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5784/2023

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DESIGN, TYPESETTING & DTP LAYOUT

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*As Jews, our task is to **bring light into a dark world** and clarity into situations of doubt. I hope this year's magazine (in both digital and print editions) will bring some much-needed light into your personal lives!*

”



Let There be Light!

Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg

2023 saw the return of load shedding in an unprecedented fashion, even reaching the dreaded Stage Six! When I was flying home with Lee from the annual Rabbinical Conference, held this year in Zimbali, KZN, I realised the full 'power' of load shedding. As our Lift aircraft made the descent to Cape Town International Airport at about 20h00, I was looking out the window when suddenly an entire suburb was plunged into darkness. I had never experienced load shedding from this vantage point and it was scary!

Fortunately, at the time of writing, we are hovering at around Stages Two and Three, so perhaps the worst is behind us. Either way, as Jews, our task is to bring light into a dark world and clarity into situations of doubt. I hope this year's magazine (in both digital and print editions) will bring some much-needed light into your personal lives! We have all the regular features, including the High Holy Days calendar, a great recipe and the Chief Rabbi's Message. There are also some great, special articles. Learn more about the load shedding that took place in ancient Egypt on page 24. Confused about the Judicial Reforms in Israel? Go to page 28. Is there hope for South Africa? Dr Frans Cronje thinks there is. Read what this leading political analyst has to say on page 8. Did you know that Jewish matchmaking is the basis of a popular Netflix television show? Read about host, Aleeza Ben-Shalom, and her methodology on page 31. Who was Rabbi Gershon Edelstein and why did thousands attend the funeral of this one hundred-year old Rosh Yeshiva? See page 34. In January 2023, our community lost one of its greatest treasures, Alison Berk-Katzeff. Read my eulogy for Alison on page 12. Kosher SA has a fantastic new website with many great features, learn about it on page 22.

I am delighted to inform you that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services this year will be lead by Chazzan Rishon Rabbi Ephraim Levitz and Chazzan Sheini, Amichai Levitz. I look forward to seeing you all at our inspirational services.

Lee, Chani Merryl and Naomi join me in wishing you Ketiva v'Chatima Tovah - may you be written and sealed in the Book of Life!



Are you a customer or partner?

CHIEF RABBI

Warren Goldstein

As you page through this magazine, you'll be struck by the hard work and dedication of your rabbi and shul committee and administrators; how they are running your community with professionalism, compassion and energy. As you do so, you may feel like a consumer of a great product. (You may even have some complaints?)

It's tempting to view your shul as a service provider, and you, the member, as its paying customer. Membership fees are paid for the many wonderful services received - a wise, understanding rabbi and rebbetzin who are there for us when we need them, in good times and challenging times, giving us spiritual guidance and support; a nice brocha on Shabbos morning, and a warm, welcoming place to have our simchas; maybe a chazan and a choir that make the services enjoyable to listen to.

This mindset of a customer works for goods and services purchased in the commercial marketplace. But a shul is different. I would like to suggest a completely different paradigm - become a partner. Being a partner means not passively consuming benefits - it means taking an active role to make your shul thrive. A partner is personally invested in the outcome. A partner feels responsible to solve problems, to look for opportunities.

One of Judaism's most radical ideas is that we are called on to be "G-d's partners in creation". G-d doesn't want us

to be passive bystanders. He wants us to come forward and create a better world as His partners. He doesn't want us to be passive recipients of His goodness and kindness. He wants us to be active partners through our mitzvahs, our Torah learning, our davening, our good deeds.

We are all Hashem's partners, which makes us each other's partners. Helping to build and sustain a great shul is part of our role as G-d's partners in creating a better world. Start by reading this magazine, as a partner not a customer. Don't sit back passively assessing your shul's performance. Read with an eye on how you can get involved - to make a real difference. As a partner you will do anything to make your shul a thriving place of emotional and spiritual connection, energy and inspiration - a truly vibrant community.

It's not just the rabbi and rebbetzin who should visit the sick, or share comfort at a shiva house, or be involved with Torah learning and building community. We shouldn't watch the chazan and choir like spectators at a concert. Lean in to the davening. Pray with intent and feel the presence of Hashem. Join the chesed activities of your shul - whether it's making meals or visiting the sick, or reaching out to fellow congregants with messages of love and support. These mitzvahs are for all of us to do.

To be a partner also means contributing financially. People are sometimes uncomfortable talking about money. But shuls cannot function without funding.

The Torah guides us to give 10% of our earnings to tzedaka - to provide for the needy, and fund worthy causes and vital communal institutions, especially our shuls. (I have written an important essay about the vision, values and practicalities of this great mitzvah. The essay will be available in booklet form at your shul over Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Look out for it.)

A thriving South African Jewish community depends on thriving shuls. We are blessed to have outstanding rabbis and rebbetzins, shul committees and staff, chazans and choirs. Don't be their customers. Become their partners, and together we will create a brighter future.

May Hashem bless the precious Claremont Wynberg Shul and inscribe all its wonderful people, together with our entire community, with a good and sweet year,

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

The Chief Rabbi's new year's message, with all the details about tzedaka and the 10% principle, will be available in shul, and to download after Yom Tov at chiefrabbi.co.za



“One of Judaism’s most radical ideas is that we are called on to be “G-d’s partners in creation”. G-d doesn’t want us to be passive bystanders. He wants us to come forward and create a better world as His partners. He doesn’t want us to be passive recipients of His goodness and kindness. He wants us to be active partners through our mitzvahs, our Torah learning, our davening, our good deeds.”

A time for Gratitude & Introspection



Melanie Harman

Amidst political instability, corruption, inflation, unemployment, loss of loved ones, illness... For many of us, this year hasn't been all apples and honey! Day to day Shul operations and events were heavily impacted by loadshedding which saw the office, kitchen and security teams pulling rabbits out of hats to ensure that our service was not compromised. We experienced the temporary absence of Jean who spent time in recovery after, BH, a successful surgery and negotiated transition when we bade farewell to Marion and welcomed Julia as the new Shul secretary. And, just for good measure, I got to enjoy a fractured ankle and a bout of pneumonia!

Yet, within this framework, we hosted some inspiring speakers who included Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and Rabbi Akiva Tatz, various *bachurim*, the annual Camp Keshet youth *machaneh*, the UOS Mashgiach Conference and the Beth Din; we saw many a winner of our popular Rosh Chodesh raffles, held a Market Day and celebrated Yom Tov dinners and braais; we enjoyed many *simchas* together with baby namings, *barmitzvahs*, breakfasts, and a wedding; we found fame when the Shul was transformed into a film set for a Netflix series. Wow, we even shared in a knighthood!

And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, the month of Elul brought the *yemei ratzon* - Days of Favour or Acceptance - a spiritual journey in preparation for Rosh Hashanah - with the ancient call of the *shofar* rallying us to action. What an honour to connect with the King in the field, away from the palace, the throne, the robes, the royal protocol - one on one. This particular time of closeness with *Hashem* affords us the opportunity of renewing our relationship with Him, ourselves and each

other. We get to introspect, be mindful of our actions, account for our footprint, reassess our values, our lifestyle, our priorities... We get to right our past and rewrite a fresh script, so that we, ourselves, are regenerated alongside the birthday of creation.

An old Yiddish proverb, "*Prayers go up and blessings come down*" encapsulates one of my principal reflections - gratitude. And how blessed I am to share in the lives of our unique and special community, wherein each of you has a little piece of my heart; to be inspired daily, in every way possible, by the exceptional Rabbi and Lee who somehow manage to squeeze 48 hours into a day; to work with an Executive, Trustees and a Committee who with their collective acumen and ceaseless efforts, often behind the scenes, safeguard the community and grow me so much (not to mention our appreciation for their installation of our new best friends, the inverters!); to work with Jean and Julia who never cease to amaze me with their professionalism, work ethic, support, friendship and humour in an environment where there is never a dull moment; to absorb their positive energy and witness the dedication and teamwork of Jacques, Annie and Lucy (who are also sadly responsible for my increased waistline) and last, but not least, Gary and Robert who with their immeasurable loyalty, not only keep everyone safe, but surpass their call of duty to the utmost extent, and I mean, utmost... Down to rescuing moles, koi fish, a cat (whose name we won't mention) and a lost dog! Jokes aside, every one of you enriches me and makes every day a privilege. I couldn't be more grateful.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l wrote, "*However much of anything else we have, we have only one life, and it is short. How we live and what we live for are the most fateful decisions we ever make.*" May we all use this auspicious time purposefully, so that we continue to shine our light to the world, within and without.

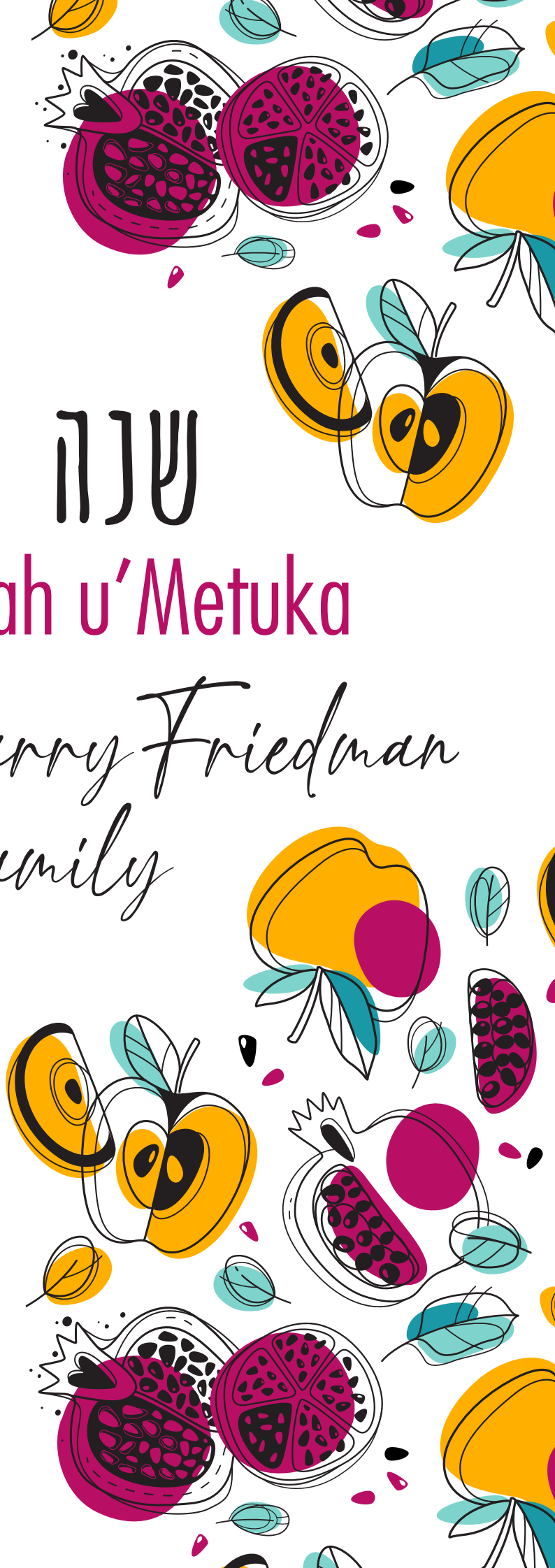
May you all count many blessings and be inscribed and sealed for a *Shanah Tovah u'Metukah!*

We get to introspect, be mindful of our actions, account for our footprint, reassess our values, our lifestyle, our priorities... We get to right our past and rewrite a fresh script, so that we, ourselves, are regenerated alongside the birthday of creation.

שנה טובה

Shanah Tovah u'Metuka

*Karen and Barry Friedman
and family*



FRANS CRONJE

FINDING POSITIVES AMID THE OVERLY DARK NATIONAL MOOD

Despite the government's failures, SA's democracy is functioning as intended



While the national mood as expressed in the media, business and public polling is acutely pessimistic, I wonder if that pessimism is not in some respects misplaced. There are some important positives that must be brought into any accounting of where SA is headed.

A first is that our political system is working as it should. The people of SA chose democracy precisely so that were a point ever reached where its government failed the expectations of the electorate they would be able to remove it from power and replace it with another. That is happening. The governing ANC now polls below 50% - more than 20 percentage points down from its peak. A second is that within the ranks of both the governing party and the opposition are leaders with the wisdom to understand that those numbers present an opportunity to bridge the country's oldest political divide and deliver a pragmatic, unity government. By that I mean an ANC-DA coalition of sorts, even if it initially takes the form of a confidence and supply arrangement whereby the DA and ANC agree to support each other in key budget and confidence votes in the interests of national stability, even as they retain the right to disagree on other pieces of legislation.

I am aware of the many excellent analyses of why such a deal would be a mistake. However, as ever, the SA challenge - to quote an SA military officer in Washington in the 1980s - is "not to make the wrong mistake". I fear it will prove a too costly mistake to try to grind the ANC, now at its weakest, into the political dust, stigmatise its supporters and shun them from government. Even in its weakened state the ANC represents the aspirations of millions of good and decent people. Shun and stigmatise them into an "us" versus "you" dynamic, and SA risks replicating cycles of political recrimination for which future generations will pay a terrible price.

Remember too that in its first decade and a bit in government the ANC did better than it has ever been given credit for. The financial and economic mess inherited from apartheid was largely fixed, with debt levels halved as a budget surplus was recorded. The ensuing saving on the government interest bill was applied to financing the rollout of the emerging world's most expansive social welfare programme - over an era in which the number of people with a job roughly doubled and 10 formal houses were built for every new shack erected.

Match that expertise and experience, which still exists in the ANC universe, with the track record the DA has shown, when unimpeded, to govern over local authorities, and the combination could be very good.

I do not know whether ANC and DA leaders will succeed in coming to even a confidence and supply arrangement, but until quite recently it was not even an option. If they fail there are other coalition options that space prevents me from dealing with here, save to say that all point to potentially promising long-term results.

A third is that while some coalitions have broken up, many others have held together. By my count the ratio is roughly 8:1 in favour of working coalition governments, but precisely because they work, you are unlikely to have heard of them.

A fourth is that our civil rights culture is chiefly intact. A cliché of the fascist playbook is that under pressure a liberation movement government will turn to the suppression of civil rights to cling to power. This year in both Venezuela and Zimbabwe arrest warrants were issued for opposition leaders, while numbers of opposition activists have been thrown into jail. That is not happening in SA; and political parties, the free media and civil society are generally left in peace to say and do whatever they wish.

A fifth is that the fascist playbook further dictates turning to the printing presses under political pressure so that inflation might sufficiently wreck an economy to enable a populist dictatorship to supplant democracy. Yet when the finance minister delivered his budget, the extent of his government's fiscal prudence was striking, especially given the poor outlook for growth and revenue - prudence that echoes that of his predecessors of 15 years ago.

A sixth is that while complacency would be a mistake, much of the talk of expropriating private assets or nationalising private health care, which were policy priorities just five years ago, has quietened down. Many government leaders now realise that the political advantages of those ideas are near nil, while their economic and therefore direct political costs are immense. A seventh is that the cabinet is, admittedly haphazardly, surrendering the idea that SA could function as a state-directed command economy. Or at least that the ANC could survive the consequences. Private providers are now mostly allowed to do what they can to mitigate the consequences of Eskom's failures.





COALITION

The people of SA chose democracy precisely so that were a point ever reached where its government failed the expectations of the electorate they would be able to remove it from power and replace it with another. That is happening.

Because SA is such an unequal society with such a small middle class, and an economy so skewed towards services as opposed to industrial production, it is relatively easier than it may at first appear to somewhat shield a critical mass of GDP from the consequences of Eskom's failures. Consider that if in addition to current rates of private energy construction Eskom is granted permission to temporarily bypass some environmental controls at Kusile, while funding to procure diesel for its gas turbines is provided and the functioning of the coal fleet is improved by just 5%, SA is likely to go into the 2024 election without load-shedding. Moves are even afoot to privatise railways and ports. It is striking just how much policy common ground now exists between the ANC, DA and many of the smaller opposition parties on these latter points, from fiscal prudence on down.

None of this is to underplay the failures of the government or the terrible hardship and stress many SA families now

endure as a result. Rather, it is to illustrate that the present position is more evenly balanced than the dominant pessimism suggests. SA's democracy is functioning as intended; within the governing party and opposition are leaders open to making the concessions necessary for a unity government; in more cases than not SA's coalitions have worked; civil rights are intact; the government is fiscally prudent; and in key areas command economy populist policy is giving way to pragmatism.

Collectively these represent a most fortuitous set of circumstances given the serious crisis SA now finds itself in, and as a consequence I believe the outlook for the country is better now than it was five years ago.

**Dr Cronje, a former CEO of the Institute of Race Relations, directs advisory firm Frans Cronje Private Clients. He was a presenter at this year's Chief Rabbi Harris Rabbinical Conference, held at Zimbali, KZN, in early August. The Chief Rabbi has also hosted Dr Cronje on several well-attended Zoom webinars. This article has been adapted from the original article published in Business Day.*

HotPot.

The catering at CWHC continues to receive great praise in town and beyond. Rebbetzin Lee heads up the catering team and is ably assisted by Annie Manzambi, Jacques Itombo and Lucy Nolungile. In addition to the spectacular weekly Kiddush Brocha, the CWHC kitchen produces a variety of baked goods for sale, including our legendary kichel. In 5783 the CWHC kitchen catered a number of special events including lunches on Sukkot and Shavuot; a Yom Ha'atzmaut Israeli-style breakfast; an intimate wedding reception; the annual Mashgiach's Conference, held under the auspices of Kosher SA and the UOS and a dinner for the campers of Camp Kesher. Please contact the office to book your sponsored Kiddush Brocha. Competitive prices and great food!

Cholent is an ancient eastern-European Jewish food. It came about as a way of solving the problem of how one could have hot food on Shabbat afternoon with transgressing the prohibition of cooking on the holy day. A hearty stew was prepared on Friday and then left to cook slowly in the oven throughout Shabbat. Some suggest that the word cholent (or tzolent) is made up of two French words: chaud, hot and lente, slow. The Karaites, an ancient sect of Jews who rejected the Oral Law and the rabbinic interpretation of the Torah, understood the prohibition against having a fire in one's home on Shabbat in its most literal sense as forbidding the presence of any fire in a Jew's home on Shabbat. Consequently, the Karaites did not light Shabbat candles (or any other lights) or eat warm food, even if the pot was left on the stove prior to Shabbat to cook by itself. The correct interpretation, based on the Oral Law, is that one may not ignite or fuel a fire on Shabbat, but there is nothing wrong with having an existing fire in one's home on Shabbat. As a result of this misinterpretation, the Sages (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 257#8) urged all Jews to purposely prepare hot food for Shabbat to disprove the Karaites' contention, provided the cooking began before Shabbat and the pot was left on the stove in such a way that one would not add fuel to the fire on Shabbat. This is one of the sources for the custom of eating cholent on Shabbat afternoon.

Usually cholent is made with rich beef, potatoes, beans, onions and other vegetables. Here is a lighter version of the classic dish made with chicken instead of beef. It comes from Rebbetzin Lee's mother, 'Bobba' Minnie Grodsinsky. Enjoy!



Bobba Minnie's Chicken Cholent Recipe

Pour about 1 and a half teaspoons of oil into a crockpot (slow cooker).

Add a handful of rice.

Slice potatoes, pumpkin/butternut and carrots and make a first 'layer' on top of the rice.

Place a few pieces of raw chicken on top of the vegetables and season with your favourite spices/ seasonings.

Add a little bit of onion or chicken soup powder (such as Osem, Telma or Ina Paarman).

Pour in a half tin of canned tomato and onion braai relish.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Add another layer of butternut/ pumpkin and carrots, followed by more chicken pieces.

Add a final layer of potatoes.

Pour in the remaining half tin of tomato and onion braai relish on top of the final layer of potatoes.

Add 2 tablespoons of syrup.

Fill with water.

Leave on low to cook throughout the night and enjoy a tasty Shabbos lunch treat!



Aliso

in loving memory

On Sunday 29 January 2023, corresponding to 7 Shevat 5783, the Cape Town Jewish community lost its matriarch, Alison Berk-Katzeff, Aviva bat Shmuel HaCohen. At the massive funeral, held on Tuesday 31 January, Rabbi Liebenberg delivered the eulogy below.

Since the untimely passing of our dear wife, mother, sister, grandmother and friend, Alison, I have given much thought to the values that she held dear. The Sages of the Talmud (Makkot 24a) tell us that the Prophet Micah (6:8) distilled all the *mitzvot* of the Torah into three principles: "He has told you, O man, what is good! What does Hashem require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"

The Talmud explains the three items in the Prophet's list:

1. "Do justice" - this refers to strict law, balance, order and a sense of fairness and morality.
2. "Love kindness" - this refers to *gemmilut chassadim*, acts of kindness, that include visiting the sick, escorting the dead at a funeral, consoling mourners, assisting a bride and groom to get married, loaning money to the needy and so forth.
3. "Walk humbly with your God" - this refers to the *mitzvot* of escorting the dead and taking the bride to the *chuppah*. In other words, even *mitzvot* such as these, which are done publicly, should be done in a modest way and not with unnecessary pomp and circumstance. Consequently, concludes the Talmud, if we are to perform public *mitzvot* modestly, then we must certainly perform private *mitzvot* in a modest and humble fashion!

The Chofetz Chaim in his book *Ahavat Chesed* asks why the Prophet chose the verb "love" when referring to kindness as opposed to "do" as appears in reference to

On

justice. He explains that we must engender a love for kindness such that we actively pursue opportunities to bestow *chesed* rather than waiting for them to happen. Just as a parent loves their child and will go out of their way for them, so too should we go out of our way to perform acts of *chesed*.



This was Alison Katzeff. She had a highly developed sense of right and wrong, of justice and morality. There were many times when she approached me to enquire as to whether a particular business deal, communal project or donation was proper and appropriate. She demanded perfection from herself and was very seldom satisfied with what she achieved, even though most people would not have been capable of coming close. She wanted everything to be correct, proper and in its place. This was true of her home, her appearance, her office, the way in which she entertained guests. She was exacting and demanding. And, if she felt that others had not achieved their potential or had performed poorly, she would tell them so. And I was no exception. But she always did so in a respectful and dignified manner with the sole intention of helping the other person to improve and not merely to criticize. Her sense of justice extended to the realm of *Halacha*. She did not cut corners in *kashrut*, *Shabbat*, *chaggim*, monetary matters and the laws between man and his fellow man. When she did her MBA at the UCT School of Business, the course required her to attend a few lectures on *Shabbat*. She made an appointment with me to discuss how she could do this without compromising the sanctity of *Shabbat*.

And then there was her *ahavat chesed*, her love of kindness. I cannot say for sure, but I do not think it would be inaccurate to say that Alison supported every Jewish communal institution in Cape Town, many nationally and many in Israel. She was a proud Zionist who visited Israel often. Besides for the donations she made to institutions, there were countless individuals she helped. Whether it was a bride who needed financial assistance with her wedding, or a student who needed funds to register for university, or a couple that needed help to make a celebration for their son's *bris*, or a grade-12 learner who could not afford a matric dance outfit, or a scholar who needed expensive extra lessons - the list goes on and on. I know of many of these because Alison would often channel the funds through my Discretionary Fund. She helped people within the Jewish community and beyond. There was her *hachnasat orchim*, her incredible hospitality. Her home was warm and open. She loved to entertain. My family enjoyed many *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov* meals at her home with numerous other guests. Just recently, we attended a *siyum* dinner at her home and, despite the fact that she was not feeling well, she prepared a magnificent banquet. A great deal of thought went into her entertaining. She found out in advance if a guest had fussy eating habits. Moreover, if visitors had a different standard of *kashrut*, she made sure to cater for them. The rooms in her home were often full of visitors who were spending *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov* in the area. A frequent visitor was Ann Harris who became a part of the family, but there were many others. She hosted the community *shluchot* and had a hand in some of their *shidduchim*. She would make delicious meals for *Shiva* houses and she would deliver them personally. She had a love of giving

to others and she sought opportunities to do so.

And then there is the third value of the Prophet Micah, "walk humbly with your God." Alison held numerous leadership positions in the community and sat on many boards. She also received a number of awards for her dedication to the Jewish community and to Israel. She was a chairperson and trustee of United Herzlia Schools; she was chairperson and trustee of the United Jewish Campaign; she was a committee member and trustee of the Claremont Wynberg Shul, she served on the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies. Her opinion and advice were sought by many and she was held in high esteem by a wide range of people. Yet everything she did, she did in a modest, unassuming way. She was not boastful or arrogant. And she despised such behaviour in others. She did not join committees for the *yichus*, for the prestige or for the renown. She joined them because she believed she could make a difference. She did not enjoy the limelight and she absolutely hated public speaking but when she did have to speak in public, she was always extremely well prepared. She often sent me a draft of her speech and asked for my input and for an appropriate *dvar Torah* to add. She never craved recognition, but in the words of our sages (Eruvin 13b), "*Anyone who seeks greatness, greatness flees from him, and, anyone who flees from greatness, greatness seeks him.*" There are many acts of kindness that Alison performed in a discreet manner. She aspired to the lofty level of *tzedakah* whereby the recipient does not know who the benefactor is and is therefore spared embarrassment.

There are many facets of this remarkable woman. There is Alison the community stalwart.

There is Alison the astute businesswoman. She had a brilliant mind and was always seeking ways to expand her knowledge.

There is Alison the friend. She was, in the words of our sages, a *chaver tov*, a good friend. Nothing was too much trouble when it came to her friends. She would listen to their woes, travel to attend their *simchas* and spoil them with good food and generous birthday gifts. In our family, we referred to her as "Aunty Alison" but she was more than that. She was a very good friend to Lee and me and, in many ways, she was a surrogate grandmother to my children and they loved her dearly. Lee and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her publicly for all of the kindness she did for us. Our appreciation knows no bounds.

There is Alison the committed Jewess. She loved to attend shul and she loved to sing along with the chazzan. I imagine that her love of shul came from her grandmother Rivkah Berk, a pious woman, after whom the *Beit Midrash* is named at Claremont Wynberg Shul. She enjoyed the songs at the *Shabbat* table and she also hosted several musical *Melaveh Malkas* with Rabbi Levitz playing on the

guitar. About thirty years ago, Alison and Howard decided to become *shomrei Shabbat*, a decision that was not easy and occasionally alienated them from certain people. It was a decision that was to have a major and positive impact on their lives. Alison proved that it was possible to be a successful businessperson and communal leader and still adhere strictly to the *mitzvot* of the Torah.

And, finally, there is Alison the family woman. The Prophet Yeshayahu (51:1-2) says: "Listen to Me, you who pursue justice, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock you were hewn from, to the quarry you were dug from. [That is...] Look back to Abraham your father and to Sarah who brought you forth..."

together with all other holy congregations: them, their wives, their sons and daughters, and all that is theirs May He bless those who unite to form synagogues for prayers and those who come there to pray; those who provide lamps for light and wine for Kiddush and Havdalah, food for visitors and charity for the poor and all who faithfully occupy themselves with the needs of the community. May the Holy One, blessed be He, give them their reward; may He remove from them all illness, grant them complete healing, and forgive all their sins. May he send blessing and success to all the work of their hands, together with all Israel their brethren; and let us say: Amen.

May her memory be for a blessing.

There are many facets of this remarkable woman. There is Alison the community stalwart. There is Alison the astute businesswoman. There is Alison the friend. There is Alison the committed Jewess. And, finally, there is Alison the family woman. May her memory always be for a blessing.

Beloved wife of Howard, her husband of thirty-seven years. Their relationship goes back even further to 1972, some fifty years ago, when they first met at the horse stables. Together they have built a wonderful family, consisting of their daughter Yael, son Oren, son-in-law Rael and, the apples of her eye, her granddaughters Tehilla, Nava and Hodaya. Recently they welcomed Talia into the family. Alison was doing her utmost to be at Oren and Talia's wedding. Alison and Howard have instilled into their children the values of family, hard work, community, honesty, integrity, and love of Judaism, the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. She was very fond of her *mechutanim*. Alison was a devoted daughter to her parents, Sam and Joyce Berk and always treated them and spoke of them with the greatest respect. She was a caring and loving daughter-in-law to Alec and Minnie. She loved her sisters Stephanie and Beverley and was an outstanding and involved aunt to their children as well as to the children of Howard's siblings. She had a particularly close relationship with Serena, whom she loved dearly. She was the matriarch and rock of the family and her passing will leave a massive, irreplaceable void in their lives. We extend to Howard, Yael, Oren, Stephanie, Beverley and their families our heartfelt wishes of *nechama*. Thank you for sharing your wife, mom, sister and *savta* with us.

Note: At a recent tribute Kiddush Brocha, sponsored in memory of Alison by her family and friends, the CWHC Ladies Guild was re-named The Alison Berk-Katzeff Chesed Guild.



I conclude with the passage we read on *Shabbat* mornings in which we ask *Hashem* to bless those who work tirelessly for the community: "May He who blessed our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, bless all this holy congregation,

The UOS Legacy Project to honour the memory of Alison Katzeff zt"l, has been approved and endorsed by The Cape Town Priorities and Planning Board. Alison's Rabbi and Dayan on the South African Beth Din, Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg has strongly endorsed and supported this project. Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has also endorsed this project, which has been generously supported by Lance Katz (UJC Chairman) in his personal capacity. We would very much like friends and family of Alison's as well as communal leaders and donors to consider contributing towards this Legacy Project.

With 20 Affiliate member shuls (synagogues) and 88 employees, working in multiple locations across the Western Cape, the UOS Cape Council plays a pivotal role in protecting Jewish continuity and Orthodoxy. From cradle to grave this organisation promotes Torah and the Jewish way of life, taking care of all our Jewish religious needs through the 12 divisions and four legal entities operating under its communal umbrella.

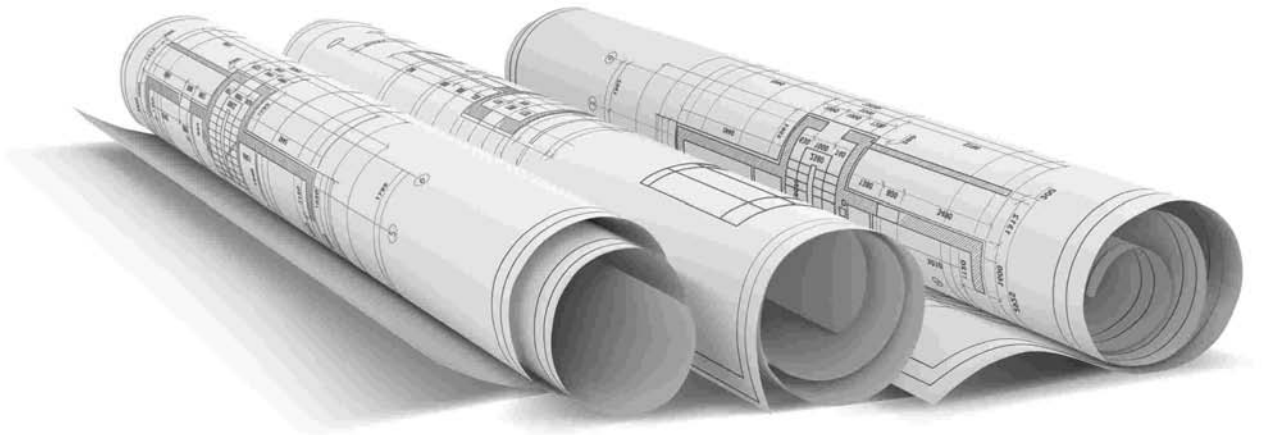
We believe that The UOS Legacy Project speaks directly to Alison's commitment to building and safeguarding the sustainability of our community and the belief that quality, commitment and integrity go hand in hand. It is an investment in the growth and sustainability of the UOS and the personal enrichment of its employees. And it is an investment in the future sustainability and viability of the Cape Town Jewish Community.

On completion of the project, the UOS building, situated at 191 Buitenkant Street, Cape Town, will be named THE ALISON BERK KATZEFF COMMUNITY CENTRE, in memory of Alison Katzeff - of blessed memory, who contributed so much to communal Jewish life in Cape Town and was a passionate supporter of Jewish education and the promotion of Torah observance and Torah learning in Cape Town.

Everything that Alison did for our community was *L'Shem Shamayim* - for the sake of Heaven, and whilst she will be remembered for her outstanding contribution to our Cape Town community through her leadership of the UJC, it was her commitment to the WHOLE COMMUNITY that really made her such an outstanding communal leader and philanthropist. It is for this reason that we believe it appropriate to honour her in this manner - the UOS is the very heartbeat of our Cape Town Jewish Community and the custodians of Torah and Jewish Life in Cape Town.

UOS LEGACY PROJECT

HONOURING THE MEMORY OF
Alison Berk-Katzeff zt"l



UNION OF
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Calendar

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS 5784/2023

SEPTEMBER							2023	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT		
						1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		

Dates, Times of Services and Relevant Information for the Yamim Noraim

**There will be a Children's Service on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - see page 20.*

Calendar

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS 5784/2023

ROSH HASHANAH FIRST DAY

Friday Night 15 and Shabbat 16 September / 1 Tishrei

Light a **yahrzeit candle** to facilitate candle lighting on second night Yom Tov.

Friday Night 15 September

18h00	Mincha
18h20	Candle Lighting - candles may be kindled earlier, from 17h23.
18h30	Maariv
18h37	Sunset

Shabbat 16 September (the shofar is not sounded on Shabbat)

08h00	Shacharit
09h30	Torah Reading
09h43	Latest time to say the Shemah.
10h30	Sermon
10h45	Mussaf

ROSH HASHANAH SECOND DAY

Saturday Night 16 and Sunday 17 September / 2 Tishrei

Saturday Night 16 September

17h50	Mincha
18h45	Maariv
After 19h12	Candle lighting from an existing flame.

Sunday 17 September

08h00	Shacharit
09h40	Torah Reading
09h42	Latest time to say the Shemah.
10h15	Sermon
10h30	Sounding of the Shofar followed by Mussaf.
16h30	Tashlich - meet at Liesbeek River below Paradise Motors.
18h00	Mincha
19h00	Maariv
19h13	Yom Tov ends (Havdalah with wine only).

Calendar

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS 5784/2023

FAST OF GEDALIAH

Monday 18 September / 3 Tishrei

05h28	Fast begins.
06h30	Selichot followed by Shacharit.
18h00	Mincha followed by Maariv.
18h58	Fast ends.

SHABBAT SHUVAH (PARASHAT HAAZINU)

Friday 22 September & Saturday 23 September / 8 Tishrei

Friday Night 22 September

18h00	Mincha
18h25	Candle Lighting - candles may be kindled earlier, from 17h26.
18h15	Kabbalat Shabbat followed by Maariv.
18h42	Sunset

Saturday 23 September

09h00	Shacharit followed by Kiddush Bracha.
09h37	Latest time to say the Shemah.
Approx. 12h30	Shabbat Shuvah Shiur following the Kiddush Bracha.
13h15	Mincha
19h17	Shabbat ends (Full Havdalah).
19h40	Maariv

CHILDREN SERVICES WITH NAOMI

ROSH HASHANAH

Friday night 15 & Saturday night 16 September: 18h30

Shabbat 16 and Sunday 17 September: 10h00

YOM KIPPUR

Kol Nidrei - No service

Monday 25 September: 11h00-13h00

(Food will be available for young children under Bar/Bat Mitzvah)

Calendar

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS 5784/2023

YOM KIPPUR

Sunday Night 24 and Monday 25 September / 10 Tishrei

It is customary to light a yartzeit candle before the onset of Yom Kippur to recall departed relatives. It is also customary to bless one's children. The blessing is found at the beginning of the Machzor.

Sunday Night 24 September

07h30	Selichot followed by Shacharit.
13h30	Early Mincha
18h26	Candle lighting – Yom Tov and Fast begins. Candles may be kindled earlier, if necessary, from 17h27. It is customary to light a Yahrzeit candle on the eve of Yom Kippur.
18h20	Kol Nidrei followed by Maariv.
18h43	Sunset

Monday 25 September

08h00	Shacharit
09h35	Latest time to say the Shemah.
10h30	Torah Reading
11h15	Sermon
11h30	Yizkor followed by Mussaf
16h00	Mincha
17h30	Sermon
17h45	Neilah followed by Maariv.
19h18	Yom Tov and Fast ends. (Full Havdalah without spices).



YOM KIPPUR

Appeal 5784

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Email: melanie@cwhc.co.za
Telephone: **021 671 9007**

Kosher in the palm of your hand

Kosher SA, a division of the UOS (Union of Orthodox Synagogues) is the organization that oversees the supervision and production of kosher food in South Africa. Kosher SA maintains two offices, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town. The MD of Kosher SA is Rabbi Dovi Goldstein (no relation to the Chief Rabbi) and Kosher SA has a staff compliment of over 40 people, including Rabbinic Coordinators (RCs), Rabbinic Field Representatives (RFR's), admin staff, food technologists, and more. In addition, they manage the ongoing certification of over 120 mashgichim. The Halachic standards and oversight of Kosher SA are set by the South African Beth Din, consisting of Dayanim Dovid Baddiel (JHB), Gidon Fox (JHB), Yoel Smith (JHB/CT) and Matthew Liebenberg (CT).

Kosher SA has an advanced data management system called KIMS, which it uses to store information about all the companies and products under its certification. They certify over 1300 companies and tens of thousands of products. There are also 80 food services, such as bakeries, butcheries, restaurants, delis, and caterers, who are under Kosher SA certification (known in Hebrew as a *'hechsher'*).

The internationally accepted reputation of Kosher SA has led to South Africa becoming a major tourist attraction for kosher visitors who are amazed at the sheer variety of products and food services available relative to the size of our Jewish community. August and December are the major months for kosher tourism to Cape Town as thousands of visitors, mostly from Israel, USA and the UK descend upon the city for delicious (and inexpensive) kosher delights!

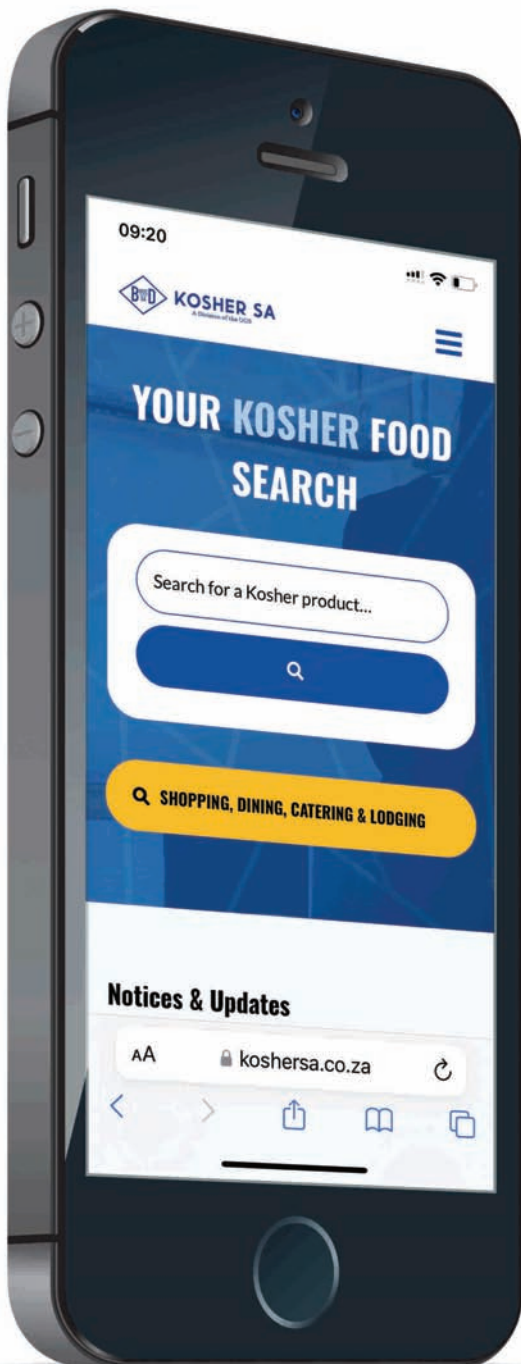
This year Kosher SA launched its new user-friendly website. The website can be accessed easily on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Some of the great features on the website are:

- Search - quickly search for any product to check its kosher status and whether it is meat, dairy or parev. You can also find kosher shops, eateries, caterers and even safari lodges.
- FAQ's - a list of frequently asked questions including: *Is Cadbury's chocolate kosher? Which chewing gum is kosher in South Africa? Are Mentos kosher in South Africa? Which Lindt products are kosher certified? Is Kikkoman soya sauce kosher? Which overseas kosher agencies are accepted? What reasons would a kosher logo be missing from a product? Do raw grains require a hechsher? Can I order coffee from anywhere? Why is freshly squeezed citrus juice sometimes problematic? Is any still or sparkling water okay? Is all raw honey kosher?*
- Kosher learning - a comprehensive learning portal including: *how to check vegetables for infestation? How do you kasher utensils? What is toiveling (immersion) and where can one find a mikveh for new utensils?*
- Passover - everything you need to know in order to keep kosher on Pesach.
- Notices and updates - sign up to receive regular updates on new products and food services, changes in products and so much more.

Kosher SA also has a WhatsApp line (messages only) for all your kosher questions: 063 693 9417.

This year Kosher SA launched its **new user-friendly website**. The website can be accessed easily on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.



KOSHER SA
A Division of the UOS

 **WhatsApp line**
063 693 9417



HELLO DARKNESS MY OLD FRIEND

LOADSHEDDING AND THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS

During 2023, South Africans experienced the worst bout of load shedding since the phenomenon began several years ago. Many people bit the bullet and installed expensive inverters and solar-units in their homes and offices. CWHC now has three inverters - one for the Rivkah Berk Beit Midrash, one for the offices and, most recently, one for the hall. *Baruch Hashem* we are able to host evening events once again! Unfortunately, cooking can only take place when there is no load shedding as the power needed to run the ovens and stove would drain an inverter in a few minutes.

This is not the first time in history we have experienced a plague of darkness. The first time was in Egypt. Let us have a deeper look at that event.

The nature of the ten plagues, their sequence, pre-warnings and duration are the subject of much discussion in rabbinic literature, especially in the commentaries to the Haggadah of Pesach. Surely a process as awesome as the plagues cannot be coincidental or random and the greatest Torah minds explain in minute detail why the plagues had to be "just so." Let us focus on one, the penultimate plague of darkness. The Torah describes this frightening event as follows (Shmot 10:21-23): "*Hashem said to Moses, "Stretch forth your hand toward the heavens, and there shall be darkness upon the land of Egypt, and the darkness will be tangible." Moses stretched forth his hand toward the heavens and there was a thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for a three-day period. No man could see his brother nor could anyone rise from his place for a three-day period; but for all the Children of Israel there was light in their dwellings.*"

Rashi (7:25), citing the Midrash (Shmot Rabbah) notes that each plague lasted for a quarter of a month (seven days) and that for the first three weeks Moses would warn Pharaoh of the consequences of not releasing the Israelites. In regards the darkness, he explains that for the first three days the darkness was so thick that one man could not see his fellow and for the next three days it became even thicker so that someone who was sitting could not stand and someone who was standing could not sit. He does not indicate if there was a seventh day. The Midrash (Shmot Rabbah 14), which is the source for Rashi's comment, explains that the seventh day of darkness occurred at the Red Sea, when a cloud separated the Egyptians from the Israelites. Ramban (Nachmanides to verse 23) explains that this darkness was not merely the absence of light, as if the sun had set and it was night. Rather, this darkness was a thick substance that descended from the sky and extinguished any flame or fire. The proof of this is the Torah's statement that "no man could see his brother." Had the darkness been similar to night, the Egyptians could simply have kindled lamps and lanterns. He concludes that it was like a heavy, tangible cloud or fog, similar to that which occasionally covers the Atlantic Ocean. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra writes likewise and testifies that such fog can last for up to five days and that "he has been there (*at the Atlantic coast*) many times" and has witnessed such thick fog.

What was the purpose of this plague? The Midrash Tanchuma (Bo # 4, partially cited by Rashi to 8:17) explains

the army would hold the townsfolk captive in the dungeon (darkness) until they capitulated. If they refused, they would execute the leaders of the city (slaying the firstborn).

Rashi (10:22) provides another, practical, reason for this plague. God had promised Abraham centuries earlier that when his offspring would eventually be redeemed from Egypt they would leave with great wealth (see Bereishit 15:14). This promise was fulfilled when God said to Moses (Shmot 11:2) "Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow (Egyptian) and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels." Now, asks Rashi, what would happen if an Israelite's Egyptian neighbour denied ownership of any valuable items? The Israelite would have to take his word and would leave empty-handed without any compensation for decades of free labour. It is for this reason that He brought the plague of darkness - the Hebrew slaves could use the period of darkness to enter the homes of the Egyptians unseen and seek out their valuables. For the Hebrews there was no darkness, as the verse makes clear: "but for all the Children of Israel there was light in their dwellings." This was true of every plague: the Hebrews were miraculously spared any ill consequence and emerged from every plague unscathed.

The Maharal notes that the ten plagues were the undoing of the ten statements of creation (see Pirkei Avot 5:1) that began with the word *Bereishit* (in the

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was light in their dwellings." (Shmot 10:2**

that God brought the plagues upon the Egyptians as an army would treat a besieged city. First the besieging forces would cut off the water supply (blood), then they would sound massive horns to frighten their enemies (the croaking of the frogs), and then they would fire arrows over the city walls (the lice that leapt upon the Egyptians) and so on until the enemies were brought to their knees. When they eventually entered the city,

beginning). The plague of blood was the opposite of the statement whereby Hashem promised all the inhabitants of the world vegetation for food. The food is ingested by the person or animal and sustains their soul that is contained in the blood. The plague of frogs was the opposite of the statement (Bereishit 1:20) "Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures..." In this case, God caused an overabundance of frogs, thereby 'cancelling'

His original statement. Based on this analysis, the plague of darkness corresponded to and was opposite to the second statement of creation (Bereishit 1:3) *"Let there be light."* The darkness in Egypt was the antithesis of the light that God introduced to the world on the first day of Creation. It follows then that the final plague - slaying of the firstborn - was the opposite of the first phrase of creation, the word *Bereishit*, in the beginning. This sequence would display to the Egyptians that (Shmot 7:5) *"I am Hashem, when I stretch forth My hand over Egypt; and I shall take the Children of Israel out from among them."* There would be no doubt that Hashem was behind the Exodus for the sequence and nature of the plagues would demonstrate that only the Master of Creation could be capable of reversing the very order of nature.

Rashi (10:22) provides a second and more ominous reason for the plague of darkness. He explains that there were many evil Hebrews in Egypt that did not want to leave the country despite their atrocious conditions. God caused them to die and be buried during the period of darkness so that the Egyptians would not be aware and remark that they too had been struck by God's wrath. This explanation tallies with the Torah's statement (in Parshat Beshalach, Shmot 13:18): *"The Children of Israel were armed (chamushim) when they went up from Egypt."* The Midrash (Mechilta) notes that the word *chamushim*, armed, is related to the word *chamesh*, five, and that the verse may be read *"one fifth of the Children of Israel went up from Egypt"* and the remaining four fifths

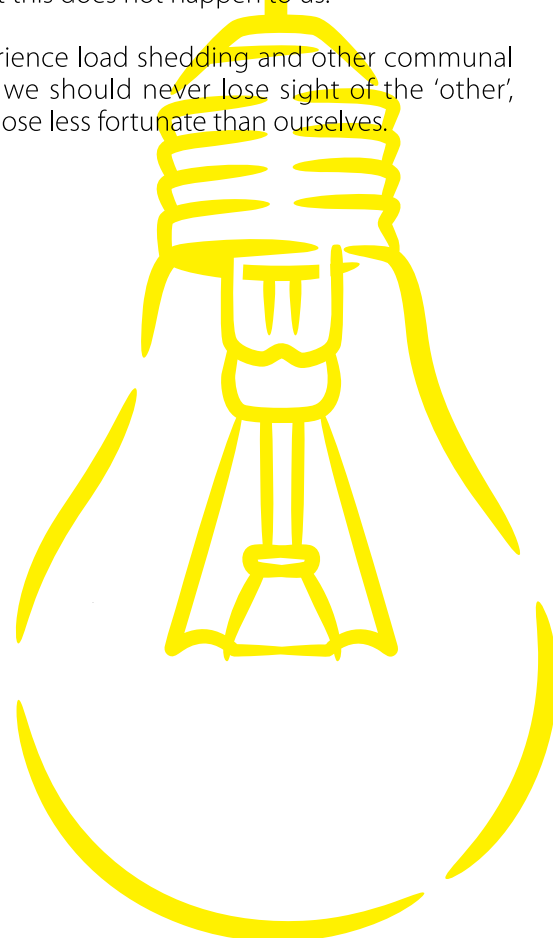
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perished in the plague of darkness! Rabbi Shimon Shwab (M'ein Beit HaShoeva) writes that if we take the words of this Midrash literally, it would mean that millions of Israelites perished, a number of casualties far greater than even the Egyptians who died in the plagues. He explains that the Midrash is speaking not of actual numbers but of potential numbers. In reality, there were very few wicked Jews who perished in the plague of darkness, but had they lived, they would have, over the course of

many generations, produced millions of descendants. Thus, it was as if "four fifths" of the Hebrews perished in those six days. This statement of our Sages is a frightening portent for all of Jewish history. There were always periods in our history when Jews for one reason or another, refused to join in the fate of their brethren. They opted to remain behind, to adopt the cultures of their host countries and were eventually lost in a silent holocaust of assimilation or even death. Perhaps the most striking example of this was the Spanish Inquisition and Expulsion. There were many Jews who chose to remain in Spain as Christians when their coreligionists were expelled in 1492. Although many attempted to live a clandestine Jewish life, eventually almost all vestiges of Judaism were lost and their descendants became proud Roman Catholics. It is rumoured that the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, a staunch Catholic, once remarked that under the Nuremberg Laws he would be classified as Jewish, so prominent was the quantity of Jewish blood in the Spanish population.

Rabbi Hanoch of Alexander (19th Century Hassidic Rebbe) made a fascinating comment on the words used to describe the intensity of the plague of darkness: *"A person did not see his brother."* That is to say, each individual only worried about himself and only looked to save himself and the members of his household - and, thus, *"did not rise from under the darkness for three days."* Not a single one of them succeeded in rising above the degraded spiritual level that they were caught in. The Egyptians were responsible for their own darkness because of their selfishness and self-centeredness. It was not the symptom of darkness - it was the cause. Their darkness was spiritual. We pray that this does not happen to us.

As we experience load shedding and other communal challenges, we should never lose sight of the 'other', especially those less fortunate than ourselves.





Judicial Reform in Israel - What's it all about?

In February, my family and I were in Israel to celebrate the wedding of Oren Katzeff and Talia Howard. We were staying in the central Jerusalem suburb of Rehavia, not far from the President's Residence. On Motzei Shabbat we left our accommodation to catch the number 13 bus, only to be accosted by a group of protestors heading towards the Presidents' Residence for a night of anti-Judicial Reform protest.

What are the protests all about? **Yaakov Katz of the Jerusalem Report** provides a nuanced approach to a difficult topic. His view is that for there to be proportion,

people need to realize that both sides of the Israeli judicial reform debate have legitimate concerns.

On November 21, 2013, the United States Senate changed the rules of the game. Stymied by what Democratic senators called "unprecedented obstruction" by Republicans, Harry Reid, the majority leader at the time, held a landmark vote to approve the most fundamental change to senate rules in a generation. Simply put, the Senate would no longer need a supermajority of three-fifths (60 votes) to break a filibuster. From that day in 2013 and on, all that would be needed is a simple majority.

If you want to reach a compromise, first, understand what is troubling the other side.

And what was being obstructed that the Democrats were so passionate about unblocking? Judicial appointments.

It is a story worth thinking about after President Joe Biden issued a rare statement about the ongoing debate in Israel over the coalition's planned judicial reforms. Like Secretary of State Antony Blinken before him, Biden hailed the "genius of American democracy and Israeli democracy" and added that "building consensus for fundamental changes is really important to ensure that the people buy into them so they can be sustained."

It was rare because it was the first known time that a United States president weighed in on an internal Israeli political dispute that has to do with the nature of the balance between the country's branches of government.

Beyond being rare, it was also interesting coming from Biden. In 2013, when the Democrats voted to change the filibuster, he was the vice-president and as such, the president of the Senate. He was aware of the way his party was changing the rules. Then, he didn't seem to have a problem with it being done without a consensus. This is not to say that Biden does not have the right to speak up if he sees something happening in Israel that he does not like. He does. After all, the foundations for the relations between the two countries rest on shared democratic values. If he feels that those are under threat then he should say something.

All that can be asked though is for a bit of proportion. It is doubtful that in 2013, he or anyone else in the Obama administration would have appreciated a foreign head of state interfering in Senate procedures and calling for a broad consensus, which is exactly what the Democrats eliminated when they changed the filibuster.

Speaking about proportion, that is exactly what is missing from the entire debate about the judicial reforms: on the Right where Justice Minister Yariv Levin and Law Committee chairman Simcha Rothman are steamrolling ahead with disregard to the other side and in the Opposition, whose leaders - Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz - say they want a dialogue but then when offered one, create preconditions so they can turn it down.

That was a mistake. When the offer was made to meet, the legislation was anyhow not moving forward for another week. Lapid and Gantz could have met with Levin and Rothman and decided after just an hour whether there was common ground to seize on. Instead, by saying

a flat-out "no," they showed what they are really concerned about: losing the momentum gained from the massive protest in Jerusalem.

Both Left and Right have legitimate concerns regarding judicial reform. The problem is that for there to be proportion, people need to realize that both sides have legitimate concerns. On the Left, there is a genuine fear that if these reforms move ahead, it will spell the end of democracy and Israel will fall into an abyss. Their concern is legitimate. Some of the moves being made are extreme and need to be toned down.

On the other hand, there is a genuine feeling of disenfranchisement by a substantial number of Israelis - right-wingers, *Mizrahim* and *Haredim* - who feel that the court does not protect their rights or represent their sectors in society. What happened during the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip was a real trauma for some of these people that has not healed. The fact that only 11 *Mizrahi* judges have served on the Supreme Court out of 72 does not favor anyone.

Altogether, this gives people a feeling that the court does not represent them. When people on the Left warn now that if the political class receives authority to appoint judges it will undermine their trust in the court, they should talk to some of their right-wing and religious friends. Many of them lost trust 20 years ago.

People can yell until tomorrow that this is meaningless and that just because some people feel distressed doesn't mean that the judicial system should be changed but that is also wrong. If you want to reach a compromise, first, understand what is troubling the other side.

Take the 100 000 protestors who took to the streets of Jerusalem in February in an impressive protest, the likes of which have not been seen in the capital for decades. They came from all walks of life and from across our nation, waving Israeli flags and chanting pro-democracy slogans. There was little doubting their support of our democratic system. But, here is something that isn't clear: If these people are such supporters of democracy and democratic values, how can they support the continued existence of the judicial appointments committee?

The committee is made up of nine members: two ministers, two MKs (one from the Opposition), two members of the Bar Association and three sitting Supreme Court justices. Under existing law, seven members are needed to approve

an appointment, meaning that the judges, who vote as a bloc, always have a veto.

Before even getting into the question of whether it makes sense that judges appoint judges - would we want one prime minister to appoint the next? - has anyone here ever seen a transcript from the appointments committee? Has anyone ever been able to sit in on a hearing or watch what happens there like in Knesset committees? Do journalists get to report from the committee hearings and understand how the decisions are made? The answers are all "no." How is a process that has zero openness, zero transparency and zero accountability democratic?

And then there is the argument that some people make according to which the political class is not qualified to select judges and that politicians are unethical and do not have legal experience. Without getting into specific people, this argument is confusing. We, the people, elect our legislators and they are our representatives in the Knesset. We elect them and trust them to make decisions about going to war, attacking our enemies, lowering and increasing taxes, dividing up our state budget and more. Suddenly, do we draw the line when it comes to the appointment of judges?

Then there is the issue of reasonability, the justification for why the court decided to bar Shas Chairman Arye Deri from serving as a minister. Before continuing, let me be clear: It was a stain on Israel that Deri was appointed in the first place. He is a two-time convicted criminal and should have no place in our Knesset or our government. Netanyahu never should have allowed him to be a minister.

Nevertheless, once he ran at the head of a party that was voted into the Knesset with 400 000 votes, was appointed a minister and approved in a Knesset vote, how can the court come and decide that doing so was unreasonable? With all due respect to the judges, there were 400 000 people who felt it was reasonable and another 64 members of Knesset who raised their hand in approval. Are the 10 judges more reasonable than everyone else?

Is that democratic?

We could go on and dissect the other parts of the proposed reform but that is not my point. Rather, I wish there was a way to restore some nuance and proportion to the conversation, which are both sorely missing. Instead,

what we have are two sides bent on not seeing the Israeli people win by reaching a compromise but rather on fighting for a victory image that will help advance their own political interests.

And while the judicial reforms are what pushed throngs of people to take to the streets, what is troubling them is less how our judges will be appointed but rather what else will come the moment that changes. Almost everyone agrees that judicial reforms are needed but the question is what kind.

What the people out on the streets fear is that this is just the beginning and that after far-reaching judicial reforms that will give the Knesset new powers, Avi Maoz will have his way with our children's education, Deri will pass his bill to jail women wearing short sleeves at the Kotel and haredim will abolish the IDF draft bill. With checks and balances out of the way, what will prevent all of this harm to our civil rights?

And that is what this is about: civil rights. Will there be a way to protect civil rights after these reforms are instituted? That is the democracy people are worried about losing and these concerns cannot be ignored. The government needs to take them into consideration and needs to address the fears that are pushing over 100 000 people to the streets on a weekly basis.

President Isaac Herzog put forth a compromise that could be acceptable to both sides. There are other ideas out there, as well, from legal experts like Yedidia Stern of the Jewish People Policy Institute and Raz Nizri, a former deputy attorney general.

The sides need to meet, talk, negotiate and find common ground. There is only one Israel and only one Supreme Court in Jerusalem. Put aside the politics and do what the people want and find a compromise.

Both Left and Right have legitimate concerns regarding judicial reform.

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NETFLIX



Jewish Matchmaking's

Aleeza Ben Shalom

The TV Star Who Doesn't Own a TV

Aleeza Ben Shalom's life has taken a 180-degree turn in the past two years. First, she, her husband and their five children moved to Israel from Philadelphia. Then, a year ago, she started working on the new Netflix series "Jewish Matchmaking," which premiered on 3 May 2023. The funny thing is that as an Orthodox woman, she doesn't even own a TV.

"I only watched it on a phone or on a computer," she laughed during a Zoom interview with the Journal. "Other people

have sent me screenshots of it on their big screen TV; I really need to go to somebody's house to see it."

When Ben Shalom was approached by Netflix to do the reality show, she was a busy matchmaker and relationship coach. One day she received a phone call from her friend, a matchmaker herself, who was asked to audition for the show. *"She told them "Nah, no thanks, I don't want to do it - but you would want my friend Aleeza. I've been working with her - we've been doing videos online for singles and speed dating events. We've been doing matchmaker trainings and workshops online - she's great, she's always got something to say, she can speak off the cuff, you should call her."* She called me and goes, *"Aleeza, casting is calling you about a show; pick up the phone!"*

So she did and the producers loved her. Relaxed, pleasant, natural, and they felt she's a good fit. To prepare for the show, Ben Shalom watched the very popular series *"Indian Matchmaking"* from the same producers. After that, she met the lucky candidates out of the hundreds who responded to the casting call.

The singles who appear on the show are both secular and Orthodox Jews who live all over the US, South Africa, and Israel. Thirty-year-old Ori is the son of Israeli parents who lives in Los Angeles and is searching for a blue-eyed, blonde-haired woman who speaks Hebrew; Nakysya is a 25-year-old black Jew from Kansas who loves to ride motorcycles and wants a fit man who doesn't live in Kansas City; Dani, a South African Jew living in Miami, loves Latin men; Harmonie, a vivacious 44-year-old looking

Ben Shalom grew up secular and became religious in her mid-20s. While dating her husband Gershon, who was brought up in a traditional Jewish household, she asked him, *"Do you wanna make aliyah?"* He answered: *"Yes."*

"So I said, 'When?' And he said, 'I don't know, whenever.' I said 'Okay. We'll go and get married, and then, in five years.'" He said "Oh, that's too short, we got to save money and work and build a life. In ten years?" And I said, "forget about it, ten years is too long, we'll get stuck in America. So I said, "We'll agree on seven years."

It took the couple 18 years to make Aliyah. They moved to Israel in March 2021 and are very pleased with their decision. Gershon, who has always been very supportive of his wife's work, agreed to stay home and take care of

On one hand, we could say it's a lot easier to meet people today. I can meet anybody anywhere anytime. I want to meet somebody, I can go online, click click and meet somebody in another country. It's very, very easy to meet people but what is difficult to do is to choose somebody.

for someone she would have a sexual chemistry with and have kids, and 29-year-old Fay is a devout and open-minded Orthodox entrepreneur who's familiar with the *Shidduchim* process and is looking for a man who prays three times a day with a group of men.

Ben Shalom begins the process of matchmaking with an in-depth interview with each of her clients. She wants to hear about their wants, dislikes, dating history and how religious they want their match to be. Sometimes their wish list can sound a little odd, but this matchmaker never judges and only tries to make them look beyond the superficial aspect of the match. She told Ori, *"If I'm going to present you with an amazing girl - personality, Hebrew-speaking, but she doesn't have blue eyes and for sure you're going to say no to that - then to be honest, I'm only going to look for a blue-eyed girl"* She also encouraged Nakysya to agree to go out on a date with a bald man, even though she loves her men with a full head of hair.

To Harmonie, who isn't religious and describes herself as having a "hippie vibe," Ben Shalom suggested she refrain from touching during the first five dates.

"In Judaism, 'Shomer Negiah' is the practice of not touching and the purpose is to keep the physical relationship waiting until the holiness of the marriage comes together," she explained.

the kids, ages nine to 19. *"He is semi-retired and he's taking care of the family really well. He's an outstanding chef, cooks and cleans, gets the boys to school in the morning. We traded roles. This was a conscious decision, where I asked him to let me do my thing, and work, and be professional, take care of the bills and you take care of the home."*

In Hebrew, the show is called *"Modern Shidduchim,"* and indeed, the matchmaking done by Ben Shalom looks nothing like the matchmaking that comes to mind when thinking of the Jewish *yente*, that older matchmaker with a kerchief that covers her hair and caters only to Orthodox Jews. Ben Shalom is working with secular and religious alike.

"I've worked with people who've said 'I'm Jewish but I don't believe in God.'" I said I don't really care. I've worked with people who've said, "Maybe I want to marry Jewish and maybe I don't," and I said "Well, I only set up Jewish people with Jewish people, so, on your own, you can do what you do - but when you work with me, that's how I'm going to match you." I've always worked with a wide variety of people. And I have a very strong religious group of marriage-minded singles, because matchmaking is more normal and comfortable in the observant world, but over the years, matchmaking has become very popular and "in", and it's not such a foreign concept to secular people."

Asked what she thinks of dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble, Match.com, and others, she said, *"I have lots of people who meet on them. I think that if they're used properly, like anything, it can be for the good. Just for example, television: good or bad? Well, it's just television. It's how you use it. Dating apps are the same thing; it's how you use it. And they can be used for tremendous good to help make matches or they can give people dating fatigue and it can be very difficult for them to go through the dating process. On one hand, we could say it's a lot easier to meet people today. I can meet anybody anywhere anytime. I want to meet somebody, I can go online, click click and meet somebody in another country. It's very, very easy to meet people but what is difficult to do is to choose somebody. I think it's much more difficult because today we have analysis paralysis; people are terrified of missing out, or "this person may be better, maybe I should try one more."*

"I think in the pre-modern world, we had very limited choices; it was just the boy or the girl next door or somebody that lived in your community and that was it. It wasn't always a good match, but they just made it work. It wasn't what we call a 'love match', but it was a match between two people that grow to love each other over time. And today, people are not seeking that, they're not seeking to be enticed to go to the Chuppah and get married."

Throughout her career, she has introduced over 200 couples who got married. Her youngest client was 18 and the oldest 89. Nothing makes her happier, she said, than receiving family photos from them, telling her, *"Look, we just had another baby, mazel tov!" "It's like being a grandparent. You see the families you helped to build, building their family; it's such a WOW feeling."*

Working on the Netflix show enabled Ben Shalom to do something she hasn't done in a very long time: travel. *"I love traveling and I haven't been able to travel significantly during my 20 years of marriage and this is the first time that I'm able to do it, and it's such a joy. I miss my family, I love my kids, but it's a tremendous amount of joy to do what I love and to be traveling."*

What is the best dating advice you can give those who are struggling to meet someone? *"I would tell people to change things. Like when they're looking online, to change their criteria, data or change their photo, refresh things and make your page look different and feel different. Present yourself in a different way so people can see and understand you a little bit differently. I would also tell people to focus on what are one or two things that they want people to really understand about helping them to find a match. Explain to your friend or family members what you want, how are you going to do that in an effective way, and they'll just say "Oh, I'm looking for a good guy or a good girl, nice, and sweet, and good looking" - Isn't everybody looking for that? Tell me something different; tell me a piece of information that not everybody tells me so that I know how to find your person. And mainly I will tell them to never stop looking and never stop trying. The person who finds their person, is the one that never stops looking. He is out there."*

A couple of days after the show began airing, Ben Shalom got her first taste of celebrity. She was at the airport, doing her round of interviews in the US before going back home to Israel. *"This man was staring at my necklace, which is a unique, one-of-a-kind piece and he went "[Gasp] You're the Jewish matchmaker. We just watched you last night. I'm on episode two. I have to take a picture and send it to my wife. She's not going to believe it!"*

Aleeza was a presenter at this year's Chief Rabbi Harris Rabbinical Conference, held at Zimbali, KZN, in early August. The article above is adapted from Jewish Journal.



Baruch Dayan Ha'emet

Rabbi Gershon Edelstein zt"l



Hundreds of thousands of mourners crowded into Bnei Brak on Tuesday 30 May 2023, corresponding to 10 Sivan 5783, for the funeral of Rabbi Gershon Edelstein, head of the Lithuanian Ponevezh Yeshiva and one of the most influential religious leaders in Israel.

In addition to running the yeshiva, one of the most prestigious in the haredi Orthodox world, for more than two decades, Edelstein was the spiritual leader of *Degel HaTorah*, a faction of Israel's United Torah Judaism political party that played a key role in the formation of the current government.

In the last year of his life, after the death of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky at 94, Edelstein was awarded the title of "*Gadol*

Hador," or "*Greatest of the Generation*." He had succeeded Kanievsky as the leader of Israel's non-*Hasidic Haredi* community, and his death is seen as leaving that community without a clear leader for the first time. Edelstein was considered somewhat moderate for his approach toward interacting with the secular Israeli world while still remaining attuned to the needs of his devout community, where he was revered for his humane approach to teaching.

Edelstein was considered somewhat moderate for his approach toward interacting with the secular Israeli world while still remaining attuned to the needs of his devout community, where he was revered for his humane approach to teaching.

“Rabbi Edelstein was a spiritual leader of enormous stature whose greatness in Torah and devout greatness influenced our generation and will influence generations to come,” Israeli President Isaac Herzog said in a statement on Twitter. “This is a great loss to the yeshiva world and the entire nation of Israel.”

Born to a family of rabbis near Smolensk in the Soviet Union, Edelstein and his father and brothers immigrated to Palestine in 1934. Edelstein eventually settled in Bnei Brak, where in 1943, he became one of the first students of the Ponevezh Yeshiva when it was reestablished there after closing in Nazi-occupied Lithuania. He married Henya Rachel Diskin in 1947, the same year he took a top position at the yeshiva. In the 1990s, a disagreement between two leaders at the yeshiva led to a schism, and Edelstein became the top leader of one of the factions. (Both groups still meet in the same building.) He stayed in that role until his death, reportedly continuing to teach until the last day of his life, despite having been hospitalized.

Edelstein advocated for Orthodox families to maintain ties with children who became secular, and attributed the non-observance of Jewish law by secular Jews to ignorance rather than the wickedness cited by more extremist *Haredi* leaders. He also embraced Orthodox Israelis who chose to serve in the army, in an apparent rejection of the stance of some *Haredi* leaders who characterize those who choose army service as rejecting Torah study.

Also unlike some other *Haredi* leaders, Edelstein advocated caution during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first round of High Holidays during the pandemic, Edelstein pushed for outdoor prayer quorums that maintained social distancing or indoor prayers in a well-ventilated area, both with congregants wearing masks. When the COVID-19 vaccines were produced, Edelstein also recommended that everyone 12 years and older get vaccinated.

He had a heavily regimented daily schedule, waking up at 5:30 am to make it in time to pray morning services by 7 am, with a full day of teaching, learning and praying until midnight. According to a 2017 profile in Israel *HaYom*, he also adhered to the so-called “Rambam diet” (named for the medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides) and ate vegetables, cheese and half a slice of whole-grain bread in the morning and in the evening. While he would eat a cooked lunch, the profile explained, he had not eaten sweets in 80 years.

From his perch at the top of the yeshiva, Edelstein also served as president of the Council of Yeshivas, an organization that supports yeshivas in Eastern Europe.

In his capacity as a spiritual advisor of the *Degel HaTorah* party, Edelstein is most recently known for demanding that the *Belz Hasidic* sect drop an agreement with the education ministry to teach more secular studies in exchange for increased government funding. His success in pressing the group to drop the demand preserved the United Torah Judaism ticket of religious parties, allowing the bloc to help Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to form a government last year.

Edelstein’s wife Henya died in 2001. Among his survivors are sons who are rabbis in Israel, at least one of whom spoke at his funeral.

“Our father did not want to pressure us, or anyone else, into devoutness,” Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Edelstein said during a eulogy, according to Israeli media. “Make no mistake: He wanted us to be devout, but from within, not from without.”

Note: the founder of the Ponovez Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, would visit Cape Town to raise funds for his yeshiva. He was a very warm person who was beloved by all. To this day, there is a Ponovez shul in Maynard Street, Cape Town, which currently forms part of the campus of Cape Town Torah High.



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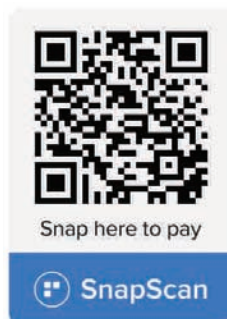
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