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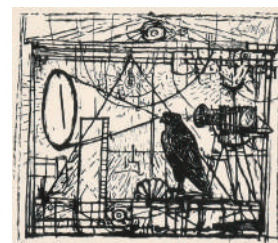
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Volume 27 – Number 18 ■ 6 June 2024 ■ 1 Sivan 5784

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Leaders call for calm following murder backlash

NICOLA MILTZ

Jewish representatives have called on all leaders not to allow the murder of a Muslim mother and the attempted murder of her husband and son, allegedly by a Jewish man, to be the spark in a tinderbox.

The murder of Halima Hoosen-Preston in KwaZulu-Natal, along with the stabbing of her husband, Shaun, and son, allegedly by the estranged son of distinguished Jewish philanthropist Julian Beare, this week rattled the anti-Israel movement, intensifying the already extreme tension since the start of the war on 7 October last year.

Anti-Israel organisations and political parties such as Africa4Palestine, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and Al Jama-ah have seemingly hijacked the horrific family tragedy for political purposes.

Motor mechanic Grayson Beare, 44, the adopted son of Julian Beare, 69, the chairperson of Beare Holdings, appeared in the Durban Magistrate's Court on Tuesday, 4 June, on charges of murder and attempted murder.

This after he is alleged to have fatally stabbed his wife's good friend, Hoosen-Preston, in her Glenmore, Durban, home in the early hours of Sunday, 2 June. Her husband, Shaun, and her son were seriously injured in the attack.

Details are sketchy as to what caused Beare allegedly to go to the family home. It's believed that Beare's wife, Jaclyn, had recently left him, taking their son with her. Beare (born King)

is the son of Julian Beare's late wife, Sue-Ellen, from whom he has been estranged for more than 30 years. Julian adopted Grayson when they married, but has been estranged from him for some time.

The defence submitted that the accused was diabetic, bipolar, and suffered from schizophrenia.

A video which has gone viral and inspired fury shows Beare allegedly confessing to the crime, claiming that the attack was motivated by the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein described the attacks as "shocking and reprehensible", saying that his heartfelt prayers go out to the survivors of the attack and expressed his deepest condolences to the bereaved family and friends.

"The perpetrator, in custody, is known as a severely troubled individual with a history of drug abuse and serious mental illness. It goes without saying that he doesn't represent the Jewish community or Jewish values in any way," Goldstein said.

"As Jews and Muslims in South Africa, we've always enjoyed uniquely peaceful and friendly relations in spite of our very different views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, embodying the culture of mutual respect that pervades our country. I therefore echo the sentiments of my fellow leaders in the Muslim community calling for calm and for the law to take its course."

The Beare family expressed "shock and dismay" upon learning about what it called the "heinous attack". A dismayed Julian has for decades been

involved in non-governmental organisations in the areas of education, social upliftment, and culture. He's a recipient of the Paul Harris Award, the highest award given to a Rotarian who has made an "outstanding contribution" to the greater community.

The Beare family told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We extend our deepest

condolences to the Hoosen-Preston family, the deceased's loved ones and community, and heartfelt prayers for a full recovery for those injured.

"We're shocked by the abhorrent violence, and wholly condemn Grayson Beare's actions. While nothing we say or do can reverse these violent actions, as a family, we stand with the Hoosen-Prestons.

"We were also horrified by his deeply upsetting comments that we heard in the video currently circulating. We totally reject any association with what he has said and done."

The family went on to say, "Grayson has previously been treated for an array of substance abuse and psychological issues. To our knowledge, he was still under professional medical care."

The family stated categorically that it wouldn't assist financially or in any way with Grayson's defence.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) described the killing of Hoosen-Preston and attacks on her family members as heinous crimes, which it condemned in the strongest terms.

"We trust that justice will take its course," it said. "It's clear from a video that has gone viral – the ethics of it aside – that Beare wasn't of sound mind.

"Beare's actions or views don't represent the Jewish community, which has expressed sympathy with the families for their loss."

Meanwhile, the Board expressed outrage at the comments made by EFF KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Chairperson Commisr Mongezi Twala to the crowd outside the courthouse saying, "Starting from today, we cut the ugly throats of the Jewish" (sic) and we must "cut the head of the snake", to which members of the crowd responded, "Thank you!"

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SAJBD said the SAJBD would be

Frum, Israeli, and fearless



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Israeli Olympic athlete Beatie Deutsch runs with South Africans through Johannesburg on Tuesday, 4 June

See story on page 9

Continued on page 3>>

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All eyes on Israel's north

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS

It took 30 firefighting crews hours to put out more than 4 000 dunams (1 000 acres) of fire in the north of Israel. That was just on Monday night, 3 June. Infernos have been blazing for weeks as firefighters battle to douse fires caused by incessant rocket, drone, and anti-tank missile attacks.

Images coming in from towns like Katzrin, Kiryat Shmona, and others show decimated buildings and fires that blaze perilously close to civilian areas. The region looks like a war zone. It's not Gaza or the south of Israel, but the north, where Hezbollah and Hamas factions in southern Lebanon have been pummeling the area since 8 October 2023 in "solidarity" with Gaza.

Hezbollah poses a significantly greater threat than Hamas. The Iranian proxy has unequivocally violated United Nations (UN) Resolution 1701, which clearly calls for Hezbollah to remain north of the Litani River. UN Interim Forces in Lebanon recently had its mandate

extended, yet has done nothing to rein in Hezbollah aggression.

The international community and media have been silent while focusing solely on Israel's war with Hamas. In recent weeks, celebrities have climbed on the virtue-signalling bandwagon to share a graphic saying, "All eyes on Rafah". It would be incumbent on world leaders and self-righteous media outlets to focus their sites on the north. Diplomatic efforts have fizzled out.

Hezbollah is Hamas on steroids. Hezbollah's equivalent of Hamas's Nakba fighters, known as the Radwan forces, are a lot more sophisticated and better trained, and Hezbollah's arsenal of rockets is estimated to be in excess of 160 000. These rockets, which are significantly more sophisticated than the ones fired by Hamas, have the entire state of Israel covered. It's a terrifying thought.

As the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) evacuated southern

communities in preparation for the military operation into Gaza, northern communities evacuated as well. Israel has more than 100 000 internal refugees or "internally displaced people". Towns and kibbutzim on the border are ghost towns, and the impact of this on farms and the regional economy has been massive. The alerts of incoming projectiles and drone infiltrations beep throughout the day from Metula to Nahariya, the southern Galilee, and one of the prime targets, Meron Air Base.

One of the worst hit towns is Kiryat Shmona. On Monday night, police rushed to evacuate anyone who may not yet have been evacuated from the town.

Doron Shnaper, the spokesperson for Kiryat Shmona, said, "Under the orders of the firefighting forces and Kiryat Shmona police, we've begun evacuating residents who remained in the city in **Continued on page 8>>**"



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Seeing the wood for the trees

Torah Thought



Rabbi Dr David Nossel

Upon returning a Torah scroll to the Ark, the custom is to recite the verse, "It's an *eitz* [tree] of life to those who take hold onto it" - by hand, according to Rashi's famous commentary - "and those who support it are praiseworthy."

This verse comes from the Book of Proverbs, composed by the wisest of all men - King Solomon himself. The verse, it seems, compares the Torah to a tree of life. Presumably this is because the Torah, like a tree, provides life via the fruits it produces.

But with the continuation of the verse, this explanation goes pear-shaped. According to it, the life-giving benefits of Torah are achieved by taking hold of it in one's hands and supporting it with one's hands, not through eating its fruit. Why no mention of the fruit? Furthermore,

how does taking hold of a tree by hand give life? And who takes hold of a tree by hand, anyway?

The continuation of the verse also seems strange: "And its supporters are praiseworthy." What's praiseworthy about supporting a tree? And who supports a tree, anyway?

But King Solomon wasn't barking up the wrong tree. He was teaching us the most amazing, paradigm-shifting and practical lesson imaginable about Torah.

The key to unlocking this lesson lies in the translation of the word "*eitz*". While it's true that the Hebrew word "*eitz*" can mean "tree", it can also be translated as "wood". Given that wood comes from a tree, this isn't over the fence. But it can be confusing. How does one know whether the word "*eitz*" is referring to a tree or a piece of wood?

The answer is simple: from the context. If the context is about fruit eaters, it makes sense to say that "*eitz*" refers to a tree. If, however, the context is hands-on

workers, it makes more sense to say that "*eitz*" is referring to wood.

So, let's return to our verse that calls Torah an *eitz* of life. Is the verse referring to a tree or a piece of wood? Well, let's look at the context - are fruit eaters about taking hold of and providing support to things? Not really. Are hands-on builders? Most definitely.

King Solomon is teaching us that the Torah is an *eitz* of life. This isn't because it's a tree that provides life-giving fruit that we can consume, but because it's wood that provides life-giving material that we can use to make a hands-on contribution.

As we return the Torah to the Ark after having read it, we declare that we, like King Solomon, value the Torah not as fruit eaters, but as builders.

We're people who are able to transform what we consume from the Torah into what we can contribute from it; people who are able to tell the wood from the tree.

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Durban	16:45	17:38	16:45	17:39	17:39	16:45	17:39
Bloemfontein	17:06	17:59	17:06	17:59	17:59	17:06	17:59
Gqeberha	16:57	17:52	16:57	17:52	17:52	16:57	17:52
Plettenberg Bay	17:06	18:01	17:06	18:01	18:01	17:06	18:01
East London	16:50	17:45	16:50	17:45	17:45	16:50	17:45
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"And the people of Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain." The verb written in Hebrew for "encamped" is "vayichan", a singular, rather than plural, form. This is to indicate that the acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people was as if with a single mind, and a single heart.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach

*Israel is one hour ahead of South Africa

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Kids' colouring book erases Jews from Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Just days after South African President Cyril Ramaphosa uttered the phrase, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" at the African National Congress's last election rally, a South African colouring book titled *From the River to the Sea* appeared on local bookshelves.

"From the river to the sea" is as an antisemitic call for the eradication of Israel and the genocide of all who live in it. The colouring book shows children that no Jews exist or have the right to exist in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Not one Jew or Israeli appears on its pages, except as sinister figures "oppressing Palestinians". Even the cover depicts two children – a South African and a Palestinian – with no Israeli child in sight.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) criticised the book for "promoting the obliteration of Jews from our historical and rightful homeland" and "indoctrinating children". The creators of the book, Social Bandit Media, responded that this was "a co-ordinated attempt to intimidate and harass us... now Zionists want to burn South African children's book too".

After a general outcry, the books were removed from South Africa's biggest bookstore chain, Exclusive Books. This led to a vicious campaign against it. Exclusive Books has chosen not to comment. The book is also on the shelves of Cape Town independent bookstore The Book Lounge, prominently displayed alongside other anti-Israel books.

The colour-by-number book, which is aimed at children between ages six and 10, says that it "introduces young readers to the key concepts driving and sustaining Palestinian resistance". This includes a page dedicated to the concept of *intifada*, which encompasses two violent Palestinian uprisings in which about 1 000 Israelis were killed by suicide bombings in the early 2000s.

The book then goes on to tell children that people who die for the Palestinians are "martyrs – heroes who have a special place in Palestinian society". Children can then colour in a picture of the late academic, Refaat Alareer, who described all Jews as "evil". In a BBC interview, he described the 7 October attack as "legitimate and moral". He compared the attack to the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and accused Israel of fabricating evidence of sexual assault by Hamas on 7 October.

He also infamously asked on social media if a baby baked in an oven on 7 October was "baked with or without baking powder". He was killed by an Israeli airstrike during the war in Gaza in December. The book describes him as being "assassinated".

Children can colour a picture of a Palestinian

covering their face with a keffiyeh, in the style of Hamas terrorists. They are also given a picture of "protest icon" Ahd Tamimi, who has been arrested twice by Israel, the second time when she posted on social media in November 2023, "Come on settlers, we'll slaughter you. What Hitler did to you was a joke. We'll drink your blood and eat your skulls."

The book's text calls Israel "a military outpost of Western imperialism" and says "Israel imposed apartheid policies in all of historic Palestine".

Children are invited to colour the fake series of



maps showing how "Palestine" has "shrunk". They are told that in 1948, "Israel was created on the land of Palestine", and that "Israel has tried to hide the truth by targeting Palestinian journalists, many have been killed by Israel for exposing the truth."

The 40-page book costs about R100. All proceeds go to Penny Appeal SA's "Palestine projects".

"Looking at the genocides of the 20th century and the

paths that led to them, among the many distinguishing steps, one of the most important was the indoctrination of children," says Jakub Nowakowski, the director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, explaining why one-sided material is so dangerous for children and society as a whole. "Perpetrators deliberately manipulated young minds, teaching children from the earliest age to hate and to see their fellow human beings as less than human."

"We have seen this in Nazi Germany, in pre-1994 Rwanda, and other places of mass violence. When 'the enemy' is pointed out, excluded, and dehumanised, the stage is set for the unthinkable. Children, moulded by propaganda, grow up believing that violence isn't only acceptable but necessary. They are groomed to take part in the machinery of destruction, to become instruments of hatred."

"As a society, we must prioritise shielding our youth from hate," says Nowakowski. "Amid the ongoing conflicts of today, we hope that future generations can overcome our collective trauma and build bridges, breaking the vicious cycles of hate. However, achieving this requires not only protecting children from immediate harm, but also ensuring they are not taught to hate."

The book is illustrated by Nathi Ngubane, a freelance cartoonist who draws for *Daily Maverick*. In a video interview about the book, he said he aimed to "educate parents and children", and that "the book's publishers

consulted educators, parents, and experts as well as Palestinian journalists to make the history accurate and accessible to kids. We wanted to show themes of resistance, freedom, and hope throughout the book. We felt it was very important for children to learn about other children in Gaza," he said, ignoring Israeli children just as his illustrations do.

In May, Ngubane went on a book tour to two schools, one in Cape Town and one in Durban, where he addressed young children and handed out copies.

"It's repugnant that this publication can be published and targeted at young minds," the SAJBD said. "We reject attempts to indoctrinate children. While we're saddened by the ongoing conflict, campaigns like this only perpetuate animosity and prolong the cycle of hatred. We urgently call for the immediate cessation of this extremely irresponsible publication."

Said Social Bandit Media, "We note that this panic comes as mainstream bookstores in South Africa have started to stock the book. We see the SAJBD statement as an attempt to smear Palestinians and place more pressure on these mainstream bookstores. We urge bookstores to stand on the right side of history." It said that more than 3 000 copies had been sold.

"The colouring book is antisemitic, devoid of truth,

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"The colouring book is antisemitic, devoid of truth,

and amounts to propaganda," says South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks. "Some of the pages glorify violence, unnecessarily exposing children to war outside of their country."

"The slogan, 'From the river to the sea', used by terrorist group Hamas, calls for the annihilation of the state of Israel," says Marks. "The vile colouring book also falsely uses former President Nelson Mandela's image in support of the genocidal chant, failing to mention that Madiba recognised Palestinians' and Israel's right to exist."

"Many South African children face difficulties such as hunger, crime, or bullying, and shouldn't be forced to grapple with politics in the Middle East," she says. "Children should enjoy their childhood, and learn to understand their own country first."

"The SAZF is also concerned that this slogan, which incites violence against Israel, has permeated South African society, from the president right down to this children's colouring book," says Marks. "It's far removed from the sentiments of South Africa's Constitution. Many South Africans, including the millions of people associated with Christian churches, recognise Israel's right to exist."

The SA Jewish Report sent questions to Ngubane, but didn't receive a response by the time of going to print.

Leaders call for calm following murder backlash

>>Continued from page 1

investigating a case of hate speech against him. "His comments come in the wake of a statement issued by Africa 4 Palestine – as just one example of the anti-Israel lobby denigrating the South African Jewish community – which calls Jews in this country 'violent' and 'aggressive'. As can be seen by the scenes outside the court, this is an inversion of the truth, inflammatory, and dangerous," Kahn said.

She said it was "appalling and unacceptable" that a tragic situation had been "turned into vilification of the broader Jewish community".

Addressing the public gallery on Tuesday, magistrate Ashwin Singh warned supporters of United 4 Palestine and the EFF to comply with the rules of the court and remove sunglasses and non-religious headgear. He barred the public from recording the court proceedings, apart from taking written notes.

"The court isn't a political arena for you to vent your frustration. Let the court proceed in a dignified manner so that the constitutional rights of all are

upheld," Singh said.

The Community Security Organisation (CSO) called for justice to take its course and for the legal system to prosecute this crime to the fullest extent possible.

"However, we've observed a significant number of social media posts blaming 'Zionists' and calling for revenge. This is cause for concern in an already heated and volatile environment, possibly leading fringe elements to take matters into their own hands."

In light of this, the CSO has called on the community to act responsibly and increase its vigilance.

Prosecutor Calvin Govender said the state wanted a seven-day postponement so that it could do a bail investigation and Grayson could undergo a mental-health assessment by the district surgeon. He is remanded in custody at Westville Prison.

Defence attorney Nyameko Jodwana told the court Grayson wanted protection because he had received threats in prison.

The case has been postponed to 11 June.

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Roth attributes rabbinical ordination to SA roots

TALI FEINBERG

When educator Adina Roth was finally ordained as an Orthodox Jewish rabbi in New York on 3 June, she couldn't quite find the words to describe how moving and beautiful it was.

"Our rabbis charged us to become the kind of rabbis the world needs right now," says Roth from New York this week.

Roth is only the second South African-born Jewish woman to achieve Orthodox *smicha*.

It has been a long road for Roth, born and raised in South Africa, where she lived until recently, and she says South African Jewry played a crucial role in getting her where she is today.

"When I told people in South Africa I was on this path, everyone I spoke to was excited for me, supported my decision, and were excited for what this meant for our community," Roth says. "The calling to be a rabbi found me through my life's work and my love of Torah and Jewish learning. It wasn't a desire for a title, but to be able to work for the community and serve as an educator and in a spiritual and religious capacity."

Being ordained "was probably one of the most powerful moments of my life," she says. "My wish is that all Jewish girls in South Africa see something like this. As of last night [3 June], there are 75 *musmachot* [Orthodox-ordained women]. Our world is changing!"

Having emigrated from Johannesburg to Sydney during her studies, "I found that the study of Torah was a comfort," says Roth. "I left behind so much that I love. But Jewish learning goes with you. Maybe this is how Jews managed to move around the world for thousands of years. Our Judaism has been a constant."

Roth studied at Yeshivat Maharat, a Jewish educational institution in New York. It was the first Orthodox yeshiva in North America to ordain women. The word "*maharat*" is a Hebrew acronym denoting a female "leader of Jewish law, spirituality, and Torah".

Roth did a four-year programme focusing on Talmud and halacha, studying mostly remotely alongside women from around the world. Two decades ago, as a

student, she did two Masters degrees on Jewish texts and studied at renowned Jewish institutions abroad.

When she returned to South Africa, "I was approached by a group of families who wanted a meaningful rite of passage for their daughters for Batmitzvah, including the option to read from the Torah in a halachic setting," says Roth. "For almost 20 years, I ran Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs, teaching boys and girls to *lein* from



Newly ordained rabbi, Adina Roth, receiving her Orthodox *smicha*

the Torah. I enjoyed running the ceremony which is, I suppose, a rabbinic role. I find it moving to walk people through the significant rites of passage of their lives using the beauty, depth, and potency of Jewish ritual."

Roth also taught adults at the Melton Institute, and developed her own courses in Tanach and Midrash. "Learning Torah has the potential to have an impact on our being, to heal and refine our character and soul. All this led me to long for an opportunity to deepen my text and Jewish leadership skills," she says.

"I was aware that since 2009, Yeshivat Maharat had begun to ordain women in orthodoxy, something I didn't imagine could happen in my lifetime." Eventually, she

decided to take on the challenge. Each year, they focused on a different area of Jewish law.

"I loved how we learned halacha in a way that responds deeply to the needs of the individual," says Roth. "The Jewish community of the 21st century has changed. People are single for much longer. People get divorced. People are in LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning] relationships. We learned how to welcome and make space for all human beings."

She emphasises that she couldn't have done it without the support of her family. In addition, "Emanuel, the school where I work as director of Jewish Life, allowed me to study for one day a week and gave me huge support. It wasn't easy to emigrate, look after a family, start a new job, and keep up my studies, but I was determined to graduate with my classmates."

She doesn't anticipate that her role [at Emanuel] will change too much after becoming a rabbi.

"I hope that opportunities will open for me, such as facilitating rite-of-passage ceremonies and teaching adults. As an Orthodox rabbi, I wouldn't lead prayers in the

traditional sense. But even in orthodoxy there are some services, called "partnership *minyanim*", where women can lead parts of the service within Jewish law.

"While it's completely halachically permissible for a woman to be a rabbi, I believe in the idea of *aseh lecha rav u'kneh l'cha chaver* [make for yourself a rabbi, and acquire for yourself a friend]," says Roth. "Each person must find a rabbi for themselves. If people aren't comfortable with a woman rabbi, they don't need to seek rabbinic relationship with women. The ship has sailed, and women rabbis are good for *Am Yisrael*."

Roth would encourage people to seek this kind of ordination. "Yeshivat Maharat is a professional institution

geared to supporting women pursuing this path. If this is something that resonates, I would encourage you to explore options. I also encourage men to develop Jewish spiritual 'muscle'. We need strong spiritual leadership at this hard time in our world."

South African community members say Roth's *smicha* is an important and well-deserved milestone. "The increasing drive by women to connect with halacha has led inevitably to them not only being educators but also halachic leaders," says Ilana Stein. "The *smicha* programme at Maharat is incredibly intense and difficult. Professor Tamar Ross calls it 'expanding the palace of Torah', and Adina's knowledge is doing just that."

Nina Cohen remembers how "as Greenside Shul embarked on a path towards a more inclusive community, we turned to Adina for assistance. Adina became an invaluable resource, particularly regarding the inclusion of women in ritual.

"About seven years ago, she helped facilitate our first *leining* of Megillat Esther by women," says Cohen. "This was the first time that this took place in an Orthodox synagogue in South Africa. On Simchat Torah, Adina organised a women's *hakafot* [dancing with the Torah] service. Adina taught in the most humble yet insightful way.

"When Adina emigrated, I was afraid we wouldn't be able to continue with the transformation she helped establish at Greenside," Cohen says. "However, always inspired by her contribution, we've managed to continue. We're so proud of Adina for having attained *smicha*. Never was an achievement more well-deserved! We're so grateful for her contribution and unwavering dedication to Judaism in South Africa."

Roth always thought she would come back to South Africa with her *smicha*, "and a part of me is sad that I won't serve my own beloved community, who really made me the person I am today. I'm grateful for the schooling I got, for the youth movements of South Africa, to many teachers, and to the love of *Yiddishkeit*. Treasure the deep roots we're given in our community, and if you want to explore options beyond it, reach for them too. It's a big Jewish world out there, and we're blessed to have access to it."

Israel requires online visa application

LEE TANKLE

South African visitors to Israel will be required to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation document (ETA-IL) as of 1 July 2024, according to a recent announcement from Israel.

Only once your ETA-IL has been approved will you be allowed to travel to Israel and stay up to 90 days per visit. The authorisation is valid for multiple trips over two years, or until an individual's passport expires, whichever one comes first.

Sabine Hadad, the spokesperson for the Israeli population and immigration authority, said the new system was being implemented to facilitate smoother entry to Israel for tourists. "Most people will be approved for this visa," Hadad said. "We're doing this so that we can avoid cases we know in advance won't be allowed into Israel for many reasons, like being deported before."

"This system exists in many countries like the United States, Canada, and Europe. It's not something new," she said, "it's to avoid having people fly such a long distance only to get to the border and be denied entry."

"It isn't a major change," said travel agent Sharlene Lifschitz. "It's the normal visa you would get on arrival, only now you have it in advance."

Deputy Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Adi Cohen-Hazanov said, "Any traveller to Israel just needs

to fill out this application in advance on the website, and will receive the visa."

However, it does enable Israel to refuse to grant the visa, making it impossible to get into Israel.

"It's good because it allows Israel to know who is coming into the country," said Lifschitz, "It's not stopping anybody from coming into the country unless it suspects that they are a terrorist or something like that. Then, it's entitled to stop you from entering the country. The only difference this makes is that if you're denied entry for whatever reason, they can send you home at the airport."

The programme was initially launched on 1 June as a pilot programme for those with American and German passports. That will provide insights and possible improvements, with the programme expanded to all visa-exempt countries from 1 July.

It will help authorities to obtain information about passengers before they even board the plane. If there's a problem with the passenger entering Israel, they will be referred to the Israeli embassy in their country of residence.

During the first year of this measure, the ETA-IL will be provided free of charge, thereafter it will cost each traveller 25 NIS (about R126).

Eyal Siso, the director-general of Israel's population and immigration authority, said in

a press statement, "This process aims to prevent passengers arriving in Israel from facing unpleasant surprises, even though there might be a reason known in advance that prevents them from entering the state of Israel. The system will also help to reinforce Israel's national security."

Chabad describes prayer app as 'spiritual Iron Dome'

LEE TANKLE

"Give Prayer a Chance", a new initiative by Chabad House Johannesburg, is described by its director, Rabbi David Masinter, as a spiritual Iron Dome for the Jewish community.

"We believe that prayer changes the creed in heaven," said Masinter, who is also the founder and director of the Miracle Drive's annual charity campaign. "When King David was fighting his battles, he told his generals, 'You fight, I'll pray.' That will be the mystical weapon that the Jews have."

"Prayer is much more than just reciting words. It's our solution, our Iron Dome. It's a profound opportunity to connect with G-d, to reflect on our lives, and present our requests in the belief that G-d will answer," he said.

"The programme seeks to motivate individuals to pray more frequently, and to feel a deeper connection to Hashem.

It underscores the Torah's teachings that prayer is effective, that G-d listens and responds to our prayers, and that through prayer, we can invoke blessings and alter decrees," Masinter said.

"Recognising that the traditional siddur can be overwhelming, this new app aims to simplify the experience and encourage more people to engage in regular prayer."

"The siddur is bursting with explanation and inspiration, and transforms mere participation into connection and communication," he said. "We're on a mission to distribute a siddur to as many people as possible, particularly to those who cannot afford one or who are removed from their community as well as high school and university students."



To make prayer more accessible to all, the programme has launched an app and a website where people can interact with a new more user-friendly siddur and lessons that suit any particular interest in prayer such as biblical stories or different insights as to why people pray.

The free, user-friendly Hebrew and English siddur app, called the "Give Prayer a Chance Siddur" is designed to make prayer more accessible and meaningful. The app uses the new Weiss edition siddur that applies to all shuls, including Chabad.

The app includes blended translation-explanations of the entire siddur, clear instructions on different prayers, the backgrounds of certain customs, prayer insights, and summaries of different prayers throughout the digital siddur.



Unisa says Jews 'abusing' concept of antisemitism

TALI FEINBERG

The University of South Africa (Unisa) has blamed Israel for Hamas's 7 October massacre, also claiming that "the Zionists" are "abusing" the concept of antisemitism and shouldn't be allowed to define it.

In one of the most extreme statements from a South African university since 7 October, the senate of Unisa, the largest open-distance learning institution in Africa and the longest-standing dedicated distance education university in the world, claimed, "The Zionists are abusing and trivialising the important anti-discrimination concept of antisemitism [in order] to silence, mute, and undermine the justice-seeking voices and calls for justice against the violence and war perpetuated against the Palestinians."

It went on to say, on 28 May, that "these distortions, that generally are embodied in

theological and political distortions, pelted under the guise of 'antisemitism', must be condemned".

It also called for "a ceasefire and the cessation of genocidal attacks by the state of Israel on Palestinian people". It went on to claim that the historical context of Israel's "genocidal activities" didn't begin with Hamas's attacks on 7 October. It insinuated it was a continuation of the "Zionist colonial movement" that had systematically "oppressed" Palestinians and deprived them of their land since 1948.

David Saks, the associate director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said, "We're astonished how any reputable academic institution, let alone Unisa, should have issued a public statement so thoroughly unscholarly, crudely emotive, and politically driven as this one.

"From representatives of the intellectual profession, one should expect that any commentary on issues of public concern, particularly when concerning highly complex international disputes, would be appropriately measured, nuanced, and, perhaps above all, fair," he said. "However, practically not a single pronouncement in this grossly partisan, ideologically driven screed would pass true scholarly muster."

Saks went on to say: "We reject, with disgust, the baseless and deeply prejudiced charge that Jewish representatives knowingly, and as a matter of decided policy, level false charges of antisemitism in order to silence criticism of Israel. This has the effect of portraying

Jews as being dishonest, manipulative, and hypocritical and as such amounts to just another form of anti-Jewish bigotry, all the more repellent for being framed in language calling for human rights, peace, and justice.

"This shockingly inappropriate statement is less an indictment against Israel than a betrayal of the institution's most fundamental values and ideals," Saks said. "By issuing it, Unisa has done a sad disservice not just to its own community, but to the academic profession and the people of South Africa as a whole."

Unisa's chancellor is former South African President Thabo Mbeki. Its principal and vice-chancellor is Professor Puleng LenkaBula, who defines herself as a "feminist ethicist". LenkaBula proudly shared the university's statement on social media, yet as a "feminist ethicist", she made no mention of the sexual violence meted out by Hamas on 7 October, nor did Unisa. The *SA Jewish Report* asked her why she was silent about this, but the query went unanswered.

Many Unisa students expressed their frustration that Unisa was taking a stance on a conflict that had no bearing on South Africa when it has much to do to get its

own house in order. "This university fails to respond to our needs as students, phone calls and emails are never answered, yet it's responding to problems in faraway places. Please fix the university administration first. When is the senate addressing administration problems at the school?" asked one student in response to LenkaBula sharing the statement on X.

"Ceasefire on ignoring students enquiries and complaints too. Prof, do you listen to Unisa students when they have a crisis? Please fix your administration also," said three students.

"Where's your statement on Russia invading Ukraine?" and "Why don't you focus rather on your own issues? It's no business of yours what goes on in the Middle East. Whose money are you trying to secure?" asked two more students on X.

"I'm ashamed of the qualifications I received from you," said a former student.

"This is uncalled for. You ignore what Hamas has done on 7 October and the rockets it fires at Israel daily. I can't believe my *alma mater* [can] stoop this low. How do you stand with a terrorist organisation like Hamas? I'm disappointed," wrote another student.

"How about those hostages? Return any hostages left alive. For every action, there's a reaction. Don't like it, tough! Women don't like being raped and brutalised either," said another.

The Unisa statement also endorsed an academic boycott of Israel, and committed to cutting all academic connections with Israeli higher education and research institutions. It urged other universities to do the same.

The senate then called Unisa's council to instruct the university's asset managers to divest any investments Unisa holds in Israeli companies, and companies supplying materials and weapons used by Israel.

It also endorsed the South African government's legal actions against Israel.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks said, "The SAZF condemns Unisa's decision to boycott Israel and cut off any research connections

between it and Israeli institutes. This is an assault on academic freedom and it breaches staff's constitutional rights to freedom of association. Universities should be places where debate is welcome, and students and staff can hold a range of views.

"Moreover, this move is likely to make Jewish students feel unwelcome," says Marks. "It's also hypocritical. While calling on asset managers to divest from firms that have assets in Israel, the senate ignores the fact that many of the components in today's computers, cellphones, or devices like flash drives were developed in Israel. It's highly unlikely that staff will stop using modern technology.

"Unisa has been beset by internal crisis, and was placed under administration by Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande in October 2023 before he withdrew his decision in November," Marks said. "The university should focus on solving its own issues and serving its students rather than attempting to divert attention from its numerous crises that include governance issues, poor administration, financial sustainability, and the declining quality of qualifications. Many of these have persisted for years at the country's biggest university, and undermine students' right to a quality education.

"Israel has the right to defend itself from the terrorist group, Hamas, that has stated that it wants to annihilate the country and its people," she said.

South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) National Chairperson Shmuel Krengel said there were several Jewish students at Unisa, but SAUJS didn't have a branch there. SAUJS is "appalled and disappointed" at Unisa's statement, he said.

Along with the query about her response to Hamas's sexual violence, the *SA Jewish Report* asked LenkaBula if Unisa condemned Hamas's atrocities of 7 October; if Jewish students and staff who are Zionist were welcome at Unisa; and if a Jewish person said something was antisemitic, the university would disbelieve them, in line with its statement. However, these questions went unanswered.



University of South Africa

Photo: unisa.ac.za

Shavuot commemorates the pivotal moment in Jewish history when the Jews received the Torah at Har Sinai. This event, more than any other, shaped the identity and destiny of the Jewish people. It was not merely a historical occurrence but the beginning of a spiritual and educational journey that continues to this day.

The Torah, given on Shavuot, represents the Divine blueprint for living a meaningful and honourable life. It is a guide that encompasses every aspect of human existence, from ethics and morality to rituals and laws. The moment of receiving the Torah was one of collective elevation and sanctification, binding the Jewish people to G-d in an eternal covenant.

The essence of Shavuot lies in the transmission of the Torah's wisdom from generation to generation. Jewish education is the vehicle through which this sacred knowledge is imparted, ensuring that the teachings of the Torah remain alive and relevant.

1. Lifelong Learning

The Torah encourages continuous learning and growth. As it is written in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), "Turn it and turn it again, for every-thing is in it." Jewish education fosters a lifelong pursuit of wisdom and understanding, promoting a deep and lasting connection to our heritage.

2. Identity and Values

Jewish education instills a strong sense of identity and values. It teaches students about their history, traditions, and the ethical imperatives that guide Jewish life. This education helps individuals develop a sense of belonging and responsibility to their community and the world.

3. Spiritual and Moral Development

The teachings of the Torah provide a moral compass and a framework for ethical behavior. Jewish education nurtures the spiritual and moral development of students, guiding them to lead lives of integrity, compassion, and justice.

4. Community and Continuity

Education is a communal effort, emphasizing the importance of family, community, and collective responsibility. By investing in Jewish education, we ensure the continuity and vitality of the Jewish people, preserving our traditions for future generations.

As we celebrate Shavuot, we are reminded of the profound significance of the Torah and the imperative of Jewish



education. It is a time to renew our commitment to learning and to passing on our rich heritage. By embracing the values and teachings of the Torah, we honour the legacy of our ancestors and pave the way for a brighter, more enlightened future.

May this Shavuot inspire us to deepen our connection to the Torah and to strengthen our dedication to Jewish education, ensuring that the links of our tradition continues to shine brightly in our lives and in the world.

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Yeshiva College Primary School wishes you Chag Sameach



South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

Don't let haters get their way

There are bad people in this world, but there are far more good people around. There are also those who go off the deep end and perpetrate crimes, even murder. This isn't news in a country with a ridiculously high crime rate. Truth is, just like any community in this country, Jewish people aren't absolved from committing crime. It does happen.

However, it's racist and hateful to tar the entire community with the same brush as someone arrested for murder. More than that, it's intolerable to use a crime that one person may have committed to inspire violence and hatred towards an entire community. This is exactly what our haters are doing right now. It is reprehensible in the extreme.

I'm speaking of the horrendous attack on Halima Hoosen-Preston and her family in Durban, in which this Muslim mother was murdered, and her husband and child stabbed, allegedly by a Jewish man. This tragedy being bandied around as a hate crime to do with Israel and Palestinians is a horrific murder allegedly perpetrated by a man whose estranged wife was close friends with Hoosen-Preston. This is a heinous crime. It's totally unforgivable, and needs to be judged appropriately in a court of law. If the man is guilty, he should be given the maximum sentence, no questions asked. Murder is murder.

However, whatever was going on in his head and caused this to happen didn't have anything to do with the Jewish community. Whatever his reasons, it wasn't something that was acceptable to us or agreed upon by us. He was 100% a lone ranger in what he did. He's also a man known to be schizophrenic, bipolar, and to have a substance-abuse problem, according to court submissions.

As most people are aware, South African Jews aren't violent, and we don't want to be at war with anyone. It's painful enough for us knowing that our brethren in Israel are at war, but here, we're not at war with the Muslim community or any other community.

Those who are building this murder up to be about the war between Israel and Hamas are committing a massive hate crime. It must stop now!

This crime isn't about Muslims and Jews. This is a horrific attack perpetrated by a murderer, not someone advocating for others.

Even the family of the man arrested has distanced themselves from him, vowing not to pay for his defence. If even his family isn't coming to his defence, surely this is reason enough to see that this isn't about politics?

There's enough distress in our country, our communities, and our world without constructing a fake battle that isn't happening.

People like some of those in Africa 4 Palestine, the Economic Freedom Fighters, and the Al Jama-ah party that have turned this into a hate crime are criminal in their intent. They are pushing for violence, which is unconscionable. There seems to be some kind of glee in turning this into something about Israel and the Palestinians to stoke a fire that our community leaders are trying hard to ensure doesn't ignite. It could lead to further tragedies.

Let's put a lid on this now! This murder is tragic enough, we don't need any more violence. We need to be sensible, calm, and rational on all sides. We need to bring to a halt all the hate speech about this on social media.

Though we acknowledge that people have taken sides on the war between Israel and Hamas, Jews and Muslims have lived side by side in South Africa, and continue to do so.

In most suburbs where Jews live, Muslims live, and vice versa. We go to the same shopping centres, gyms, hang out at the same coffee shops. There's no hatred or bloodthirstiness for each other. Ultimately, we're brethren. So, please don't allow those who actually have made it their business to hate to turn Muslims against Jews, and vice versa. We aren't those people, and we mustn't become them.

Last week, our country held the most incredible election. It was democracy at its best. We don't know what the future brings. We have no choice but to trust that the horse trading that's happening between political parties will bring the results we South Africans want.

What we don't need is hot headedness, people being impulsive or foolish in any area of South Africa. We need to stay calm and level headed, moving forward day by day without distress.

It doesn't take much to put a spark to the various tinderboxes that exist in our country and world.

We're sitting on a knife edge, and need to find the calm and positivity to get us through to the other side where there's clarity for our future and peace. We don't know whether the African National Congress (ANC) will jump into bed with former President Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe party or cosy up to the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Those are just two iterations which would bring two extremes in terms of our future.

Zuma is making threats and using interesting strategies to force his way back into ruling the country. Many of these are threats of violence. My hope is that sense will prevail, and the ANC will join hands with the DA and take our country forward.

I do believe most South Africans want the same thing, something only a party like the DA can bring home. We all want a growing economy, jobs for the jobless, investment, food on people's tables, a good education for our children, and peace and stability. It doesn't seem like a lot to ask, so here's hoping sense prevails in the microcosm and macrocosm.

Shabbat Shalom and chag Shavuot sameach!

Peta Krost
Editor

We won't be publishing next week as it's Shavuot. We'll be back on 20 June.



SA needs wise choices not wishful thinking

OPINION

TONY LEON



Never has the Chinese curse or cliché, "May you live in interesting times", been more fitting for South Africa in the aftermath of the momentous 29 May election.

One aspect which never came to pass was that the Gaza war and South African foreign policy would feature in the poll outcome. It was striking that in Cape Town, for example, home to most Muslims in South Africa, attempts to weaponise that conflict made no impression on voters.

To the contrary. On one reading, the 9% drop in support for the African National Congress to an all-time low of 19.55% – with its explicitly anti-Israel stance – was almost matched by the 9% obtained by the most pro-Israel party on the ballot, the Patriotic Alliance.

The Democratic Alliance was barely touched by any of this, and comfortably won the province with an overwhelming majority.

You didn't need to be a political prophet to forecast that foreign policy would count for next to nothing in a poll determined by domestic crises and problems. And we now have – for the first time in three decades – a situation where we genuinely don't know who will comprise the next government of South Africa.

As we navigate genuinely uncharted waters, it could be said that the map to hand, our Constitution, will guide us safely to calmer waters. That's both true and untrue.

The Constitution does indeed provide us, and crucially, new members of Parliament, with a reasonably detailed roadmap. Forgive the mixture of metaphors, but of course, just as it had a Nelson Mandela in mind as head of state, the Constitution also had an implicit bias that one party would obtain a parliamentary majority. It didn't closely contemplate the reality we're in – a hung Parliament with no overall majority for a single party.



The future of how South Africa's Parliament will be made up is in the balance

Photo: Wikipedia

Of course, the Constitution tells us exactly the form and manner of electing the speaker and president. However, the timeline it prescribes – 14 days after last Sunday for Parliament to convene and elect – doesn't allow for a lengthy bargaining period. This often lasts months, not weeks, in other democracies where multi, not single, party governments are the rule not the exception.

I'm not going to interrogate the merits and demerits of the possible arrangements, which could provide South Africa with a stable government consonant with democratic continuance, economic sensibility and genuine freedom, and equality as indeed our Constitution mandates.

But there's one approach which does need to be headed off at the pass.

Some otherwise impressive analysts have suggested that even if, for example, a government consists in part of parties which want the Constitution junked entirely – the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party – or who will red ant it from within by destroying its key pillars and foundations – the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – then it would be rough, but South Africa would survive.

Indeed, on this analysis, the current centrist political forces would, after such a torrid and destructive period, emerge to reclaim democracy and rebuild the economy.

I regard any such view as an extreme form of wishful thinking.

Someone said that when you introduce Hitler into an argument you've lost it, since his regime was such an extreme and nihilistic example of genocidal authoritarianism that it has no equal in history.

That's true, but the Micawber approach of "hoping that something will turn up for the better" is applicable to some naivete around our situation. It's also as misplaced here and now as it was back then in democratic Weimar

Germany in 1933.

As the brilliant historian Timothy Snyder reminds us, "History does not repeat, but it does instruct."

In his short booklet *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Snyder writes, "We tend to assume that institutions will automatically maintain themselves against even the most direct attacks."

This of course is an historic mistake, as Snyder illustrates by reminding us that institutions – courts, Constitutions, reserve banks etc – "don't protect themselves". And "hope as a strategy" is nothing new, as Nazi Germany ominously reminds us.

Snyder quotes at length from a leading newspaper for German Jews published on 3 February 1933, days after Hitler was installed as Reich chancellor due to backroom machinations, not a parliamentary outright majority. It read in part:

"We do not subscribe to the view that Mr Hitler and his friends, now finally in possession of the power they have so long desired, will implement the proposals circulating in Nazi newspapers. They will not suddenly deprive German Jews of their constitutional rights, nor enclose them in ghettos, nor subject them to murderous impulses of the mob. They cannot do this because a number of crucial factors hold powers in check, and they clearly do not want to go down this road."

While Nazi Germany was darkly unique in history, the entirely reasonable view of people then is based on a mistake which equally reasonable people make now. As Snyder reminds us, "The mistake is to assume that rulers who came to power through institutions cannot change or destroy those very institutions, even when that's exactly what they have announced they will do."

Jacob Zuma's MK party wants to dismantle the

Constitution entirely and strip the judiciary of its testing power over parliamentary legislation and worse. The EFF has advised – via its leader or "commander in chief" – that it wants "to slit the throat of whiteness"; destroy the independence of the Reserve Bank – and with it our currency via runaway inflation; expropriate private property; and nationalise industry.

Place either or both such parties into the new government of South Africa,

and you can see the future plainly.

Our bond rate now is already about 20% for a 20-year bond, given future uncertainties. Confidently, you can predict it will be, under such a prospectus, impossible to raise any funding at all for these economically ruinous programmes.

It's entirely correct to say that this is hardly a replica of Nazi Germany, but it's a pretty good facsimile of Hugo Chávez's Venezuela – and the late Chávez is the explicit role model for Julius Malema. Venezuela was once upon a time the most successful economy in South America. Today, its citizens are reduced to beggary and its currency is debauched.

Like South Africa, it had an authoritarian past, but just before Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, it was a robust democracy. Since their ascent, it has become a sham democracy, an authoritarian one-party state in form and substance, if not in name.

Last week's election presents South Africa and its new Parliament with great opportunity and a prospect for renewal. But the opposite is also true: it's also a moment of great peril. Let's hope there's enough common wisdom and deft leadership to choose the right path.

And given the arithmetic of the new Parliament, this is the one time when the wisdom of United States baseball icon Yogi Berra doesn't apply. He said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it."

The choices made, or not made, in the next 14 days will determine our future for a very long time to come.

• Tony Leon is the founding leader of the Democratic Alliance, the longest serving leader of the official opposition in Parliament since the advent of democracy, and a former ambassador. He's the chairperson of a communications company.

Elections bring uncertainty but opportunity

OPINION

MANDY WIENER



At the South African Jewish Board of Deputies election debate a fortnight before the polls, the Patriotic Alliance's Kenny Kunene, deadpan, told the audience that he had been to Israel to learn about how coalitions work. Of course, there are places where coalitions do work – like Germany – and places where coalitions don't work. Like Israel.

South Africa is now faced with the reality of having to navigate this new political landscape of negotiating coalitions at national level. Negotiating teams have been appointed and this week, meetings are taking place between representatives of parties who were able to win seats in government. There's an enormous amount at stake, and the country is in flux as our future is being determined.

Some parties have gone into these talks stronger or weaker than anticipated, depending on their respective election results.

The key narratives of these elections have been the implosion of the African National Congress (ANC), the surprising success of former President Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, and the arrival of the Patriotic Alliance as a potential kingmaker.

The ANC effectively lost eighteen percentage points in these polls. That's a massive knock. Over the past

two decades, the ANC in government has been responsible for economic decline, depressed growth, huge unemployment, infrastructure collapse, impaired service delivery, state capture, and widespread tender corruption. Voters had enough. What also became evident was that the electorate didn't seem too swayed by the ANC's support of Gaza at the International Court of Justice, in



Opposition parties will need to work together in the new coalition government

fact it seems to have cost the party support. But what really dented the ANC ultimately was the success of its former leader, Jacob Zuma, who bizarrely remains a member of the ANC.

Why was Zuma and MK so successful? MK is now the third largest party in South Africa, with 14.58% of the national vote and 58 seats in the National Assembly.

In KwaZulu-Natal, MK emerged as the most popular party with an astonishing 46% of the votes.

After the "nine wasted years", the Gupta leaks, state capture, the arms deal corruption, the destruction of state-owned entities, and infrastructure collapse, why would nearly two and a half million South Africans vote for Jacob Zuma?

Is it as simple as tribalism or ethnicity as some analysts have suggested? Zuma is MK and MK is Zuma. Zuma is a Trumpian figure in our politics, and this is a case of identity politics. The ongoing court cases against Zuma have cast him as a victim of the ANC and the political establishment. His populist appeal resonated with voters.

This is also protest politics. MK supporters felt neglected and isolated by the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal.

If MK supporters actually read the party's manifesto, I doubt they would vote in support of its policies, which include replacing the Constitution; holding a referendum on the death penalty; nationalising everything; and reversing reforms.

The ANC is now at a watershed moment. It effectively has to make a choice between constitutional democracy and anarchy. This week is

monumental in determining which path the country takes. It's terrifying but it's also exciting. There's so much opportunity and promise.

According to the Constitution, the first sitting of the National Assembly must take place 14 days after the results are declared. There are several potential scenarios that could emerge from the negotiations with multiple permutations.

Investors, economists, and citizens like you and I are watching developments closely.

It's possible that deals could be done that have an impact at provincial and national level. Provinces like KwaZulu-Natal or Gauteng could be used as bargaining chips at national level – a premiership in exchange for support in the National Assembly as an example.

Among the more spoken-about scenarios that have emerged are:

- A GNU – government of national unity that would include all parties in government;
- ANC plus Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) plus the Patriotic Alliance (or Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)) or ANC plus MK;
- A centrist coalition between the ANC, Democratic Alliance (DA), and the IFP, with all parties in government;
- The super opposition – ANC plus DA plus IFP, but parties remain in opposition; or
- ANC becomes minority government

without coalition partners.

What the most likely scenario is at this point is the ANC doing a deal with the DA and the IFP, but these parties stay "outside" of government in what is being called a confidence/supply agreement.

The ANC retains control of the executive in a minority government, and the DA and IFP take on positions of oversight in Parliament including speaker and chairpersons of portfolio committees. Helen Zille calls this the "super opposition scenario". The DA and IFP would support the ANC against votes of no confidence, and with the passing of budgets.

However, there's always the possibility that the faction within the ANC that prefers a coalition with MK or EFF wins out. Economists warn that this would have a considerable impact on investor confidence and the rand will tank as it will signal the reversal of reforms.

It's now up to our elected political leaders to negotiate on our behalf and in the interests of the country. This requires political maturity. There's the potential that coalitions will fail as they have in the City of Johannesburg and in Israel. But there's also the potential for politicians to chart a new way forward. We're witnessing history. Anything could happen.

• Mandy Wiener is a broadcaster and author.

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How the Muslim community betrayed the ANC



HOWARD SACKSTEIN

OPINION

Last week wasn't a good week for the African National Congress (ANC). Not only was it decimated in South Africa's general election, dropping 17% in the polls, losing its parliamentary majority and four provinces, but South Africa's revolutionary liberation movement discovered that it had been betrayed by some of its closest allies.

Lured into a deceptive trap, concocted by Dr Naledi Pandor, South Africa's jihadi foreign minister, the ANC had thrown its entire weight behind South Africa's Muslim community, pandering to its Hamas supporting extremist wing and turning its back on the South African Jewish community, many of whom had been long-time allies, financial backers of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and activists in the anti-apartheid struggle for the country's liberation.

Pandor, a convert to Islam, had led her government down an economic black hole with her anti-Western foreign policy, supporting Hamas, targeting Israel, attacking Morocco, and her rapprochement with Iran. Her rabid anti-American vitriol, and her threats that America would be the next target at the International Criminal Court, has caused the cancellation of numerous American investments in South Africa and jeopardised South Africa's ongoing membership of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, together with its 200 000 local South African jobs.

One of the most iconic moments of the 2024 general elections campaign was a social media video post of an animated, hysterical Muslim man, zealously ranting to a smiling Ramaphosa how the Muslim community would vote for the president and the ANC.

Ramaphosa actively courted the Muslim community, pandering to its needs; taking Israel to the International Court of Justice; bowing down in Muslim prayer at mosque; celebrating Iftar with Muslim leaders; shouting "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"; and sporting Palestinian fancy dress regalia. Ramaphosa wasn't alone. The president's deputy, Paul Mashatile, also joined the Muslim community in prayer and apparel. Palestinian scarves and keffiyehs became as prolific at ANC gatherings and news conferences as the ill-fitting yellow t-shirt.

Pandor telephoned Hamas shortly after the 7 October Hamas invasion of Israel, according



President Cyril Ramaphosa praying with Muslim community leaders

to Hamas, to congratulate it on the success of its Al Aqsa Flood operation, a comment denied by Pandor. South Africa and the ruling party, have twice hosted Hamas in South Africa in the past eight months, and hosted the Global Anti-Apartheid Conference for Palestine in Sandton and representatives of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the European Muslim Council, the US Council of Muslim Organisations, and an array of local Muslim bodies.

The ANC manifesto launch at the Moses Mabhida Stadium on 24 February 2024 was hijacked by the Muslim community.

At the ANC's closing election rally, at Soccer City just outside Johannesburg, a huge Palestinian flag featured prominently, while there were no South African flags in sight.

Palestine has been front and centre of the ANC's election campaign and in return, the Muslim community promised its electoral support for the ANC and its assistance to oust the Democratic Alliance (DA) from power in the Western Cape. The Muslim community constitute a mere 1.2% of South Africa's electorate but a full 6% of voters in the Western Cape.

But history has a habit of repeating itself. In 1948, Field Marshal Jan Smuts, arguably one of South Africa's greatest statesmen, was ousted from power by an electorate *gatvol* of Smuts's preoccupation with the international community. Smuts had served as minister in the Imperial War Cabinet in World War I; had conceived of the League of Nations; helped draft the United Nations Charter; and served as one of the key allies to

Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill during World War II. So important was Smuts to the Allied forces, a plan was concocted in 1940 for Smuts to become prime minister of the United Kingdom should anything happen to Churchill.

But the voters turned on Smuts in the same way they turned on the ANC.

After 30 years of ANC corruption, criminality, incompetence, and failure to deliver services to country, the people had simply had enough.

As the election results were announced on Sunday evening, 2 June 2024, it became clear that the ANC had lost 3.56 million votes compared to the election held five years previously.

The citizens of Gaza hadn't voted in these elections, and the Muslim community hadn't voted for the ANC either.

In the Western Cape provincial elections, where the ANC had banked on the Islamic vote to oust the DA, the ANC's support reduced by 9% from 28.6% to 19.55%, shedding 204 202 voters in the process. The Muslims had betrayed the ANC, co-opting it into their agenda, but failing to support it at the polls.

The example of Muslim betrayal is even more stark if you examine voting patterns in areas where large Muslim populations reside in the Western Cape.

We took the areas of Bo-Kaap, Woodstock, Athlone, Bonteheuwel, Valhalla Park, Rylands, Rondebosch East, Lansdowne, Salt River,

and Manenberg, and randomly selected 29 voting districts to analyse.

The results of the national election are stark. The ANC lost voters in 21 of the 29 voting districts analysed, although there was a major decline in voter participation throughout the province, dropping from 66.05% in 2019 to 58.64% this month.

As a percentage of votes, the ANC share of votes declined in 18 of the 29 voting districts analysed.

Ironically, many votes were lost to the vocally Israel aligned Patriotic Alliance.

For voters in the Western Cape, Palestine wasn't a central issue in deciding to whom they should gift their vote. Voters chose service delivery over radical ideology, and believed that the DA would deliver them and their children a better future. The DA has 12 Muslim councillors in Cape Town, the ANC none.

The ANC has been taken for a ride, it has been betrayed, and it should have learned the lesson that Chris de Burgh taught us all in 1982:

"Whatever you do
Don't pay the ferryman
Don't even fix a price
Don't pay the ferryman
Until he gets you to the other side"

• Howard Sackstein is a political analyst, and the chairperson of the SA Jewish Report. He writes in his personal capacity.

All eyes on Israel's north

>>Continued from page 2

spite of the evacuation order. We're going door to door, asking those in their homes to evacuate immediately."

Six IDF reservists and five citizens were treated for smoke inhalation.

About 15 active fire sites were reported in the Galilee-Golan region alone, which Israeli media said resulted mostly from rocket fire on a day as hot as 43 degrees centigrade in Kiryat Shmona and the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee).

Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett had harsh criticism for the government.

"These are tough days, but the sense that there's someone in charge, even in difficult

times, isn't a luxury, it's an existential need. We must save the north. The Galilee is going up in flames. The fire is spreading," Bennett said, referring to Hezbollah's intensified rocket and drone attacks.

"Beautiful and flourishing places have turned into heaps of rubble. Some residents who were evacuated are already planning their lives elsewhere. This is a grave strategic event, and can in no way be normalised. The north's abandonment is dangerous for our future. The prime minister must begin to manage, and now."

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir visited Kiryat Shmona for a situational



Firefighters in Kiryat Shmona fighting the blaze caused by rocket attacks from Hezbollah

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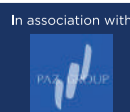
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assessment, on Tuesday, 4 June, and demanded "war" "They're burning us here. All Hezbollah strongholds should be burned, they should be destroyed. War!" he cried.

Hezbollah's attacks in the north have led to the deaths of 10 Israeli civilians and 14 Israeli soldiers and reservists.

On Tuesday, Israel's war cabinet convened to discuss the situation in the north. IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi stated that Israel was nearing a decision on whether to launch war against Hezbollah. "We're approaching the point where a decision will have to be made, and the IDF is prepared and ready for this decision. We've been striking here for eight months, and Hezbollah is paying a very high price. Hezbollah has increased its attacks in recent days, and we're prepared after a very good process of training up to the level of a general staff exercise to move to an offensive in the north. Strong defence, readiness for an offensive, we're approaching a decision point."

For the Israeli public, the situation in the north is becoming increasingly untenable and patience is wearing thin. The north is on fire, and the eyes of the world are shut. Israel needs to take decisive measures sooner rather than later. Our citizens deserve nothing less.

• Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.

'My faith is my super power', says Speedy Beatie

NICOLA MILTZ

Running sensation Beatie Deutsch is a Haredi Orthodox mom of five, the fastest woman in Israel, and a four-time Israeli marathon champion. She's frum and fearless and if you'd told her eight years ago that she would grace advertising billboards in bustling cities wearing her trademark headscarf, elbow-length shirt, and knee-length Lycra skirt, or that she'd captivate packed speaking venues with her motivational journey, she would have laughed in your face.

Back then, the most exercise she got was chasing her kids around her Jerusalem flat getting them ready for bed. "As an Orthodox mother, exercise was the last thing on my mind," she said, never mind becoming a professional elite marathon phenomenon with an Olympic qualifying time and a roomful of gold medals. All she ever dreamt of was to raise a religious family and "share the beauty of Judaism with the world and to make a difference for Jewish communities".

A family outing to the beach in 2016 was the turning point, Deutsch told audiences in Cape Town and Johannesburg this week, as she struggled to run 100m, and realised she needed to get in shape.

"I told my husband, 'That's it, I'm going to run a marathon.' I signed up so that I'd commit to the training." A mere four

Dubbed "Speedy Beatie" and "Marathon Mom" Deutsch, 34, visited South Africa this week with her son, Ben-Tzion, 11. She was invited by the Israel Centre, the South African Zionist Centre, Mizrahi South Africa, Elitzur, and the Partnership2Gether Global Network to spread her message of hope, resilience, and faith.

After 7 October, Deutsch felt her message no longer had relevance "because people were just trying to survive".

"However, when I heard my friends talk about their sons who had lost their lives and read their moving letters, I realised these boys knew exactly what they were ready to die for and if this was the case, then we need to know what we're living for. They died so that we could continue living as proud Jews," she said.

So, she continues to run, spreading her message and inspiring others to live their best life "in spite of the pain, suffering, and everything the Jewish world is going through".

"What this running journey has taught me is that we have so much more strength than we know. We're so much more capable than we realise," she said.

When she was offered an opportunity to become a professional athlete, she turned

to her rabbi for advice. He told her that she was "a one-time phenomenon", and it must be that she was created for a special mission. "With that, I pursued my professional running career," she said.

Deutsch may be a tiny 4ft11 (1.25m) but she's larger than life, a petite powerhouse with unwavering determination in spite of numerous health and injury setbacks and gut-wrenching disappointments.

Two months before the Jerusalem Marathon, she returned from a long run and felt depleted. A blood test revealed she had Celiac disease, and her iron levels were dangerously low. But true to form, Deutsch wasn't deterred. She cut out gluten from her diet, had an iron infusion, and went on to win. More important than winning, she said it gave her a platform to raise money for Beit Daniella, a rehabilitative mental-health centre for youth, which was named after her cousin, Daniella Pardes, who died by suicide at 14 after a

Continued on page 11 >>



Beatie Deutsch running with Malka Ella Comrades Marathon runners

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

We have every reason to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim

OPINION

RABBI JONATHAN ALTMAN



Our relationship with the city of Jerusalem begins close to the beginning of the recorded history of the Jewish people.

Our forefather, Avraham, is described in the Book of Genesis as going to battle with the four kings who had kidnapped his nephew, Lot. Upon his successful return with Lot, Avraham is greeted by Melchizedek, the King of Shalem, with wine and bread in celebration and recognition of his bravery, courage, and brotherly affection.

The city of Shelem is identified in rabbinic literature as the place of the modern city of Jerusalem. Thus begins the bond of the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov with the city of Jerusalem that plays such a central role in our lives.

The actual name, Jerusalem, enters onto the Biblical stage when King David acquired the land that would become the Temple Mount from Arvanah, the Jebusite who used it as his threshing floor. King David did it to establish that place as his royal city, the capital around which all the tribes of Israel would be united. He then gave it the name

"Jerusalem". However its spiritual uniqueness manifests in the building of the Beit HaMikdash (the Holy Temple) by King David's son, King Solomon.

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik expressed the idea that Yerushalayim was endowed with a unique *kedusha* (holiness) called *kedushat shechina* - the holiness of G-d's presence. Maimonides said the holiness that emerges from G-d is endless and infinite. It's a *kedusha* that lasts forever. The Temple Mount and surrounding city of Jerusalem are the *neschama* (soul) of the Jewish people and the spiritual centre of the Jewish homeland.

At the start of June 1967, Israel was in the grip of anxiety and fear. The threat of an all-out Arab attack on the 19-year-old fledgling state caused panic. In action reminiscent of war-torn Europe only 30 years earlier, people sent their children out of Israel amid pessimistic forecasts of tens of thousands of casualties.

Foreign Minister Abba Eban ran from country to country, finding no-one that would help us and in a similar refrain from today's "From the river to the sea" chant, Egyptian leadership threatened to throw all the Jews in Israel into the Mediterranean. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was heard to stammer lamely in a radio broadcast that the atmosphere was one of terrible despair.

As we have seen in the war in Gaza in 2024, in a series of miraculous battles and airstrikes in the six days of June 1967, the soldiers of the Jewish state fought with everything they had. Eventually, the surrounding hills of Jerusalem, the City of Hebron, and other important strategic landmarks were captured. But the words of General Motta Gur, "Har habayit beyadeinu" (the Temple Mount is in our hands) indicated our physical and

spiritual victory.

The joy was so great, we sometimes forget the despair and fear that preceded it.

28 Iyar will forever stand as the day in which we celebrate the reunification of the city of Jerusalem in the hands of *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish people). It marks a most significant day in the modern Jewish calendar. A day of celebration, and a day of deep gratitude.

Fifty-seven years ago, at the cost of many lives and with the experience of many miracles, we were given back the gift of davening at the Kotel, of enjoying the sights and sounds of our ancient holy city, and the ability to rebuild it into a modern icon.



The Kotel in the Old City of Jerusalem

In doing so, we witness the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, for we have merited to hear once again the sounds of joy and celebration in the city that was desolate. This is a cause for celebration.

Yet, this year, our celebration is tempered as the echoes of "Free Al Quds!" resounds in our national psyche, accompanied with the horrific images of the Black Shabbat of 7 October.

Let's not forget that for us, this is almost a normal situation. For the Jewish people, a place somewhere between absolute destruction and complete redemption is the place in which we are able to navigate the paradox of our emotions.

The Talmud teaches us that 10 measures of beauty were sent from heaven to the world, and nine of these were kept by Jerusalem, the rest spread into the world. The beauty of our capital city, of our holy, sanctified centre is that it's the place from which we can draw hope. The place in which we can dance and cry simultaneously.

Jerusalem is the place where our history of brotherly love began, as Avraham saved Lot, the first recorded hostage from the cruelty of his captors. It's the place where he was prepared to bring his son as a sacrifice. These lessons are the story of our beloved city. They are written in its walls and its very foundations.

On Yom Yerushalayim, we celebrate the miracle of the unification of the dynamic, vibrant, metropolitan, beautiful, and sanctified city of Jerusalem. The city we share with G-d Himself.

• Rabbi Jonathan Altman is the rabbi of Yeshiva Mizrahi Shul in Glenhazel.

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Litvak vote influential in poll for European Parliament

HOWARD SACKSTEIN

It's election season this year around the world, with the people of more than 50 countries going to cast their ballots. Fresh from the Lithuanian presidential elections, Lithuanians living in South Africa go back to cast their votes for the European Parliament this Sunday, 9 June 2024.

For those who didn't apply for a postal vote, a voting station will be available on Sunday, 9 June, at Beyachad, 2 Elray Street, Raedene Estate, Johannesburg, between the hours of 11:00 and 17:00. All voters must bring their Lithuanian passports or identity cards.

In anticipation of a hotly contested election, the *SA Jewish Report* interviewed one of the most senior members of the Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament), Emanuelis Zingeris, who is now standing for election to the European Parliament.

Zingeris has served in the Seimas since 1990, with a short four-year break in the middle, and is one of the signatories to the Act of the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania, which re-established an independent Lithuania after the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today he serves as chairperson of the Parliament's foreign affairs committee, heads the human rights committee, and is vice-president of

the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Zingeris is the son of a Holocaust survivor, who grew up speaking English and Yiddish at home with a strong, positive Jewish identity. His mother survived the Kovno Ghetto and the Stutthof concentration camp. His father fought against the Nazis in the Lithuanian division of the Soviet Army. His brother, Mark, who recently passed away, was one of the most respected poets, novelists, and intellectuals in Lithuania.

During a short break from Parliament, Zingeris founded and became the director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum in Vilnius, and is an honorary chairperson of the Lithuanian Jewish community.

He describes both candidates who contested the final round of the Lithuanian presidential elections as pro-North Atlantic Treaty Organization, pro-European Union, and pro-Israel, however the current prime minister, whose party Zingeris is aligned with, herself is more vocal in favour of human rights and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning or queer) rights.

What's worrying is that in the early rounds of the presidential elections,

a pro-Moscow candidate received 9% of the vote, the same candidate who was found guilty of anti-Israel and antisemitic remarks. Who are these voters, Zingeris wonders, and where do they come from?

Zingeris said it was important to have voices in the European Parliament that support a strong, united Europe, a strong defence pact, and a strong voice against racism, antisemitism, and anti-Israel rhetoric. It's up to us to ensure that those important voices get elected into the European Parliament.

In addition, he said Jewish communities around the world should be more vocal in explaining Israel's position in their own countries. On 10 October 2023, Zingeris proposed a resolution in the Lithuanian Seimas in support of Israel and against the Hamas terror attacks. It was passed overwhelmingly. Iranian support for Russia in its war against Ukraine has also assisted in turning Lithuanians in favour of Israel.

Luckily, the thousands of Lithuanians living in South Africa have a chance this Sunday to express their choice and hopefully send Zingeris to Parliament in Strasbourg and Brussels.

• **Vote in the Lithuanian European Parliamentary election on Sunday, 9 June 2024, from 11:00 to 17:00 at Beyachad, 2 Elray Street, Raedene**



Emanuelis Zingeris

Nervous times: the art of dealing with trauma

LEE TANKLE

"Most of us – if not all – have been born into a tapestry of ancestral trauma as the Jewish people." Peta Cline Feigin, local life coach and trauma therapist, told the EdJEWcation 3D conference on 2 June.

Feigin said that around the globe, Jews were now experiencing complex trauma – the experience of several different traumas as well as collective trauma.

Because of this trauma, our children are asking more and more complicated questions that don't seem to have an answer.

"When I hear those questions, like 'Why do they hate us?', all I can think is that our kids need to know. Our kids need to know what's happening. We can't lie, and we can't just say everything," she said.

"This tapestry [of trauma] runs deep. It has an impact on how we respond to the world. It allows us to build on our community. It allows us to identify when to rein it in and call in the troops. But a lot of the time when we're feeling despair, we fall apart at the seams," she said.

"It's about understanding how we can pull together," Feigin said. "When we're born into a field with pre-traumatisation, that's ancestral trauma. Knowing that we're descendants of the Holocaust, knowing our family history, we have a different understanding of how we connect in the world."

Feigin said our body processes trauma through our nervous system. "It witnesses whatever it is that we've gone through, and has a heightened experience," she said. In response to this event, our nervous system will respond and store that particular response in the unconscious mind – which Feigin equates to a five-year-old child.

"All of our nervous systems are communicating with each other," she said, "and the five-year-old is determining how we're connecting as well."

Adults need to know how to regulate their "five-year-old child" when responding to trauma.

"Our kids need to know that in establishing a connection with us, we're regulated."

Feigin said that when discussing largely emotional and triggering topics with children, we need to expand our vocabulary for the range of emotions we're experiencing, and share this vocabulary with children.

"We've lost our words because this is such an unspeakable time," she said.

She said she was among the broader community asked to help with some of the soldiers in Israel. She thought she had heard it all after seeing just one of them, but was quickly proven wrong.

"I was listening to one soldier telling of his

Exercise is a great way to deal with trauma



experience of opening up the ovens where there were babies and scraping people off the floor who were stuck with their blood and shrapnel and losing pieces of their skin. I was trying to help him, but I wasn't okay. It was my responsibility to make sure that my nervous system got back into check," she said.

While on Oxford Road in Johannesburg en route to the conference, she met another driver at a traffic light who gave her a negative look and pointed to the yellow ribbon Feigin had hanging in her car. Feigin phoned her husband after the incident while driving, and he asked her how she reacted. She said that when

confronted by this hatred, she just fastened the ribbon's bow.

In the face of adversity, we must be reminded that "our identities are secure, our nervous systems aren't", Feigin said. "Our responsibility is to do the exercise, literally and figuratively, to calm down these central nervous systems. It's our responsibility to make sure, whether it be through exercise, craniosacral therapy, reflexology, or trauma release exercise [TRE], that we get into our bodies to build up what we call resilience. Resilience is no longer the definition of how quickly you get back up. It's how you restore along the way."

Why shattered reality requires better Jewish education

LEE TANKLE

While the world changed for Jews on 7 October 2023, educational practices have also had to adjust, David Bryfman, the chief executive of the New York-based Jewish Education Project, told the EdJEWcation 3D conference of more than 350 Jewish educators in Johannesburg on 2 June.

"I can't walk into a classroom of young people today with a straight face and say unconditionally that those things which were true before 7 October, like that antisemitism is fringe or a war can't be won on social media, are now true today. And when my foundations are shattered, so too is everything else," he said.

"Recognising that we've all changed is part of the importance of what it means to be an educator today," said Bryfman whose extensive research into understanding Jewish adolescents brings a fresh understanding of what communities, religion, and organisations need to do today to deal with the new realities.

How and what Jewish educators are teaching pupils is vital, was the message from Bryfman and Mina Rush, the national director of Middle School Education at StandWithUs in Los Angeles, also at the conference.

"If a young person graduating from a Jewish school hears about the *nakbah*, Deir Yassin, or Rafah for the first time in a hostile environment on a college campus, we've failed those students," said Bryfman.

Rush said though Jewish education was exemplary around the world, there doesn't seem to be the same focus on Israeli education and how Israel fits into the lives of youth today.

She said one of the roadblocks she has experienced when tackling this topic is that students are given talking points and not the whole story. "If we're using bullet points, if we're arming our politics, if we're arming our students with this list of bullet points, do they have enough information?" she asked.

Rush and Bryfman believe that this isn't enough. Students must have the whole story to have a robust education.

"We need to be teaching Palestinian history to our children. But this mustn't come at the expense of Zionist history," said Bryfman.

"Because if we don't, we won't understand the reality of what is happening today. The reality of the situation is that two peoples are competing for the same land," said Bryfman. "As educators, we cannot ignore the objective truths on the ground."

Said Rush, "They must get their hands dirty with their intellectual curiosity, with their doubts, with their challenges, their questions, their reflections. That's how they

make meaning.

"That's how they build, with a teacher's help and guidance, a structure with a foundation so strong that when the ground starts to slip and when there's an earthquake like we're experiencing right now, it still stands strong," said Rush. "Talking points and advocacy isn't the answer."

"Jewish educators need to understand the words of South African Jewish educator Avraham Infeld that 'Jews don't have history, but rather memory' when it comes to Jewish and Israel education," Bryfman told educators,

"because if we have memory, it's ours. History happened to somebody else. Memory happened to me. I don't control history."

Rush told a story showing the importance of reinforcing young people's Jewish pride through Jewish and Zionist education. She received 300 phone calls in 2021 from Jewish parents saying that their children had been targeted by other students as well as by educators. They had apparently been told to "go back to the gas chambers", kids would get off the bus and a row of students would give them the 'heil Hitler' salute, and swastikas were carved into desks and painted on

Jewish students' lockers and backpacks.

Rush asked these parents how they "did Jewish" in their own homes, and to her dismay, most of the parents responded with silence.

"These families identified as being Jewish," she said. "They called an organisation that they felt would give them a proper Jewish response. They were being targeted. And yet, they had never had a meaningful conversation with their children about who they were, about what mattered most. And the first time their kid was confronted with it was through a hater."

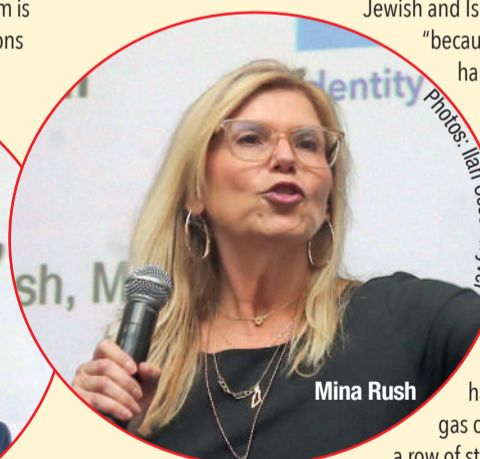
If parents wait for problems to arise to address issues of Judaism and antisemitism, they've waited too long, she said. "If we wait to have a meaningful, sophisticated, complex conversation about Jewish identity, Israel, and how Israel fits into that identity, then we've probably waited too long."

Parents and their teachers need to ensure that they understand these issues long before they are faced with them from the outside, she said. "The biggest sin of Jewish and Zionist education today is when a graduate of our schools comes out and tells us, 'you didn't tell me', 'you misled me', or even worse, 'you lied'," Bryfman said.

It's not acceptable, Rush said, that teens are being told what a Jew is, who Zionists are, and what Israel is from things like social media, and haven't figured out what it means for themselves.



David Bryfman



Mina Rush

Photos: Ian Ouseander/Ver



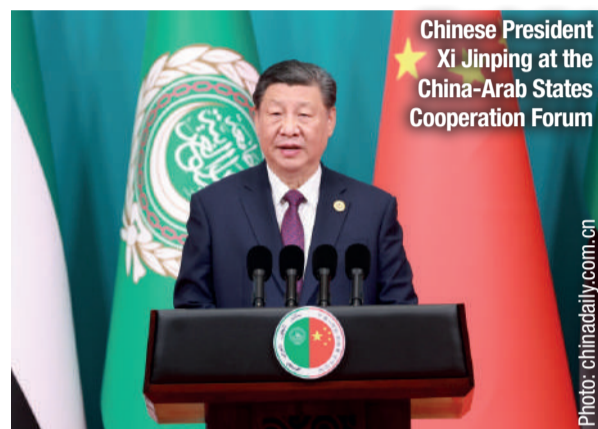
China's Middle East policy – doing the diplomatic dance



STEVEN GRUZD

While all eyes are on what the United States (US) says and does in the Middle East, another great power is flexing its diplomatic muscles in the region: China. In its new posturing about the Israel-Hamas war, this mega-power is showing that it's using this conflict in its broader rivalry with the West. By doing this, it's proving this battle to be a fight between East and West rather than a small battle between Israel and Hamas.

This was made evident at this year's biennial China-Arab States Cooperation Forum held in Beijing in May. The event was first held in Cairo in 2004. China has made it clear it wants to broaden and deepen its relationships with the Arab world and weigh in on the Israel-Hamas war on the side of the Palestinians, all while balancing its ties with Israel.



Chinese President Xi Jinping at the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum

Photo: chinadaily.com.cn

If it can annoy and challenge the US's global position, that's an added bonus.

"Twenty years since the first China-Arab countries' ministerial meeting, the breadth and depth of co-operation today is almost too much to fathom," said Lauren Johnston, associate professor of Chinese studies at The University of Sydney. "From brown and green energy fields to artificial intelligence and tech, digital currencies and finance, and collaboration along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – China's global mega-infrastructure development plan. Agreements for industrial co-operation in Egypt, and discussion of how to promote a better circumstance in the Israel-Palestinian conflict are likely to evolve over coming months."

"China has become more prominent in the region over the past few years due to increased oil buying and strengthened diplomatic outreach," said Dr Cobus van Staden, the managing editor of the China-Global South Project. "Brokering the Iran-Saudi reopening in 2023 was its biggest success so far. It also staged a meeting between Hamas and Fatah in Beijing in April. In that sense, it's becoming more of a factor."

Chinese President Xi Jinping said at the tenth forum in Beijing on 30 May, "The Middle East is a land bestowed with broad prospects for development, but the war is raging on in it. Since last October, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has escalated drastically, throwing the people into tremendous suffering. War shouldn't continue indefinitely. Justice shouldn't be absent forever. Commitment to the two-state solution shouldn't be wavered at will."

At the meeting, Xi said China supported a two-state

solution based on the 1967 borders and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. China "supports Palestine's full membership at the UN [United Nations], and a more broad-based, authoritative, and effective international peace conference," Xi said. He pledged almost \$70 million (R1.3 billion) for emergency humanitarian assistance in Gaza, plus \$3 million (R55.9 million) to the UN Works and Relief Agency.

In rare criticism of the Yemen-based Houthi militants, the Chinese called for the end of attacks on civilian vessels in the Red Sea.

The meeting adopted a hard-hitting statement, condemning Israel's "aggression against the Palestinian people"; and decried Israel's systematic destruction of Gaza. It called for the "end of the occupation of the territory of the state of Palestine" and condemned the

US for vetoing a resolution that would have recommended granting this proto-state full UN membership.

Among the leaders of 22 Arab countries represented in Beijing were the presidents of Egypt, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. Bahrain's king was there too. The foreign ministers of Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria also attended the forum.

China has been in the corner of Israel's arch enemy, Iran, buying its oil and providing diplomatic cover, loudly defending Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel, and

shielding Tehran at the UN.

But China is also pragmatic, and hasn't let the Palestinian question get in the way of doing thriving business in and with Israel.

Said Van Staden, "The China-Israel commercial relationship is shifting, but more specifically because of the Biden Administration's Inflation Reduction Act related to pushing China out of tech supply chains. More broadly, the two are happy to keep trading. Meanwhile, I think they both ignore China's long-term support for Palestine, which is part of its wider Global South connections."

Events like this forum help China to undermine US legitimacy and influence in the region, which is on the wane after it withdrew its forces from Afghanistan and Iraq. China's new assertiveness coincides with the narrative from Beijing that Washington is a self-appointed bully that unfairly dominates the international system.

But, experts say, expecting China to resolve history's most intractable conflict is both naïve and misplaced. "I don't think the Chinese particularly plan to replace the US's regional position or its role as a security provider," Van Staden said. "Rather, the crisis has allowed China to strengthen relationships in the Middle East and present itself as a responsible actor in multilateral forums to a Global South audience. It's difficult to say how that ranks as a priority compared to actually solving Mideast crises – the latter is complicated by a general commitment to non-intervention, which is interpreted differently at different times."

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

'My faith is my super power', says Speedy Beatie

>>Continued from page 9

struggle with anorexia. As someone who has struggled on and off with "distorted eating", her cousin's death had affected her deeply.

Though Deutsch is famous for her speed and positivity, she's no stranger to disappointments. The Tokyo Olympics was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the women's marathon was moved from a Sunday to a Saturday, meaning that Deutsch needed to convince the International Olympic Committee to switch the date or she couldn't compete. Then runners needed to requalify, beating a new standard time of 2:29:30 or ranking in the top 80.

"Sadly, while I ran a new personal record of 2:31:39 in England, I didn't make the cutoff. I was gutted.

"My ultimate dream is the Olympics, so I'm still chasing 2:29:30," said Deutsch whose Paris 2024 Olympic dream ended following a recurring hamstring injury which she says is still healing.

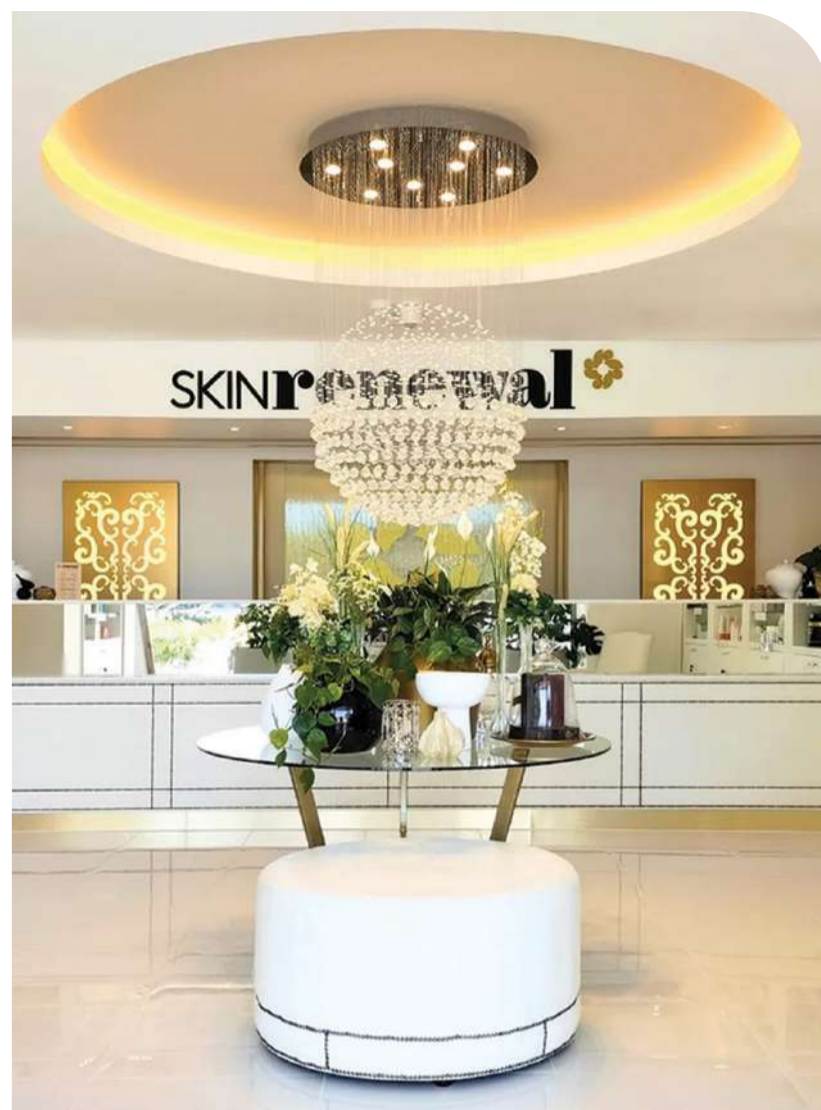
"My parents always said I was like a dog with a bone,"

said Deutsch who admits she's an "A-type, perfectionist, control freak".

"I've learnt to be patient, to have faith, and to stay the course. I've had to learn what it means to just show up and be ok with whatever happens on the day, and trust that if you know you did your best, then you can't ask anymore from yourself as a runner."

"My faith is my super power," she said, as well as her skirt, which has earned her many nicknames including "Dignified Queen" by top Kenyan runners when she trained with them in Kenya, and "Lady in the Skirt", which she heard on the sidelines of the 2019 Cape Town Marathon.

"The South African Jewish community is unique in that there's this special love, warmth, and connection, and that's what Judaism needs right now. I'm coming away from here inspired, knowing that we each have the power to change the world in our own small way. It's not about running, it's about life. We're all in a marathon."



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The most difficult commandment

OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN



The elections are over. And now? Is there new hope, or will it be more of the same? Though there may not be an overnight transformation, all agree that we've experienced a huge move in the right direction.

And now Shavuot is upon us. We'll commemorate the giving of the Torah and read about the great revelation at Sinai. With it, of course, comes the world famous 10 commandments.



'Thou shalt not covet' could be the most difficult commandment to follow

Which would you say is the most difficult of the "Big 10" to keep? Would it be the first, the *mitzvah* to believe in G-d? Faith doesn't come as easily to our generation as it did in the days of our grandparents. Children with aged parents suffering ill health who require much attention might argue that the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and mother", is the most difficult. Still others would say that number four, keeping Shabbos, cramps their lifestyle more than any other. Or maybe you're one of those Jews Jackie Mason referred to when he said, "Every Jew almost killed someone." Then, number six – not to murder – would be your personal challenge.

Though each has a valid point, I would cast my vote for the last commandment, number 10, "Thou shalt not covet."

You shall not covet your friend's house; or his wife, servant, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your friend. Or in simple English, don't desire his beautiful home, stunning wife, super-efficient personal assistant, nifty sports car, or anything else that is his.

It's one thing not to steal the stuff, but not even to desire it? That's got to be the hardest of all. Really now, is G-d not being somewhat unreasonable with this one? Is this realistic? Surely the Almighty knows we're not angels!

So, allow me to do what all good Jews do and try to answer a question with another question. As Golda Meir famously once answered a reporter who asked her, "Why do Jews always answer a question with another question?" Her reply? "Why not?"

Why does the text of this commandment first list a variety of specifics – "house, wife, servant" etc, and then still find it necessary to add the generalisation "and all that belongs to your friend"?

One compelling explanation is that it's to teach us a very important life lesson; a lesson which makes this difficult commandment much easier to live with. What the Torah is saying is that if, perchance, you should cast your envious eye over your neighbour's fence; don't look only at the specifics. Remember also to look at the overall picture.

Most people assume the grass to be greener on the other side. But we don't always consider the full picture, the whole package. So, he's got a great business and a healthy balance sheet. But is he healthy? Is his family healthy? The attractive wife looks great at his side when they're out together, but is she such a pleasure to live with at home? And if he should have

health and wealth, does he have nachas from his children? Is there actually anybody who has it all?

As the Yiddish proverb goes, everybody has his own little *pekkel*. We each carry a knapsack through life, a parcel of problems, our own little bundle of issues and *tzorris*. When you're young, you think difficulties are for "other people". When you get older, you realise that no-one is immune. Nobody has it all.

There's a famous folk story of a group of villagers who formed a circle, and everyone opened his own knapsack, revealing the contents for all to see. They walked around the circle of open parcels, and everyone had the opportunity to choose whichever one he liked. In the end, each one chose his own.

I believe it's more than just a case of "better the devil you know". When

we actually see with our own eyes what the other fellow's life is all about behind closed doors, what's really inside his knapsack, we feel grateful for our own lot in life and happily choose our very own *pekkel*, with all its inherent problems.

The Almighty gives us good advice. Be wise enough to realise that you've got to look at the whole picture. When we do, this difficult commandment becomes more easily observable. Not only is it sinful to envy what other people have; it's foolish. Because life is a package deal.

So here we are now in post-election South Africa. The ruling party was dealt a severe blow, with its support shrinking dramatically. What does the future hold? We don't yet know. Do we ever know?

South Africans have been coveting greener pastures around the world for decades. We assume the grass is greener elsewhere. But the truth is that every country and community has its own set of problems. You'll not find utopia anywhere on our planet.

Since I became rabbi emeritus of Sydenham Shul, my wife and I have been doing a lot of travelling. We've found it fascinating to see the sets of challenges facing every community.

Yes, America works. But look at Los Angeles. Once considered a paradise, today, people are leaving California in droves because of its "woke" ideology and ensuing lawlessness. Florida has growing Jewish numbers but the heat in summer is unbearable, and it has to contend with hurricanes. And many other Jewish communities, though larger than our own, don't have nearly the quality and quantity of Jewish services and facilities that South Africa has to offer. I can think of one with more than 100 000 Jews, including many South Africans, which has barely one kosher restaurant!

We're blessed with a unique community which is hard to replicate. Just ask the tens of thousands of homesick South Africans around the world.

My wife always reminds people that "the grass is greener on this side!" So, let's not violate the 10th commandment by being jealous of seemingly better places elsewhere. Enjoy your own *pekkel* right here. Actually, it's not a bad one at all.

• Rabbi Yossy Goldman is the life rabbi emeritus at Sydenham Shul, and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.

How Sinai singlehandedly changed us

OPINION

RABBI MOTTI HADAR



It was the sixth of Sivan in the year 2448. Seven weeks earlier, a nation of survivors walked out of the clutches of their oppressors. After more than 200 years of back-breaking slavery, torture, abuse, and horrors, the Jewish people were finally free. This was a nation that had been born into the depravity of Egyptian hedonism and idolatry. The Jews were at the lowest level of spirituality.

Seven weeks later, they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, witnessing the greatest revelation of G-d the world has ever seen.

In a dazzling display of thunder, lightning, and sound, G-d laid out his mandate for the Jewish people. I'm your G-d; believe in me; honour your parents; keep Shabbat; don't murder or steal; don't be a false witness; and more.

It was a transformative moment for the Jewish nation and the entire world. But what really happened? Didn't the Jews know about the *mitzvot* beforehand? We're taught that Avraham was the first Jew to discover monotheism and the truth of G-d singlehandedly. Did Avraham and Sarah not keep the 10 commandments and all of the *mitzvot* of the Torah? What about Yitzchak and Rivka? Yaakov, Leah, and Rachel? The 12 tribes? We know that they studied the Torah and observed its *mitzvot*.

If the Torah and its *mitzvot* were part of the life of a Jew since Avraham, what was so extraordinary about the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai that we celebrate it annually with the festival of Shavuot? How could you give something to someone if they already had it?

Two things changed at the giving of the Torah. Before Mount Sinai, those who observed Torah did so entirely of their own accord. They initiated the relationship based on their own logic, conclusions, and feelings. As such, their connection to G-d was entirely dependent on their understanding and emotions. However, at the giving of the Torah, G-d connected His essence to the Torah, and gave it to us. G-d reach out to us, from the depths of his core, commanding us to follow His will. Since then, every time we learn Torah or perform a *mitzvah*, we connect to G-d's essence, regardless of how much we understand or feel.

Secondly, the effect the Torah had on the world was permanently changed. Before *matan* Torah (the giving of the Torah), Torah and *mitzvot* were spiritual matters and didn't have an impact on this physical world. They didn't leave a lasting imprint on the material objects used to serve Hashem. At the giving of the Torah, however, G-d shattered the barrier between the physical and spiritual, between the theory and the practical, the sublime and the mundane. This fundamentally changed the way the world and its physicality would function forevermore. Torah and *mitzvos* would now affect, uplift, transform, and elevate this world.

Judaism isn't a religion of ideas; it's a religion of action. G-d didn't give us the Torah to use as a vehicle to separate ourselves from the chaos of this physical world. He gave us the Torah as the ultimate tool to transform this world into a home for Him, a world where peace and goodness reign. And every year on Shavuot, we receive this mandate anew. We celebrate being tasked with transforming the world around us, not through debate and meditation, but through our actions.

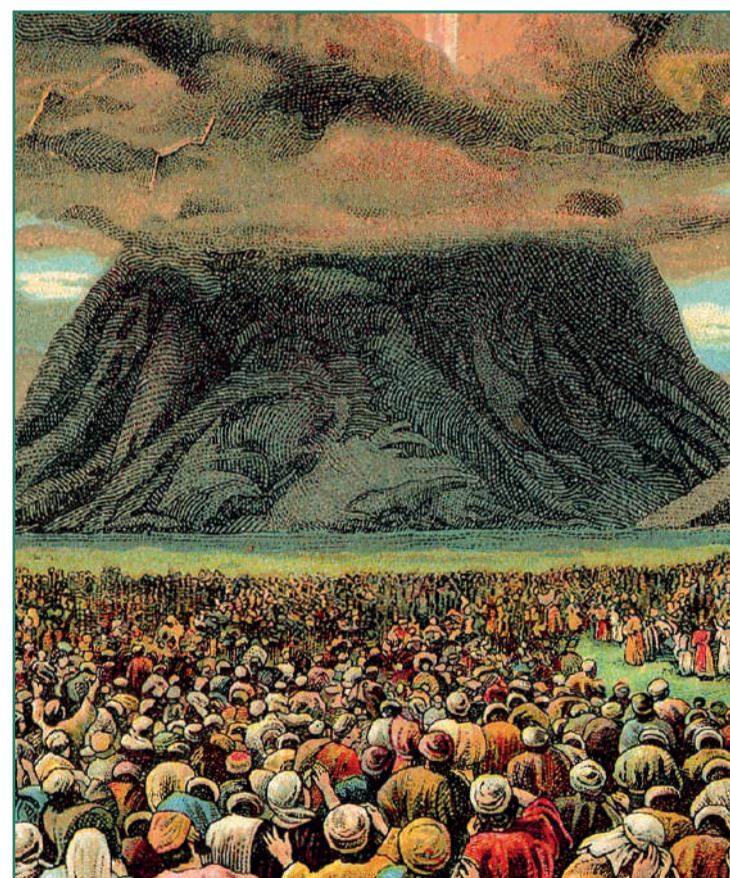
G-d deliberately created an imperfect world. We live in a chaotic world and turbulent times. Our nation has experienced the worst horrors since the Holocaust,

which continues until every hostage is returned safely home. On university campuses and across social media, we witness a terrifying rise in antisemitism. Closer to home, our country faces government corruption, failing infrastructure, service delivery failures, crime, and more. It's easy to be a passive bystander and shake our heads at the enormity of the problems we face as a Jewish nation or as a South African Jew.

But rather than being victims of our circumstances and focusing helplessly on the difficulties and challenges, let's remember that Hashem has given us the tools to be partners with Him in solving the problems we face. We have the power to make a difference, to make the world a better place, to bring order to the chaos, to make sense of the nonsense, and to turn a jungle into a home.

I'm grateful for the incredible, truly one-of-a-kind community that we have here in South Africa, its leadership, its infrastructure, its institutions, and mostly, its people. Those of us who have chosen to remain in this blessed country and beautiful land, among mostly wonderful people, have done so with an attitude that we can affect change, make our mark, and shape our future. This is done with humility, with constant reverence to Hashem, who ultimately runs this world and every aspect of it, and has given us His Torah as a compass and guide for life and for our mission and purpose. But with a recognition that Hashem has tasked us with the opportunity – and indeed the responsibility – to do that which is in our power to improve the world around us for today and forever.

Shavuot reminds us of the transformative power each of us has. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to make a positive impact on our surroundings. How can I help my local and global Jewish community? How can I make South Africa a home for G-d?



The giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai

And because G-d wanted to make sure you know that you're up to the task given to you at Sinai, he gave the Torah to survivors – people who had experienced the worst in humanity and left Egypt in the lowest levels of spirituality. G-d gave the Torah to imperfect, flawed human beings like you and me.

Don't tell yourself that you're not observant enough to make a difference or that your acts are too insignificant to create the change this world desperately needs. Every word of Torah you study, every prayer you whisper, every *mitzvah* you perform, and every act of kindness towards another creates a cosmic shift in our reality.

Let's each do our part to fulfil G-d's vision for this world, which he endowed us with at Sinai. Let's build a beautiful home for Him, for us, for our children, and for the future of the mighty *Am Yisrael!*

• Rabbi Motti Hadar is the rabbi at Pine Street Shul.

Sephardi Shavuot here we come!

Rifca Sommer is a caterer and cooking teacher who runs Rifca's Kitchen in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She's a proud Sephardic Jew, with both parents hailing from the small Mediterranean island of Rhodes.

SOULAC - RICE PUDDING

With a cameo appearance in the Netflix series *The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem*, soulac is a perfect Turkish themed Shavuot dessert.

Ingredients

2 heaped tablespoons of ground rice
½ cup cold water
2 cups milk
2½ tablespoons sugar
Cinnamon to sprinkle

Method

Place ground rice in pot and pour in the cold water.



Leave for five minutes to soak. Add milk and sugar, and bring to the boil over medium heat, stirring continuously until thick. Add a little boiling water if too thick. Serve in bowls and sprinkle cinnamon.

FONGOS - SPINACH AND POTATO BAKE

Ingredients

2 bunches spinach
4 eggs, well beaten
4 large potatoes, cooked and mashed
2 cups grated cheese (1 cup cheddar, 1 cup parmesan)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons oil
2 teaspoons butter

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Temperature: 180°C

Makes 12 squares and serves eight people



Method

Wash spinach well. Remove the stalks and shred leaves finely. Dry on absorbent paper. Place in a large bowl.

Add three well-beaten eggs, a quarter of the mashed potato, one cup of the cheese mixture, and seasonings. Place oil in ovenproof dish. Heat in oven for five minutes at 180°C. Pour spinach mixture into dish. Form 12 mounds of potato-cheese mixture and place on spinach. Dot with knobs of butter. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes. Serve hot or cold as a vegetable, cut into squares.

Golden brown and delicious cheesecake

Daniel Kusner, also known as Chef Dan, is a personal kosher chef from Johannesburg who has a passion for feeding people great food.



BASQUE CHEESECAKE

Ingredients

900g cream cheese, room temperature
300g sugar
6 large eggs
500ml heavy cream
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
80g all-purpose flour

Method

- Place a rack in the middle of the oven; preheat to 204 degrees celsius. Butter pan, then line with two overlapping (40cm by 30cm) sheets of parchment, making sure the parchment comes at least 5cm above the top of the pan on all sides. Because the parchment needs to be pleated and creased in some areas to fit in the pan, you won't end up with a clean, smooth outer edge to the cake. That's okay! Place the pan on a rimmed baking sheet.
- Beat cream cheese and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment on medium-low speed, scraping down the sides of the bowl, until it's very smooth, no lumps remain, and the sugar has dissolved – about two minutes.
- Increase speed to medium, and add eggs one at a time, beating each egg 15 seconds before adding the next. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then reduce mixer speed to medium-low. Add cream, salt, and vanilla, and beat until combined, about 30 seconds.
- Turn off the mixer and sift flour evenly over cream cheese mixture using a fine-mesh sieve. Beat on low speed until incorporated, about 15 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl yet again, and continue to beat until the batter is smooth, homogenous, and silky – about 10 seconds.
- Pour batter into the prepared pan. Bake cheesecake until deeply golden brown on top and still very jiggly in the centre – 60 to 65 minutes.
- Let it cool slightly. It will fall drastically as it cools, then un mould. Let it cool completely. Carefully peel away parchment from the sides of the cheesecake. Slice into wedges and serve at room temperature, preferably with a glass of sherry.



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'Like Ruth, I found my true way home'

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

From abuse to teenage pregnancy to observant Judaism, convert Batsheva Phillips hasn't had an easy journey, but today she knows she's where she's meant to be.

"The first question people ask when they find out I converted to Judaism is, 'What the heck is wrong with you?'" Phillips told an audience at Yeshiva College. "This question gets me every time because how can you explain a 10-year journey in a few sentences?"

Born to a conservative Christian family, Phillips always felt like the black sheep. Growing up in Constantia, Cape Town, living predominantly with her mother, stepdad, and younger brother, she moved frequently. "I had lived in 13 different homes by the time I was 16," she said. This included a move overseas to New Zealand.

As a child and teenager, Phillips was exposed to two opposite worlds. Her mother's was dominated by the church, something Phillips never fully related to. "My biological father was sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll," she said. With intermittent arrests and stays in rehab, her father was a constant source of disappointment.

"The first time I was on the receiving end of his physical abuse was at the age of 10," she said. "I learned to cover up many swollen and black eyes, split lips, and more bruises than I could ever count. I defended every girlfriend that he punched, every waiter, every neighbour that he'd get in a fight with. At the age of 10, I learned literally how to fight someone three times my size."

By the time she was 16, Phillips was living with her mom in Constantia and had fallen into a depression. "I got involved with the wrong people, trying to run away from reality. In my damaged head, I decided that I was going to figure out the world for myself and wanted to have a baby. The psychology, I think, was that I was going to teach my parents how to parent."

So she fell pregnant. "The most immature and irresponsible decision I've ever made is also the biggest blessing I've been given," she said. When her mother found out about the pregnancy, Phillips was given the ultimatum either to have an abortion or move out, so she left.

Phillips' mother eventually allowed her to move back home on the

proviso that she would give her baby up for adoption upon its birth. Phillips pretended to agree to as she needed a home and a way to finance her matric year.

Ultimately, she wrote her final exams when her baby daughter was six weeks old, pumping and dumping milk in the school bathroom. Nevertheless, she finished with some distinctions and a university pass and left her mother's home as soon as exams were over. Years later, Phillips and her mother reconciled, and today they are "besties".

On leaving home with her baby, Phillips lived with her daughter's abusive father. After a year, knowing that she couldn't let her daughter experience the same turmoil she did, she moved to Johannesburg.

Once she was settled with a job, Phillips reached out to family in Johannesburg who lived a "different" kind of life. "My cousin who had converted many years prior invited us to a meal on a Friday night," she said.

"It was a culture shock. These people were singing in an ancient language, they washed their hands and didn't talk and drank out of little wine goblets. When they did speak, it was really loud and bizarre. And then the food came out – there was meat, salad, kugels, dessert, and magic braided bread. It was like Christmas day on Friday night, but so much better."

By chance, her first friend in Johannesburg was also Jewish, and through his friends, her Friday night options and Torah exposure expanded. Eventually, she attended shul, which was somewhat overwhelming. A friend suggested that she try Reform shul where services were easier to understand, and Phillips began converting to Reform Judaism. Ultimately, she found it didn't resonate with her as much as orthodoxy did.

Trying to expand her Jewish friendship circle, Phillips joined the Community Security Organisation. "I met my future husband learning Krav Maga. I guess you could call it love at first punch," she said. His father is Jewish and his mother isn't, and they shared similar feelings about Judaism. After having their first son, they contacted the Beth Din and after six months of back and forth, they were accepted into the conversion programme.

In a fairly new marriage, with a newborn, a new home, and a new shul, the couple eventually began to feel the strain. Her husband spent every spare moment at shul or learning.

Running a busy household with kids and working full-time, Phillips began to feel growing resentment. Yet after therapy, they realigned.

Phillips also had to face the demons of her past, and eventually came to understand that although she didn't feel Hashem as she navigated significant challenges, he was always there, subconsciously guiding her. "Yet, I wasn't ready to embrace him. I needed to grow," she says.

Phillips urged community members not to take their Judaism for granted. "My husband and I have fought hard to be Jewish and to be accepted as part of your tribe. You've received the most incredible gift from Hashem."

Phillips relates to the story of Ruth, which features in the upcoming Shavuot festival. "Like me, Ruth was given a choice: she could walk away from Naomi and return 'home' and reclaim her identity, or she could stay with Naomi, leaving her home, city, status, and religion.

"The second choice, be it harder and more challenging, would be to continue my journey in Judaism with a staunch commitment to Hashem, Torah, and *mitzvot*. I inherently rejected the belief system that I was bought up with to fulfil my soul's yearning to be part of the Jewish people. Two years after converting, I still believe I made the right choice."



Batsheva Phillips

An extra 10 commandments for war in Israel

OPINION

For more than 2 000 years, humanity lived in darkness and confusion. The human imagination couldn't imagine one G-d responsible for all creation, who scrutinised human behaviour and held it morally accountable. In a tangled world of multiple gods, no common baseline of moral behaviour emerged.

The chaos and moral anarchy continued until, finally, Hashem delivered His word and His will to our nation. We were selected to live a godlike lifestyle, obeying a system of 613 eternal divine *mitzvot* which permeate every aspect of human experience.

Additionally, Hashem summarised this elaborate network of *mitzvot* by issuing 10 foundational commandments which, like to the stony luchot tablets upon which they were etched, are absolute and unchanging. The 10 commandments, by underscoring immutable religious and moral responsibilities, gave moral clarity to a muddled world.

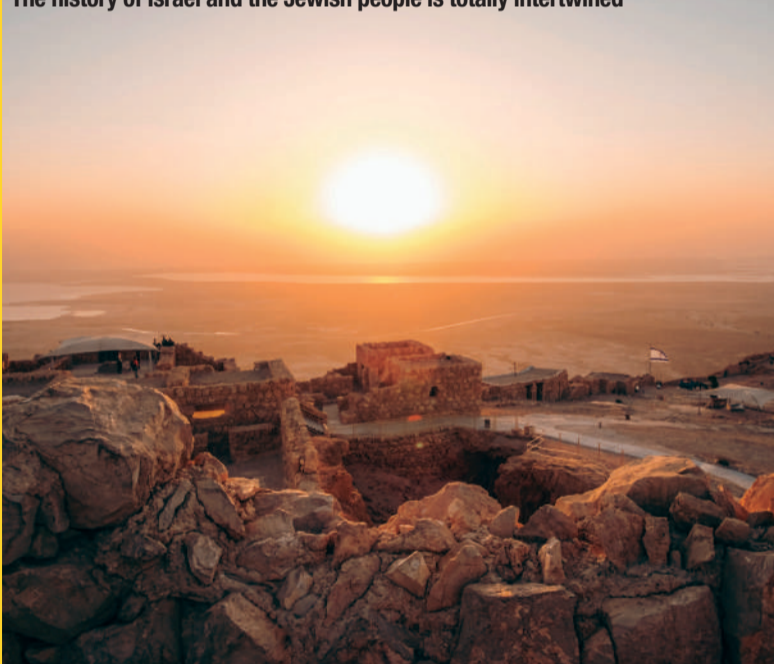
We're living through a baffling period of history. Our people and our land were viciously attacked yet we're blamed and denigrated with baseless and spurious claims. The world around us has gone berserk with hatred and antisemitism. This Shavuot, alongside the 10 commandments of Sinai we require 10 additional "commandments" or 10 guiding principles to provide clarity and sanity during our age of bewilderment.

Here are 10 fundamental doctrines regarding Israel, Jewish destiny, and Jewish universalism.

Hashem chose us as His people, tasking us with inspiring the world to higher religious and moral ground. We were awarded His land of Israel to better broadcast our divine message. In ideal conditions, Jewish presence in Israel provides broader benefit to the entire world. Jewish settlement of Israel is both a nationalist and universalist agenda.

We broke history. Originally, we were intended to establish a Jewish homeland

The history of Israel and the Jewish people is totally intertwined



and monarchy in Israel and to educate humanity through the nation state we assembled. After our repeated betrayals of Hashem, we were expelled from Israel and, for the past 2 000 years, we've lived on the margins of history and of society. We're slowly repairing that rupture, and gradually reconvening Jews into our ancient homeland. This gathering won't be swift, nor will it be easy. We continue to face domestic challenges and international opposition. Repairing historical breakdowns takes time.

Antisemitism is woven into the fabric of history. We serve as the moral and religious conscience of humanity, and no-one likes a whistleblower. Though antisemitism can be traced to political, economic, ethnic, and sociological factors, it stems from the larger truth that we challenge the world to higher ground. As antisemitism is programmed into history, it will end only when history ends. Over the past few decades, education and legislation have succeeded in dramatically curbing this hatred. Yet, in spite of our best efforts, the monster still lives. Just when we thought that Jew-hatred was a relic of an oppressive medieval past, we were

reminded that it's still very much alive. It will end only when history itself ends.

For years, we were cast as outsiders, a sub-human race of religious infidels unfit for membership in general society. We were both hated and marginalised. We weren't viewed as central – or even relevant – to human history. Now that we've returned to Israel, the tables of history have turned. Our battle to defend our homeland lies at the centre of a larger global battle of ideas. This is unsurprising. Israel is the land where human history began and where human history will end. We know it and, subliminally, the entire world knows it. For this reason, Jewish presence in the land of G-d is so hotly contested, and for this reason the battle over the land of Israel is integrated within a larger ideological and cultural struggle.

Arab violence against Jews has absolutely nothing to do with borders, refugees, or any other political factor. Regarded as religious heretics, Jews were discriminated against in Arab countries well before the state of Israel was conceived. We faced dozens of blood libels and pogroms unrelated to

Jewish settlement of Israel. In the past two centuries, our constant willingness to negotiate peacefully was met with Arab inflexibility and intransigence. We weren't the aggressors on 7 October, and have never been the aggressors in our peaceful attempt to settle a small parcel of our ancient homeland. Sadly, had the Arabs not been so consumed with hatred and violence, we would long ago have converted the Middle East into an oasis of prosperity. But history is too confusing for a TikTok generation of protesters with attention spans no longer than 15 seconds.

The application of "international law" to Israel has become farcical. International bodies, established to supervise and enforce international behaviour, have been hijacked by political interest groups and weaponised against our people. Condemning Israel in the United Nations or prosecuting us in The Hague gives the appearance of legitimacy to vile and repugnant Jew-hatred. Antisemitism has always taken two forms: raw violence by mobs complemented with government legislation. This wave is no different. We face military and legislative antisemitism. Nothing about this war has violated international law, though we may have violated the verdicts of kangaroo courts manipulated by antisemites. Block out the noise.

The sky isn't falling upon our people. We've suffered a horrible tragedy, and there's no easy or quick solution upon the horizon. However, the condition of our people has never been better in the past 2 000 years. In spite of our ongoing struggle, Jewish history has made dramatic strides. Our ancestors, who suffered far worse hardships, would gladly trade places with us. It's specifically during dark and depressing periods that historical perspective is crucial.

We're responsible for leading a moral lifestyle and conducting warfare ethically. We avoid indiscriminate bombing not only to appease international opinion but because of our own moral code. As the

people of Hashem, we're expected to try, as best we can, to protect innocent civilians. Hamas murderers and their accomplices must be killed or arrested but, to the degree possible, innocents must be protected. The unfortunate loss of civilian life is completely the responsibility of maniacal terrorists who exploit them as human shields. Battling murderers who have embedded themselves within citizens, we've conducted the most moral war in the annals of military history. Block out the cacophony of Israel bashing, and keep your sanity, while the rest of the world loses theirs.

The easiest way to repel hate is to retaliate with our own hatred, and this certainly hasn't been humanity's finest hour. However, in response to this loathing we cannot become misanthropic or lose hope in human potential. Currently, the world is confused. People of higher education from whom we expect more are acting foolishly and embarrassingly. Yet we must continue to believe in the divine potential of every human being and hope that one day, our current enemies will become our audiences as we deliver spiritual and cultural restoration. If we abandon this hope, we abdicate the Jewish mission.

As gloomy as our current situation may be, we know how this all ends. But knowing how history ends doesn't excuse us from struggling with it and attempting to improve it. What we don't know is how quickly it ends, and whose shoulders carry history to the finish line. One manner of negotiating tragedy is to take the long view of Jewish history.

• *Rabbi Moshe Taragin is rabbi at the hesder (pre-military) Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, with ordination from Yeshiva University and a Masters in English literature from The City University of New York. He's the author of 'Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below' (Kodesh Press), which provides religious responses to 7 October.*



RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Finding a happy place within Jewish youth movements

Jewish youth movements pave the way for leaders, enable children and teens to have healthy fun with others much like them – and it really doesn't matter which organisation they choose. The SA Jewish Report asked two channichim why they feel at home in the movement of their choice.

Young, Jewish, and free at Habonim

OPINION

LEAH RODENACKER



I've been part of Habonim Dror South Africa since they let me start going to camp. I joined Habonim because my family has been involved with "Habo" for a long time. My grandmother and my mom were both part of the movement. I remember my brother coming home from camp, singing camp songs, and just wishing I could be there.

And I kept on going, because there's no place on earth where you can be yourself freely like the Habonim campsite.

At camp, you don't care if people judge the way you dance, the way you dress, the way you live. You can just live. You can express yourself however you like. It's a space for productive conversation and debate to cultivate young Jewish minds. I created life-long memories and friendships I'm convinced I'll cherish till I die. I told my friends that once you go on camp, you start wishing all of your experiences were at camp. You would never think, 'I want to spend my birthday at camp' until you go. Then all you want to do is have your birthday at camp. Everything has an air of the unparalleled joy of youth. I loved learning about the world and my place in it. At *machaneh*, you get to be young, Jewish, and free.

I've been to three *machanot*. It would have been

more but for the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was in shorashim last year, and I had an incredible time. I reconnected with old friends and made new ones. So many of my best friends live in Johannesburg, and I grew close to them only on shorashim. I learnt about Israel's history, ate

incredible food, and experienced the culture. On that programme, I made memories that, with any luck, I'll carry with me throughout my lifetime. It really was incredible.

This year, I had the opportunity to go to April Sem. I was surrounded by my friends and *madrichim*, and it was special. We learnt about some of the issues facing the movement, and how the leadership works. We got a taste of what it would be like to be Habonim's leaders. It was empowering. I felt like we could do anything, and I believe that I and my fellow Habonim *channichim* will grow up to make important changes in the world.

By giving us knowledge, a safe space to think, learn, and grow, by teaching us how to navigate life, and by giving us the ability to believe we can, Habonim has allowed us to make the world a better place for all of the people who are a part of it. That's why I'm proud to be a part of this movement.

• Leah Rodenacker is a *shomrim chanicha* at Herzlia High.



Camping out with Hashem – why I love Bnei Akiva

OPINION

AYALA SIFRIS



Bnei Akiva's slogan, "*Am Yisrael be eretz Yisrael el pi Torat Yisrael*" (the Jewish people living in Israel according to the Torah) is the slogan of my life. I'm privileged to have been a part of this incredible movement from birth, to have grown up in the warmth of the Bnei Akiva *chevra*, and to experience the greatest moments of life – feeling Hashem's presence and finding true happiness – thanks to this organisation.

Bnei Akiva is a religious Zionist movement that offers an unmatched opportunity to connect to Judaism, Hashem, Israel, friends, and yourself through fun, meaningful, uplifting experiences, and fosters a sense of belonging and community.

Bnei Akiva emphasises Jewish identity, values, and a connection to the land of Israel. It has an ability to uplift the mere physical and make it spiritual. A bare field in Hartenbos is transformed every December to the pumping heart of Jewish youth, strangers are transformed into family, and an empty hall is transformed into a *Mishkan Me'at* (miniature *Beit HaMikdash*). Teenagers linking arms, words belted in unison – "they can kill our bodies but they'll never kill our souls" – wax dripping down fingers, and tears dripping down faces as hoarse voices shout in song to the heavens and the *shechina* rests on earth. Through shul, *tochniot*, *shichva* rivalry, *tish*, and *ruach*, the mediocre is made extravagant, and the soul that entered camp exits with a new, profound meaning of what it means and feels like to be a Jew.

Bnei Akiva focuses on the holistic development of its members, encouraging us to take on leadership roles, participate in community service, and engage in

meaningful Jewish learning. Through experiences such as *machaneh*, *hadracha*, *kfar* and gap-year programmes, *channichim* not only inherit a deep sense of belonging, but also a desire to give back.

Run by youth, Bnei creates an incredible, indescribable bond between *madrich* and *channich* as *maddies* aren't friends or parents but role models that guide and lead by example on the *derech* (path) of a young Jew in this world.

My *madrichim* are the people I look up to the most – teenagers and young adults who invest time and effort, sacrificing sleep and fun in order to shape me and so many others into the people we are today.

Bnei Akiva is more than a youth movement, it's a family. A family that values Hashem and Israel. A family that values Torah *ve avoda* (and work). A family that values youth, and a family that values experiences. A family that encourages young people to engage with their Jewish heritage, and contribute positively to society.

In these times of uncertainty and fear, although our army and people are prevailing, we continue to *daven* for the total annihilation of our enemies, the return of our hostages, and the coming of *moshiach*. As youth, we struggle to discover what we can do to help. Bnei Akiva helps every child master the ancient paradox of being a religious Jew and living in the modern world, between Torah *ve avoda*. To study in a yeshiva or midrasha and still serve our country. To master the arts and the sciences with a kippa on your head and a skirt on your knee. For as Jewish youth, we can change the world with a Magen David on our chest and fire and purpose in our eyes.

Kadima Bnei Akiva!

• Ayala Sifris is a Grade 11 pupil at Yeshiva College and is extremely dedicated to Bnei Akiva.



Home is where the heart is for revamped Bnei Akiva bayit

OPINION

SAUL JOSEPH



A bayit is a place where imagination expands, connections form, opinions develop, and family calls home. Bnei Akiva has recently been blessed to open its renovated bayit, a modern home fitting for a thriving movement.

In Tractate Sukkah of the Talmud (53a), Hillel the Elder is

quoted, in reference to the Beit HaMikdash, saying, "To the place that I love, there is where my feet take me." Nowadays, as our Temple still lies in ruins, our shuls and *Batei Midrash* (houses of Torah study) have replaced the Beit HaMikdash as the place of connection to Hashem and His Torah. Our shuls should be places which pull us toward entering, davening, and learning.

The foundation of the Jewish nation is our homes. On Shavuot, we look back seven weeks to the story of Pesach, a festival rooted in family. As Jews, we're one body, made up of units of families, each with their own traditions and shared memories. The differences that each family brings to our nation provides the tapestry of Judaism. It's for this reason that at the giving of the Torah on *har Sinai*, the Jews are referred to as

"*kol ha am*" (all of the nation). Had we been referred to as just "the nation", this would negate the power of individuals and families within the "all".

As the devastation of 7 October came to light, the most painful images were those of homes invaded, torn apart, and burnt

down. The symbol of peace, learning, and safety had been violently dismembered. We're still trying to reconcile ourselves with the tragedy, but we believe in the transformative power of building. It symbolises our undying belief that no matter what occurs, we'll continue, heads held high as Jews. The answer to the destruction of our sanctuaries is to rebuild a home based on our shared values.

Our bayit is what Bnei Akiva calls home – the centre of learning, prayer, and relationships. Within its walls lie generations of *madrichim* and *channichim*'s bonds, memories, and growth. It has become a place synonymous with connections

and positivity. The Bnei Akiva bayit has been a symbol of our belief system for generations.

We've experienced laughter and joy as we celebrated our Judaism, but we've also cried on one another's shoulders during the hardships our nation has faced. The bayit has been the physical manifestation of what we stand for. However, as a growing movement, we felt the need to reimagine the space in order to inspire the formative experiences it's meant to hold.

Where a father and mother once walked as excited teenagers, their sons and daughters now stand, no less enthralled than their parents. The bayit has allowed generations to understand why and how we act in the way we do – the customs we follow, the words of our *tefillot*, our love for the land of Israel, and how to hold oneself as an upright Jew in the modern world are a few of its myriad lessons. The bayit has added links onto the chain of Jewish thought and values that began at *har Sinai*.

The structure of the Bayit remains unchanged as its walls hold the holiness of years of learning and attachment between different generations. However, the fresh look aims to create a home for every Bnei Akivanik. Equipped with a beautiful shul, games room, action court, amphitheatre, and boardrooms, our bayit promises to provide the space for the continuation of the transmission of our ideology. It will be a place of warmth and happiness, bursting with inspiration and unity – a home.

• Saul Joseph is the national chairperson of Bnei Akiva.



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Boston takes high road with 46th Comrades Marathon

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Dr Vic Boston, set to run his 46th consecutive Comrades Marathon this Sunday, 9 June, hasn't yet reached a diagnosis for why he has run this race every year for nearly half a century.

The only time Boston didn't participate in the Comrades since 1977 was when it was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He's third on the most-medals list, with only two others having run more Comrades than the 64-year-old Boston. Ahead of him are 72-year-old Barry Holland on 49 medals; and Louis Massyn on 48. Holland, who has completed his 49th race consecutively, recently told the *Citizen* that 50 would "be enough for him".

"I've got 45 medals now," Boston says. "It's madness. Can you believe it?"

He told the *SA Jewish Report* he's motivated to keep going because of "the fact that I've done so much and I'm so near the top, I may as well try to get to the top".

Boston is one of the more than 13 600 runners who have completed



Vic Boston running in the 1982 Comrades Marathon

the Comrades more than 10 times since 1921, thus earning their place on the coveted Comrades Green Number Roll of Honour. Much fewer, however, have a Quadruple Green Number like Boston.

It was 60 years ago that the running bug bit Boston when

his father took him for a run in Linksfield Ridge Park. "My father started me off running, and I could feel how good it was for me," he says.

Boston did his first Comrades in 1977 as a 17-year-old. His best time was just more than seven hours, eight minutes in 1984.

He says he's feeling "all right" heading into the 97th Comrades, an up run. "To be honest, it's so many years and years of running, it takes a toll on the body. It's not running per se, it's running Comrades.

"Remembering all the downhill silvers I got, it eventually damages you." The race is downhill every second year.

Boston has also done multiple Two Oceans Marathons and Ironmans.

"So, of course, the body isn't what it was. But the Comrades is a great race. It has become harder and harder for me, not because of age so much but because of cumulative damage from years and years of running."

He has been running consistently ahead the race on Sunday, has done some gym work, and has planned meticulously. "You don't do the homework, you don't get through," he says.

"The training routines have changed. Today, they give you a programme where you are doing much less. But in the early days, if you wanted to achieve that silver, you ran a lot. So, it all depends on what one wants to go for. I like to run seven days a week, but if I need

to rest, I'll just take a day or two to recover. You're not going to lose any fitness by resting a day or two, certainly not if you do a swim. It helps you to recover. You've got to do at least 80kms a week during Comrades season."

Boston participated in the Comrades roadshow that went to several locations recently to empower its 22 500 entrants to prepare for this year's race. Local running legends spoke at each of its stops. Charne Bosman, the 2016 Comrades Marathon winner, spoke in Pretoria; and Boston spoke in Johannesburg.

"I talked about my experiences," Boston says. "I endorsed a lot of what [Comrades coach, Lindsey Parry] said, and I added a little bit. I gave training and nutrition advice."

Boston recently told Holland, who has done the most Comrades runs in the world and is apparently struggling with his knees, "Even if you don't run, you're still king. It's been so many years, it's cumulative damage, man. Compared to people who have done 20 Comrades, their body is still fresh."

Boston remembers his first Comrades because "you just go out and run. Your first is your easiest because you don't have to beat any previous times." Two other memorable moments were his first out of 17 silver medals, and doing his 40th Comrades when, he recalled, being surrounded by all his friends.

"During the run, you concentrate. You do look around at the changing scenery and see all the spectators. The whole thing is an experience. It's a difficult race. It looks a lot easier on TV. You've got to be prepared for it, and when you get to the race, you've got to pace yourself properly. It's a long and difficult day. The terrain isn't easy – up, down, up, down, and so on."

Boston advises first-time Comrades entrants, "Have early nights the whole week because you may not get much sleep the night before. Eat early on the night before, because you're getting up early and if you eat late, you may want to go to the toilet only at 08:00. Don't eat breakfast for the same reason. Generally, people aren't hungry at 04:00, so don't force it down. You'll have had enough food the night before. They've got toilets, but each time you run past a toilet, there will be a queue of five other runners. Eat what you're used to the night before – carbohydrates, fat, and protein. Protein is important to replenish after the race. Stay as close to the start as possible so you can just walk. I don't want to find a car at 05:00. Enjoy the race as a novice."

Boston will join thousands of runners outside Durban City Hall this Sunday for the up run to Pietermaritzburg. He says uphill is better logistically than downhill because the airport is in Durban and the weather isn't cold at the start.

Due to roadworks at the Umlaas Road Interchange, this year's race is 85.91km, the shortest route in Comrades history, nearly 820m shorter than the last up run in 2019. But, however long or difficult it may be, Boston will be there no matter what. I will be there no matter what.

Katz turns tables on big league players

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The one player sticking out like a sore thumb in the Senior Cape Town Table Tennis league is 11-year-old Milo Katz.

Katz is ranked in second place on the top under-11 table tennis players' leaderboard in South Africa. However, he's the only child in the senior league, and has been taking on adults in the sixth division of the eight-tiered league.

Having played in a junior league last year, this Grade 5 student at Herzlia Weizmann Primary School joined Boundary Table Tennis Club in Bonteheuwel, Cape Town, at the beginning of this year, and started playing for its senior team.

"My coach asked if I wanted to play senior league, so I said, 'Why not?'" Katz recalls. "My first match in the senior league was against Mitchell's Plain Royals in Mitchell's Plain. I enjoyed it, so I decided to continue in the senior league."

Each league match consists of six singles games and one doubles game, played at home or away. A team is comprised of three players, two of whom play three singles games each and one of whom will partner the third player in the doubles match. "I enjoy

it because I get a lot of experience," Katz says.

He loves how the table tennis ball moves and the different ways you can make the ball swerve and spin. He usually practices two to three times a week, and has a table tennis table at home.

Katz started playing table tennis with his brother, Joseph, when their mother bought them the table. "We fell in love with the sport," he says. His father, Anton, played table tennis as a child and now attends all of his matches. Joseph, 15, is a social player who plays for fun. He spends a lot of his spare time immersed in Cambridge Maths.

Katz had a memorable year last year when he came third in the Junior South African Table Tennis Championships and won the Free State Open for his



Milo Katz

age.

Katz, who also plays scrumhalf for the Hamiltons under-11 rugby team in Cape Town, hopes to continue improving and having fun with table tennis. "I also hope to get into the South African team and win the South African Table Tennis Championships," he says. "I would enjoy that seven-day-long tournament."

Playing in Bonteheuwel may be the perfect breeding ground for him to achieve these goals. After all, South Africa's top rated table tennis player in 2023, Theo Cogill, started playing table tennis at his primary school, E.A. Janari Primary, in Bonteheuwel.

In addition, Bonteheuwel-born Genevieve Lentz joined the Boundary Table Tennis Club in 1999, and went on to make history at the 2020 Olympics by becoming the first woman from Africa to referee table tennis at the Games.

Why voting sets us free

OPINION

DYLAN BERGER



The memories of many South Africans from 27 April 1994 are filled with emotions like hope, excitement, and relief. While for some other South Africans, that momentous day harbours emotions of irritation, impatience, and boredom.

As a five-year-old boy, I vividly remember my mother trying to appease me with Liquefruit apple juice and NikNaks while we waited in a never-ending queue outside Glenhazel Primary School for her to vote. The historic events that were unfolding blew over me like an African National Congress "Vote for Mandela" poster drifting in the wind – I just wanted to go home!

Fifteen years later, in 2009, I was no longer a none-the-wiser five-year-old, and I found myself queuing again at Glenhazel Primary School, ready to vote for the first time. I waved at neighbours, chatted to friends, helped carry an old man in a wheelchair up the stairs because there was no ramp, and made conversation with the people in front and behind me in the queue. The childhood trauma of 27 April 1994 had been reversed. Voting day felt good, and it has continued to feel good ever since.

Election day is much like when the Springboks reach a rugby world cup final. Of late, both take place in a cycle of three to five years and are filled with similar emotions – hope, a sense of patriotism, and a slight underlying feeling of anxiety. On both days, we're all South Africans just hoping for the best possible outcome.

Much like your car starting first time in the morning, free and fair elections are something we shouldn't take for granted. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was

democratic South Africa. It took many years of blood, sweat, and tears. This is possibly why we take the day off and go to the polls with a sense of purpose. We strategise about what time is best to go to vote, we co-ordinate with our friends and family so that we can arrive at the same time, we get the Jik at home on standby so that the ink doesn't stain our thumb for months, and we bring our best attitude on the day. After we vote, we post a mandatory ink-stained thumb selfie on family WhatsApp groups and social media, and we tell our families about the random conversations we had with people in the queue.

Elections day is South Africa's Pesach seder, where we celebrate the hard-fought freedom and liberties that thankfully many South Africans still enjoy today. We also remind ourselves where we came from and the challenges that lie ahead.

While our government does its level best to destroy any sense of pride we have as South Africans, when it comes to elections, it feels good to be a South African.

• Dylan Berger is editorial co-ordinator at the SA Jewish Report.



Voters queuing to cast their ballot at the Jabula voting station on 29 May 2024

'Besties' gone bad: Schimmel's new domestic noir

Joburg author and lawyer, **Gail Schimmel's**, new novel, *The Finish Line*, is hot off the press. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to her.

Just as soon as the fanfare about one of your novels dies down, another seems to be published. How do you keep doing it?

Over the past few years, I've managed to bring out one "Gail Schimmel" book a year, if we count *Chasing Marian*, which I wrote with three friends. This is mostly down to the rather slow process of publishing – it takes about a year from finishing a book to publication – and the fact that I need to write.

I've written eight novels as myself over the past 15 years, and I write cozy mysteries with Kate Sidley under the name "Katie Gayle". We bring out two of those a year, and we're working on our tenth book together!

Having said all that, I've had a really strange writing year, and I'm not sure we'll see a new "Gail Schimmel" in 2025.

Are your novels similar in theme or genre?

My own books are all so far more or less definable as "domestic noir" – the dark side of domestic life. Some are a bit more "thriller", some a bit less, but they all look closely at ordinary lives and then throw in a twist or two.

Can you sketch your process of writing?

I start with the idea, usually a "what if" moment that sometimes comes quite suddenly and sometimes has to be thought about for a while. I usually know where I want to be in the middle of the book and at the end, but not exactly what will happen in between. And then I write. I try to write 500 to 1 000 words a day when I'm in writing mode. The reality is that the only way that one gets a book out is by sitting down and writing until it's done. I'm quite a clean writer, which means that my first draft is close to what I'll give the publisher, but

obviously there's a process of editing and fixing after writing.

Are your books ever autobiographical, if so which ones and in what way?

The answer to this is a resounding no, except for the fact that they are set in my city, Johannesburg, and mostly explore the type of people that I know.

What sparked the idea for *The Finish Line*?

The idea for this book is unfortunately

completely linked to the first big twist, making it impossible to talk about! This is definitely one of those that came from a "what if", and quickly grew into a full idea. All I can say is that I was standing in the middle of my garden thinking, "Oh G-d, imagine if ..." and I suddenly thought, "Wait, this is a book idea!"

In this book, rivalry within female friendships is an abiding theme. What made you want to write about this?

I'm a bit obsessed with the theme of friendship, and often friendship gone bad. Women's friendships are incredibly important to us, and when they go bad, it's completely heartbreaking. But at the same time, one doesn't always go into a friendship as carefully as a romantic relationship, so, just like with romantic relationships, one can make really big mistakes.

Are there familiar themes and personalities that come through in your books? If so, what are they and why? If not, how do you constantly come up with new, unique characters and themes?

There are some similarities. Friendship is definitely a big theme for me, as are lies and betrayal. Someone once vaguely described one of my books to me, and I couldn't actually work out which one she meant!

But my characters are always new, although sometimes maybe the same type in that I focus on middle-class Joburg women, but I

try to give them all their own unique feel. For example, Brenda in *The Finish Line* is a woman who never feels like she fits in, a feeling that maybe makes her react badly in some situations.

There are so many different people in the world, so thinking of different characters is the part I find easiest!

Have you found a typical reader of your books? What's he/she like?

My books appeal to women more than men, although many men love my work. But other than that, I'm pleased to say that I seem to have fans of all ages and races and from all over the world.

There are many who are captivated by your books and can't wait for the next. What do you believe draws them in and keeps them there?

Because they explore the dark side of the ordinary, they could happen to any of us. Mostly, they involve personalities that you recognise and situations that you might have been in. And then they go pear-shaped, and the reader might feel, "Oh no, this could happen to me!"

How have your books done internationally?

The cozy mysteries, writing as Katie Gayle with Kate Sidley, are hugely successful. This is a weird and very specific genre – think *Murder She Wrote*.

With my own books, it's been up and down. *The Accident*, which was published as *The Aftermath* overseas, did really well. But one of the lessons of that experience was that with writing, you've never really "made it", and the last few books haven't been published internationally.



Gail Schimmel

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I told you so

Arguably one of the most annoying phrases known to man must be, "I told you so." For generations, wives have reminded husbands of their unheeded warnings, parents have shaken their heads at their ill-disciplined children, and outdated employers have made the dire warning to their employees.

It's also one of the phrases universally accepted as being pointless and irritating, and seldom achieves what it's meant to. Which is to force the recipient to learn from the error of their ways. And to recognise the wisdom of the utterer.

All this is why I won't be saying, "I told you so" when it comes to the African National Congress (ANC) and its approach in the lead-up to the elections. I won't be reminding it that to focus on a conflict in the Middle East rather than on the situation within the borders of South Africa isn't smart. And that to target the Jewish community, long known to be loyal to the country, is quite frankly stupid.

It would be fantastically classless of me to ask the ANC what it will be doing with all the Palestinian paraphernalia that it now has little use for. Will it store it at the top of the spare-room cupboard, donate it to charity, or sell it all at a massive jumble sale, marked "Everything must go!"

It would be ridiculously childish of me to enquire if it was, perhaps, interested in selling some of its air miles that it amassed from the four sojourns to The Hague – at a reasonable discount – or if alternatively, it could use those miles to send a few Jewish kids to summer camp in December. Local flights costing what they do.

Which is why I would never do that. I also don't need to. The Electoral

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Commission of South Africa's results announcement on Sunday evening, 2 June, was impressive from several perspectives. The most significant was the removal of all things Palestinian from the necks of the ANC. Whether it was compelled to return them by Sunday lunchtime, or if it collectively decided that it did them no favours, the Palestinian-free look was a visual signal that they were there to represent South Africans, and not others. It was refreshing, and it was comforting.

In addition, the dignified acceptance of loss along with the message that lessons needed to be learned was even more important, especially as it underscored the ANC's belief in democracy and respect for the wishes of the constituents.

Impressive as that might have been, the perceived betrayal by the ANC, the cold, uncaring treatment of the country's Jews has left them deeply distrustful and angry. For many, the damage is too significant, and it will take immense work and effort to bridge the gap between the ANC and the Jewish community.

The one factor that might assist in healing wounds would be a successful coalition between the Democratic Alliance and the ANC. Where I believe that this is the best way forward for the country in many ways, I also know that the ANC is forced to enter such an arrangement in order to stay in government is most likely the biggest "I told you so" of them all.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Dawn of a new era

Last week's elections brought about a seismic change to the political landscape, with the African National Congress (ANC) decisively losing its one-party rule after 30 years in office. Though the party will remain the dominant faction in whatever new government emerges, the all-but-unchallenged control it exercised in the three decades following the democratic transition is now a thing of the past, with the ANC receiving less than 50% support in the three most economically significant provinces.

We can now truly say that the country stands on the threshold of a new era. We can also say that the true winner of South Africa's seventh elections since 1994 is democracy itself. It was this that made possible the peaceful and lawful removal of a party that dominated South African politics for so long, something rare on this continent and indeed far from being the norm in many other parts of the world. Complex negotiations are now taking place to form a new government, at national level and in the provinces where the ANC has lost its majority. Following our #MakeUsCount pre-election education and awareness-raising campaign, which was again an inspiring success, we've now organised an "Elections 2024, the day after" event where experts will unpack the results and implications of this historic poll. It's taking place this Thursday evening, 6 June, so I urge those who are interested and haven't yet registered to do so: Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/atkm94fu> Meeting ID: 864 9856 1994 Passcode: 2024

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



A tragedy cynically exploited

We were deeply shocked to learn about the recent heinous and deadly attack on a Muslim family in Durban by a member of our community. The perpetrator has a history of mental illness and drug abuse, and reportedly knew the family he attacked.

Unfortunately and perhaps inevitably, given the context in which we live, certain factions were quick to exploit this appalling tragedy and use it as an opportunity to vilify and even threaten the Jewish community as a whole. Particularly shocking were comments outside the Durban Magistrates Court by the Economic Freedom Fighters KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Chairperson Mongezi Twala, who while addressing the crowd gathered declared, "Starting from today, we cut the ugly throats of the Jewish" [sic] and we must "cut the head of the snake". The South African Jewish Board of Deputies' KwaZulu-Natal branch is following up with its legal advisors in taking appropriate action against this criminal incitement, which is all the more inexcusable in that it came from the representative of a political organisation. In the statement released by the Board, we said it was "appalling and unacceptable that a tragic situation has been turned into a vilification campaign of the broader Jewish community" and that it was "reckless, bigoted, and inappropriate to hold all the members of a religion responsible for a reprehensible act by an unstable individual".

• 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

A column of the Astra Centre

A journey of purpose at Astra

In the bustling world of non-profit organisations, where the magic happens, goals are achieved, and the impossible becomes possible, every day unfolds as a new chapter in the quest for positive change. As director of Astra Jewish Sheltered Employment Centre, there's dedication, challenges, and moments of wholehearted impact.

At the heart of my journey lies a steadfast commitment to our organisation's mission. Each morning, as I step into my role, I'm reminded of the lives we touch and the difference we strive to make.

Navigating the intricate web of non-profit operations demands strategic foresight and adaptability. From charting long-term goals to navigating day-to-day challenges, every decision is infused with purpose. Collaborating with our dedicated team, we refine our strategies and leverage resources effectively to maximise impact. Whether it's refining programme initiatives or exploring innovative fundraising avenues, I strive to fulfil our vision.

It's not only about expanding our reach but also cultivating the potential within our organisation. Investing in our team's professional development, fostering a culture of innovation, and embracing



Mandy Edison
Executive Director

diversity enriches the fabric of our organisation. By nurturing growth, we empower our beneficiaries and staff to realise their fullest potential, fostering a spirit of excellence and resilience. Whether it's witnessing the transformational journey of those we serve or celebrating milestones achieved, each triumph reaffirms the significance of our mission.

Thank you to the committee, staff, and beneficiaries for their support, and for encouraging me along my journey.

As the director of Astra Centre, I'm humbled by the privilege of serving a cause greater than myself. Each day brings new opportunities to create meaningful change, to amplify voices, and to ignite sparks of hope in the darkest of times. Looking ahead, I'm filled with optimism, fuelled by the unwavering belief that together, we can create a brighter, fairer world, one day at a time.

• Listen to Mandy Edison's interview about Astra on ChaiFM: <https://www.chaifm.com/podcast/2024-05-10-astra-centre-mandy-edison/>

This column is paid for by Astra Jewish Sheltered Employment Centre

Letters

WHAT RHYMES WITH 'CAST CYRIL INTO THE SEA'?

I, too, was appalled to read your front-page report about South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's totally inappropriate decision to include the so-called "river chant" in his Soweto speech on 25 May.

There has since been a lot of (justified) ranting and raving over this inconsiderate, insensitive, subtle, and indeed slanderous insinuation against Israel – its status and promising future.

What else to do?

Well, I have a suggestion. Let's think up a rhyme or two to counter Cyril's serious slip-up.

Here are two (rather crude) examples:

"From sea to shiny sea

South Africa could be free indeed

Without the blundering ANC!"

(The seas would be the Indian Ocean in the east and the Atlantic Ocean in the west.)

Or:

"Sing a song of sixpence

A pocket full of rye

Without the errant Cyril

We really would be fine!"

Come on, you poets out there, put on your thinking caps and let's hear from you.

Remember that being humorous, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, and promoting a giggle could indeed be useful weapons in the current bitter war of words!

Wouldn't it be fun if some wealthy individual or institution could offer a prize – maybe first, second, and third prize – for anyone offering a suitable counter rhyme to the silly "river chant"?

It would be super if a South African bard could win a prize! You would become famous all over the world!

Need inspiration? Look up the Israeli national anthem.

– Paul Schamberger, Johannesburg

I'M SCARED AND PROUD TO BE JEWISH

A non-Jewish friend recently asked me what it felt like to be a Jew in these times. I thought about it for a few moments, and gave these answers: scared, shocked, and proud.

Scared because I live in a country where the government is a partner of Hamas. For the first time ever, I'm scared of Muslims, but I must add that I have Muslim neighbours who are wonderful to me and the best neighbours ever. I've also worked with some wonderful Muslims. However, I'm now wary of every Muslim I pass in the street. I won't take an Uber if I suspect the driver is Muslim; won't walk into a Muslim-owned store; and will never allow a Muslim into my home to do repairs.

Shocked. I'm shocked at the antisemitism around the world. I've never been able to understand why we're so hated. I wish someone could explain this to me.

Proud. I'm proud to be part of the South African and global Jewish community. We're stronger than any old boys' club. I'm proud of the fact that all Jews, no matter whether they practice their

religion or not, have stood together since 7 October. Assimilated Jews have come out of the woodwork, as have people who had a Jewish grandparent and don't practice Judaism. I'm proud of how American youth have stood their ground at universities, and conducted themselves with such dignity. Naturally, I'm most proud of the Israelis, especially the youth who, after 7 October, flew back to Israel from all over the world to face our enemy. I don't believe this would happen anywhere else in the world.

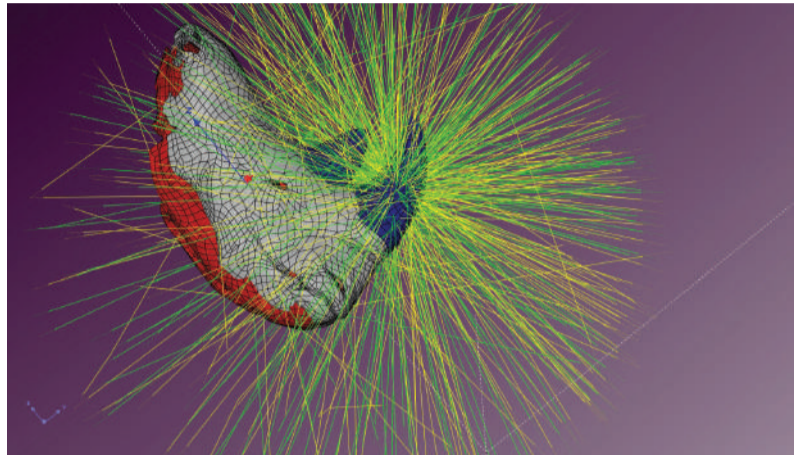
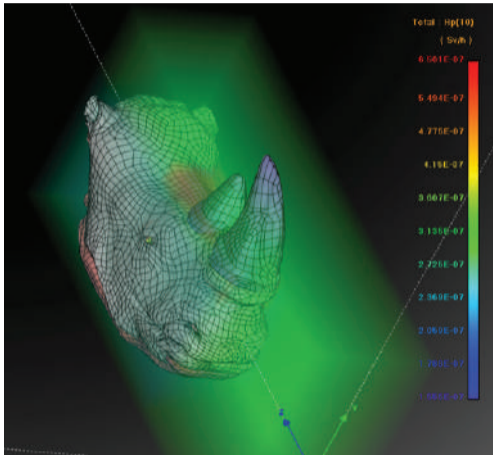
Maybe it's because we're so connected that people despise us, or maybe, as some people say, we're arrogant. But if so, we have a right to be, as Jews have brought so much to the world. We just need to look at how many Nobel Prizes we've won. They say that Jews take over everything, but is it wrong to want to be the best you can be? And, if we reach these heights, it's through pure hard work.

I looked at my friend and said, 'I'm proud to be a Jew and Zionist.' I assured her that Israel would always be there, and Jews would continue to thrive all over the world. – Sue Clague, Cape Town



Wits Rhisotope Project

The Power of Nuclear Science for Rhino Conservation



What if nuclear science could be the key to rescuing our majestic rhinos from the brink of extinction? This is what Wits University's innovative Rhisotope Project, an initiative that harnesses the potential of radioisotopes to protect our beloved rhinos, hopes to achieve.

In the Wits Rhisotope Project, science meets conservation in a revolutionary way, as measured doses of radioisotopes are delicately inserted into the horns of live rhinos. This innovative approach offers a non-lethal yet formidable solution, that has the potential to significantly diminish the demand for rhino horns and shield these magnificent creatures from the imminent threat of extinction, through poaching.

Science Saving Rhinos

By rendering rhino horns radioactive, we diminish their allure as a commodity. This heightened radioactivity increases the likelihood of detection at international borders, exposing smuggling syndicates to prosecution under anti-terrorism laws.

People Saving Rhinos

The Wits Rhisotope Project extends beyond science, fostering a strong philanthropic ethos. Our efforts focus on empowering communities through education and support initiatives, cultivating a new generation of rhino champions. Together, we enable communities to benefit from the presence of living rhinos, rather than mourning the loss of dead ones.

Rhinos Saving People

Wildlife crime ranks among the top four black market activities, ranking alongside drug-, human- and weapons trafficking. By combating wildlife crime, we can strike a blow against international terrorism, making the world a safer place for all.

Join us in the fight to safeguard our rhinos and secure a brighter future for generations to come.

Together, we can make a difference for good.

Visit <https://rhisotope.org/>



Zionist Leadership Academy in Italy



Photo: Arie Elkouby

Brendon Unterslak and Akiva Carr are representing South Africa at the Zionist Leadership Academy programme this year. The 10-month programme was established in 2021 by the World Zionist Organization and the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael (KKL-JNF) to promote future Zionist leaders. The programme, in its third cohort, aims to create an elite, cohesive, and united group of leaders from Jewish communities worldwide who are committed to the needs of the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

King David victorious in Pirates rugby challenge

The King David Linksfield (KDL) U16 rugby team won the Pirates School Challenge at Pirates Rugby Club on 28 May after beating Randpark High School 11-10 in the final. It's the first time KDL has won the U16 section of the challenge, and KDL's head of rugby, David Jordaan, is ecstatic at the result.



The victorious King David Linksfield U16 rugby team with the Pirates School Challenge trophy

"After a long season of ups and downs, commitment, and sacrifice, to win the league was an incredible achievement for the boys," he said.

Ice cream for president at Sydenham Preschool

Sydenham Hebrew Preschool took to the polls on Tuesday, 28 May, to vote for their favourite treat. On the ballot paper were Flings, ice cream, or broccoli.

There was plenty of pre-election campaigning, but in the end, ice cream won – it somehow always does! The voting was declared free and fair, and because Sydenham delivers, the children enjoyed ice cream before going home on Friday, 31 May.

Yeshiva boys make the cut for Gauteng Volleyball

Yeshiva College Boys High School continues to excel in volleyball, with five students selected to represent Gauteng at the Volleyball South African Junior U19 Inter Provincial tournament. Ari Elchai Zlotnick, Binyamin Sandler, Reuven Crouse (captain), Da'el Basserabie, and Jacob Hoffman will be off to the tournament in Mpumalanga in July.



Ari Elchai Zlotnick, Binyamin Sandler, Reuven Crouse, Da'El Basserabie, and Jacob Hoffman

Mina Lopato on track with new bike route

Mina Lopato Nursery School children took to the track on 31 May in a bikeathon to celebrate the opening of a brand-new bike route. The parents generously sponsored 14 brand-new bikes for the school.



Bikeathon at Mina Lopato Nursery School

Victory Park has 143 Day of gratitude to staff

King David Primary School Victory Park students celebrated 143 Day on Thursday, 23 May, by showing gratitude for the adults who support the campus daily, including its cleaners, gardeners, security personnel, and bus drivers.

143 Day is new tradition inspired by Fred Rogers Day in the United States, and is connected to the school's Cool to

be Kind campaign. The number 143 symbolises the words, "I love you", a phrase Mister Rogers considered the most powerful anyone could hear or say. In his commitment to this idea, he even aimed to maintain a body weight of 143 pounds (65kg).

For the celebration, students wrote heartfelt cards to campus support staff. The gesture was deeply appreciated, with many expressing their gratitude for the students' thoughtfulness.



Joshua Aremband and Frank Ralepele

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