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UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

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Bonny's Beat



By Bonny Feldman, Managing Editor Cape Jewish Chronicle

Keeping memories alive for future generations

Ella Blumenthal's biography, *I Am Ella*, was originally commissioned as a family record — not a book for the general public. But, writer Joanne Jowell soon recognised that the story should reach a wider audience.

Joanne explains: "Ella's remarkable life, her story of survival and hope, her deep love of people, her message of love and tolerance, her infectious personality and unbridled positivity... all this is extraordinary and deserves a universal stage. Every one of us can learn from her, and from so much more than her formative Holocaust years. It is her life beyond the war — to Paris, Palestine and South Africa — that shows us how to live life, create legacy, grieve losses and honour memory."

At the launch of the book recently, the story of its evolution from family memoir to published book got me thinking about our own experiences of events in our lives, and of the need to record the memories for family and future generations.

Only now that documentary films like Nancy Spielberg's *Above and Beyond* and the South African film *804* are being made, do we learn about the contribution of South African Jews to the survival of the new Jewish State in the 1948 war. If I had a family member who went off to help, I would have wanted to know more.

How many of us have considered our parents' lives in earlier times? Whether it's about their experiences of apartheid; what they recall of the War years; how the local Jewish

community felt about the Nationalist Party victory in 1948; or how they spent their free time — lives make interesting stories. And we get closer to family members when we share in their experiences and show interest in their past.

I challenge you — and myself — to sit down with family members or friends and ask some questions about bygone times. Get to know the person better — and, in the process, you'll be keeping a record of what could be a fascinating life story.

As for Ella Blumenthal's life story, you'll see a glowing review of the book on page 24 of this issue of the Chronicle.

Then, see the insights into how the needs of Olim have changed over the years. Read the Telfed article on page 9.

Another interesting piece — on page 26 — explores the competing rights in law of our national law and religious law.

See also the information about the Chayela Rosenthal exhibition at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, as well as the story of Leyb Rozental, Chayela's brother.

Temple Israel talks on page 16 about the lessons from our Biblical forebears that we can use to provide guidance on how to respond to corrupt leadership in South Africa.

Talking about leadership, Mensch focuses on the topic this month with its leadership programme and Mandela Day project. Find out more on pages 20 and 21.

We hope you enjoy the read!



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Date	Portion	Candle lighting		Ends	
		Earliest	Latest		
30 June/1 July	12 Tammuz	Chukat-Balak	16:46	17:30	18:25
7/8 July	19 Tammuz	Pinchas	16:49	17:33	18:28
14/15 July	26 Tammuz	Matot-Masei	16:52	17:37	18:32
21/22 July	4 Av	Devarim	16:56	17:41	18:36
28/29 July	11 Av	Vaetchanan	17:00	17:46	18:40

N.B. Please note that the times indicated are the earliest times for candle lighting. Please consult your Rabbi/local shul to determine their Shabbat acceptance time.

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Highlands House
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Moonyeen, our outreach maven

Mathilde Myburgh interviewed Moonyeen Castle, long-time supporter of Highlands House and Honorary Life Member as of 2022

I was born in Johannesburg, and lived in the early years in Cyrildene.

Things were so different in those days. I walked to Observatory Girls Primary School. From 12 to 17, I lived in Welkom, and those were the best years of my life. I am grateful that my parents made the decision to move — it was a small town, and the freedom was marvellous. I rode my bike all over, and I could run across the field to my friends. The Afrikaans and English children were integrated, and everyone mingled. I attended a convent in Welkom, where I learned new perspectives on our different ways of life and different faiths. While there may be upsides to growing up in a cocoon — such as improving your identity and sense of self and safety — I'm grateful that I didn't. I think it is important to know about other lives and find the commonalities.

The move to Cape Town

I'm a teacher by profession and studied in Johannesburg. I came to Cape Town on holiday, and luckily the convent in Welkom contacted me to advise about a vacancy at Good Hope Convent in Hope Street, saying they needed somebody like me. The familiar surroundings were comforting, and I thought this was my chance. Teaching at the convent was a great experience. I was enriched by teaching children who were raised differently than I was.

My parents insisted that I stayed with family friends, but they agreed to the move, realising that the most important thing they could do for their child was to let her go, and I tried to do that with my children, too.

While I was teaching there, I met my husband. I was 22 — we met in May, we married in December, and 55 years later, we are still together. I continued teaching, even after we got married. I decided not to have children immediately but, when I did, I stopped working. Those days, you became a mother and reared children, and most women did not continue with their careers.

From mommy to president

I missed teaching, and I knew that I needed to do more than being a mommy and fetching children from school, so I got involved in various community organisations. I was a Joburger who got involved in Capetonian Jewish life, rising to Chairmanships and Presidencies. I first got involved with the Union of Jewish Women. We lived in Rondebosch those days, and my friend attended Bnoth Zion WIZO meetings and invited me along. Back then, it was newly founded and there was great need in Israel, and I walked into a wonderful group of women who had a purpose and focus. It was a privilege for me to be involved and rise, as I later became Chairperson of the Rondebosch branch, and then I was invited to the Executive, and later elected as Chairperson of Cape Town and, quite recently, I served as President of WIZO South Africa.

At a later point, I taught at the Holocaust Centre for a couple of years. That was another marvellous

"I became the first woman in 104 years to serve as Chairperson of the Cape SAJBD. It was a challenge for the men, and my moves were closely scrutinised."

experience. Some children had never seen a Jew, and this space opened up their minds and hearts. It's hard to try and help people who come in with a certain perception to think differently, but for some, it had a great effect.

Being the "first woman to..." is not easy

In the 90s, I became the first woman in 104 years to serve as Chairperson of the Cape SAJBD. It was a challenge for the men, and my moves were closely scrutinised. Although there were women on the Board at the time, being led by a woman brought about frustration and inevitable change.

Being on the Cape SAJBD had wonderful benefits, including meeting wonderful people like Nelson Mandela and representing South Africa at the American Jewish Committee's centenary conference, attended by George Bush, Angela Merkel, Kofi Anan and other prestigious world leaders.

At the 100th anniversary of the Cape SAJBD in 1994, I was the Vice-chair and Dennis Davis the Chair, and we had a celebration at a hotel in town with a special opening evening. We had a 100-year-old Jewish man who ran carrying the Olympic candle down the centre of the hall to *Chariots of Fire*. It was memorable.

I also later became the Chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council.

I was involved with Afrika Tikkun, with the late Ann Harris, who did brilliant work. One has to give dignity to those who suffered indignity during apartheid, and one way to do that is to educate and uplift people, which spoke to my love of teaching and witnessing spiritual growth. We had a children's aftercare centre and cooked thousands of meals for people.

The President's Tea and the coffee shop

After my term for the SAZF, my friend Anna Berkowitz got involved at Highlands House and invited me along. It wasn't the Home it became in more recent years. At the time, it had a grim reputation. It's changed today and people seem happy. I enjoyed spending time with the residents and doing volunteer work. Anna was meant to be the President but, unfortunately, she stepped down, and that's how I became President. I loved it. I held the President's Tea once a month, and we'd have 12 or so people together, and Jenni Burnett (who's still an active resident) assisted me. Residents could open up on a one-to-one basis and air complaints — and they weren't shy. I'm sure food



Honorary Life Member Moonyeen Castle with current Highlands House President Stuart Hendler. Photo by Yolande Kretzmer-Keys

and air conditioning are still the two most-visited topics at the Home! Either it's wonderful, or terrible — and there's no in-between. I was grateful to Terry Berkow, who took over the Presidency from me. The committee I was part of did an incredible job and was a great group of people to be around.

I'll never forget a woman who was put out at being admitted to Highlands House, feeling abandoned, blaming her son and not speaking to him at first. Later, she had to swallow her pride, phone her son and thank him. She grew to feel secure, cared for with good food and medical assistance, and she made friends. She was so happy she had come.

One highlight for me was the ideation and creation of the coffee shop. I pitched the idea to Harris Burman and we secured a donation. It brought a whole new dynamic to the Home because people were no longer stuck in their rooms, and friends and family had a place to enjoy their visit.

Harris Burman changed Highlands House in his time, cleaning up the organisation and modernising things. I respect Dr Leon Geffen and his medical background, and I believe he's doing an incredible job with a new motivation and focus. He managed the COVID-19 pandemic incredibly well and ensured our residents felt safe and cared for and were vaccinated as soon as possible.

I hope for a bright, abundant future for Highlands House, and for many more people to get involved and feel that fulfilment.

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CONNECT, COLLABORATE, COMMUNITY

Are you an extrovert?

By Daniel Bloch, Executive Director, Cape SAJBD

“People who are extroverts are typically outgoing, have high self-esteem, are energised by being around other people, are socially confident and enjoy being in large social gatherings or public speaking. They also tend to be sociable and friendly.”
 (Definition from Google Search)

Throughout my life, I have always considered myself friendly, easy to talk to and sociable. Whilst I could easily stay at home in my pyjamas on these long cold weekends, I do enjoy getting out and spending time with other human beings. I also like to talk a lot, only because I like to share my opinions with others. In my previous career in events management and now within my current community role, having the skill and ability to engage with people, converse on a variety of topics and network constantly, has been and continues to be extremely important.

In my opinion, having the confidence to speak to people is sometimes more important than knowing what you are talking about. For example, when I started working on transport-infrastructure-related events, I had no idea what most of the terminology was or even what to talk about. However, I was comfortable talking to people, reading their

body language, assessing their tone of voice, and ultimately making them feel comfortable in my presence. Using these skills, I was able to persuade them to participate in my events. The more meetings and functions I attended, the more knowledge I gained about the industry, and the more confident I became in having in-depth discussions about my clients’ business needs.

Over the past two years, I have learned much about our community as well as our partners and key stakeholders. Coupled with a love of sport and an interest in general knowledge, I have been extremely comfortable in talking with Ambassadors, Consul Generals, religious leaders, government officials, political leaders, international organisations, media and more, covering a variety of topics. Just the other day, I met with the Spanish Consul General and discovered our common interest in football. Despite the fact that he supports Real Madrid and I Manchester United, we were still able to keep the meeting cordial and spent half the time discussing football and the other half discussing business.

Friends and family often ask me why I attend so many “boring” functions. Whether or not AGMs and book launches are exciting, most of the time I am there to support Board partners and affiliates

and to network. You cannot simply attend functions which you find entertaining. You have to attend those initiatives which are important to your client or stakeholder as it makes them feel important and shows your commitment to that relationship. In the same way I would watch a series or movie that my wife wants to watch that I wouldn’t necessarily have chosen myself. Sitting on the couch and enjoying each other’s company is more important than the actual movie. (The yummy snacks during the movie are another incentive to watch!)

I really enjoy attending these events as it allows me to learn more about the people, their organisations, their challenges, as well as to identify opportunities for collaboration. In the end, we are all part of one big community and a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions and ethnicities. We are all striving to ensure our communities are inclusive and are able to provide equal opportunities to each and every person. The best way to learn about one another is not by reading the mission statement on a website, but rather by engaging in a face-to-face discussion. And, if you can do so over a glass of wine and a plate of sushi, even better!



Uniting youth through sport: celebrating diversity on Youth Day

The Cape Board, in partnership with the Union of Jewish Women (UJW), Maccabi Western Province, and the SAZF Cape Council, organised a special event to commemorate Youth Day and celebrate the spirit of the Soweto Uprising.

The event took place at the sports facilities of Camps Bay Primary School and involved netball and soccer matches that brought together youth from various communities.

Maccabi Western Province co-ordinated the participation of Jewish youth, along with the Noluntu Soup Kitchen project from Khayelitsha, a group supported by the UJW. The Noluntu Soup Kitchen teams were provided with lunch packs for the day. The netball and soccer matches featured

mixed teams, with Jewish youth playing alongside the Silverstars Netball and Friends Football Clubs.

Vanessa Arelisky from the UJW expressed her satisfaction with the event, stating that the UJW had collaborated with the Noluntu Soup Kitchen for a similar event the previous year, which was a resounding success. Saul Jackson, Maccabi Western Province Sports Director, mentioned that the event generated a lot of interest, with full teams registering within the first few days of advertising the games.

The Executive Director of the Board, Daniel Bloch, emphasised the unifying power of sports, and expressed pride in participating in events that promote inclusiveness and unity. Heather Blumenthal, SAZF Cape Council Director, echoed these sentiments, highlighting how sport can

transcend boundaries and bring people together.

Overall, the event served as testament to the importance of embracing diversity and using sports as a means to foster unity and understanding among different communities.





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Empowering entrepreneurs, fuelling success: Entrepreneurs' Network

Joshua Friedman, Programme and Development Manager, Cape SAJBD, in conversation with Dawn Nathan-Jones, Cape Council Board Member and Associate Relations Chair

Entrepreneurs' Network Cape Town (EN) is a dynamic platform that has quickly become a catalyst for entrepreneur growth, skills development, and job creation. The brainchild of Dawn Nathan-Jones, a prominent business leader, entrepreneur and co-owner of Over the Rainbow (OTR), EN aims to provide small businesses with networking opportunities, growth prospects, and valuable peer-to-peer learning experiences.

How did EN begin and what inspired you to create it?

EN was established less than a year ago through a collaborative effort between the Entrepreneurs Organisation (EO), ORT Jet Cape, the Cape SAJBD, and Over the Rainbow. The initiative was born out of a post-Covid need to assist and support micro-businesses in their journey towards growth and success. By bringing together entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and cultures, EN fosters an environment where businesses can thrive, skillsets can be shared, and meaningful connections can be forged.

The inspiration behind EN stems from a desire to uplift smaller businesses and contribute to poverty alleviation in South Africa. By empowering

and enabling these businesses to flourish, EN believes that it can make a positive impact on the local economy. Active citizenship and social responsibility drive the initiative's commitment to supporting and nurturing small businesses.

What EN events have been hosted to date?

EN has organised several impactful events since its inception, each designed to address the needs and challenges expressed by the entrepreneurs themselves. These events have covered a range of topics, including venture capital for entrepreneurs, business registration processes, and sales skills training. Additionally, monthly forums are held to encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and personal development among the entrepreneurs, guided by the principles of the Gestaltdt Mindset.

What are some of its key successes to date?

The network's achievements in such a short time are impressive. To date, EN has hosted four large-scale events, each attracting approximately 60 entrepreneurs. Over 18 forum meetings have taken place, providing ample opportunities for collaboration and shared learning. EN members have also had access to 10 business and networking events organised by partner organisations. Furthermore, a facilitator and moderator training programme has been implemented, resulting in 14 qualified moderators who enhance the effectiveness of the network's activities.

EN's impact extends beyond knowledge sharing and networking. Approximately 10 new jobs have been created through the network's initiatives, with the potential for more in the future. Furthermore, EN estimates that it has facilitated approximately R10 million worth of new business through member-to-member transactions, highlighting the tangible results of its networking efforts.

What is your vision for EN?

First and foremost, to create jobs. In addition, EN is a pipeline or 'feeder' for entrepreneurs

R10 million
New business transacted

10
new jobs created

52
committed entrepreneurs

105+
hours of learning

130+
days of networking

50+
volunteers, mentors
and guest speakers



Entrepreneurs' Network is a joint initiative of the Cape SAJBD, ORT Jet Cape, EO and Over the Rainbow



Launch event with Simon Susman, previous Chair and CEO of Woolworths Holdings Limited



Panel discussion moderated by Lara Rosmarin



Alderman James Vos revealed the City of Cape Town's plans to mitigate loadshedding and improve ease of doing business



VC Event at UVU Africa



Happy birthday, Telfed!

Many of us will know from those who've left South Africa to seek a new life elsewhere, that settling down as an immigrant in a different country doesn't come easy.

In most instances, you're on your own when you immigrate. But Israel stands out for the unique aid it provides to newcomers. In addition to government assistance — such as, free flights and Hebrew lessons — the South African community is active in providing helpful guidance and information to assist immigrants to cope with the many challenges they will face as they transition into a new life.

And Telfed plays a core role in this transition. The fact that it turns 75 this year, at the same time as Israel's 75th birthday, is no coincidence. Telfed developed out of an initiative taken in 1948 when many in favour of a Jewish state volunteered to assist in the War for Independence. Over 800 South African volunteers risked their lives to secure the future of Israel, and many decided to stay on in the fledgling country after the Israeli victory.

According to Dorrn Kline, Telfed CEO, "Telfed was established by the South African Zionist Federation to assist the volunteers during their stay in the new State but it continued its existence since many of the volunteers chose to remain in the country."

Over the years, immigration from South Africa has tended to surge whenever there was a period of political or financial uncertainty: in 1960 with the Sharpeville massacre; after the Soweto unrest; after PW Botha's 1985 'Rubicon' speech; and following the Covid pandemic.

At its inception, the organisation's main focus was securing accommodation for the volunteers who remained in the country. This was the beginning of what became major housing initiatives for South African olim. In fact, in the early years, Telfed was involved in setting up 28 residential centres, creating new towns — Ashkelon being one of

the earliest — as well as kibbutzim and moshavim.

A primary focus of the organisation is the absorption of the new immigrants into Israeli society. This involves providing information prior to Aliyah to assist with making informed decisions, creating opportunities for social integration, and assistance with finding employment. In the earlier years, Telfed helped newcomers secure jobs, but, today, its work involves assisting olim to become employable in a different environment. "This includes relicensing for particular professions — ensuring that a South African qualification is officially recognised by the Israeli employer," Dorrn explains. "We have also recently embarked on a mentorship project — we match a new immigrant in a particular profession with someone from South Africa who's in the same line of work but has already established themselves in Israel."



Telfed CEO, Dorrn Kline

A further element of the work done is the provision of material assistance to needy olim. In addition, through initiatives undertaken in the 1960s, Telfed administers a number of trust funds from South African donors, providing around 500 scholarships for academic study. Scholarship recipients are required to volunteer to support olim with their integration.

Dorrn encourages South Africans keen to make a life elsewhere to consider Israel. "There are so many opportunities here," he says, pointing out that, because of the country's success in the technology field, anyone with tech or engineering skills is highly employable. "But make the decision as soon as possible. For youngsters, Israel is a fantastic place of opportunity," he concludes.

Israel stands out for the unique aid it provides to newcomers. In addition to government assistance — such as, free flights and Hebrew lessons — the South African community is active in providing helpful guidance and information to assist immigrants to cope with the many challenges they will face as they transition into a new life.





Turning wheels to raise money

What can be better than raising funds for a very worthwhile cause while doing what you really enjoy?

A group of keen cyclists recently had the opportunity to test this out when they participated in a two-day road cycle tour through some of the most beautiful parts of the Western Cape — and raised over R200 000 in the process.

Cape Town's Community Security Organisation (CSO), which provides security and emergency medical services to members of our community, was the beneficiary of this fund-raising initiative. According to CSO's Head of Fundraising and Marketing, Dani Janks, "This venture was the brainchild of a few cyclists who had previously taken part in the Hatzolah Cape Invasion Tour. They were keen to do something similar, and to benefit CSO in the process. So, they suggested the idea to us, and we were thrilled to accept the offer despite knowing that we would be under pressure to finalise the arrangements within the timeframe."

The group set a goal of securing at least 20 keen cyclists to ride the two



Back: Lionel Pamensky, Brenden Falk, Alon Sachs, Mark Isserow, Maon Saxe, Aubrey Miller, Stuart Hender, Darren Levy, Saul Gorin, Graham Rosendorff, Selwyn Shandel, David Cohen, Eitan Durbach and Matteo Coscia. Front: Tevin Hirshowitz, Raoul Miller, John O'Connor, Dana Gordon-Davis, Joel Gamsu, Mike Wohlman and Lynton Cassel. Missing from pic: Gary Palmer, Allen Jaffe and Saar Ben Tovim.

routes identified within a two-day time period. "It was great to see the interest in this cycle tour from members of the local cycling community," Janks says, commenting that 24 cyclists eventually signed up.

The tour took place on 21 and 22 May, with routes going from Stellenbosch to Franschhoek, Wellington to Tulbagh, and along Bainskloof Pass and back

to Wellington. The cyclists covered about 100km per day on these magnificent routes. While the weather on Day 1 proved to be a challenge, it didn't dampen the spirits of the riders.

The final stop was in the scenic Val Du Charon Estate in Wellington, where all 24 cyclists met for a closing lunch and the awarding of certificates and medals.

The youngest cyclist in the group, Cape Town Torah High Grade 10 learner, Matteo Coscia, 16, enjoyed the camaraderie among his fellow cyclists. "We didn't leave any other cyclists behind, and we would wait if someone was fixing a puncture or needed help," he explains. "And we had a great route leader in John O'Connor, the owner of John O'Connor Premium Cycling Store in Mouille Point."

The CSO team is extremely grateful to the cyclists for taking the initiative on this — and to their family members and friends who made donations via GivenGain crowdfunding pages. "Our sincere thanks too, to the companies who assisted with sponsorship — The DisChem Foundation, Vida e Caffé, Top N Nos, 32Gi, Revive, and Alligator," Dani comments.

With the first-ever CSO Cycle Tour now over, CSO has every intention to make this an annual fundraising — and enjoyable — event. They look forward to the next one, which they are aiming to make bigger and better.

So, if you'd like to join in next year and enjoy the beauty of the Western Cape while doing good, get your bicycle ready and start training!

Life without CSO UNIMAGINABLE

**We never ignore your calls
Please don't ignore ours!**

19 and 20 July 2023

#NEVERWITHOUTUS

Limmud - from AI to Zionism



The forthcoming Limmud Festival, on Sunday 20 August, promises to be a fascinating exploration of very diverse topics.

With expert presenters guiding attendees through a range of thought-provoking and informative sessions, participants will expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding of AI, Israeli society and Jewish tradition.

Let's dive into the speakers and topics



NEIL JANES is a knowledgeable and experienced rabbi, with extensive experience in Jewish education and research. Join him for a captivating conversation about AI *chavruta*, where he shares a sometimes amusing and occasionally worrying experience of asking an AI chat to explain a mishnah. Through discussing the relationship between AI and Forgotten Torah, he will also explore the connection between Talmud and AI Large Language Models.

DOV LIPMAN is a former Knesset member and expert in Israeli education and politics. He will explore the significance of living in the land of Israel in Judaism, as well as studying Torah sources that address Israel's role in redemption, while addressing challenges from an opposing view. He will also delve into the current issues and possible solutions to the ongoing tension around defining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.



OMER BENJAKOB is an investigative journalist who will present a captivating talk on Israeli Spyware and Cyber. He will take us beyond NSO, presenting a wider ecosystem of surveillance technologies and exploring the need for regulation of digital arms, as well as other privatised forms of intelligence. His session will be an eye-opening and informative experience for anyone interested in surveillance technologies.

In addition, Benjakob will get the audience thinking and discussing disinformation-as-a-service, a growing field in which these technologies are being used to spread malicious information.

From AI to Zionism, Limmud has something for everyone. With a diverse range of sessions, expert presenters, and challenging discussions, participants will leave with a greater understanding of many fascinating topics. Don't miss out on this exciting event.

Sunday, 20 August 2023

Jewish Community Centre, Hatfield Street

Watch our **website**, **social media pages** and **emails** for news on community events on 18 and 19 August too.

Tickets available from QUICKET. Join us at LIMMUD CAPE TOWN 2023 - you can buy tickets [here](#).

Limited space, so don't delay!

The above article was written by AI, but edited by a very human Limmud volunteer! Did you notice?



LIMMUD 2023

SYNAGOGUES OF SOUTH AFRICA



A historical photographic exhibition by Cantor Ivor Lichterman

26 June 2023 - 6 August 2023.



SAJM

South African Jewish Museum

88 Hatfield Street, Gardens | www.sajewishmuseum.co.za



COMMUNICATION & COUNSELLING SKILLS COURSE



Online Skills Course

This course introduces general skills for effective and empathic communication.

We will explore the basics of the counselling process and the core counselling skills that are vital for active listening. We will discuss how counselling is distinguishable from other types of conversations and interactions with a focus on important communication skills for daily interactions, whether at work or in relationships.

Skills will be acquired through theoretical input as well as through experiential learning, which includes role-plays and activities.

The course will be facilitated by

Sarit Swisa,

Clinical Psychologist.



DATES:

Monday 17th, 24th, 31st July
Monday 7th, 14th, 28th August
Monday 4th 11th September



TIMES:

17H00 – 18H30 via Zoom



COST:

R750-00

For further details, please contact admin@nechama.org.za or 021-465 9390 during office hours 08H30 – 12H30. Please note that you will not become an accredited counsellor after completing this course. Subsidies are available.



Chayela “Wunderkind” of the Vilna Ghetto Exhibition Opens

On June 18th, in partnership with the Lithuanian Embassy, the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre proudly opened the Chayela Rosenthal “Wunderkind” of the Vilna Ghetto exhibition to a capacity audience. The esteemed Lithuanian ambassador, H.E. Dainius Junevičius, gave a profoundly moving address. Adding to the emotional atmosphere, Aviva Pelham, a close friend of Chayela both personally and professionally, delivered an inspiring and deeply heartfelt video message.

Among the many poignant moments of the evening, Chayela’s daughter, Zola, shared her personal reflections on the unique experience of growing up with two Holocaust survivor parents and the profound significance of this exhibition, which delved into the history of

her family.

“20 years ago, on the 60th anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto, my sister Naava brought my mother to life through her one-woman show, ‘Better Don’t Talk’, in Vilna on the very same stage where our mother had performed as a 16-year-old. And now, here in Cape Town 80 years after the liquidation, through this exhibition, I have had the opportunity, with your help, to bring Chayela back to life.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a full public programme of lectures, screenings and concerts, focusing on the Jewish legacy of Vilna. For more information, please visit www.ctholocaust.co.za/events/. We hope to see you there!



CTHGC Chairman Richard Freedman, Zola Piatka Shuman, Trustee Myra Osrin, Exhibition Designer Linda Bester and Lithuanian Ambassador H.E Dainius Junevičius



Lithuanian Ambassador H.E Dainius Junevičius presents a book to Zola containing a chapter about her mother



A display case featuring dresses Chayela performed in and other personal artefacts



SUNDAY 2 JULY, 6PM FILM SCREENING: BETTER DON'T TALK

Screening of Naava Piatka’s internationally acclaimed musical performance piece about the remarkable life and times of her mother, Holocaust survivor and actress, Chayela Rosenthal.



WEDNESDAY 12 JULY, 6PM FILM SCREENING: THE PAPER BRIGADE

An award-winning documentary that tells the moving story of the resistance group “The Paper Brigade”, a group of Jewish writers, scholars, and librarians who desperately tried to rescue Jewish cultural treasures in Vilnius during the Nazi occupation.

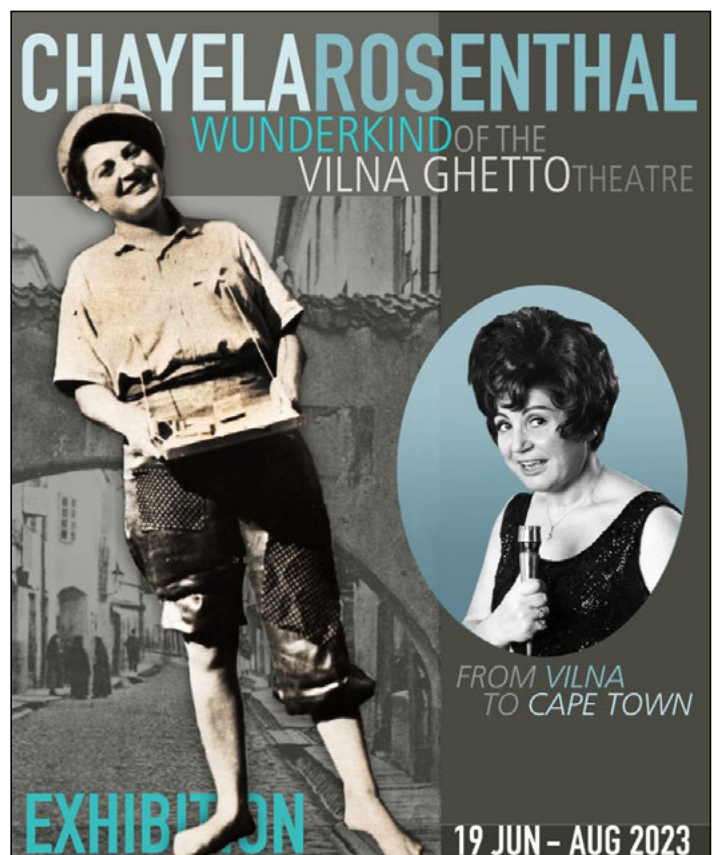
SUNDAY 16 JULY, 6PM RETHINKING YIDDISH THEATRE - NOW AND THEN

PANEL DISCUSSION: Dr Veronica Belling, author of “A History of Yiddish Theatre In South Africa: From the Late Nineteenth Century to 1960”. Joy Wilkin, daughter of parents involved in local Yiddish theatre. Rudy Nadler-Nir, trained Theatre Director, Producer and Co-director of “The Dybbuk”, and Aviva Pelham, South African opera diva who appeared with Chayela in “Fiddler on the Roof” in 1979. Moderated by Philip Todres



SUNDAY 30 JULY, 6PM FILM SCREENING: LEAH, TEDDY AND THE MANDOLIN

The documentary film celebrating 10 years of the annual Leah Todres Yiddish Song Festival 2001 - 2010. A story of warmth and spirit crossing generations and rekindling a special Yiddish spark in Cape Town.



Proudly presented by the
CAPE TOWN HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE CENTRE
2023 marks the 80th Anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto
Vilna (Vilnius) was once renowned as “The Jerusalem of Lithuania”



To book for these events, please RSVP to admin@holocaust.org.za or call 021 462 5553

A true *eshet chayil*: Sybil Castle z"l



Rabbi Feldman of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation was asked by someone what the female equivalent is of a 'mensch'.

Without much time to think it through, he replied, "Definitely, Sybil Castle". This perfectly sums up this wonderful Capetonian, a woman who touched many lives and was loved by all.

Her daughter, Elana, comments that, "Peoples' faces light up at the mere mention of her name; and the extraordinary outpouring of love and support in the wake of her sudden passing are testament to her kind, friendly and generous nature and her outside impact in the Cape Town community."

Sybil's involvement in the Cape Town Jewish community goes back many decades. As was the case with Leyb Rozental (see the article alongside), she played an important role in the promotion of Yiddish, teaching the language both in person and online in Cape Town, while at the same time sharing her immense love for the language, history and culture.

Elana continues, "Numerous Capetonians will remember her for the beautiful hand-illuminated and personalised *ketubot* that she lovingly created for Jewish couples, many of them proudly displayed in homes all over the world."

In addition, she drove the outreach programme for Jewish children in government schools, leading an initiative to teach Jewish religion in these schools over a 20-year period. Her focus on education continued in later years, when she served as a Holocaust educator.

Sybil also gave of her time and enthusiastic spirit to many other organisations in the community, including being a lifelong member of Bnoth Zion/WIZO.

While the sudden passing of Sybil Castle leaves a void for many, her impact will live on in the many happy memories that remain.

A gifted songwriter and literary figure: what would he have become had he survived the Holocaust?

By Bonny Feldman

The doyenne of Yiddish theatre, Chayela Rosenthal, grew up in a world of Yiddish words and music.

Her older brother, Leyb (known as Leyb Rozental, the difference the surname being because of the use of an assumed English spelling of a Yiddish name), was a gifted writer, who would probably have become a huge star in the field of literature and theatre, had his life not ended at just 29.

Success came early, with the publication of a book of poetry at the age of just 14. And, while still a schoolboy, Leyb helped out at his father's Vilna-based daily Yiddish newspaper, *Der Ovent Kuryer/The Evening Courier*, becoming involved in many activities relating to the publishing trade, including writing new chapters for American serial romance novels that the newspaper published.

While still in his teens, Leyb was commissioned by a local theatre to write songs and comedy sketches. Despite his youth, they were successful among an adult audience. He also wrote material for the performance of puppet theatre.

When just 18, Leyb began publishing a newspaper in the town of Lida, called the *Lider Folksblat (Lida People's Newspaper)*. At this time he became a socialist, highlighting the rights of the proletariat and showing an affinity with the Jewish working class. At times, his political views got him into trouble with the authorities but he continued with his work. This led him to focus increasingly on writing for the stage. Believing in the power of music as a means of communication, he wrote songs that many people would sing, thus repeating his messages about society and life.

For Leyb and his socialist friends, the arrival of the Soviets in Lithuania in 1939 was a moment of victory, and he began composing songs in praise of the Soviet Union. These proved popular, and Leyb became a well-known name when his songs were played on the Vilna radio.

These happy days soon ended,

NOTE: Cape Town resident, Zola Piatka Shuman, did not know much about her Uncle Leyb at all. It was only during the Covid lockdown, when she began going through boxes of material that had belonged to other, now deceased, family members that she discovered the story and the brilliance of the uncle she never knew. Thanks to undertaking this huge task, Zola has recreated the life of a gifted man, and her work brings renewed appreciation of the music of her Uncle Leyb.



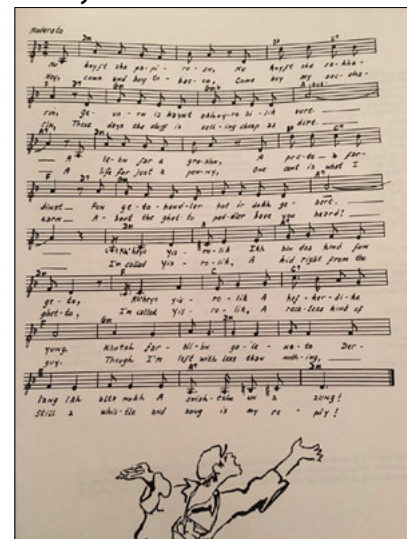
Siblings Chayela, Leyb and Mary circa 1938-40

however, with the 1941 invasion by the Germans. Leyb and Chayela's father was murdered soon after the arrival of the Germans, and Leyb had to take some daring steps to avoid capture.

Leyb, Chayela, their sister Mary and their mother were forced to leave their home and move to the Vilna Jewish Ghetto. In due course, Leyb became involved in the mission to save valuable Jewish manuscripts — an initiative known as 'The Paper Brigade'.

The opening of a ghetto theatre provided Leyb with the opportunity to produce far more material, and he wrote songs that have become entrenched in the legacy of Yiddish literature from this period. The most well-known of these is *Mir Lebn Eybek (We Live Forever)*, and it typified the messaging that Leyb aimed to convey: to provide hope to those trying to survive the awful conditions in the ghetto.

In September 1943, with the liquidation of the ghetto, Leyb was sent to a forced labour camp in Estonia. There, he continued writing new songs, all geared to memorialise the Jews of Vilna and the horrors they faced under Nazi occupation. By this time, the vast majority of Lithuania's Jews had been killed, and a year later, knowing that they were facing defeat, the Germans undertook the murder of the remaining Jews, including Leyb, who died just a few days before the arrival of Russian troops, who liberated Lithuania from



the Nazi yoke.

Leyb Rozental's contribution to the Yiddish language and to the recording of the horrific actions perpetrated against the Jews of Lithuania was huge. As recorded on the [website*](#), put together recently by his niece, Zola Piatka Shuman, "... Leyb left for posterity an important document about their thoughts and state of life, a picture of men, women and children, of workers, lovers and the elderly, all in songs and narrative, in comedy and drama — a ghetto kaleidoscope of events."

Had Leyb survived the War, he would probably have found international fame as a writer and musician. His story highlights an important element of genocide: that the actions of perpetrators of hate remove so much talent and skill from the world.

*<https://chayela.com/leyb-rosenthal/>

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Cape Town teens focus on innovation in business

The benefits of sharing ideas — of different minds coming together — was recently seen in an entrepreneurship and innovation programme involving Grade 11 learners from Cape Town and Johannesburg, who joined forces with some of their Israeli peers.



Unistream Cape Town participants with Heather Blumenthal (front left) and Yvette Rosenberg (back right)

Through The Jewish Agency's Partnership2Gether (P2G) programme, these young people were given the opportunity to work with other teenagers from environments different to their own, bringing together a range of skills and individual talents geared to enhance the work of the team as a collective. This comment by Herzlia High learner, Aidan Kusevitsky, perfectly summarises the value of this: "The cross-cultural exchange of ideas and experiences was truly invaluable. Engaging with individuals from different cities and countries broadened my perspective and enhanced the experience."

Heather Blumenthal, Director of the SAZF Cape Council explains, "P2G connects over 500 Jewish communities in the diaspora with 45 Israeli Partnership areas. We in South Africa work together with people from the Beit Shemesh area, connecting teachers and learners through a variety of different initiatives."

One such initiative, Unistream, uses Israel's focus on innovation to promote entrepreneurial skills among teenagers across the globe. Yvette Rosenberg, Cape Town organiser of the programme, says, "The teens selected worked together with others from other centres — in our case, from Johannesburg and Israel — to collaborate on an entrepreneurial venture of their collective choice. They learned about problem-solving through collaboration, as well as about a range of business skills, and were guided by mentors identified for their own business success."

The mentorship provided through the programme certainly made its mark, as is clear from the comments of participant, Dani Cohen, "I enjoyed

working with mentors who are extremely skilled and helped guide us through the course."

Networking with peers with similar visions for their futures also brings benefits. According to Yali Albedas from Cape Town Torah High (CTTH), "I had the chance to build a robust network of people who share my entrepreneurial aspirations." These connections could well result in new business startups in years to come.

A valuable element of the programme is that it provides both theoretical learning and the practical application of innovative ideas. Ethan Werb, a Herzlia High student, comments that, "One of the differentiators of this programme is that not only are you taught the skills of modern-day entrepreneurship, but that you have an opportunity to put these skills into action through projects. We took an entrepreneurial journey through designing our very own product."

During June, the South African/Beit Shemesh programme reached its final stages, with the presentation by three groups of their business ideas, all of which relate to the development of a mobile app to meet a particular need among a group of people.

Yvette is enthusiastic about how the Cape Town learners fared, commenting that, "The 15 Cape Town participants from Herzlia High School and CTTH did us proud. Watching them conceptualise and develop an idea and bring it to its final presentation was incredible."

The participants certainly felt that the experience was a worthwhile one. As CTTH's Eitan Robins Kallmann says, "It was exciting to think about what we as individuals can create to change the world and hopefully make the world a better place."

Shabbat blessings!



Every Friday, come rain or shine, our amazing Christian Zionist friends stand outside Parliament in support of Israel.

To show our appreciation and gratitude, SAZF Cape Council Mancom member, Hayley Cohen, went to stand with them, bearing a gift of challah for each member of the group.

This challah represents more than just a delicious bread: It symbolises the bond between our communities and the re-establishment of these precious relationships. It is a reminder of the warmth and love that exists within both our communities.

Their support of Israel is much appreciated. Am Yisrael Chai!

WINTER APPEAL

cold, winter DONATE

Drop off points by Wed 5 July:

- ♥ UJW office - 7 Albany Rd Sea Point
- ♥ Call us to collect donations

Tel: 021 464 6714



Habonim Dror Southern Africa is globetrotting

The June/July period is shaping up to be a massive month for Habonim this year with multiple international events happening. Firstly, a group of 15 Grade 10s will be going to Israel this July on our Shorashim programme. Shorashim is always a highlight of the year, with the tour consisting of the classic experiences on offer such as the Dead Sea and Masada. Also, a group of 30 of our madrichim are jetting off to Budapest to run Camp Hallelujah (also known as the Hallelujah Project). Camp Hallelujah is a programme run by Habonim Dror Olami



for Jewish children around the world, with kids from countries such as Sweden, Israel, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Switzerland all attending.

Nofesh is coming soon to our beautiful Onrus campsite, and will kick off on 11 July. It will be unique compared to everything we have run before, and will serve as a mini-vacation for Grade 7s to 9s. It's going to be a week of live music, outings and activities that will be sure to act as the perfect refreshment to end off the holidays.



Being proudly based within South Africa as a bustling youth movement, Youth Day is a significant moment, encapsulating core elements of what Habonim prides itself on. This includes high quality informal education and youth empowerment that emerges from our programmes as chaverim develop their own identity and passions. Keep your eyes on our social media platforms to stay informed about ongoings within the movement and collaborations with our broader South African network.

In other news, we have secured a brand new Bayit to hold our events, house our movement workers, and act as a centre for movement activities within the Cape Town Habo community. An exciting location for the Bayit situates us in Sea Point, around the corner from the Marais Road Shul. This opens many opportunities for engagement with the core location of the Jewish community within Cape Town today. So, chaverim, ex-chaverim and community at large, please contact us to come visit, get acquainted with the space, and meet the people running Habonim today.

Aleh V'hagshem! Sasha Rodenacker, Rosh Bogrim

Bnei Akiva CT: giving back

This month, Bnei Akiva Cape Town had our second Chesed Day of the year.

Madrichim and Channichim came together early on a Sunday morning to create farming beds in a small-scale South African farm which will be used to grow vegetables and feed the local community. Farmer Nonza told us that our work saved her six weeks of hard labour! Thank you to *Mensch* and the *South African Urban Food and Farming Trust* for helping us co-ordinate the day, as well as the amazing madrichim and chanichim who made this Chesed Day a reality!

Grade 11 channie, Feigie Shaman, gave her thoughts on Bnei Akiva as a movement, "I think Bnei Akiva is the most amazing organisation. I feel comfortable with everyone there, and I also strongly stand for their values. Bnei allows channies to build connections and leadership skills, and provides unique opportunities. I love Bnei and I am so grateful for it!"

As the month comes to an end, we are all patiently awaiting Winter Camp headed by Jethro Klitzner, in his role as Rosh Winter Camp, and Eden Lipshitz as Sgan. When asked how she is feeling about Winter Camp, Eden said, "Winter Camp 2023 is going to be unforgettable! I am absolutely pumped to treat all the channichim to the best five days filled with games, music and even a bit of mischief. I am totally looking forward to sitting around the bonfire and creating the best memories with the best people!"



Sign up now for the most amazing five days!

Kadimah Bnei Akiva! *Written by Jessica Conné*

Bringing the heat this winter season

One of the highlights of the Netzer calendar is our Winter Hadrachah Machaneh. With our two oldest age groups, *Shemesh* — Grade 8s and 9s and *Keshet* — Grade 10s to matrics, and our incredible group of madrichimot, we have an insightful and inspiring week planned, filled with Hadrachah training and much informal education on Reform Zionism, Progressive Judaism, Tikkun Olam and Youth Empowerment. Our theme for this Winter Camp is *Nilmad V'Na'aseh* (we will learn and we will do). We can't wait to teach our channies the importance of this phrase as well as learn from them about how and why it is so relevant in their lives.

Alongside our Winter Machaneh, we run another programme for our younger channichimot from Grades 1 to 7, referred to as our Day Camps. This is where we introduce our channichimot to the beauty of Netzer spirit, giving them tastes of Netzer values through informal education and fun experiences as we go on outings across Cape Town. With a city with such variety to share with the youth, we involve ourselves in all sorts of activities, such as: decorating pottery at Clay Cafe, roller-skating at RollerCade, going on hikes at Kirstenbosch, and much more. We bring



Netzer maddies and channichimot at Clay Cafe

the Netzer spirit to life by incorporating services and peulot into these activities, whether on top of the mountain or next to the dam at Silvermine. To end the week we will be having a sleepover to give the channichimot a taste of camp and remind them of the fun, excitement and bonding element that being with your Netzer friends overnight gives.

Written by Ghaim Atash and Daniella Beswick

Consider This

Moses, Shemaiah and Spider-Man – Lessons in the Responsibilities of Power

By Rabbi Malcolm Matitiani

The Torah, by way of the mitzvot and the example set by Moses, teaches us about the responsibilities of leadership.

In *parashat shoftim*, the Torah stipulates the mitzvah of *egla arufa* (Deuteronomy 21:1-9). When a murdered person's body was found outside a town and it was not known who caused their death, the judges from the Great Sanhedrin would measure the distance between the corpse and the surrounding towns.

The elders of the nearest town to the corpse had to bring a heifer that had never been used for any work and break its neck in a riverbed that had not been tilled. The elders then washed their hands and made a statement absolving themselves of any guilt for the murder: "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done" (Deuteronomy 21:7).

The Mishnah (*Sotah 9:6*) questions the need for such a denial of guilt – surely the elders are not suspected

of committing the crime? It then answers by stating that the elders need to scrutinise their own actions (or lack thereof) and declare that they did not cause the death of the unfortunate victim whether directly or indirectly. The Rambam, in his commentary to the Mishnah, explains this ritual and declaration as a demonstration of the all-embracing, comprehensive responsibility borne by leaders who must proclaim that they did not sin or transgress in the matter of the deceased, which would be tantamount to having caused their death. In other words the leaders had to declare publically that they did not create the conditions that made the murder possible.

In another Torah passage (Exodus 38:21-31) Moses voluntarily disclosed an audit of the materials used for the construction of the *Mishkan*. Since the materials were gifts from all male Israelites over the age of twenty, Moses gave an account of the amount of the gold, silver and copper that was used for overlaying the sacred utensils and for the casting of sockets and clasps. While no one would question his honesty, Moses demonstrated his integrity by publically divulging the amount of precious metal and how it was used so that no suspicion could be levelled against him.

The Mishnah (*Avot 1:10*) quotes Shemaiah who taught, "Love work. Hate authority. Don't get friendly with the government." Rambam explains this mishnah as follows: A person should love work because if a person is unemployed they will suffer financial hardship and may resort to crime to survive. "Hate authority" means: do not seek office because power can lead to wickedness. Getting too close to those in authority can also lead to moral corruption as people attempt to aggrandize themselves with those in power without thought

to the consequences of any action taken to do so.

While Jewish tradition demands that we not shirk our social responsibilities and that we take up the cudgels of leadership, we are urged to take pains to take responsibility for our actions and not to be tempted into corruption. South Africa is plagued by leadership that is corrupt, incompetent and unaccountable. (The parastatal Eskom is a prime example.) While we need to demonstrate our discontent with this scourge which has ravaged the upper echelons of government leadership by protest, we can take more direct action against undesirable leadership in business. Boycotting products manufactured by slave labour, pressurising the authorities to act against incompetent and corrupt leadership and reminding those in power of their responsibilities to society must be understood to be part of our divine task of *tikkun olam*, of repairing the world. To quote an adage penned by Stanley Lieber (better known by his pen name, Stan Lee), co-creator of Spider-Man, "with great power there must also come great responsibility". It is perhaps no coincidence that the comic book writer and editor was born to Romanian-born Jewish immigrant parents who instilled in him the Torah values of integrity, transparency and a loathing of corruption.



WINEberg Route event a huge success, despite stormy weather

Temple Israel held their second WINEberg Route event on Sunday 4th June at our Wynberg campus.

Eleven wine farms set up wine tasting stations in our hall and everyone received a branded wine glass to enjoy the wonderful selection. As well as wine there was a coffee truck, salmon bagels, delicious pastries, and kids' activities. We had a fantastic turnout despite the stormy Cape Town weather and would like to thank the organisers, the amazing wine farms, the prize sponsors, and EVERYONE who joined us for a fabulous afternoon!



Glenda and Eugene Kruss van der Heever and Rabbi Greg with their WINEberg Route glasses



David and Diana Sochen



David Amato, Eric Beswick, Karen Amato, Brent and Ilana Stone



Amely Wiseglass and Dean Hyde with some of the fabulous raffle prizes



Gill Saks, Nancy Krisch and Tony Lachman

Mazaltov to last month's Bnei Mitzvah!



Adam and Ethan Goldberg — 24 June

MANDELA DAY SANDWICH MAKING



Sunday 16th July | 15h00 | Green Point

EDITOR'S COMMENT

An Ethical Will

I read with interest the article by Rabbi Greg Alexander in our June edition about the need for everyone to give consideration to drafting an Ethical Will.

He said that, "Instead of letting your heirs know who gets the stuff, an Ethical Will lets them know what you believe. What is important to you, and what you want them to know after you are no longer around. What are your values, what wisdom have you learned in your life and what guidance would you want to give to the generations who come after you?"

His words came to mind on two occasions after I first read his article: both relate to the passing of a leader. One was Cape Town's own Bennie Rabinowitz, while the other was the former Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi.

A glance at the news headlines when each of them departed this life makes it clear who could write an Ethical Will of substance.

As many of us know, Bennie Rabinowitz, a person of strong conscience, stood out for his incredibly good deeds and for his concern for his fellow human beings. The news headlines reflect this: "Utterly unique, generous spirit: Social justice lawyer Bennie Rabinowitz dies aged 89" and "Ben Rabinowitz: a South African Mensch who transformed lives".

Contrast this with these headlines: "Silvio Berlusconi, Italy leader mired in scandal, dies at 86"; "Silvio Berlusconi: Former Italian PM plagued by tax fraud and 'bunga bunga' sex scandals dies aged 86"; and "Italians bid farewell — and good riddance — to Silvio Berlusconi".

Whose example would you choose to follow?

A new Old Shul

In *Bonny's Beat*, on page 3 of this issue, we talk about the need to preserve the memories of previous years held by older family members. It's a sentiment with wide application, and there are strong motivations to preserve cultural icons too.

This is true of buildings, such as the St John's Street Synagogue, described by South African Jewish Museum Director (SAJM), Gavin Morris, as a "remarkable building". This building, known fondly as the 'Old Shul', stands on the property of the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town, another architectural treasure, which towers above it.

Dating back to 1863, the building is the first purpose-built synagogue in Southern Africa, and the oldest existing shul in Sub-Saharan Africa. It represents the strong desire of immigrant Jews who settled here in the early and mid-19th century to set down roots at the tip of Africa and establish a community of Jews in the region.

According to Gavin, "The 160-year-old building is architecturally unique, having been built in the Egyptian Revival architectural style popular among new synagogues at the time. In 2021 it became the recipient of a U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) grant, valued at over R1.2 million, mostly to support the restoration of the Old Shul."

The building needed a great deal of maintenance work. As Gavin explains,

"The Old Shul was built above underground streams, and water has been its constant enemy." The project involved repairing the building's roof; restoring original timber windows; remaking window frames because some of the wood had rotted; lifting the wooden floor, waterproofing the concrete beneath it, and replacing the original floorboards which had been sanded and cleaned; restoring the mosaic work; painting the entire building — and more.

Quite obviously, this was a major project, and required a substantial financial commitment. The SAJM, acknowledging the cultural and historic value of the building, decided to put in a proposal for an AFCP grant. Gavin explains that, "The funding is a U.S. State Department-funded programme designed to ensure the maintenance of places of international cultural significance." It is quite a feat to qualify for a grant: over 170 proposals were submitted for the finance in 2021, and the Old Shul was selected as one of only 32 projects across the world to receive funding.

After many months of construction work, the Old Shul was finally reopened in its new, pristine state on 24 May. At the opening event, the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, Reuben E Brigety II, commented that the renovation project is an example of *Tikkun Olam* (to heal the world). "To repair the world. Just as we repaired the roof, not only to stop the rain from destroying the building, but to ensure our humanity and our stories are not lost," he concluded.

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Herzlia's 83rd AGM was held in person at the Herzlia High School auditorium and streamed on Wednesday night, 31 May 2023.

Board of Governors Chair, Hayle Marks, opened the event and reflected on the past year and all we have achieved, saying that "Herzlia is a school with a commitment to being an all-inclusive institution in every sense of the word. Our academic results speak for themselves with our 2022 Matrics achieving an average of 3,5 distinctions per person which is truly astounding and we can be very proud of our offering."

Andries van Renssen, UHS Executive Director, focused on the strategic priorities for 2020-22 and how Herzlia has evolved. He looked at Herzlia's



new three-year set of priorities — not that much different from the past one — but with several fresh environmental challenges, including the challenges of load shedding, post-Covid social realities, and the effects it had on our pupils, parents and staff. Some highlights shared from the past 12 months included academic results, school ranking, Jewish Life & Learning programmes and facilities upgrades across multiple campuses.

"We are very future focused now and we are a lot more comfortable with the changes because

with change comes learning and the discovery of new opportunities. This excites us. If it leads to the success of our pupils reaching their dreams, then we have succeeded in our mission. It is all of your efforts that are ensuring the sustainability of the school for the next generation."

2023 UHS Educator Award

The UHS Directors' Educator of Excellence award is presented annually to an educator at Herzlia who has consistently made a significant difference in the lives of pupils as well as making a positive impact on their day-to-day lives at school.

"This year's recipient, Lauren Palte, is an alumnus and over many years has proven herself to be a true Herzlian, always keeping the ethos of Herzlia top of mind in everything that she does. She started her teaching career at Herzlia in 2013 and has since made a remarkable impact on pupils, parents and staff. The recipient of this award is a talented and passionate teacher who takes huge pride in her work and has indeed worked magic in bringing out the excellence of her pupils.

She has served as Head of Grade 10 for many years with incredible insight, expertise and professionalism and this year she agreed to take over as Head of Grade 7 where she immediately took a firm hold of the reins and has already made a huge impact on these young Herzlia High School pupils."



Andries van Renssen, UHS Executive Director, presented the 2023 Directors' Educator Award to Lauren Palte, Herzlia High School Head of Visual Art and Gr 7 Head

The Chairman's Cup is awarded annually at the sole discretion of the Chairman to an individual who has made an extraordinary contribution to the life and well-being of the greater Herzlia community. Someone who has embraced and enhanced the special character of our precious school.

There are many deserving candidates for this award; we are fortunate to have many people who are committed to our school and who perform every day to the best of their ability. But there can be only one winner and anyone who has had the opportunity to interact with her will know how incredibly professional, honourable and committed she is. Taryn stepped into her current role nearly two years ago but has been a valuable member of the Herzlia staff for many more years than that. She performs every day with discretion, integrity and the highest level of care and attention to detail. She always gives of her best and will go the extra mile to ensure that the information she provides is accurate, clear and thorough. She is respected by all who deal with her not only within the school environment, but also within the community as a whole.



Hayle Marks, UHS Board Chair, presented the 2023 Chairman's Cup to Taryn Bernstein, UHS Finance Manager

2023-4 UHS Board of Governors

Mazaltov, Kol Hakavod and Behatzlachah Rabah to the incoming UHS Board of Governors and a special, warm welcome to newcomers Claude Hanan and Herschel Berkowitz

Hayle Marks (Chair), Leor Atie, Louis Benjamin, Herschel Berkowitz, Gary Davidson, Matthew Gruzd (Immediate Past Chair), Claude Hanan, Warren Kilborn, Melanie Levy, Sharon Levy and Gia Whitehead (Independent)



Above: Jan Gutter (MY 1977) and Geoff Cohen (MY 1976) in Toronto. Fun fact — they climbed Mount Everest together!

Alongside: Jonathan Collie (MY 1986), Miriam Sumeruk (Hebrew teacher at Herzlia Constantia), Nirit Sumeruk Abbou (MY 1995) and Geoff Cohen (1976) in London



[back to contents](#)



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ZIA ADLER
Social Worker

Jewish Community Services provides a basket of services to meet the challenge of ensuring, enhancing and maintaining the well-being and protection of vulnerable individuals and families in the Jewish Community for persons of every age and background with a homogeneity of faith.

These services define a path which serves as a guide to lead the individual to arrive at their destination, and this includes necessary interception geared to prevent a spiral of decline from the precipice of risk of psycho-social ills and to safeguard well-being.

To accomplish this, JCS provides material relief, food security, statutory services, community projects and supportive counselling and interventions for a range of issues including substance abuse, domestic violence, psychiatric pressures, the aged, family conflict and a range of housing programmes.

The social workers at Jewish Community Services utilise a body of tools of social work practice that aid in addressing multiple human experiences, the complexity of which is indented by post-Covid ramifications and the rapidly escalating socio-economic pressures of inflation and unemployment. The primary mission is to enhance human well-being and help meet both the basic and complex needs of all with a focus on the vulnerable and those facing destitution. The focus is on the person and their environment as well as external and internal factors that impact the person's circumstances and perspective.

Contemporary social workers balance the competing demand of care and control, utilising key professional values of social work facing an interlay of complicated ethical dilemmas and challenges.

Clients are gently guided to critical resources and the social workers act as advocates for the voiceless to improve social conditions and strengthen a fragile safety net.

These skills, knowledge and values are translated into various patterns of intervention, one of which can be highlighted as the provision of group housing initiatives. This translates into communal living environments with graded and flexible levels of care and support for persons living with psychiatric conditions and various supportive care needs.

Through the provision of the material physical structure with its implication of a shelter where the most basic needs can be met, a metaphorical space is created which fills the void for interpersonal needs of human contact, communication, companionship and belonging. A soul home which is predictable and secure, bright with warmth, mutual support and camaraderie, a togetherness bound through the simplicity of shared meals flavoured with consolation and comfort. A context in which to achieve optimum growth and realisation of potential.

Jewish Community Services Community Cottages is one such project among a profile of houses. These two houses, which are linked, provide accommodation for 11 individuals experiencing psychiatric conditions or other barriers to optimal functioning.

A comprehensive infrastructure of support provides a range of services which include housemother support, auxiliary assistance, assistance with medication,

case management, individual counselling, 24-hour crisis intervention, spiritual enrichment, work programmes, meaningful occupation, life skills development, psychoeducation, groupwork and lifestyle enhancement incorporating an activity hub. The levels of support concertina with fluctuating and differing abilities and provide support in the least restrictive environment.

In this context the values of social work, inter alia, respect for the dignity and worth of every individual, non-judgmentalism, awareness of differing values, promotion of clients' socially responsible self-determination, knit with a body of knowledge, skills and resources to strive to capacitate clients to address and change their own needs with an aspiration of optimal self-reliance. This translates into the fabric of the ethos and culture of these homes which allows for persons living with psychiatric conditions or other barriers to reintegrate into society and feel dignified in their personal autonomy as far as possible.

Should you be interested in a proposed volunteer project to facilitate, arrange and co-ordinate outings and opportunities for stimulation and cultural nourishment for our residents at Jewish Community Services Community Cottages please contact Zia Adler on 021 462 5520 or email zia@jcs.org.za



#JewishCommunity #Accommodation #GroupHomes #SocialWork





Volunteering: Mandela Day and beyond!

“So, like it is extremely boring, but I’ve never felt so good about myself. While we were in the car afterwards driving away, it was nice to see so many homeless people eating the food I helped make,” Sam Mendelsohn, age 10, sharing after volunteering with Mensch Network Member Danny Diliberto’s organisation, *Ladles of Love*.

Mandela Day this year marks the 10th anniversary of Madiba’s passing in December 2013.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation has themed their 10-year remembrance with the call to action, *The Legacy Lives on Through You*. What a beautiful and appropriate reminder that each of us has a role to play in transforming South Africa — with actions big and small. In the words of young Sam Mendelsohn quoted here, we’re reminded that often, in giving of ourselves, we gain as much, if not more, than we give.

For the past six years, Mensch

has hosted a community ‘cook-a-thon’, an action and volunteering day to mark Mandela Day. A day that invites our community to pitch in, actively support and learn more about Jewish-led organisations in our Mensch Network, working to better society. Later in the year in mid-November, we also help to activate the International Day of Volunteering, Mitzvah Day, across Southern Africa. Joining over 40 000 people world-wide, Mensch helps to create community-volunteering projects in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Johannesburg and even Namibia! A great deal of work goes into these two flagship volunteering days, and this year we are taking things up a notch: extending the reach and impact of these two once-off events into a three-month volunteering programme!

An opportunity to volunteer beyond Mitzvah Day

Mandela Day to Mitzvah Day! We are offering you an opportunity to volunteer on a regular basis, at times that suit you, and in a way that serves

the organisation you’re working with. As a Mensch volunteer on this programme, you will be part of a cohort of Capetonian Jews volunteering across the city in a variety of ways. We will meet monthly to connect, reflect and dig a little deeper into what is innately Jewish about the act of service; and discuss the tensions of doing this work in our context.

So, join us at this year’s Mensch Mandela Day communal cook-a-thon, meet and learn about the organisations looking for volunteers as part of this longer-term volunteering programme!

More about Mandela Day

In partnership and with support from the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the UJC, we will be chopping vegetables to make 2 000 delicious, nutritious meals to be distributed by the Angel Network via their feeding programme. The fresh produce used to make these meals will be sourced by our partners, the SA Urban Food and Farming Trust (SAUFFT), from their network of small-scale urban



farmers in Langa, Mitchell’s Plain and Khayelitsha. SAUFFT is developing a series of ‘agrihubs’ with support from the Joint Distribution Committee’s (JDC) Global Relief and International Development arm (GRID). These agrihubs serve as a source of support for small-scale farmers, providing access to everything from seedlings and compost to peer-led training and knowledge transfer opportunities.

For more information about Mandela Day and the volunteering programme, please check the Mensch website www.mensch.org.za or email gina@mensch.org.za



MANDELA DAY COOK-A-THON 2023

Join us for an impactful family fun day making a hearty meal to feed 2000 people!

MORE THAN A HAND OUT THIS YEAR WE WILL AGAIN BE PARTNERING WITH THE SA URBAN FOOD & FARMING TRUST TO SOURCE OUR VEGGIES, THIS PROVIDES SUSTAINABILITY, INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT TO A NETWORK OF SMALL-SCALE FARMERS IN CAPE TOWN.

FOOD MADE ON THE DAY WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO 13 FOOD KITCHENS VIA THE ANGEL NETWORK’S FEEDING PROGRAMMES, FEEDING 2000 PEOPLE!

Sunday 23 July

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- 2000 PEOPLE FED
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Cape Jewish Seniors Association

DIRECTOR: Diana Sochen 021 434 9691 director@cjsa.org.za ADMIN: Amanda 021 434 9691 admin@cjsa.org.za search CJSA on Facebook

Making the best of winter blues

If you look at our photos this month, you can definitely see how our members cope with the winter blues.

Each centre has been busy with wonderful happenings and outings. Each day of the week one has the option of remaining home alone, or joining a group of happy seniors who participate in and enjoy the activities we have on offer.

Our art classes are particularly popular and enjoyed as are the weekly outings. Each day of the week one of our branches has access to our driver and combi. On a first-come, first-served basis, there is a different outing of interest that is always enjoyable. Our guest speakers this month have given talks on a lifetime of sailing and the adventures that were enjoyed (John Levin), Adaptive Surfing, the role of a woman in a man's world (Helen Millson), and a representative of the NSRI speaking on the incredible voluntary work that is done by their NGO.

We hosted a special housewarming evening at our Sea Point home, with numerous sponsors and community leaders coming through the door, many of them for the first time. Each one had fabulous compliments to offer when they saw what has been done since we joined forces with the UJW at their Stonehaven home. There is certainly a lovely vibe and many people pop in throughout the day.

Unfortunately, there has also been much sadness this month with a few of our long-standing and much-loved members passing on. Members know that our social workers are available at all times to support family members who are grieving, and know about the bereavement counselling services offered by Nechama. We will miss each one of our members who have passed. Special mention is made of Sybil Castle who has been an integral part of our Yiddish team giving weekly Yiddish classes to many of our members. She will be sorely missed by all. We wish everyone grieving for a loved one, strength, happy memories and especially long life. CJSA is richer for having had each member in our lives.

Please take time to read our weekly programme which is sent out each week, together with an online YouTube link to many different documentaries, movies and shows that can be enjoyed during the long, cold winter evenings.

Have an enjoyable month — stay healthy and warm.

Diana Sochen

Executive Director



Artist Liz Kantor enjoys our art class in Sea Point



CJSA Sea Point Garden makeover



Chair exercises with Cathy in West Coast



Talented companions who entertained our members



Judi Thomas with her painting



Milnerton members with the beautiful knitted garments which they donate



Marcia Orlin with her painting



Sea Point members enjoy the canal boat trip at the Waterfront



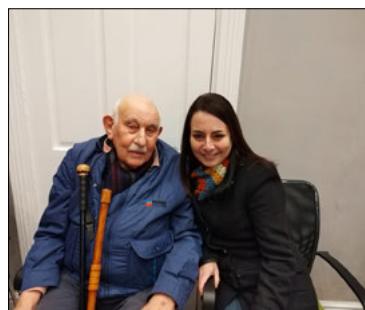
Ivan Sofer enjoying a beer at the Brauhaus



Social worker Jaime-Lee Mocke with Yvette and David Polovin at the Sea Point housewarming



Milnerton members celebrating birthdays



Abe Sank and Robyn Black at the housewarming evening



Philip Todres and David Sochen enjoying our housewarming



John Levin speaking on his life, and love of sailing at West Coast

Social and Personal

We congratulate our members who have had joyous occasions during the last month.

Batmitzvah: Lessa Gordon – Granddaughter

Engagement: Rene and Theo Musikanth — Grandson

Marriage: Eunice Mofsowitz – Grandson (in Israel)

Welcome to new members: Jennifer Miller, Avril Galp, Peter Tuchten, Charlotte Cohen, Rita Herman

Well wishes to those who have been under the weather: Harriet Hoffman, Carrie Clift, Sandra Cohen, Edie Busch, Charlotte Berson

Our wishes of strength to family of members who have recently passed away: Lucy Woolf, Wolsley Jacobson, Barbara Newman, Sybil Castle, Hannah Abramsohn. They will all be remembered with respect and love.

ISRAEL: A JOURNEY MAKING MEANING

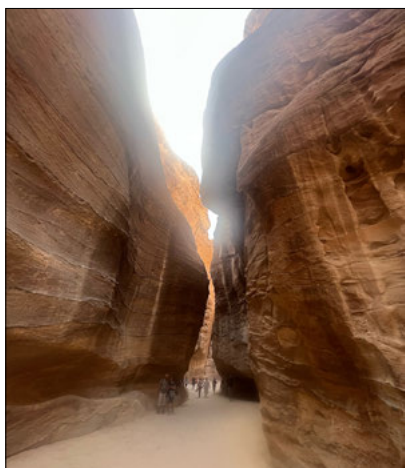
Journeying

Julian Resnick writes from Israel

What is it about being on a Journey that draws me in so powerfully?

Why did I wake up a little after 4am this morning in Jerusalem only to be sitting some sixteen hours later in the Movenpick Petra? Exhausted. Wiped out, and yet feeling a sense of great contentment and purpose.

What did I do today? I got myself and the seven people I am travelling with to Ben-Gurion Airport in time to take the 8am flight down to the airport near Eilat; from there to the Yitzchak Rabin Terminal; etc.; etc., until we got to our late afternoon walk in Petra which remains undeniably exquisite in spite of the hawkers and the hundreds — no, thousands — of visitors who fill the Siq with noise and chatter, but never enough to drown out its symphony of shadows and litany of light.



Petra - The Siq. Credit: Ron Cipriano

But I have been here before, so why do this again? It is all about fresh eyes. About seeing it again through the eyes of an eight-year-old, the eyes of a thirteen-year-old, the eyes of a fifteen-year-old (and their parents and grandparents, of course, but it is the young eyes that are so wonderful to see through).

It is about those moments when I see the young person getting beyond how hot it is; the fact that they are being asked to walk in the late afternoon

after getting up at four in the morning; the fact that the lunch was “weird food” — neither a Big Mac nor KFC; and seeing what beauty means. Seeing the young person beginning to understand that there is a world out there filled with wonder, that we can only see when we wander in it.

As I approach my 69th birthday in a few weeks’ time, which will coincide, as it always does, with the anniversary of my Aliyah — this time the 47th anniversary — I am more aware of the power of the Journeys I take with other people, and equally the Journey that I have taken from Somerset West to Kibbutz Tzora: from a small Jewish community focused around the Shul and Habonim (a tiny minority in a sea of the ‘other’), to an intentional Jewish community within a country which self-defines as a Jewish State, even as that definition gets more and more complicated to understand.

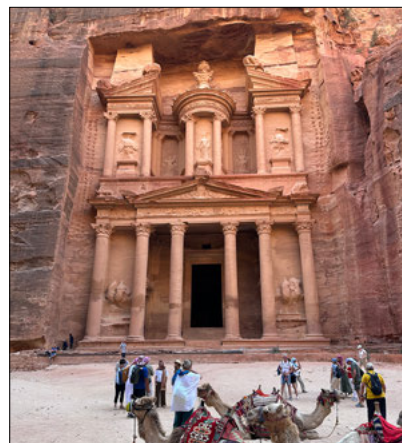
And I think of all of those whom I met along the way on this Journey, in Somerset West, my family of origin whose Journey took it to Sea Point, Israel, Los Angeles and NYC (just thinking of where we are today). My friends from the Jewish community, once again spread out across the globe. My classmates from Somerset West Primary, from Paul Roos Gymnasium in Stellenbosch, from Hottentots Holland High, from Cape Town High, from UCT and, of course, from Habonim, literally living in the four corners of the earth. In New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Canada, the UK, Germany, Portugal — the list goes on and on.

What are our Journeys about? Are they Journeys from, or are they Journeys to?

Did we move towards something, an attraction, something pulling us towards wherever we got to, or was it a force pushing us away from where we found ourselves?

I think back to my first experience of Journeying. In the back seat of the Chevvy, the three of us: my brother, my sister, and myself. (No

seatbelts of course; it was long before they were installed in cars.) In the front, window rolled down, my father driving and my mother in the passenger seat (even though once again no separate seats, just one long seat from window to window). On our way to either Caledon, to visit Uncle Selwyn, Auntie Nayomi and our cousins, or to Oranjezicht to visit Zeide and Bobbe or Uncle Bennie and Auntie Bea and our cousins, or to Fresnaye to visit Grannie and Simon. Most Journeys in the Chevvy were to visit family. Besides visits to the immediate family there were, of course, the visits to multiple cousins and to huge numbers of people my parents’ age who were all known as ‘Uncle’ and ‘Auntie’ whether related to us or not.



Petra - The Treasury. Credit: Robin Gelles

The one Journey which did not involve the Chevvy was of course the most exciting of all: the visits to Auntie Sevvie, Uncle Phillip and our cousins in Bulawayo. These involved driving to DF Malan (am I allowed to use that name?) Airport and flying SAA to Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe). It was exciting to fly, it was exciting to be in another country, it was exciting to see family, but mainly it was exciting to see.... *The Flintstones* on TV!!

It was these early Journeys, I believe which created the pathways into the more sophisticated versions of today and, at the same time, explains

why it is, when I see the eyes of the children light up as they understand something new on their own personal Journeys, that I am so moved.



Of course, it is not only the Journeys of the children which move me, as most of my Journeys are with people my own age, I am moved by where each of us has got to on our personal Journeys and what traveling can do to these Journeys we are on. It is when a seventy-year-old, my age group today, stands in the Majorelle Gardens in Marrakech or next to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin or in a simple hut in Auschwitz-Birkenau or at dusk near a leopard in Motswari Game Reserve, and in the moment understands something new about their own humanity.

It is when I understand that the moment demands a certain conversation — be it about the meaning of beauty, the questions the Jewish People have faced throughout our history or about our vulnerability, and we have the conversation, with all its complexity, its pain and its sense of awe — that I understand why I am on the Journey and why I believe it is so crucial that we keep Journeying on.

The Journey has been one of dispersion and of finding new homes.

The Journey has been one of touching the points of pain and those of awe and wonder.

The Journey has been one of dislocation and of building new relationships.

The Journey has been physical, emotional, spiritual and inevitable.

We have no choice: it is either to move and grow or stand still and wither.

Journey on.

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BOOKS

I am Ella: A remarkable story of survival, from Auschwitz to Africa

Reviewed by Beryl Eichenberger

***I am Ella* by Joanne Jowell on Holocaust survivor Ella Blumenthal is a truly remarkable book.**

Now 103 years old, Ella has revealed to Jowell the horrors she survived in the Holocaust, the spirit of hope that never left her, the remaking of a life that shows her extraordinary resilience, as well as sharing her thoughts and humour in an intimate and moving account. Inspirational in its message of joy and hope, here is a survivor story that, like so many others, lay unspoken for many decades. It was only some 15 years ago that Ella started speaking of what she had endured; since then she has addressed many audiences in her own feisty style, ensuring that her story lives on.

It was in 2017 that Jowell was approached by Ella's daughter, Evelyn Kaplan, to help the family record Blumenthal's story for her children and grandchildren and future generations. After 22 interviews over some 45 hours of conversation, it was clear that this was a book that needed wider publication than just family.

There is no doubt that it became deeply personal to Jowell, as perhaps it might become to many Jewish people. There is perhaps something in our DNA, the generations of slaughter, displacement and horror that make us identify with survivors, however far removed we might be. Jowell writes in her author's note of how, when gazing at the iconic Holocaust photo 'Warsaw Ghetto Boy', she sees to the side a little girl

looking directly at the camera. She has a moment of eerie recognition — of herself at that age in similar dress celebrating Purim. This story reminds us that it could have been any one of us — 'Perhaps in another incarnation it WAS me' — and that this history belongs to each individual.

The writing is such that it creates a relationship between the reader and Ella. By the time I finished the book I had, by proxy, enjoyed tea, tasted Ella's famous biscuits, laughed and cried with her as the stories came tumbling out, and placed a hand on my heart that the Holocaust horrors are never repeated. Add to that the story behind Ella's name and why the simple title *I am Ella* is in fact "complex and layered, a declaration of strength and a statement of identity," says Jowell.

It is an emotional account and yet Jowell is in control all along the way. Ella's shards of memory are sometimes haphazard and yet Jowell has carefully, scrupulously placed them in context, building the whole picture in a way that draws the reader into Ella's life, through her own words. We hear her loud and clear. A truly courageous woman, Ella is known for her outspokenness in her community, and she tells it like it is.

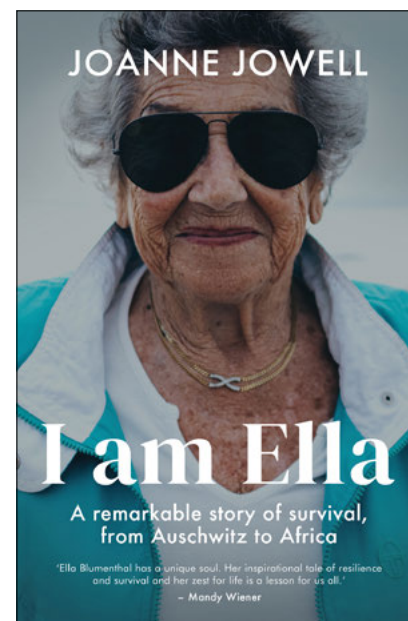
Jowell allows us to enter this sacred space of memory and take the steps with the young Ella learning to swim in the river near her home — swimming is a lifelong passion. We hear the laughter and warmth of her large family as the youngest of seven children; we are privy to enter her home and share those special

Judaic moments of memory. And we are with her as the horrors start and continue — herding into the Warsaw Ghetto, activist underground, losing every member of her family, except her niece Roma to whom she became a protective surrogate mother. She was meant to survive; from 'the gas chambers of Majdanek, the depravity of Auschwitz, and the utter hopelessness of Bergen Belsen,' to liberation and the chance to rebuild her life.

That she was able to get from Paris to Palestine, meet her husband Isaac, settle in South Africa, have a large family and create a life of love, hard work and laughter, while holding her past in the archives of her memory is extraordinary.

Included in the narrative are interviews with her Cape Town family which reveal their closeness, the love and protectiveness of their matriarch and a very special relationship with granddaughter Jade. It is a frank, unsentimental and open account, skilfully woven together by Jowell.

What struck me particularly was the fact that through Ella there are now



23 members of family — the same number as she lost in the Holocaust. Her mantra is to keep on telling her story, that all survival stories should be told to future generations so that we never forget. What the Nazis could not take away was her 'faith, hope and belief in Hashem ...that is what saved us. That is what saved me. That is something I never lost'.



Panel of speakers at the launch of *I Am Ella* on 11 June: Shane Kaplan, Ella Blumenthal's grandson; Evelyn Kaplan, Ella Blumenthal's daughter; and Joanne Jowell, author. Standing: Richard Freedman, Acting Director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre



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USING MY NUDEL

Becoming part of a community

By Craig Nudelman

In the middle of June I was privileged to perform in the Sydney Opera House's newly refurbished Concert Hall as a chorister; the Sydney Philharmonia Choir's Chorus Oz performed Gustav Mahler's 8th Symphony, also known as the *Symphony of a Thousand*.

There were almost 1 000 people performing, and I was one of 850 singers bringing this incredible piece to life. I've been part of productions before, but this was a mammoth work. And the amazing thing was that there were only two days of rehearsal before we performed the piece. Others who had done it before said that they'd taken at least four months to rehearse and polish until they were ready. However, with choirmaster Brett Weymark at the helm, the choristers and orchestra were simply marvellous.

It's been a while since I've performed in front of a larger audience than a shul congregation – and the Latin and German was a bit different to the usual prayers that we sing on a Shabbos. But after going through the score and listening to the practice tracks numerous times, I was ready to go ahead. The magnitude of this piece was not only difficult in terms of the musicality, I was not prepared for holding my sheet music and standing for many hours. The last time I'd sung in something physically difficult was for Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Symphony Choir of Cape Town. Pushing the choir through to making sure that this was the best experience for both the choir and the audience was how we became a community.

After nearly three months in Sydney, it was nice to form another community, even though it was only for a weekend. Of course, we have family, the girls' schools, work, and Shul communities. And for new immigrants, community is the most important thing to form. After leaving friends, family, and colleagues, we need to ensure we can belong to something for a support system, social interaction, and engagement. There have been many studies which point to community involvement as being a method to enhance our mental and physical health.

Lauren Zuchman, writing in the *Psychiatric Times*, speaks about community involvement and community engagement being critical for our mental health and wellbeing. She writes, "I have found that community involvement is really key to a sense of belonging and really feeding our soul as we think about maintaining our mental health." And in an article in *Painted Brain*, an organisation dedicated to mental wellbeing, a lack of sense of community can increase depression by loneliness, which raises stress levels, increasing the risk of depression, sleep deprivation, and anxiety.

For a new immigrant, the latter were not options (but who sleeps with young kids anyway?). I got involved in a shul choir two days after landing in Sydney and spent the next two months adjusting. Gabi's new job has made her transition into Australia as easy as it can be, and Livi has had no trouble adjusting to the Joeys group in her nursery school. Jessica has had a more difficult time coming to terms with saying goodbye to her friends back in Cape Town. We have provided her with a safe space and she has a posse at school (the Harry Potter Club and the Green team); she isn't alone, but for a young child who had such a tight community and was taken away from it, it's been a challenge. And it's a challenge for Gabi and me, which we'll have to deal with it as it comes. Perhaps we need to find a community for parents of distraught South African children.

I remember, when I was a child, I was quite lonely. I had epilepsy, and I didn't really have a community to go to to discuss what I was going through. I also wasn't as outgoing as Jessica is, and my friend groups were either small or constantly changing. That was hard. And I know that many people, not just children, go through that. I acknowledge that loneliness and exclusion is not just a childhood issue but something that happens in all facets of adult life.

What can you do about it if you're feeling left out and alone? Well, the best step is to find out what you're interested in. Sports, dancing, bridge, poker, music... The list goes on. And it isn't only a favour we're doing for ourselves. Communities grow from newbies, and not just in numbers. When we come together as a collective, we can learn from one another, share experiences, and share knowledge. We build each other's self-esteem and a new support network.

I am lucky to have been part and still be a part of so many incredible networks which have changed my life. Being a South African, Jewish, a Limmudnik, a Nahum Goldmann Fellow, a chorister, a Jewish professional, a singer, actor, tour guide, dad, and husband (and an epileptic) have given me opportunities to build my networks of support and encouragement in different guises. I am grateful to have various areas of my life which give me support where and when I need it. From my dad group on WhatsApp (called Dadvice) to my fellow actors from Cape Town community theatre – and everything in between – I am #blessed to belong.

The question to ask ourselves, even if we're happy and included, is who is being excluded and how to make sure that opportunities are there for others to join our communities. For example, how do community theatre groups and choirs in Cape Town, whose rehearsals and performances are difficult to access for people from townships around the city, become accessible? When I performed in the Symphony Choir of Cape Town my peers were mostly middle-aged or elderly white people. Who is being left out of the tent yet could create such a difference for our organisation or community?

A former Capetonian, Craig Nudelman is now based in Sydney, where he has settled into Australian life with his wife Gabi, and two daughters, Jessica and Livi. He works for the Jewish Communal Appeal and enjoys singing as a member of Sydney's Central Synagogue choir and the Sydney Philharmonia Choir. The Cape Jewish Chronicle is privileged to continue to receive regular articles written by Craig.



Choirmaster Brett Weymark. Credit: Sydney Philharmonia Choirs on Facebook



Members of the choir in action. Credit: Sydney Philharmonia Choirs on Facebook



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Individual vs collective rights: the approach taken by SA courts

By Bonny Feldman

In his keynote address at the opening of the renovated Old Shul at the Gardens Shul complex, visiting Fulbright scholar Simon Rabinovitch discussed an interesting legal issue that reached the courts in South Africa.

The concept of ‘equality before the law’ may be something most of us would like to see in all countries — after all, it’s about a democratic approach to society and it ensures that the rights of all people are protected.

However, there are situations in which rights may clash — in which case, equality before the law becomes somewhat more difficult to uphold.

A particular area of potential conflict relates to the legal position offered to individuals under the law of the land, as opposed to the legal protection offered by religious law. Can these two types of law co-exist without ever being in conflict?

This question came up in a recent case, its focus being on whether the law of the country could override the law of the Beth Din, i.e., the organisation acknowledged within the Jewish community of South Africa as being the upholders of Jewish religious law. It’s a case that was recently discussed by visiting Fulbright scholar, Simon Rabinovitch, in his keynote address at the opening of the renovated Old Shul at the Gardens Shul complex in Cape Town.

Rabinovitch points out that South African law recognises the rights of people in terms of “religious and tribal self-determination”, and this recognition goes as far as being entrenched in the Constitution, which “recognises traditional law and customary law”.

In his explanation of the legal situation relating to the recognition of customary or religious law, as opposed to the country’s national law, Rabinovitch referred to two cases that reached the courts. In essence, both of the cases dealt with the right of a religious authority to banish a member of their community for their failure to adhere to the laws and practices of their particular community. The argument here relates to whether the rights of an individual to behave in a way they choose — and which may be in line with the protection of individual rights afforded by South Africa’s Constitution — can be subsumed by the rights of a traditional or religious leader to uphold the practices of the collective.

The case of most interest to us is one in which the Beth Din issued an order of excommunication against a man who refused to comply with its pronouncement regarding his obligation to pay maintenance to support his ex-wife and children. The man took the matter to court, arguing that excommunication was humiliating and that it negatively impacted his dignity as a human being. He hoped that the court would uphold his civil legal rights relating to freedom of religion and dignity — in the sense of these rights being applicable to him as an individual.

The court looked to the South African Constitution, interpreting its provisions regarding freedom of religion and freedom of association as being applicable both to an individual and to a collective. The court concluded that, because the ex-husband

had initially entrusted the conflict about the terms of his divorce to the Beth Din, he had chosen to “put himself under the authority of the Jewish religious court”. As such, the Beth Din had the right to “actively disassociat[e]... from individuals who break communal norms”. And so, the court upheld the right of the Beth Din to excommunicate the man.

As Rabinovitch argued, the case confirmed that the rights provided to the individual in our Constitution may, at times, be secondary to communal authority. However, it cannot be assumed that this is always going to apply. In the Beth Din case, an important consideration for the court was to prevent the infringement of another right, in this instance the right to equality for women.

Rabinovitch concluded that, “Modern liberal democratic states will always have difficulty balancing between collective and individual rights when...[these rights]...are in conflict. The cases...illuminate...the degree to which democratic states can find ways to prioritise communities’ cohesion without sacrificing individual freedoms.”



Associate Professor Simon Rabinovitch



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