



■ Volume 24 – Number 40 ■ 6 November 2020 ■ 19 Cheshvan 5781

south african Jewish Report

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Europe terror raises concern of attacks in SA

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa may be physically far from the recent terrorist attacks that took place in France and Austria, but we still have to be extra vigilant. Terror is now a global phenomenon, says experts, and Jewish communities have to be on their guard.

“What has become clear is that there are no borders or boundaries in the world anymore,” says Jevon Greenblatt, the director of operations at the Community Security Organisation (CSO). “With social media and the speed of information, we can’t turn around and say what happens there doesn’t affect us over here.

“For example, the New Zealand mosque shootings motivated other right-wing radicals to emulate similar attacks.”

The series of attacks in Europe started when a teacher, Samuel Paty, was decapitated in the streets of Paris on 16 October, a few days after he showed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in a lesson about freedom of expression.

On 29 October, three people were killed in an attack – including one woman who was decapitated – at the Notre-Dame church in the southern city of Nice. Later that day, in the southern city of Avignon, police shot dead an armed man after he refused to drop his weapon.

The attack in Vienna began on the evening of 2 November, when a heavily armed man opened fire on people outside restaurants at six locations, all near the street on which Vienna’s central synagogue is located. Four civilians were confirmed dead. Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack 24 hours later.

The resurfacing of the cartoons in France has led to mass protests, calls for a boycott, and tensions among world leaders. After the Vienna attack, French President Emmanuel Macron said among other things, “This is our Europe. Our enemies must know who they are dealing with. We will not give up.” Meanwhile, the United Kingdom raised its terror threat level from ‘substantial’ to ‘severe’, meaning an attack is now judged to be ‘highly likely’, in light of events on France and Austria.

Says Greenblatt, “There have been protests against France in South Africa, as well as talks on the issue and sermons in local mosques, so we can’t say there hasn’t been a physical effect in South Africa. Locals are expressing their anger and displeasure with what’s happening, and that could be seen as a microcosm of sentiments globally.

“It could encourage someone who is radicalised

or unhinged to listen to the call of ISIS to carry out attacks, and to look at French, Western, or Jewish targets in South Africa. These recent events in Europe were ‘very successful’ in that they’ve damaged France’s sense of safety and security, and now Vienna’s as well. The more ‘successful’ an attack, the more ‘inspiring’ it is for other jihadists to emulate. So there is no doubt that copycat attacks are a concern at global level.

“On top of that, we have ISIS in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique. Just recently, ISIS made a statement that what is happening in France, and the normalisation between Israel and Arab states, is an affront to Islam, telling fighters to go out into the world and attack in revenge. ISIS has an agenda, and will use every single opportunity to justify that agenda.”

Jasmine Opperman, a terrorism expert and analyst at the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, echoes Greenblatt’s sentiments.

“South Africa has to end its self-constructed belief that we are different, that we are isolated, that we’ve never had this problem. We cannot say

that anymore. We have ISIS supporters, fanatics on home soil, people feeling insulted [by the cartoons], and right-wingers communicating with international right-wing organisations,” she says.

“South Africa is the ideal setting for fanatics to execute an attack,” Opperman says. “This may be without any guidance or training – as can be seen in the ‘lone-wolf’ attacks in France – but based on personal beliefs. South Africa must pop out of its bubble of believing it’s immune to terrorism.” She says this especially true because of the presence of ISIS in Mozambique, although she doesn’t think that it’s in a position to direct activities in South Africa at this point in time.

Writing for *Sky News*, European correspondent Adam Parsons said after the Vienna attack, “What’s clear is that for the past few weeks, we have talked about a resurgence in terrorism in France. Now that tension has seeped beyond the borders. Few doubt that another attack will happen soon. What we don’t know is where.”

Opperman notes that the French attacks were “lone-wolf attacks that weren’t co-ordinated,

with no reference to belonging to ISIS or al-Qaeda, even though on social media, these organisations celebrated the attacks as a victory for Muslims”.

“This is where the concern lies,” she says, “with developments in Europe, the divide between communities is getting bigger, and the opportunity for fanatics to execute attacks beyond a traditional terrorism framework is at play. The primary concern is that the scope of those willing to make use of violence has opened up, and we cannot ignore that, even in South Africa.” While she emphasises that an imminent terrorist attack on South African soil is highly unlikely, Jewish communities are always a more vulnerable target.

“My concern lies with the France attacks. That is to say, we could have individuals in South Africa, not associated with Al-Qaeda or ISIS, but due to hatred or feeling insulted by the cartoons, deciding to take action against the Jewish community or European embassies or personnel. We need to understand that a classic counter-terrorism approach won’t deal with these fanatics. For most of the time, we won’t even know about them. Hence, South Africa cannot ignore these developments. South Africa has to take note and put action in place.”

Examining the context of the recent attacks, Opperman says, “In Europe, for the past few years, we have seen a divide setting in. In Austria, antisemitism has been in drastic increase. Right-wing extremist groups are active on propaganda channels inciting individuals to take action. And that leaves Europe more vulnerable. In addition, Macron’s response to the Vienna attack creates even more of a divide of ‘either you’re with us or against us’. It could antagonise Muslim communities and create the opportunity for more fanaticism.”

Greenblatt says the CSO isn’t going to raise the threat level in the Jewish community because, “For 26 years, we have put mechanisms in place for basic security for our community. Every day, we are operating at a level where we understand that this can happen at any stage.

“This is just a slightly more sensitive time that could lead to a local reaction or inspire a copycat attack. We can’t say it won’t, and we have no information to say it will. But we always work with facilities and the community to be aware and vigilant.

“Our processes are aligned to what’s happening in the world. The fundamental principles of security are simple, and actions as small as locking a door or gate, proper access control, community protectors on duty at key times, and reporting any concerns to the CSO on 086 18 000 18 can make all the difference in preventing an attack.”

A nail-biting election



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Rabbi Ari Kievman, who was born in the United States, is glued to the screen during this week’s tense elections in his country of birth.

See story on page 4

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Court sends message of zero tolerance for antisemitism

NICOLA MILTZ

In sentencing Matome Letsoalo, a South African magistrate has sent a clear message that antisemitic statements won't be tolerated.

In the Randburg Magistrates Court on 30 October, presiding Magistrate Heidi Barnard sentenced Letsoalo to three years imprisonment, suspended for five years, for a string of threatening and antisemitic tweets that he posted in June 2018.

This was the first-ever criminal verdict in an antisemitism case in South Africa. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) lodged the charge of crimen injuria against Letsoalo, who pleaded guilty. Crimen injuria is a criminal charge defined in South African law as a wilful injury to someone's dignity, caused by the use of obscene or racially offensive language or gestures.

In sentencing Letsoalo last Friday, Barnard said that hateful statements of the kind made by Letsoalo were in violation of the Constitution, and were becoming all too prevalent in South Africa.

She said the courts therefore had a responsibility to deal firmly with such incidents to send a strong message that such behaviour won't be tolerated.

It was for this reason that she had decided to impose the maximum jail term allowed by a district court. However, in view of Letsoalo having entered a guilty plea and expressed remorse for his actions, the sentence would be suspended for five years subject to him not repeating the same offence.

It was also the first time the SAJBD went the criminal route, having in the past resolved issues of hate speech and antisemitism through mediation and education, favouring conciliation over confrontation.

The SAJBD has often turned to the Equality Court or the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).

The definition of what constitutes prohibited hate speech is still being debated because of a pending challenge to the relevant section of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act in the Constitutional Court.

Because of this, the SAJBD felt that going the civil route – such as through the Equality Court or the SAHRC – wouldn't be an effective option, and instead opted to follow criminal proceedings.

In recent months, the SAJBD's representatives have laid several charges of crimen injuria against

alleged crusading antisemites, believing justice will be better served by the appropriate criminal courts.

Two such cases are still pending.

Johannesburg resident Jan Lamprecht, who has said among many hateful things that "there is no good Jew but a dead Jew" is due to appear in the Randburg Magistrates Court later this week after a protection order was laid against him by the SAJBD's Professor Karen Milner.

Milner received threats from Lamprecht and his supporters after she laid a charge of crimen injuria against him.

Earlier this year, the SAJBD laid a criminal charge against Hitler sympathiser, Simone Abigail Kriel of Pretoria, for allegedly posting antisemitic and inflammatory messages on her Instagram page in May.

Kriel, a social-media influencer, is well known in gym and fitness circles. Following this, hateful online messages on her Instagram and Facebook profile have been taken down.

Some high-profile crimen injuria cases have made the news in recent years.

The late former estate agent Penny Sparrow sparked anger in South Africa after she compared black beachgoers to monkeys in a Facebook post after New Years' Eve in 2016. She was found guilty of hate speech in the Equality Court, and later pleaded guilty to crimen injuria, becoming the first South African convicted for racist

slurs.

Former realtor Vicky Momberg was convicted in March 2018 of using racist insults against a black policeman, and was found guilty of crimen injuria and sentenced to two years in jail. She used the "k-word" more than 40 times against police officers and 10111 operators trying to help her after a smash-and-grab incident. She was the first person in South Africa to spend time in jail for crimen injuria. She was sentenced to three years imprisonment, of which one year was suspended for a period of three years on condition that she didn't commit crimen injuria again.

Adam Catzavelos pleaded guilty to crimen injuria in 2019. He admitted to recording a video on a beach in Greece in which he used the "k-word" while celebrating the lack of black people around him.

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn welcomed Letsoalo's sentence, saying that the ruling had established an important precedent for similar cases that the SAJBD had laid and might lay in the future, and heralded tougher consequences for antisemites.

"The maximum sentence is an encouraging demonstration of the seriousness with which the courts are viewing hate speech, in this case antisemitism, and I believe it will be a deterrent to people who feel they are free to engage in such behaviour in our country," she said.



Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
18:10	19:02	Johannesburg
19:02	19:57	Cape Town
18:04	18:58	Durban
18:15	19:15	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:28	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:17	East London

Torah Thought

Take your baggage with you

Spending much of my time with elderly people as I do comes with the perk of learning invaluable life lessons from those with decades of experience.

This week's parsha speaks of our first patriarch and matriarch in their stage of life as pensioners. "Abraham and Sarah were old, coming on in days," the Torah says in Genesis 18:11. Why the redundancy of saying "old" and "coming on in days"?

According to the Zohar, they came with their days, as each day of their life was virtuous.

Yet, how can this be if the earlier years of their life were consumed with idolatry before they acknowledged the monotheistic belief in G-d for which they are now famous?

In spite of being born and raised with pagan beliefs as was common then, their past challenges were actually part of their spiritual journey. Truth-seekers often make mistakes along the way before discovering the light they seek.

Abraham and Sarah came to G-d via other routes, because without it, they couldn't have discovered monotheism. So even their "bad days" were good, for

all of their solecism can be seen as part of the learning process.

Do you ever feel stuck in a cycle of mishap, or embarrassed by past mistakes?

Again and again in conversation with seniors, I find myself asking about their life accomplishments and asking the question: what's the secret to your success?

The array of achievements quoted run the gamut of self-development, relationships, family life, community involvement, career, and so much more. And repeatedly, the secret is to learn every step along the way, via the steps that are clearly oriented toward the goal, and even (sometimes more so) the steps that seem to be a deviation or detour from the projected outcome.

Take your experiences with you. Grow with them, not in spite of them.

Often, the consternation about our shortcomings and poor decisions can be more upsetting than material challenges and hardships. Sometimes, our negative thoughts can leave us feeling defeated.

Let's take a cue from our ancestors. Their journey to recognising G-d was circuitous, laden with personal dilemmas,

and experimentation. Maimonides notes that they explored and wondered until they truly understood.

We may have deficiencies, but remember that failure isn't getting knocked down, failure is staying down. We, too, must reframe our challenges into joy-inspiring opportunities as they "came with their days" – all of their days.

It's never too late to learn. We're never too old to grow and explore. The Torah is a book of eternal truth, and we can tap into its messages and wisdom at every stage along the journey of personal growth.

As thousands of Jews the world over will be making an extra effort to keep Shabbos this week, we can glean an important life-lesson. Perhaps here's another explanation for why, toward the end of Lecha Dodi, we turn around as we welcome Shabbos. We look back at our past week's journey along which we arrived at our present destination.

Don't leave your baggage unattended. Take it with you, and make it serve you.

Rabbi Ari Kievman, director of Chabad Seniors and rabbi of Sandton Central Shul



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Tel: 0860 525 200 • Board of Directors Howard Sackstein (Chairperson), Dina Diamond, Herschel Jawitz, Shaun Matisonn, Benjy Porter.
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COVID-19 leaves destitute choosing between food and fuel

JORDAN MOSHE

“COVID-19 has knocked me right off my feet. I’ve lost my job and my income along with it. R100 has become a lot for me, and I always ask myself: what do I need to spend it on the most?”

‘Without a job, I’m left sitting at home every day with my son. His aggression is getting worse because of the stress, and he sometimes attacks me.’

This is the question 55-year-old Martha Benson* has had to ask herself daily since the onset of COVID-19 in March this year. Confined to a one-room cottage with her 27-year-old son, she no longer holds a job and struggles daily to put food on the table. Were it not for the weekly meal hamper she receives, she wouldn’t know where to go for her next meal.

Benson is one of hundreds of members of our community who have been devastated financially by the effects of the pandemic. While few of us have remained unscathed, too many have lost jobs and are left with no choice but to turn to organisations like Yad Aharon & Michael to help them to feed their families.

Without the food parcels provided weekly, most of these families wouldn’t survive. There has been a substantial increase in the number of applications for food assistance as a result of COVID-19, says the managing director of Yad Aharon & Michael, Alice Friedman. “For Pesach, we had 655 families on our weekly list, plus an additional 20 families who manage

[with difficulty] to put food on their table,” she says. “For Rosh Hashanah, we packed a record 700 double food hampers, and we currently assist 687 families.

“Until the devastation of COVID-19, ‘middle class’ families were never considered eligible for our assistance, but this has had to change.

“Families whose businesses closed and the thousands of retrenched people are suddenly unable to meet basic expenses which are much higher than those of our regular recipients. They find their totally unexpected situation, albeit temporary, extremely hard to deal with and accept,” says Friedman. “The humbling message is that no one is immune.”

There is a large spectrum of people affected, ranging from those

two jobs at one time, I couldn’t always afford to care for my son, and he was taken to a home where he was abused.

“It’s been emotionally devastating and traumatic. I’m now sitting with a grown-up son with emotional issues who is totally reliant on me financially and emotionally.”

Benson’s son didn’t get his matric, and was still trying to complete his studies earlier this year when COVID-19 arrived, an expense his mother was already struggling to afford on limited grant payments and a meagre salary.

“I earned almost R2 500 if I was lucky helping my mother care for an elderly person in a retirement home,” she says. “That stopped suddenly in March, and I found myself with no income at all. I was stunned.

“My first thought was, how will I put my son through school? Will that ever happen?”

Photo supplied by Yad Aharon & Michael



who were financially vulnerable to begin with to those who have experienced a sudden change of circumstance. Benson falls into the former category.

“I’ve had a tough life,” she told the SA Jewish Report last week. “I was raised by a single mother, my ex-husband had an affair, and I’ve been raising my son alone without much support. In spite of working

“Without a job, I’m left sitting at home every day with my son,” she says. “His aggression is getting worse because of the stress, and he sometimes attacks me. Sometimes we have electricity and sometimes we just don’t. I’ve occasionally begged my ex-husband for some help, but it’s so demoralising. COVID-19 has made a difficult situation even worse.”

Simone Jacobs* was doing fine

financially until she lost her job when COVID-19 hit. Now, she and her family of five don’t have enough money to look after themselves.

“I was working in a retail store, and it got scary when COVID-19 was coming and stores started closing for health reasons,” says Jacobs. “When we were told to close the shop under lockdown, I was nervous and didn’t know what would come next.

“I came home, and was loving the first weeks of lockdown – it was like a holiday. Reality set in when my hourly salary was suddenly cut and I had to start drawing from UIF [the Unemployment Insurance Fund]. It was scary.”

Jacobs was retrenched shortly thereafter.

“That was that,” she says. “No thank you or goodbye. It was a shock. My husband runs his own business, and he was forced to close as well. My income used to contribute quite a bit to our home, and though we’d always been okay financially, the sudden lack of a second income made a huge difference.”

Rachel Ellis* has also experienced considerable hardship since the onset of the pandemic when her husband’s business had to close, leaving the couple and their daughter with little support.

“My husband works in diamonds, and before lockdown things were starting to pick up a little,” says Ellis. “People from overseas would come, and he’d make some sales. Lockdown came, closed the airports, and shut him down completely.

“I used to add a little to our income by working for a local kollel. Now there’s nothing at all – no income, no nothing. My husband still goes to work and tries to earn a little something, and my daughter works a bit as well.

“We are relying on other people to help us.”

Like Benson and Jacobs, Ellis survives on a weekly meal hamper that keeps them going.

Says Jacobs, “When friends asked if they could put me on Yad Aharon & Michael’s list, I initially said no because there are people out there who have it much worse.” Little did she realise how it would keep them afloat.

“Now I don’t know where we would be without it.”

Says Benson, “I would have been finished a long time ago if it weren’t for the help. I never thought I’d be in this position.

“When I was first married, I had it all – my own Diners Club card, a credit card, and my husband drove a BMW. Now I’m questioning whether to spend R100 on groceries or petrol.

‘I would have been finished a long time ago if it weren’t for the help. I never thought I’d be in this position.’

“We’ve all taken a knock, but I don’t think everyone really understands the situation. You don’t realise what it’s really like until it happens to you.”

*All names were changed to protect the identity of those quoted.

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SA government unswayed by Israel-Arab peace ties

TALI FEINBERG

The South African government continues to refuse to support Israel and its newly transformed ties with three Arab countries in three months, without resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of those agreements.

When the historic Abraham Accords between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was announced in August, the department of international relations and cooperation, said that it noted the developments with “concern”, describing the deal as “regrettable” on the grounds that the Palestinian people hadn’t been “engaged”.

Now, Naledi Pandor, the minister of international relations and cooperation, has doubled down on this stance by saying that South Africa “reiterates that sustainable peace and stability in the Gulf and the wider Middle East region requires an end to its core peace and security challenge, which is the occupation of Palestine”.

She was speaking on 20 October at a United Nations (UN) Security Council high-level debate on a comprehensive review of the situation in the Gulf region. This was days before the latest agreement was reached between Israel and Sudan.

South African Zionist Federation

National Chairperson Rowan Polovin said, “The normalisation deal between Sudan and Israel could be a game-changer for Sudan and the African continent as it is set to deliver significant investment, agricultural development, and strategic co-operation between Israel, Sudan, North Africa, and the Middle East.”

However, Pandor’s views are unchanged. “The international community, including countries in the Gulf region, should continue to work towards a just and peaceful end to the occupation,” she said.

This, she believes, should be a “viable two-state solution that will guarantee and safeguard the human rights and dignity of all people on both sides of the agreed Green Line”.

Said Polovin, “Instead of warmly welcoming this objectively positive development, South Africa bizarrely takes the side of the Palestinians over the Sudanese people. South Africa has a dubious foreign policy record, including granting immunity to former Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir instead of arresting him on his 2015 trip to the country. Since Al-Bashir’s overthrow in 2019, South Africa hasn’t played any known role in assisting Sudan with economic development, nor helped the country in its transition to democracy.”

Local political analyst Steven Gruzd believes that “the Abraham Accords with the UAE, Bahrain, and Sudan have surprised and wrong-footed South Africa diplomatically”.



Naledi Pandor, the minister of international relations and cooperation

“South Africa was slow to react, and somewhat predictable by trying to re-centre debate on the Palestinian issue. President Donald Trump’s efforts have turned conventional wisdom about the Middle East on its head. Normalisation with these states happened against a stalemate with the Palestinians. Trump’s stance has been that if the Palestinians won’t jump on the train, it will leave without them.”

Hussein Solomon, senior professor of political studies and governance at the

University of the Free State, questioned Pandor’s depiction of the Israeli-Palestinian question as the core security challenge in the region. “I’m sure the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain will hold that Iran constitutes such a challenge,” he says.

He questioned South Africa’s opposition to these peace agreements. “Other countries like Oman, Morocco, Tunisia, and eventually Saudi Arabia will all have agreements with Israel since it’s in their national interest. This is something that senior diplomats will understand. The Palestinians have been ill-served by their leadership, and have alienated the Arab countries supporting them, and now more so by calling their moves ‘treacherous’.”

Meanwhile the permanent representative of South Africa to the UN, ambassador Jerry Matjila, echoed Pandor’s sentiments while speaking at the Security Council video teleconference open debate on the situation in the Middle East on 26 October.

He was critical of Israel’s recent agreements with Arab states, saying, “No peace plan or initiative can have any merit or succeed if all parties to the conflict aren’t included in such talks as

equal partners from the very beginning.

“We had hoped that these events would lead to less suffering of Palestinians ... [but] these agreements appear to coincide with increased illegal settlement activity and destruction of Palestinian agricultural land. While formal annexation may have been suspended, *de facto* annexation continues.”

Matjila referred to Israeli authorities announcing plans earlier in October for the advancement of more than 5 000 new housing units in the West Bank, which he said marked 2020 as “the year for the highest settlement expansion since 2012, with over 12 000 units being advanced”. To Matjila, this settlement activity “contradicts these agreements, and calls into question the benefits of these agreements for peace as they have not eased the occupation”.

He emphasised that South Africa viewed these settlements as illegal, and implied that there were double standards in how the Security Council dealt with them. “Israel continues to violate security council resolutions and international law. Why then, has there been no action to hold Israel accountable?” he asked.

But, according to Gruzd, “The ambassador is hypocritical in referring to ‘double standards’ when dealing with Israel. South Africa is more than happy to single out Israel annually at the UN’s Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva. It’s a standing item at every single UNHRC meeting, yet South Africa opposes ‘country-specific’ criticism of any other country.”

Matjila also said that there had been a number of international conferences that had led to positive steps in the peace process, so “South Africa fully supports the call for an international conference with the participation of all concerned parties for discussions on a genuine peace process, including the resolution of all final status issues.”

“South Africa will continue to work with all like-minded countries to support international efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel within international recognised borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with all relevant UN resolutions, international law, and internationally agreed parameters,” he said.

Solomon said he agreed with Pretoria regarding illegal settlement activity, “however, an international conference won’t resolve anything given the Palestinian divisions and the inability to develop a more nuanced position. More importantly, South Africa doesn’t have the capacity to play the role of some sort of mediator – we cannot even keep the lights on within our country. So, our foreign policy must reflect our strengths.”

Said Gruzd, “South Africa will keep fighting in the Palestinians’ corner and [will continue to] see the normalisation as a betrayal, but it needs to recognise that important players in the Arab world have moved on.”

Polovin said he believed that South Africa “should be at the forefront of assisting African states to improve their human-rights record on the basis of improved economic ties, investment, bilateral relations, and joint projects, but instead it uses its foreign policy airtime to obsess over Israel.”

“South Africa should side with African states and their transition to democracy over the corrupt Palestinian leadership,” Polovin said.

Toilet paper and trepidation: an unusually tense US election

TALI FEINBERG

Fear, tension, concern, and excitement are the emotions South African Jewish expats living in the United States were feeling as their adopted home went to the polls on 3 November. Some stood in lines, while others mailed in their ballots early, but none took their democratic right to vote for granted.

“It was a surreal day. The weather was crisp and the leaves were falling endlessly. In spite of the cold, long lines formed from about 05:30, which reminded us of the pictures we saw when South Africa had its first democratic election,” says Ilan Fogel, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Stamford, Connecticut late on Tuesday.

“My experience in the US during the elections has been one of despair at the overall apathy when it came to voting – always cognisant of what it meant not to have the vote, and feeling that Americans were spoilt and took too much for granted,” he says.

“So it was fascinating and encouraging to see lines around the block of voters waiting to cast their ballots, as I had never seen this before. In fact, it was announced that before the first voting station had even opened today, as many as two-thirds of the number of people in total who voted in the last election had already cast early or absentee ballots. Whichever candidate you were supporting, I found it encouraging that people were, in fact, voting.”

“The atmosphere is definitely tense. People are incredibly divided, angry at one another, and intolerant of opinions differing from their own. There is a lot of animosity in the community, friendships have broken up, families are fighting, and shul members no longer talk to each other.”

“Things are very much up in the air, but it’s my fervent wish that we have a clear winner, and that whoever that might be, we are able to accept the will of the people as a nation and move on to heal and build a healthier future.”

Lindy Miller, who is running for public service commissioner in Georgia, wrote on Facebook, “In 1977, my parents moved to Atlanta from South Africa. They wanted to have children and raise a family in a country where everyone had a voice and a vote.”

She said that on Tuesday she volunteered to be a poll watcher to ensure the poll opened on time, and

that voters could vote on what was “the most important election day of my lifetime”. Her parents had inspired her interest in politics, so she was taken aback when her mother expressed fear when she told them she was going to be a poll watcher. “The fact that my parents are fearful of me being subject to violence as a poll watcher is a disgraceful reality of our nation’s present,” said Miller. “Going to vote should never again be a dangerous act in America. My mom encouraged me to reconsider and to ‘think of my children’. I told her that’s exactly what I was doing.”



Grant Gochin in Los Angeles says that where he lives, “everyone received mail-in ballots. My family voted weeks ago. I have been in the US for 34 years, and I have never seen such division or hostility. Families and communities are pitted against each other, and there is great unease.”

“The most basic premise of democracy is a peaceful transition of power, and that’s in doubt. Our democracy is damaged, our society is fractured, and I don’t know how healing can begin after this is over. There is only fear, tension, and angst. Gun sales are through the roof. This isn’t the aspirational America I came to. It’s a divided, nasty, and bitter America, and I hope we can recover quickly.”

Esther Brozin Feder in Los Angeles says she and her family voted early in mail-in ballots. Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* on Tuesday morning, she said, “I have been here for 35 years and would never have imagined we would be in this situation. I say this both for the soul of the nation and for the security of this country.”

She shared a video of the streets of Beverly Hills from the day before, as shops were boarded up and security increased in case of election violence. “We are all hunkered down for an election – what part of that in a democratic society is normal?” she asked rhetorically.

“The hatred and fear is real and felt on the streets. I’m petrified to see what today brings.” When asked if there was any sense of excitement or celebration often felt on election day, she responded, “The pandemic is at all of our doorsteps. There will be no joy until people stop getting sick and dying.”

Shelley Shub in Atlanta says, “With half a heart I approached the building where I’m supposed to vote. I’ve been feeling between a rock and a hard place for the past year about whom I’d vote for. I walked in, proud to be a naturalised citizen of this great country, without a doubt.”

“My mind was decided, and I said a small private prayer asking Hashem to help me with my conviction. There was no line whatsoever, plenty of available screens, and smiling, helpful volunteers. And before I knew it, I was done. Baruch Hashem, my civic duty is over for now. What the result will be is another story altogether. May Hashem bless this country and its people. Today, I’m a proud American.”

For Caron Gremont, election day reminded her of her first Pesach in Israel. “I remember sitting in traffic as we drove to my friend’s family. I had never before felt so connected to an entire people as we all sat together on the Ayalon highway with parts of the meals on our laps and bottles of kosher wine in the backseat, trying to get to the seder.”

“Fast forward many years. Today I’m living just outside of Washington, D.C. with my husband and two children, and we are all anxiously awaiting the election results. Like everyone around me, we’re sharing this experience. Conversations with strangers always include ‘Did you already vote?’ and Zoom meetings with colleagues inevitably include questions like ‘What’s on your election-night menu?’ and ‘How are you spending election day?’ My husband and 12 year old spent the day calling voters whose ballots weren’t counted in key swing states across the country.”

“We are all sharing this experience in a way I have never witnessed in America, in red, blue, and purple states. It feels like Passover in Israel, except we aren’t all on the same road. Voting is at an all-time high, and so is fear. It feels like the nation is collectively waiting for biopsy results, and some of us will see those results and celebrate like never before, and others will see the results and fear it’s a death sentence.”

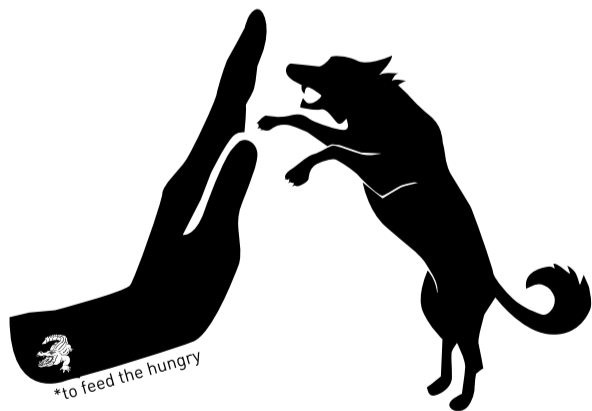
“The retail and business centre just a bit further away is already boarded up, preparing for the violence that might come tonight, tomorrow, or later this week. I’ve stocked up on toilet paper and hope for a better tomorrow.”

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South African Jewish Report

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Take terrorism seriously

Our focus this week has been on the nail-biting United States election and terrorism in Europe – two events totally out of our environment and control – or so it would seem.

The terrorism that hit France and Austria struck fear in the hearts of Jews in Europe. In Vienna, Jews were warned to stay home – and it had nothing to do with COVID-19. If they went out, they were told to leave their kippot at home.

These attacks have been brutal. They weren't necessarily well planned or orchestrated, but the attackers were out to kill as many as they could. They appeared to be "lone wolves". In other words, they didn't seem to be part of a planned organisational attack, as in the case of 9/11 for example, but a person or group who just went out to kill.

They succeeded in their mission of terrifying people who live in those countries. And it's not clear whether these attacks are over or just beginning.

What is clear is that the perpetrators are Muslim fundamentalists. I make the point about fundamentalism because most Muslims are like you and me and hate terrorism and any association with it. Local Muslim authorities have been vocal in their condemnation of ISIS (Islamic State) and other international terrorist groups, and certainly don't align themselves to such violence.

But much like the crazies who become right-wing antisemites and hate for hate's sake, these lone wolf fundamentalists are extremely dangerous because they will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. And they are willing to give up their lives in the process.

As Jevon Greenblatt of the Community Security Organisation (CSO) says, there is nothing to stop such people perpetrating terror right here in South Africa. Having said that, we are fortunate to have the CSO, which has been expertly watching our backs for a long time, and will continue to do so.

While we haven't had any overt terror attacks in South Africa, the CSO has been on alert for years just in case.

Here's the thing that concerns me. I notice that the leadership of many countries around the world came out in support of the French and Austrians following these attacks. Even the Americans did so, in spite of being in the throes of an election.

Other leaders, whose countries are in hard lockdown, sent messages on Zoom and any way they could. Some, like England, went on high alert against terrorism. However, I searched for a message or statement from the South African government, but couldn't find any.

Perhaps our government is too busy. Perhaps it doesn't think these attacks warranted commiseration or a message of concern. Perhaps it doesn't believe terrorism is as bad as we make it out to be. I wonder...

If the attacks were perpetrated by Israelis, the government would most likely have had something to say though.

Okay, that's my jibe, but I genuinely believe that the South African government needs to take international terrorism more seriously – or at least look like it's doing so.

All the terrorism experts in South Africa say we're one step away from people perpetrating terrorism right here but it hasn't happened yet. But what's being done to ensure that it doesn't happen? What's being done to ensure that potential terrorist cells are eradicated?

Is there any evidence to show that something is being done to ensure that we won't ever have a terrorist attack here? At one point, there was an indication that South Africa would help Mozambique in fighting the ISIS-related terror groups in Cabo Delgado province. However, so far, there has been no news about South African forces trying to stop the terrorists and make sure they don't penetrate our borders. In fact, there are indications that a few South Africans have gone over to Mozambique and are fighting alongside the terrorists.

Surely, it's time for our government to wake up to this problem? Are we reaching out to terrorist experts in our country and around the world to be able to stem this potential crisis before it becomes a problem? I see no evidence of it.

It's concerning watching terrorism unfold elsewhere and not being able to be safe in the knowledge that we are safe.

As for the week's other massive focus, the US election, it was a frustrating time. It's never easy as a newspaper that prides itself of being on top of the news not to be able to deliver up-to-the-moment news for you. In this case, we go to print on Wednesdays at 18:00, and we have no wiggle room. If we miss our deadline, we can't get our newspaper into the retail outlets and into your hands on Thursday. While I know many pick up the paper only on Friday, it's available for most around lunchtime on a Thursday.

Unfortunately, we didn't know who won the election in time to run a story on that before going to print. We did bring you a story which gave a sense of what South African expats had experienced when voting. (Page 4). So, forgive us. We did and always will do our best for you. I do hope the best man won!

Also, as the Shabbos Project descends on our community this weekend, it's wonderful to see that there are more than 1 600 cities and 106 countries that will be keeping Shabbat with us. (Page 10.)

The theme of this year's Shabbos Project of bringing Shabbat home really makes sense to me.

For many years, my family would join my extended family for Shabbat dinners most weeks, but this year due to lockdown, I have learnt to do it myself for my family. It has been very precious!

So, I wish you all a very special and safe Shabbat shalom this week!
Peta Krost Maunder
 Editor



Corbyn part of long history of antisemitism on the left

OPINION

DR DAVID HIRSH



The story that led to Jeremy Corbyn being suspended from the British Labour Party for antisemitism started back in 2004.

It began with a campaign that was gaining traction within the academic trade unions in Britain to exclude Israelis from the global community of science and scholarship.

Or, perhaps it started in 1843, when Karl Marx had to argue against his comrades that equal rights for Jews should be made conditional on them disavowing their Jewishness.

Or maybe in the 1890s, when August Bebel denounced left-wing movements against Jewish capitalism as the "socialism of fools".

Was it when English socialists claimed that behind the Boer War were shady Jewish diamond dealers and financiers pulling the strings of the British Empire?

Or did it begin in the years following the Holocaust, when Stalin planned the wholesale deportation of Russian Jews to Siberia on the pretext that Jewish doctors were trying to murder him?

Or perhaps it was when the last remaining Jews were purged from public life in Communist Germany and Poland because of their imputed support for Zionist imperialism?

I could go on, but the point is made that there is an authentically left-wing tradition of antisemitism.



Jeremy Corbyn

In 2004, we defeated the boycott campaign, but it came back. Year after year, it grew more powerful, and its antisemitic politics were tolerated by tens of thousands of members of our union, most of whom were scholars and scientists.

We fought hard and tenaciously against the antizionists in the union because we feared that if they succeeded in making themselves legitimate there, then the problem would spread throughout the Labour movement, including, in the end, the Labour Party. We fought hard but we lost; and our fears were realised.

I write "antizionism" without a hyphen because, just as antisemites invent the "semite" who they hate, so the "Zionism" which antizionism demonises is a construction of its own imagination. I used to be a sociologist, but I was now thought of by many of my comrades and my colleagues as a Zionist sociologist. This meant not a sociologist at all, but a racist, an admirer of apartheid, and a supporter of imperialism.

In 2006, the popular socialist mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was accused of antisemitism. He denied it, and shot back an aggressive counter accusation of Zionist conspiracy. When Jews claimed they experienced antisemitism on the left, he said, they weren't just wrong, they were lying. They were really just trying to silence criticism of Israel and to smear the left by mobilising the false accusation of antisemitism as a weapon to bolster their Jewish power.

This was the key mode of antisemitic bullying in my union, and later in the Labour Party, after 2015, when it was led by Corbyn. When Jews spoke out, they were treated as though their true motivation was to harm the left. In this way,

Jews in the party were treated as disloyal, as only pretending to be part of the left.

The democratic state seeks to mediate the interests and the desires of the complex diversity of its citizens. But populism constructs the image of a single, united, authentic "people", whose interests are articulated by one strong man leader. The leader says that the "enemies of the people" are a globalist liberal elite, the educated, who live in the big cities, people who pretend to be fair and just but who really are only out for themselves.

The antisemitic notion of "the Jew" is perfectly evolved as a way of picturing the enemy, of feeling the visceral dread of the enemy's power and its venal cunning. The Corbyn left was able to participate in this populist antisemitism by imagining the enemy as Zionism, but always with the caveat that they also relied on the image of good Jews who love Corbyn and hate Zionists.

Boris Johnson's right-wing Brexit populism offered foreigners as the "enemy of the people". The European Union was stealing our freedom, he said, in league with the disloyal liberal metropolitan elite in London and its "political class", and it was bringing foreigners into Britain to adulterate our nostalgically mis-remembered authentic culture, and to bring down wages. The British electorate preferred even that nonsense to Corbyn's Stalinist contempt for democracy,

his antisemitism, and his toadying admiration for anybody who abused human rights around the world in the name of anti-imperialism.

During Corbyn's leadership there was an unprecedented consensus in the UK Jewish community around the issue of Corbyn's antisemitism. The Jewish journalists articulated, the scholars offered evidence and analysis, the institutions of the community spoke out,

liberal and Orthodox rabbis spoke as one, the Jewish papers shared the same front page.

This week, the statutory body, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), finally delivered its quasi-judicial verdict in the form of a report on Labour antisemitism. The Labour Party had unlawfully harassed its Jewish members, it said.

It specified the antisemitic conduct as "suggesting that complaints of antisemitism are fake or smears". It's not antisemitic to say that somebody who says they experience antisemitism may have got it wrong, but it is antisemitic to treat people who say that as though they were part of a dishonest conspiracy to lie, to smear the "Dear Leader", or to silence legitimate criticism of Israel.

Corbyn responded to this by doing precisely what the EHRC had newly designated as antisemitic harassment of Jews. He wrote, "The scale of the problem was ... dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside of the party."

Corbyn's claim was that they were lying, that they hated him because he sided with the Palestinians and he opposed capitalism. But of course they didn't invent the antisemitism because they hated him, they hated him because the antisemitism was real.

• Dr David Hirsh is a senior lecturer in sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. He did his PhD on crimes against humanity and international law. He has written extensively on antisemitism in the left. His most recent book, published in September 2017, was titled "Contemporary Left Antisemitism".

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So many in our community have lost their jobs since the onset of lockdown. We have invited people in this position to send in their details so we can help them find work. Here is our third group:



Alan Glauber

Experience: Experienced graduate
Education: BA English and Drama [UCT]; Performers Diploma in Speech and Drama [UCT]; BA Honours [Wits]

Looking for a position in: Writing, editing, and proofreading work, but also any type of assistant/organisational work for those who feel they need someone to help sort out an overwhelmed business.

More information: I currently work as an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Examiner, which means that I assess people's levels of English proficiency using the IELTS test. This work isn't full-time though. I've haven't received any income for six months because of COVID-19, and need to supplement my income. I have experience in corporate conference organising, running my own second-hand book stall, teaching English as a foreign language, and in the theatre, television, and movie world as an actor. I'm efficient and bright, so if you're looking for someone to help you as a manager or assistant, I'd be interested in discussing that with you too.

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: Yes

Email address: alangi@webmail.co.za



Andrew Lewis

Experience: Experienced and accomplished bookkeeper with 15 years' experience in full charge accounting, and 10 years' experience in all aspects of property admin and management

Looking for a position in: Administration, office support, and management

More information: Team player but able to work at any level

Current location: Durban

Willing to relocate: Yes

Email address: adlewis199@gmail.com



Anthony Katz

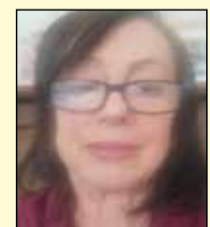
Experience: Computer expert
Education: Matric [King David Linksfield]; BA and BA Honours [Wits]; MPhil [Stellenbosch University]; Wits Languages; King David Linksfield Audiovisual; and

IT, Sun City Languages and IT

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: anthonymkatz@gmail.com



Arlene Goldberg

Experience: Insurance underwriting
Education: Damelin Night School

Looking for a position in: I'm a personal lines insurance underwriter. I am highly experienced. I'm also able to do administration work.

More information: I'm a fast but accurate typist. I have many years of insurance experience. I am honest, reliable, and dedicated to my work. I'm cheerful and like to assist clients and colleagues.

Current location: Sydenham, Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: arlene@teamgold.co.za



Barret Edelstein

Experience: Marketing, New Business, and Brand Development
Education: Matric [King David High School]; BA Communications [Unisa]; Post-Graduate Marketing/

Account Management [AAA School of Advertising]; Digital Marketing, Business Branding, Marketing Strategy, and Graphic Design [Udemy]

Looking for a position in: Marketing, Communications, Brand Manager, or Director
More information: As a marketing and communication expert, my experience includes creating and executing ideas to engage target audiences in innovative ways, analysis, and creating reports about the impact of the campaign. I've been able to use my marketing and communications skills in South Africa, Israel, and England to improve various levels of marketing and communications, business development, and project management in industries such as music and entertainment, financial services, banking, telecommunications, health and beauty, and IT.

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: bedelstein8@gmail.com



Corinne Rothschild

Experience: Secretary / Receptionist
Education: Secretarial course [Anchor College]
Looking for a position in: Receptionist / Secretary / Admin

More information: I'm a professional, hardworking, and committed individual, with over 20 years of administrative, reception, and secretarial experience. My warm and hospitable nature is testament to the number of front-line positions I've been in, often being the first impression the client will have when engaging with the company. I've performed many tasks including client liaison, invoicing, switchboard, workers' wages, bank statement analysis, workers' schedules, and general office duties, as well as sales. I'm also proficient in Microsoft Office (Outlook, Word, and basic Excel).

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: corinnerothschild@gmail.com



Daniel Traub

Experience: Experienced lawyer
Education: Matric [King David High School Linksfield]; BA LLB [Wits]
Looking for a position in: Legal Advisor / Lawyer

More information: I was admitted as an attorney and thereafter as an advocate of the high court.

Email address: danieltraub@hotmail.com



Daniet Levin

Experience: Proofreader
Education: Matric [King David High School Linksfield]; BA [Unisa]; PGCE [RAU, UJ]
Looking for a position in: Proofreader

More information: I have taught before, full-time and in locum positions. I am quite creative and am currently sewing for a small company. I would work in teaching as well.

Email address: danietlevin@yahoo.com



Dave Carless

Experience: Experienced customer services manager with extensive FMCG knowledge, including logistics and forecourts
Education: Matric and business-related diplomas

including MAP at Wits University

Looking for a position in: Full-time or project-based, ideally in sales/logistics at any level

More information: Over 35 years FMCG experience within blue chip operations. I'm a professional results-driven customer services individual, with strong relationship building strengths.

Current location: Sandringham, Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: carlessdave@gmail.com



David Joffe

Experience: Business development, managing sales teams, recruitment, training, development, and mentoring
Education: HDip.Ed

Looking for a position in:

Business Development Manager

More information: I'm married with three boys aged between two and 13 years old. I've volunteered for Hatzolah as a responder for the last seven years. I have developed skills in business development management, including recruitment, training, management, and mentoring of sales teams. I have primarily been involved in the security industry for the past 11 years, however my skills can be used in any sector. I am dedicated and always open to learning new skills.

Email address: davidjoffe67@gmail.com



Denis Sandler

Experience: Accountant
Education: B.Acc [Wits]; CA (SA)
Looking for a position in: Accounting, bookkeeping, tax, and finance

More information: I'm a mature experienced Accountant with many years of financial, accounting, admin, and management experience. After completing articles and qualifying as a CA, I've worked in various financial roles. My most recent position was as a Financial Director and part-owner of an IT company, taking responsibility for the full accounting and admin functions.

Current location: Sandton

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: densand@iafrica.com



Mandi Garbman

Experience: Senior Art Director, and Digital Marketing and Design
Education: Matric [Herzlia] and AAA College of Advertising
Looking for a position in: Marketing and Design

More information: I have 20 years in advertising from retail, start-ups, financial, wellness, interior, FMCG, B2B, and the NPO/NGO sector working in the creative and marketing departments. Specialising in digital, print design, and social media content. Working on top-shelf international and local brands. Managing and implementing campaigns, and projects from packaging, social media, activations, animation, interior design renderings, and internal and external design.

Current location: Cape Town

Willing to relocate: Yes

Email address: mandigarbman@gmail.com



Michelle Geffen

Experience: Admin
Education: Matric
Looking for a position in: Basic admin or office position, part-time or full-time within the Edenvale area

More information: I'm a very loving and patient person, with a good nature, very reliable, and honest. I have experience with basic office work.

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: michelle.geffen@yahoo.com



Nicole Silver

Experience: Administrator and Bookkeeper to Balance Sheet
Education: Matric [Sandringham High School]; Bookkeeping diploma [Birnarn Business College];

Pastel Accounting certificate

Looking for a position in: Admin Assistant/Bookkeeper to Balance Sheet looking for a full-time job preferably in the north-eastern suburbs. Can work from home too.

More information: Worked for accountants for over 22 years. Am looking for a new challenge and change. I'm competent, capable, and have a great attitude. I'm very loyal and honest.

Current location: Gauteng

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: silvernf69@gmail.com



Rael Wingrin

Experience: Experienced Bookkeeper
Education: Matric [Carmel, Pretoria]
Looking for a position in: Bookkeeping, Admin Assistant. Available for part-time work in Johannesburg and Pretoria

More information: I'm an accounting professional with many years' experience in running my own business as well as bookkeeping services for other companies. I have experience in Pastel Accounting, SARS Efiling, Ufiling, CIPC annual returns, payroll, and import and export. I am known for my integrity, reliability, and service.

Current location: Pretoria

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: raelw.goa@gmail.com



Selwyn Kanushesky

Experience: Sales Representative and Stock Controller
Education: Matric [Kimberley Boys High School]
Looking for a position in: Sales Representative or

Warehouse Manager / Stock Controller
More information: I've been in the sales industry for most of my life, both in store and on the road. I was in the clothing industry in Kimberley, and then moved to Johannesburg within the golf clothing world. I've been a sales representative for many years. I'm driven and eager to work hard and have a purpose again. I'm hands-on and dedicated.

Current location: Johannesburg

Willing to relocate: No

Email address: skanushesky@gmail.com

'New normal' leads to 'abnormal' behaviour in kids

TALI FEINBERG

People are beginning to adapt to the “new normal”, but the psychological effects of lockdown on children may be felt for years to come. However, experts say that children are resilient, and there are ways for parents to manage the anxiety and behavioural issues that may arise as a result of living through a pandemic.

“COVID-19 has dramatically transformed the structure of modern childhood. Although most children haven’t experienced the infection, most have been exposed to life changes and stresses,” says Ilana Edelstein, a clinical psychologist practicing in Cape Town.

“There are limited studies on the emotional consequences of COVID-19, and its exact impact may be unclear for a long time. However, it’s well recognised that exposure to stressors increases rates of emotional vulnerability among children,” she says. “Young children may be more clingy, inattentive, and irritable. Older children may display mood swings, problems with concentration and attention, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, and body aches.”

“There have been pros and cons of lockdown for kids,” says Johannesburg psychiatrist Caroline Serebro, who squeezed in time to talk to the SA Jewish Report as she has never been so busy. “Kids of all ages are ‘acting out’ and demonstrating aggression and anxiety. I’m seeing more adolescents and kids than I’ve seen in a long time.

“Being Jewish, we’re always waiting for disaster with heightened vigilance. So if we’re genetically predisposed to anxiety, it may come out now in kids who may have never otherwise experienced it,” she says. “There’s a lot of loss and grief for what we took for granted, like going to camp at the end of the year. We need to give kids the space to grieve those losses.

“Many kids managed at the beginning of

lockdown, but are ‘unravelling’ now, as they deal with the anxiety of reintegrating into school and dealing with changes around seeing family and friends,” she says. Yet there have also been many positives, such as both parents working from home and more quality family time.

Serebro says many children were given devices or extra TV time under lockdown. Now, they and their parents are dealing with the ugly after-effects of withdrawal as they wean kids off endless hours in front of a screen.

In addition, with death and illness dominating our headlines and conversations, families have had to confront difficult and frightening topics with their children that they may not have had to before.

“The biggest effect of lockdown on children has been loss of routine and structure,” says Yael O’Reilly, a clinical psychologist practicing in Johannesburg. “This can be seen in many forms, but especially in the uncertainty around school. The loss of familiarity has manifested in a lot of anxiety, clinginess, and separation anxiety. Some kids have regressed in their behaviour or skills, for example wetting the bed.

“Kids – especially younger kids – don’t always have the ‘emotional literacy’ to express themselves. So this comes out behaviourally,” she says. “Children may be defiant, oppositional, tearful, and have more tantrums. While parents may see this as ‘being out of control’, children are communicating their emotional distress.

“The type of fear children may be experiencing is similar to that experienced by adults,” says Edelstein. “For example, fear of dying, fear of family or friends dying, or a fear of becoming ill and needing medical treatment. Some children’s anxiety may be exacerbated by losing loved ones to the virus. Further disruptions or losses may include the erosion of family and community connections, limited access

to play spaces, diminished support systems, and economic vulnerability of the family.”

She says this time of loss may “trigger” children to be affected by losses they might have experienced in the past. “Having to process one loss after another may have some negative effects on children coping and on their mental-health outcomes over time.”



All three experts say that the best way to manage these psychological effects are to remain calm and model this behaviour for children, keep communicating in an open and honest way, stick to routines as much as possible, ensure you as a parent get the support you need, and stay positive. If none of this helps, it’s worth seeking help from a professional.

“It’s important to work with your child’s school and get their input,” says Serebro. She advises identifying the spaces where a child is struggling emotionally, be it at home, school, or both. If it’s only one particular area, it may feel less overwhelming for the parent

and child to deal with it.

O’Reilly advises using visual tools to help your child make sense of the “new normal” and the impact it has on their life. “Children interpret the world through visual cues. For young children, you could draw pictures of what you can and can’t do at the moment, or draw what their day will look like.”

Also, “keep talking to your kids, acknowledge what a big adjustment it has been, and reassure them that you will navigate it with them”, she says. “While there’s so much we cannot control at the moment, it’s vital to keep as much consistency as possible, which gives children a sense of safety. They may rebel against this, but knowing where the boundaries are makes them feel secure when everything is so chaotic.”

“If properly supported, parents and children can appropriately overcome this period of distress and avoid long-term consequences,” says Edelstein. “Indeed, stable mental health is key to restoring a healthy and robust post-pandemic society.

“Kids are more resilient than we think we give credit for, and I’ve seen that now,” says O’Reilly. “Children went back to school and got used to it quickly. They rolled with the punches. I think our kids will be fine, and this experience will make them more resilient.

“Importantly, we create the blueprint for our children’s behaviour,” she says. “So the first step is that we look after ourselves. If we don’t feel supported, we can’t hold that space for our kids. If parents have empathy, care, and support, it naturally filters down to our children, and will help them to manage the difficulties that have come and that are potentially still coming.”

“The world has changed, and it’s tough to wait and see what will happen when things are so uncertain,” says Serebro. “But we need to reassure kids that it won’t always be hard, and we will figure it out together.”

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PROPERTIES



SECURING YOUR FUTURE IN ISRAEL

Ending the year on a high note of giving

OPINION

CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



The year 2020 has been challenging. It has stretched us almost to breaking point. Lives and livelihoods have been lost. The coronavirus crisis has placed enormous strain on all of us – physically, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. We've all had to get used to a new normal that isn't normal at all.

And yet, 2020 has also brought out the incredible resilience, strength, and comradery of our community. Together, we have rallied to meet these challenges. Together, we closed our shuls and schools. And together, we reopened them, taking every precaution to ensure they were as safe as possible. We have looked after each other. We have responded generously, supporting those in need, and we have emerged more resilient and ready for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

This year's Shabbos Project arrives at this pivotal, poignant time, and reminds us what we learnt this year – that when we come together, we can do great things. Nobody thought it possible for Jews of all backgrounds to come together to keep a full Shabbat. Nobody thought it possible until we showed the world that it was.

Like everything else this year, the Shabbos Project is going to feel very different. We don't have the large public gatherings that we normally would, but in a certain sense, we have something more profound and beautiful. We have each other, and we have our homes and families.

This can be the Shabbos Project that reminds us that Shabbos, after all is said and done, happens in our homes. Shabbos fills our homes with love and light, its unique energy helping us to connect with our family, with ourselves, and with G-d. The home is the heart of Shabbos. And Shabbos is the heart of the home.

This isn't to say our influence can't extend beyond our homes. This year, we have distributed reusable tote bags filled with opportunities to give and grow together as a community, to unpack and discover even more beauty in our shared Shabbos experiences.

As we approach the end of an exhausting 2020, let us replenish and elevate ourselves by giving. Let us continue to transform our challenges into opportunities to give, to connect, and to care. And let us all celebrate and appreciate this year's Shabbos Project as we've never celebrated it before.

Let's bring it home!

When the rush becomes a hush

OPINION

REBBETZIN GINA GOLDSTEIN



Preparing for Shabbos can be frantic. There's cooking, cleaning, and shopping to be done. There are urns to fill, and warming trays to set. There are lights to turn on, and phones to switch off. There's a table to be laid, and kids to be dressed. And, all the while, the clock is ticking.

But just before the sun slips below the horizon, everything grinds to a halt, and what's done is done. Wherever you are in your prep, whatever you've built during the week, all of that stops as you enter the realm of holy time. When you realise you can do no more, there's a surrender that births a serenity. Shabbos glides into your home. And in that instant, the rush becomes a hush.

The lighting of Shabbos candles is that magical moment that marks the transition. At the flicker of a flame, you go from the mad rush of the week to the peace and holiness of Shabbos. It's the moment when you exhale, your body relaxes, and you surrender control of the world to Hashem for 25

hours. At that moment of transition, tranquillity and holiness floods through your home, and there's a tangible change in atmosphere. Our home is transformed in that moment – and so are we. We can actually feel it.

This year, the Shabbos Project has produced a series of candle-lighting cards – meditations authored by luminaries such as Lori Palatnik, Slovie Jungreiss-Wolff, and Sivan Rahav-Meir. These meditations are real pearls of wisdom, splashes of light illuminating the sacred *mitzvah* of candle-lighting, and almost as beautiful as the light of Shabbat itself.

Their purpose is simple: to enable us to approach these moments mindfully; to remind us of the spiritual power of candle-lighting; and to be truly present as we transition into Shabbos – to really experience it.

I would like to invite every woman in our community to enjoy these meditations. You can find them at theshabbosproject.org.

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbos Project Challah Bake in Netanya, Israel, in 2019

Souls on fire

A meditation by Rebbetzin Gina Goldstein

As I light my Shabbos candles each week, I mention the Hebrew names of each of my children, my children-in-law, my husband, and myself. The flame of each individual candle represents the soul of each family member. "The flame of Hashem is the soul of a person." (Mishlei 20:27) Just like a soul, the flame burns bright, independent, and strong. Just like a soul, the flame is mesmerising, always reaching upwards, as high as it can. Just like the pure and holy soul within each person in my home. And, very quickly, with the light, warmth, and energy of the Shabbos candles, I am reminded of what I sometimes forget. As a Jewish mother, it is my mission to ignite the souls within my home – that they should shine and burn bright! When we are all switched on, when we are transcendent, when we defy the confines of our own limitations, when we feel passion and closeness to Hashem, when we crave meaning and search for destiny, when we seek truth, we are drawing from the energy of our burning soul! Our greatest achievements, our most noble acts, and deepest loves arise from our soul's passionate fire! All the hard work of my week supports this holy mission. All the energy and effort is worthy. I know why I do what I do!

Online, international Shabbos Project breaks boundaries

This Shabbat, the Shabbos Project is being held in more than 1 600 cities and 106 countries around the world. This year, it's arriving in a world transformed by the coronavirus – and the project has had to reinvent itself.

Among the pre-Shabbat events scheduled are virtual challah bakes, online classes about Shabbat, cooking webcasts, global "singathons", and virtual synagogue tours.

A silver lining of the online events is that geographical barriers have dissolved. Seed UK will broadcast an extraordinary 24-hour challah bake featuring 19 different live events from cities such as Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Sydney, Moscow, Toronto, and New York. A pre-Shabbat event in Arizona featuring Latino pop singer Miriam Sandler will include participants from four continents. And in the wake of the Abraham Accords, an event hosted in Israel will include the Jewish communities of Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and Dubai.

In Argentina, a challah bake will unite Jewish communities in 32 cities across the country for the first time. And Long Island's Cook and Connect event, featuring young cooking sensation and *Chopped* winner Rachel Goldzal, will bring together teenagers from around the world to share traditional Shabbat dishes and cultural cuisines.

Other highlights this year include Mizrahi UK's Shabbaton at Home, involving



Preparing for Shabbat in Cali, Colombia in 2019

more than 30 000 Jewish households and 75 shuls across the country, with thousands of Shabbat booklets distributed to enhance the Shabbat experience. The event will kick off with a pre-Shabbat launch on 5 November featuring Israeli singer Ishay Ribo, as well as live addresses by UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and South Africa Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, and will conclude on Saturday night with a live Zoom Havdalah followed by the Great UK Shabbaton at Home Quiz.

In Kfar Yona, the ministry of education in association with the local municipality is sending a "Shabbat kit" – with candles, a song book, challah ingredients, and other

items – to every single resident in the town, and encouraging neighbours to exchange challahs with each other.

Panama has a wide range of events planned for the Shabbos Project, including a series of one-minute video classes, a learning programme for Hatzolah first responders on the laws of Shabbos relating to emergency care, a special Shabbos programme for residents of an old age home, and the delivery of Shabbos meals to families economically affected by COVID-19.

In Mexico City, a special challah bake for Batmitzvah girls will help alleviate some of the disappointment of not being able to celebrate their Batmitzvah with their friends

and extended family.

In Los Angeles, a Jewish vegan organisation will be hosting a Shabbat cooking class with a difference – a demo on swapping mushrooms and jackfruit for chicken and brisket. In Atlanta, the Beth Jacob congregation has launched an *erev* Shabbat challenge, encouraging the community to bring in Shabbos at midday on Friday to avoid the rush and extend the day. And in Rhode Island, organisers will be gifting a Shabbos Box – including tea lights, grape juice, Shabbos treats, and a Havdalah set – to anyone who commits to upgrading their Shabbos observance for a week.

Elsewhere, a group of Israeli volunteers will be cooking and delivering Shabbat meals to Magen David Adom first responders in Ra'anana, Herzliya, and Kfar Saba. A website in Denver is offering Shabbat meals, Shabbat classes, and Shabbat "survival kits" on demand. And an all-day "women's day" event hosted in Netanya will feature international singers, filmmakers, and celebrity chefs.

In Boulogne, acclaimed Jewish historian Emmanuel Attyasse is leading a virtual tour of old Jewish France. And in Karnei Shomron, members of the religious Zionist Bnei Akiva and largely secular Tzofim youth movements will be working together to deliver food parcels and flowers to residents of the town affected by COVID-19.

Judaica collectors preserve history in their homes

JORDAN MOSHE

Some of South Africa's most captivating Judaica is found in people's homes.

From kiddush cups rescued from rubbish heaps to pre-Holocaust pieces found in pawn shops, the items collected by private individuals in our community illustrate the history of the Jewish people and their survival against all odds.

Candlesticks, tzedakah boxes, Channukiot, kiddush cups, and seder plates are just some of the items which have been preserved by members of the Johannesburg and Cape Town Jewish communities.

Although their history is often shrouded in mystery, their evident historical value makes them invaluable to those who own them.

"I'm not an intellectual collector of Judaica," says David Sussman, a retired businessman and Killarney resident. "I don't collect it for art reasons. For me, it's about having these things in Jewish hands."

Sussman began collecting Judaica in 1996 after successfully smuggling a Torah scroll out of Poland, having bought it off an elderly Polish Catholic. Through a business operating out of the city, Sussman arranged for an associate of his to scour local markets for Judaica,

buying numerous items and returning them to South Africa.

"He would go to flea markets or hear from people about others who had them," says Sussman. "He found countless items between 1996 and 1999, and after that, my wife and I used to pick up different items on our travels."

Among these are a battered siddur purchased at a junk store in Budapest, an enormous seder plate made in Nuremberg in the 1800s, and handmade tzedakah boxes from the Prague ghetto. There's even a

book whose inner cover indicates that it was the property of the water carriers at the shul of Minsk.

Says Sussman, "It became a *meshugas*. Why should non-Jews have these things? They mean very little to them. Whenever I came across the stuff, I bought it."

One of Sussman's most prized



A silver salver from Sussman's collection

items is a small handmade steel box, topped with an Iron Cross medal, and bearing the words "Sobibor, 1943, Shaul" punched out of its side with a sharp instrument.

"In financial terms, it's worth nothing, but to me, it's priceless," says Sussman. "Shaul must have been a slave at the camp who was instructed to make it for a Nazi officer who provided the medal. To me, this is a remarkable piece."

Ninety-five percent of Sussman's collection predates the Holocaust, and he believes it adds a unique dimension to his home.

"None of this is here because

of its monetary value," he says. "It adds a certain peace to my home. I feel the *neshomas* of the Jews who owned them across the centuries around me."

An equally enthusiastic collector is Johnny Egdes, whose Glenhazel home is a veritable

repository of incredible pieces often found in the least likely of places: the city dump.

"I probably visit the dump every day of the week," says Egdes. "So often, I've come across incredible pieces that people have just tossed out without realising exactly what it

is they are throwing away."

These items include not only pieces of antique furniture, but often Judaica such as Torah books, kiddush cups, even tefillin.

"I once noticed a dirty and blackened cup that turned out to be Russian silver," Egdes recalls. "I recognised the scenes engraved on the cup and picked it up for R50 at the dump. There have also been paintings, tonnes of benches, Hebrew books, and once there was even a black bin bag full of tefillin."

"While most of their inner scrolls were removed, those tefillin shouldn't have been there. You would think they would have a little more sensitivity for something we value as much as that."

Egdes has also discovered much Judaica in pawn shops across the country, including a Channukiah in a store on Ontdekkers Road – on *erev* Channukah.

He recounts, "I saw this Channukiah staring at me from the shop window. You have to buy something like that. It's nothing special, but the appearance of this thing in a place like that on *erev* Channukah was unbelievable."

Egdes maintains that he'd much rather have a piece of Judaica steeped in history than a shiny new piece.

"To me, there's something of the past in that item," he says. "You don't know what it went through before it came to you. There's a history there that you become a part of."

Postal artefacts are the focus of Sea Point resident and veteran lawyer, Ben-Zion Surdut. For more than 40 years, he has gathered concentration-camp mail, with a special interest in the Theresienstadt camp. This includes all mail and related items which were sent to and from the camp during the Holocaust.

"It started off with items given to me by a survivor who had been in the camp for four years and died in Cape Town at 104," he says. "She managed to retain various items and correspondence from her days in the camp, and asked me pursue this and add to the collection."

Surdut has scoured auction

catalogues from across the globe in search of concentration-camp post, occasionally finding items in Israel and the United States.

"These items are all one of a kind," he says. "All the cards have been censored by camp authorities. There were phrases Jews often used because you were limited in what you could say, and you could find them writing that they were 'eating well as though it were Yom Kippur', a code to say they were actually starving."

"In Theresienstadt, the Nazis encouraged inmates to write to their families and ask for food. You often find this in the letters, but the tragedy is that the camp officials would actually confiscate it for themselves when it arrived."

Among Surdut's more remarkable finds is a telegram sent from Johannesburg to



A postcard from Surdut's collection

Theresienstadt after the camp had been liberated by the Russian forces, enquiring after the survival of a certain family member. Beyond camp post, there are also postal artefacts such as a postcard addressed to Theodor Herzl, and a postcard written by Martin Buber.

"Camp post provides a vital link with the past," he says. "It's unique, and it gives us proof that these people actually lived and experienced these ordeals. They're a window on our history."

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- Proficiency with online marketing and social media strategy
- Knowledge of the private school market would be advantageous

A Curriculum Vitae with a letter of motivation with at least two references should be e-mailed to: seeffr@sabje.co.za

Closing date for applications: Friday 13th November 2020

The SABJE reserves the right not to make an appointment.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

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All members of the above societies are cordially invited to attend the Biennial General Meetings of these organisations which will be held, on Thursday, 19 November 2020 at 15h00 at the Gerald Horwitz Lounge, Golden Acres.

Due to COVID considerations, members wishing to attend need to register by emailing feedback@jhbchev.co.za by no later than 18h00 on Monday 16 November 2020.

No unregistered participants will be allowed to access the meeting or the premises. Numbers are restricted due to social distancing considerations.

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A progressive maverick in our tent

Irwin Manoim, best known for being one of the joint editors of the original *Weekly Mail*, has authored a book on progressive Jewry in South Africa titled *Mavericks Inside the Tent*. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to him about it.

How did a journalist like you end up as an historian?

In the age of social media, there's not a lot of journalism work going around for elderly male throwbacks. So, when the opportunity to do research through the Kaplan Centre at the University of Cape Town arose, I grabbed it. And I've really enjoyed being able to focus on a topic in depth, over a long period, rather than rushing from deadline to deadline.

Why did you focus on progressive Judaism?

The Jewish community in this country has been studied and dissected all the way down to the quality of *kneidlach* in the tiniest platteland *dorp*. There are books galore on Jewish communists and atheists. But progressive Jews? Hardly anything. It's a giant hole in our knowledge.

What does the progressive Jewish movement mean to you, and what's your involvement in it?

I was once the chairman of a synagogue committee, proof of the dearth of available talent. But let me make it clear that the book isn't a public relations "rah-rah" job for progressive Judaism. It's published by a university department and maintains a critical distance, by no means shying away from awkward controversies.

You were brought up Orthodox, what drew you to progressive Judaism?

I blame my feminist daughters. They demanded that their Batmitzvahs be exactly the same as those of boys, and that was available only in a progressive shul. For a long time, I hated it. It was very different in style. But then I came to realise that its leaders were serious people, concerned about contemporary issues, who'd given a lot of thought to the topics I'd taken for granted, and who were open to new ideas in ways I hadn't encountered before.

Give me a quick overview of the book.

It tells the story of a charismatic young rabbi, Moses Weiler, who defies expectations by building a movement under adverse conditions in a deeply conservative community, and then manages to spread it from Cape Town to Salisbury.

He pioneers all sorts of areas: the first Batmitzvah, held in near secrecy; the first Jewish outreach to African townships; the first women on shul executives; the first interfaith dialogues. And more recently, the movement has gone places Orthodox

can't follow: women rabbis, same-sex marriages.

The movement starts to splutter around 1976, when the Jewish flight abroad begins; the progressives lose most of their leadership. Orthodoxy stages a come-back – Chabad steals away many members. Progressive parents send their kids to King David, where other kids tell them they aren't proper Jews.

But the pendulum may be swinging back. The recent Kaplan Centre survey shows that if you compare paid-up shul memberships, progressive has nosed slightly ahead in Cape Town for the first time.



On Sukkot 1966, Rabbi Richard Lampert escorts Hebrew School children bearing baskets of fruit to the MC Weiler School in Alexandra township

Photo sourced from the book

Are there some interesting characters in the book? If so, who are they, and why did you write about them?

The movement's founder in South Africa was Professor Avraham Zvi Idelsohn, widely regarded as the world's leading expert on Jewish liturgical music. He also happened to compose *Hava Nagila*. He had a wife in Joburg, and a mistress in Cincinnati. His brother, Jerry Idelson, was the first leader of the movement in South Africa. He had founded a Zionist youth movement when still a teenager. He also founded the Vegetarian Society (his father was a shochet), founded the Mountain Club, was a founding member of revisionist Zionism, and a member of the first orchestra to perform for radio.

Weiler was a heroic and tragic figure. A master orator in multiple languages, he was deployed as a trouble shooter by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies whenever they had a particularly thorny issue to deal with. Then he went on aliyah, and lost

two sons in Israel's wars.

Rabbi Andre Ungar spent his childhood hiding from the Nazis in Budapest. When he arrived in South Africa 10 years later, he said he saw similar things happening here. For which the government promptly deported him.

Rabbi Arthur Super lost the use of his legs after radiographers forgot to switch off an x-ray machine. Yet he carried on, more feisty than ever, from a wheelchair.

Rabbi Richard Lampert was raided by security police after a congregant tipped them off that he had banned political books in his library. His super-alert wife treated the policemen to tea in the sukkah while she chucked the books over the garden fence.

Why do you believe this book is necessary?

To quote Professor Adam Mendelsohn of the Kaplan Centre, it demonstrates that no history of the South African Jewish community is complete without an understanding of the role of the progressive movement in pushing boundaries.

Progressive Judaism hasn't really taken off here the way it did in America. Why do you believe this is the case?

When reform first arrived in this country, there was fear in Orthodox circles that what had happened

in America – where reform swept the country and became the dominant denomination – might repeat itself in South Africa.

So, there were concerted efforts to keep reform at

bay. Initially these were fairly crude: denying access to communal facilities, planting hecklers at meetings, claiming that reform was anti-Zionist.

But then a masterstroke: the rabbis branded reform as "inauthentic". It wasn't Judaism at all, and therefore no reform weddings or conversions would be recognised. This tactic, which had failed in the United States, was an immediate success in South Africa. The stigma of "inauthentic" has haunted the South African progressive movement ever since, and scared away people who otherwise share similar values.

Who is this book aimed at and why?

The general Jewish public are big purchasers of books on South African Jewish history. Some people have shelves of them. Myself, for example. There is a sizeable diaspora of Jews abroad, many of whom were members of the progressive movement in the old days. Jewish historians at international universities are surprisingly fascinated by South African Jews, and are less inclined to treat progressives as marginal.

Why would someone who isn't progressive want to read the book?

To quote David Saks of *Jewish Affairs*, it's an entertaining read. It also has pictures. For those who aren't big readers, there's the Jewish Museum exhibition, which has slimmed down my 500 pages into two dozen picture panels and lots of videos.

Where does one buy the book, and how much does it cost?

There's a website at www.progressivejews.co.za which contains additional material and photographs (i.e. a taster for the book) and also points readers to the Juta website which is selling the book online. There will be a book launch on Zoom on Thursday, 12 November, at 18:00, all welcome, at <https://beiteman.link/bezoomclub>.

Letters

SACC AND AFRICA4PALESTINE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

On the face of it, the South African Council of Churches (SACC's) sharing a billboard with Africa4Palestine at a cost that probably runs into six digits may seem like a coming together of two quite different entities, but is this really the case?

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) South Africa, rebranded Africa4Palestine after its disenfranchisement by the international BDS movement, is better described as anti-Israel rather than as pro-Palestinian. Omar Barghouti, the founder of the BDS movement has repeatedly

asserted that the two-state option is dead and, in the future, there will be two Palestinian states, both with Palestinian majorities, existing side-by-side. This aligns with Barghouti and his movement's denial of the historical connection of the Jewish people to the land, and the deeper-seated view espoused by Hamas and Iran that Israel cannot exist in any form.

Although Bishop Mpumwana declares of the SACC that "we don't do doctrine, we do social justice", the SACC has endorsed activities that suggest that it is, indeed, seeking to promote a particular doctrine concerning Israel. The adoption of the Kairos Palestine "Moment of Truth" document, and participation in various conferences and webinars involving theologians from the Bethlehem Bible College suggests that the SACC has aligned itself with the view that the modern return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel isn't the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. This doctrine, known as "replacement theology", emerged in early Church history often with disastrous consequences for Jews.

The SACC "annexation" statement released on 25 June 2020 includes the following quote: "The [annexation] plan transforms the Holy Land into a Zionist fairyland for the enjoyment of extreme evangelicals and Jews, while the local Christian population remains subjugated under Israel's coercion."

If Israel appears to the outsider as a fairyland, this didn't come about through the waving of a magical wand. Israel was built because Jewish people, with encouragement from some Christians, took the Bible at face value and through visionary leadership, innovation, hard work, and sacrifice transformed Israel into the country that it is today.

If believing the Bible is labelled "extreme", then many Christians, including Arab Christian, would plead guilty. This, however, doesn't equate to hostility towards the indigenous Palestinian Christians and in many instances, the entities providing assistance in Israel are also supporting Palestinian Christians. – **Chris Eden, national director Bridges for Peace South Africa**

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TALI FEINBERG

Film director Jenna Cato Bass and producer David Horler first met when they were growing up in Cape Town and were in the same year at school. Little did they know that they would one day join forces to create groundbreaking films that have made waves locally and internationally.

Their latest project, *Flatland*, premiered at the Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival) in February 2019, opening its Panorama section to much acclaim, and hit South African cinemas on 30 October 2020.

Daily Maverick called it “fearless filmmaking from one of our own”. Bass told the *SA Jewish Report* “My grandmother grew up as a Jewish Afrikaans farm girl in Malmesbury. In many ways, this film is in homage to her.”

Set in Beaufort West in the Karoo, it tells the story of Natalie, whose disastrous wedding night leads to an accidental killing. She flees her husband and the rural town where the landscape is so flat that “you can see your future rolling in”.

After reuniting with her rebellious best friend, Poppie, the two young women escape together on horseback. Hot on their trail is police captain Beauty Cuba. The fates of these three different – yet equally desperate – South African women eventually converge.

A few days after its release on South African shores, Horler told the *SA Jewish Report* that, “The film has been travelling the world since February 2019 at festivals and screenings, so we’re really grateful and relieved it can finally come home and be seen by South African audiences.

“It’s been an interesting experience as this film started its life outside South Africa, and at the same time is very South African in terms of its cultural relevance and experience. While audiences abroad really appreciated and enjoyed the plot, the complexity of the characters, and messages explored in the film, there were undoubtedly many moments that only South African audiences would really appreciate.”

COVID-19 has meant that fewer South Africans are going to cinemas and, Horler says, “attendance is still a fraction of what it was this time last year, and we’re the first South African film to screen post-lockdown. So there are many unknowns.” But they remain positive that

South Africans will welcome their work, and if the reactions of critics are anything to go by, it has definitely caused a stir.

Flatland has been described as modern, feminist version of the classic Western film, and Bass says she was definitely inspired by that field.

“The Western was one of my dad’s favourite genres, and we watched a lot of them together when I was getting into cinema. There was so much about them I loved – the action, the high stakes, the landscape, the horses – but at the same time there were never any characters I particularly related to. I started to realise how few – if any – Westerns placed women centrally in the narrative, and what this said about the genre. I realised that if I was going to make a Western, I would have to address this, and allow the characters to drive the genre, rather than the other way around.



A scene from 'Flatland'

“It also made sense to question the Western’s history as a colonial narrative – how this reflected in contemporary South Africa when we are still very much dealing with these issues of conquest and oppression,” she says.

The film is shot in Afrikaans and in a desolate rural town – not Bass’ first language or home environment. “There were most certainly challenges, but that’s when I as a director or writer like to acknowledge what I don’t know, and where I need help,” she says. “There was a huge contribution from our cast in realising

the characters you see in the film. We also would never have been able to make the movie without the enthusiastic support and hospitality of Beaufort West and the surrounding communities.”

Horler says the majority of the film was shot in and around Beaufort West, with several days in Cape Town, which was a challenge for his production company, Proper Films. “As Beaufort West had no film infrastructure or support from vendors and suppliers – and we were at the height of the drought in the Western Cape – we had to be particularly meticulous with our planning and make sure we brought absolutely everything we needed with us from both a technical and personnel perspective.

“We also had an incredibly dedicated team of drivers travelling to and from Cape Town on an almost daily basis, bringing additional supplies or transporting actors and personnel that

Going back to how they first met, Horler explains that “Jenna and I were both at Herzlia together and matriculated in 2004, but only connected properly at film school after I approached her to work together. We have worked together on and off ever since.” The duo’s major film from 2017, *High Fantasy*, was shot using cell phones, and has won multiple awards.

“The fact that we give each other the freedom and mutual respect to do our jobs makes it conducive for us to excel when working together,” says Horler. “We acknowledge each other’s unique skill sets and experiences, and give each other that freedom and trust to run with things. And when things do go wrong, there is always an openness to discuss issues and how best to fix them.”

Bass says that growing up in the Jewish community meant that “my life was very insular and secluded. When I left school, everything felt new, and I really appreciated how little I knew about the greater South Africa. I think this inspired me to learn and listen more to the world around me, because in a lot of ways, I was still a stranger to it.”

While South African cinema faces many challenges, especially in the “new normal” post-pandemic, both are excited about the future. “It’s always been and remains a challenge to realise an independent film, so we are both always working on multiple projects in the hope that a handful of them will pick up momentum and be able to be realised,” says Horler.

“Over the past few years, there is a very clear trend towards more authentic, engaging, and powerful local cinema. You can also see this playing out across the continent. Filmmakers are finding the confidence to tell their unique stories instead of trying to emulate Hollywood styles or focus on issue-driven identity films,” he adds.

“There is definitely a palpable excitement across the industry, with films today really standing out, having more successful lives outside of South Africa and resonating with people without needing to fit into narrow boxes,” says Horler. “At the same time, our production values and strength of storytelling continues to increase, making the films competitive in the international marketplace. So I do believe there is a renaissance of sorts taking place. A lot of the South African films that have come out in the past few years are a clear testament to this.”

Photo supplied by Proper Films

Letters

TRUMP HAS NO REDEEMING FACTORS

In response to Sachs and Fisher’s “The case for Trump in 2020”, (*SA Jewish Report*, 30 October), let me say I’m neither ill-informed, malicious, nor a follower of fashion (as the authors characterise those who object to Trump), but rather believe, unlike the authors who discount Trump’s well recorded character flaws in favour of his policies, that there can be no redeeming factor (however superficially appealing) when a person in high office who is granted enormous power is so glaringly unfit for the office.

A useful way to test one’s own view is to see the situation in a different light or to apply an analogy. So, when Harvey Weinstein was fired by Miramax, nobody said, “but he made great movies and profits for us”, which he did. And this is because no self-respecting business wants to be associated with a moral reprobate, regardless of his so-called value. That’s because reputation affects value, and in the end, having such a person in charge leads to tears. If true for a company, how much more true is it for a country which is the leader of the Western world?

In another analogy: how would you react to a South African president removing officials who are there to hold ministers to

account? (Trump dismissed the inspectors general of five cabinet departments because of ongoing investigations.) How about firing the head of the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] and installing his own man (as Zuma and Trump did)? What of profiting from his position by renting his own properties to the government, or employing his daughter and son-in-law in senior state positions? How about his instruction to his justice department to prosecute a political opponent on his say so, or obstructing voting and openly stuffing the highest court with political judges? What about not only lying every day, but insulting you by making assertions that your own eyes tell you lies.

They write that “Trump hasn’t abused power”, but that assertion is false because these actions are factual examples of abuse of power.

To conclude, let me return to the thrust of my response, which is that a principled person should set aside any personal, political, or transactional benefits of a candidate when that person has no respect for the rule of law, the norms demanded by secular society, or Jewish moral laws such as *derech erez*. – **Sydney Kaye, Cape Town**

TRUMP SUPPORTERS WOULD BE WISE TO AVOID DODGY SNAKE-OIL SALESMEN

This will be printed after the United States election. Apologies for my condescending tone. I must comment on “The Case for Trump in 2020”. The article regurgitated clichés, conspiracy theories, and liberty-threatening conjecture found on right-wing websites without context or fact-checking. They try to separate the crudeness of Trump from his policies. Shallow arguments, as political policy and outcomes create a more complex legacy not easily learned from computer screens.

Americans chose a conservative government in 2016. Donald Trump and a conservative Congress had every right to enact conservative policy. Conservative-leaning voters might want him re-elected for this alone. Many Germans supported Adolf Hitler because unemployment declined and roads were built.

Sadly though, the writers watch websites and pundits pushing dodgy, discredited conspiracy theories. They claim that Joe Biden has used his political influence for his and his son’s financial benefit. No self-respecting professional journalist has verified the assertion (reference *New York Times* 22 and 25 October 2020; *Wall Street Journal* 23 October 2020). Nevertheless, right-wing conspiracy theorists push this notion, and the more people hear that Biden is corrupt, the more they believe the false assertion. Hitler showed the modern world this trick before. The “mainstream media”, as these writers call it, doesn’t pursue conspiracy theories because they are professional

journalists. Professional journalists look at a story, verify it, and if they smell a rat, drop it. Meantime, alt-right entertainers like Trump and Ben Shapiro repeat falsehoods. And, in time, these boys start to believe the nonsense.

Offensive to many Americans is the relentless attack on democratic institutions. The boys don’t understand that democracies are maintained by politicians’ honesty. President Trump has misused electoral trust for his own selfish means. He has directed the justice department and the national security apparatus to investigate his political foes. He has used homeland security to patrol streets and arrest political dissenters. He has encouraged armed militia when he has disagreed with local politics. He says he should lock up adversaries in public rallies all over the country.

He has separated children and families of Hispanic background and orphaned more than 500 children. I won’t point out where this happened before. No leader of a democracy should ever be elected with this behaviour – ever again!

These silly boys should reject the banality of the shameless website snake-oil salesmen. True leaders ask their followers to wear masks and keep a social distance in a pandemic. They put the public first and humble themselves against the problems the world faces. Real leaders remember to set a good example every day of their lives. – **Robert Taylor, Johannesburg**

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Fake news starts and stops with us

Sunday in Johannesburg was noteworthy for a number of reasons: the Jacarandas put on a display that was truly remarkable, a massive storm hit Gauteng, and the lights went out for many hours across the city.

The combination of the weather and the power outage was unsettling, which is why during this time I was perplexed to receive a communication, allegedly from the Democratic Alliance (DA), titled "Dark Days In Joburg", informing me that there were no maintenance crews available and that for the foreseeable future, there wouldn't be.

The implication was clear that city residents were unlikely to see electricity in our parts ever again. And yet the lights came on a few hours later and life returned to normal. I'm still unclear if this was a legitimate document in the poorest of taste, or if it was fake news.

In December 2016, just before the last United States elections, the term "fake news" was used in a BuzzFeed article reporting on websites that were publishing false (and mostly) pro-Trump articles that were shared a lot on social media. Only four days later, Donald Trump picked up the term and started to use it to label certain news reporting. It's his use of the term that brought it popularity.

In 2017, dictionary publisher Collins named "fake news" the word of the year. The dictionary defined fake news as "false, often sensational information disseminated under the guise of news". Since its invention, it has been used and abused to an extent that it stopped meaning much.

But it does mean a lot, and it always has.

On a webinar I participated in soon after the lights returned, I tried to assist participants in identifying some of the threads that remain common to all fake news stories. The obvious ones remain political or financial gain, but I explained further that we are more likely to believe fake stories that resonate with our belief systems and that reinforce our way of thinking. Because social media algorithms are designed to show us what we want to read, we are all at risk in this regard.

But there's another component common to many fake news stories, and that's the fear factor. For example, when we receive a message that there will be protests and riots in an area, or that a storm to end all storms is coming. What about the message that if someone throws egg on your windscreen, something will happen (I have never got to the end of the message), or that

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



children are being abducted at the Mall of Somewhere and their hair colour dyed. Then, there are those that say that the hospitals are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients, when they are not, and that the president is going to take single malt whisky away from us again. These stories spread because they make us afraid. These are the stories that unnerve us because fear is one of our strongest emotions.

And let's be honest, we didn't survive the holocaust in order to die from single malt deprivation.

We have all forwarded messages that we shouldn't have. We do it because we are worried and because we are decent people and want others to know. Mostly.

But we need to learn from the DA document. If it was legitimate, then it was poorly timed and politically expedient. Even if it was fake, we had the power to stop it. It starts with us, and that's where it can end. If we try.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Vigilance in dangerous times

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD's) case against Matome Letsoalo finally concluded last Friday with the Randburg Magistrates Court sentencing him to three years imprisonment, suspended for five years subject to not repeating the same offence part during that period.

The court took the matter very seriously, with both prosecutor and magistrate commenting that hateful statements were becoming all too prevalent in South Africa, and that the courts had a responsibility to send a strong message that such behaviour wouldn't be tolerated. This, ultimately, is what we aimed to achieve when taking on this matter. It wasn't just about bringing to account a single individual offender, but demonstrating to those who would emulate him that our community isn't fair game, that we have the will to strenuously respond to antisemitically-motivated attacks, and that in doing so, we have recourse to effective laws strictly prohibiting racially motivated hate speech in our country.

This coming Friday, we will be back in the same court for the first of what will likely be a number of appearances concerning the crimen injuria case lodged against Jan Lamprecht. An ultra-right-wing, stridently pro-Nazi white supremacist, Lamprecht has for years been disseminating antisemitic propaganda of an especially virulent nature, to the point of gleefully praising the perpetrators of deadly shooting attacks on, among others, the Powys and Pittsburgh synagogues, a black church in Charleston in the United States, and a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Over the past week, a series of harrowing terrorist atrocities have taken place in various parts of the world, including Ethiopia, Afghanistan, France, and Austria. Whether motivated by traditional ethnic antagonisms or radical



ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

Islam, what underpinned them all were extremist ideologies in which the victims were considered collectively guilty, not for what they might have done, but simply for being "the other".

In protecting our own society from such barbaric acts, we need always to remember that those who perpetrate them have been thoroughly indoctrinated beforehand, and that much of this is taking place in plain sight through easily accessible online platforms. We know all too well that words can – and frequently do – lead to deadly consequences, and that therefore the fight against extremism must of necessity involve confronting the scourge of online hatred. This is why the SAJBD has made it its core business to take up the most egregious instances of hate speech against our community and see them through to the end, regardless of how many years it might take or what kind of technical, procedural, logistical, or other obstacles might need to be surmounted.

The successes we have gained, the Letsoalo judgment being the latest, have unquestionably helped to create a safer environment for our own community and for all South Africans who are – or might one day be – targeted on the grounds of race, ethnicity, belief, or identity.

In conclusion, I warmly congratulate our national president, Mary Kluk, on being appointed as a member of the leadership council of the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany. This is a position of great responsibility and Mary's appointment testifies to the esteem with which she is held in global Jewish circles.

• 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

KDL Primary gets a taste for print journalism

King David Primary School Linksfield's virtual newsroom was abuzz with activity recently.

There were Grade 7 editors-in-chief strategising with team members, and design and layout specialists working around the clock to generate creative, unique pages and advertisements. Then, youthful photographers were capturing interesting moments in time and journalists penning fascinating news stories and feature articles.

The journey began with a visit from

a *Sunday Times* news journalist, who entertained and enlightening Grade 7 students on Zoom about his career.

The students were then guided by their teachers through the different components of a newspaper. Tasks were assigned and, using a multitude of media platforms and working feverishly around the clock to meet deadlines, their work was captured in 8-12 page newspapers printed on A3 newspaper print.

It culminated in live broadcasts of certain aspects of the newspapers through a simulated television presentation and an awards ceremony which highlighted the talent, passion, and creativity of the students. The English teachers are extremely proud of their aspirant journalists.



Yeshiva appoints junior councillors

Yeshiva College students Batsheva Levy and Menachem Altman have been selected as the school's Johannesburg Junior Council representatives for 2021. They join 70 students across the city who will be involved in creating awareness about the social issues faced by youth, and in creating outreach projects that uplift the underprivileged.



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