outcome for Israelis and Palestinians alike, I identify with those who are deeply troubled by the terrible, if unavoidable, human cost of achieving that aim.

It was only a few seconds into the first speaker, Vusi Madonsela’s, address to the court, that I realised that my somewhat hopeful view of South Africa’s motives had been completely misplaced.

The South African case was a cut-and-paste regurgitation of the familiar anti-Israel, anti-Zionist narrative, taking aim at the very legitimacy of the state of Israel, going far beyond what was necessary for the proceedings before the court. As Madonsela rattled off slogan after anti-Zionist slogan – “nakba”, “colonisation”, “apartheid”, “forcibly dispossessed”, etc – it became all too apparent that South Africa was happy to be there as a proxy for those who deny Israel’s right to defend itself against the genocidal barbarism of Hamas and its ilk, let alone its right to exist.

As for South Africa’s attempt to prove “genocidal intent” on Israel’s part, this included the outrageous and unsubstantiated claim that Israel was deliberately killing civilians, especially children, while intentionally inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians. What stood out in particular was the bizarre assertion that by urging and facilitating the evacuation of civilians from areas of intense combat – in fulfilment of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law – Israel was in fact displaying genocidal intent.

South Africa also accused Israel of starving the Gazan population while in fact Israel has shown its readiness to allow massive quantities of humanitarian aid into Gaza and has a designated unit, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (Cogat), working around the clock to make that happen. There are certainly substantial difficulties involved in distributing the aid within Gaza, such as Hamas hijacking convoys as well as logistical challenges, but to lay the blame on Israel and infer from that an existence of genocidal intent is ludicrous.

As for South Africa’s claim that Israel deliberately destroyed Gaza’s healthcare system, it conveniently overlooked the establishment of field and floating hospitals serving the areas to where civilians had been evacuated.

Perhaps the most outlandish accusation of the day was that Israel was engaged in “reproductive violence” by engineering difficulties of access to proper medical care and thereby deliberately preventing Palestinian births – further alleged proof of genocide. Seriously?

To be sure, there were aspects of South Africa’s arguments that were discomfiting for normative Israelis, namely the quotes from various public figures and soldiers which taken at face value, could be construed as

justifying illegal conduct. However, anyone acquainted with Israel’s political set-up knows to dismiss this as bluster, having no bearing whatsoever on Israel’s actual official policy or conduct. This is an exasperating feature of a democratic open society – a high tolerance for people saying things that should not be said. South Africans will be struck by the hypocrisy of this argument, since South Africa has the same “problem”.

Much of South Africa’s effort was aimed at persuading the court that the legal threshold for determining whether there was a plausible case for genocide, thereby justifying urgent intervention by the court, was a very low one. The problem is that if you set the bar too low then almost any military action can be called a genocide, thereby emptying the term of its special meaning.

South Africa also wasted more than a few precious minutes waxing lyrical on how genocide was never justified – as if anyone thought it was. Interestingly, it all but neglected mentioning the crimes of Hamas and the suffering on the Israeli side – the massacre, the rapes, the torture, the kidnappings, the displacement, the indiscriminate rocket-fire, and the casualties of war. All this could have helped established a motive for Israel’s alleged crimes, but South Africa chose to leave it out. Apparently, this didn’t gel with the interests of the client.

Its time might have been better spent explaining to Israel and the world how the Israel Defense Forces should conduct its military campaign differently, given Hamas’s modus operandi of embedding its entire military-terror infrastructure in the civilian environment and conducting attacks from within, nearby, or under hospitals, schools, mosques, residential buildings, and United Nations facilities. Could it be that the South Africans thought, wisely, that any mention of this inconvenient truth might be prejudicial to their case?

The Israeli legal team was truly impressive. They did a superb job. But they didn’t need to. South Africa had no case to begin with.



South Africa’s legal team presenting its case at the International Court of Justice

Having said that, Israel finally had an opportunity to present its side of the story to the world before dozens of news outlets, without violent protests or rowdy hecklers. Most importantly, it showed that Israel is a country of laws, serious jurists, and a robustly independent legal system that ensures that the laws are followed, including on the battlefield. Thank you, South Africa, for supplying the platform.

Does all this mean the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will throw out the case? Of course not. One of the cases cited by Professor Vaughan Lowe for South Africa was a previous decision of the ICJ from 2004, “The Wall”, which ruled that Israel had no right to self-defence against Palestinian terror attacks. An astonishing decision to say the least. Ironically, as pointed out to the court by Tal Becker, legal adviser to Israel’s foreign ministry, the very same Lowe in a 2005 publication correctly stated:

“The source of the attack, whether a state or non-state actor, is irrelevant to the existence of the right” to defence. “Force may be used to avert a threat because no-one, and no state, is obliged by law passively to suffer the delivery of an attack.”

Can the ICJ, like Lowe, change its mind? Or its attitude towards Israel? For Israel’s sake and for the sake of international law, let’s hope so.

- *David Benjamin is an Israeli attorney and international consultant specialising in international law, the law of armed conflict, and counter-terrorism. He’s a former career-officer in the Israel Defense Forces Military Advocate General’s Corps, where he served as chief legal adviser for the Gaza Strip and as director of the strategic and international branch in the international law department.*

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PERSONAL STORY

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN



“Death has ascended our windows and entered our homes. It has taken children from our roads and youth from our streets.” (Jeremiah, chapter 9)

Last week, two students of Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, who had studied in my *shiur*, fell during battle in Gaza. It was devastating week for families whose lives were shattered by an unspeakable tragedy. The death of these two boys, lifelong friends, rippled through the entire Jewish world. As their rabbi, I'm in grief.

These two soldier scholars lived similar, tragically shortened, lives. Each of their fathers studied in our yeshiva and raised Torah-committed families upon the values they absorbed decades ago. Their sons profoundly identified with our yeshiva, and relished the opportunity to continue their family legacy by studying in their father's *beit midrash*.

Dovid Schwartz's family are native Israelis, whereas Yakir Hexter's parents made aliya from the United States. The pairing of these two families provides a sad but fitting metaphor for our yeshiva, which has been a flagship hesder yeshiva (combining Torah study and service in the Israel Defense Forces) for more than 50 years, while also assisting thousands of students in transitioning to aliya.

A part of our yeshiva has been torn away, and there's a gaping hole. As their rabbi, I mourn, holding back tears and clearing lumps in my throat.

Dovid had an incandescent smile which never left his face, radiated instant happiness, and literally climbed into your heart. He displayed quiet, understated leadership which was never aggressive or controlling. He always assumed responsibility, organising group events or scheduling changes. He was a truth-seeker, possessing deep personal conviction, but always eager to receive helpful input from his teachers. Even after leaving yeshiva, he would periodically check in with me for guidance as he transitioned to the next stage.

His intellectual curiosity inspired him to look beyond



Yakir Hexter and Dovid Schwartz

his natural setting for religious inspiration and personal growth. Though he was raised and schooled in a national religious context, he was a regular at hassidic *tishes* and gatherings. Based on his request, I started a weekly *shiur* in *chasidut* in our yeshiva, though we don't typically stress this area of study. He scrupulously maintained this weekly *shiur* even during the difficult conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. He deeply enjoyed *parshat hashavuah*, publishing a collection of his own Torah thoughts in honour of his wedding.

Conscious that religious identity should be simple but compelling, he hung three handwritten Torah verses above his bed. One of them captures his short life: "I will rely upon your kindness, my heart will rejoice in your deliverance." (Psalms chapter 13)

Yakir was immensely driven, holding himself to extremely high personal standards. He enjoyed learning Mesillat Yesahrim, a classic *musar* work which lays out a detailed roadmap for religious development. Yet, in spite of his own surpassing standards, Yakir was humble about his achievements and was extremely tolerant of those who couldn't or didn't match his own lofty expectations.

Yakir was an exceptional listener and excelled at

making other people feel heard and seen. He had embarked on a degree in architecture, which was true to his extraordinary ability to create space for other people. He was a magnet for English-speaking students looking for a shoulder to lean on or in need of a friendly *shmooze*.

Extremely modest, his smile wasn't radiant or overpowering, but inconspicuous, charming, and endearing. He never drowned out others in the room.

He was artistic, and an original thinker, who exhibited broad intellectual sweep. Additionally, he possessed strong moral integrity and conscientiously donated to charity from his various side incomes. As he deeply valued time as a commodity, he also allocated specific hours to support the needy.

Though he possessed a strong moral fibre, he knew how to let loose with friends, be mischievous, and have fun. He combined finesse, imagination, modesty, moral integrity, intensity, and sensitivity.

The Talmud concludes that a rabbi also gains wisdom from his students. Obviously, as the study of Torah is centred on give-and-take, interaction with students yields new intellectual perspectives. However, a rabbi is also inspired by observing his *talmidim* apply his values, often more successfully than he himself is capable of doing.

Obviously, I tried to instil passion and selflessness in Dovid and Yakir, but watching them risk everything for our nation and, sadly, sacrifice their lives, leaves me astonished. I'm expected to provide leadership and inspiration, but I'm humbled by their extraordinary commitment and hope to G-d that I can be worthy of the privilege He gave me to teach them during their brief time on this earth.

A rebbe looks into the future, planting seeds which

one day, with G-d's help will germinate into a life of Torah, morality, family, country, and idealism. Every student brings a world of potential and possibility. Tragically, my hopes and dreams for Dovid and Yakir have now been cut short. All that remains is a gaping hole of potential unfulfilled.

Amidst the gloom, I take one slight solace, knowing that they returned to G-d in pure and unsullied innocence. As Dovid and Yakir were just beginning their life journey, they hadn't yet been blemished by the pain of this world. They returned to G-d pure and pristine, just as He created them.

Their death is even more painful given the strong friendship they enjoyed throughout their life. Dovid and Yakir befriended each other in high school, and maintained this bond through yeshiva, army training, and officers' training. They served together until their death. The iconic picture of them studying in our *beit midrash* captures the exquisite beauty and agonising pain of their friendship, in life and in death.

Our people are recovering from a terrible year of strife and social discord. The war has involuntarily thrust unity upon us, and we're riding a euphoric wave of national solidarity. We all seek ways to preserve this national unity for the long term. Perhaps we should improve our own friendships, both with personal friends, but also with every member of our nation. Friends can disagree, but their bond cannot fray.

We're broken hearted by the loss of Dovid and Yakir. Tragically, there's already half a *minyan* of *gush talmidim* in Heaven. Please G-d, end our suffering and protect all our soldiers.

- *The writer is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a Bachelor of Arts in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a Masters degree in English literature from the City University of New York.*

War is always and inherently brutal

OPINION

TERENCE CORRIGAN



Back in 2004, I recall watching an interview with a young woman at a protest against the war the United States and its allies were waging against the insurgency in Iraq. “This is an incredibly brutal war,” she said. I doubt I’ll ever forget that, both as a redundancy and a truism.

The Iraq war was a divisive issue, with some arguing that it was necessary to eradicate terrorist breeding grounds and that it opened the possibility of a new, democratic impulse in the Middle East, and others that the costs – the brutality if you will – outstripped any idealism, and besides, it would only encourage the terrorism it was intended to stop.

As it happens, at that time, I was quite taken with classical military history, and wondered why such appellations were seldom applied to the warfare of distant centuries. Ancient warfare, with the technology involved, entailed a savage combination of impaling, bludgeoning, and severing, and often the collapse from exhaustion and literal trampling to death of foes during close quarters fighting. Over the course of a few hours on 2 August 216 BC, near the village of Cannae in Italy, a Carthaginian army surrounded and slaughtered as many as 80 000 Romans.

Nor were the ancients restrained in their understanding of what war involved and what was right and proper in its prosecution. The Sumerian Stele of the Vultures, celebrating the victory of King Eannatum of Lagash over the rival state of Umma, depicts in gory detail the bodily remnants of the vanquished and vultures feasting on them.

This comes to mind watching the commentary about the war in Gaza. Information and narrative have been weaponised in this conflict as nowhere else. And no country attracts the level of hostility for misdeeds – real or perceived – that Israel does.

There has been no restraint on the invective levelled at Israel – up to and including ethnic cleansing and genocide. This is slanderous, even though I have misgivings about Israel's strategies

and think that some Israeli leaders haven't helped its case through incendiary rhetoric. But if the goal was to wipe out Gaza's population, it would be a distressingly simple task, since Gaza is a tightly controlled and densely populated space, and Israel has the ordinance to do so. Yet this narrative has been relentlessly pushed and has found a receptive audience. South Africa's government, which prevaricates about whether Russia's invasion of Ukraine is in fact a war, is making this case before the International Court of Justice.

Call this a reiteration of the condemnation of an “incredibly brutal” war.

In a sense, this is correct. War is by its nature brutal, has been since before Eannatum's phalanxes skewered their foes and left them for the vultures. This is no less the case in the current conflict.

History is littered with cruelty towards defeated foes and civilians. The destruction caused during the wars of the Mongol conquests was sufficient to alter affected societies' demographic compositions. Among other things, the Mongols pioneered biological warfare by catapulting diseased corpses into besieged cities. And when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the scale of looting, rape, and murder, and the enslavement of tens of thousands, was such that even the victorious Sultan Mehmed II lamented, “What a city we have given over to plunder and destruction!”

As an aside, the claims by Hamas – echoed by Ronnie Kasrils – that the atrocities of 7 October could absolutely not have been perpetrated by its fighters as they are dutiful Muslims and wouldn't behave like that are ludicrous and would make Hamas truly unique across human history.

What has perhaps changed is that civilians are today more likely to find themselves trapped in combat zones; that weaponry has an exponentially more destructive potential; and that over the past two centuries, attempts have been made to formalise the responsibilities of combatants towards their enemies and towards non-combatants. Contemporary armies are expected to show concern for the well-being of their opponents in a way that would have seemed

incomprehensible to commanders of past epochs. This forms part of international law.

No-one could argue with the imperative of safeguarding those not involved in fighting. This reflects a revulsion in the inherent brutality of war, even of war itself. But since armies now seldom confront each other on open plains and move too quickly for civilians to avoid the immediate theatre of combat, it has also given groups like Hamas – embedded in a civilian population and its infrastructure – a potent weapon.

Israel is well aware that its key vulnerability is the possibility of faltering international support. This includes those who have newly “normalised” relations and countries, including many of the world's democracies, with which it has long-



established ties. In the latter, there's considerable evidence that younger people feel particularly alienated by Israel's response. Perhaps the current reaction is simply a function of a culture in which war is a repulsive phenomenon that's beyond their frame of reference. Hamas and its sympathisers have capitalised on this with relish.

As a matter of law and morality, Israel has to try to minimise non-combatants' deaths. Its military maintains an elaborate system of judicial officers to regulate its actions, and sends warnings to civilians, or at least it tries to, before strikes. However dismissive of this Israel's detractors may be – Zapiro's cartoons would be an example familiar to South Africans – this is fairly unique within the dreadful realities of war. Compared to the conduct of other militaries and “militant” groups – the conduct of the Russian military in the Chechen wars, for example, or of the belligerents in numerous less well-reported conflicts such as in Syria, the Great Lakes region, or Sudan – it can claim some moral high ground. It's an open question just how much good that will do Israel's cause.

The suffering of the population of Gaza is real, as is the trauma and suffering of the Israelis who were touched by Hamas's attack, and those who see their sons and daughters killed. This is war, it's brutal, and there's no kind or gentle face that can be put on it. Whether it's just, whether Israel's actions are in all instances lawful, and whether the outcome of this war will be beneficial, well, those are separate questions.

- *Terence Corrigan is project and publications manager at the South African Institute of Race Relations, South Africa's oldest think tank, which aims to promote individual and societal freedom and prosperity.*

Chief rabbis unite to celebrate Muizenberg Shul centenary

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The appearance of two chief rabbis – of South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) – to honour Muizenberg Shul's centenary celebrations this month was a rare occasion.

South African Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein says it was a particularly special honour to have the UK Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, join him for the centenary.

"Chief Rabbi Mirvis has a deep connection to South African Jewry, and in particular, Cape Town, the Jewish community of his birth," Goldstein says.

Mirvis and Lady Valerie Mirvis were invited as guests of honour at the centenary by Charlene and Herschel Mayers on behalf of the Muizenberg Shul centenary committee.

Mirvis told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Valerie and I had a most memorable time during the centenary celebrations. While reflecting on the significant role that Muizenberg has played in the lives of so many people, we were also celebrating the vitality of the

community under the leadership of Rabbi Ryan Newfield, and hopefully a wonderful future as well."

The Mirvises have a special connection to Muizenberg and its shul. Valerie (née Kaplan), who grew up in Bulawayo, spent summer holidays in the area. Having grown up in Wynberg, where his late father, Rabbi Dr Lionel Mirvis, was the rabbi, Mirvis was a Bnei Akiva madrich in Muizenberg as a teenager, and led services on the high holy days in Muizenberg Shul. Mirvis' brother, Howard, was a rabbi at Muizenberg Shul for a number of years.

"I reached out to Chief Rabbi Mirvis because he had been an integral part of Muizenberg Shul. A lot of people in their 70s and 80s here remember him fondly," the Muizenberg-bred Charlene Mayers said.

More than 1 500 people participated in the celebrations in Cape Town over eight days, starting from 28 December. "They were from all over South Africa, Australia, the United States, the UK, the Netherlands, and Israel," Newfield, the architect of the events, says.



UK Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis and SA Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

In his Shabbat morning sermon, Mirvis recalled that the very first Jewish communal facility in Muizenberg was a Talmud Torah and not a shul. He highlighted the centrality of Torah education in Jewish communities, particularly in Muizenberg. He challenged the many hundreds present to mark the special anniversary by strengthening their commitment to Jewish values and learning.

"It was a memorable, heartwarming, and meaningful Shabbos spent together with the Muizenberg community celebrating its centenary," Goldstein says. "It was special to have the time to share the platform with Chief Rabbi Mirvis. I particularly enjoyed the interactive, lively, and engaging question and answer sessions we did together."

Mirvis and Goldstein fielded questions on a wide range of topics, such as antisemitism, humility in leadership, the war in Israel, the inclusion of women in synagogue life, Israel and South Africa's relationship after the 7 October attacks, and dealing with people with different views on social media.

Particular interest was shown in Mirvis's role in the coronation of King Charles III and his relationship with the royal family.

Other events included a surf day, in which local Jewish professional surfers taught kids to 70-year-olds to surf, and a historic walking tour of Muizenberg, at which participants heard stories of the early Jews in Muizenberg. There was also a hike up Muizenberg Peak for sunrise prayer, and men and women prayed in a cave on St James Peak.

"The closing ceremony got everyone crying with joy and pride in our shul's history, with a 26-minute documentary that listed all the rabbis and influential persons who helped the shul start and continue. Our centenary is about the revival of Muizenberg Shul."

The shul is one of the oldest in South Africa, starting in 1916 and occupying the same building since 1924. "More importantly, almost the whole of South African Jewry has ties to Muizenberg Shul from vacations for the past 100 years," Newfield says.

Says Goldstein, "Muizenberg as a shul has served not only the local Jewish community, but also the broader South African Jewish community through its devoted band of holiday makers for many generations. It has a special and iconic place in the heart of South African Jewry. These centenary celebrations were really something to remember. It's another reminder to us of the critical role that our shuls play in the continued vitality and vibrancy of the South African Jewish community."

"Our shuls are the places where we connect every single week, and are a beacon of light and kindness that supports community, learning, and *mitzvot*. The centenary celebration in a sense paid tribute to Muizenberg Shul, but at the same time, to all of our shuls across the country."

Newfield says the shul is unique because it's "one of the only – if not the only – shul in South Africa that has had almost the whole community of South Africa attend it and visit. We're also one of the only shuls that has reached 100 years and is still going in this country."

The shul has experienced a revival in spite of challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, largely thanks to Newfield, who has significantly expanded the community since his appointment in March 2020. "We were forced to go online during COVID-19, and we had international reunions that have connected disconnected parties for more than half a century," he says.

In December, the shul's *minyan* is made up of Jews from Cape Town, Johannesburg, and around the world, each with different *hashkafas* (worldviews) and clothing.

"Muizenberg Shul's vision for the next 100 years is to become the most inclusive Orthodox shul in South Africa by virtue of the fact that we're one of the most assimilated and intermarried parts of the country," Newfield says. "Non-Jews of Muizenberg know the shul, and want to visit it."

The numbers that define 100 days

BEN SALES – JTA

For Jews who weren't directly ensnared in the violence and terror of 7 October, the days that followed were characterised by rapidly changing numbers. The number of people known to be dead shot up, as did the number of rockets fired from Gaza, and the number of mobilised Israeli troops. The number of kibbutzes that remained unsecured ticked downward. Reports of antisemitic incidents worldwide began to accumulate.

One hundred days later, some numbers have come into focus as meaningful for the long haul. Here are those that help explain what happened on 7 October and in its aftermath.

A total of 1 391 Israelis killed since 7 October, as of 10 January. Hamas's 7 October invasion of Israel was a seismic moment in Israeli and Jewish history. Its terrorists killed about 1 200 people that day, mostly civilians, took hostages, and wounded thousands, making it the bloodiest day in Israeli history and the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. The attackers also committed numerous atrocities and destroyed several communities.

The attack shattered a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and launched the war. Israel invaded Gaza, aiming to depose Hamas. So far, more than 185 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the invasion.

One hundred and thirty six hostages are still held in Gaza as of 7 January. On 7 October, Hamas took more than 240 people hostage, hailing from countries worldwide and ranging in age from an infant to an octogenarian. The campaign for their freedom, led by the hostages' family members, has become a global activist movement. It spans a large-scale flier campaign, rallies, and art installations in cities across the world, and political advocacy.

Hamas freed more than 100 hostages during a seven-day truce in November. A number have been killed, including at least three unintentionally by the Israeli military. Relatives of the remaining hostages are pushing the Israeli government to negotiate for their release. The current total includes the bodies of hostages who were killed and two Israeli hostages believed to have been held alive in Gaza for years before 7 October.

A total of 23 357 Palestinians have been killed since

7 October, as of 10 January. Israel's counteroffensive in Gaza, launched in the days after 7 October, has devastated the coastal enclave. The casualty figure, provided by the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry, covers combatants and civilians, including thousands of children. Tens of thousands more have been injured.

The casualty figure, far higher than that of any previous Israel-Hamas conflict, has driven global calls by international bodies and left-wing activists for a ceasefire. Israel has rebuffed those calls and maintains that it makes extensive efforts to safeguard civilian life. It blames Hamas for putting non-combatants in harm's way.

Two hundred thousand and 1.9 million Israelis and Palestinians respectively have been displaced by the fighting. In addition to the war's death toll, it has also driven masses of people from their homes. Hamas's invasion of Israel ravaged the Gaza border region, sending thousands of residents to hotels, where they have been living since 7 October. Tens of thousands more evacuated the area as it became a war zone, and further tens of thousands evacuated their homes on Israel's northern border as clashes with the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah ramped up.



Former president of Harvard University, Dr. Claudine Gay

Ahead of its invasion Israel ordered the population of the northern half of the Gaza to evacuate to the southern half, and its counteroffensive in the Gaza City area has destroyed a large number of homes. As Israel's focus has moved south, residents there have also been told to evacuate, with Israel creating routes for safe passage. The vast majority of residents are now displaced.

Two Ivy League presidents resigned after a congressional hearing on campus antisemitism. The now (in)famous hearing, in early December, in which the presidents of three

elite universities all declined to say outright that calling for the genocide of Jews would break school rules, led to two of the leaders stepping down. University of Pennsylvania's Liz Magill resigned after pressure from students, faculty, donors, and officials. Harvard's Dr. Claudine Gay followed suit weeks later, bedeviled by a string of plagiarism accusations. Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sally Kornbluth appears to be hanging on.

Nineteen percent of Israelis want Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to continue in office after the war, as of 8 December. Netanyahu, unlike other leaders of Israel's defence establishment, hasn't explicitly taken responsibility for Israel's missteps ahead of 7 October. But Israelis are signalling that they will hold him responsible at the ballot box.

His government, which took office only about a year ago, is deeply unpopular. Election surveys show Netanyahu's Likud party plummeting while centrist parties gain steam. Netanyahu, who is also on trial for corruption, has so far rejected calls to step down.

Five is the number of trips Secretary of State Antony Blinken has taken to Israel since 7 October. After Hamas's invasion, the Biden administration said it was standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel. President Joe Biden gave an Oval Office address calling for funding for Israel's war effort, visited Israel, and has met the families of hostages. The United States has continued to defend the war in international bodies.

But recently, daylight between Biden and Netanyahu has begun to appear. Biden wants the Palestinian Authority to be in charge in Gaza on the day after the war, which Netanyahu opposes. Biden has also called on Netanyahu to disavow his far-right partners' calls for the transfer of civilians from Gaza, something the prime minister did this week.

Three hundred thousand West Bank Palestinians' work permits into Israel have been revoked. Alongside the conflicts in Gaza and on Israel's northern border, violence has spiked in the West Bank. Following 7 October, Israel revoked the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian work permits, plunging the territory into economic crisis.

And Israel has taken aim at Hamas cells in the West Bank, where hundreds of Palestinians have been killed. There have also been reports of settler violence. In December, the Biden administration banned entry to the US to Israeli settlers and Palestinians who harm "peace, security, or stability in the West Bank".

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Six decades of caring: Selma Browde’s extraordinary life

TRIBUTE

DANIEL BROWDE



In 2016, I published a book about my grandfather, Jules Browde, a legendary advocate who made his name fighting for human rights in the courtrooms of apartheid South Africa.

In one of our interviews, I asked him why he thought his career had taken the direction it had. It struck me that this was by no means self-evident: there were many lawyers with exactly his background – the child of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania – who didn’t take this route.

A week later, my grandfather handed me a piece of foolscap paper on which he had listed three people he called “ethical inspirations”.

The first was his father, who, he said, taught him by his own example “to treat people fairly and decently, irrespective of the colour of their skin”. The second was Colin Gluckman, one of the early leaders of the Habonim youth movement in South Africa, who had introduced him at a very early age to ideas of Jewish ethics, particularly *mishpat* (justice), *chesed* (kindness), and *rachamim* (compassion). The third and “thankfully most prolonged source of inspiration” was his wife, my grandmother, Selma Browde.

“Caring for others,” he had written, in his jagged, deliberate cursive, “has occupied most of her days and, indeed, even the hours when one might have expected her to be asleep. It’s her example of service to others that was directly responsible for most of the worthwhile activities in which I became involved during the course of my career.”

In the few weeks since Selma passed away – aged 97 – on 26 December last year, it has become clear to me that Jules was only one – though a special one – of many, many people around the world for whom my grandmother was a crucial influence. In literally hundreds of messages – on Facebook, on WhatsApp, and email – we continue to read about the shapes her influence has taken.

In her chosen fields of medicine, politics, and social activism, Selma was a ground breaker, a pathfinder, a troublemaker, a woman who worked relentlessly, often sleeplessly, as my grandfather said, to care of the sick, to provide solace to the suffering, and, always, to speak for those whose voices are silenced.

Born in 1926 in Cape Town to a Jewish family with roots in Lithuania and Ukraine, Selma studied medicine in Cape Town and, later, Johannesburg. She interrupted her medical studies in the late 1940s to marry and have two sons – Ian and Alan. Her third son, Paul, would be born a decade later.

Selma graduated as a doctor from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1959. She received her specialist degree in radiation oncology in 1967, and was then appointed as a senior consultant and lecturer in that department.

In 1972, at the urging of her friend, Progressive Party (PP) MP Helen Suzman, she stood for election to the Johannesburg City Council on a PP platform in spite of not being a member of the party. She had been a member of the Liberal Party, which had disbanded in 1968 rather than conform to a new law outlawing mixed-race parties.

She told the story often – of how she was convinced that she stood no chance of winning, and of her surprise when, of 14 PP candidates on the roll, she was the only one to win. She soon came to be seen as the unofficial council representative of the African, Indian, and coloured communities in and around Johannesburg.

Selma retained her post in the radiation oncology department and pursued her council work from a home office, to which as many as 20 people from various townships came daily, seeking help or advice. She laughed about how much coffee she drank during that period.

And she made things happen. In 1973/1974, she initiated a process that led to the comprehensive electrification of Soweto by a private company. Among other projects on behalf of the disenfranchised, she secured access for Indian soccer teams to municipal fields, and helped remove the corrupt quota system for access to education above Standard 6 (Grade 8) level in Soweto. In 1974, she was elected to the Transvaal Provincial Council, one of only two progressives on the council.

Selma also pursued her activism beyond the confines of the city and provincial councils. Among many other

initiatives, she joined human rights lawyer Shun Chetty to start Action to Stop Removals (ActStop) in 1976, to fight forced removals conducted under the Group Areas Act; and, with Dr Nthato Motlana, she started the Hunger Concern Programme, which subsequently became Operation Hunger.

For years after her retirement from formal politics in 1978, she continued to be moved to action. In 1988, she founded the Soweto Electricity Advice Centre



Jules and Dr Selma Browde in 2016

which exposed the faults and corruption in billing and achieved a change in the system to flat-rate billing.

After leaving the council, she returned to her post in the radiation oncology department, and was appointed professor and head of department at Johannesburg General Hospital.

After Selma retired from her hospital post in 1986, she became passionately involved in palliative medicine, with a focus on pain management at all stages of disease. In 1998, she founded the Palliative Medicine Institute at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. She also persuaded the heads at Johannesburg and Chris Hani Baragwanath hospitals to set up palliative care teams

and personally trained numerous nurses in this area.

On discovering that her son, my uncle Paul, was living with HIV, Selma focused her attention increasingly on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in South Africa. In 2000, she founded the nongovernmental organisation Parents for AIDS Action, which became known as Community Action as its focus widened to tackle these linked epidemics.

Selma also maintained an abiding interest in Israel. In recent years, she was active in organisations such as Save Israel, Stop the Occupation, and the Jewish Democratic Initiative, animated by a desire to find a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 2004, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science by Wits University. The citation by the award committee is a succinct and moving summary of my grandmother’s public life, which spanned an astonishing six decades:

“Dr Browde has dedicated her life to the promotion of health. She has done this as a cancer therapist and researcher, striving to improve the cures, care, and palliation available to patients. She has done it as a politician, working to improve the living conditions that determine the health of the poor. She has done it as a caring human being, spreading the word that suffering can be alleviated, teaching health professionals and supporting . . . those who face death. She has done it as an activist who has succeeded in changing policies and attitudes.”

And as a grandmother, she gave me more than I can say. Not least among these gifts was the lesson, taught in the last few years, that the human heart, if kept in practise, can remain open and supple until the end.

Selma Browde was buried on 27 December 2023 at the Westpark Cemetery in Johannesburg besides Jules, her beloved husband of almost 70 years. She is survived and forever missed by her three sons, seven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren

• Daniel Browde is Selma Browde’s grandson.

Farewell to ‘Finky’, fighter and second father to many

TRIBUTE

JONATHAN KATZENELLENBOGEN



Mark Finkelstein, a lawyer much admired for his teaching of self-defence and voluntary efforts in the Jewish community, died of cancer on 27 December in Johannesburg. His death came a few weeks before what would have been his 58th birthday.

Finkelstein was first diagnosed with cancer nearly four years ago, and in spite of pain, continued to work and maintained his good humour.

He often said he was a lawyer by profession, but his passion was teaching Krav Maga, Hebrew for close combat, an Israeli developed self-defence system. As a lawyer he advised a number of business clients and wrote contracts. His brother, Oscar, says in pursuing law, “he might not have been following his true calling” of teaching.

Finkelstein had a passion for teaching, was devoted to his students, and they were to him. One of those he helped with substance-abuse issues was so grateful to him, he flew in from London for the funeral. Mothers often said how grateful they were to Finkelstein for helping their youngsters become more confident.

What Finkelstein loved about Krav Maga was that it’s about a real fight and not restricted by the rules of any martial art. Other Krav Maga instructors rated him as a fifth dan, which is five notches above a black belt, reflecting immense technical and teaching expertise. Rather than showy moves, Finkelstein favoured the simple and effective.

For more than 20 years, he volunteered for the Community Security Organisation (CSO). He taught Krav Maga to CSO volunteers and held various supervisory positions.

For the past few years, he has been in charge of security at Yeshiva College campus, which required him to rise at dawn every day. Steve Goldberg, the chairperson of the Johannesburg CSO, said everyone found him, “open and approachable with a great depth of experience. He taught with a true passion for Jewish people to defend themselves. It’s a



Mark Finkelstein

terrible loss for the CSO to be without Finky.”

Finkelstein was born and grew up in Johannesburg, did his matric at Highlands North Boys’ High School, and then went on to do a Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Laws at the University of the Witwatersrand. As estate agents, his parents often found new houses and moved with Finkelstein, his older brother, Oscar, and sisters, Lani and Aviva.

One of the greatest influences on the brothers’ lives was the late Mickey Davidow, their Judo sensei. “Mickey was like a second father to us,” says Oscar.

When Finkelstein was five, his parents sent him to Davidow’s dojo in Glenhazel, where Oscar was already a pupil. At the first class, Finkelstein was pinned down by an older and more skilled opponent. To release himself, he punched the boy in the face. When his mother came to collect him from the dojo, Davidow told her that he had the right amount of aggression, but it would be best if he started Judo in a year’s time.

He went on to train with Davidow for many years, and regularly went to see him until he passed away two years ago. Finkelstein represented Transvaal and won a number of national titles in Judo.

In a tribute to Davidow published in *Soul Sport*, a local Jewish sports magazine, Finkelstein wrote, “In my martial arts instruction, I have attempted to follow Mickey’s kind and calm encouragement of students while being specific in any criticism.

“Mickey always made us feel good about ourselves and sought honour for his students ahead of himself. His dojo was the place to feel good about life, about who you are, and your skills as a fighter. Above all, Mickey wanted us to enjoy ourselves, something that he stressed to children and their parents.”

For nearly five years, Finkelstein was my Krav Maga instructor and I could see the influence of Davidow. Until November last year, when his medical needs interfered with training, I would look forward to our two training sessions a week like a young child does a treat. Seeing him arrive

in his dark red Ford Ranger, wearing his favourite black security guard boots, jeans, and a T-shirt gave me an energy boost.

Finkelstein had Davidow’s calm teaching style and ensured his students developed good form, but he also spent time sparring with them to give them the feel of a fight. One of his guiding principles in teaching was Davidow’s Yo rule, which stresses bringing together the key elements of earth – balance, wind, speed, fire, aggression, and water-flow, in a fight. The ultimate praise from Finkelstein was that one had brought together the elements well.

He saw the basics of physical fighting as applicable to other fights. He also taught Krav Maga as a means for fighting addiction in substance-abuse treatment centres.

His teaching went beyond physical fighting, and he lectured on how *The Art of War* written by Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese general, could be used as a tool for fighting addiction, in thinking about business, and daily life. He had begun to write a book on *The Art of War* and fighting addiction.

Finkelstein also spoke to individuals and groups about his fight against cancer.

Although he often had a hectic schedule, he always found time to give of himself. He regularly visited the elderly parents of friends who had emigrated.

Finkelstein was proud of his Jewish identity and loved Yiddishkeit, but was tolerant of those who were not as observant. Though he didn’t grow up in a highly religious home, he became observant after his marriage to Cheryl.

He paid immense attention to his children in teaching them, exercising with them, and taking up their interests. He frequently took the family for hikes in nature reserves, and on holiday at his favourite places in Mozambique. The Finkelstein Shabbos evenings were always filled with good food, lively conversation, and argument. His other great enjoyments were baking bread and taking his beloved schnauzer, Zuko, for walks.

Mark leaves his wife, Cheryl, and children Dan, Aaron, Yigal, Judah, and Estee Rivka.

• Jonathan Katzenellenbogen was taught Krav Maga by Mark Finkelstein for nearly five years. Jonathan is a weekly columnist for The Daily Friend and has worked for a number of publications including Business Day.

Holidays of hate, but antisemitism still comparatively scarce

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Though antisemitism in South Africa has undoubtedly intensified since 7 October, its extent is lower than that recorded in many countries around the world.

The number of antisemitic incidents in the country is higher than in previous years, but there were only a “handful” of reported cases over the December holiday period, says the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD).

The SAJBD recorded 182 antisemitic incidents in the first 11 months of 2023, with 63% (114) of these occurring after 7 October. The figure for the first 11 months of 2022 was 67. To put this in perspective, in the United States, the Anti-Defamation League said that antisemitic incidents had increased a record 360% in the three months after 7 October compared to the same period in 2022.

This translates to an average of nearly 34 antisemitic incidents every day following the 7 October massacre and includes more than 40 incidents of physical violence, 750 of hate speech, and 400 incidents on college campuses. In figures reported in December, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry said that Australia had experienced a 591% increase in reported antisemitic incidents since 7 October.

“We had more incidents than we usually get in December, which in normal years is very quiet, but that’s to be expected in these times,” says David Saks, the associate director of the SAJBD, reflecting on the small number of incidents in South Africa over the holiday season. Reported cases over this period included online insults, occasional verbal abuse, and some graffiti.

A Jewish family was subjected to hate speech and threats in the entertainment centre at a popular South African holiday resort in December, and is unsatisfied with the way the matter has been handled by the establishment.

“A Middle Eastern looking gentleman bumped into my father-in-law, after which he claimed to have apologised,” says Dean Fine*, recalling the incident. “My father-in-law – who wears a *kippah* – didn’t hear him and unbothered, continued with what he was doing knowing that it was crowded and that people would bump into each other.

“The gentleman then turned around and started shouting at him saying, ‘I said I was sorry, you f***ing c*nt’. My mother-in-law asked this man why he was swearing like that at them, and the man proceeded to threaten her and tell her that he was going to come for her.”

When Fine and his wife arrived at the centre, they were told what had happened. “Then this same man walked past me and said, ‘F***ing Jews!’” Fine recalls. “I heard clearly what he said, but asked him to repeat it as I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. He then walked quite aggressively up to me and started shouting at me and at my in-laws who were standing behind me. This man had a few friends who also came and stood very close to us in an effort to intimidate us. My wife eventually managed to advise this man that my father-

in-law didn’t hear him, which he seemed to accept, shook his hand, and walked away. The rest of his acquaintances followed him.”

Shortly afterwards, Fine’s sister-in-law was called a “F***ing Jew” by another man involved in the initial confrontation. The family has since lodged a formal complaint with the resort, which completed an investigation but said there was nothing it could do and that the family should report the matter to the police.

The Miller* family, who stayed at a resort in Knysna over the holidays, cut their getaway short due to their discomfort in the face of ongoing anti-Israel rhetoric. When a group of Muslim families arrived at the resort, the Miller’s children initially happily played with the kids in the group. Yet the next day, when the Miller children declined non-kosher treats, things took a turn.



“One of the Muslim kids asked why, and my eight-year-old daughter said that she was kosher and kept Shabbos, and started telling them about being Jewish,” says mother

Leanne Miller*. “They now knew who my kids were, and they saw me wearing a scarf a bit later and my husband wearing a *kippah*, so it was quite clear that we were a religious Jewish family. During the day, my kids were subject to comments like: ‘Do your parents have bombs? Why are you Jewish? Pick one – Israel or Palestine.’”

Later on, a group of Muslim teenagers and younger kids in the pool started directing the comments at Miller herself. “They were running around the pool, jumping and splashing and chanting ‘From the river to the sea’, and they were kicking the ball towards me and saying, ‘Palestine, Palestine!’ I felt like I was getting bullied by a bunch of teenagers, which sounds ridiculous, but I can’t explain how uncomfortable it was.”

Though the parents of the Muslim kids

didn’t get involved and weren’t around much, the Millers, who felt increasingly uncomfortable, decided to leave the hotel a few days early. “If this is what we were experiencing from the kids, obviously they were getting it from their parents,” says Miller. “It was an eye-opening experience to see how indoctrinated these kids were and how they were behaving. They’d obviously been to protests as they knew all of these chants and songs. To experience that switch from the kids all playing nicely together until they discovered my children were Jewish and everything changed, was unsettling.”

Miller says she feels it’s important to be aware of the reality of the situation Jews are facing in the country, and says she’s also experienced an uncomfortable shift in Cape Town, where she and her family live. “One day, we went to Hout Bay and were asked, ‘Are you from Israel, are you Jewish?’ Thank G-d, there was no violence in our case, but you never know.”

**Names have been changed.*

‘Friends of Israel must make their voice heard’

HEATHER DJUNGA

Former Israel Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion said, “If you don’t believe in miracles, you’re not a realist.” He was referring to repeated miracles such as the parting of the Red Sea, and the subsequent exodus of the Israelites. Christian community leader Clive Mashishi, the founder of the Clive Mashishi Foundation and volunteer for the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI), says it’s this miracle which captured his heart as a young boy, when his mother would tell him the stories of how G-d continually shepherd Israel and rescued its people.

He’s among the friends of Israel who have stepped up in support of the local Jewish community in the wake of the 7 October massacre and in response to the subsequent rise of antisemitism in South Africa.

Mashishi has been advocating for Israel for almost a decade, having worked closely with Jewish communities and organisations, among them the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD).

He and a group of pastors, many affiliated with SAFI, regularly go into communities to educate about antisemitism and mobilise residents to pray for the hostages and peace for Israel. Together with the South African Jewish Prayer Network and SAFI, they organised a prayer meeting on 20 October last year at the City of Mercy Tabernacle Katlehong to which they invited the now-recalled Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky and members of the SAJBD, among other delegates.

Ironically, the gathering of more than 550 people in Katlehong took place at the same time protests were staged outside the Israeli embassy in Pretoria. However, Mashishi believes the overriding support shown by the community at this event and others held in the wake of the 7 October attacks shows that people accept Israel.

Event organiser Pastor Tshepo Mosala of Kingdom of Hope Ministries, says Israel matters as without it, there would be no treasure of Christianity. He has collaborated with SAFI since 2017. “The Lord says of Israel, ‘I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who curse you.’ (Genesis 12:3),” he says. “Some are pushing antisemitic agendas. They are taking us back to the apartheid era.” For this reason, it’s important to educate people. “I’ve never seen or experienced the Jewish people as being against us,” Mosala says. “Two weeks before the Hamas attacks which initiated the war, Prime Minister Netanyahu was speaking about peace.”

SAFI was also instrumental in organising a solidarity

gathering for Israel of more than 1 000 attendees at the Redemption Church in Greenstone, Johannesburg, in late November together with the South African Zionist Federation and the South African International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ). Vivienne Myburgh, the national director of ICEJ, said that about 1 000 Jews and Christians spoke from one platform with one heart at the event, proclaiming Israel’s right to exist and defend herself.



Solidarity gathering for Israel held at the Redemption Church in Greenstone, Johannesburg in November 2023

Myburgh has been working through radio and social media to give the Christian community accurate news following the October massacre, and ICEJ has held prayer and proclamation events for Israel throughout the country. Its rally for Israel at Sea Point was violently disrupted by pro-Palestinian protesters.

“There’s such ignorance and, of course, massive media misinformation about Israel,” says Myburgh. “We all know where this misinformation ended during World War II, and we’re shocked that after these brutal attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians, antisemitism has massively increased. We have to speak up, educate, and advocate.”

Youth leader Tshegofatso Motaung of Healing the Nation says she has supported many initiatives for Israel, among these Africa Stand With Israel in 2014. She also holds weekly online prayer meetings for Israel.

However, after 7 October, she was disturbed to see how badly the local Jewish community had been impacted by the events unfolding in Israel. Her determination to speak up

was strengthened by the African National Congress’s (ANC’s) action to bring Israel to the International Court of Justice. “This has brought us to a place where, like Queen Esther in scripture, we cannot remain silent,” Motaung says.

Reverend Canon Peter Houston, a senior Anglican priest and Canon theologian in the Diocese of Natal Ministry among Jewish people in South Africa (CMJ SA) who is involved in education at the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, has spoken out about the double-standards and antisemitism which has manifested, even in religious circles. His articles on the 7 October attacks have been published in various national publications, and he regularly speaks and teaches about the history of antisemitism in multiple forums.

These friends of Israel believe South Africa has a key role to play in the crisis in the Middle East. “We’re a model of reconciliation, and it’s a position we need to be deliberate about,” says Motaung. “It’s sad that there are those in our country who have taken a position which isn’t one of reconciliation. It rests on us as ordinary people to create spaces of dialogue.”

Myburgh concurs. “We’ll continue to stand for truth and to support Israel in any practical way that we can,” she says.

“No matter what, we’ll continue to pray. We’re commanded in Psalm 122 to pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” says Mashishi.

SAJBD Communications Head Charisse Zeifert, says, “Since the 7 October attack, I’ve attended numerous rallies organised by Christian friends of Israel. Our Christian friends love Israel as much as we do and are willing to support Israel publicly, even though it’s not popular, and they are happy to take the consequences. The South African Jewish community deeply appreciates the solidarity and firm friendship shown by Christian fellow citizens.”

Shaun Zagnoev, the former president of the SAJBD, says that following 7 October, he has attended three events and witnessed an outpouring of support for Israel from South Africa’s Christian community. “I was relieved to see that in spite of the hatred being promoted by the ANC-led government, the vast majority of South Africans, who are of the Christian faith, love Israel and the Jewish people,” he says.

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Cyclists in global movement to highlight hostage plight

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“When an amazing cyclist such as Chris Froome, the Kenyan-born four-time winner of the Tour de France, supports an event, you just have to come on board,” says Selwyn Sanders, chairperson of the Johannesburg-based Capri Wheelers Cycling Club.

Johannesburg was one of at least 40 cities across the globe to respond to the call by Froome, one of the greatest road cyclists in history, to take part in Ride To Bring Them Home Now on Sunday, 14 January, in solidarity with the 136 Israeli hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. The event commemorated the 100th day since the attack by Hamas on 7 October, and the kidnapping of hundreds of people to Gaza. Tens of thousands of cyclists from six continents took part.

Sanders, Dan Stillerman, and Shevi Brand were inspired to organise a formal cycling event to create awareness of the hostages after watching a video of Froome expressing his support for this cause.

Froome, who rides for elite road race cycling team Israel-Premier Tech, was born in Kenya and schooled in South Africa, and went on to become a legendary four-time Tour de France winner.

“As a human being, as a father myself, I cannot stand idly by,” he said. “Their suffering and that of all the other hostages, deeply affects me, and I call on all cyclists to come out for a solidarity ride that day, just as I will myself, in the hope that this show of support will bring them closer to returning home.”

More than 100 cyclists took part in Capri Wheelers’ 90km route from Arch Cycles in Melrose Arch and back. “It was an unbelievable day out, and it definitely created an awareness,” Sanders says.

A good crowd also turned up for the Stillerman-designed 18km route that took riders past about 46 different shuls and schools through Glenhazel, Sydenham, Norwood, and Linksfield. They rode more than 21km as riders suggested going to different Jewish places. “It was almost a Tour de Jewish Joburg,” Stillerman quips. The latter event also offered a 2km fun route suitable for kids and families. Tied to the riders’ bikes were yellow ribbons, a longstanding symbol of readiness to welcome home prisoners or hostages.

“Initially, when we thought about participating in this ride, we thought we might upset the Muslim riders in our club,” Sanders says. After mulling it over, they realised the ride wasn’t about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the war. “It’s about the hostages. I’m sure there are hostages who aren’t Israeli or Jewish.”

Sanders says Capri Wheelers’ riders have never discussed the war. “It’s not a political club. It’s a sport, a social thing,” he says.

Stillerman, with the help of his girlfriend, Brand, decided to formalise Froome’s call by providing a date, time, and venue. “Dan took leadership on the day, and designed the route,” Brand says.

“We put the photos of the ride and a hashtag on social media so it would raise more awareness and support for Israel and the hostages,” says



Cyclists taking part in the Ride To Bring Them Home event

Stillerman, who has completed the 947 Ride Joburg a few times, riding in support of the DL Link and Cancer Warriors. “If there’s a good cause to ride for, it’s nice to be able to make a difference and stand together,” he says.

“We’re riding to demand that the Red Cross gain access to our people and learn how they are coping, as well as to provide medical care for our 136

citizens that are cruelly being held in Gaza,” says Israel-Premier Tech owner Sylvan Adams.

The core event took place at the Tel Aviv Velodrome, where 136 cyclists, each with a photo of one of the hostages, encircled the stadium. The riders were led by released hostage Erez Kalderon, who endured 51 days in captivity, and widowed father Avida Bacha, who tragically lost a leg

in the attack on 7 October while his wife and son were killed.

Many riders also rode individually to mark the day. Czech rider Lukas Klement was so inspired by Israeli riders who supported him on a visit to Israel when his bike was stolen, he rode a 24-hour route in the shape of a Star of David and the number 100.

Meanwhile, you may have seen about 70 people, wearing red to

show their hearts for the hostages and the number 100 taped on their chests, walking in Cape Town on 14 January. This event was organised by Capetonian human resources professional Michelle Jaffe after she saw a social media post from the mom of a hostage promoting the United States-based Run For Their Lives organisation.

“Feeling as helpless as people are all feeling across the world wanting to do something in solidarity with the hostages, I signed up and spoke to a lady in America, an ex-South African,” Jaffe says. “She onboarded me as the lead in Cape Town to start organising a weekly walk in solidarity with the hostages.”

The Run For Their Lives movement was started by a group of California-based Israelis in collaboration with the Hostage and Missing Families Forum. “The walks are taking place in 160 locations around the world, in countries like America, Germany, Australia, India, and Mauritius,” Jaffe says. “At different locations in Cape Town, we get together every week to do these walks in support of bringing the hostages home.”

No ‘camplaining’ as channies embrace machaneh experience

LEE TANKLE

Jewish youth from around the country and a smattering of those from abroad who chose to go to Habonim Dror or Bnei Akiva camp in December 2023 left the troubles of the world behind as they headed for three weeks of good-old fashioned fun in the sun.

Although it was a smaller, more intimate machaneh, there “was a great Habo magic feel on machaneh this year”, Lula Pencharz, the new Mazkira Klalit for Habonim Dror told the *SA Jewish Report*, “It felt like a proper camp experience. There was always something happening on the campsite.”

The Habonim tradition of having a music-filled, fun havdalah ceremony certainly continued, and campers enjoyed being together with their friends on Shabbat.

Bnei Akiva made some small adjustments to the schedule so that every *channie* could get the most out of their experience. There were more educational activities, and some that included *chanichim* helping the community of Mossel Bay.

“On 7 December, to mark two months since the 7 October massacre, we had a sandwich-making day in which 1 400 sandwiches were made in honour of all of those who were killed on the day of the massacre. The sandwiches were then given to members of the community in need,” said Saul Joseph, the new national chairperson for Bnei Akiva.

Bnei Akiva’s clinic system was also completely overhauled. According to Joseph, “We have a full clinic booking system, so if someone wanted to see a doctor or a medic they had to book an appointment and show up at that particular time slot. It was great because we could track health trends for the campsite and stop things in their tracks.”

“Our speakers spoke about what it means to be Jewish after the events of 7 October,” Ava Cohen,

a part of the Habonim *mazkirut*, said. “We also had a lot of Israelis joining us on site, so what’s going on in Israel was on top of people’s minds. It was a great opportunity for us to gain knowledge and expertise.”

Said Pencharz, “There were a lot of discussions on Israel and South Africa, and how as Habonim and as individuals, we can relate to what’s going on.”

“People were grateful to have a space where they could talk freely,” Cohen said. “We have a lot of kids from non-Jewish schools, and they said it was refreshing for them to talk openly about what it meant to be Jewish, where it’s safe to be Jewish.”

Joseph said machaneh this past year was “infused with a lot of meaning, given the context we find ourselves in with Israel. We had amazing events and programmes run around Israel, Israel education, and caring for our brothers and sisters in Israel”.



Bnei Akiva camp

kids were sick or tired, they always had a smile on their faces. Our *chanichim* were excited to be there, excited to get involved, and excited to grow and learn together. The culture has shifted into a new era in which we focus on each other’s growth so that we can foster a community of continuity.”

Habonim has continued to have smaller-sized machanehs compared to pre-COVID-19 pandemic years. “It’s a different generation,” Pencharz and Cohen said. “We found that a lot of *channies* weren’t as eager and comfortable with sleeping out as they were before the pandemic.”

In spite of this, for Habonim Dror, the 2023 machaneh will serve as a springboard for future machanot, “Since this was such an intimate environment, it allows for *channies* to share their experience with their friends and tell them to come on camp with them in December and why it’s so amazing,” said Pencharz.

Habonim already has big things planned for the rest of 2024. *Shorashim* – its July Israel trip – has already been planned, and it’s making an effort to showcase the relationships it has created with *channies* to the smaller age groups so they can be involved in the movement in the future.

“We have an exciting year planned after an extremely successful machaneh,” Joseph said. “We’re ramping up our engagement with *chanichim*, and are creating more opportunities to gather and grow together because, at the end of the day, we’re one big family in maintaining Jewish Life in South Africa and the ideologies of Bnei Akiva in all *chanichim* and *madrachim*.”



Habonim Dror camp

Pencharz and Cohen said the mood of the campsite was more gratifying than sombre, as *chanichim* were desperate to have a space where they could celebrate their Jewish identity without fear of exclusion, and to feel a sense of community.

At Bnei Akiva, Joseph said, “Whether the

Cricket – it’s all over for me

My mind is made up. From today onwards, I’ll be boycotting cricket. All cricket. Even “one hand bounce” played on a Saturday afternoon in the garden. Whether South Africa is playing matters not, if it’s a five-day Test or a day-night game, I refuse to engage. I’ll neither watch cricket, participate in cricket – not that high a risk – or speak about cricket.

Much like Dr Naledi Pandor, cricket is dead to me. And the fact that it’s the most boring sport on the planet by a six has nothing to do with my decision.

For reason alone of giving me cause to do this, David Teeger deserves the Rising Star Award. In my books, anyway.

I cannot believe I never thought of this before. For years, I was shamed into spending a day or five at the cricket. I would pack enough snacks for an average family to live on for a week, ensure that I had at least two Myprodol in my pocket for the inevitable heat and dehydration induced headache, sunscreen, after sun, an umbrella in case it rained – it always rains – a charger for my cellphone, and a book that would never open, but gave me some comfort just to have it. We would speak about seats for weeks before, strategise about parking, and then land up walking 6.7km on average to the gate. Carrying more than just the pantry.

The return walk to the car was always easier.

This was all to watch a “short” eight-hour game that might not even conclude with a winner. And if it did, it would be based on an actuarial calculation requiring a logbook that some legal firm of Duckworth, Lewis, and Sons had decided made the most sense. To nobody.

In all my years of watching cricket, I never

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman



understood Duckworth and co. But knew enough to know that it wouldn’t work in our favour. Ever.

Cricket is a game for numbers-people. Not word inspired ones. Who else would choose to spend days at a time calculating run rates, averages, and then doing it all again when it clouds over and starts to rain.

And then, just as progress is being made on the overs played, someone decides it’s time for tea. Yet, in all my pre-boycott years, I don’t believe I ever saw a cup of tea being steeped, poured, or drunk. Not ever.

Which is weird.

As a rule, I’m not a fan of boycotts. I didn’t support the Woolworths one – who boycotts the purveyors of Chuckles? I still listen to Michael Jackson, and would happily shop at the Oriental Plaza – because a deal is a deal. Boycotts in general push us further apart instead of closer, and they achieve very little at the end of it all.

But in this case, I’m prepared to make an exception. Not because of the appalling behaviour of Cricket South Africa. Not because of alleged government intervention. And not because the removal of David Teeger, the deserved captain of the team, is based on him being Jewish. But because cricket has stolen more of my time than TikTok has, caused more frustration than Eskom. And because this might be pretty much the only good thing that the African National Congress has ever done for me.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Cricket SA’s outright antisemitism

The ongoing scandal over David Teeger being summarily removed as captain of the South African Under-19 cricket side has been the Board’s primary focus as the new year gets underway. The ostensible reason for Cricket South Africa’s (CSA’s) action was a concern over security due to threatened protests at the upcoming Under-19 World Cup. However, in spite of repeated approaches for clarification on the security and intelligence reports that led to this conclusion, no such information has been forthcoming.

On 16 January, the Board met the management of CSA, headed by the chairperson of its board of directors, Lawson Naidoo. Once again, CSA categorically failed to provide any credible evidence that Teeger’s captaincy had posed any real security threat. CSA’s vacillating and contradictory responses to the questions put to it further reinforces our conviction that the “security concerns” excuse was trumped up. According to *Daily Maverick*, the expert opinion of a leading security company with extensive experience in event security was that the threat to Teeger or anyone else at the World Cup “was close to zero”. However, even if there had been credible information of possible protest action, CSA could have taken appropriate steps to deal with it had it chosen to do so.

Since there appears to be no basis to the stated concerns about security, together with an independent investigation commissioned by CSA itself having cleared Teeger of any breaches of the CSA code of conduct, the only reasonable conclusion must be that a young member of our community was stripped of his captaincy due to his being a Jewish person who at a private Jewish communal event expressed support for Israel and its armed forces following the 7 October terror attacks. *Daily Maverick* cricket reporter Craig Ray has described CSA’s handling of the matter as “ham-fisted, and frankly, spineless”. To that we can add that it



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

constituted an outright act of antisemitism by our country’s premier cricket governing body.

Immediately following the CSA meeting, the Board convened an online media briefing at which President Zev Krengel and I reported on what was discussed. More than 40 journalists, including from overseas, attended, and there were many questions. Noting that every single time we challenged CSA on the safety issue, it had shifted the goalposts, I stated that what it had done was to find an excuse to exclude a young Jewish cricketer and days before the start of the tournament, strip him of his honours in the most hurtful and humiliating way. Krengel compared CSA’s capitulation to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, at which the American team pulled two Jewish athletes out of the 100m sprint relay at the 11th hour so as not to upset their Nazi hosts.

At the time of writing, we’re organising a protest outside the CSA headquarters at 86 5th Avenue Melrose Estate (corner Glenhove). This will take place this Thursday, 18 January, at 16:00, and I encourage as many people as possible to join us.

The other issue that has been capturing the headlines is, of course, the case lodged by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice. On 16 January, the Cape Board held a webinar emceed by our national vice-president, Mary Kluk, in which Judge Dennis Davis provided a typically erudite analysis of what the case is about beyond all the emotion and rhetoric that has surrounded it. I commend our Cape colleagues on organising this successful and timeous event.

• 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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Back to school

As students went back to school in Johannesburg this week, the SA Jewish Report caught up with the excitement.

Dani Blumberg and Zoey Aharoni



Lisa and Samuel Mondschein with Riki and Ben Jacobson



King David Sandton Primary School



Sarah and Justin Lipschitz with their son Jamie



Aria and Levi Segal



Dini and Netanel Norton

Ethan Taitz and Max Shirazi at Yeshiva College Nursery School



Amira Nathan



Graduates walk red carpet of UJW sewing school

Graduates of the Union of Jewish Women's Sewing Empowerment School walked the red carpet on 14 December wearing their handmade evening attire and showcased the items made during their four-month course.

Started in 2010, the school aims to help alleviate South Africa's most pressing problems – skills development and poverty. Since then, more than 110 students have learned new skills and graduated.

Most students arrive on the first day not knowing how to thread a needle, and are well equipped at the end to start working for themselves.

The project aims to provide practical basic sewing skills for unemployed men and women;



Graduation class December 2023

teach students the basic principles of sewing including design and manufacturing; and equip them with the ability to earn an income by selling items. Prospective students are carefully selected to undergo the intensive full-time training course. The course's new instructor is a past student, testament to the school's empowerment success.

UJW 'fairy godmothers' help pay for school uniforms

A week before the start of the school year, the Gqeberha branch of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) paid off the balances of 20 lay-byes for school uniforms at PEP in Walmer, benefitting about 40 children.

Elaine Racussen, the chairperson of the Gqeberha branch, explained the UJW's practice of "playing fairy godmother to parents and grandparents", saying that if the lay-byes weren't paid when school commenced, many children would have to attend school on the first day without their full uniforms.

There was much excitement when PEP employees called the parents to tell them that their uniforms had been paid for in full, with some rushing to the store to collect them while the UJW members were still there.



Pam Leibowitz and Wendy Bethlehem with beneficiaries who had their lay-byes paid off by the Union of Jewish Women

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