

south african Jewish Report

■ Volume 21 – Number 29 ■ August 18 2017 ■ 26 Av 5777

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south african Jewish Report

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Mark Pamensky lashes out at OUTA

NICOLA MILTZ

Mark Pamensky this week lashed out at the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) for laying charges against him for corruption and abuse of his position as an Eskom board director.

Pamensky, a former non-executive director at the Gupta family’s Oakbay Resources and Energy, as well as former non-executive director at Eskom, told the SA Jewish Report that he was “furious” with OUTA.

“I’m flabbergasted, I’m in shock,” he said in response to the charges which were laid at the Brooklyn Police Station in Pretoria earlier this week.

Benjamin Theron, chief operating officer of (OUTA), says the charges relate to Pamensky’s “conduct” while he was a director of Eskom and “of at least one business linked to the Gupta’s business empire”.

“In his role as non-executive board member of various companies, Pamensky was the conduit for the flow of privileged information between the companies,” said Theron in his affidavit.

Theron alleges “Pamensky used his position and authority to influence decisions and manipulate the outcomes of the various committees that he sat on.”

However, Pamensky denies this. “My lawyers and I see it clearly as black and white – there is no truth to any of the allegations; they are false.”

He steadfastly maintains he recused himself from all board decisions when it became apparent that a conflict of interest may be perceived, and that all leaked Gupta e-mails have been taken out of context in OUTA’s affidavit and the media.

He said OUTA’s complaint is “spurious and without any foundation.

“It is clearly designed to defame me and an attempt to sensationalise my role as an independent non-executive director of Eskom. I was at all times well aware of the fiduciary duties that I owed to various companies and I have fully complied with all of those duties in accordance with all applicable laws and corporate governance requirements.

“I was never in a position where I had a conflict of interest and to the extent that there may have been a perceived conflict, I have, at all times, made the necessary declarations and recused myself from such discussions, and have documented proof of such.

“The information contained in the e-mails, does not, in any way, support the allegations

levelled against me by OUTA, which have failed to properly consider the contextual content of the e-mails they purport to rely on, as well as other factual evidence at hand.

“I’ve gone on record on numerous occasions setting out how I could not possibly have had a conflict of interest or breached any of my fiduciary duties. In the present circumstances, I again deny any wrongdoing and believe that the complaint is malicious and defamatory.”

The Pamensky saga is far from over as there are far too many questions left unanswered. We will bring you more as it unfolds.



Mark Pamensky

Parshat Re’eh

‘This day’ we brace for the redemption

Moshiach is the catalyst that will bring about the emancipation of mankind and of the world. The Messianic arrival ushers a transition from a historically lengthy period of Divine concealment, to a time of Divine manifestation, where the process of history and G-d’s purpose in His creation, culminates and is revealed.

The Messianic era heralds a dramatic shift, where the world and mankind are rid of ills and negativity, with goodness and blessing engulfing all existence.

The ongoing buzz proclaiming the imminent arrival of Moshiach, has been stated with more frequency and with greater intensity over the last few decades and particularly over the last few years. But with time passing and no Moshiach, one ends up wondering if it’s really real, and if it’s ever going to happen.

So, let me reaffirm this principle-view categorically. Yes, Moshiach is coming, and yes, very soon, if not sooner.

It is worth noting that this perspective is today shared by every scholar of Torah without exception, from the most astute of sages, to the intelligent student who has basic insight into Jewish thought.

This total uniformity of agreement is in itself a distinct phenomenon. Never has it been so in-sync, collectively endorsed and uncontested, as it is today.

Furthermore, there are spine-chilling prophetic insights that are clearly documented in authentic Torah texts,

some from over 2 000 years ago, which foretell of the period before Moshiach’s arrival. These predicted signs and events have uncannily manifested in great volume in recent times, bearing testimony to the cosmic transformation that is set to unfold.

The opening words of our portion also gives us a deep insight into this extraordinary time. They read: “See I have placed before you ‘this day’ blessing and curse.” The term “this day” is also used elsewhere, referring to the day of (before) Moshiach’s arrival in the verse, “Today (Moshiach will come), if you hearken to His (G-d’s) voice.” (Psalms 95:7).

Anytime the same word is used in different parts of the Torah there is a link and tie-in to both ideas. How then is the statement describing “blessing and curse”, related to the time just before Moshiach’s arrival?

The Talmud in Sanhedrin gives us the key. Sanhedrin teaches that Moshiach will come to a generation that is enigmatically characterised by a deep paradox and further, that the paradox is built from a single dimension!

The unique time in which we live, suggests we are impossibly near to Moshiach, both from a remarkably positive perspective (blessing) and simultaneously, a negative (curse).

The positive is that in our modern day the world offers as never before in history, the freedom for the Jew to be able to live a completely open and unfettered Jewish life and lifestyle (blessing) – this means that G-d’s truth is able to be expressed in Creation without restriction, antagonism or objection.

But paradoxically, the nature of this time of freedom as it impacts on human choice (or lack thereof), results in a numbness to spiritual identity, such that erosion through assimilation is critical and devastating. The same source is creating the paradox, signalling that we are nearer than ever.

Rev
Ilan Herrmann



South African Jewish Report

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Israelis luring South African slave domestics

ANT KATZ

Israelis are luring South African domestic workers through adverts placed in local newspapers, and later “exploited”, the United Nations’ International Organisation for Migration (IOM) told the SA Jewish Report this week.

Those who are tricked into going to Israel, are then denied “freedom of movement, have to work long hours and were not paid for their work”, according to the IOM’s SADEC office Project Officer Marija Nikolovska.

While they were unable to provide numbers of victims, they are unlikely to be very high. The total number of repatriation of South African human trafficking victims from all countries in the four years to 2014 was just 142.

The fact that Israel is one of the top six destination countries for human trafficking out of South Africa, emerged in a speech by Police Minister Fikile Mbalula recently. The other five are Ireland, Zimbabwe, Switzerland, Macau and the Netherlands.

Mbalula’s spokesman, Vuyo Mhaga, confirmed the top six list, but said that the Ministry did not have the numbers of people being trafficked. He said, however, the trafficking of people out of South Africa was far less than those trafficked into the country.

IOM South Africa had “provided comprehensive direct assistance to several victims of trafficking of South African nationals who were trafficked to Israel,” Nikolovska confirmed this week.

Nikolovska said the recorded cases had all been “for the purposes of labour exploitation (domestic servitude)”.

Those trafficked to Israel had “answered an advert in a newspaper and were given employment in Israel and later exploited”, she said. “They didn’t have freedom of movement, had to work long hours and were not paid for their work.”

They managed to escape and seek help from authorities,

and were then directed to the IOM. They were all repatriated.

The IOM is the world’s leading international migration agency. It has helped over 13 million migrants to date.

Mbalula’s original statement had come in the wake of a joint sting operation by police in South Africa and Malaysia last month, which resulted in the freeing of a 24-year-old Bloemfontein woman, Princess Mahlangu, along with 13 other women from 13 other countries as far afield as Thailand, the US and Barbados.

The South African authorities had heard that Mahlangu had been conned online into entering a fake modelling competition. The speed of the intervention, said Mbalula, resulted in the rescue of all of the captive women.

While Israel appears on the IMO’s top six list, it remains unclear how many of the South African victims have been repatriated.

Hawks spokesman Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi said they were not aware of the Israeli trafficking situation.

The press office of Interpol in France confirmed that the organisation was aware of the problem, but “does not gather

such statistics”. They, too, rely on the information published by the IOM.

Nikolovska explained that human trafficking was different to smuggling of migrants. In smuggling, the person pays someone else to smuggle them across a border and their relationship ends there.

“With human trafficking, the intention is exploitation. Human smuggling is a breach of immigration laws, while human trafficking is a breach of human rights,” she says.

No country in the world is immune to the crime of human trafficking. It is the third most profitable illegal trade globally – after drugs and weapons. Countries are viewed as places of origin, transit or destination of victims. “South Africa is all of the above,” says the IOM.



Bobroff money frozen in Israel

ANT KATZ

The South African Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) has frozen, and plans to confiscate, over R101 million of Ronald and Darren Bobroff’s funds that were found by the Israeli authorities in Israel.

The Hawks and Interpol say they are trying to do the same with “a lot of (Bobroff) funds scattered all over the world”.

And the Hawks say extradition proceedings to bring the father and son, who are living in Australia, back to South Africa to face the music, are already in motion.

Personal injury lawyers Ronald and Darren Bobroff fled to Australia a day before they had agreed to hand themselves over to the Hawks in March last year after

irregularities were uncovered at their legal practice.

They have since both been struck from the role of attorneys in South Africa and provisionally sequestered. The SA Law Society has advised the Australian authorities of this.

Ronald has previously claimed to be a member of the Israeli Bar. However, in 2014, the deputy general manager of the Israel Bar Association, Uri Elfersy, put paid to that suggestion by issuing a statement that Bobroff had never been admitted as a member. He did, in fact, write and fail the Israeli Bar exam in 1988.

The AFU is a division of the National Prosecuting Authority. NPA national spokesman, Luvuyo Mfaku, told the SA Jewish Report this week that the Israeli

financial authorities recently “became aware of the suspicious movement of money” in the Bobroffs’ accounts. They then put a temporary freeze on the accounts and informed their South African counterparts.

Asked if there were any other assets elsewhere, Mfaku would not deny this, but said he could not comment on any other assets presently under investigation.

Hawks spokesman Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi, however told the SA Jewish Report that “there are a lot of funds scattered all over the world”. The South African Police are working with Interpol and trying to trace and secure these, he said.

The Bobroffs face a range of civil and criminal charges in South Africa, including

Continued on page 4>>

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We can't ignore South Africa, says visiting Knesset member

STEVEN GRUZD

When asked about South Africa's apparent efforts to sabotage the planned Israel-Africa Summit in Togo in October, Israeli Member of Knesset Nachman Shai said: "It's a diplomatic war. We won't ignore or leave Africa – they are important countries in the international arena."

Shai, from the opposition centre-left Zionist Camp (incorporating the Labour Party), is one of five MKs currently visiting South Africa, on a trip jointly organised by the Jewish Agency, the Knesset, and the South African Zionist Federation.

He was speaking on Tuesday at a luncheon for the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) at the Women's Jail on Constitution Hill – a place of fear, transformed into a museum, dialogue space and a symbol of hope.

In the shadow of Johannesburg's iconic Hillbrow Tower, approximately 130 mostly Christian supporters of Israel, heard speakers optimistically emphasise how much South Africa and the African continent could gain if only they embraced warmer ties with the Jewish State.

Shai told the SA Jewish Report: "Even if [this trip] doesn't work perfectly and we don't get all our meetings, this is an important visit.

We can't ignore South Africa, especially as the Israeli government is increasing its contact with Africa."

He said: "Israel is ready to give and share. We can have a new chapter now... we have so much to offer South Africa – hi-tech, agriculture, water technology, education, creativity."

Politicians talk for a living, so when the other four MKs – Amir Ohana (Likud), Nurit Koren (Likud), Michal Biran (Zionist Camp), and Zouheir Bahloul (Zionist Camp) – were asked to introduce themselves, each had to make a little speech.

Ohana invited the Christians to "walk in the footsteps of Jesus" in Jerusalem, while Biran, stressed her secularism and that for her, Judaism meant "tikkun olam – repairing the world". She mentioned her work against racism and discrimination in Israeli society, and her desire to see two states for two people, and a Jewish State that retained its democratic values.

Koren spoke as a child of Yemenite immigrants to Israel, and her involvement in selecting judges, proudly noting Israel's recent appointment of two female Ethiopian Jewish judges.

Most memorable was Bahloul, who described himself as "Muslim, Arab, Palestinian and a proud citizen of Israel". He warned that if the occupation persists, Israel was headed for what he had seen in the Apartheid Museum that morning.

"The Jewish people will lose the treasure of their values," he said, and pleaded for freedom, independence and hope for both his grandchildren and those of Jewish Israelis.

Israel's new ambassador to South Africa, Lior Keinan, told the SA Jewish Report: "It is important to connect the MKs with Israel's many friends in South Africa. It is a beautiful opportunity for me, just a couple of weeks into my posting. We want to foster co-operation, not just politically but on a people-to-people level."

Keinan said his embassy always would be open to approaches for assistance.

SAFI, initiated in 2010 by the SAZF to mobilise, connect and channel non-Jewish supporters of Israel, has grown exponentially. SAZF chairman and SAFI co-chairman, Ben Swartz, acknowledged the love for Israel across the spectrum of Christian churches and communities.

He said they wanted to show the MKs "the depth, width and degree of support for Israel by ordinary South Africans, and not just the Jewish community... Israel shouldn't lose hope in South Africa."

Reflecting on ANC hostility to Israel, the most recent manifestation being the call at the July policy conference for downgrading or even closing the South African embassy in Tel Aviv,



Nachman Shai

Swartz said: "Tell the ANC... that the majority of South Africans do not want a downgrade in diplomatic relations."

SAFI's other co-chairman, Mark Hyman, noted that only Israel protects Christians in the volatile Middle East, and said: "We believe that within our country we can take back the narrative of what it means to be proud of Israel and not rely solely on mainstream media and hate groups for biased half-truths and misinformation."

To enthusiastic applause, Swartz and Hyman urged SAFI support for a planned protest march to the Department of International Relations and Co-operation in Pretoria before the ANC's December conference.

Reverend Andrew Mutandoro of Oasis Christian Ministries said he was blessed to "hear the heartbeat" of the MKs and the new ambassador. "Israel has so much knowhow it wants to share with whoever is willing to receive it."

"Technology transfer can really help our communities. In 70 years, this tiny country has achieved so much. Many politicians in this country convey misinformation about Israel. SAFI is needed to counter this narrative. The truth will always prevail."

Ambassador Keinan was reluctant to reveal the MKs' itinerary or comment on meetings already held, not wanting to jeopardise their trip, given the sensitivities and complexities of Israel-South Africa political relations. "We'd rather talk about them after they happen," he said.

Bobroff money frozen...

>> Continued from page 3

illegal fee agreements, tax evasion, theft, money laundering and fraud. Since they fled South Africa there have been multiple investigations into the web of deceit they allegedly left behind. These criminal investigations were conducted by the Law Society, South African Revenue Service, the Road Accident Fund, the Hawks and the NPA, which have amassed an estimated amount of ill-gotten gains exceeding a billion rand.

Not to mention medical aids and members of the community who have enormous civil claims against the pair, should they be found guilty.

The North Gauteng High Court heard last month that the R101 million was being held in cash in two separate bank accounts – one in Ronald and the other in Darren's names – in Israel.

The freezing order "was the result of excellent co-operation between both the South African and Israeli authorities", said Mfaku. The AFU believes that "the funds in the bank accounts are, in all probability, the proceeds of unlawful activities, namely, fraud and/or theft and/or money laundering", he said.

"The money is currently kept safe in Israel until

the finalisation of forfeiture proceedings," which, said Mfaku, was "in terms of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act".

The Bobroffs had also invested a substantial amount of money from their now defunct legal practice, Ronald Bobroff and Partners (RBP) in a separate Israeli investment account. "The account was, however, not reflected as a trust creditor account in RBP's trust accounting records," said Mfaku.

In fact, he added: "The money in the investment account provided the Bobroffs with an opportunity to avoid the taxation of the interest earned on the monies invested, as well as with an opportunity to launder funds without being detected."

The R100 million freeze order was granted "under the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, which provides that property that is used to commit a crime can be frozen, while the NPA applies for a final order to forfeit the money to the state," said Mfaku.

Interpol's world headquarters in Lyon were unable to confirm whether extradition proceedings were underway.



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A galaxy of stars illuminates the Achiever Awards

HELEN GRANGE

For the past 19 years, we have gathered at the Jewish Achiever Awards as proud South Africans believing that our best days are still before us, said Howard Sackstein, chairman of the SA Jewish Report board at the opening of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards at Vodaworld in Midrand on Sunday evening.

“Despite recession, political decay and rampant kleptocracy, tonight we reaffirm our belief that when the sky is darkest, the stars shine more brightly.

“Across the backdrop of South Africa’s heavens, our Galaxy of Stars will shine tonight as they illuminate our country and the world.”

He spoke to some of South Africa’s most illustrious talent in business, politics, sport, culture and the arts, who were gathered to find out who the nine winners of this year’s awards were.

It was an evening defined by glamour in black and silver decor, haute cuisine and outstanding entertainment courtesy The Muses, South Africa’s all-girl violinists.

Themed “A Galaxy of Stars”, the event kicked off with cocktails and tappas appetisers at 16:00, enjoyed as one of The Muses, Ashley Lineker, made an entrance in a bubble dress made of silver balloons and worked the room playing her violin.

The star-studded guest list included former Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela, former Deputy Commissioner of the SA Revenue Services Ivan Pillay, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga, Professor Mathole

Motshekga, Deputy Minister of Public Works Dipuo Letsati-Duba, MEC of Economic Development Mandla Nkomfe, DA leader Mmusi Maimane and COPE leader Mosiuoa Lekota, Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba and IFP Gauteng leader Bonginkosi Dlamini.

“Tonight we celebrate nine remarkable South Africans who have changed the very fabric of South Africa,” said Sackstein, adding that “integrity, service and excellence” were the qualities that the Jewish Achiever Awards, along with its partner Absa, sought out in the nominees and winners.

“We celebrate not to brag of our successes, but to highlight that each individual plays a role in shaping and improving the world.

“Our community created the trade union movement in South Africa, we were the communists, the capitalists, the industrialists and the humanitarian workers.

“We gave birth to Joe Slovo and Ruth First, to Rusty Bernstein and Arthur Goldreich, to Esther Basel and Sheila Weinberg, to Jill Marcus and Arthur Chaskalson, to Albie Sachs and Helen Suzman.

“Whether it’s Operation Hunger or Morris Isaacson School, whether its Afrika Tikkun or Liliesleaf Farm, the fingerprints of our people are indelibly imprinted on the history of South Africa,” said Sackstein to generous applause and a room awash in sparkle.

“We as Jews and South Africans, have seen the fruits of redemption as we have moved from slavery to freedom, from violence to peace, from ashes to resurrection. We measure ourselves not by our numbers, but by our impact on society. But life and peace and freedom are fragile. They need to be

nourished and nurtured.”

His message to the politicians present was simple and clear:

“Every rand that is stolen or wasted is a home that is not built; a pension that is not paid; a student that never goes to university and water that is not delivered.

“As we sit dangerously on a precipice, we can never allow our nation to slip back into the abyss of despair.

“The problems we face today are man-made and require no Divine intervention to solve. They can and must be resolved by all of us as South Africans, determined to carve a better future for our country – and believing that the people of this country simply deserve better.”

Sackstein said that it is “hope that drives us forward with relentless optimism”.

It was in this “country of miracles” that “penniless refugees facing certain death in Eastern Europe, were allowed to settle in a country fraught with racial divides, among people who did not consider us worthy to live among them”.

He made it clear that “now more than ever, our moral leadership will define who we are as a people”.

He spoke to an audience filled with luminaries – aside from the award nominees and winners – that included Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, Investec CEO Stephen Koseff, Bidvest founder Brian Joffe, David Hodnett, deputy CEO of Barclays Africa Group (for Absa), CEO of KIA Motors Gary Scott, co-founder and co-CEO of The Creative Counsel Gil Oved, and well-known psychologist Dorianne Weil, who stood out in a stunning red dress offset with glam heels.

Master of ceremonies for the evening

was Kagiso Lediga, a stand-up comedian who kept the show rolling between rousing performances by The Muses, an electric string quartet made up of four beautiful women who owned the stage with their brilliant performances of all-time favourites like Miriam Makeba’s Pata Pata, Simon and Garfunkel’s Sound of Silence and the theme song from The Game of Thrones.



Dinner started, around beautifully decorated tables, with Japanese-style sashimi with pickled radish and capers, followed by a vodka and gazpacho consommé as a chilled palate cleanser.

Dinner was slow-braised chicken roulade with mushroom filling, crispy rice noodles and vegetables. True to theme, dessert was named “Rings, Starlight Spheres & Gold Glitter”.

It was washed down with top name wines and Bunnahabhain single malt Scotch whisky, sponsored by Distell and greatly appreciated.



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Jewish Report
The true achievers
of our community

Looking around me at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards on Sunday, I could not help thinking that we are a force to be reckoned with – in no uncertain terms.

Like the biblical story of David and Goliath, the South African Jewish community is in fact the young David who punches so far above his weight. So much so that South Africans at large think there are far more Jews than there actually are, because we are a powerful bunch.

Sitting in that auditorium in all our finery, it was so evident. The fact that so many political dignitaries gave up their Sunday evening to be with us, meant that they believe us to be worth making the effort for. And we are.

Having put together the Achievers publication, I can tell you the innovation, the business acumen and ethic, the wisdom, the social and moral compass, the street suss, the innovation and know-how among our nominees is totally astounding.

I am glad I wasn't party to judging the business section, because – although I come from a family of business people – the competition was fierce. Every single finalist deserved to win – and I don't say that lightly.

Former Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan coming to accept his award, means that he values our Kavod. He believes that this community is worth watching, listening to and honouring with his presence.

But, in truth, Sunday night was not about what others think about us, it is about paying tribute to excellence and credit where it is due.

Of those winners, there were two people I know personally and I am proud to know them.

Firstly, I have known Brett Osrin – the Absa Unlisted Company Award winner – since he was a little King David Linksfield Primary School boy and my brother's friend. One thing I always remember about Brett was that he was a mensch – a gutinka – even as a little boy.

He was always respectful, thoughtful and did the right thing. I don't believe he has changed much. Suffice to say, I revel in the fact that someone who lives his life with ethics and morals succeeds. Kol Hakavod!

Alas, in this instance, it takes me back to those Jewish names that float around in the Guptagate saga, which gives most of us the opposite uncomfortable feeling.

The second person I have a history with is the winner of the SA Jewish Report Art, Sport, Science & Culture Award, Bryan Schimmel.

I was in the same class as Bryan through much of our time at King David Linksfield. I can tell you that Bryan did not have an easy time. He was bullied and not given a chance because he was different and had a bad stutter.

The cruelty of the kids in our year made it hard for him to be heard. That is, except when he got in front of a piano. That shut us all up. So, when Bryan said that making music was his happy and safe space – that made sense to me. It was the only time at school that he had a voice and everyone listened.

For Bryan to be where he is today – one of the most respected and admired people in the music and theatre industry – is such a testament to his bravery, perseverance and the ability to find in himself an inner core of self-belief.

The fact that he accepted his award as a symbol of hope for all those kids who are not the cool kids, who are different, but who have a dream and a passion, is a true testament to who Bryan Schimmel really is. He is an inspiration to us all!

On the one hand, his experience should teach us to ensure that bullying is brought to a total stop at any of our schools. On the other hand, he has shown us all what is possible. Thank you, Bryan!

To end off this amazing week, I just want to say thank you to everyone who joined us at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2017 because your participation and contribution will keep this newspaper going. So, from all of us at the SA Jewish Report, you have our humblest gratitude!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



Howard Sackstein



Thuli Madonsela, Reeva Forman and Nicci Raz



Gidon Feinman, Thuli Madonsela, Don Krausz, Sharon Wapnick and Dina Diamond



Bryan Schimmel, Oshy Tugendhaft and Stephen Koseff



Laurence Rapp, Howard Sackstein, Bryan Schimmel, Herschel Jawitz and Dr Dorianne Weil



Siobhan Wilson, Robyn Smookler, Hazel Lerman, Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein, Taryn Marcus, Debbie Myers and Michelle Rosen



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver and Kevin Sutherland



DA leader Mmusi Maimane, Howard Sackstein, Pravin Gordhan and Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein



Aaron Greenblatt and Pravin Gordhan



Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba and Diane Wolfson



Howard and Raelene Tradonsky



Gil Oved, Dr Dorianne Weil, Romeo Kumalo, Absa's Craig Bond and Dawn Nathan-Jones



Terry and Jeff Katz, Israeli Ambassador Lior and Sarit Keinan



COPE president Mosiuoa Lekota, Brendon Katz, Ari Kruger and Ben Swartz

This year’s Jewish Achievers are real winners

HELEN GRANGE


When music director extraordinaire Bryan Schimmel, stood up to accept the SA Jewish Art, Sport, Science and Culture award, he ensured there was nary a dry eye in the 600-strong Absa Jewish Achiever Awards audience.

“All through school I was not the cool kid or the popular kid. I was shy, awkward, introverted, self-conscious, afraid of speaking, marginalised because I was different. And all I ever wished for was acceptance. “The saying goes ‘careful what you wish for’. In finding my place on the path unwinding, here I am in front of all of you, feeling mightily accepted,” he said to a standing ovation.

Once too shy to speak because he had a terrible stutter, he had the audience enraptured as he told of his journey to this award.

“Being named as a Jewish Achiever has a certain resonance for me. I am not a shul-goer, I am not shomrei Shabbos, I am not always observant. But I am extremely proud of being Jewish. On my path unwinding, I’ve always been guided by the words of Hillel that I wear permanently on my left forearm: ‘If I am not for myself, who is for me? If I am for myself, what am I? If not now, when?’.

“And so, I say to every kid who is not the cool kid, but who has a dream and a passion, I accept this award as a symbol of inspiration and hope to all of you... If you follow your heart, if you live outside your comfort zone, and if you strive to be the best version of yourself at all times, you will find your place in the circle of life.”



Pravin Gordhan

And Schimmel was just one of the nine phenomenal winners of this year’s premier event on Sunday evening.

The auspicious Lifetime Achiever Award, in honour of Helen Suzman, was awarded to **Simon Susman**, chairman of the Woolworths Group and non-executive chairman of the London-based Virgin Active fitness group, who said that his life was divided into three parts, the first being about learning, the second about earning and the third about giving back. So, now he participates in numerous, mostly Jewish organisations, in order to do the latter.

He said: “My parents taught me very high standards, deep Jewish principles and values, and I try and live up to those every day.”

Susman also credited his many business mentors along the way, including Lord Marcus Sieff, former chairman of Marks & Spencer, and his “powerful grandmother”, daughter of the founder of Marks & Spencer Michael Marks, who taught him to “honour powerful woman”.

He thanked the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, saying “recognition by one’s peers is the only real recognition”. He also thanked the woman in his life. “I’m very grateful and lucky, lucky too to have a partner in Megan, who I met late in life and is showing me new adventures.”

Pravin Gordhan

Winner of the Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris was announced as Pravin Gordhan, who said he was grateful for this “very humbling award” and congratulated the other award winners for

the “remarkable contributions they’ve made to their respective fields of endeavour”.

“We are just activists and public servants, so let me give this award to the Treasury team, the good people at Revenue Services and SA Reserve Bank, and all the good public servants who do their best to keep South Africa on the right road,” he said.


Addressing the vexing issue of state capture and corruption, he urged South Africans to be more proactive: “These are not issues for politicians, but issues for the people... The Jewish community is extremely resourceful, with great skills, talent and entrepreneurs, some of whom are here today, and has produced fascinating freedom fighters from whom my generation learnt some of their politics and principles.”

Gordhan highlighted the importance of “cultural silos” – “these give us a sense of identity and meaning”.

“But equally, as we build a new South Africa, we also have to find important bridges across those silos, and that requires people of foresight... This community has produced illustrious people who’ve contributed to the Freedom Charter, which stands as a testament to real imagination, foresight but above all, humanity,” he said.

Don Krausz

The KIA Community Service Award was given to 87-year-old Don Krausz, Holocaust survivor, who has spent his life since escaping the horrors of the Holocaust, making sure young people know what really happened.



Simon Susman

He tells them of his terrifying experiences at Ravensbruck concentration camp in northern Germany.

He relayed how, when he began as a Holocaust educator, most survivors were going to Jewish schools to talk. He questioned why they were preaching to the converted and wanted to go to the other schools to talk to them. He went to schools, some of which were not ready for his message yet. Things have since changed.

In his emotive speech, he spoke of how he had in the past reminded those who, when they think of the children who were killed in the Holocaust, they focus on Anne Frank, but, he says, there were 1,5 million children who were murdered in the Holocaust and not just this one heroine.

Ryan Canin

The Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award went to Ryan Canin, CEO and co-founder of DocFox Inc, a web application designed to fight money laundering and simplify compliance for financial services firms, locally and abroad.

“I want to thank the many people in this room who put time and effort, which is unique in the Jewish community, into really growing young entrepreneurs,” he said.

Ronleigh Gaddin

Winner of Europcar’s Jewish Woman in Leadership Award was Ronleigh Gaddin, CEO of the Amani Spas Group. Gaddin said the Jewish Achiever process has been one of “self-introspection and reflection”.

Continued on page 8>>



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>>Continued from page 7

“I’ve had the privilege of meeting the most incredible people. I stand here and salute every single nominee, each of whom is a winner in their own right,” she said, adding: “To reach a landmark such as this award raises the expectations I have of myself, and motivates me to continue to succeed, to build my company and my own reputation.”

Gaddin, daughter of the late Russell Gaddin – a stalwart in Jewish leadership – said she knew how proud her father would be of her today and that she accepted this award in his name.

Avi Mishan

Avi Mishan, MD of SMD Technologies, distributor of computer technology worldwide, was announced as winner of the Absa Entrepreneur Award. Especially thanking his business partner Simca Diskin, Mishan said: “He has been with me from the beginning, the best investment I’ve ever made. From a two-man show selling calculators out of the boots of our car, to where we are today, this award is just as much yours as it is mine.”

Brett Osrin and Laurence Rapp

The evening ended with the announcement of Brett Osrin, CEO of Ecowize cleaning company, as the winner of the Absa Unlisted Company Award, and Laurence Rapp, CEO of Vukile Property Fund, as winner of the Absa Listed Company Award.

Said Osrin: “The amazing part of the Jewish community is that we grow up not wanting to be the postmaster. We grow up wanting to be the CEO of any business, irrespective of the size.”

To this, Rapp added: “This is the most unique and meaningful award, because it not only recognises business achievement, but more importantly, it comes from this community that I love dearly, and am so proud to be part of.”



Don Krausz



Dr Dorianne Weil and Bryan Schimmel



Fred Hart, Stephen Koseff, Pravin Gordhan and Adrian Gore



Ryan Canin



Ronleigh Gaddin



Avi Mishan



Brett Osrin and Jan Moganwa of Absa



Laurence Rapp



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A portrait of Thuli Madonsela, a woman with dark hair, wearing a pink top and a pearl necklace.

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Message from former President Kgalema Motlanthe to Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

Let me start by apologising for being unable to attend the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards banquet. Prior engagements have made it impossible for me to do so, in the process robbing me of the opportunity to be part of what should amount to a honorific occasion.

I am more than pleased to express these words on such a grand occasion for our former Minister of Finance, comrade Pravin Gordhan.

This is a deserved honour for comrade Pravin. I would be remiss if I did not also

thank the organisers of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards banquet for recognising the sterling work of comrade Pravin both as the former Minister of Finance and his personal capacity as an active and critical citizen.

Certainly, in both roles comrade Pravin has been at the receiving end of untold pressure, frustration and animosity from forces hell-bent on undermining our system of democracy for their own ends.

It has not been easy for him. Yet it would appear that history has as much changes as it has continuities. At some level the

challenges that comrade Pravin has faced, are continuous in intensity with those thrown up by the era of the liberation struggle.

Recognising comrade Pravin for all this effort he has selflessly made in contributing to the maintenance of the values that underline the society envisioned by our forebears, is among the greatest gestures ordinary South Africans can make to show appreciation.

It is both encouraging and uplifting to realise that one's sacrifices do not go



unnoticed.

Our country is engulfed in a crisis of massive proportions. At all levels, economically, politically and socially, our nation is unravelling. Gains that have been painstakingly made since the April 1994 democratic breakthrough that saw in a new dawn for our nation, are evaporating under our very noses.

Times like this call for commensurate action. These are times that call for clear-eyed articulation. Men and women of unbending moral stature are called upon by the imperative of our age to speak out against moral turpitude in our public life.

It is not easy. It will not be easy. Many will have to suffer. Many will have to put aside personal comforts in order to reclaim the vision which scores of our leaders have sacrificed so much for.

Comrade Pravin is one of those who have enthusiastically answered this call.

In so doing he has stepped into the massive shoes of Sophie de Bruyn, Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Albertina Sisulu, Ruth First, Amina Cachalia, Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, Oliver Tambo, Robert Sobukwe, Steve Bantu Biko, Moses Kotane, JB Marks, ZK Matthews, Bill Andrews, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada and hundreds more who put premium on a grand vision and set about pursuing that vision with all their might.

This vision was driven by a transcendent moral purpose that is for all time. This vision will outlast all of us, yet this vision is vulnerable to human failings. As such, its survival is predicated on inspired, conscious human effort.

Comrade Pravin is among those individuals who have stepped up to the plate to grasp our common destiny by the scruff of its neck. For this he will suffer the inevitable consequences; if we cannot join him in this epic struggle, at least we can cheer him on.

I am therefore pleased to join many of you at this event and indeed around our country, in congratulating comrade Pravin for a job well done.

Comrade Pravin, while we say more power to your elbow, we also want you and many more like you to understand that, though we may not fully grasp the extent of your unpleasant experience, we are completely behind you.

This is, after all, in the nature of the human struggle. Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright and painter, nailed it when she said: “The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely.”.

Yet, the way I see it, prompted by conscious effort, time and circumstance have a way of weeding out the impurities in human experience. You are on the right side of history for sure. Time and tide will confirm that.

Congratulations and everything of the best.



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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Israelis reject Trump’s ‘two sides’ to hate march

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

Israeli politicians and others took aim at US President Donald Trump for comments appearing to equate neo-Nazi marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, with left-wing anti-fascist activists, rejecting his assertion that there were two sides to the story.

“There aren’t two sides,” Yair Lapid, head of the centrist Yesh Atid party, said in a Wednesday statement.

“When neo-Nazis march in Charlottesville and scream slogans against Jews and in support of white supremacy, the condemnation has to be unambiguous. They represent hate and evil. Anyone who believes in the human spirit must stand against them without fear.”

Despite condemning white supremacists and neo-Nazis on Monday, Trump on Tuesday doubled down on his original statement from last Saturday that equated the two groups of protesters, telling reporters that “both sides were to blame” for the deadly violence that unfolded at the neo-Nazi rally last Friday.

“You had a group on one side and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent,” he said.

Tzipi Livni, a former justice minister and

“To put things in perspective. I’m a Jew, I’m an Israeli, the neo-Nazis scums in Virginia hate me and my country. But they belong to the past. Their breed is dying out.”

number two in the opposition Zionist Union faction, also rejected Trump’s assertion.

“When it comes to racism, anti-Semitism and Nazism, there are never two equal sides. There’s good and there’s evil. Period,” she said in a Wednesday statement.

Jonathan Greenblatt, head of the anti-hate watchdog Anti-Defamation League, also slammed Trump as going “beyond the pale today in equating racist white supremacists in Charlottesville with counter-protesters who were there to stand up against hate.

“We have a history in this country of presidents standing up to bigotry and hate. Today, for the second time in four days, President Trump did the opposite,” Greenblatt said in a statement.

“There is no rationalising white

supremacy and no room for this vile bigotry. It is un-American and it needs to be condemned without hesitation. President Trump has had a pattern of equivocating on prejudice.”

On Tuesday evening, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu broke his silence on the issue, tweeting that he was “outraged by expressions of anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism and racism. Everyone should oppose this hatred”.

Yet on Wednesday morning, his son Yair dismissed the threat from “neo-Nazis scums” in a Facebook post, and slammed the left-wing protesters at Charlottesville instead.

“To put things in perspective. I’m a Jew, I’m an Israeli, the neo-Nazis scums in Virginia hate me and my country. But they belong to the past. Their breed is dying

out,” the younger Netanyahu wrote.

“However the thugs of Antifa and BLM who hate my country (and America too in my view) just as much are getting stronger and stronger and becoming super dominant in American universities and public life.”

Before Netanyahu, Education Minister Naftali Bennett had been the only major Israeli politician to speak out against the neo-Nazis, and on Wednesday he was joined by Jewish Home colleague and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, who urged that the neo-Nazis face prosecution.

“The neo-Nazis in the United States should be prosecuted,” she said on Tuesday.

Trump came under harsh criticism, even from members of his own party, for blaming the violence on hatred and bigotry “on many sides”, and not explicitly condemning the white extremist groups at the rally.

IRAN CAN’T USE NUKES TO HOLD WORLD HOSTAGE

US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley says Iran should not be allowed “to use the nuclear deal to hold the world hostage”.

Haley commented on Tuesday after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned that the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement with the US and five other world powers could fall apart. Rouhani said Tehran could quickly ramp up and advance its nuclear programme if the US continues “threats and sanctions” against Iran.

Haley warned that “the nuclear deal must not become ‘too big to fail’.” She added that “Iran, under no circumstances, can ever be allowed to have nuclear weapons”.

Haley said Iran must be held responsible for launching missiles,



Nikki Haley

supporting terrorism, disregarding human rights and violating UN Security Council resolutions.

Earlier on Tuesday, Rouhani said Iran could abandon its nuclear deal with world powers if the United States keeps on imposing new sanctions.

He hit out at US counterpart Donald Trump saying that he had shown the world that Washington was “not a good partner”.

Rouhani’s comments came with the nuclear deal under mounting pressure after Tehran carried out missile tests and strikes, and Washington imposed new sanctions - with each accusing the other of violating the spirit of the agreement.

Rouhani warned that Iran was ready to walk out of the 2015 deal, which saw the lifting of most international sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme, if Washington persisted.

“Those who try to return to the language of threats and sanctions are prisoners of their past delusions,” he said.

“If they want to go back to that experience, definitely in a short time - not weeks or months, but in the scale of hours and days - we will return to our previous situation very much stronger.” (News agencies)

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TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
AND AFP

Israel’s ambassador in West Africa, Paul Hirschson, was in contact with Sierra Leone authorities on Tuesday about beginning to transfer aid to the country after it was hit by devastating mudslides early Monday morning.

Israel will begin purchasing food to distribute to survivors of the mudslide and will follow that up with medical aid in co-operation with local authorities, a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Initial Red Cross estimates said as many as 3 000 people were left homeless and the figure is expected to rise.

On Monday night, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the Foreign Ministry to

send the aid to Freetown, where close on 400 people died.

“The prime minister has ordered the Foreign Ministry to extend aid to Sierra Leone in any way and as soon as possible,” his office said.

Hirschson is non-resident ambassador to Sierra Leone and is based i n Senegal.

Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma visited Israel in January, and at that time Netanyahu discussed with him the possibility of sending a delegation to support economic development.

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, according to UN indicators.

Sierra Leone’s military, police and Red Cross volunteers were

deployed in an all-out effort to locate and rescue citizens trapped in their homes or under rubble.

The Sierra Leone meteorological department did not issue any warning ahead of the torrential rains to hasten evacuation from the disaster zones.

Deputy Information Minister Cornelius Deveaux confirmed Koroma had called a national emergency.

The scale of the human cost of the floods was only becoming clear on Monday afternoon, as images of battered corpses piled on top of each other circulated and residents spoke of their struggles to cope with the destruction and find their loved ones.



Photo: AFP Photo/Saidu Bah

Iran filling vacuum left by IS retreat in Syria, Iraq – Mossad chief

JUDAH ARI GROSS

The head of the Mossad warned last Sunday that as the Islamic State terrorist group is beaten back, Iran and its proxies are rushing in to take over its territory.

“The areas where Daesh [an Arabic term for IS] presence is decreasing, Iran is working to fill the void,” Mossad chief Yossi Cohen said during a security briefing to Cabinet ministers on Sunday.

In late 2014, the terrorist group controlled approximately 100 000 square kilometres) of territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria, according to the US-based RAND Corporation think tank. (The group also controlled an additional 10 000 square kilometres in Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan and Egypt.)

It started losing ground in 2015 and currently controls less than half that area, or some 36 200 square kilometres, according to the IHS Conflict Monitor intelligence think tank.

Israeli security officials have warned that Tehran may use the area of western Iraq and eastern Syria as a “land bridge” connecting the Islamic Republic to Lebanon, through which it can move fighters and weaponry.

Cohen said Iran is also taking over territory for itself and its proxies in Lebanon and Yemen.

The Mossad chief noted that in the two years since the signing of the Iran nuclear deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tehran has not abandoned its desire to develop nuclear weapons, and that the agreement “only reinforced that trend and strengthened Iranian aggression in the region”.

The JCPOA came under considerable criticism in Israel for its failure to address Iran’s disruptive



Photo: Miriam Alster/Flash90

Yossi Cohen, Mossad chief, speaks at a committee meeting in the Knesset.

non-nuclear activities, and for what Israeli officials described as legitimising the regime in Tehran and its activities in the region.

During his presentation to the ministers, Cohen said Iran was now enjoying economic growth and international contracts in the deal’s wake.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to Cohen’s presentation by noting “that Israel is in no way beholden to international treaties signed by Iran.”

The Prime Minister’s Office added that “Israel will continue to operate with determination and in a variety of ways in order to protect itself from those threats”.



News and views from the Fed The iron dome

NAOMI HADAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: IUA-UCF GAUTENG

The IUA-UCF is the fundraising body whose mandate is to secure the safety and dignity of the South African Jewish community, while fostering a love for Israel.

We are very proud to fund the communal organisations that work hard to lead and protect our community. These organisations constitute the “iron dome” under which the South African Jewry is able to continue living a rich and vibrant Jewish life.

The major beneficiaries of the UCF (United Communal Fund) are: CSO, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), and the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS).

These organisations are at the forefront of representing our community, such as government-related issues, and protecting our community from anti-Semitism and potential threats of terrorism.

The IUA (Israel United Appeal) funds the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) and its affiliate organisations, including the Israel Centre (Jewish Agency for Israel), the Zionist Youth Organisation, and other Zionist organisations, such as SAFI.

The South African Friends of Israel is an SAZF initiative, with a grassroots following of over 100 000 people. SAFI transcends religious, cultural and political barriers, enabling a wider support base and creating a united coalition promoting a positive connection with Israel. Our support and promotion of Zionist activities, ensures that our community stays closely tied to Israel, allowing us to also facilitate aliya and study in Israel.

The South African Jewish community is facing many challenges and difficulties at this time with the rise of anti-Israel rhetoric and organisations such as the BDS, which continue to incite and derail any chance of a peace and reconciliation.

However, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Zionist Federation, have had remarkable success in countering the determined effort of Israel’s enemies to weaken and isolate it.

We are proud to say that the South African Jewry continues to be a beacon of light to other communities globally. The work done locally in counteracting these very loud voices of our enemies and their bias against Israel, is not unnoticed.

We are however unable to rest on our laurels...

The CSO and the SAJBD work closely with other security and intelligence agencies to keep our community and all South Africans as safe and secure as possible. Without security and a sense of safety, our daily lives would be severely impacted. It is our goal and mandate to safeguard the needs and future of our vibrant Jewish community.

Funding these structures is our key priority and we could not do this without the continued generosity of our donors and sponsors. In order to continue in this regard, we need your help. We implore you to get involved and help us on this mission by donating to the IUA-UCF.

For more information or to donate:

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Banking details: UCF, Standard Bank-Smal Street, Branch Code 001805, Account Number 001367072, Ref: Name

Swiss hotel asks Jews to shower before swimming

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

A hotel in Switzerland put up signs telling “Jewish guests” to shower before swimming, sparking outrage from the guests and an official complaint from the Foreign Ministry on Monday.

“To our Jewish guests, women, men and children, please take a shower before you go swimming,” said one sign at the at the Aparthaus Paradies in the Alpine resort village of Arosa . “If you break the rules I’m forced to close the swimming pool for you.”

Another sign, this one on the refrigerator, said: “For our Jewish guests: You may access the refrigerator only in the following hours: 10:00-11:00 and 16:30-17:30.

I hope you understand that our team does not like being disturbed all the time.”

While guests said they were horrified by the signs and Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely in a statement expressed her outrage at the situation, the hotel said it was a misunderstanding and there was no anti-Semitic intent at all.

Hotovely said: “We must make sure that the punishment for incidents such as these will serve as deterrents for those who still harbour the germ of anti-Semitism.”

Ruth Thomann, the manager of the hotel, confirmed the signs had now been removed. She insisted that many Jews visit the hotel and they are very welcome.

Charlottesville violence ‘didn’t come out of nowhere’

CLAIRE GALOFARO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The videos that rolled across the television screen were startling: Americans beating each other with clubs and sticks on the streets of a quiet college town. White supremacists with torches; anti-fascists pushing back. An improvised flame thrower fashioned from an aerosol can. Bottles of frozen water hurled like bricks at one another’s skulls.

Kevin Boyle, an American history professor at Northwestern University, watched it unfold, the feeling in his gut both horror and a sense that the racial tension bubbling for years had finally, almost inevitably, begun boiling over. “Given our political moment, I’m not surprised that we’ve come to this point,” he said. “I’m terribly depressed we’ve come to this point but I’m not surprised. It didn’t come out of nowhere.”

Historians and political scientists have been warning that American politics had become a pressure cooker, full of racial tension building once again to the point of a deadly clash, like the one in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Saturday that claimed three lives.

White supremacy has always lurked in America’s shadow, said Boyle, whose teaching focuses on the history of racial violence and civil rights. Then, he believes, US President Donald Trump was elected and emboldened their hate.

“Donald Trump gave them permission to come out into the real world,” he said. “As long as they were existing in this kind of sad little shadow world where they were just talking to each other, it was disturbing, but it’s not as profoundly dangerous as when they feel they can take the public square.”



A counter-demonstrator uses an aerosol can against a white nationalist demonstrator at the entrance to Lee Park in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Last Saturday’s chaos erupted around what is believed to be the largest group of white nationalists to come together in a decade – more than 1 000 neo-Nazis, skinheads and Ku Klux Klan members who descended on the city of Charlottesville to “take America back” by rallying against plans to remove a Confederate statue.

Hundreds came to protest against the racism. The two sides engaged in bloody brawls on the street.

The day turned deadly when a car ploughed into a crowd of anti-racism protesters, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer. A Virginia State Police helicopter deployed in a large-scale response to the violence then crashed into the woods outside of town and both troopers on board died.

The violence had been building for months during a series of confrontations between members of the “alt-right” – a loose collection of white nationalists, racists and anti-immigration populists – and

people who oppose them. It began the very day Trump took the oath of office. Skirmishes broke out at his inauguration between his supporters, some of them white nationalists, and those against him. More than 200 were arrested. It was on that day that Richard Spencer, among the nation’s foremost white nationalists, realised that something had fundamentally shifted in American political discourse. He was giving a media interview when someone ran toward him and punched him in the head on video. “We’re in a totally new world,” he remembers thinking. “Political violence is a real thing.” Violent clashes have piled up since: 11 arrested after fights broke out at New York University when the founder of a right-wing men’s organisation was scheduled to speak; clashes outside one of Spencer’s appearances at Auburn University; a shouting match between the two sides in Pikeville, Kentucky; confrontations in New

Iran’s missile factory in Syria

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

Iran has been building a factory in Syria that can be used for the production and underground storage of long-range missiles capable of striking Israel, according to photos from Israeli satellite imaging company ImageSat. Satellite images of the site in northern Syria show a Scud missile factory being built near the city of Baniyas, south of Latakia, in an area seen as a bastion of support for the embattled Assad regime, Channel 2 reported on Tuesday. Experts told Channel 2 the buildings match building methods seen in Iran, pointing to co-operation between Damascus and Tehran, one of Syrian President Bashar Assad’s largest backers. Dirt berms can also be seen around the buildings in the satellite photos, ostensibly to protect them from attack. The report said that construction on the site began last year and is expected to be finished by the end of this year. The site can also be seen in plain view on Google Maps. In addition to the site in Syria, Iran is also reportedly building subterranean weapons factories for the Hezbollah terror group in Lebanon. The French Intelligence Online magazine last month reported on two of the factories, one of which is being built in northern Lebanon, near the town of Hermel in the eastern Bekaa Valley. The second facility is reportedly being constructed along the southern coast, between the towns of Sidon and Tyre. According to Intelligence Online, the Hermel facility is being used to produce the Fateh 110, a medium-range missile. The southern facility, meanwhile, will be used to make smaller munitions. The new factories would mark a dramatic upgrade in Hezbollah’s ability to acquire additional, and more precise rockets than ever before.

Yad Vashem warns of Nazi ideology on display in Virginia

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum on Monday condemned last weekend’s neo-Nazi rally in Virginia, saying that the ideology on display there was identical to that which led to the murder of six million Jews. In a statement, the remembrance centre said that it “is very concerned by the images, hateful rhetoric, and subsequent violence emanating from the rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.” “In our post-Holocaust global society, there is no room for racism or anti-Semitism,” the organisation said. “The anti-Jewish ideology of the Nazis was a precursor to the eventual murderous policy and extermination of six million Jews.” “These images are yet another reminder that we must remain vigilant about educating the public regarding hatred and xenophobia.” Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, also slammed the hatred expressed by neo-Nazi participants in the march. In a statement Sharansky said he was horrified at the racism and hatred demonstrated at last weekend’s rally by Ku Klux Klan members and other white nationalists in Charlottesville, “I am deeply concerned by the expressions of anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and hatred exhibited at the neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville,” he said. “There is no place for such hate speech or violence in any democratic society, and I am confident that American authorities will do everything in their power to bring the perpetrators to justice.”

White nationalists assembled in Charlottesville last Friday to vent their frustration against the city’s plans to take down a statue of Confederate general Robert E Lee, counter-protesters massed in opposition the next day. President Donald Trump has come under mounting fire, even from members of his own party, for blaming the violence on hatred and bigotry “on many sides”. On Sunday, the White House released a statement clarifying that his condemnation of hate and bigotry at the rally had been in reference to the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis.



Melania and President Donald Trump at Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem

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Orleans when the city moved to remove a Confederate monument; police opening fire with stun grenades and arresting more than a dozen during conflicts in Portland. Spencer, and others who support white nationalism, blame the other side. But both sides agree on the general narrative of how the widening racial and ideological divide took root: Some white Americans began feeling left behind by progress. The decline of the white working class coincided with drastic cultural changes, like quickly diversifying demographics and the election of the nation’s first black president. “With the election of Barack Obama, there was so much talk about being this post-racial moment, and on some levels it was extraordinary,” said Steven Hahn, a history professor at New York University. “But it didn’t take long for the really vicious racism to surface. It turned out to be an instigator of an enormous amount of rage, and I think Trump both fanned it and inherited it.” Trump has been a long time member of the birther movement – those who questioned Obama’s citizenship and his legitimacy as president.



SOUTH
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Russian launches world’s first Jewish cryptocurrency

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF

A Russian entrepreneur has launched the initial offering of a cryptocurrency aimed primarily at the Jewish market last Wednesday that would conform to Jewish law and offer participants interest-free loans.

BitCoen is billed as the “first kosher

cryptocurrency in the world” according to the website. It promises to give 10 per cent of earnings to charity and says it can be used at 110 reception points including kosher restaurants and stores.

It is the brainchild of Vyacheslav Semenchuk, a serial entrepreneur who has launched more than 30 start-ups.

According to the website, the new currency “absorbed all the advantages of the digital world and combined them with values, customs and ancient foundations within the framework of Jewish law”.

The ICO (Initial Coin Offering) is planned for October 9. So far the venture has attracted investments of over



Illustrative image of chocolate coins used during the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.

\$42 000. Semenchuk himself invested \$500 000 in the project, INC. news site reported, and he hopes to attract up to \$20 million. In addition to conforming to Jewish law, members of the kosher cryptocurrency will be able to receive interest-free loans.

The currency will be administered by a body called the “Council of Six” made up of six respected members of the Jewish community, each representing a different

area of expertise – business, politics, finance, technology, social activities, culture – represented by the six-pointed Magen David Jewish star.

The name of the currency BitCoen, is a play on the most popular cryptocurrency Bitcoin and the Hebrew word “Kohen,” referring to Jews from the priestly class.

The launch received support from one of the two chief rabbis of Russia, the Chabad-affiliated Rabbi Berel Lazar.

“We expect that the cryptocurrency will cover all Jewish communities around the world,” Lazar’s press secretary, Michael Lidogoster, said in a statement.

“The main guarantor of stability here is the fact that the keys to managing the cryptocurrency will be in the hands of the most respected members of the community, and not in the hands of some programmers.”

BitCoen joins more than 800 cryptocurrencies traded globally.

Israeli-born tennis star wears a cross, but his mother considers him ‘Jewish’

MARVIN GLASSMAN
MONTREAL

Eighteen-year-old Israeli-Canadian tennis player Denis Shapovalov, made history at last week’s Rogers Cup tournament in Montreal as the youngest player ever to make the semi-final round, and made headlines for beating superstar Rafael Nadal en route.

Born in Tel Aviv, Shapovalov also became the first Israeli-born player to earn a berth in the Rogers Cup semifinals since Harel Levy finished as a finalist in the 2000 Rogers Cup in Toronto, then called the Tennis Masters Series Canada.

Levy was ranked #144 when he went to the final of the 2000 Rogers Cup tournament, losing to Marat Safin of Russia. To achieve his historical milestone, Shapovalov, ranked #143, also upset higher ranked players at the tournament.

Shapovalov was knocked out of the tournament late Saturday, losing his semifinal match to fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany.

Shapovalov’s parents came from the Soviet Union to Israel in the 1990s, and he was born in Tel Aviv in 1999. His mother, Tessa Shapovolova, who is Jewish, wanted to emigrate to Israel despite being an elite tennis player from the Soviet Union.

“Although my husband Viktor [and father of Denis] is Greek Orthodox and not Jewish, he was just as eager as I was to go to Israel,” said Tessa Shapovalova.

“We decided to move to Toronto before Denis was one.”

“My parents had a hard life and I respect what they had to do. I love playing for Canada, but am friendly with the Israeli tennis players I met, such as Dudi Sela,” said Shapovalov.

Shapovolov wears a cross around his neck while playing matches. “Denis identifies with his father’s religion, but I consider him Jewish,” said Tessa.



Denis Shapovalov

Twitter acts after Israeli artist’s stunt

FRANK JORDANS
BERLIN

An artist tired of seeing hateful tweets ignored by Twitter, has managed to get the social network to remove or hide some of them – by spray-painting the offending posts in front of the company’s German headquarters.

Shahak Shapira said he reported some 300 tweets containing possible illegal content to Twitter over a period of about six months but the social networking site ignored him. This occurred at a time when Twitter was arguing against tough new legislation in Germany, insisting it was already taking sufficient measures against hate speech.

Shapira said he painted almost 30 of the offending tweets on the street in front of Twitter’s Hamburg offices last Friday because “flagging things clearly wasn’t enough”. “I had to spray it on the ground,” he said last Wednesday.

The Israeli-born artist said he didn’t get any direct response from Twitter, either before or after the stunt. But a video of it received over 100 000 views in 48 hours and clearly got the company’s attention.

By last Wednesday, Twitter had deleted three tweets, suspended four accounts and withheld another seven accounts in Germany. Fifteen other tweets, including some containing anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and anti-black comments, were still online.

Shahak Shapira



Iran arrests six for teaching Zumba

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
TEHRAN

Four boys and two girls have been arrested in Iran for teaching “Western” dance moves including Zumba, a Colombian fitness routine, a local Revolutionary Guards commander said.

“The members of a network teaching and filming Western dances have been identified and arrested,” said Hamid Damghani, commander of the Guards in the town of Sharhroud in Iran’s northeastern Semnan province, according to Jamejam Online website late last Tuesday.

“The team attracted boys and girls, taught them Western dances and published their video clips on social media apps like Telegram and Instagram,” he added.

“They were arrested by the Guards’ intelligence forces while teaching and creating video clips... as they sought to change lifestyles and promote a lack of hijab,” he said.

They were charged with dancing and failing to wear proper hijab – Islamic regulations that require women to wear headscarves and ban revealing clothing in public.

Dancing is banned in Iran for women in front of men outside their immediate families, but in recent years Zumba and other dances have been banned even in women-only gyms, even if the rules are widely flouted.

“The promotion and teaching of dancing in the name of sport in women’s gyms is a serious issue,” Damghani said.





Amanda Blankfield-Koseff and Jak Koseff



Kathy Kaler and Jason Kaler



Joey Friedman and Alyson Yeell



Beulah Hyman, Mark Hyman, Oderile Mahlangu, Professor Mathole Motshekga, Sedecca Kgatka, Elson Kgatka, Howard Sackstein and Tsepho Mahlangu



David Lieberman, Scarlett Lieberman, Karen Schneid and Safron Lieberman



Hayley and Jedd Myers



Jordan, Barry, Stacey and Aiden Swartzberg and Ryan Swartzberg



Marcus Susman, Nikki Susman, Simon Susman and Megan De Veyer



Monique Fleming, Allen Ambor and Joe Fleming



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Breakfast of analysts and stars

NICOLA MILTZ

The 2017 Jewish Achiever Awards launched in fine style at a lavish welcoming breakfast last Friday as dozens of nominees gathered to usher in the weekend’s glittering celebration of the community’s brightest stars.

As a proud sponsor of the Jewish Achiever Awards for the past 16 years, Absa welcomed this year’s illustrious nominees, past winners and VIPs, to a morning of networking, sumptuous food and stimulating presentations.

“Welcome to our Galaxy of Stars” said Howard Sackstein, chairman of the SA Jewish Report in his welcoming address. He explained this year’s theme was chosen because 55 years ago John F Kennedy said: “We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

Sackstein said that this “boldness of spirit” is what “inspired a generation” and that this “relentless optimism and dogged determination” is what we need now “more than ever”.

He said that the Jewish community’s message to the country’s leaders is clear: “Our country deserves better, the people of this nation deserve better and we will not sit idly by as the very fabric of our society is destroyed. All of us in business, in the arts, in civil society, have not only a right but an obligation to ensure the protection and resurrection of our country.”

Craig Bond, Chief Executive: Retail and Business Banking, Barclays Africa, spoke about how important the sponsorship of the Jewish Achiever Awards is to Absa.

“This community thrives on the concept

of abundance” and on the concept of giving, whereby “the more you give the more you get”, he said. He spoke of the Jewish community’s “culture and feeling of abundance”, which he linked to Absa’s philosophy of shared growth.

He said that like Absa, the Jewish community believe: “When we share, we grow.” This is a business philosophy that reaffirms the bank’s commitment to economic and social growth on the continent, he explained.

Absa senior economist, Jeff Gable, in a somewhat sombre tone, told it like it is with a slide presentation outlining the gloomy state of the economy. He spoke about “the politics of rage” citing the global economic effects of US President Donald Trump and Brexit and the “I’ve been left behind” sentiment.

The audience was then kept enthralled by the guest appearance of two of the country’s foremost political commentators and senior writers, Ranjeni Munusamy, an associate editor of Tiso Blackstar and 702 talk show host and Daily Maverick columnist, Stephen Grootes.

He said while the global environment pointed to the fact that the world’s global economies were doing well, at home in South Africa, the “economy was not growing fast enough, ratings agencies agreed that South Africa’s economic growth is too slow”.

He said sales growth had lost momentum

Jewish Achiever Awards breakfast at the Westcliff Hotel



and that spending on desirables had slumped. “Inflation may be slowing but spending power was under pressure... real wage growth had slipped, pulling spending downwards,” he said. Credit markets had placed further pressure on the consumer, he added.

Gable said two of the most significant constraints to expansion for manufacturing, was insufficient demand and the uncertain political climate. He said 2017 was the most significant and important year, explaining that the political future would influence the economy for the next five to ten years.

The audience was then kept enthralled by the guest appearance of two of the country’s foremost political commentators and senior writers, Ranjeni Munusamy, an associate editor of Tiso Blackstar and 702 talk show host and Daily Maverick columnist, Stephen Grootes.

The two started their discussion with an analysis of last Tuesday’s vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma, both agreeing that the outcome of the vote had left the ANC in more turmoil than ever.

Munusamy said Zuma “was left weaker” based on factors around the vote, including the fact that National Speaker Baleka Mbete had granted a secret vote in the first place – which “shocked many people within the ANC caucus”.

The fact that Zuma was present in Parliament last week, showed his weakened position as he was forced to be there to “assert his dominance”.

“Even the ANC MP’s who voted against Zuma did not know who else would vote ‘no’,” said Grootes.

They explained that the huge level of uncertainty within the ANC was hugely “damaging” to the party.

“The ANC is battling to stabilise and it is going

to be very hard to get the caucus to function at even the most basic level to keep the wheels turning in the ANC,” said Munusamy.

They both agreed that the ANC had no consensus over the issues of land and mining, which were so “defining in South Africa”, and that there would “be no light at the end of the tunnel” and that the party would not be able to “deal with the dysfunctionality” until after December.

This lead to a discussion over the leadership battle which they said was posing some interesting developments, with Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, in their mind, leading the succession battle at the moment – “with no guarantees in place”.

“We can only analyse what we can see,” said Grootes, “and the ANC is an opaque, very big organisation. It is difficult to know what is going on inside: who is ahead in the race, and who is lagging behind. It looks like it’s leaning Ramaphosa’s way, but this can change,” said Grootes.

The provinces held the key to all the questions they hinted, but this also posed no certainties. For example, in the North West, the so-called Premier League province, you can see “a subsiding of rhetoric” indicating sentiments were changing. KZN was “very fractured and unravelling”.

Munusamy said there was going to be a period of coalitions and that depending on how parties held out in the metros, we could brace ourselves for pre-election pacts and non-aggression pacts in “order to break the back of the ANC” she said.

All outcomes rested on the outcome of what happens in December (during the ANC’s elective conference) they agreed.

moving *Amanda's* way
moving *Donna's* way
moving *Edna's* way
moving *Glynné's* way
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Clyde Ackerman



Howard Sackstein



Lucas Radebe and Dov Fedler



Paul Counihan of Absa



Sharon Wapnick and Dina Diamond



Lana Roy, Danna Rachelson, Tali Nates and Ronleigh Gaddin



The breakfast



Jeff Gable of Absa, Lucas Radebe and Dov Fedler



Karen Schneid and Dionne Ellerine-Hirschowitz



Steven Grootes, Jodi Fittinghoff (front), Raelene Tradonsky and Benji Porter



Absa's Brienne van der Walt and Itai Melchior



Barry Swartzberg



Laurence Rapp and Absa's Craig Bond



Howard Sackstein, Absa's Kumari Moodley, Jeff Gable of Absa, Dina Diamond, Helen Fraser, Lucas Radebe, Dov Fedler and Amanda Blankfield-Koseff



Bryan Schimmel, Dorianne Weil and Dina Diamond



Ranjeni Munusamy and Stephen Grootes



Jake Shepherd, Don Krausz and Kathy Kaler



Absa's Oscar Sibiza, Lenny Shenker and Dan Wagner



Benji Porter, Craig Bond of Absa, Howard Sackstein, Reeva Forman and Absa's Kumari Moodley



Craig Bond of Absa

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Why Trevor Noah had a ‘barmitzvah’

SUZANNE BELLING

“Now you’re a man – mazeltov!”

With these words, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah gave her son Trevor a blessing on his 13th birthday, which she turned into a self-styled barmitzvah, according to her interpretations as a Bible scholar.

Speaking at a jam-packed press conference organised by M-Net at Montecasino last Thursday, while the world-famous comedian was in South Africa for shows in Johannesburg and Durban, Trevor Noah explained to the SA Jewish Report why he had a “barmitzvah”.

“My mom has been a Bible scholar for many years in her quest to delve into religion.

“She started studying Judaism [but was not a convert as some rumours claimed] and at some point, I came home and she was telling me about shul. I guess I woke up one day and had a mom who was ‘Jewish’!

“She enjoyed learning in Hebrew and studying the Scriptures, as I think many people read that way a long time ago.” So, Noah’s mom told him that was the way she was going to raise him. “When you are 13, you are going to have a barmitzvah.”

Noah did not argue with his mother, a very strong woman – and it is clear from his book, “Born a Crime and other stories”, how much he respects and adores her. His book explains what it was like being the son of a black mother and a white Swiss-German father, Robert, during the days of the apartheid regime.

But after Nelson Mandela was freed, he had the best of all worlds, being schlepped across Johannesburg to three different



churches – a “white” church, a mixed charismatic church and a traditional black church – every Sunday.

“I didn’t know what a barmitzvah was – and I don’t think she really did either. We didn’t know how anything was supposed to happen. It was just a thing my mom was celebrating when I was 13.

“None of my friends – I only had black friends at the time – came. They said: ‘We don’t know what this party is’.”

But, undaunted, Noah and his mother continued with the simcha. “Some years later, Noah found out that barmitzvah boys were given presents – mainly money – on their passage into manhood.

“When I told my friends, they said: ‘I must give you money for what, Trevor? Just because you are 15?’ So that’s the crazy world I live in!”

Noah is South African through and through, apparently understanding every ethnic group, which makes him so successful as a comedian. He speaks several official languages and has an innate understanding of all the cultures, having lived in Soweto, a coloured township, and in Highlands North.

The man who was called an international star by some of the media present, refuted that. “I don’t know if I will ever label myself an international star. I am a comedian who is very successful and lucky to be working in the world internationally.

“I am proud of my achievements,” he says, although he is modest to the core and greeted the 50 members of the media as if they were old friends.

Noah, who was the recent recipient of the Comedy of the Year award – among several others he has to his credit – had sell-out shows in both Johannesburg and Durban, attended by as many as 20 000 people at the Dome.

Noah paid tribute to M-Net as the first South African broadcaster that gave him a TV show, and is looking forward to working

“I didn’t know what a barmitzvah was – and I don’t think she really did either. We didn’t know how anything was supposed to happen. It was just a thing my mom was celebrating when I was 13.”

with the station in his upcoming series “Trevor Noah Presents...”

“I will be working with M-Net, gathering the finest comedians from across the country and showcasing them to viewers in South Africa, and saying ‘these are the comedians who will make you laugh’ – for every walk of life, every single race, every single language.”

WHAT'S ON

Sunday (August 20)

- Edenvale Jewish Community hosts a Ladies Night of Increased Self-awareness with Dvori Blumenau, educational psychologist and psychotherapist. Time: 19:00. Venue: Edenvale Shul. Including lecture, tea and optional group hypnotherapy. Donations to Edenvale Shul. Contact: Lisa Gordon 072-824-8424 or Tamara Lee 076-993-7767.

Monday (August 21)

- UJW hosts Dennis de Jongh, tax accountant and practising Mormon, on “The Mormons and What They Believe – a Window Into a Different Religion”. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Time: 10:00. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office (011) 648-1053.

Tuesday (August 22)

- Read it in Hebrew, learn to read Hebrew before the High Holidays with Rabbi Ari Kievman at Chabad of Benmore/Riverclub. Time: 19:30. Booking essential: (011) 440-6600.

March of the Living 2018

Youth Delegations

Dates: 8 – 24 April

ALL THOSE CURRENT GRADE 10 LEARNERS

Those in Grade 11 in 2018, interested in participating in MOTL 2018. Please join us, together with your parents, at one of our Information Sessions, where we will share with you all that there is to know about this life-altering experience.

JOHANNESBURG

DATE: 29 August 2017

VENUE: Jhb Holocaust and Genocide Centre. 1 Duncombe Rd, Forest Town

TIME: 6 – 7 pm

CAPE TOWN

DATE: 31 August 2017

Venue: Herzlia High School

TIME: 6 – 7 pm

The **March of the Living** is a two-part, unique, educational experience, which brings together teens and adults from over 40 countries, first to Poland for a week, followed by a week in Israel.

In **POLAND**, the rich cultural heritage that once existed there, will be explored, culminating in a march from Auschwitz to Auschwitz-Birkenau, on Yom Ha'Shoah, Holocaust memorial day .

In **ISRAEL**, we will commemorate Yom Ha'Zikaron, Israel's Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers, and Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel's Day of Independence.

2018 is a very special MOTL, as it will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the MOTL, and 70th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel. Many thousands of people have already booked to be part of these festivities, and numbers are being limited, due to the high demand for flights and hotels. The Youth Delegation will consist of only one bus of approximately 45 learners, and we will have a cut off date for applications of October 31st, 2017.

To apply or find out more information, see our website: www.motlsa.com
To RSVP contact the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre.
Tel: (011) 640-3100
For any questions, please email Kim at motlsouthafrica@gmail.com

Join a moderate, constructive, pro-peace growing global movement for a better future for Israelis and Palestinians.

To read the full letter signed by a group of prominent South African Jews, see: www.siso.org.il/southafrica

If you want to join the South African group, contact SISO's communities' coordinator, Matan Rosenstrauch, at Matanstr@gmail.com

How to legally remove a president

STORIES BY MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Advocate Anton Katz SC believes the outcome of the vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma held in parliament last week was “fabulous!” and “very good for this country”. So he told an audience at Limmud Cape Town at the weekend, when addressing “How to Lawfully Remove the President in South Africa”. Katz’s practice at the Cape Bar involves a range of human rights issues, principally concerning international law and constitutional law and he has done much work for the various political parties over the last 10 years. He said he was “surprised” at National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete’s decision to hold a secret ballot. “The parties were ready to go to court if she hadn’t, the papers had

already been drawn up,” he noted. His view is that Mbete decided on a secret ballot because her counsel warned her that she would lose the ensuing court case if she didn’t. “Whatever you may read in the Daily Maverick or anywhere else, nobody knew, (even President Jacob) Zuma didn’t know if it was going to be secret,” he maintained. Katz outlined three broad ways in which a person stops being the president. Firstly, there is a term limit – the Constitution only allows for an individual to serve for two five-year terms. Secondly, there is impeachment, which requires two thirds of the members of the National Assembly to vote for his removal on the grounds of serious violation of the Constitution (which the Constitutional Court has found in Zuma’s case); serious misconduct; and inability to perform in office.



Thirdly, there is a motion of no confidence, which succeeds if the National Assembly has lost confidence in the president and his government. “You introduce a no-confidence motion because you know that you’re not going to succeed with impeachment, as you need two thirds (of MPs to vote in favour),” said Katz. In the case of impeachment, the President is removed but the Cabinet continues, with the deputy president stepping in for 30 days until a new president is elected. In the case of a motion of no-confidence, the whole Cabinet must resign, including the deputy president, with the Speaker acting as president for 30 days until the National Assembly can elect a new president. Failure to elect a president in both cases, will result in a general election.

A Habonim start to a trade union career



Johnny Copelyn and Judge Dennis Davis

Johnny Copelyn – a former trade union leader – maintained that Habonim influenced his political views. In a discussion titled “Going Inside the Trade Union” on Johnny Copelyn’s recent memoir, “Maverick Insider”, Judge Dennis Davis asked how much of an influence. “Habonim was very, very influential in my outlook – it inspired my utopian hopes and dreams,” said Copelyn. “I’ve probably declined since, but so have they!” Copelyn, a prominent union leader for the two decades preceding 1994, was general secretary of SACTWU (the Southern Clothing and Textile Workers Union), one of Cosatu’s three largest affiliates. He recalled that the ANC had been “very antagonistic” towards the union movement during the ‘70s. He related that the Frame Group was the biggest employer of their members and at one point intended retrenching 300 of them. “We asked them why they didn’t start a new business making overalls for their workers instead. “They said, ‘If you think it’s so easy – here’s

the money, you do it!’ So the union started the factory with the 300 retrenched workers – the worst 300 were foisted on us, an entirely untrained group of people, because of the new skills that were needed. “Those worst 300 became star performers. The factory is still going today and the union still owns it.” Referring to cheap Chinese imports, Copelyn referred to “so-called good African nationalists who make such a mess that it’s intolerable. That’s a disaster for the textile industry and has led to the collapse of the clothing industry. “It is not recognised as being a consequence of poor policies by the state and that is an issue for me,” he stated. Commenting that the unions had been “absolutely captured” by getting a handful of their leaders to become prominent ANC members, Copelyn said that despite Cosatu’s alliance with government, the unions “were a very central opposition to (former President Thabo) Mbeki’s Aids denialism and should be lauded.”

Challenging our notion of ethical consumption

“Not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That first act of human consumption gave birth to moral consciousness,” Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz told a Limmud Cape Town audience over the weekend. This, he referred to as the first prohibition in the Torah. “We live in an age of over-consumption and mis-consumption and the most impact we can make today is in our consumption choices,” said this American Orthodox rabbi who founded and leads Uri L’Tzedek, the only Orthodox social justice group in North America. He also founded the Shamayim V’Aretz Institute, an animal welfare activist centre. In 2015, Newsweek rated him one of America’s top 50 rabbis and in 2016, the Forward named him one of America’s most inspiring and influential. Addressing the topic of “Ethical Consumption: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century”, he referred to a scandal that erupted in 2008 involving Agriprocessors, the largest kosher meat producers in America. He and a colleague decided to go there to see what was going on. “We found workers (illegal immigrants) paid well below the minimum rates and animals being treated very badly. The owners had been accused of bank fraud to the tune of 10 million dollars. “The idea of kosher representing a higher standard, had been lost. I saw the religious community rallying behind this company and I said: ‘This doesn’t represent Torah values.’ “We (Uri L’Tzedek) launched a boycott. This was unheard of – an Orthodox Jewish movement launching a boycott against a kosher meat producer – and the backlash was enormous,” he remembers.

The rabbi’s lodestar, however, is tikkun olam – repair the world – maintaining that kashrut and brachot are tied to a spiritual consciousness of what we consume. “How did we lose a consciousness that fasting on Yom Kippur and not eating pork is just as important as not mistreating workers?” he asked, quoting writings on the Torah prohibition against mistreating animals or workers. He related that he had met someone at a kosher restaurant who earned four dollars an hour – half the minimum wage. “There is a lot of corruption around kosher certification (in the United States) today,” he added. “Consciousness of what we do, actually matters. It’s often said that to expose problems in the Jewish community would be ‘chillul Hashem’ (desecrating G-d’s name). “(It is said that) Kosher is no worse than other industries, the sad part is it’s no better. We’ve gone so far from what kashrut was about, that it requires a tikkun,” he stated. Referencing Jewish philosopher, the Rambam (Maimonides) the rabbi stated that the overall goal of all rituals and laws is the creation of a just society. And paraphrasing another, Rav Soloveitchik: “Somehow, we’ve got the idea that Jewish life is about the synagogue, but it happens in the workplace, the streets and every time we make ethical choices. “After Yom Kippur – do I fundamentally relate to food differently? Shabbat – it’s not just checking the box for Jewish continuity. “Did it produce a new way in how I relate to others in the world?” Rabbi Yanklowitz asked. “If all rituals are not vehicles for character development and societal progress, then I’m not sure what they’re for.”



Charlottesville and Johannesburg: The impact of a blunt instrument



It has seemingly again become a trend to stifle arguments with blunt instruments. It might appear to be stretching a point to contrast recent horrific events in Charlottesville, Virginia in the United States, with post-apartheid South African discourse.

But as our world increasingly sinks into hatred and intolerance, driven by populist leaders who care only for themselves, trends stand out which are weakening the post-Second World War ideal that people of different cultures and creeds can respect one another, and talk together.

Last year’s election of the lying, tweeting Donald Trump as United States president, with his contempt for “the Other” – Mexicans, refugees and so on – epitomises this. His reaction on Sunday to violent demonstrations by alt-right, anti-Semitic hooligans in Charlottesville, in which a woman demonstrating for peace was killed by a car driven headlong into the crowd by a militant racist – a blunt instrument – confirmed it; he refused to immediately condemn the alt-right, since they were part of the constituency which elected him.

Community Column

-----**A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies**-----

All systems go for the biennial conference

Preparations are being finalised for the Board’s 49th biennial national conference, taking place in the Sandton Shul hall this Sunday at 15:00. To book your place, e-mail sajbd@sajbd.org or call Roseanne on (011) 645-2521.

We are delighted and honoured that former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela has agreed to be our keynote speaker for the occasion. Advocate Madonsela has become a household name in South Africa through the courage, persistence and professional rigour she has displayed in defending the Constitution (in whose original drafting she was involved) and exposing corruption at the highest levels.

The topic on which she will be speaking is entitled, “Reimagining South African Democracy”, and no doubt will focus on what has gone wrong in our country and what needs to be done to get things back on course.

For the core section of the conference, following my report-back, each of our national professional staff members will speak briefly about what it is that they do and some of the highpoints of what has been achieved in their particular areas since the last conference.

While the Board’s elected lay leaders are the ones who determine matters of policy, it is its professional teams, in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria, who are at the coal face of what the Board does.

Sunday’s conference will provide

Turning to South Africa: Despite its history and political travails, and the damage President Jacob Zuma inflicts, this country is doing relatively well in inter-group tolerance.

Remnants of Mandela’s dream remain, even if somewhat sullied. But an illustrative incident occurred at a Limmud session last week in Johannesburg, when a young black woman on a panel declared to the audience of mainly white Jews that she was going to be “brave”, and then pronounced vociferously: “There is no rainbow nation!”

All whites were inherently guilty, and blacks had to separately re-examine their attitudes towards whites. The session’s topic was “The Tarnished Rainbow: South Africa in 2017”.

Audience members were angered by her bluntly lumping all whites together. In the auditorium were white veteran political activists, participants in projects of cultural engagement, helping the marginalised and poor, and so on.

One white person countered her by saying her generation of young blacks had scant personal experience or knowledge of the role some whites played in demolishing apartheid, and their sacrifices.

Then a youngish white man spoke up, saying he agreed the country had racial demons to overcome because of its history. He then said politely but pointedly: “I am white and doing my best. What else do

you want me to do now? Will it help, or atone for white sins during colonialism and apartheid, if I give away all the money in my bank account, give up my job and car, and go and sweep the streets?”

The audience waited for some constructive response. Instead, she angrily retorted that his very question exposed his racism, because he seemed to believe black people just “sweep the streets”. A ripple of annoyance ran through the audience. One white woman muttered that the country’s black middle class numbered six million today, larger than the white one.

But the interaction showed something important. This young panelist’s ignorance and anger notwithstanding, many South Africans are trying to talk to each other. Indeed, she herself had come to the Jewish Limmud forum, to challenge a white audience and be challenged.

Turning back to the thugs in Charlottesville, Virginia, it seems incredible that after all the years since the Second World War and the Holocaust, people still needed to protest against unmitigated Nazism from closed-minded people with no desire or willingness to talk.

At a Ku Klux Klan rally in Charlottesville on July 8, a sign held by a white-hooded participant read: “Jews are Satan’s children... Talmud is a child molester’s bible.”

Despite how much anger there is in South African society, a sign like that would not be permitted. Perhaps Donald Trump’s American South can learn something from this country about how people still manage to talk today, even across chasms.

• *Read Geoff Sifrin’s regular columns on his blog sifrintakingissue.wordpress.com*

World News in Brief

Schwarzenegger donates to Jewish anti-hate group

NEW YORK - Arnold Schwarzenegger has donated \$100 000 to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which combats anti-Semitism and bigotry, in the wake of the far-right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The actor and former California governor, announced the donation last Sunday on Facebook, where he wrote that he was “horrified” by the previous day’s rally bringing together neo-Nazis, white supremacists and other far-right activists.

The rally featured racist and anti-Semitic slogans, and a car-ramming attack by a participant killed a counter-protester and injured at least 19 people. Two police officers monitoring

the rally also died when their helicopter crashed.

“I have been horrified by the images of Nazis and white supremacists marching in Charlottesville and I was heartbroken that a domestic terrorist took an innocent life,” he wrote. “My message is simple: you won’t win. Our voices are louder and stronger. There is no white America – there is only the United States of America.”

Schwarzenegger said he worked with the LA-based Wiesenthal Centre for decades, and admires “the Centre’s mission of expanding tolerance through education and fighting hate all over America”. (JTA)




Above Board
Jeff Katz
National Chairman

participants with an opportunity of hearing first-hand what it is to be in the engine room of the Jewish community’s representative spokesperson and civil rights lobby.

It will further give our community a better idea of the diversity of the work in which the Board is involved, which in addition to upholding Jewish civil rights and fighting anti-Semitism, encompasses a range of activities including outreach and upliftment initiatives, media and public relations, cultural, educational and academic projects, information services and country community-related services.

As reported on last week, the conference will also include the presentation of special awards to members of our community who have excelled in particular fields.

The Rabbi Cyril and Ann Harris Human Rights Award, which honours those who have contributed to democracy and social justice in South Africa, will be

presented to the founders and heads of the Mitzvah School, Leslie Rosenberg and Molly Smith.

John Moshal and Shirley Beagle will respectively receive the lay and professional Eric Samson Mendel Kaplan Communal Service Awards.

This being my last SA Jewish Report column before I step down as national chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues at the SAJBD. I further congratulate the incoming leadership and wish them success for their term of office.

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

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



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Comedian, movie actor and author, Nik has appeared live in Australia, Canada, Holland, the USA and the UK as well as on several comedy shows. He is known as the funniest Jewish Xhosa speaking comedian in Africa.