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# south african Jewish Report

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■ Volume 23 – Number 42 ■ 29 November 2019 ■ 1 Kislev 5780

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## Disbelief over anti-Semitism watchdog's SA findings

NICOLA MILTZ

A respected international survey claiming a huge spike in anti-Semitic attitudes in South Africa has prompted shock and disbelief by experts in the local community who warn that the findings should be viewed with extreme caution.

According to the latest survey by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a United States anti-Semitism watchdog, a staggering 47% of South Africans harbour anti-Semitic attitudes.

Topping the list of countries harbouring such attitudes are Poland, South Africa, Ukraine, and Hungary, according to the survey published last Thursday.

"It's a bizarre result," said a perplexed David Saks of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). "Every second South African you meet is anti-Semitically inclined? We know that's not true. Most South Africans know little and care less about Jews – why should they?" he said, describing the survey as "deeply misleading and unreliable".

The poll of 18 countries, which is part of the ADL Global 100: An Index of Anti-Semitism, was conducted between April and June 2019 in Eastern and Western Europe, Canada, South Africa, Argentina, and Brazil. Countries with a significant Jewish population were selected for the 2019 survey of 9 000 adults.

The poll found that about one in

four Europeans harboured "pernicious and pervasive attitudes" toward Jews, while the figure was almost double in South Africa.

The survey was based on responses to 11 statements concerning belief in anti-Semitic stereotypes. The inaugural ADL Global 100 Index was conducted in 2014.

Respondents were asked questions to which they needed to respond "probably true" or "probably false".

Sixty percent of South Africans (about 500 people) responded "probably true" to the statement that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to South Africa.

In response to the statement that Jews have too much power in the business world, 55% of South Africans said "probably true".

Fifty-two percent of South Africans said it was "probably true" that Jews have too much power in international financial markets. Forty-nine percent agreed that Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust, while 54% agreed that Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind.

Saks joins other local experts in lambasting the survey's methodology and findings, arguing that the results contradict local data, what's happening on the ground, and have glaring discrepancies.

Professor Karen Milner of the University of the Witwatersrand and vice-chairperson of the SAJBD, said the survey should be viewed with "extreme caution".

She said the findings contradicted what "we know from our own information that we have one of the lowest incidences of anti-Semitism in the world".

"I'm not saying we should reject it out of hand. We should scrutinise it much more carefully and try understand what's going on in terms of these contradictory results and data that we are getting from other places."

She said the survey didn't take cultural nuances into account. "We shouldn't accept this as definitive when we have other information that needs to feed into it as well. Our own lived experience in South Africa for one. We live openly and visibly as Jews in South Africa. If you look where France falls on the survey, where people clearly can't live openly, visibly, and comfortably as Jews, this raises concerns for me."

The University of Cape Town's Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research conducted a survey in 2016 titled, "Attitudes and perceptions of black South Africans towards Jewish people", which had quite different results to the ADL survey.

Professor Adam Mendelsohn of the Kaplan Centre told the *SA Jewish Report*, "When planning our study of the attitudes of black South Africans, we spent some time exploring the methodology that the ADL uses."

"Our sense is that the [ADL] methodology is problematic: a very small sample of people, and much read into the few questions that were asked."

"The finding that South Africa is one of the most anti-Semitic countries in the world in terms of attitudes is seemingly contradicted by low incidences of anti-Semitism relative to our peer countries. The findings of our perception study [as well as past studies] didn't find evidence that black South Africans harbour broad or

deep anti-Semitic attitudes."

Saks added to this by saying, "I'm deeply sceptical about the accuracy of these findings, and their significance."

"Most of those interviewed have never met a Jew, and know far too little about them to have been able to answer the fairly complex questions

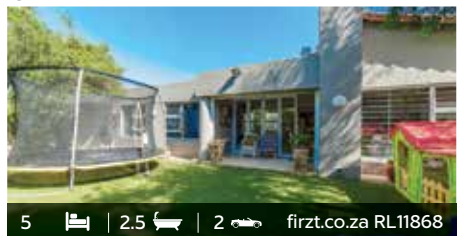
Continued on page 12>>

## Meeting of Jewish minds



Newly appointed United States ambassador to South Africa, Lana Marks, meets SA Jewish communal leaders this week.

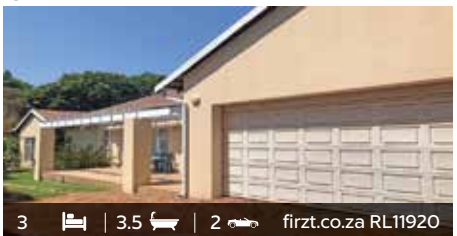
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# Social media ‘the greatest propaganda machine in history’

TALI FEINBERG AND JTA

Internationally acclaimed actor Sacha Baron Cohen has called for greater regulation of social media to contain rising hatred, terrorism, and violence.

*The Spy* star spoke at the Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL’s) 2019 “Never Is Now” summit on anti-Semitism and hate in New York City on 21 November. He said his work as a comedian exposed him to centuries-old stereotypes, racism, and pure lack of knowledge, and “fear and fanaticism find fertile ground in the echo chamber that is social media”.

“Today, around the world, demagogues appeal to our worst instincts. Conspiracy theories once confined to the fringe are going mainstream. It’s as if the age of reason – the era of evidential argument – is ending, and now knowledge is delegitimised and scientific consensus is dismissed. Democracy, which depends on shared truths, is in retreat, and autocracy, which depends on shared lies, is on the march. Hate crimes are surging, as are murderous attacks on religious and ethnic minorities,” he said.

“All this hate and violence is being facilitated by a handful of internet companies that amount to the greatest propaganda machine in history. Think about it. Facebook, YouTube and Google, Twitter and others – they reach billions of people. The algorithms these platforms depend on deliberately amplify the type of content that keeps users engaged – stories that appeal to our baser instincts and that trigger outrage and fear. It’s no surprise that the greatest propaganda machine in history has spread the oldest conspiracy theory in history – the lie that Jews are somehow dangerous. As one headline put it, ‘Just think what Goebbels could have done with Facebook.’”

Ironically, his speech has gone viral on social media. The points he made, including, “On the internet, everything can appear equally legitimate ... We have lost, it seems, a shared sense of the basic facts upon which democracy depends,” clearly resonated with users. He explained that while social-media companies had taken some steps to reduce hate and

conspiracies on their platforms, “These have been mostly superficial.” He warned that “pluralistic democracies are on a precipice, and that the next twelve months and the role of social media could be a determinant. A sewer of bigotry and vile conspiracy theories that threatens democracy and our planet – this cannot possibly be what the creators of the internet had in mind.”



Sacha Baron Cohen

Baron Cohen called out Mark Zuckerberg’s recent speech that warned against new laws and regulations for companies like Facebook. “First, Zuckerberg tried to portray this whole issue as ‘choices ... around free expression’. That’s ludicrous. This isn’t about limiting anyone’s free speech. This is about giving people, including some of the most reprehensible people on earth, the biggest platform in history to reach a third of the planet. Freedom of speech is not freedom of reach. Sadly, there will always be racists, misogynists, anti-Semites, and child abusers. But I think we could all agree that we should not be giving bigots and paedophiles a free platform to amplify their views and target their victims.

“We’re not asking these companies to determine the boundaries of free speech across society. We just want them to be responsible on their platforms.”

Baron Cohen pointed out that Zuckerberg said he found posts denying the Holocaust “deeply offensive”, but he didn’t think Facebook should take them down. “At this very moment,

there are still Holocaust deniers on Facebook, and Google still takes you to the most repulsive Holocaust denial sites with a simple click. One of the heads of Google once told me, incredibly, that these sites just show ‘both sides’ of the issue. At a time when two-thirds of millennials say they haven’t even heard of Auschwitz, how are they supposed to know what’s credible? How are they supposed to know that the lie is a lie?” he asked rhetorically.

“There is such a thing as objective truth. Facts do exist. And if these internet companies really want to make a difference, they should hire enough monitors to actually monitor, work closely with groups like the ADL, insist on facts, and purge these lies and conspiracies from their platforms.

“These are the richest companies in the world, and they have the best engineers in the world. They could fix these problems if they wanted to. Twitter could deploy an algorithm to remove more white-supremacist hate speech, but reportedly it hasn’t because it would eject some very prominent politicians from its platform. Maybe that’s not a bad thing! The truth is, these companies won’t fundamentally change because their entire business model relies on generating more engagement, and nothing generates more engagement than lies, fear, and outrage.”

He suggested that social-media companies be made to abide by basic standards and practices just like newspapers, magazines, and TV news do.

“In every other industry, a company can be held liable when their product is defective. It only seems fair to say to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter: your product is defective; you are obliged to fix it, no matter how much it costs, and no matter how many moderators you need to employ.

## Shabbat times this week

| Starts | Ends  |                |
|--------|-------|----------------|
| 18:15  | 19:20 | Johannesburg   |
| 19:15  | 20:20 | Cape Town      |
| 18:15  | 19:18 | Durban         |
| 18:15  | 19:35 | Bloemfontein   |
| 18:15  | 19:51 | Port Elizabeth |
| 18:15  | 19:39 | East London    |

## Torah Thought

### How to bring blessing into your life

Man is a being with many needs. Not only materially but in many other areas – emotional, mental, social, biological, and spiritual. We are told that we must be “happy with our portion” (Pirkei Avot), yet we are created to be striving beings, seeking to increase and grow, and not stay as we are.

The latter isn’t narcissistic – or at least shouldn’t be – and it’s not a contradiction. Be happy with what we have means being able to recognise and appreciate the blessing we have. Blessing implies relationship, meaning we recognise we are being blessed and respond humbly, benevolently, and reciprocally. Then we will want more, and that’s not being greedy, because who doesn’t want more blessing to enhance our situation, and have more to be grateful for and appreciate.

How do we activate blessing? The opening words of this week’s portion indicates how.

“These are the generations of Yitschak, the son of Avraham. Avraham

begot Yitschak.” There seems to be a clear redundancy. We don’t need the second verse to tell us that Yitschak is Avraham’s son and that Avraham is his father, it’s obvious from the first verse. The Torah does not use unnecessary words. What then is it teaching us?

A few chapters back, we read how Avraham and Sarah were childless and could not bear children. Avraham was 99 and Sarah 90. Then came the commandment (*mitzvah*) of circumcision that G-d gave Avraham, telling him that he will be the father of many. Right then, G-d also tells him that he (Avraham) will be having a name change. An extra letter (*hei*) will be added to his name. So from Avram, he will now be called Avraham.

This is what the extra phrase is emphasising. It’s not just that Yitschak is the son of Avraham, but that Avraham begot Yitschak. Prior to his receiving the *mitzvah* of circumcision, there was an obstruction in the flow of divine blessing preventing it reaching Avraham. In his case, it was in regard

Rav Ilan Herrmann,  
Soul Workout Shul  
in Glenhazel



to offspring, for others, it may be in a different areas.

The word *mitzvah* comes from the word *tzavtah*, which means “to connect”. When we perform a *mitzvah*, we establish a connection with Hashem and specifically so because a *mitzvah* is Hashem’s inner will. Our *mitzvah* then opens up the channel, and triggers a flow of divine blessing to be drawn downward.

“Avraham begot Yitschak” is teaching us that specifically now, through the channel that is the *mitzvah*, Avraham possessed a new shifted state (reflected in his name change), and that this shifted the cosmic forces to enable him to beget Yitschak.

This is the power of a *mitzvah* – any *mitzvah*. And it has nothing to do with being religious. It’s a mitzvah. It’s the channel that connects, the switch that turns on the light. There are 613 of them, so help yourself. But please do help yourself!

## South African Jewish Report

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**Board of Directors** Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benjy Porter.  
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# Israel boycott motion withdrawn by UCT senate

TALI FEINBERG

The senate of the University of Cape Town (UCT) made a momentous decision on 22 November when two thirds of its members voted to cancel a motion made in March 2019 proposing a boycott of Israeli universities. “Earlier this year, the senate voted to call for the university to enforce a boycott of Israeli institutions. This would have been the first step in institutionalising a boycott. But on Friday, Professor Hugh Corder, a constitutional law professor, proposed a motion to rescind the senate’s earlier decision,” said Scott Roberts, the vice-chairperson of Progress SA, an organisation that has played a vital role in fighting the possibility of an academic boycott at UCT.

“The new motion cited concerns about academic freedom, which is a part of the right to freedom of expression in terms of Section 16 of the Constitution. Senate resolved not to impose a prohibition on the tertiary academic sector of any nation state,” said Roberts.

The new resolution was seconded by Professor Kelly Chibale, a professor of organic chemistry at UCT. The senate voted in favour 68.7%.

The rule is that a two-thirds majority is needed to rescind any decision of senate if it happens within 12 months of the first motion. The March motion proposing an academic boycott is therefore no longer a decision of senate. It has been replaced by the 22 November motion.

Professor Corder said nothing would have been accomplished “without the active and profound support of a few senior members of senate, drawn from all faculties, who overwhelmingly have at heart the academic project at UCT”.

From here, the new resolution will either be ratified or rejected by the university’s council on 7 December. A source speaking on condition of anonymity told the *SA Jewish Report* it was likely the council would vote in favour of the new resolution.

Another factor at play is the “impact and sustainability assessment” which the UCT council asked the UCT executive to undertake to examine all likely

consequences – including financial and reputational – of any proposed boycott of Israeli institutions. Many organisations and individuals contributed, including all UCT alumni, who were polled. This process is yet to be concluded, and it isn’t certain that it will be completed in time to present to the council in December.

Kayla Ginsberg, the national director of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), said “The battle against the boycott motion was one defended over many months and fraught with complexities. Procedurally, the motion moved from lower committees right up to council. It was amended several times, and that along with procedural requirements,



resulted in the motion being heard in senate multiple times.

“The entire process took three years, wherein SAUJS alongside the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), and South African Friends of Israel (SAFI), invested countless hours ensuring that academic freedom and the rights of Jewish students prevailed. We hope that UCT will now be able to redirect its efforts, which have been hijacked with the narrow-minded boycott motion, towards educating the leaders of tomorrow and ultimately building a better South Africa.”

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Solidarity Forum (PSF) told IOL News that, “It’s a clear indication of the persisting conservatism of UCT

and the fact that UCT, and the vice-chancellor in particular, is beholden to its donors and ‘the Zionist lobby’.”

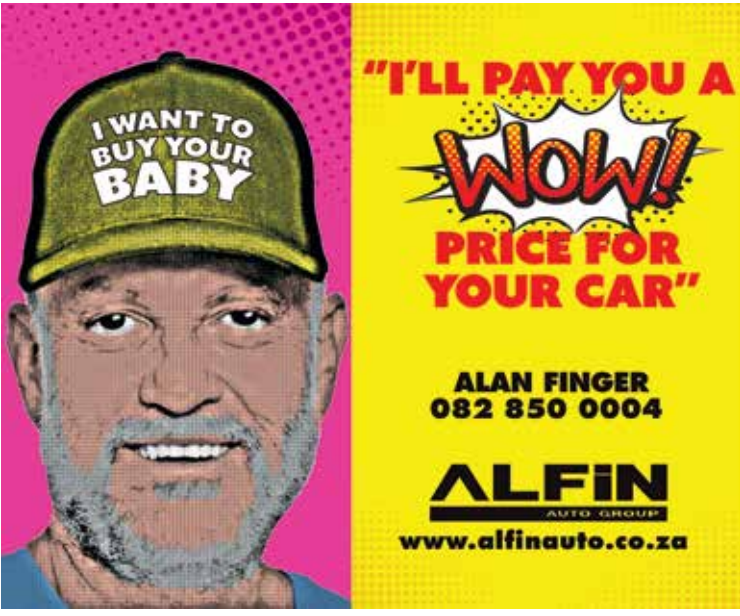
Said Roberts, “For now, it seems like the possibility of any kind of politically-inspired academic boycott at UCT has been put to bed. A 68% rejection by senate is very, very convincing.”

Asked about the role of Progress SA in making this happen, Roberts said it had worked to raise awareness. “We circulated a memo amongst hundreds of staff presenting arguments against the Israeli academic boycott. Meetings of senate have been poorly attended, and many liberal academics have stopped attending as a result of radicalism dominating university discourse in the past few years. However, on Friday, there was a great

turnout at senate, including a large number of liberal academics. We hope our activism has had something to do with this.

“The other thing that was important is that this wasn’t a question of Israeli/Palestinian loyalty for us. We were careful to point out that this was about the freedom of members of UCT not to have a certain viewpoint imposed on them. Framed as such, even members of the UCT community who are critical of the Israeli government could get on board with the idea that a boycott is a bad idea.”

Sara Gon of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) has written extensively on the dangers of a boycott at UCT. Reviewing the chain of events, she said, “From the start, it seemed as if the senate’s



original decision was driven by certain factional interests, and the rest of the senate went along with it without doing any research. While this process has played out, a number of things

have happened. Although the government’s foreign-relations position remains hostile to Israel, it’s become much more pragmatic about its economic relations. Another thing is the United Nations report declaring BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] to be anti-Semitic. I don’t think this is necessarily the end of the matter, but it should put the cause back awhile.”

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn said it was significant that the discussion at senate focused on academic freedom, and the decision was reached based on these values. “This protracted campaign has done little to advance peace building between Palestinians and Israelis. All it has done is create

polarisation and divert attention from important local issues. We are reassured that the members of the UCT senate saw through the ‘dirty tricks’ employed by BDS groups on campus. They were not swayed by the spamming of senate members, personal attacks on academics, and the fraudulent impersonation of SAUJS students. The senate’s decision is a victory for academic freedom in our country and globally.”

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the SAZE, said, “UCT’s repudiation of this resolution shows that South Africans are interested in peace in the Middle East. It creates a precedent for the direction our institutions should take. It’s now time to push forward, and increase engagement between South Africans and Israelis, for example, students from UCT going to the Weizmann Institute [an initiative organised by SAFI].”

SAZF chairperson Rowan Polovin thanked the senate for “standing up to this campaign of hate, and asserting the importance of academic freedom over narrow political agendas. Its repudiation sends a strong message that freedom of academic enquiry without limitation is essential. Academics, students, and faculty at UCT are free to engage with Israeli academia or that of any country they so choose, without restriction.”

The head of media liaison at UCT, Nombuso Shabalala, would not comment, saying, “The senate resolution still has to go to council next month where a final decision will be made on the matter. Thereafter we will comment.”

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# ANC MP demands that SA shut down embassy in Israel

TALI FEINBERG

The chairperson of the South African International Relations and Cooperation Portfolio Committee, Tandi Mahambehlala, went on a tirade against Israel in a briefing last week, demanding that the South African embassy be shut down.

“It’s high time that the mission [which is in fact, the South African Embassy in Israel] is closed,” she ranted. “[The] recalling of an ambassador alone isn’t enough. You must be brave. Recall the ambassador, and close the office.”

Her comments were made at a briefing on 20 November by the department on its performance and financial report and that of the Africa Renaissance Fund for the first and second quarters of the 2019/2020 financial year.

Mahambehlala is a minister of parliament (MP) for the African National Congress, and is also the ANC national youth task team (NYTT) convener. The NYTT was established to rebuild, rebrand, and strengthen

the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). Essentially, she replaced former ANCYL president Collen Maine in July 2019.

According to transcripts, the discussion began when Economic Freedom Fighters MP and commissar Thembi Portia Msane said that “the issue of Israel and Palestine was discussed in the fifth Parliament [2014 to 2019] ... as much as we are administrative, we also need to participate in global politics”.

DA MP Darren Bergman, the party’s shadow minister of international relations and cooperation, responded by saying, “If we are talking about Palestine and Morocco, DIRCO [the department of international relations and cooperation] and the committee should also discuss Hong Kong and Zimbabwe.”

It was at this point that the chairperson began an emotive and seemingly nonsensical tirade against Israel. “One thing that we must know [is] that the US [United States] and Israel they have been causing mayhem throughout ... the Middle East, South America, and what have you (sic).”

She went on to claim that somehow, Israel (and America) “poses a threat to our own people in those countries. And the aggression by Israel, it can never be correct at any point, and we will never support it.”

She said she had received a message “the other day that an explosion happened 200m from a house of one of our own there. And we must say it’s correct? We are going to speak against it, and the whole world is against Israel (sic).”



President Cyril Ramaphosa’s comments to the *SA Jewish Report* in May this year, when he said that the decision to downgrade South Africa’s embassy in Tel Aviv had “not been considered yet by cabinet”.

“Once the cabinet has fully engaged and come out with a view on this matter, it will be communicated to the public. In other words, we remain seized with the modalities of downgrading the South African embassy in Israel, and this matter has not been finalised,” Ramaphosa said.

“South Africa is playing a constructive role in the Middle East,” the president continued, “and we use every opportunity that avails itself to engage with all states in this region, including the Palestinians and Israelis. We continue to host high-level talks and receive numerous delegations from Israel and Palestine. We hope to intensify this in the future.”

Asked if he still welcomed foreign direct investment by Israel, the president said, “South Africa welcomes investment in our economy from any investor that respects our laws and supports the development of our economy.”

When the *SA Jewish Report* approached DIRCO spokesperson Clayson Monyela for comment, he said, “In all fairness, you can’t ask the department to comment on statements of lawmakers. Members of parliament belong to a branch of government that is above us. Please direct your questions to the chairperson.”

At the same time, he shared a statement from 24 November, in which DIRCO condemned Israel’s building of settlements, but asked both sides of the conflict “to respect [United Nations] Security Council resolution 2334 and all other UN resolutions aimed at resolving the conflict ... to the achievement of the two-state solution and a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace.”

On the same day that Mahambehlala made her comments, ambassador Jerry Matjila (the permanent representative of South Africa to the UN) spoke during the UN Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East. There, he also condemned Israeli settlements, but said that peace could be achieved only “through sustained dialogue, negotiation, and mediation by both sides respecting one another and through compromise and understanding”.

He concluded by saying that, “South Africa is fully committed to ensuring that the two-state solution, and the agreed peace processes aimed at ensuring two viable states with the possibility of coexisting side by side to the mutual benefit of all peoples in the region, become a reality. We are ready to play our part to assist the parties to find durable peace for the sake of future generations.”

The *SA Jewish Report’s* calls, messages, and emails to Mahambehlala went unanswered.

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# Chief rabbi joins stadium of prayer for SA

JORDAN MOSHE

It’s not often that the chief rabbi says a prayer at FNB Stadium in front of more than 100 000 people, many of whom had been queuing to get a seat from 03:00.

But then, it’s not every day that so many come together to cheer the country on through prayer, united in their vision for a better South Africa.

Thirty-three religious and faith-based organisations assembled for the 2019 National Day of Prayer for All South Africans on Sunday. An initiative of the Motsepe Foundation, the massive event has for the past three years drawn individuals from across the religious spectrum. On the day, pastors, archbishops, imams, and rabbis lead the crowd in prayer to end poverty and crime, and for the creation of jobs, and a successful future for all South Africans.

Music groups put on performances between prayers, inspiring attendees.

“It’s a day devoted to prayer,” says Rabbi Dovi Rabin, a representative of the Jewish community who is involved in interfaith initiatives. “Every one of the organisations represented has a slot in the day’s programme to lead prayer. No platform is given to politics whatsoever.”

Though political figures such as Mmusi Maimane, Julius Malema, Floyd Shivambu, and even the first lady of South Africa, Dr Tshepo Motsepe, were present, political agendas were set aside in favour of the common goal of prayer.

Prayer was recited by religious leaders from the Dutch Reformed Church to the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein representing South African Jewry.

“This is a day of G-d’s blessings,” Goldstein told the crowd. “To see so many people coming to pray to our father in heaven brings blessing to our country. As the Book of Psalms says, ‘This is the day that G-d has made. Let us rejoice and be glad on it.’”

Goldstein’s address was followed by a musical performance given by the Sydenham choir under the direction of choirmaster Doron Chitiz, led by chazzan Yudi Cohen. Accompanied by live music, the choir performed a tastefully adapted rendition of Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah*, but in which the lyrics were replaced with text from various psalms.

The impact was electrifying, says Benjamin Porter, a Johannesburg businessman and close friend of Goldstein. “It was one of the most inspiring experiences I’ve had since the 1994 World Cup.”

“The chief rabbi and the choir performed a huge *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d’s name) and people couldn’t get enough. They were clapping throughout and cheering. You could see the genuine enthusiasm, love, and respect everyone had for one

another,” says Porter.

“I’m not being flippant when I say that it was unquestionably one of the best experiences of my life.”

The day’s power to bring diverse groups together through prayer and song was apparent to Cohen, who says he witnessed nothing but an outpouring of positivity from start to finish. “It dawned on me that a big part of South African society is pro-Israel and very supportive of the Jewish community,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* after the event.

“In spite of noise from the government and the loud voices of those who dislike us, most people are peace loving individuals who just want to live. Seeing people amassed in prayer reminds you that it’s not all negative.”

Cohen says people develop a personal connection with G-d outside Judaism, an example from which Jews could learn. “We sometimes risk



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

Photo: Wayne Kopping

losing that personal connection to Hashem, getting caught up instead in asking for things instead of just forging a connection,” he says.

“The idea of *tefilla* (Jewish prayer) is to create a connection through which you discover your inner self and G-d. This event was just that – strengthening a personal relationship with G-d. As Jews, we need to tap into

this power of prayer and song. It goes beyond an intellectual connection, and makes us connect to something special on a different level.”

The fact that the Jewish community is invited to participate in the event clearly shows the esteem in which it is held within the broader South African society, says Rabin. “We’re respected as a religion in

South Africa,” he says. “The chief rabbi is a respected figure across society. It’s clear that we matter as a community, and we continue to be invited to participate actively as a religious group.”

Goldstein echoed this sentiment, saying that the crowd displayed great warmth and was generous and responsive to the Jewish presence.

“The whole experience filled me with such positivity,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “There are millions of South Africans who love G-d, and are dedicated to the kind of ethics, faith, and respect for unity and diversity that a country needs to thrive.

“It was inspiring to see a packed stadium of so many people who came together to pray to G-d in a spirit of love and unity. It was heart-warming to feel the overflowing welcome and enthusiastic response to the participation of the Jewish community.”

## British chief rabbi warns against Labour

CNAAN LIPSHIZ – JTA

In an unprecedented move, Britain’s chief rabbi has warned ahead of the country’s general elections that the Labour Party’s anti-Semitism problem means that the “very soul of our nation is at stake”.

South African-born Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis made his intervention on Tuesday in a column published in the online edition of *The Times of London*. “It’s not my place to tell any person how they should vote,” Mirvis wrote, adding, “I regret being in this situation at all.” But in the column, he listed anti-Semitism scandals involving Labour and its leader since 2015, the far-left politician Jeremy Corbyn.

“Many members of the Jewish community can hardly believe that this is the same party that they proudly called their political home for more than a century. It can no longer claim to be the party of diversity, equality, and anti-racism. This is the Labour Party in name only,” he wrote.

Mirvis then considered how complicit in prejudice a leader of Her Majesty’s opposition would have to be in order to be considered unfit for high office. He asked, “Would association with those who have openly incited hatred against Jews be enough? Would support for a racist mural, depicting powerful, hook-nosed Jews supposedly getting rich at the expense of the weak and downtrodden be enough? Would describing as ‘friends’ those who endorse and even perpetrate the murder of Jews be enough? It seems not.”

Come the 12 December election, “the very soul of our nation is at stake”, he wrote.

Corbyn in 2013 defended a mural depicting Jewish men playing Monopoly on the backs of dark-skinned men. In 2014, he laid a wreath on a monument commemorating Palestinian terrorists who murdered Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. He called Hamas and Hezbollah his friends in 2009.

Under Corbyn, anti-Semitism and anti-Israel vitriol proliferated in Labour’s ranks, prompting the Equality and Human Rights Commission, a government watchdog, to launch its first inquiry into the handling of racism in any mainstream British party.

Corbyn has denied harbouring or encouraging any anti-Semitic bias.

Amanda Bowman, the vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said Mirvis’ call was unprecedented, pointing out that it was “sadly reflective of how many British Jews feel”. They are



Britain's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Photo courtesy of Mirvis

“fearful that if Labour has allowed anti-Semitism to take hold in this way while in opposition, that things will become worse if they are in government”, she wrote on Tuesday.

The chief rabbi was backed by Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh leaders. Within the British Jewish community, the response was divided.

Raymond Simonson, the chief executive of a Jewish cultural centre in London, told *The Guardian* that, “For the chief rabbi, the most senior religious leader in the UK Jewish community, to come out with something as strong as this is extraordinary. Even if people disagree, the fact he’s moved to say this publicly reflects absolute angst in his heart, soul, and mind. People who have been natural Labour voters are reluctantly coming to the conclusion that they can’t vote Labour this time.”

Karen Pollock, the chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, told *The Guardian* that Mirvis would have written his article from a sense of duty. “I think he was right to do it, and I respect him for it. It reflects the deep despair and distress felt by the community, and the absolute failure of a political party with a long history of fighting racism to deal with anti-Semitism today. It’s heart breaking.”

Mike Katz, who chairs the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), said, “Sadly Mirvis’ diagnosis is spot on. That’s why the JLM has said, for the first time ever, we’re downing tools in this election. We’re only supporting exceptional [Labour] candidates in exceptional circumstances.”

But Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL), said Mirvis’ article was “utterly inappropriate”. Jonathan Rosenhead, a member of the group, said, “As with all other accusations made, they’re very nearly evidence-free. It’s not an endemic problem. There are anti-Semites in the Labour party because they’re everywhere. But this country is the safest place in Europe for Jews.”

In an interview with the BBC on Tuesday night, Corbyn refused to apologise to the Jewish community following Mirvis’ comments. Asked four times if he would say sorry, the opposition leader instead said that a Labour government would protect “every community against the abuse they receive”.

Corbyn said he wanted to have “a discussion” with the chief rabbi, who needed to produce evidence to back up his claims.

A Labour spokesman said, “Jeremy Corbyn is a lifelong campaigner against anti-Semitism, and has made it absolutely clear it has no place in our party and society and that no-one who engages in it does so in his name,” according to the *Evening Standard*.

“A Labour government will guarantee the security of the Jewish community, defend and support the Jewish way of life, and combat rising anti-Semitism in our country and across Europe. Our race and faith manifesto sets out our policies to achieve this.”

The chief rabbi claimed that there were at least 130 outstanding cases of anti-Semitism in the party, and that thousands more have been reported but remain unresolved.

But the Labour spokesman said, “The figure is inaccurate, and it is categorically untrue to suggest there are thousands of outstanding cases. We are taking robust action to root out anti-Semitism in the party, with swift suspensions, processes for rapid expulsion, and an education programme for members.”

– Additional reporting by Tali Feinberg



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# South Africa isn't anti-Semitic

Any whiff of anti-Semitism in this country, and you are likely to read about it in this newspaper. In fact, some have criticised us for our coverage of anti-Semitism on social media, making it look like we have a bigger problem than we really do.

Also, some readers don't like the fact that we write about BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] so much, saying we are giving it an unwarranted platform for its irksome deeds.

However, be that as it may, I would go as far as to say that we are at the coalface of anti-Semitism in this country. We make sure you are aware if it's happening, when it's happening, who is behind it, and why. We pursue anti-Semites, and we aren't alone.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) makes sure anti-Semites know they cannot get away with their ugly statements and treatment of this community.

What we are all clear about is that Jewish people are totally free to practice our religion in this country. We are free to live a totally Jewish life. We can wear religious Jewish garb, and nobody is going to harm or even bother us.

We are free to have kosher stores, restaurants, and even many shuls. Our religion is just one of many in this country, and we are left to practice it and be who we are without prejudice. If university exams fall on Jewish holy days, the SAJBD alerts the authorities, and alternative arrangements are made.

The chief rabbi goes to speak at national political and interdenominational events (see page 5). We have held events where the president has come to address our community with affection. I can go on and on.

So, when the news of the latest American Defamation League (ADL) survey on anti-Semitic sentiment around the world came out, I wasn't alone in being shocked and quite dismissive that South Africa was one of the countries at the top of the list (see page 1).

In *Ha'aretz's* online newspaper, it claimed that the study showed South Africa as the second most anti-Semitic country in the world. Or at least it claimed that 47% of the population harboured anti-Semitic sentiments, just 1% down from Poland, where 48% of the population had these ugly feelings towards Jews. Just below South Africa was Ukraine, then Hungary, Russia, and Argentina. France, which we all know to be terribly anti-Semitic, and where Jews can be in danger if they wear a kippah in public, was way down the list. Germany, also known to have a rising anti-Semitic trend, was below France. England, too, was way below South Africa.

Reading this and other information about this particular survey made me angry. I know that this country has issues and yes, the government is pro-Palestinian and has friends in Hamas, but we are free to be Jews in South Africa, and nobody hassles or worries us about it.

Surveys like this from a reputable organisation can only do damage to our state of mind here on the southern tip of Africa. I mean, what are we expected to feel when the United States' foremost anti-Semitism fighter makes these claims following supposedly reputable research?

But you and I know it can't be true. Most people in South Africa don't really know what being Jewish is, and if they do, they don't really bother us as a group.

Recent research by the Kaplan Institute has produced figures supporting what we know to be true. Despite this, we asked one of our investigative journalists to find out what happened to get to the former result, and why it was put out. Was there something untoward about the research?

Almost as soon as the ink on those newspapers with articles about the ADL survey was drying, this newspaper started getting messages from Israel and other countries telling us to emigrate now.

Every now and again, we get an influx of doomsayers contacting us, telling us it's time to leave South Africa. Some do this because they firmly believe we are in trouble here, others simply need to justify their decision to emigrate. Even if they don't need to justify it and are blissfully happy, in this instance, they have been given inaccurate information about us.

I can safely say that there are few places in the world where Jews have the kind of freedom that we have to live the way we do. I'm so grateful for that, and I love living in this country. Yes, we have an abundance of problems and they all have an impact on our pocket – among other areas – but we still have a good life and a fantastic community.

## 16 Days of Activism

As we move into the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, I ask you to spare a thought about what you can do to stem this particular crisis. We all know that our community is far from free of gender-based violence – we write about it often.

The *SA Jewish Report* has a fundraising campaign in place to pay for psychological help for the young Israeli tourist who was attacked and raped while on holiday here with her boyfriend recently. We are also raising funds for psychological assistance for South African women who have been raped. Help us to help them!

While we cannot change what happened to them, we can do what we can to help them through this horrific time. We can do something – so let's do it.

Donations can be made to the following account: Ian Levitt Attorneys Trust Fund, Absa, Rosebank Central Branch, account number 4046253714. Reference: Israeli tourist.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Peta Krost Maunder  
Editor



# Is the curtain finally coming down on Netanyahu's reign?

For the first time ever, Israel is being led by a prime minister under indictment. Fighting the biggest political battle of his life, Benjamin Netanyahu is holding onto his position as if his life depends on it. To some extent it does. Should he be admired – or not – for refusing to step down?

About half of Israelis think he shouldn't be, and that his time has passed. Of those recently polled, only one-third support him in the top position, and admire his struggle to stay there.

It took nearly three years, but Israel's attorney-general finally decided to indict Netanyahu on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in three separate corruption cases. The prime minister faces charges of receiving hundreds of thousands of rands worth of champagne and cigars, favourable press coverage, and good publicity in exchange for billions to his benefactors in regulatory policies.

Netanyahu denies any wrongdoing, and has accused law enforcement agencies and the Israeli media of trying to stage a coup against him. He's now left with three courses of action: he can again try to claim immunity from prosecution; he can fight the charges in court; or he can try to arrange for a plea bargain in which he'd have to give up his position and in return would not go to jail. However, it's no longer guaranteed that the attorney-general is still open to the last option.

Israeli law requires a prime minister to step down if convicted – but not when indicted. By comparison, a minister or government official in the same situation would have to forfeit his position. So Netanyahu will have to give up the four ministerial portfolios he's held while continuing to serve as prime minister – health, social welfare, diaspora, and acting agricultural minister. But it's the one he will still retain that's he's fighting tooth and nail to keep.

Whether he succeeds or not depends to a large degree on what his Likud party decides to do with him. After neither Netanyahu nor his chief rival, Benny Gantz of the Blue and White Party, was able to form a coalition following elections in September, the field is now open for another parliamentarian to do so. Assuming that this doesn't happen by 11 December – and it's highly likely it won't – the country will then head into an unprecedented third election in 12 months. At this point in time, an election next March seems all but inevitable.

The only way to prevent it would be for the Likud central committee to hold primary elections and choose another party leader. Gantz has repeatedly said he is willing to team up with Likud so long as it's not headed by Netanyahu. Such a unity government would avert another election.

Netanyahu's advisers say he would be willing to hold a leadership primary in six weeks. The timing is intentional because by then, the 11 December deadline will have passed and a Likud primary will need to be held so the party can choose a candidate for the next Knesset (parliament) election. In such a scenario, Likud is unlikely to field anyone else than the experienced Netanyahu to face off against Gantz, whose bloc won the most parliamentary seats in the previous poll.

This past weekend, Likud legislator Gideon Sa'ar, expressed his support for the primaries and his intention to run, claiming that, unlike Netanyahu, he could "easily form a government".

## DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier

Sa'ar is a former minister who left Likud over disagreements with Netanyahu, but recently returned with strong backing. To date, he is the only senior party member to challenge the prime minister openly, but there are several who are eyeing the top seat and lining up in the wings.

Critics accuse Sa'ar of mounting a coup. He's certainly taking a political gamble, and while most observers don't believe he can usurp Netanyahu, this is a chance for Sa'ar to raise his profile – but also the ire of Netanyahu.

"Does anyone think that in a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth election, he [Netanayhu] could form a government?" Sa'ar asked recently. "Either this crisis continues, or G-d forbid, we'll lose power to our rivals."

Sa'ar's only chance of becoming leader of Likud is if it happens before 11 December. He could then form a unity government and prevent another round of polls. With a widely unpopular election do-over looming, Likud might decide it's not worth rallying around Netanyahu and move to dump him. That's one scenario.

But people are afraid of Netanyahu. There's also a fair amount of inertia to change things, and he is still hugely popular within the party. In another scenario, Netanyahu wins the primaries and, as unimaginable as it may seem now, also wins next March's election. He could then try to defend himself during a trial while leading the country. This is uncharted water for Israeli society.

The closest it came to such a situation was when corruption charges were brought against former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2005. Ironically, Netanyahu was among those who called for him to resign, but whereas Olmert had already resigned by the time he was indicted in 2009, Netanyahu is far from doing this. It's worth remembering that it took seven years for Olmert's conviction to be upheld, and then he served only 16 of a 27-month prison sentence. Netanyahu is playing for time, and despite many of the Israeli editorials declaring the demise of "King Bibi", it's still too soon to write him off.

Netanyahu's already got his talking points for his next election bid written out: the conspiracy to oust a prime minister by an attempted coup; the Iranian threat; and the danger of a Blue and White government with Arab support.

But Netanyahu will be able to use these messages only if Likud, whose members have overwhelmingly supported him in the past, again puts its faith in him.

The party has only had four leaders since it first came to power in 1977 – Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Ariel Sharon, and Netanyahu. Since then, it has spent three-quarters of its time in office, thanks in no small part to "King Bibi", the longest-serving Israeli prime minister. Netanyahu has a reputation for winning elections – and that's the main reason Likudniks stuck by him.

But he isn't winning them any longer – even before the indictment for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. Will his supporters remain convinced that he is still a viable candidate with a moral leg to stand on? Will they give him a third chance to form a government? Or has the curtain finally come down on Netanyahu's career that has all the makings of a Shakespearean tragedy?





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# A fitting salute to three Torah giants

JORDAN MOSHE

A dancing rabbi is by no means an uncommon sight, but the sight of three senior rabbis and an entire community tearing up the tar together as they parade through Glenhazel is something to behold.

The streets of the *shtetl* reverberated on Sunday as hundreds of Jews came together to pay tribute to prominent personalities of the local Beth Din with a festive *hachnasat sifrei Torah* (inauguration of Torah scrolls).

Led by a band playing from atop a flatbed truck, the procession moved from Corbel Crescent to the Yeshiva College campus in celebration of the decades Rabbis Moshe Kurtstag, Boruch Rapoport, and Zadok Suchard devoted to Johannesburg Jewry.

The revelry was certainly a fitting final salute to these giants who have collectively served the community for more than 50 years, and who are stepping down as *dayanim* (judges) of the Beth Din. In their honour, three Torah scrolls (donated by the Cyrildene Shul) will become available to any *minyan* (prayer quorum) in the community in need of one on loan.

Young and old filled the streets as the procession ascended Long Avenue, arriving at the gates of Yeshiva College. The elated crowd escorted the rabbis and Torah scrolls into the main Yeshiva College Shul, where Durban’s Rabbi Pinchas Zekry addressed them.

“South Africa is lucky to have such great rabbanim,” said Zekry. “It is indeed an outstanding *shidduch* (arranged marriage) that we have between South African Jewry and its *dayanim*. We cannot take for granted that we have one Beth Din which unites all of us.

“They have given prestige to our community’s different establishments, from kashrut to conversion. When you go to Israel or anywhere else in the world with a certificate from South Africa, they don’t need to check it. South Africa is trusted. The Beth Din is trusted.”

The accomplishments of the retiring *dayanim* is clearly a testament to this. In a career spanning 40 years, Kurtstag served as head of the Beth Din after initially taking up the position of *dayan* when he arrived from Israel in 1976. He retired to Telstone, Israel, two years ago, but returns to South Africa frequently.

“Serving on the Beth Din of South Africa was a privilege. This is the most unique community in the world, something I recognised very early on. This community is the envy of the rest of the world because of its unity.

“What can I say about my work here? They call us the old guard. We always tried to stand for high standards, halacha, and keeping up the reputation of this community. We were always looking at the community to see what we could upgrade or improve.”

He expressed confidence in the *dayanim* who will take up the reins as he and his colleagues step down. “We are handing over to the new guard,” he said. “We are handing over into good hands.”

Rapaport said that the event



was the most appropriate way to acknowledge the role of the Beth Din and its *dayanim*. Born in the United Kingdom, he moved here in 1985 to take up a position at the Beth Din, assuming responsibility for litigation, conversions, kashrut, and divorces for 33 years.

“The ninth principle of the thirteen principles of faith affirms pure belief that the Torah will never change,” he said. “That principle tells us that the *sifrei* Torah [Torah scrolls] we brought in today are the very same ones our *zaidas* [grandfathers] had, that the Vilna Gaon had, and that Moshe had. It hasn’t been changed. The standards have been maintained.”

He affirmed that South Africa’s Beth Din consistently tried to maintain these inherited standards and raise them where possible. “If there were any changes, they took place within the framework of tradition of South African Jewry.

“My plea to the incoming *dayanim* is, irrespective of your backgrounds, maintain the standards that have been maintained for the past 100 years. If you want to change, do so within the framework.”

Suchard thanked the community for affording him the opportunity to enhance his personal growth and take his religious experience to new heights. He served as *dayan* on

the Beth Din for more than three decades, and also built a thriving community almost from scratch in Sandton, helping found King David Sandton along the way.

“It was really an honour and a privilege to be part of the Beth Din for more than 30 years,” he said. “When you’re part of the Beth Din, Torah comes alive. You implement what you learn. The matters of the Talmud and *shulchan aruch* [code of Jewish law] come alive. We came to appreciate our Torah, what was in it, and could apply it to real life.”

He believes the Beth Din is the heartbeat of our community. “The younger *dayanim* who will carry on

our work are wonderful people,” he affirmed. “They are *tzaddikim* [spiritual leaders], scholars who will serve the beautiful South African community in the correct way.”

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said those present at the event would cherish its memory for years to come. “Everyone who has participated here this afternoon has a sense of participating in a milestone event of our community,” he said. “It’s an occasion we will carry with us in our memories forever.”

Beyond paying tribute to the Beth Din as an institution, Goldstein said that the event was a celebration of and tribute to the three men, their personal lives, and contributions. “We are here to express our love for them as human beings we connected with.

“But it’s also a celebration of Torah. A Torah represents everything, and a true *talmid chacham* [Torah scholar] is a living embodiment of the Torah. What better way to pay tribute to people who represent the essence of Torah than with *sifrei* Torah?”

He concluded, “These *sifrei* Torah are here for the community. They will have a home here but are available for loan to any shul or *minyan* that needs one. These Torah scrolls represent our *dayanim* not just because they embody the teachings of the Torah but because these Torahs are dedicated to serving the community.

“Our *dayanim* and their families have been like *sifrei* Torah. They have been on loan to the community to serve and teach us with selflessness and dedication.”

## Looking back with gratitude and forward with confidence

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



This past Sunday, we celebrated an historic occasion: the extraordinary legacy of Rabbi Moshe Kurtstag, Rabbi Boruch Rapoport, and Rabbi Zadok Suchard. These three names are synonymous with Jewish life in South Africa. They are three pillars of the community, and three *dayanim* who have devoted a staggering combined 105 years of service between them as the leaders of the Beth Din.

As a tribute to that selflessness and service, three *sifrei* Torah were dedicated, one for each of the *dayanim* who retired last year. Rabbi Kurtstag has also recently been awarded the honorary title of Emeritus Rosh Beth, in recognition of his years of service in heading up the Beth Din.

No one who was there will forget it. The atmosphere was charged with a love and reverence for Torah, and for those who have devoted their lives to upholding it. The event was a celebration of all these respected *dayanim* have accomplished over decades. But it was also very personal and heart-warming. We all have stories of how our lives have been personally touched through their *chesed* (compassion), their wisdom, Torah, and humanity. Personally, I have deep gratitude for the warmth, support, advice, and encouragement they have given me. We have worked together for 15 years, and I will always treasure the time I've spent learning and receiving from them. Indeed, I continue to do so.

These Torahs are a fitting symbol of Rabbi Kurtstag, Rabbi Rapoport, and Rabbi Suchard’s impact on the community as a whole, for the Beth Din they built and maintained over decades. Simply put, they established an institution that provides the community with the Torah infrastructure required to be a Jew in South Africa – a comprehensive range of specialist services essential to the preservation of Jewish life, overseeing everything from kashrut and the arbitration of monetary disputes, to marriage authorisation, divorce

proceedings, and conversions.

Without the work of the Beth Din, Jewish life in South Africa would be unthinkable. We can all live here as proud Jews because the Beth Din provides the foundations for us to do so. It has done so with a level of distinction that has ensured our halachic standards – and therefore all marriages, divorces, conversions, and kosher certification – are recognised and accepted across the globe – in Israel, the United States, and across the diaspora. They have maintained a single, unified institution that is the envy of communities worldwide.

This is not something to take for granted. It’s not something that every Beth Din automatically enjoys. It’s something that has been achieved through decades of hard work, excellence, and attention to detail.

The  *mishna* in Pirkei Avot says, “The world stands on three things – justice, truth, and peace.” (Avot, 1;18). Justice, truth, and peace are the cornerstones of any successful and enduring society with good moral foundations. It is precisely these three values that a Beth Din represents and upholds, and which our Beth Din in particular has brought to our extraordinary Jewish community. The blueprint for how to create a world with justice, truth, and peace, is G-d’s Torah and the Beth Din gives practical expression to its divine system of ethics, values, and laws.

A community steeped in justice, truth, and peace is Rabbi Kurtstag, Rabbi Rapoport, and Rabbi Suchard’s great legacy, and it’s a legacy that they are passing on to a new generation of similarly principled, conscientious, compassionate, and accomplished *dayanim* who they continue to mentor.

Even as the sun sets on this golden generation of *dayanim*, we take great comfort as a community in knowing that our Beth Din is in safe hands. In Johannesburg, Rabbi Dovid Baddiel, Rabbi Yoel Smith,

Rabbi Dr Shlomo Glicksberg, and Rabbi Gidon Fox, and in Cape Town, Rabbi Desmond Maizels, Rabbi Reuven Suiza, and Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg, are continuing the great work of their predecessors.

These *dayanim* are all working together as a team of equals, in a spirit of partnership and unity. They are continuing to serve and lead in a spirit of unity and compassion, with care and concern for the needs of all, with integrity and humility, loyalty and dedication, with selflessness and wisdom, thereby establishing justice, truth, and peace as the pillars of our community.

This is a time of transition. As a community, we look back on these glorious decades, and, at the same time, we look forward to the future with confidence and hope. A vibrant Jewish future here in South Africa depends on our connection to our ancient values, to our divine heritage that has sustained, empowered, and inspired Jews for thousands of years. The Beth Din has the leadership it needs to continue to preserve our Torah heritage, making it accessible and embracing to all, thereby ensuring a bright Jewish future for our community.

May G-d bless Rabbi Kurtstag, Rabbi Rapoport, Rabbi Suchard, their rebbetzins and entire families, with good health, with continued blessings, and with a deep sense of satisfaction at all they have accomplished, all they have built, and all they have given us. And let us, together with our new generation of *dayanim*, continue the vision of a vibrant, proud Jewish community connected to our divine values and legacy.

• *Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein has been the Chief Rabbi of The Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa since 2005. He has a BA, LLB (Unisa), and a PhD. in Human Rights and Constitutional Law (Wits).*



# Zuma’s downfall holds lessons for King Bibi

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



Israel crashed into uncharted waters last Thursday when Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announced the indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. In three separate corruption cases, Netanyahu is accused of accepting luxury gifts from rich friends and granting favours to telecoms and media tycoons in return for positive news coverage.

Netanyahu hit back, declaring the move an “attempt to stage a coup”. For months, he has portrayed the charges as a “witch hunt” concocted by despised left-wing opponents who’ve failed to beat him at the ballot box. He has called for his investigators to be investigated by an independent enquiry.

In a press conference, a defiant Netanyahu said, “I will continue to lead this country according to the letter of the law. I will not allow lies to win.” There is no law forcing him to resign at this stage.

South Africans can identify with a head of government who protests his innocence and stubbornly clings to power. What light might the (eventual) political downfall of South Africa’s former President Jacob Zuma cast on Israel’s situation?

Both Zuma and Netanyahu were skilfully able to manipulate positions of apparent weakness into

those of great strength, not least by playing the victim.

Zuma, like Netanyahu, is a consummate survivor. Stripped of the deputy presidency in 2005 by President Thabo Mbeki amid serious corruption and rape allegations, Zuma roared back to seize the presidency of the African National Congress (ANC) in 2007 at Polokwane. Within a year, the tables had turned. Mbeki was dumped from the presidency by the party, and Zuma became the country’s president after the 2009 election.

Both Zuma and Netanyahu were skilfully able to manipulate positions of apparent weakness into those of great strength, not least by playing the victim.

If Zuma’s first term was marked by the scandal over wasted taxpayer millions on upgrades to his Nkandla homestead, his second term will be remembered for rampant corruption, the greed of the Gupta brothers, and state capture. Dubbed “the Teflon President”, nothing seemed to stick to Zuma. He refused to resign, and survived eight votes of no confidence in the national assembly, protected by the



ANC’s majority in parliament.

Mastering the rollercoaster of coalition politics in a very different milieu to the ANC’s dominance, Netanyahu has surpassed David Ben-Gurion’s number of days in office. Netanyahu was prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2009 until now. Israel, unlike South Africa, doesn’t have term limits.

In Israel’s second election in 2019, once again no-one has managed to cobble together a coalition. This means Netanyahu remains in power. Politicians have exhibited a toxic mix of stubbornness and greed over compromise and the national interest. If a government doesn’t

emerge in the next two weeks, the Jewish state will face its third poll in less than a year.

Netanyahu’s indictment could be the game changer.

Has Bibi finally become more of a liability than an asset for his Likud party? One of his party rivals, Gideon Sa’ar, said that if a third election occurred, Likud members should rethink their leadership. Israeli TV channels are circulating claims that senior Likud officials have the knives out for Netanyahu before the looming third election. This is a long shot, only likely if they can unite around a single successor in a party stuffed with Bibi acolytes and massive egos.

Because, ultimately, it wasn’t the opposition, or the courts, or civil society, or the media that toppled Zuma. It was his own party. The victory of Cyril Ramaphosa as ANC leader in December 2017 over Zuma’s ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, signalled the beginning of the end. When Zuma refused to resign two months later, it was announced he was being “recalled” by the ANC. Facing a ninth no-confidence vote that he was now sure to lose, Zuma resigned on 14 February 2018. Ramaphosa was installed as president the following day. The party that had protected Zuma for almost a decade turned on him in a heartbeat. Robert Mugabe’s 37-year rule in Zimbabwe was similarly snuffed out by his party.

Don’t count King Bibi out just yet. Like Zuma, he is likely to tie his cases up in the courts for years with appeals and other legal manoeuvres. His next move will probably be to seek immunity from prosecution from the Knesset, made more complicated by the coalition logjam. Experts say it might take up to seven years to secure a conviction. By that time, Netanyahu will be 77.

• Steven Gruzd is an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs



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# Farewell to an iconic insurance mogul

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Sir Donald (Donny) Gordon was “really extraordinary and a great role model”, businesswoman and philanthropist Wendy Appelbaum says of her father who died last Thursday at the age of 89. “He gave us all a moral compass that will always guide us.

“The lessons he passed on to the family have been invaluable. We were blessed to have had him,” she says of her late father, a business and philanthropy titan, who passed away in Plettenberg Bay on 21 November.

While some have described him as both incredibly kind and tough, Appelbaum says, “He was never really tough on me – he might have said I was tough on him!

“He was very upstanding. He wasn’t even that strict. He was set in his ways, and there was only one way which was his way.

“He never really had to repeat himself – he made himself so clear that we all knew exactly where we stood. He was probably tough in business, but I also think he was fair and incredibly honest. To have reached almost 90 with an unblemished record, to leave a legacy like that is extraordinary.”

Appelbaum, together with husband Hylton, runs the Donald Gordon Foundation. Established in 1971, it is one of the oldest and largest private foundations in the country.

Its focus is education and healthcare, and it is a top donor to the Chevrah Kadisha. The foundation received the 2016 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards Lifetime Achievement Award, recognising Gordon’s business and philanthropic contributions.

Unbeknown to most people, Gordon looked after all his teachers from King Edward VII School and when they passed away, he looked

after their wives, says Appelbaum.

Philanthropy was inculcated in the family from a young age, she remembers, with the adage that “those who have much, have much responsibility”.

Dorianne Weil (the clinical and media psychologist known as “Dr D”) describes the Gordons as “very, very close” family friends, with whom she and her family spent many *yomtavim* together either in Plettenberg Bay or Johannesburg. The friendship goes back to her father and Gordon being “exceptionally good friends”.

Referring to Gordon, she says “he was more than the monument that people know about. There are a lot of institutions and organisations in Johannesburg that bear his name, but he was beyond that.

“He supported many families of people who used to work for him, and he carried on supporting their widows,” much like he did with his former teachers.

He had quite a soft spot for animal causes, and supported the SPCA (the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), she says.

Referring to the conferral of a knighthood by the Queen in 2005 for services to the arts and business, Weil described Gordon as “an innovator, a trailblazer, and a maverick. When he started in the insurance industry, it looked very different to what it does today.

“He came with extremely way-out, new ideas and I remember hearing snippets of conversation and loud voices from behind the doors, ‘For goodness sake, that’s crazy, that’s never going to work!’ The people who backed him then, I can tell you, are very thankful, even today.

“The industry was being run by the establishment, and by conservative suits. He came along as a young man with way-out ideas

that were not tried and tested. So he had to have quite a lot of courage and relate well. He had to be very convincing.”

Says businessman Arnold Basserabie, the chairperson of Afrika Tikkun and former chief executive of Fedsure Financial Services, “We were competitors and engaged on various industry committees where I had the opportunity and benefit of learning from him and identifying some of the pioneering and creative things he did during his tenure in the industry.

“He was extremely dedicated and hardworking, and had a clear understanding of both the big picture and relevant detail.

“A lot is said today about industries being disrupted. Well, he certainly disrupted the life insurance industry with some amazing innovations. He pioneered the introduction of linked (market-related) insurance and investment products, and South Africa’s unit trust and retirement annuity industry.”

Basserabie notes that Gordon was one of the first investors to envisage the potential of Sandton as an investment opportunity and, together with developers Rapp and Maister, built Sandton City. Liberty subsequently built up a very prominent and successful property portfolio, and introduced into South Africa the concept of property-linked investments for individual investors.

He expanded into the United Kingdom by acquiring a significant stake in Sun Life Assurance, and building up a substantial property portfolio there under the aegis of what



The late Sir Donald (Donny) Gordon

became Liberty International.

Gordon has given much back to South Africa, two examples of which are the Gordon Institute of Business Science (affiliated to the University of Pretoria) and the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre (of which Basserabie has been a director for the past 15 years).

“He was very competitive,” Basserabie says. “I recall that at one industry conference he was playing tennis [at which he was very proficient]. He ran to the net, cut the ball over the net, and then ran onto the other side of the net, and returned the ball to win the point!”

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies described Sir Donald as “a living legend” for his “phenomenal achievements in both the business and philanthropic fields. As a business leader who founded the global insurance giant Liberty International, he was far-sighted, bold, and innovative. As a philanthropist, his unstinting generosity led to the establishment of a range of outstanding institutions and foundations that have benefited countless people and numerous worthy causes the world over.

“Along with his innumerable services to the wider society, Gordon was a committed member of the Jewish community and contributed extensively over the decades to the welfare of its members.”

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## Masinter’s *tehillim* shine light on the world

### JORDAN MOSHE

Rabbi David Masinter works around the clock strategising for one goal: reaching every Jew in Southern Africa and kindling the Torah light within.

Masinter, the director of Chabad House in Johannesburg, and his team of volunteers are committed to turning the pessimistic outlook of South Africa around. For them, it’s not just about promoting positive thinking, but changing the way we address our problems.

Masinter’s *tehillim* (psalms) campaign has gained momentum every passing month since its launch in January. As the year draws to a close, the Chabad campaign, which ensures that every South African Jewish family has a book of psalms in their home, concludes the first major leg of its project.

About 5 000 primary school students from Glenhazel to Green Point have already received their own copy of *tehillim*, and Masinter is eager to move on to the next phase.

“We’ve rolled out a systematic distribution scheme of epic proportions,” says Masinter. “We began by asking people if they know of Jewish children attending non-Jewish schools who might not have a book. We’ve found Jews at Crawford, Dainfern, Cedarwood, and St Peters. We’ve found schools we didn’t even know existed, and we won’t stop until every child in the country has one.”

On Friday, a major rally took place at the Kotel in Jerusalem involving primary school



students from South African Jewish schools via live feed. It included all the King David schools, Yeshiva College, Bella Vista, Crawford, and Torah Academy. Together with Chabad of Jerusalem’s Rabbi Yossi Swerdlow, these 2 000 students recited *tehillim* in unison with a view of one of Judaism’s holiest sites.

“The Gemarah says that the psalms, especially those said by children, break decrees against us,” says Masinter. “The prayer of a child is pure, and coupled with the potency of psalms, it can achieve extraordinary things.

“I look at the world, and I see people walking around in darkness. There are some things we cannot fix, but there are some we can. As Jews, we are equipped with the power of prayer. We really do believe it has the power to change decrees in heaven, and we believe that psalms are the most powerful of all prayers. This is all about bringing light and hope.”

Masinter says high school students are next on his list, followed by university students, and eventually senior citizens, whose names he and his team have already begun compiling.

Together, they intend to scour the entire country, locating Jews in every *dorp* (small town) and every province to ensure that they remain connected. From KwaZulu-Natal to the Free State, his team is going door to door to find every Jew and deliver a book of *tehillim* into their hands.

“We’re not doing this as a mere good deed,” Masinter says. “I really believe this is a solution” Masinter says. This is not a ‘nice thing’, but a solution to a problem that brings light into a dark world. It’s a very serious undertaking to which we’re completely committed.”



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# Making aliyah is a financial challenge of note

JORDAN MOSHE

As if emigrating to Israel physically isn't daunting enough, financial emigration matters far more than we realise, and could ultimately determine the success of resettlement.

That's according to Bankfin finance experts Jeremy Bank and Venessa Kotze, who on Monday night unpacked the complexities of financial emigration at Beyachad in Johannesburg in front of a packed auditorium.

"When you pack up a home and make aliyah, it's tough," said Bank, a chartered accountant. "I've lived through it. There's the physical part of packing, resettling a family – it takes years off your life.

"But what so often happens is that the whole issue of financial arrangements gets left on the backseat. In many cases, it goes under the wheels, and it creates terrible *tzorres* (difficulty and suffering)."

Together, he and Kotze stressed the need to establish a financial plan before emigration, deciding whether to transfer your finances to Israel with you, or leave them in South Africa.

"If you start planning when you land in Israel, you've missed out," Bank says. This needs to be planned well in advance.

"There are issues concerning your finances that will keep coming up. Financial emigration is not a point in time. Yes, it aligns with boarding a plane, but there's legislation involved, to say nothing of the complex financial systems of two countries."

According to Kotze, a tax practitioner, dealing with the department of home affairs is the easy part, and has little bearing on your financial changes. "Your passport and actual travel mean very little," she said. "The South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) are involved. You can't emigrate financially without them."

"The SARB looks over your shoulder the minute any funds leave the country or come in," said Kotze. "Everybody thinks you fill out a form, and that's all. It's a misconception. Before you fill out anything, there's a mountain of things to do, including statements, share valuations, and trust deeds.

"The SARB knows your whole history by the time you've filled out any form. To fill anything out is no easy feat – it's a mountain."

Even once the form is completed and certified, the process has only just begun.

"The SARB now knows about all your income," said Kotze. "When those amounts accrue to you and enter your bank account, and it happens

that you omitted anything in your form, the money won't be remitted to you offshore. You can't touch it if you didn't declare it."

She said tax clearance is essential to taking any money out of the country, meaning that all your tax returns need to be up to date. "Believe you me, they dig everywhere to find out what your status is. It's amazing what they can uncover."

Kotze said the tax clearance is only valid for 12 months, and in that time, you need to decide how much money you want to take out. If you fail to do so, you need to apply all over again. "If you decide to go, you must go. You mustn't hesitate. You have 12 months. It will cost you money to reapply."

Getting money out of South Africa before emigrating financially can be accomplished in various ways, including using a discretionary allowance or a capital allowance. The method you use depends on the amount you require, and may involve applying for a tax certificate in order for this to be carried out.

Whichever you use, it's essential to declare every cent. "SARS has fingers in all the pies," said Kotze. "They will pick up something you haven't declared. Honesty is really the best policy here."

She and Bank explained that virtually any amount of money can be taken out of the country, but you need to have it on hand. "If you apply for R8 million, you have to prove to SARS that you have that in an account ready to go," they say. "Liquid assets like a share portfolio are acceptable, but property isn't unless it has been sold and lodged with the deeds office."

The taxes you will be liable to pay will also depend greatly on which country you spend most of your time in, and both South Africa and Israel investigate this closely. Both countries have a required number of days you need to spend outside the country in order to avoid being deemed a taxable resident, but they don't only rely on day counts.

"They will look at where your centre of life is," said Bank. "The days could be irrelevant. They look at where you ordinarily engage and move about. People try to escape the system on both sides, but can end up falling into both tax nets. This leads to a double tax agreement, a very grey area that is difficult to navigate. It's not simple, so tread carefully.

"You need to determine where you live. The point is when you emigrate, remain emigrated. Don't wear two tax hats – it creates problems. Yes, you can return, but watch your days. Don't create complications. Choose one hat, and wear it."



The experts reiterated that the process of emigrating financially has multiple steps, but isn't the right path for everyone.

"Start with a personal balance sheet," they said. "Know what your assets and liabilities are. Once this is done, it's time to consider. There is no right or wrong answer when you emigrate financially. Some people choose to remain a South African tax resident, and others don't."

Still, one must remember that when you board a plane, you may cease being a tax resident but are subject to capital gains tax.

"When you board a plane and leave, it's an indicator that you are severing ties with South Africa permanently," said Bank. "The

implication from a tax point of view is that it triggers a deemed capital-gains tax event. Tax authorities have every right to pursue you based on the deemed values of your property, and demand it of you. Whether you do or don't financially emigrate, you automatically trigger an obligation to render capital-gains tax with your next South African tax return."

He concluded, "Financial emigration is optional. Whether it is necessary depends on your circumstances. There are indicators that may make it advisable, such as inheritance expectation, insurance policies, and retirement funds, but you need to choose one way or the other."

## Disbelief over anti-Semitism watchdog's SA findings

>> Continued from page 1

put to them in the ADL survey."

He said while he was not dismissive of the report, he believes it needs to be approached with caution.

Countries where anti-Semitic attitudes are relatively low (less than 20% of the population) reported the highest levels of direct anti-Semitic behaviour, whereas it's completely the opposite in countries with high levels of negative attitudes towards Jews. Saks said this was an "interesting paradox".

According to the ADL survey, only 11% of people in the United Kingdom "think bad things" about Jews, whereas one in two South Africans allegedly do so. However, last year, the UK reported more than 30 times the number of anti-Semitic incidents – many of them involving violence – than South Africa, Saks said.

He referred to the Kaplan survey, in which

"more than two out of three black people said they had never met or interacted with a Jewish person (64%)". Along with other findings in the survey, he said this was an indication "how little most blacks know or frankly really care about Jews".

"Some of the findings of the ADL survey are either self-contradictory or, to put it plainly, simply nonsensical," he said.

He cited a number of problems with the survey. In one of the questions, the survey asks whether certain groups are viewed favourably, somewhat favourably, unfavourably, or somewhat unfavourably. According to the answers received, 49% have a favourable view of Jews (up 13% from the ADL's 2014 survey), and only 26% hold unfavourable views. The views of Muslims were virtually identical. However, said Saks, when it came to assessing the results of specific questions relating to typical anti-Jewish tropes (for example, Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind; have too much power in business; the media, etc.) the "unfavourable" proportion suddenly leapt to 47%. "What's actually going on?" he asked.

Sharon Nazarian, the senior vice-president of ADL International Affairs, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the ADL did not label countries as anti-Semitic. "Rather, our Global 100 Index examines attitudes toward Jews," she said.

She said the Global 100 didn't tabulate anti-Semitic violence or incidents, nor did it take into account intense anti-Israel hostility, which, at its most virulent, can be considered anti-Semitic.

"This is important to take into account when considering the data from South Africa, where, to be sure, there are few recorded anti-Semitic incidents documented, and the Jewish community is enviably strong, vibrant, and deeply rooted."

She said the findings could be useful to "examine what anti-Semitic stereotypes are most accepted by the South Africans surveyed, and to consider how those misperceptions could be better addressed through educational and other methods."

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# The ‘invisible violence’ we don’t want to see

NIA MAGOULIANITI-MCGREGOR

‘Social justice goes hand in hand with being Jewish.’  
These were the words of Professor Bonita Meyersfeld as she began the Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue’s 15th Annual Franz Auerbach Interfaith Memorial lecture last Thursday evening.

You could hear a pin drop as Meyersfeld, the director of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, offered three compelling stories to illustrate her topic: “Violence and social justice” at Beit Emanuel in Parktown.

A recent recipient of the Knight of the National Order of Merit of France for her work in gender-based violence and the 2018 Absa Jewish Achiever Women in Leadership Award winner, Meyersfeld gave an account of how the cycle of poverty and violence begets more poverty and violence. She introduced a new concept for many in the audience: invisible violence.

**Story 1: Johannes**

“Like his forefathers, Johannes went to work on the mines in the North West. When he got sick, the mine’s medical doctor determined his breathing problems weren’t caused by his occupation. He was discharged with no compensation, and Johannes went home to the Eastern Cape. There were no savings. Any salary had been sent back home to assist about 15 members of his family. His son, a gardener, saved up enough money for Johannes to travel to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. There, the doctor diagnosed a respiratory illness for which he needed hospital equipment – but it wasn’t working. Two weeks later, Johannes died of a curable disease.”

The moment of violence was not, said Meyersfeld, Johannes’ death. “It was the moment he was conceived. Because for a

## Tiffany Haddish opens up about Jewish identity

EMILY BURACK – JTA

Comedian Tiffany Haddish discussed her Jewish identity and upcoming Batmitzvah in depth in an interview with online publication *Alma*.

Haddish, who has starred in blockbusters such as *Girls Trip* and *The Secret Life of Pets 2*, spent more than a decade working as an “energy producer” (or performer) at Barmitzvahs and Batmitzvahs not knowing that she had Jewish heritage. She didn’t meet her father until she was 27, when he told her that he was an Eritrean Jew, and that she was Jewish.



“I didn’t know anything about Judaism for a long time,” she said in the interview published last Friday. “As I got into that profession as an energy producer, I started learning more and more about the Torah. I could really relate to it. And when I met my father, it resonated with me. I was like, ‘This is what I am.’ I did my 23andMe [DNA genetic analysis], and it said the same thing. I [thought], well, I can’t deny this. I wanna claim it.”

Now Haddish is learning Hebrew and studying for her Batmitzvah. She’ll celebrate with a ceremony in Los Angeles on her 40th birthday, which falls on 3 December, and celebrities like Sarah Silverman, Billy Crystal, and Sinbad will attend.

On the same day, she will release a new Netflix stand-up special, *Black Mitzvah*. Unsurprisingly, *Black Mitzvah* is pretty Jewish. Haddish says she hopes being open about her journey will encourage others to dig into their background.

thousand days after, the nutrition you ingest determines your ability to achieve intellectually and physically later in life. If you’re denied rich nutrition, you are starting the race from further back.”

She said as most people who live in poverty can’t afford school fees, the chances are their education won’t be complete and they’ll have to go into a job in a mining community. Then, the chances are that they will have insufficient money to save for their children’s education. “So the next generation is born with minimal nutrition and education.” That’s the cycle of poverty.

“And that cycle is itself an act of violence – an invisible violence.”

**Story 2: Ferreira**

Meyersfeld relayed the story of Ferreira. “Born into an abusive family, she married young, had children, and left her abusive husband. With no source of income or training, she put her children into foster care believing it was for the best.”

She found a housekeeping job on a farm, said Meyersfeld, for a man called Pat. They began a romantic relationship. Soon, Pat began insulting her, calling her “stupid” and a bad mother. “He stopped paying her.” The beatings started. Bones were broken. Ferreira suffered internal bleeding. He raped her. “When Pat did allow her access to a doctor, she wasn’t allowed to speak. But also, nobody asked.” The police were no better. She was utterly alone.

“Her choices were limited to killing herself or Pat. She hired two men to kill him. “Ferreira received a life sentence. But in appealing that sentence, the Supreme Court of Appeal recognised



Professor Bonita Meyersfeld

that her psychological position at the time was one of self-defence.” While the judges agreed the murder was premeditated, they said that in her mind, the danger was ever imminent. “They reduced the sentence to six years, three of which were suspended.” A dissenting judge disagreed, saying she could have left or sought help. “The point is that one of the highest justices of the country was blind and deaf to the invisible violence that characterised this case.”

Meyersfeld said gender-based violence originates from a notion that women are inferior. It can start, she said, in the most benign, insidious way, even with words like, “Don’t throw like a girl.”

“There’s a belief that inferiority justifies treating a person violently. This is a cycle of violence.”

Meyersfeld believes there is a low-level civil war being conducted against women. “We don’t see it, but the result is an act of overt violence, the type we see in criminal statistics.”

**Story 3: 90 billion chickens**

“Annually, 90 billion chickens are slaughtered in the food industry.” But the really bad part, said Meyersfeld, is how they live. “As soon as an egg is hatched, the chickens are diverted into crammed battery cages. Injected with antibiotics and growth hormones, the artificial development of the chickens means they start to fight so they’re debeaked.” Chickens experience a lifetime of imprisonment. They’re eventually shipped off to brutal slaughter. “This is a horror. A horror eventually wrapped in plastic, and put on our shelves.”

But that’s just one part of the violence. “The mass consumption of meat is one of the leading contributors to

environmental degradation and food insecurity in the world. One third of the farmed land worldwide is used for the production of grain, fed to animals for the production of meat, creating a shortage of food. And food and water shortage are two of the fundamental bases of conflict.

“In all three stories, we can see that which is invisible to us, that we don’t see, or choose not to see, has an impact on the public violence we do see. It’s inextricably linked.”

The only way to respond to this is with structural change. Regarding the meat industry, consumers can opt for veganism, or to “stop buying meat from large-scale retailers to show them consumption can be curtailed. If there’s no profit to be made, things will change.”

We have alternative ways of reconstructing reality. “It’s not simply to cradle our hearts in despair, but to identify a way – even if miniscule – we can stop this violence.”

What about poverty? ‘We can start thinking seriously about how we pay the people who look after our children. They’re doing the more important jobs in the world, looking after the most important people in our lives, and we’re paying indigent salaries. As a community, is that acceptable? Should we not be paying salaries that are commensurate with the value being given?’

“The salary we pay to one person is used by 10. What’s our role in perpetuating that?”

She said there’s a basic step each of us can take regarding gender-based violence. It’s to believe. If a person comes to you and says, “I’ve been hurt,” believe them. Don’t say, “but your husband’s such a great guy”. Or “what were you wearing?”

“Violence against women is moored in gender-based discrimination. That’s the seed from which violence grows.”

But Meyersfeld is cautiously optimistic. ‘We’re not going backwards. In fact, the reason we know so much today is because we’re going forward. We’re hearing more. The veil is falling.’

While violence is as old as history itself, “we can change how we respond to it. Do we allow it to be invisible or not? Do we worry ourselves only about the violence perpetrated in public? Or equally about the violence in private?” She urged us to remain “aspirational, hopeful, and committed”.

“Let’s move away from this violence. We can do it moment by moment.”

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# For children of Nazis, trauma is intergenerational

MIRAH LANGER

What does it mean to be born into a family of evil? Descendants of some of the most brutal and infamous Nazi officers have to extricate a sense of personal identity from this legacy. Psychiatrist Dr Michael Robertson explained that the process of doing this is psychologically one of “intellectual and emotional gymnastics”, from which a number of divergent coping strategies emerge. Robertson, a clinical associate professor of mental health ethics at the University of Sydney and a visiting professorial fellow at the Sydney Jewish Museum, was speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Forest Town this week. He discussed various aspects of intergenerational trauma in a panel discussion following the screening of the documentary, *Hitler’s Children*, directed by Israeli filmmaker Chanoch Zeevi. The film interviews a number of descendants of high-profile Nazi officers, exploring how they deal with their family history. Among those interviewed are relatives of top Nazi officials including those from the lineage of Rudolf Hess, Hermann Goering, Heinrich Himmler, Amon Goeth, and Hans Frank. These descendants provide intimate details of how they have wrestled with the ghosts of their personal past. For one, it led to a decision to sterilise herself in order to “cut” her bloodline. Another chose to marry an Israeli Jew, but admitted that during arguments, they resorted to stereotyping each other. Many have written books. Some have cut ties with parts of their family, while others confess that they have been unable to shake off the love they felt as children for people whom they later came to learn were monsters. Robertson elaborated on some of the psychological complexities that have emerged from research into the experience of these post-war generations. “Initially, in speaking about the German post-war engagement with the criminality of the Nazi period, there was an inability as a collective to internalise and take ownership of the crimes perpetrated. As such, any process of atonement or mourning was thwarted, and denial became a characteristic in some of the families closely aligned with Nazi rule. Another psychological hurdle that some of the descendants of perpetrators have faced is the sense that their grief doesn’t have the same legitimacy as that of the descendants of survivors, whose suffering is “known and endorsed”. Therefore, for many of the perpetrators’ descendants, there is an “effacing of trauma” through a sense of shame. Another common thread is concern about the inheritability of evil. For some, “at some point, the descendant of the perpetrator fears that he or she is inhabited by an evil ... The other direction of their psychological manoeuvres is that they come to fear their annihilation – that someone will come for them as



Rainer Hess, grandson of Auschwitz death camp commander Rudolf Hess, with a family photograph

belated retribution.” Robertson said even those descendants who wanted to face the past frequently hit a “double wall” that prevented them from truly “engaging with the reality of their parents’ or grandparents’ crimes”. If they are able to break out of the “first layer” of defensive manoeuvres against confronting their loved one’s crimes, a second layer remains. This is “the tissue of lies that the families tell themselves. It comes up in all the narratives: the self-serving rationalisations, distortions of reality, and complete untruths.” He said the cost of the family cover-up is that it denies descendants a sense of reality, and without this, any full processing of the past is curtailed. Therefore, while for some of the descendants a way of coping with their past is to express empathy and identification with the victim, often in very public ways, there is a sense of “implausibility and inauthenticity” to

these acts. “There is a question of pseudo-empathy,” said Robertson, elaborating on this idea later in discussion with the SA Jewish Report. “This is the idea that you act as if you have empathy,” he said, pointing out that many of the descendants who made a concerted effort to expressed their sorrow, did completely believe in the authenticity of their feelings. “It’s almost like a pseudologia fantastica, which is essentially believing your own [self-deception].” “They create this false self – a projection of what they want to be. They haven’t been able to internalise what has gone on [in their family past]. To do so would be to annihilatory to their psyche.” Also involved in the discussion was holocaust centre director Tali Nates. Nates was speaking in her capacity as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor – her father. She was joined by the executive headmaster of St

Martin’s School, Thomas Hagspihl, who offered comment in his capacity as the son of a German father who, as a child, had been a member of the Hitler Youth. Nates said that the struggle of descendants of perpetrators was often painful and uncomfortable to witness. The challenge was to keep asserting a common humanity with these generations born after the war. Hagspihl confessed that he continued to grapple with the ideology expressed by his loved ones. For example, he said his parents would often say that, having been German children during the war, they “had suffered just as much” as the direct victims of the Nazi regime. In trying to delve into his past, Hagspihl said that what had been meaningful for him was being able to have “conversations” with others, like Nate, about these issues. Ultimately, said Robertson, intergenerational trauma, for both sides, remains an ongoing process. “It’s an endless process, and it doesn’t ever end, because your children inherit it, and your grandchildren.”

## Catholics preserving Polish Jewish life for sake of national identity

MIRAH LANGER

The questions about what happened to the Jews began in childhood. Sometimes they were inspired by grandparents; at other times by the empty buildings in the neighbourhood, or a sense of silence in society. Yet for Jakub Nowakowski, Tomasz Kuncewicz, and Joanna Krauze, the need for answers has never had a neat ending. Instead, it has compelled them to carve out careers concerned with the preservation of Jewish history in Poland. As Nowakowski explains of his experience of studying Jewish Studies at university, “At some point, we [he and his fellow Polish students] realised that we were living in this post-Jewish space. All of us had the same experience of finding that a big part of our story was created on the shoulders of some other people who were gone. All of us were looking for the same answers: who were those people? What happened to them?” It was a journey that led to him serving as director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków, a role he has fulfilled since 2010. For Kuncewicz, the director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center for nearly two decades, his career was inspired by a similar realisation; as was the case with Krauze. She runs a tour company focusing on the Jewish heritage in what was Eastern Poland before 1939, as well as working with charitable associations preserving Jewish memory, particularly in the Lublin region of Poland where she is based. Yet, while all three aren’t Jewish, they don’t see the work they have chosen as an effort enacted on behalf of “the other”.

Rather, as Kuncewicz puts it, “These are my people; these were citizens of Poland; they were Jewish and Polish at the same time. Jews have lived in Poland for almost a thousand years. It’s obvious that they were part of my country and part of my identity.” Krauze reiterates this point. “Because I’m Polish and not Jewish, a lot of people would tell me this isn’t my story. I believe it is my story because I’m Polish. For the sake of national identity, it’s very important to talk about this story, to commemorate the Holocaust, but also to talk about what happened before the war, that there was this whole Jewish Polish life.” It was a centuries-old life, of which Nowakowski started noticing the traces as he grew up Catholic in Kazimierz, historically the Jewish district of

Kraków. “For the larger part of my childhood, I had no idea of the Jewish past. It wasn’t something we would discuss. It wasn’t something to be proud or ashamed of, it just wasn’t a part of the landscape. Even though the tangible objects of that past, such as synagogues, were still there, they sat in darkness.” A school project about the neighbourhood led Nowakowski to discover a Jewish cemetery that lay behind a wall he had passed by every day. “I started to ask questions, and discovered that I was actually living in a kind of Atlantis, a land of ruins.” For Nowakowski, like the other three, what their grandparents did and didn’t speak of or know, also sparked his interest. He came to understand through his grandparents that the contact in his district between Jews and non-Jews took the form of “living next to them, but not with them”. As such, the portrait that emerged

was the stronger personality, and it was she who had an impact on me and developed my interest.” Krauze’s paternal grandfather had been a prisoner in Majdanek owing to his involvement in the Polish underground army, and wouldn’t speak of it. His silence became deafening. She also became intrigued about the snippets he would reveal about his pre-war life, and his connection to Jewish people. “In the town that I grew up in there were no Jews. It made me interested in what exactly he was talking about.” For all three, the work they do is a gratifying culmination of these early experiences, and which aims not just to preserve the past, but create a new way of living in the present. “We want to reach the point where people will take on their own shoulders the role of guardians. Not for me, not for you, not for the chief rabbi of Warsaw, but because they understand that this is their story most of all,” says Nowakowski.



Jakub Nowakowski



Tomasz Kuncewicz



Joanna Krauze

remained flattened to a “Fiddler-on-the-Roof kind of Jew”. Over time, “trying to put together the pieces of the puzzle” of who this defining Polish community had been became increasingly important to Nowakowski. Meanwhile, Kuncewicz also found himself challenged by the disparate portraits of Jewish life that his maternal and paternal grandmothers presented him. “One was full of stories of life before the war, of Jewish neighbours, Jewish friends – she was very nostalgic about this time and this multicultural world that doesn’t exist anymore. Then I had another who didn’t have such an enthusiastic memory of this time. She was a bit anti-Semitic, which at that time was the norm. Yet the other one

He says this task has greater political resonance with the current right-wing government in Poland. “The government is trying to portray the Jews as a stranger and an enemy.” The museum, therefore, is “critical of the things that are happening, as we see the danger and the problems that became more and more visible in Poland”. Along with preserving the Jewish history of the town of Oświęcim – the site which would later be taken over by the Nazis in order to erect the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps – the Auschwitz Jewish Center focuses on diversity and anti-discrimination education. For Kuncewicz , these two pillars remain crucial in ensuring that the Holocaust doesn’t simply remain about a “distant past”.



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# Dagga revolution may be budding opportunity for Africa

MICHALYA SCHONWALD MOSS

In 2013, at the age of seven, Rylie Maedler was diagnosed with aggressive bone tumours that disintegrated her facial bones. This American child’s face began to swell, and all her teeth fell out. Maedler shared her story on the CannaTech stage this past week in Cape Town. “I thought, ‘Yay! I’m going to be rich with tooth fairy money’, but I could tell my mom wasn’t excited for me. She looked scared, and she got even more scared when my face started looking different.” With the help of cannabis-derived cannabidiol, the non-psychoactive compound found in the cannabis plant, all of her bones regenerated.

Today, Maedler is the youngest chief executive in the global cannabis space, heading up a research and development company, Rylie’s Sunshine, dedicated to creating safe and affordable cannabis oils for kids living with debilitating illness. Maedler had audiences at CannaTech in tears. She wasn’t the only one with a story of how medical cannabis saved her life. Capetonian Frank Rosen, the founder of Cannabliss CBD oils and sugar-free edibles, shared how he cured himself of bladder cancer with CBD oil after years of mainstream interventions failed.

For Max Haamukale, a Zambian who recently acquired a medical-cannabis growing license and land to cultivate cannabis, participating in the CannaTech summit validated his new venture into the cannabis market. Haamukale believes cannabis cultivation is a win-win for Zambia, generating financial and social returns.

“When my uncle was dying of cancer, he was in so much pain. Someone suggested CBD oil when morphine didn’t work, and my uncle was able to live out his last days pain-free.” In addition to the medicinal benefits of cannabis, the summit also explored the economic and social potential of medical cannabis in Africa.

In his opening remarks, South African-born Saul Kaye, the chief executive and founder of iCAN and CannaTech, shared the “why” of CannaTech with the audience. “Some of you are here for the medicine, some of you are here for the plant, some of you are here for the investment. We are here for the massive opportunity for change. Change for good, change for karma, change on a global scale.”

CannaTech, a global gathering of key stakeholders and innovators in the medical cannabis ecosystem, drew more than 500 participants to Cape Town. Senior industry leaders, government officials, medical and scientific experts, and new ventures from Israel, the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia engaged with their African contemporaries from



South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. Rastafarians mingled with corporates and kippah-wearing Orthodox Jews from Israel and South Africa. The coffee baristas were inundated with orders for almond-milk lattes. Goodleaf’s cannabis-infused sparkling water and ice-cold Durban poison beer were in abundant supply. Attendees also received a CannaTech branded hemp kippah.

“Million-dollar deals are being made right now,” Eli Beda, the sales director for CannaTech said pointing to a table in the main exhibition hall where a South African distribution company was vying to represent iBOT. The latter is an Israel-based multidisciplinary botanical nutritional supplement company specialising in formulations with cannabis, botanical, and fungal synergies.

According to a recent report by Prohibition Partners (a provider of independent international data on the cannabis market, intelligence, and strategy), the cannabis market in Africa is estimated to be worth R104 billion.

Warren Schewitz, the chief executive of Cape Town-based Southern Sun Pharma, believes that South Africa could expect to generate \$2.5 billion (R36.7 billion) and create social upliftment on a national scale.

While Africa has been identified as a high-potential emerging market with the possibility of becoming the main source of bulk medicinal cannabis and cannabis-derived products, it’s still early days for the cannabis industry here.

South Africa is leading the continent’s entry into the market along with Lesotho and Zimbabwe. Other African countries including Swaziland and Malawi are examining the legalisation of cannabis cultivation for medical or industrial applications. But, although South Africa is leading the continent’s entry into the market, there are still no legal regulations in place that will enable the cannabis market to

develop. With inexpensive land, an experienced labour force, and a climate conducive to cannabis cultivation, cannabis may be able to contribute to a continent-wide economic uptick via job creation. But this budding industry faces

challenges, such as maintaining consistent, sustainable product quality, overcoming regulatory uncertainty, and promoting sustainability and social equity. However, for CannaTech participants, the benefits of engaging with the industry in

Africa outweigh the risks. As enthusiastic as Schewitz is about kickstarting a green revolution in South Africa, he also recognises that the cultural narrative regarding dagga needs to change for the cannabis ecosystem to thrive. The Afristar Foundation and the Cannabis Industry Development Cooperative of the Western Cape are working to create a new narrative around dagga, turning it from the “devil’s weed” to the “people’s plant”. They are promoting cannabis as “a versatile, useful wonder crop that produces superfoods, fuel, fibre, and medicine with enormous potential to uplift communities across Africa, create jobs, entrepreneurs, and massive economic opportunities”. “What usually happens after CannaTech is that conversations around the medical cannabis market make it to government level,” says Beda. “For example, a week after CannaTech in Panama, the government met to discuss legislation and strategy around cannabis.”

## Cancer activist calls for help

JORDAN MOSHE

The last thing any cancer survivor wants to hear is that their cancer has returned. Tragically, this is the reality for cancer-awareness campaigner Addi Lang, who five years ago was diagnosed with breast cancer. Although she underwent extensive treatment, she learned last month that her cancer is back, and with it a renewed sense of devastation.

With neither medical aid nor funding, she is turning to the Jewish community to help her get to Israel for alternative treatment to address her cancer, which has spread to her lymph and bones.

“We have done much for people going through cancer with the support of this amazing Jewish community,” she says. “Now we are asking for their help once again. I desperately need this community to help me through this crisis.”

Lang, the founder of the Forever Changed global awareness campaign, was diagnosed with late stage breast cancer in 2014, undergoing reconstructive implant surgery as part of her treatment. Her ordeal inspired her to empower others who suffer from cancer by helping them to understand their treatment options, and teaching those around them how best to support their friends.

Two months ago, however, it turned out that she was once again the one in need of support. “Over the past two years, I stopped going for tests because the last ones weren’t clear,” she says. “I thought my implants were causing the problem.”

Lang investigated further, and when the removal of the implants didn’t make any difference, she underwent an MRI and learned the worst – three spreading tumours, affected lymph nodes, and the presence of cancer in her blood. “I discovered it’s a recurrent cancer. In spite of all the procedures I’ve had, it’s back.

“It came out of thin air,” she says. “I never thought that it was even possible to have a recurrent cancer after a mastectomy and chemotherapy. The trauma is devastating, more than it was when I was first diagnosed. My mind is undergoing a terrible psychological battle.”

Lang is receiving

Addi Lang

alternative treatment at the Golding Institute in Houghton. However, if she can raise the necessary funds, she will travel to Israel to receive cryoablation therapy, a process that uses extreme cold to destroy cancerous tissue. This treatment is not offered in South Africa.

“The treatment is a holistic alternative to chemo,” says Lang. “For anyone who knows chemo, the thought of going through it again is terrifying. My life partner, David Salomon, has done much research into the cryoablation treatment, and we have consulted oncologists around the world. The Israeli technology offers great potential.”

Lang says that contrary to popular belief, alternative treatments are not quackery. “What comes to mind for most people is a homeopathic garlic remedy,” she says. “Alternative medicine is scientific, researched, and approaches the issues from a different angle. Cannabis is just one of these, and there are so many more.

“I understand that a conventional medical team’s contribution is essential,” she says. “I’ve been offered surgery and chemo, not from a survival point of view but only to manage the problem as best as possible. People think that cancer surgery and chemo are the beginning and end of cancer treatment, but it doesn’t work that way.”

The treatment Lang hopes to undergo is offered at Tel Aviv’s New Hope Medical Center, where expert oncologist Dr Joseph Brenner has been treating cancer patients for more than a decade using an integrative approach, combining immune boosting therapies and the hypothermic treatment. “Dr Brenner offers a combined conventional and complementary treatment,” says Lang. “It would be fantastic to get to Israel.”

As part of her fundraising campaign, Lang has planned a high tea on 15 December, and is appealing to the community for assistance. “I’m asking people to help in any way they can, either by donating directly, contributing raffle prizes, or attending the tea.

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# The ‘unsung heroes’ at camp

TALI FEINBERG

When you send your child to a Jewish youth camp, you expect that they will be looked after by experienced *madrichim* (camp counsellors). However, there’s a whole other team – often the unsung heroes – who keep things running smoothly and who care for *channichim* (campers) and *madrichim* alike.

These professionals give up weeks of their December holidays to be on the campsites as medics, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and secretaries. Most of these roles are voluntary, so why do they do it?

“My motivation is mainly my love for Habonim. I have a history there both as a *channie* and a *maddie*. I love the campsite, vibe, and memories, and I wanted to give back for what I got at Habonim,” says Dr Anthony Ger, an anaesthetist from Johannesburg. This is his second year as one of the main doctors at Habonim *machaneh* (camp), and he has helped out as a junior doctor in years past.

He says it’s also an amazing experience for his children, now aged six and four. “The open spaces, community spirit – it’s incredible. They run around at night with their torches and do activities with the youngest age group. They have their tags for the tuckshop, and really feel part of it. The freedom is fantastic. There is also a bit of a hidden agenda to prime them from an early age [to want to go to camp],” he quips.

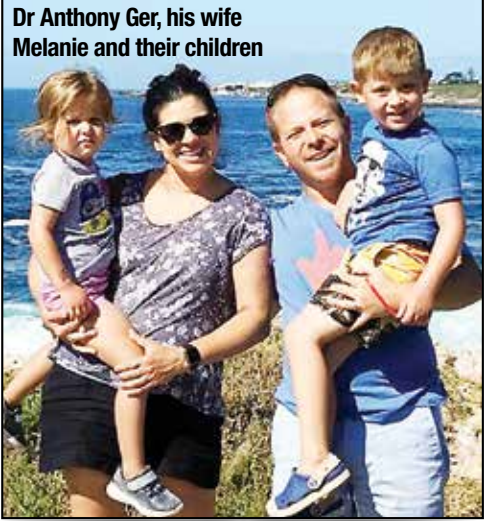
“There are two doctors at a time on site, so we share the load. Most doctors go for about 10 days, so there can be about four or five doctors over the three weeks,” he says.

A typical day for a camp doctor at Habonim includes three shifts when the clinic is open, usually after meals. There is always someone on call for emergencies. Ger says he is working to change the “Strepsils mentality”, when kids think that no matter what’s wrong, the camp doctor will just give them a Strepsils (lozenge) and send them on their way. “Our *channies* deserve more. Thorough medical care makes for a happier campsite,” he says.

Avi Joseph will be attending his fifth camp as a medic at Bnei Akiva. “I attended seven camps as a *channich*. They were by far my best holidays. Attending camp as a medic is a way

for me to thank an organisation which nurtured and shaped me during my youth,” he says.

A typical day involves all medics



Dr Anthony Ger, his wife Melanie and their children

attending two daily clinics, one after breakfast and one after supper. The clinics generally run for about two hours, but it depends on the number of kids who need to be seen.

“Each medic has a number of days that they are on call, which means that



Avi and Avril Joseph and their family

they need to be on site and available for the *channichim*. There is an acute understanding that each *channich* requires attention, whether they are sick, have injured themselves in some way, or are just homesick. Each *channich* receives the appropriate attention and is validated,” he says.

“Days at camp can be long and demanding, so in order to stay fresh and focused, we do make sure that we get off the campsite when not on call to get some breathing space,” says Joseph. “We get to spend our holiday with other medics and doctors who are willing to sacrifice their holidays to give back and look after *channichim*. All

these individuals are amazing people with one common goal. Overall it’s an experience I look forward to every year!”

Sharon Rosen will be at Habonim camp for the fourth time as therapist and social worker. “It’s the most fantastic thing, and really nice that my son and I both get to go. It’s a working holiday, and is such a great environment,” she says. “Camp runs phenomenally well, and seeing kids run it for kids – that’s incredibly meaningful. We are the ‘service provider’ adults helping our kids have those experiences.”

She says it’s also wonderful on a social level. There is great camaraderie among the support staff, and they have opportunities to go to Hermanus or to the beach.

However, her priority is to support the *channichim* and *madrichim*.

“We work hard. Every day is different. I work on a casual, informal basis. Anyone can approach me anytime, and they have my phone number if I’m offsite. We deal with

homesickness and other big issues like problems amongst a group of kids sharing a tent. Sometimes I will tell a child to come back for another session. I also offer a lot of support to the *maddies*. Sometimes they come to me in the middle of the night if there’s a child in crisis.”

Dr Caroline Serebro will be going to Habonim as a camp psychiatrist for the third time. She finds that often when there are issues at home, they “come to light” at camp, with children being in a new environment or because it is a “space” for kids to talk.

“I work closely with parents, but my main role is to deal with crises, not to offer ongoing therapy,” she says. The job can be difficult, like trying to decide if a child with mental-health issues should “stick it out” if camp is positive for them, or if they should rather be at home. Homesickness is a big issue, and is taken seriously.

It’s rewarding to volunteer as support staff, says Serebro. “The camaraderie is amazing, the ethos is admirable, and there are wonderful aspects to enjoy, making it a meaningful holiday experience. “It’s a privilege to be part of it.”



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# Stains that can't be removed

Legacy is important to anyone. What will you be remembered for? Too many heroes of the struggle against apartheid who gave their all for it and were admired, became corrupt and immoral when the struggle was over. Former President Jacob Zuma, who was head of intelligence of the African National Congress (ANC), went on to become the epitome of corrupt government, leading to the country being robbed of billions of rands. The shine he and his ilk had during Nelson Mandela's days is long gone.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has yet to come to trial after being indicted last week. Politically, his opponents will dance for joy at the fact that his legacy will forever be "Israeli prime minister indicted for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust". This is a tragedy, since he and his family contributed hugely to Israel at its founding and after. He personally contributed from his younger days, serving in an elite army unit, providing a sense of security to the country amidst its multiple enemies, and being its highly articulate spokesperson on the international stage. To this day, thousands of Israelis still believe in him totally, and call him the king of Israel.

History is a harsh judge. It casts an exacting light on powerful people who have become addicted to power, which leads them to believe they can do anything without accountability.

A student of history who logs on to Wikipedia 50 years from now for information on Netanyahu, will probably find him described as the longest serving Israeli prime minister. A sentence or two later, he will be deemed the first Israeli prime minister indicted for serious misdemeanours while in office. Whatever the outcome of the legal proceedings, which will dominate Israeli politics for years to come, he cannot remove this stain from his record.

Numerous powerful people and historical figures discovered to have done something abhorrent will be remembered by history only for that act, not their

## TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



greater deeds. When the former president of Israel, Moshe Katsav's, name is mentioned, it's not his term as president that comes to mind, but his abuse of women, and the fact that he was sent to jail.

Sidney Frankel, a billionaire stockbroker in South Africa, supported homes for underprivileged orphans for many years, gave money to worthy causes, and was universally respected and admired. That was until he was found to have been sexually molesting these same orphans, among others.

Now, whenever this man's name crops up, all you can think of is these sexual crimes against vulnerable children. Think of former South African Police Chief Jackie Selebi, who went down in history as the beneficiary of drug trafficking. Think of respected South African artist Zwelethu Mthethwa, who murdered a prostitute in 2013, and will be remembered for that alone. What do you remember about famous athlete Oscar Pistorius?

Legacies can move in the other direction too. The famed German, Oskar Schindler, who saved 1 200 Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazis, was previously himself a card-carrying member of the Nazi party. Today, his legacy is one of a selfless, courageous man. There are still Jews today who can trace their family to the people he saved.

Sadly, Netanyahu seems to have travelled a well-trodden path from the heights of glory to an ignominious end without ever being willing to let go. His legacy will not be his courage in battle, or his diplomatic talents, but his wheeling, dealing, and corruption. Had he let go earlier, it might have been different.

# Merry Christmas and happy Boney M

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



One of my favourite anecdotes was recounted to me by an American friend who lives in Israel. She was talking about her ultra-Orthodox grandmother who had lived in New York most of her life. As her "ommi" aged, she began to struggle with the weather, particularly the winter which resulted in her being apartment bound. As a solution, the family convinced her to retire, along with many of her friends, to Miami, Florida.

To begin with, ommi enjoyed the experience. But the honeymoon soon ended, and by the end of the year, she began to complain. Profusely. Nothing was right, and so my friend, in desperation said to her, "Ommi, tell me your biggest issue. Don't tell me all of them. Give me your one biggest complaint."

Ommi thought about it for a while, and then, when she had the answer, looked at her, adjusted her acrylic *sheitel* (wig) and said, "X-mas [pronounce X mass]! X-mas is so goyish in Florida!"

This week marks exactly a month until 25 December. This means that decorations will go up and Boney M will be played repeatedly over the sound systems of shopping malls throughout the country. I'm writing this piece at Starbucks with the sound of *Jingle Bells* in the background, having been served my flat-white by a barista in a red Santa Claus hat.

And I love it. Because Jewish or not, when we live in the diaspora, the ebbs and the flows of those around us have an impact on us. And whether we like it or not, that becomes part of our history, experience, and narrative.

Another favourite story was a family holiday to Muizenberg when I was five years old. My friend Carole, also five, and I were watching the kids show they put on each day at the back of the beach. That day was a talent competition. The entertainer asked the kids if they wanted to come up and sing a Christmas Carol. Carole, hearing her name, assumed they were calling her, and so she went up on stage to sing as loud and proud as she could. She belted out *David Melech Yisrael* at the top of her voice, to the confusion of just about everyone. She was so

great, neither of us had any idea why she didn't win.

Over the past few years, Christmas has come under fire. "Merry Christmas" has been replaced by "Happy Holidays" as we tiptoe around the fact that someone might be offended by the exclusion. Last year, I penned a column for *News24* suggesting that it was time Christians took back the festival and celebrated it with pride, and that Christians, in this instance, focus on the celebration of their religion, and not worry about offending the rest of us.

This year, I would like to take that one step further. The Jewish community has come to rely on our friends in the Christian community, and has enormous expectations of support. Many Christians openly – and against popular opinion – support Israel. Many stand up vocally against anti-Semitism – to their detriment. This year I would like us to be aware that this is a season of celebration of a faith, that although not ours, is meaningful and special to our friends.

By no means do I suggest that we embrace the customs of that faith, as many in the United States have done. I abhor the idea of Chanukah trees, and the idea that we have to give our children Chanukah presents in case they feel left out. We give gifts because that's what we've always done.

Let's celebrate that which is ours, and let's allow those celebrating Christmas to do the same. Let's celebrate without trying to appropriate parts of it, and without creating a mess that we will never be able to get out of.

More than that, I believe that we should embrace the fact that we live in a country that celebrates diversity and freedom of religious practice. Whether we choose to or not, our experience becomes part of our history, and we will always know exactly what time of the year it is just by hearing Boney M. That, along with our Christian friends, along with Ommi – who is back in New York – and along with Carole, who still sings *David Melech Yisrael* at the top of her voice, is worth celebrating.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## End of the line for UCT Israel boycott

The door was finally closed last week on long-running efforts by anti-Israel pressure groups to get the University of Cape Town to impose a boycott on its Israeli counterparts. In March this year, the UCT senate went so far as to pass a resolution to boycott Israeli universities deemed to be "enabling" rights violations. However, the UCT council determined that a more consultative process along with an assessment of the impact of the resolution on the institution's sustainability was needed, and referred the matter back to senate. At its meeting on Friday, the senate again considered the boycott question, and this time resoundingly rejected it, with more than two-thirds of members voting to rescind the March resolution.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), in collaboration with the South African Zionist Federation, South African Union of Jewish Students, and other stakeholders, devoted a considerable amount of time and resources to opposing this pernicious campaign, one that cynically sought to hijack a reputable institution of higher learning and use it as a political weapon against the Jewish state. Had it succeeded, it would not only have strengthened the hand of anti-Israel boycott movements the world over, but would also have caused considerable and lasting damage to UCT itself.

In our media statement, we commended UCT on the firm stance it has taken against politically-motivated academic boycotts of this nature. We further condemned the three-year obsession by certain UCT academics to pursue their own narrowly-focused political agenda, in the process



## ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



undermining the objective interests and reputation of UCT itself, and taking the university's focus away from key issues of concern to UCT and our country. Thankfully, this pointless and damaging episode in UCT's history has now finally been brought to a conclusion. We hope that the focus there will turn once more to further building and strengthening this outstanding South African tertiary institution.

## SAJBD hosts US Ambassador (designate) Lana Marks

On Tuesday, the board hosted newly-arrived US ambassador Lana Marks for a lunch at Beyachad to introduce her to the leadership of our key communal organisations. At an initial meeting with the SAJBD's leadership we had an opportunity to engage with her on key issues within the community. It's special having an American ambassador who is Jewish and was born and grew up in South Africa. Ambassador Marks was warm and engaging throughout, displaying a knowledge of and feeling for our country and its Jewish community that was most encouraging. We were all also heartened by her positive outlook on the US-South Africa relationship going forward, and look forward to many more fruitful interactions with her.

- Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.

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

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# KDVP Hub opens doors to 21st century learning

More than 150 teachers, parents, and alumni of King David Victory Park Primary attended the official opening on 21 November of “The Hub”, the school’s upgraded media centre.



The Hub

The story behind the creation of this space of 21st century learning goes back to November 1982, when Barney Myers unveiled a beautiful media centre that became a place for many pupils to read, network, and learn in the 1980s and 1990s. As time went on, books became outdated, technology advanced in leaps and bounds, social media and the internet became the quickest information source, and collaborative learning and globalisation became the norm.

The vision of the new centre was for a

beautiful, modern place for primary school children to learn, collaborate, create, innovate, and most importantly, help equip them for the 21st century.

The project was complex with audacious financial and logistical requirements. However, with strong leadership and an ongoing passion for the end goal, the money was raised and a team of professionals rallied with the Parent-Teacher Association to commence building at the start of 2019.

The upgrade wasn’t just an extreme makeover of an old building, it required more light, a new roof, extra space for a high-tech auditorium, in addition to appropriate furniture and technology to make it a functional and relevant innovation centre.

Funds were raised over three years from current parents and generous “past Parkers” who wanted to pay it forward to the next generation. Almost 11 months later, the amazing transformation was complete.

Next year, The Hub will be integrated into the school timetable to allow pupils to collaborate and research when doing projects, hold video conferences of speakers from another country in the new 70-seater auditorium, or to use the “Maker” space to tinker with robotics, 3D printing, wood, arts, sewing, and more.

Friday (29 November)

- Jewish Women’s Benevolent Society Pop-up Bookstore Black Friday special. Time: 10:00 to 14:00. Venue: On the kosher strip (old Moo-z), George Avenue, Sandringham. All books cost R5. Call: 011 485 5232 for more information.

Saturday (30 November)

- The Gauteng Progressive Jewish Congregation is proud to present *shacharit together*, an informal Shabbat service and picnic on the lawn. Bring a picnic basket and something to sit on. Netzer will be running activities for children. Time: 09:30 to 11:30. Venue: Johannesburg Botanical Garden, next to Tranquility restaurant. Contact: 011 783 7117.

Sunday (1 December)

- Second Innings year-end function hosts professional singer Jana Lucia Nel. Time: 09:30 for tea, 10:30 for entertainment. Venue: The Gerald Horwitz Lounge, second floor, Golden Acres, Chev complex, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R80 for members, R100 for visitors. Contact: Betty Kowal or Fanny Bauman to book, or phone 082 561 3228.
- Jaffa Morning Market. Deli, tombola, bric-à-brac, jewellery, lunch, children’s treasure hunt, and raffles. Time: 09:00 to 12:30. Venue: 42 Mackie Street, Baileys Muckleneuk. Contact: 012 346 2006.

Monday (2 December)

- The Union of Jewish Women (UJW) hosts Professor David Bilchitz, department of public law, University of Johannesburg, on *Free speech is a necessity in a democracy – when does free speech become hate speech?* Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW office 011 648 1053.
- Chabad Seniors Club hosts occupational therapist Cynthia

WHAT’S ON

Wednesday (4 December)

- Sandton Central Shul hosts Jewish Learning Institute Tanya course: *Living joyfully; finding happiness & fulfilment*. Time: 19:15. Venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton (opposite Gautrain) Info: 011 440 6600, [www.jli.org.za](mailto:www.jli.org.za), or [jli@chabad.org.za](mailto:jli@chabad.org.za)
- Bet David hosts Rabbi Lea Mühlstein, the international chair of Arzenu (the umbrella organisation of reform and progressive religious Zionists). Rabbi Mühlstein will facilitate an open dialogue on progressive Jewish Zionism. Time: 18:30 for 19:00. Venue: Middleton Hall, Bet David, 3 Middle Road, Morningside. Contact: 011 783 7117.

Thursday (5 December)

- Hebrew speakers meet at 10:00 at Beyachad building, 2 Elray Street, Raedene.
- Learn Yiddish every Thursday with Tamar Olswang and the UJW. Time: 10:00 to 11:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Cost: R100 per person, R80 for pensioners and UJW members. Includes tea/coffee and refreshments. Contact: 011 648 1053.

Friday (6 December)

- Sandton Central Shul hosts Friday Night Live. Time: 18:00. Venue: Sandton Central Shul, 8 Stella Street, Sandton (opposite Gautrain). Info: 079 434 1293, [www.jli.org.za](http://www.jli.org.za), or [rak@chabad.org.za](mailto:rak@chabad.org.za)

# Entrepreneurs shine at ORT Jet awards

“I’m proud of my business, and I appreciate ORT Jet’s involvement in taking it from dream to reality,” said Orit Taback from Orit’s Bakery. Taback received the ORT Jet Business of the Year Award at ORT’s annual awards ceremony for 2019.

Her sentiments were echoed by marketing strategist Mike Said, the winner of ORT Jet Mentor of the Year, who said, “It is amazing to watch the mentees become more comfortable with what they are doing, and turn that into actual results.”

“Mentoring can be very rewarding,” said Ellis Falkof, the chairperson of ORT SA at the dazzling event, after another year of proud accomplishments.

“The work the mentors do is remarkable. I salute the entrepreneurs who take support and advice from the mentors, because ultimately they are the real heroes,” said Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein. He congratulated Chief Executive Ariellah Rosenberg on her leadership and expertise.

Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan told the audience, “I’m happy to see that what ORT Jet is doing on a small scale is exactly what Israel is doing as a country – understanding the need to support entrepreneurs.”

Professor Nick Binedell from the Gordon Institute of Business Science concluded, “I admire the work



Orit Taback

that ORT Jet does, and the possibilities it creates for people – if each one taught one...”

ORT Jet congratulates all the nominees and winners, and thanks the sponsors for their generosity and expertise.

# Torah Academy stepping stones for the future



Pre-grade graduates at Torah Academy Nursery School paint pebbles for the school’s sensory garden with teacher Chana Rivka Lewin. The project was initiated by Reggio Emilia co-ordinator and social worker Dalya Erster and Torah Academy Nursery School Principal Leah Lipskar as a marker for future pupils in all the school grades. The Reggio Emilia approach is to view pupils as curious individuals with the potential to learn and make a difference to the world around them.

Daphne Kuhn presents the return season of

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## Letters

### SHABBOS PROJECT STILL AN INSPIRATION TO MANY

South Africa was the first country to spearhead the Shabbos Project. Since then, it has spread to more than 100 countries and hundreds of cities across the globe. Indeed, it’s a remarkable phenomenon!

Some people believe the Shabbos Project has lost its novelty. I can sympathise with that. Being on the committee of a longstanding shul, it’s challenging to come up with programmes, speakers, and so on, every year for the Shabbos Project, particularly since it’s so soon after the Jewish High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, culminating in a *leibedik* (festive) Simchat Torah. It seems like a new Yom Tov has been invented on the heels of so many others.

But when I read the stories about the lives the Shabbos Project has touched in so many parts of the world where Jews are not connected to their Judaism, it astounds me! To read about a Jewish woman, married

to a non-Jewish man in Arizona, who are keeping Shabbos, and he is on a conversion programme, is truly touching. That’s exactly what the Shabbos Project is about.

For centuries, we Jews have had (and continue to have) a plethora of Jewish holidays throughout the year. Nearly every month we’ve got a Yom Tov, Purim, Chanukah, fast, or some other commemoration. We are rich in history, tradition, and symbolism. Yet, so many unaffiliated or unobservant Jews don’t observe Jewish festivals and commemorative days. They don’t keep Shabbos or go to shul regularly. Many of them drive to shul on Yom Kippur. And yet, they keep Shabbos on the Shabbos Project!

We may not realise it, but the Shabbos Project continues to touch and inspire Jews all around the globe. Therefore, it must go on.

– Michele Engelberg, Johannesburg



**LUKE ALFRED**

Setting off the following morning, he was back in Cape Town in time for

Elkin has been the top scorer in club cricket in Cape Town for the past three seasons, yet he's been unable to nail down a regular spot in the Western Province semi-professional side. The excuses are

Despite clinging to his dream, Elkin also knows that time is running out. He's prepared well for life without cricket, having read a degree in social policy at Cardiff University. Currently he's studying psychology online through the



What he really needs now, you feel, is a little luck, a series of happy co-incidences or the trust of someone influential who believes

Elkin, who has been grinding in the trenches for so long, deserves his slice more than most.

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