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# South african Jewish Report

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## Wits protest an education in activism

JORDAN MOSHE

"When I look back to my youth in years to come, I don't want to have to tell my children I was one of the people who kept to the side and stayed silent. I want to tell them that as a white, Jewish woman in a democratic South Africa, I led."

So says Gabi Farber, a student activist who, together with other Jewish youth, has committed herself to the fight against financial and academic exclusion at South African universities.

They join a growing movement of university students who in recent weeks embarked on a nationwide protest over tuition fees with demands including the allocation of funding for excluded students and a zero fee increase for the 2021 academic year.

Farber, the legal and policy officer of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), has been integrally involved in the protest.

"We have been on the ground every day," she told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Walking through the streets of Braamfontein creating mass awareness about the students' financial-exclusion crisis."

Following the shutdown of various campuses, violence has escalated in the past few days, with police responding to demonstrations with rubber bullets, stun grenades, and teargas, and arresting protesting students in Braamfontein. A bystander, Mthokozisi Nthumba, was tragically shot and killed by police last week.

Says Farber, "The first few days were scary. The police were out of control, and you could see they didn't know what they were doing, shooting rubber bullets directly at people without giving time to disperse. A grenade landed on my foot and burst my eardrums. It was dangerous."

"The media suggests there are hundreds of us and that the protestors are violent. In reality, it's very calm on the ground, and there aren't too many of us."

The police have calmed down in recent days, Farber says, and those responsible for Nthumba's death were due to attend a hearing on Wednesday, 17 March.

"I couldn't let [the police brutality] turn me away though," she says. "There are risks when you're fighting

for change. What's scarier to me would be doing nothing at a time like this."

Natanya Porter and Benjamin Atie have also been actively involved.

"On Monday, there were about 50 protestors, and we were chanting and singing peacefully in the street," recounts Porter, South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) officer at Wits' education campus. "Suddenly, the police arrived in hippos [armed vehicles] and water-cannon trucks as if there were thousands of us burning down Braamfontein. They used a disproportionate amount of force."

Beyond active involvement in the protest, Porter and Atie have also been involved in assisting students arrested by police, providing them with snacks and support while they awaited trial last week.

responded.

"A total of 8 142 Wits University students are financially excluded," says Atie, SAUJS Wits chairperson. "This means that these students passed last year in spite of all its challenges, but aren't being allowed to return because they are in debt to the university."

"As Jews, this issue speaks to us because we have always placed a major focus on education and supporting the impoverished. It's our responsibility to assist these students in whatever way we can."

Indeed, the role played by the young Jewish activists has raised the profile of the fees issue within the broader Jewish community, says political analyst and former SRC activist Jamie Mighti.

"We have to be cognisant living in South Africa that there are challenges to upward social mobility, including

this was the birth of South African leaders and the re-emergence of Jewish activism within the broader South African conversation."

Former SAUJS Wits chairperson, Yanir Grindler, stresses that more Jewish students need to get involved. "I'm left with a sense of anger towards the broader Jewish student population," he says. "It has been so difficult to get them involved. A minority of Jewish students have been there on a consistent basis alongside Gabi protesting with the students. The rest are quite disconnected because they feel it doesn't really affect them. That's naïve, because it does."

Farber, Porter, and Atie agree that more Jewish students need to play their part.

Says Atie, "One of the biggest criticisms we receive at SAUJS is that we come across as a union which cares only about Israel and Jews and not the larger South African community. It's this perception of Jews that enables anti-Israel and antisemitic rhetoric to enter the halls of parliament and academic circles of South Africa. Only by involving ourselves in the struggle of the larger South Africa can we begin to change this perspective."

Many academics agree that the plight of financially excluded students must be addressed.

"There are multiple stories in and around the protests," says Bonita Meyersfeld, a professor at Wits Law School. "Do I think they're legitimate? Absolutely. The commercial reality demands a creative and imaginative rethinking, but that's true of the country as a whole. My experience with the first Fees Must Fall movement showed me that students are desperate."

"Ignoring that pain or painting all protestors with the same brush of judgement and intolerance will never solve the problem."

Barry Dwolatzky, emeritus professor of engineering at Wits, attests that the contribution each graduate makes far exceeds the cost of educating them. "The debate isn't between students and university management," he says. "It's one between all of us and our government."

"Universities don't have the resources to solve the problem in the long run. All they can do is apply a band aid here and there in the hope of managing the short-term situation. The future of South Africa depends on how well we support education."



"There was no reason for their arrest," Porter says. "We believe that the police just grabbed whoever was in a protest t-shirt and who was slowest at running away. In the end, the magistrate dismissed the case."

"As an education student, I believe that it's a right not a privilege. I don't think it's fair for education to be available only to the few who can afford it. I'm heartbroken and shocked at the way the police

historic poverty and exclusion," he says. "One of the recognised ways to lift oneself up is through education. The Jewish community is world renowned for prioritising the value of education."

"To see young people like this stand in the gap with other students and use their voices reminds one of the roles played by Jews in fighting apartheid. The Jewish community will look back at this moment and say



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## Mogoeng appeals as commentators call out ironies

TALI FEINBERG

As the deadline for him to apologise drew to its final hour, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng announced that he had chosen to appeal the Judicial Conduct Committee's (JCC) ruling. Meanwhile, a number of highly respected political commentators have chosen to defend him.

The judgment, made on 4 March 2021, ruled that the chief justice had 10 days to apologise for comments he made about Israel in a June 2020 webinar in which he said South Africa had a role to play in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that he supported both peoples, and as a Christian, he had an obligation to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

In response to Mogoeng's decision to appeal the ruling, the JCC announced that it would determine in due course the date on which the appeal would be heard by at least three of its members. The chief justice's decision to appeal didn't come as a surprise after he insisted that he would never apologise.

At a public prayer meeting on Sunday, 14 March, after he announced that he would appeal, Mogoeng said, "If I get to the point where there is a judgment that says, 'You must say you hate Israel and the Jews', I would rather cease to be chief justice. If I get to the point where they say, 'Mogoeng, you must say you hate the Palestinians and Palestine', I would rather cease to be chief justice than do it, because my G-d has instructed me to love and not to hate. I hate evil deeds, I don't hate anybody."

Mogoeng also referred to a speech by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018 to the South African Jewish community, calling for peace between Israelis and the Palestinians. "Is that not what I called for?" he asked. "Peace and mutually beneficial coexistence? You will never find anything that contradicts what I said, said by the president. Nothing official, nothing."

A number of respected political commentators have chosen the moment to defend Mogoeng. "This case is full of ironies, the biggest one being that South African politics and anti-Israel sentiment are influencing this decision," veteran journalist and author Jeremy Gordin told the *SA Jewish Report*. "That's the core irony, seeing as Mogoeng is being questioned about if he himself has been influenced by politics."

While Gordin emphasises that retired Deputy Judge Phineas

Mojapelo's judgment was "strictly based on the judicial code of conduct", the fact that this matter has been given so much energy and airtime is questionable for anyone looking at the wider political landscape.

"It seems motivated by people's own motivations, that they are beating the same old drum and that they aim to whack anyone who has any kind of support for Israel. The worst thing is that the groundswell is always anti-Israel, that people don't see the subtleties. What's bizarre about this is how everyone seems to have jumped on that bandwagon," says Gordin.

"As has been noted, not much has been said about Mogoeng's highly questionable comments about vaccines."

Gordin points out, as have many others, that "there was nothing remotely objectionable about what Mogoeng said. He didn't say anything reprehensible; he said everyone should love one another. And for that he gets attacked? The reaction here has been vicious. And it feeds into 'cancel culture' ... it's unacceptable."

Giving the chief justice the exact words of an apology is "just absurd", Gordin says. "It's not necessary to embarrass him. Essentially, he had no choice but to appeal. It's appalling to see the influence of [Ronnie] Kasrils *et al*, how they turned this into a big case and got away with it. That's the nub of the matter."

Gordin expressed similar views in a satirical piece on *politicsweb* on 11 March 2021, in which he wrote, "It seems bizarrely totalitarian that Judge Mojapelo ... opted to force the CJ [chief justice] to apologise rather than just rap him over the knuckles. Very odd, given all that the JSC [Judicial Service Commission] turns a blind eye to."

Douglas Gibson, the former opposition chief whip and former South African ambassador to Thailand, echoed these sentiments. "One is a little suspicious that the reason for the expeditious and unprecedented action against the chief justice is that it involved Israel," he wrote on *News24*. "The truth about the complaint against his remarks is that some complainants are from organisations that hate Israel, don't hope for peace for Israel, and wish to see it wiped from the face of the earth."

"Judge Mojapelo stated that one of the reasons for finding against the CJ is that his remarks contravened South African foreign policy," said Gibson.

Continued on page 6>>

### Torah Thought

## Redemption – bring it on!

In the month of Nissan, in which the redemption from Egypt took place, there is a Talmudic discussion about the time of the future redemption. Rabbi Eliezer says the final redemption of Moshiach will take place in the month of Tishrei, the month in which we celebrate the solemn days of awe and repentance. Rabbi Yehoshua says that Moshiach will redeem us in Nissan, the month of Pesach, in which G-d redeemed us with great miracles and wonders.

A question arises. We are told that redemption can take place at any time. In fact, it can happen while you are reading this article, right now, so how can we say that redemption will take place in a particular month?

An explanation, offered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is that Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua aren't arguing about the specific time of redemption, but rather the manner of redemption.

Rabbi Eliezer, who says redemption will happen in Tishrei, opines that it will

take place through the effort of man, from below. Through man's reaching out to G-d, repenting, returning, and penetrating the gates of heaven, G-d will bring about redemption. This is the nature of the month of Tishrei, a time of teshuvah (repentance), in which man's service brings about a response from above.

Rabbi Yehoshua says final redemption will come from above, with G-d bringing about redemption even if man hasn't repented sufficiently. This kind of redemption is like the month of Nissan and Pesach, in which G-d wrought miracles and wonders and redeemed the Jewish people in spite of them not necessarily being worthy.

Moshiach can certainly come at any time. The sages are discussing where the main thrust of the redemption will come – from below or above.

Even Rabbi Eliezer asks to what extent man's effort is required to bring about redemption. The Jew has a g-dly soul that

is always stirred and is therefore always involved in doing good, as our sages say, "Every Jew is filled with *mitzvot* like a pomegranate is filled with seeds," but he is impeded by his animal instinct.

Perhaps he is saying there needs to be a much greater effort from man, and he needs to subdue his animal instinct in a much greater way to achieve perfect service. That will be the catalyst for redemption.

Rabbi Yehoshua similarly says that the Jew is always G-d conscious. He has a g-dly soul that is always somewhat in the service of his divine mission. But he has an animal instinct which disrupts and obstructs him from being perfect in his service. This is the nature of man, and the world that You, G-d, created! The service of the Jew is good. Let it be enough! It's you, G-d, that needs to initiate mercy and not wait for perfect service. Bring on redemption!

Rav Ilan Herrmann,  
Soul Workout Shul



### South African Jewish Report

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# SA company switches to Canadian *hechsher*

TALI FEINBERG

A South African health-food company opened the door to getting a *hechsher* from international kosher certifiers when it adopted the Canadian Kosher Certifier (known as MK) recently. This decision appears to be unprecedented in the South African market, and raises questions about the impact on the United Orthodox Synagogues (UOS’s) Beth Din.

The news was announced in a number of marketing videos made by MK and shared on social media by The Chocolate Tree and Nu Tree. In the first video, a man with a South African accent says, “Kosher certification is a big advantage in the competitive industry. That little symbol [pointing to the MK sign] is a seal of quality, guaranteeing that your product meets the highest standard. MK has been a world leader in kosher certification for over 75 years and now we’re in South Africa. We recently certified The Chocolate Tree and Nu Tree, leading South African health-food manufacturers that have been synonymous with quality food for decades. Join the movement, get the seal.”

A second video welcomes the company, and encourages consumers to “look out for MK, the mark of trust”, and “MK – kosher for Passover” on its packaging.

Moshe Amoils, the owner of The Chocolate Tree and Nu Tree, said that even before the uproar last year over the UOS’s Beth Din kosher department’s fees and communication issues, he was thinking of seeking out a *hechsher* abroad.

“A few local companies were chatting about how unhappy we were about the Beth Din’s service delivery, pricing structure, the lack of justification for fee increases, and the way we were being treated. A couple of us started looking overseas because even by that stage, we were already *gatvol*.”

After things came to a head and Amoils went on air to describe his experience, he began to seek out an overseas *hechsher*

**“Kashrut is all about reliability. We go where people ask us to go. We aren’t going out there to companies and offering our services, but we will be glad to assist them if they request it.”**

more seriously. He heard that another local manufacturer had succeeded with MK, and he decided to reach out to it, getting a speedy response from executive director Rabbi Saul Emanuel. It was a coincidence that Emanuel happens to be ex-South African, which Amoils only realised after they connected.

Amoils said that from the beginning of going with MK, “the service has been unbelievable, the technology superb. I’ve listed 125 products in two weeks. With the Beth Din, it would have taken two weeks to list one product, although I know their processes have since improved. MK is a

different machine. It couldn’t be more co-operative and happy to assist.” Even with the time difference, Amoils said he received prompt answers to questions. “For example, Rabbi Emanuel will call me as he’s getting ready for shul at 06:00.”

Furthermore, he said, he is paying two-thirds of what he paid the Beth Din. “It’s cheaper to get an overseas *hechsher* than from the people just down the road.” His Pesach fees are 50% cheaper, and annual fee inflation is set at 5% to 7%, a far cry from the volatile increases he said he faced with the UOS.

Amoils said the Beth Din tried to engage with him, and there was discussion of a dual



*hechsher*. The Beth Din allegedly wouldn’t accept being the secondary *hechsher*, so Amoils agreed to make both *hechsharim* equal (on the packaging) in the spirit of community unity. However he couldn’t pay full fees to both, so he offered to pay a smaller fee to the Beth Din as it wasn’t the primary certifier. Amoils claims the Beth Din refused this offer. “It’s not about community unity. It’s really all about money,” he said.

He said an overseas *hechsher* was nothing new in the kosher world. Many companies manufacture products in countries that don’t have a kosher office, and inspectors from overseas certifiers visit their facilities to certify products. The same will happen here. “Essentially, it’s the same concept as the UOS.”

Amoils said the MK *hechsher* was known by the community here, and if a product was on the shelves of KosherWorld, people didn’t question it. He has spread the word on social media, and believes it won’t take long for it to be just another trusted *hechsher*.

He said the videos MK released were all funded by MK and were done free of charge as a way to welcome and promote new products. MK is also assisting Amoils with investigating export opportunities in North America. “Making the decision has made a huge difference to my stress levels and mental well-being,” he said.

Emanuel told the *SA Jewish Report* that he had worked for the kashrut department of the Beth Din for 10 years prior to moving to Canada. Speaking in a strong South African accent, he said “this request came from South Africa. We got an email one afternoon [from Amoils]. We got back to him right away, and soon after that we did the certification.”

He said MK would gladly co-certify kosher products with the UOS Beth Din.

Having options when it comes to kosher certifiers is the norm overseas, creating a “healthy” environment, Emanuel said. “Companies make the decision based on quality, price, and service.” MK has “very

experienced representatives in South Africa” to monitor the kashrut of its certified products, and it can certify products “anywhere”.

“Kashrut is all about reliability,” he said. “We go where people ask us to go. We aren’t going out there to companies and offering our services, but we will be glad to assist them if they request it.” The organisation’s goal is to “help companies all over the world get kosher certified in many different

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, the managing director of the kosher department of the UOS, said, “We are aware of The Chocolate Tree being certified by MK, however we cannot comment on MK or any other potential competition. We have had limited dealings with them, but understand that they are one of several kashrut authorities in Canada.

“We are an internationally recognised *hechsher* that works with the best in the world, like the OU [Orthodox Union], and have been serving the South African Jewish community for decades,” Goldstein said. “Being local experts, with representatives visiting factories thousands of times each year, we provide the highest standards of *kashrus* with the most sustainable option for companies in Southern Africa. We have certified more than 150 new companies kosher in the past three years, and will continue to bring many more kosher products to the community.

“The kosher department of the UOS remains dedicated to delivering on our vision of more people eating more kosher more often.”

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# Israelis assists Eswatini with vaccine rollout

TALI FEINBERG

**T**he success of Israel's COVID-19 vaccine programme may seem like a far-away reality, but it's actually much closer to home – over the border in fact. An Israel-based non-governmental organisation is working feverishly to assist Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland) to build its COVID-19 response, including vaccine rollout, logistics, and public education.

The tiny landlocked nation has been hit hard by the pandemic, symbolised for many in the demise of Prime Minister Ambrose Dlamini four weeks after he contracted the virus. Now IsraAID, the largest humanitarian aid organisation in Israel, is helping it to pick up the pieces and turn its story around.

From earthquakes and hurricanes to epidemics and forced displacement, IsraAID has been at the forefront of responding to major humanitarian crises worldwide since 2001. It has worked in more than 50 countries and at any one time, has about 300 staff members worldwide.

A seven-member team from IsraAID landed in Eswatini on 8 March 2021 for a two-week visit. They were invited by the government, which has vaccines in the pipeline, and wants help with logistics and public education ahead of the rollout. The mission is being funded by South Africa-based Nathan “Natie” Kirsh, a citizen of Eswatini.

The global chief executive of the Kirsh Foundation, Carly Maisel, told the *SA Jewish Report* that Eswatini's COVID-19 case load and death count probably exceeded reported numbers. “The country has the highest COVID-19 death rate in Africa, and the highest HIV prevalence in the world. With just more than one million people, nearly 60% of whom live under the national poverty line, it would be easy for Eswatini to be left behind in the global vaccination race.”

Speaking from Eswatini, Molly Bernstein, IsraAID's development and communications manager, says, “We made it here on one of the first flights following Ben Gurion Airport's reopening last Sunday. We arrived

with experts who can give insight into the main aspects needed to implement a vaccination campaign of this kind: an operations expert; a psychosocial support expert; our medical sector lead and public health nurse; an epidemiologist and physician who specialises in vaccines; our head of global programmes; and a communications and public-outreach lead.

“Since the start of the pandemic, IsraAID has been working non-stop,” she says. “We have responded to COVID-19 in 17 countries worldwide. We aim to use the models we develop in Eswatini to inform further vaccination campaigns around the world, specifically in the global south, through a new Global Vaccine Access initiative. IsraAID has longstanding expertise in public health, emergency medical care, and mental health capacity building. We will utilise the know-how developed during Israel's successful vaccination rollout to inform its planning in Eswatini, from here moving to other potential locations.

“This visit is an assessment mission to understand the capacity, assets, and needs on the ground, and identify how we can best support these aspects moving forward,” says Bernstein. “We’re working with the government to put together a plan.”

Because the country has been hit so hard, Bernstein says that a crucial component of its work will be to focus on mental health and resilience, particularly in regard to the country's frontline health workers.

“In order to build an effective public health response, we have to think holistically and prioritise the needs of local communities. We are meeting many inspiring people here on the ground who want to work hard to help Eswatini push forward with vaccinations to decrease

the day-to-day impact of the pandemic,” she says.

“The people of Eswatini, including community leaders, government officials, and everyone we’ve met, have been extremely warm and welcoming. They are excited about learning about the vaccination experience in Israel and working together as the rollout launches here in Eswatini.”

Maisel says that the Kirsh Foundation wanted to play a role because it believes that “successfully overcoming the pandemic will be possible only once there is equitable access and widespread adoption of vaccines across all nations”. The Kirsh family has responded to COVID-19 around the globe, particularly in Southern Africa, through food relief, unemployment support, medical equipment, and bridge-loan funding.

In addition, “Mr Kirsh's roots are firmly in Eswatini, the place he calls home, and his legacy of philanthropy there is extensive,” Maisel says. “Eswatini is the country where he founded his entry into business and where he raised his family. It will forever be an integral part of his identity. Watching the country ravaged by COVID-19 has been heartbreaking for him and the Kirsh family.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Kirsh Foundation has responded to short-term needs such as PPE [personal protective equipment] and food relief [in Eswatini],” says Maisel. “Additionally, the foundation has been examining how it can support the country over the long term, such as by sponsoring local oxygen capabilities.

“Now, we have partnered with IsraAID to help the nation and frontline health workers prepare for vaccine distribution and a potential third wave of the virus. Mr Kirsh speaks to the IsraAID team via video calls, and he has told them that they will have a universal effect on the country.”

IsraAID Chief Executive Yotam Polizer told the



Photo: Molly Bernstein

*SA Jewish Report*, “It’s ground breaking because there are few initiatives to support the global south during COVID-19, specifically with vaccination campaigns. It’s also ground breaking because it’s the first time that an Israeli organisation is using the expertise

developed in Israel as part of its vaccination campaign, and is bringing this know-how to some of the world's most vulnerable communities.”

The Kirsh Foundation has been a longstanding supporter of IsraAID's world-renowned global initiatives. “Bringing together the two countries central to Mr Kirsh's philanthropic vision was a ‘no brainer’ in this case,” says Maisel.

“IsraAID has become synonymous with rapid response to humanitarian crises around the world. We know that it’s up to the daunting task of preparing for a national vaccine rollout, not just because of its proven ability to deliver on its mission, but because of the unique insights it will bring from the unparalleled success of Israel's vaccination campaign.

“We hope IsraAID will be able to leverage its experience in Eswatini to roll out its global vaccine initiative throughout the rest of Africa, where many countries are in need of its logistical and medical insight,” she says.

Asked if the organisation would carry out a similar mission in South Africa, Polizer says, “Our goal at IsraAID is to support the most vulnerable, regardless of politics. We’ve worked in countries that didn’t even have diplomatic relations with Israel, and we would be happy to support communities affected in South Africa in the future. We believe that through long-term humanitarian work, we can build bridges between people and countries. We would also love to discuss opportunities to partner with individuals and institutions in the South African Jewish community in the future. COVID-19 won’t be over for us, here [in Israel], until it is over for everyone, everywhere.”



# Warrant of arrest for Nazi sympathiser Jan Lamprecht

NICOLA MILTZ

A warrant of arrest has been issued for white supremacist and Nazi sympathiser Jan Lamprecht, who allegedly breached an interim protection order issued against him last year.

Lamprecht, who despises Jews, blacks, gays, and anything that threatens white supremacy, continues to spew dangerous and inflammatory antisemitic and racist hate on social media.

Based in Johannesburg and skilled in information technology, Lamprecht believes Jews are out to silence him. He sees this fight against censorship as his personal crusade, and has said he will “fight this tooth and nail”.

He accuses Jews of everything, including the production of “dangerous” COVID-19 vaccines to fight the “fake” pandemic. He claims Jews, who he refers to as “liberals”, are intent on robbing him and the world of free speech. He is also anti-government and refers to Cyril Ramaphosa as the “black Jew” or the “bravo liberal”.

Last week, the Randburg Magistrates Court authorised the warrant of arrest for allegedly breaching an interim interdict against him.

The matter goes back to July last year, when a charge of crimen injuria was brought against Lamprecht by University of the Witwatersrand Professor Karen Milner.

In October last year, Milner, who is also Gauteng chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), was granted an interim protection order against him. This after Lamprecht posted a photograph of her as well as her personal details and degrading comments of her on his fake-news website. It resulted in her receiving hate mail from some of his white supremacist followers.

At the time the application for a protection order was served on Lamprecht, he was also served with a warrant for his arrest which was suspended pending compliance with the court’s instructions.

“When he failed to comply, we went back to court last week to get the suspension removed so that he could be arrested,” said SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn.

According to insiders, it’s only a matter of time until he is arrested.

In terms of the interim protection order,

Lamprecht is prohibited from engaging in and attempting to engage in harassment of the complainant (Milner); posting any pictures/videos referencing the complainant on websites; and all references and pictures/ photos of the applicant and complainant are to be removed and deleted from all websites and platforms within 48 hours of the order.

Yet Lamprecht continued to post inflammatory material even after he was served the protection notice, Kahn said.

It’s not known whether Lamprecht is employed, but he obsessively manages at least

one website which he uses to disseminate his antisemitic and racist views. One of his so-called news sites is named *History Reviewed The Truth They Are Not Telling You*, another is titled *African Crisis Total Communist Takeover of South Africa Stop White Genocide*.

Over many years, Lamprecht has used his websites to promote Nazi propaganda and disseminate extreme antisemitic and racist content. There are reams of material and dozens of videos rich in

conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial.

Lamprecht evidently scours the internet, presumably for hours, hunting for foreign and local news articles which back his views. He then shares and re-posts these articles on his sites, along with endless personal opinions and his so-called “breaking news” or “latest news”. He posts home-made videos and conspiracy-related material all neatly packaged on his fake-news sites.

He has also taken to attacking the SAJBD’s attorney, Ian Levitt. In one post, he said, “Ian Levitt is the attorney for the South African Liberal Board of Deputies. He’s also the attorney for the white-hating, genocide-inciting, bravo communist Julius Malema! Is this a ‘coincidence’? You’ll find these liberals on the side of communists ... Liberals and communists ... working against Whites... is this an accident?”

Lamprecht blames Jews “across the Western world” for censorship and interfering in freedom of speech “all under the guise of combating hate speech”.

Among reams of published material, his comments include, “given what a race of two-faced, backstabbing fiends they are, I .... have made the argument that there is no such thing

as a good Jew”, “They need to meet a new kind of white man, the kind they’ve not met since the time of Hitler”, “filthy little race of rats and pathological liars ... They dominate EVERYTHING ... and turn all the powerful against us ... Hitler was too nice to them.”

In February this year, he said Jews were behind the COVID-19 vaccines.

“Liberals are behind the COVID vaccines. This would not surprise me. Wherever liberals are involved one should be doubly and trebly careful. There is so much that is not known about these vaccines. I see that our people in European countries are becoming more agitated by this COVID crap. I am very pleased to see Whites arising. This is good. Trust nothing ...

especially when liberals are involved.” He tells his followers there is “no such thing as a liberal who can be trusted” because they are “fair-weather friends”.

Acting on behalf of the SAJBD, Ian Levitt Attorneys said last week that the court ruling “was a major milestone and indicative of the court’s stance that it won’t tolerate contempt of its court orders and will authorise the arrest of people who do so”.

Kahn agrees, saying that she is “encouraged by the fact that there is recognition of the seriousness of hate and harassment by our courts”.

Lamprecht is due to appear in the Randburg Magistrates Court on 19 April.



Jan Lamprecht



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## Real protests and smokescreens

This week is Israel Apartheid Week (IAW), which usually means a week of trouble on university campuses around the country and in many other countries. The strife is usually between those who support Israel and those who would like it to disappear. The week-long series of events is a construct of those against Israel in an attempt to garner as much support as they can in their Boycott Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) anti-Israel battle.

They appear to do what they do to make Israel look like a racist country that treats Palestinians no better than the Nationalist government did to black people during apartheid – hence the term “apartheid Israel”.

Frankly, those behind IAW use the guise of human rights to sew division and encourage prejudice and hatred against the Jewish state and those who support it. And as much as they claim that it’s all in the name of human rights, they totally neglect to factor in human-rights abuses in the rest of the Middle East and the world.

The good thing about IAW this year is that, because of the coronavirus pandemic, most students are working from home and aren’t on campus. So, IAW isn’t on campus either.

But there is a genuine protest on campus over young South Africans’ inability to continue their university education because they can’t afford it.

A number of students from our community are involved in the protest and have, in some cases, put their own education and future on the line to help others. One such person is Gabi Farber, who is a member of the Student Representative Council on an African National Congress ticket.

Gabi, like most of us, comes from a sheltered environment where she really doesn’t have to go out on a limb to get an education. But for her, it is a matter of values – Jewish values at that – that spur her on to fight for the rights of others. (See her opinion piece on this page.)

I’m aware that many in our community believe people like Gabi are rabble rousers and troublemakers looking for a cause. I beg to differ. Such people generally don’t do things that could have a negative impact on their own lives. In this case, those who have stuck their necks out have a lot to lose in order for others to gain what they are already getting – an education. They stand the chance of being arrested, suspended, or even kicked out of the university. All this because they are protesting the fact that others aren’t allowed to continue their education.

It would be far easier to sit at home and carry on studying while others are out there protesting.

I do understand the fear factor of students and parents, and some people are ambivalent or not very up to date on what this about. I’m not sure I would be encouraging my children to go out and protest because of fear for their security. However, I do believe that Gabi and the others out there are courageous young people with integrity and backbone. They are doing what so many of us won’t do. They are standing up for those who aren’t being heard.

I do understand that many of us question where the money to put these young people through university is meant to come from. I would also like to know that. We are all aware of the financial quagmire our country is in, not least of all because of the pandemic and lockdown.

However, as Jews, we understand the importance of an education, and most of us would give the clothes off our backs to get our children the best education. So, too, would other parents, however, for so many, their clothes won’t garner a day of a university education. So their children can’t go. And if they could afford something, they may not be able to pay for more than a year or two...

So, where should the money come from? I don’t know. However, like Gabi, I do believe that if young people have the ability to get a tertiary education, they should be encouraged to do so, not prevented.

I believe we should support this cause, not least because it’s part of the Bill of Rights within our Constitution to provide a basic and secondary education. The wording in the Constitution is that everyone has the right to “further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible”. Clearly this was written a couple of decades ago, and it should by now have become more accessible to all whether they could or couldn’t afford it. Do I sound like a radical? Hardly! I sound like a Jewish mother who believes education is paramount.

So, while this protest goes on, supported by people who believe in a Jewish state and those who don’t, IAW is still happening in a different format.

This year’s theme is #UnitedAgainstRacism, which as it happens, is something I totally agree with. I believe we should be uniting against racism in all forms. I believe we should be uniting against prejudice as well. It’s a great cause, only I believe it’s a smokescreen. It’s not actually about uniting against all forms of racism around the world, but uniting against Israel, a country that BDS claims is racist. This isn’t a fight against racism, it’s about getting the world to unite against Israel. Let’s call a spade a spade.

I would love us to all unite against racism and for the education of all our children. For me, those issues I fully support.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Peta Krost Maunder  
Editor



## If I am only for myself, then who am I?

OPINION

GABI FARBER



In Pirkei Avot, it says, “If I am not for myself then who will be for me? If I am only for myself, then who am I? And if not now, then when?”

This is a verse that has rung true for me over the years. Growing up in South Africa, I was always confused about why we were all still living here when the country has so many problems.

About three months ago, students started coming to the Student Representative Council (SRC) offices in their numbers desperately asking for help. These were students who had passed one of the most challenging academic years, but weren’t allowed to continue their studies because they had been excluded financially.

Last year, these students passed against great odds. Many were sent home to rural areas to study a university degree while living in a one-bedroom shack. They had to set aside an hour during their exam to walk up a hill just so that they would have signal to submit their work. Many have parents who lost jobs and lost lives.

These same students aren’t being allowed to return to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), not on merit, but on the basis of an unfair disadvantage.

Since the beginning of time, Judaism has highlighted the importance of education. During the time of Rabbi

We tried everything and exhausted all our options before beginning to protest. After much deliberation, we had no other option but to go to ground. It’s sad to see that our requests fell on deaf ears until the entrances of the university were peacefully blocked.

It’s frustrating that when I called the police to help a student who had been raped, they never arrived. However, when we protest, within minutes, there more police on the ground than there are students.

But the hardest thing of all is to know that there are many who don’t understand what we are doing here, and will probably never ask.

These protests aren’t about politics or trying to cause chaos. These protests are about lives. Many of these students are the first ones out of many generations in their family to be getting a tertiary education. So, when they come to the SRC offices for help, it’s because they don’t have anyone to show them what to do. They are alone, and they come to us as the SRC for help in desperate need of solutions.

Every day, I walk into the SRC office as one person and come out as another. I have heard the stories and seen the faces of these students. Each degree is a bridge for a student from a life of despair to a future of opportunity.

This is a truth that I can’t unlearn, a truth that I can’t not act upon.

As Jews, we are no longer a persecuted people, but that doesn’t mean that we mustn’t fight for those persecuted around us.

As I write this article, I’m a student at Wits, but that doesn’t mean that I must stop fighting for the 6 000 students who aren’t.

I have learnt that my identity as a Jew is directly tied to my ability to protest, to demonstrate, to stand firmly for

what I believe in. I have learnt that to protest, I don’t need to be violent or undignified, but rather I can protest in the way in which I feel is right.

I have learnt that my Judaism isn’t confined to shul and the parameters of my community. It’s about my feet. It’s about movement and movement building. It’s about applying my abilities as a Jew to practice *tikkun olam* (to repair the world) fervently in all the spaces I exist in.

We have all chosen to stay in this country, with all its problems and its opportunities. It’s time we stopped complaining about the things that are wrong, and started being the ones to change them to things that are right.

If we are going to stay in South Africa, let’s do it for a reason. I have found my reason. I’m going to do my part in bringing back these 6 000 students, and make sure that they aren’t the last ones from their families, schools, or townships to open the doors of education.

“If I’m not for myself then, who will be for me? If I’m only for myself then who am I? And if not now, then when?”

• *Gabi Farber is studying a Bachelor of Arts Law and International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand.*



Aviva, Jews were killed for learning Torah. From here on, it was made very clear to us as a nation that without education, one cannot survive. As a persecuted people, we were made to understand that education is something that can never be taken away from us.

But what if you were never given an opportunity to get that education in the first place?

During the apartheid era, the doors of higher education were closed to black people. Twenty-seven years down the line in a post-apartheid democracy, this reality still exists for many in our country.

While I have been privileged enough to be able to access tertiary education, many aren’t in that place of privilege.

For much of my life, I didn’t agree with protests. I thought that they were the easy way out, futile, and that a much better way of getting what you want was negotiation.

We have had two months of hour-long meetings, negotiating with the Wits administration and putting forward proposals, many interviews, and even the launch of a national fundraising campaign #21MillionIn2021. After this, I realised I was living in utopia thinking that sitting across a table would bring back these students.

## Mogoeng appeals as commentators call out ironies

>>Continued from page 2

“With great respect to the learned judge, he seems to be ignorant about foreign policy matters. It’s correct that many people in the governing party hate Israel, but the government itself maintains normal diplomatic relations with Israel as a friendly country. If Mojapelo was correct in his finding, this country’s foreign policy would be hatred of Israel, and support for efforts for its destruction.”

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, says, “I’m not surprised that the chief justice decided to appeal. First, because I assume he will have felt that the sentiments conveyed wouldn’t have done the ANC [African National Congress] any harm. Also, there have been more serious statements made by other judges on the same or other subjects, but they’ve been anti-Israel.

“His term ends late this year. An appeal will help kick the issue into touch, although he doesn’t face being impeached for these comments,” she says. Gon points out that considering the delays in dealing with other judges’

“misconduct” in the past, Mogoeng is “unlikely to be under any threat until his retirement”.

South African Friends of Israel spokesperson Bafana Modise told the *SA Jewish Report*, “We support the appeal, which is in line with his [Mogoeng’s] beliefs that have stood the test of time. He must never compromise these beliefs, irrespective of public pressure. It’s the G-d of Israel who we serve, with no fear or favour. We ask Christians to unite and stand with the chief justice. If he stands alone, soon it will be [our beliefs] they’re coming after.”

A highly respected senior member of the legal profession, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the *SA Jewish Report* that he thought Mogoeng’s appeal had a good chance of succeeding. Another local legal expert said, “This isn’t a Stalingrad strategy, which wears down the complainants by tenaciously fighting anything they present by whatever means possible. The CJ is fairly exercising his rights in a case where he has reasonable prospects of success.”



Historic UN gathering debates antisemitism problem

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



“Antisemitism is an international problem that is a threat to democracy.” So said Dr Ahmed Shaheed, special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, who was addressing a conference exploring holistic approaches to antisemitism. The conference was held under the auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on 15 March.

The session was chaired by the high representative for UNAOC, Miguel Moratinos, who reiterated numerous times that combatting antisemitism in its various guises remains a priority for the UN. UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Moratinos in February 2020 to serve as the UN focal point for monitoring antisemitism and to facilitate a system-wide response.

The virtual gathering brought together speakers and participants including Rabbi Arthur Schneier, a UNAOC goodwill ambassador; Malcolm Hoenlein, the vice-chairperson of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Katharina Von Schnurbein, the co-ordinator on combatting antisemitism and fostering Jewish life at the European Commission; Lord Eric Pickles, the United Kingdom’s special envoy for post-Holocaust issues; and Irwin Cotler, Canada’s special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism.

Understanding the reservations that many expressed about the often-hostile environment that the UN and its various bodies present to Israel, Moratinos stressed that the Jewish state remained welcome and enjoyed friendly ties with many member countries.

It was my immense honour to represent World WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) in my capacity as head of public diplomacy and hasbara, a portfolio I hold as an executive member of the global leadership. WIZO has a noble history at the UN, holds consultative status on UNICEF (the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund) and ECOSOC (United Nations Economic and Social Council), and has representation lobbying for women’s issues in Geneva, Vienna, and New York.

**This new form of Holocaust revisionism is often used as a reference for issues without a clear understanding of the magnitude and severity of this genocide on the Jews.**

WIZO is a leading civil society organisation in Israel, and throughout our 100-year history, has demonstrated the ability to recognise antisemitism in our federations around the world and adapt and respond accordingly.

High on the agenda for many of the speakers, including myself, was the importance of adopting the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism across government, media, educational organisations, civil society, and various other bodies.

At the same time that this gathering took place, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, launched his initiative to get the UN as an international body to accept the IHRA definition. The rationale is that this move will obligate all of its organisations and member states to respect the parameters of defined antisemitism, and limit some of the incitement against Israel.

The other major area of concern is social media. Although some progress has been made in addressing and countering hate speech, social media platforms need to develop tools for defining antisemitic language.

This isn’t an attempt to crack down on free speech, but rather to address the hate-filled rhetoric that is prevalent on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

In my address, I spoke about the vulnerability of young people to hate-filled messaging. I also spoke about the need to engage and educate social media influencers who understand and identify with the language of social justice but have little or no knowledge about the Holocaust.

This new form of Holocaust revisionism is often used as a reference for issues without a clear understanding of the magnitude and severity of this genocide of the Jews.

Speakers expressed unanimous concern about the potential dangers of social media,

especially during this global pandemic when Jews are routinely blamed for the spread of COVID-19 and conspiracy theories abound.

It was clear just how big a problem unchecked hate speech is on social media. One of my recommendations was to make it mandatory by law for anyone signing up to give their full name and identity so that it makes it difficult for individuals to hide behind avatars.

“Antisemitism is a shared problem. Social media have to act responsibly,” said Dr Robert Williams, the deputy director of international affairs at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Antisemitism is worse now than at any point since 1948. The time to act is now before it’s too late, and we must do it together.”

The conference on 15 March was a very strong start in the global effort to look at more holistic ways to approach the problem of rising antisemitism. UN facilitators who acknowledged WIZO’s work noted how important it is to have women present in these discussions.

This historic gathering, which brought together some of the most respected experts, is proof that the UN recognises the veracity of the problem and the imperative to make combatting it a priority. The work starts now.

• *Rolene Marks is World WIZO Executive for Public Diplomacy and Hasbara, and is co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.*



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# The individuals who defied Nazi oppression

JORDAN MOSHE

When Berlin resident Hertha Reis was evicted from her home in 1941 because she was Jewish, she had no qualms about denouncing the Nazi regime.

In front of the Berlin courthouse, she exclaimed boldly, “We lost everything. Because of the damned government, we finally lost our home, too. This thug Hitler, the damned government, the damned people. Just because we are Jews, we are discriminated against.”

The narrative that Jews were lead like lambs to the slaughter is being challenged. Contrary to popular belief, thousands of Jews in Nazi Germany resisted the regime.

That’s according to history professor Wolf Gruner, who last week accounted for hundreds of Jewish individuals like Reis who thumbed their noses at Hitler and his followers.

“Defiance and protest are really important because they challenge the popular belief that there was no resistance,” Gruner said in a webinar co-hosted by The Base and the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

“We often hear people say that the Jews didn’t resist. I broke these stereotypes.”

Indeed, Gruner has spent years uncovering evidence of Jewish resistance to Nazi rule, spanning from the early 1930s well into the 1940s.

“There are even stories of open protest during the war,” said Gruner. “After eight years of Nazi rule, Jews still had the courage to resist. It challenges the widespread belief that there was passive suffering under the Nazis.”

According to Gruner, the perception of passivity has been nourished by the fact that historians typically discuss resistance mostly in terms of organised, group, and armed resistance, neglecting individual acts.

“When one applies this new definition to an analysis

of Nazi society, it produces astonishing results of individual opposition,” Gruner said.

His research has revealed many instances of individual resistance. Photographs of Jewish men and women protesting, openly standing in front of anti-Jewish signs, or seated on benches reserved for Aryans aren’t uncommon, suggesting a diverse array of acts which defied Nazi rule.

“Most historians would look at Nazi sources like administrative reports or use diaries and memoirs to find proof,” said Gruner. “Most of these didn’t really mention individual acts of resistance. My research is based on much unexplored material.”

Gruner combed through hundreds of German police logbooks housed in German state archives,

uncovering thousands of reports (though brief) which provide evidence of public protests by individual Jews.

“I was struck,” he said. “After 20 years of research, I had never come across this type of protest. I followed up to see what became of these Jews, and found that many were sent to special courts which were usually used to punish Germans for political protest. Dozens of Jews protested and were sentenced.”

This proved true across the Reich, with acts of defiance taking place in Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, and further afield.

“Against the boycott of Jewish shops, individuals intervened with petitions in the 1930s,” said Gruner. “This lasted well into the 1940s. Records show that immediately after the Nazis came to power, Jews protested in public, criticising the beating of Jews and their torture in the early camps.”

In fact, records reveal that Jews didn’t stop with verbal criticism but resisted in other ways. Throughout the

1930s, many were arrested for besmearing antisemitic newspapers, contesting the Hitler salute, or destroying Nazi flags and posters.

In 1936, for example, David Bornstein tried to destroy the logo of the swastika on a public bus, scratching it with his walking stick. He was jailed for five weeks, and after subsequent interment in a labour camp, fled to British mandate Palestine.

“In Berlin in 1935 there was a wave of anti-Jewish demonstration,” Gruner said. “Against this movement, a flyer was found in German mailboxes written by a Jew.” He wrote, “Germany is a disgrace. I am a Jew who is loyal to the emperor. Germany should expel the foreigner Hitler. Down with Hitler!”

Jews ignored municipal bans on using public spaces and pools, some speaking out and even cursing Hitler in public. Jewish men even got into brawls, taking on storm troopers or their antisemitic neighbours.

Such was the case with Fritz Josephthal, who accosted Julius Streicher, the editor of the infamously discriminatory journal, *Der Sturmer*, after the publication ran a scathing article about his late father.

Josephthal’s niece, herself a Holocaust survivor, recounted in a video, “*Der Sturmer* ran an article about my uncle’s father, Dr Josephthal, saying that that bodies of virgins and children were found in his basement and their blood had been used for Pesach.”

Fritz Josephthal had been an officer in World War I, and when he read the story, he donned his uniform, pinned on his medals, and went to Streicher’s office.

“He marched in, pushed past the receptionist, and walked up to Streicher’s desk,” said his niece. “He said, ‘Did you know Dr Josephthal?’ When Streicher said no, my uncle said, ‘then meet his son’, and beat Streicher in the face with his riding crop.” Astonishingly, Streicher never sought a reprisal.

Contesting Nazi propaganda, oral and written protest, defying restrictions, and self-defence against attacks all classify as resistance, said Gruner.

“We can understand for the first time why there is a trope of so-called ‘impudent Jews’ in Gestapo reports. Historians thought they put it in to justify harsher measures, but now we can say it actually refers to real opposition and protest.”



Lizi Rosenfeld on a park bench with a sign ‘For Aryans Only’, August 1938, Vienna

Photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

# How to be Jewish beyond the pandemic

STEVEN GRUZD

“Don’t be scared of the virtual. When our ancestors tried to recreate the exodus every Pesach, they struggled with how to make the virtual real,” said Rabbi Irwin Kula, the president of the United States-based National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, in considering COVID-19’s impact on the Jewish world.

“What makes us human beings is the ability to see beyond the overt, the surface,” he said during an online Limmud South Africa event on 10 March that focused on finding our place in a vaccinated world.

Adina Roth, the moderator and co-chair of Limmud South Africa, asked Kula and two other panellists what they foresaw for the Jewish community going forward after a year that had upended conventional communal life.

Kula took a postmodernist approach. “My sense is that everything is going to be happening,” he said, “Consolidation and de-consolidation, more virtual and less virtual, more physical presence and less physical presence . . . The key word is ‘emergent’, and by definition, we cannot predict it. We haven’t turned off communal life, in fact, many have had more Jewish connections under COVID-19 than in the past decade because of access.”

Rabbi Shoshana Boyd Gelfand leads the Pears Foundation’s international development grants, interfaith projects, and leadership development programmes from London.

“I compare coming out of lockdown to Noah emerging from the Ark,” she said. “Noah’s first act was one of gratitude – he builds an altar. The second is to get drunk, to numb the pain, loss, and grief. We have been traumatised as a community for the past year, living with deep uncertainty and loss. We need to honour both

these emotions.

“Virtual gathering is an amazing tool and is creating mini-communities,” Boyd Gelfand said, “but I miss the conversations with my son on the walk to shul.”

Daniel Taub, a British-born Israeli diplomat, international lawyer, and writer, said the pandemic had showed how strengths can be weaknesses.

“Take the Haredi [ultra-religious] community.

They have such devotion to community, study, and respect for leaders, but there is tremendous crisis there and opposition to change.” The Haredim have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Said Boyd Gelfand, “Judaism is part of our connective tissue. Part of Jewish life and creating community is how we are habituated to daily, weekly, and annual customs and rituals. It helps to keep the muscles of community strong. COVID-19 has disrupted our habits. The danger is that we can’t go back to the old ways, and we don’t replace them with new muscles that are equally robust. We have the opportunity to be intentional about the kind of muscles we want to build. Toned down Bnei-mitzvah have shown us it’s not about the napkin colours or the magician. It’s about what really matters in a coming-of-age ceremony. We have had to find new ways to reach out in *shivah*.”

She spoke about her son’s uncertainty whether he could attend an Israel summer programme due to COVID-19. “If he doesn’t go, this disrupts the whole

ecosystem. It has an impact on his budding relationship with Israel. We want to have that scaffolded at every stage of the life cycle. While much can be done online, there are some things he will miss out on. You can’t replicate the experience of being on the bus, maybe snogging a girl at the back!” She said that technology could be the gift that helped to sustain a love of Israel.

“Technology is good for the doing, but not for the being,” Taub said, “We haven’t figured it all out . . . we are missing the kiddush at shul and fighting over fish-balls!”

Kula emphasised the pluralism that online interaction unleashes. “A future challenge will be managing many more voices than we’ve ever had to manage before. Umbrella bodies and legacy institutions will have to retool.”

He believes technology can unlock so much in Judaism. “There’s an explosion of voices of the excluded, repressed, and marginalised. There is a fluidity and porousness of boundaries between groups, tribes, religions, and peoples.”

Taub warns, however, that lockdown’s psychological issues will play out over a long time once we open up again. “In Israel, the thought that the pandemic is a great leveller and treats all the same – a message of universality and social cohesion – is sadly not always the way it has played out. It has strained fragile relations between the Haredim and the rest of society.”

Taub emphasised Limmud’s role as an enabler. It has constantly renewed itself “through the wisdom of crowds”. Like every institution, it must evolve and remain relevant.

Boyd Gelfand ended off by reminding the audience that Limmud meant “learning”, and created micro communities as part of its magic. “Learning is a dynamic process, we are all struggling, we are all learning. Lean into the discomfort. And historically, Jews learn together, whether in *chevrutah* (pairs that study Talmud together), or in a *minyán*.”

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# Young filmmakers awarded for tale of Holocaust survivor

TALI FEINBERG

It's not often that twenty-somethings are given the chance to tell a 99-year-old Holocaust survivor's harrowing story on screen, but clearly Jordy Sank and Gabriella Blumberg had the magic touch. Their film received the Audience Award for best documentary at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival on 11 March 2021.

Sank, the director, and producer Blumberg's feature-length documentary *I Am Here*, depicts Ella Blumenthal's Holocaust testimony as never before.

"It's an unprecedented time, when you don't have cinemas and the audience next to you, laughing and crying, so to get the Audience Award is really validating for us," says Blumberg.

Sank, a Herzlia alumnus, has wanted to make this film since he was a teenager from the moment he met Blumenthal. "I've met many Holocaust survivors before, but none were quite like her. I was at a Shabbat dinner, and I remember her telling some really harrowing stories about her experience in the concentration camps. Then a few minutes later, she was dancing and singing. That struck me – that one could go from the pits of hell and come out alive, and still have this positive outlook."

The film opens with dramatic scenes of antisemitism in the 21st century, including the infamous Charlottesville rally in 2018, emphasising that the discrimination Blumenthal faced is alive and well.. The film uses 2D animation to bring her memories to life, "allowing the audience to be there with her", says Sank.

This is achieved through beautiful, heart wrenching, but understated scenes. We are there as Blumenthal and her few remaining family members hide in the Warsaw ghetto and watch as it burns to the ground. We are there in the overcrowded cattle car that takes her to Majdanek, and we are taken inside a gas chamber where she thought her final moments would be. In between, Sank allows the audience to join Blumenthal's intimate 98th birthday celebration, where she laughed, cried, and remembered with her family. Through it all, one gets to

know a woman who has an irrepressible zest for life, an unshakeable faith, and endless gratitude.

Blumberg, a King David Linksfield alumnus, and Sank have been passionate about theatre, drama, storytelling, and film since a young age. After studying film and working in the advertising industry, Sank started his own film company. Blumberg, meanwhile, studied at acclaimed London institutions and was working in filmmaking and teaching drama. The two knew each other from Bnei Akiva camp, and when they bumped into each other and Sank shared his aspiration to make a film about Blumenthal's life, Blumberg immediately wanted to get on board.

The team knew that time was of the essence, and once they had Blumenthal and her family's agreement, they moved quickly to start filming, beginning in March 2019. A year later, when the pandemic hit, they were already in post-production.

"We felt that it was now or never," Sank says. "People needed to be inspired by this amazing woman, to hear what she has been through."

While the film was mostly privately funded, they were also given a grant by the Claims Conference, which backed Oscar-winning Holocaust film, *Son of Saul*.

For Sank, the toughest scene to direct was "when Ella saw her father for the last time ... especially because this was contrasted with beautiful memories from childhood.



Ella Blumenthal

There was so much raw emotion."

For Blumberg, the scene where Blumenthal's niece, Roma, (her only surviving family member) comes to her at Auschwitz and says that they should give up and electrocute themselves on the fence, was heartbreaking and meaningful.

"Ella says no, and she recalls that at that moment 'the will of survival was awakened in me'. It

would have been easy to give up, and to find that strength not only for yourself but for your last family member... it's remarkable," she says.

Sank says they wanted to show how full and vibrant Blumenthal's life is now, as well as the busy, beautiful life which was stolen by the Shoah. One scene of Blumenthal swimming recalls how "she loved to swim ever since she was a young girl. Her brother taught her, and she used to swim in the Vistula River every day in Warsaw.

"In the film, she talks about her first bath after liberation, and she was still swimming almost every day before the pandemic. It epitomises her zest for life," says Blumberg. "When we were shooting that scene, we said, 'Do one or two laps, then take a break'. But she insisted on swimming ten laps. She didn't stop for a second!" says Sank.

Asked about the meaning of the film's title, *I Am Here*, Blumberg says, "When she was in the camps, a Nazi saw her tattoo and asked, 'Why are you still here? There is no

one else with your numbers left.' She is still here ... and with this film, her story will continue forever."

The pair hopes that the film will be a "catalyst for conversation about the danger of discrimination". In addition, they hope people will be inspired by Ella's personality. "A year into COVID-19, everyone has experienced trauma, so we hope people will leave the film with her sense of joy and gratitude," Blumberg says.

Blumenthal says she feels "honoured and humbled that my life story has been recorded. While the film focuses on my life, I feel privileged to be able to represent the millions who perished and perhaps I can in some small way speak for them too.

"It's very difficult for me to re-live my experience, which is why it took me so long to be able to share it," she says. "But seeing it on screen made me feel proud and also made me wonder how I actually managed to survive and then go on to raise a family and live a normal life. It also made me realise that even though Hitler tried to destroy us, we are here, stronger than ever."

Blumenthal says she enjoyed making the film. "There were many full days and many different locations. But I had a lot of fun with the crew, and I even had nicknames for each one of them. Jordy made me feel so comfortable and relaxed, so it was easier for me to re-live my life story."

She hopes the message will be passed from generation to generation. "Antisemitism is rampant at the moment, so it's important that we counter it. I also would like people to see that understanding and love are necessary in place of hate and bigotry. In that way, it's possible to live a life filled with joy and happiness no matter the difficulties one encounters."

Her take on the title is that, "Throughout my life and during the darkest times, I would always say that I was grateful to be here, and to be spared. Every morning, I'm thankful for another day. This mantra eventually became the obvious choice for the film's title."

• The film is showing on film festival circuits. To find out when it will be released locally, follow @sankturyfilms on Instagram and Facebook.

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# A legacy of goodwill: farewell to the Zulu King

TRIBUTE

PROFESSOR ANTONY ARKIN



My apartment in Ra'anana is dominated by beautiful woven baskets, gifts of his majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu, the monarch of the Zulu nation, South Africa's largest ethnic group, whose death was announced last Friday.

King Goodwill has been the constitutional monarch of the Zulu nation since 1968, and was the sole trustee of the Ingonyama Trust Board, safeguarding about 2.8 hectares of KwaZulu-Natal's rural land on behalf of the Zulu nation.

In the words of President Cyril Ramaphosa, "His majesty will be remembered as a much loved visionary monarch who made an important contribution to cultural identity, national unity, and economic development in KwaZulu-Natal, and through this to the development of our country as a whole."

To the Jewish community, he was a stalwart friend and an ardent Zionist. A delegation of the South African Zionist Federation was warmly received at his palace in early 2012 as the king's guests at the Marula and dance ceremonies, where he expressed concern about the scourge of HIV and lack of food security.

A range of programmes initiated by the local Jewish community with the assistance of the Israeli embassy were discussed and welcomed. King Goodwill was touched that amongst his gifts was a JNF (Jewish National Fund) tree certificate that indicated that trees had been planted in his name in the South African Forest in Israel.

He was pleased to accept an invitation to visit Israel. It was the start of many meetings over the years. Some were small, intimate discussions, others part of large fora.

A few weeks later, our delegation, including

Ya'acov Finkelstein, the then Israeli deputy ambassador, met the king again at Nongoma, who was in discussion with all his tribal leaders (about 300 people) about a growth plan under



Photo: newspaper clipping

King Goodwill handing Antony Arkin his gift

the auspices of the Ingonyama Trust.

Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi and KwaZulu-Natal Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize were also present. Proposals for the South African Jewish community to bring medical and environmental expertise were gratefully accepted.

These included the building of a clinic situated at the Africa Centre in Mtubatuba, which is involved in extensive research on HIV/AIDS. It was agreed that the Jewish community would assist with a male-circumcision clinic, with experts to be brought by the Operation Abraham Collaborative of Israel. The Israeli embassy also offered advice on agricultural projects.

The Jewish community with the Dis-Chem Foundation went on to create a Community Wellness Centre at Mtubatuba with Princess Mogay, the king's daughter, who manages the royal household's engagement with outreach.

In addition, the Victor Daitz Foundation generously developed the medical-circumcision clinic in eMondlo in the Vryheid area.

King Goodwill also eagerly participated in Jewish communal events. He was guest of honour at the Yom Ha'atzmaut ceremony at the Israeli embassy in 2013. In his speech, he praised the ability of the Jewish people to rise above challenges, stipulating that he believed Israel's history was one filled with paradox and tragedy, but ultimately triumph. He also expressed the desire to co-operate further with us in the arena of agriculture, and to promote a youth exchange between the two countries.

King Goodwill and his wife, Her Royal Highness Queen Kwalindizulu, were keynote speakers and guests of honour at one of the largest community events in Durban – A Night to Honour Jerusalem. More than 500 attendees, members of the KwaZulu-Natal Jewish community and Christian Zionists, came to the Durban Jewish Centre for this.

"Operation Abraham remains the strongest bond binding KwaZulu-Natal and Israel together for many years to come. When I announced the revival of circumcision, I received support from a team of experts in Jerusalem. They offered to collaborate with me and the department of health to drive the circumcision campaign," his majesty said. "A few months ago, I was informed that more than 20 000 young men in KwaZulu-Natal had been circumcised without any complications, none had died."

Over the past decade, one of the most serious issues confronting the Jewish community is the attempt by factions in the South African government to promote the boycott of Israel.

## A brocha fit for a King

TRIBUTE

RABBI ALEX CARLEBACH



Former Johannesburg major, the late David Neppe, held an official dinner at the city council mayoral banquet hall to honour the late King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu.

As chaplain, I discussed the idea of making a *brocha* over a king. After all, this king had even more power over his people, than, say, the queen of England. I suggested to Neppe that when the king entered, I begin proceedings with a short explanation of *sheva mitzvos bnei noach* (the Torah laws that all nations of the

world should observe) and recite the appropriate *brocha*.

The king entered with a lot of pomp and ceremony. His subjects all bowed, and some prostrated to the ground. I gave my little speech, and recited the appropriate blessing in Hebrew which I then translated: "*Baruch ata Hashem elokeynu melech ha-olam shechalak meekvodo libassar vidam* [Blessed are you, Lord, king of the universe, who has given of his glory to flesh and blood.]"

It made a favourable impression. During the banquet, the king

approached me, saying, "This is the first time anyone has ever blessed me in the original language of the Bible, in Hebrew. I believe in the G-d-given Bible. I appreciate your blessing very much."

So ended an evening which left a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's name) on all those who attended.

• Rabbi Alex Carlebach is the rabbi at Chabad of Lyndhurst in Johannesburg.

Immediately after the former Deputy Minister of International Relations, Ebrahim Ebrahim, unveiled the policy, Israel's then ambassador, Dov Segev-Steinberg, stated that the king had accepted an invitation to visit Israel. "He vowed to use his official visit to explore ways to intensify co-operation between South Africa and Israel, especially between the Zulu people and Israeli people," said Segev-Steinberg.

The ambassador believed that the king's commitment to visit was "a sign that Israel still has good friends in this country, friends who are happy and willing

to share experiences and ensure love and respect for Israel".

Your majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu, you were an honoured and treasured supporter of the South African Jewish community. We salute you, and wish you hamba kahle, baba.

• Professor Antony Arkin is the immediate past-chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Zionist Council and served as the National Treasurer of the South African Zionist Federation for 20 years.

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# Herzlia - top NSC school in SA

TALI FEINBERG

Ripples of pride, joy, and nachas spread from the Cape Town Jewish community around the world as news broke on 13 March 2021 on career website Gradesmatch that United Herzlia Schools (UHS) was the top performing National Senior Certificate (NSC) school in South Africa.

The site measures a school's performance based on distinctions per learner using data gathered from the Department of Basic Education. Herzlia came out tops, with 4.281



Herzlia High Junior SLC celebrating UHS Top Performing School

distinctions per learner, outperforming competitive schools like Herschel Girls School and Bishops Diocesan College.

"There are many ways of ranking schools, and no one set of statistics tells a full story. By any ranking method, however, 4.28 distinctions per candidate for a co-educational, inclusive community school is astonishing, and to be ranked as the top performing school in the country by this criterion is wonderful beyond words," Herzlia High School Principal Marc Falconer told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Said UHS Executive Director Andries van Renssen, "We embarked on a journey to focus on the future and modernise, improve, and become more relevant. This has brought about changes in the way we teach, assess, and engage with pupils. So, we are pleased that the way Herzlia is evolving on this journey has already created change – last year we were number six on this same list, and this year we are number one!

"We are really proud of our results, but academic results are just one parameter of success. We want to reach the pinnacle of success in other spheres like sport, innovation, and *menschlichkeit* as well."

Said Falconer, "It's with humility, gratitude, and appreciation that we acknowledge the quite incredible achievements of our 2020 matric group. We are, however, aware that for the majority of schools in the country, a full online

learning programme wasn't practicable or even possible [during lockdown].

"While this doesn't diminish the dedication, focus, and hard work of the matriculants or the expertise and commitment of teachers and support of parents, it does humble us and make us aware of our privilege and our responsibilities. We wish our matric group *mazaltov*, and congratulate our teachers, support staff, and counselling department for an extraordinary performance that fills us with delight and pride."

# Teaching a language to stay alive

FILM REVIEW

JORDAN MOSHE

Could you teach someone to speak a language that doesn't exist if your life depended on it? This is the question which Holocaust film *Persian Lessons* raises, and though it may at times stretch credibility, its consideration of what it means to remember is compelling.

Directed by Ukrainian-American film maker Vadim Perelman, *Persian Lessons* is a unique piece of cinema which doesn't fit neatly into the typical mould of Holocaust films. The film is based on a novella written by Wolfgang Kohlhaase, and rather than claiming to be historically accurate, presents itself as being "inspired by true events", though without explanation.

Set in occupied France in 1942, *Persian Lessons* tells the story of a young Belgian man called Gilles (Nahuel Pérez Biscayart), who survives being executed by a Nazi firing squad by convincing them that he's not Jewish, but Persian. He bases his claim on a book of Persian legends, acquired only moments before in exchange for half a sandwich. His luck holds out, and Gilles is taken to a transit camp where a culinarily inclined SS officer, Klaus Koch, (Lars Eidinger) happens to need a Persian to teach him Farsi.

Unfortunately, the Persian pretender knows only a single word in the Persian language, but he (very) easily convinces Koch (whose unorthodox post-war aspiration is to open a restaurant in Tehran) that he is up to the task. Adopting the name Reza Joon, the wily Gilles devises a gibberish tongue, drawing inspiration from the names of Jewish prisoners who are incarcerated in the camp.

Joon and Koch's relationship develops as the language tutelage unfolds, but the former's cover is frequently threatened not just by his own memory, but by camp staff who feel that their superior has been duped by a cunning Jew. When he's not teaching or memorising reams of contrived words, Joon works in the kitchen or interacts with his fellow Jewish inmates, whose plight leaves him wracked with guilt.

Unlike many Holocaust films, *Persian Lessons* avoids

especially harrowing depictions of camp life, and also aims to go beyond presenting Nazis as stock trope murderers. Unsettling though this may be, it enhances the poignancy of Nazi brutality, leaving viewers with perhaps more to contemplate.

"I wanted to show the transformation Koch goes through. He's able to communicate things in invented Farsi language, things he couldn't say in German, taboo things," Perelman said in an interview. "I found it fascinating to portray the growth



A screenshot from *Persian Lessons*

of this person, his humanisation, and the fact that through this language, he is able to reach and show certain parts of himself that he wasn't able to perform in German."

Language, too, humanises the victims

of Nazi terror, their names preserved not on paper but in the dynamism of the spoken word in spite of the inherent difficulty of memorisation.

"Inventing them isn't the problem," Joon says of teaching his false Farsi. "It's remembering them, that's the issue. There will always be more."

Holocaust memory is one of the film's strongest themes, as observed by Perelman.

"Gilles transforming prisoners' names into foreign-language words is immortalising them," he says. "During the war, there were all those people who vanished completely and remained unknown because all the archives and registers of the camp were burnt by the Nazis."

Ultimately, *Persian Lessons* may beggar belief at certain times, but its emotive invocation of memory and the act of remembering expressed through the metaphor of language presents a powerful and poignant message.

• *Persian Lessons* will be released in South Africa on 19 March.

## George Mendelsohn, a great Maccabian, turns 90

Maccabi South Africa wishes lifelong Maccabian, George Mendelsohn, a happy 90th birthday.

Born in Berlin, Germany, on 12 March 1931, George left Germany five years later with his mother and sister on The Stuttgart, the last ship to bring Jewish refugees from Germany to South Africa.

He joined Maccabi South Africa, becoming a respected administrator and leader of the organisation for more than 20 years.

George attended seven Maccabi Games in various capacities: 1973 (football manager/coach); 1977 (SA team assistant manager); 1981 (general manager); 1985 (head of delegation); 1989 (joint



Maccabi SA Sports Director Jarred Gronemann and George Mendelsohn

head of delegation); 1993 (joint head of delegation); and 1997 (Yakir Award recipient).

He served as chairperson of Maccabi SA from 1982 to 1987. He became honorary life president in 1994. In 1997, he received the prestigious global Yakir Award, which is the highest honour bestowed by Maccabi World Union for outstanding services to Maccabi.

George and Barbara (married for 64 years) have three children, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. George's son, Alan, competed in judo at the 1981 Maccabi Games, winning a bronze medal, and he was judo manager at the 1997 games. Grandsons Jay Budler competed in rugby in 2009, and Natan Mendelsohn in soccer in 2013.

Please see our website [www.sajr.co.za](http://www.sajr.co.za) for all our youth and community stories this week.

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### Letters

#### ISRAEL CENTRE ENDEAVOURS TO ASSIST GAP-YEAR APPLICANTS

In regard to the article, "Student barred from gap year speaks out" (*SA Jewish Report*, 12 March 2021), we would like to clarify that the Israel Centre wasn't involved in this application process.

We are sorry for the negative experience that Demi Putziger has had with the organisers of this gap-year programme.

This particular programme handles its own applications. We have been in contact with the organisers, and they have assured us that in future, applicants will be made aware of their specific programme-entrance criteria at the onset of the process.

The Israel Centre offers a variety of gap-year programmes and Livnat Katz, our Masa Israel Journey representative, endeavours to assist all applicants and explain the various gap-year opportunities available. We urge all school leavers and students to contact the Israel Centre and Katz in particular to explore their options.

Masa Israel Journey is the global leader in immersive experiences for young diaspora Jews, lasting four to 12 months for ages between 18-30. Whether it be programmes involving Jewish studies, academic studies, career development, touring, volunteering, and much more, Masa offers countless opportunities in Israel.

Automatic grants are available for programmes, and candidates that fall under Israel's Law of Return (like Demi) are eligible for a Masa grant.

Each Masa programme has different acceptance criteria, which we explain to each potential participant.

Our goal is to help anyone who wishes to go to Israel, and to find the right programme suitable for them.

Demi is welcome to contact us for further assistance. We sincerely hope this clarifies any misunderstandings.

The Israel Centre remains committed to strengthening the connection between the South African Jewish community and Israel. - **Liat Amar-Arran, director of the Israel Centre; Livnat Katz, Masa Israel Journey representative SA** ([marketing@israelcentre.co.za](mailto:marketing@israelcentre.co.za) | 011 645 2574)



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# Seeing red over digital blackface

One of the few good things to come out of the Oprah interview with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry on 7 March were the spectacular memes. Whereas the couple were predictably dull and sad, Oprah was her expressive wonderful self during the conversation. It was no surprise therefore that some of the scenes were turned into memes that went viral. This is also why I found myself using one of them on social media in response to a post.

I might have anticipated one of my children telling me that it wasn't appropriate or cool for a guy in his (early) 50s to use memes the way I was doing. I might also have anticipated that a few well-meaning friends would point out that I'm not nearly as woke as I might think I am. But I didn't anticipate that someone would refer me to an article that suggested that I might be guilty of perpetrating a "digital blackface".

By now, even the latest adapters are aware of the offensive nature of "blackface". The concept has theatrical roots in the United States in the 19th century, when makeup was used on white actors to portray a caricature of a black person. It was a form of racial stereotyping that still causes hurt today.

Digital blackfacing is a progression of this concept. It's defined as "an online phenomenon where white folk share gifs and photos of black folk to express emotion or reaction to anything happening on the internet. It's another way people try to co-opt black identity and culture without any of the day-to-day realities of being black."

Hold on a moment! I might have been doing a lot of things with my meme, but I was certainly not co-opting Oprah's culture without appreciating her day-to-day realities of being black. I can't even imagine how black culture enters into the use of the meme.

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Whereas conversations around "cancel culture" are all the rage right now, not nearly enough is said about its evil twin "opinion disqualification". Often seen in the form of an instruction to "stay in your lane", opinion disqualification is a serious and cognitively terminal disease. The basic tenet is that unless we fit into the lane (as defined from time to time by social media), we lose all right to participate in any dialogue.

On a broad, practical level this means that men aren't qualified to opine on gender issues, and that only people of colour can comment on issues of racism. But that's just the starting point, because if the goal is to disqualify an opinion based on the identity of the holder, there's really no limit to which this can be applied.

There is no doubt that some measure of this is reasonable. And as Jews, it's not difficult to relate to this on some level. A recent BBC panel debating whether Jews are to be considered a minority was thought to be offensive as a result of low representation in the discussion. Jews hate being told what is and what isn't antisemitic, much like a woman might reject being told by a man what is and isn't misogynistic.

The answer to this apparent quagmire is surprisingly simple. Awareness, sensitivity, and the ability to think. Given the opportunity again, I would use the Oprah meme. I will think twice as to whether I'm stereotyping, but I also fully intend to embrace the magnificent personalities of those around me by not staying anywhere near my lane.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Bringing hatemongers to book



## ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

One of the more unfortunate consequences of the online communication revolution is that it has given bigots, cranks, and conspiracy theorists of every stripe easily accessible platforms to propagate their noxious views. South Africa has certainly had its fair share of these cyberspace hatemongers, but few in our experience have matched the sheer virulence and persistence of local Nazi wannabe Jan Lamprecht.

In July last year, the Board, in the name of South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Council chairperson, Professor Karen Milner, laid a crimen injuria charge against Lamprecht for persistently propagating a particularly radical brand of antisemitism, including incitement to violence, on his various online platforms. This spawned a number of court actions.

Lamprecht's reaction to the charge was to post Milner's picture and personal details along with disparaging comments about her on his website, resulting in her receiving hate mail. In October, Milner successfully applied to the Randburg Magistrates Court for a protection order against Lamprecht in terms of which he was prohibited from engaging or attempting to engage in harassment by publishing any pictures/photos or references to her on any social media platform or websites, and was required to remove all such material previously posted by him within 48 hours of the order.

It soon emerged that Lamprecht had not only failed to remove certain relevant items, but had posted further offensive material. The

SAJBD accordingly applied to the same court for a warrant of arrest to be issued against him for violating the conditions of the interim protection order.

We were once again successful, with the court confirming the issuing of the warrant last Thursday, 11 March 2021. It was, as we noted in our media statement, a major milestone and is indicative of the court's stance that it won't tolerate contempt of its court orders and will authorise the arrest of people who do so.

We appeared in court again this week, this time for a scheduled hearing into whether or not the court would confirm the interim protection order. However, in the end, the hearing was rescheduled to 19 April.

The fact that the SAJBD has been able to bring to book those guilty of inciting hatred and harm against our community is in large part due to those who over the decades have so generously put their skills and resources at its disposal. As with previous high-profile antisemitism cases it has taken on over the past several years, the SAJBD has been represented throughout in this latest matter by Ian Levitt Attorneys. I take this opportunity of thanking Ian, advocate Laurance Hodes, and the rest of their superb team for all they have done and continue to do to protect the safety and civil rights of South African Jewry.

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

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

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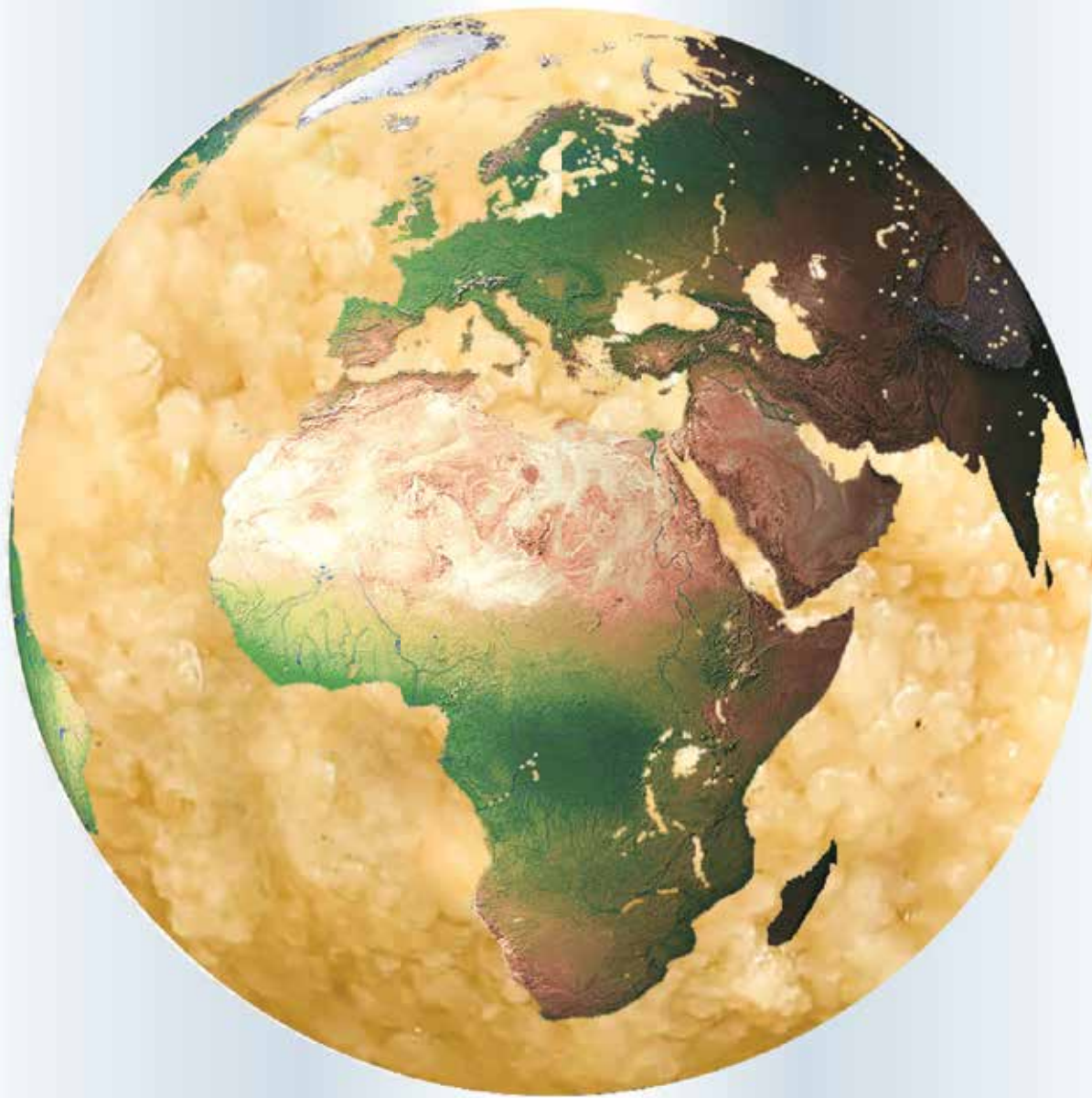


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# Linksfield Ridge hike offers spectacular vista of history

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) South Africa hosted a tour of Linksfield Ridge on Sunday, 14 March, a series of *koppies* with spectacular views to the north and south of Johannesburg.

The tour was guided by Joni Kowensky, a registered guide with the Parks Board who is very knowledgeable about the history, geography, and flora and fauna of the ridge, starting with its real name, the Harvey Park Small Bird and Buck Sanctuary.

The ridge has spectacular panoramic views of the Magaliesberg and Pretoria to the north and vistas to the south of Johannesburg. Hikers learnt about various native plants such as “Bushmen’s Dagga” (Lion Tail) and our country’s national flower, the Protea, of which they viewed more than 50 along the trail. They viewed ruins (stone circles and structures) and rock art, which have various timelines extending back to 400



Participants of the hike on Linksfield Ridge

odd years ago. The walk in the reserve ended at the entrance to Kallenbach Drive, which is more than 100 years old and was constructed by a close friend of Mahatma Gandhi, Herman Kallenbach, who was a Jewish architect and a

passionate Zionist. Kallenbach left a large portion of his considerable estate for the development of Israel. Gandhi recorded walking and meditating on the ridge. Participants also had the opportunity to share their knowledge with the group about the surroundings, and got to see the enormous contribution South African Jews made to the development of Johannesburg.

One of the positive aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has given us the impetus to take part in new and exciting discovery. Hikes like this emphasise the amazing sites on our doorstep. They are part of the KKL-JNF’s promotion of the environment here and in Israel, where the organisation has created leisure and picnic areas, hiking and cycling trails, and promotes summer camps.

For more details, or to join hikes or other events, call 011 645 2579 or email b.schneider@jnfsa.co.za.

## WIZO recognises women who do good



The WIZO Executive Committee 2021

WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organisation) Johannesburg held its 107th annual general meeting via Zoom on 4 March 2021 with Joceline Basserabie in the chair. Rabbi Ryan Goldstein gave a meaningful *dvar torah*, linking the *parsha* of the week with the worth of women who do so much good.

World WIZO President Esther Mor and World WIZO chairperson Anita Friedman gave short addresses from Israel. Newly-elected WIZO South Africa President Shelley Friedman spoke about the vital work of WIZO in the future.

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), spoke about the valuable work done by the SAZF and the historic links it has with WIZO. Bev Goldman, the national president of the Union of Jewish Women, brought a goodwill message from the Combined Jewish Women committee.

Basserabie presented the chairman’s report on behalf of co-chairpersons Nava Gonen and Anat

Shevel, and Janine Rabbie presented the treasurer’s report, both reflecting the difficulties of a year of COVID-19, with hope for a better year ahead. Basserabie thanked Lauren Phillips for her hard work as organising secretary over the past year with all its challenges.

A video was shown of Neve WIZO, WIZO South Africa’s special project, which consists of five cottages, five sets of house parents, and 40 youth who cannot live in their home environments. They receive physical, emotional, and scholastic mentoring from a team of dedicated social workers, psychologists, therapists, and tutors.

Alex Azerad, social worker at Neve WIZO, described some of the challenges that the children faced during lockdown away from their homes, with added restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Award certificates were presented to Andrea Wainer, Kim Wainer, Andy Schwartz, and Evelyn Furman for their huge contribution to WIZO over the past year.

## KDL kids chart family legacies

Weeks of marking ancestors’ travels on maps, discovering family heirlooms, and interviewing relatives culminated in a My Family Story art exhibition at King David Linksfield (KDL) Senior Primary on 4 March. The Grade 7s came to school with three-dimensional models made of wood, beads, fabric, and light-displays containing treasures of personal stories highlighting family journeys and values.

“This may be the most significant project a child will ever do,” said Shelly Freinkel, the head of the school. “More important than any curriculum is knowing, internalising, and continuing the legacy of one’s own family story.”

My Family Story is a worldwide initiative organised by Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People in Israel. This year’s winners from KDL are Benjamin Garb, Ava Gonen, and Jaimie Zwarenstein.



Ava Gonen



Jaimie Zwarenstein



Benjamin Garb

## KDVP seniors lead juniors in prayer

King David High School Victory Park Grade 11s are leading davening groups at the primary school, furthering the family atmosphere that exists among the four schools on the Victory Park campus.

Every day, a committed team of students runs the Grade 6 Ariel and Victory Park Primary School davening groups. They do a variety of activities including davening, learning about the prayers, and group workshops.

“We are proud of our Grade 11 group of prayer tutors, who are also gaining leadership experience through this programme,” says campus rabbi Mendel Rabinowitz.



King David Victory Park Grade 11 students lead morning davening for Grade 6

### Letters

#### FAREWELL TO THE MONARCH WHO SWAM AGAINST THE TIDE

It is with a deep sense of loss and sadness that I mourn the passing of his majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu. My condolences go out to his wives and children and the whole Zulu nation.

Zwelithini was the eighth Zulu monarch, and could trace his ancestry directly to King Mpande, the half-brother of King Shaka.

As a Jew and a Zionist, I appreciate the principled stand that the king took in swimming against the tide in government circles of unrestrained animosity towards Israel. I met him in 2012 at a celebration of Israel’s independence at the Israeli embassy. I was immensely impressed by his stately yet humble demeanour.

Later that year, when the South African government through the deputy foreign minister said that it was improper for any official to associate with Israel, the king promised to “intensify bilateral co-operation” with Israel, accepting an invitation from Israeli Ambassador Dov Segev-Steinberg to visit Israel.

On a previous trip to Israel, the king became aware of the incredible opportunities that

co-operation with Israel could offer his people, particularly in the “fields of health, agriculture, and education”.

In 2018, the king once again emphasised the importance of maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel in response to ongoing calls by the boycott movement and the ruling African National Congress to cut off diplomatic relations and recall ambassadors. The king went on to extoll the potential benefits co-operation with Israel offered in the fields of water security through desalination, food sustainability, and health.

“For South Africa to prosper, we firmly believe that it must take a stand in support of Israel, not against it. Today, unfortunately, there are other voices within our society that are demanding the opposite,” he said.

I hope that the king’s legacy of reaching out to Israel for the betterment of his people will continue, and will inspire policy makers to act in the interests of amity rather than of boycott.

– Ben Levitas, Cape Town



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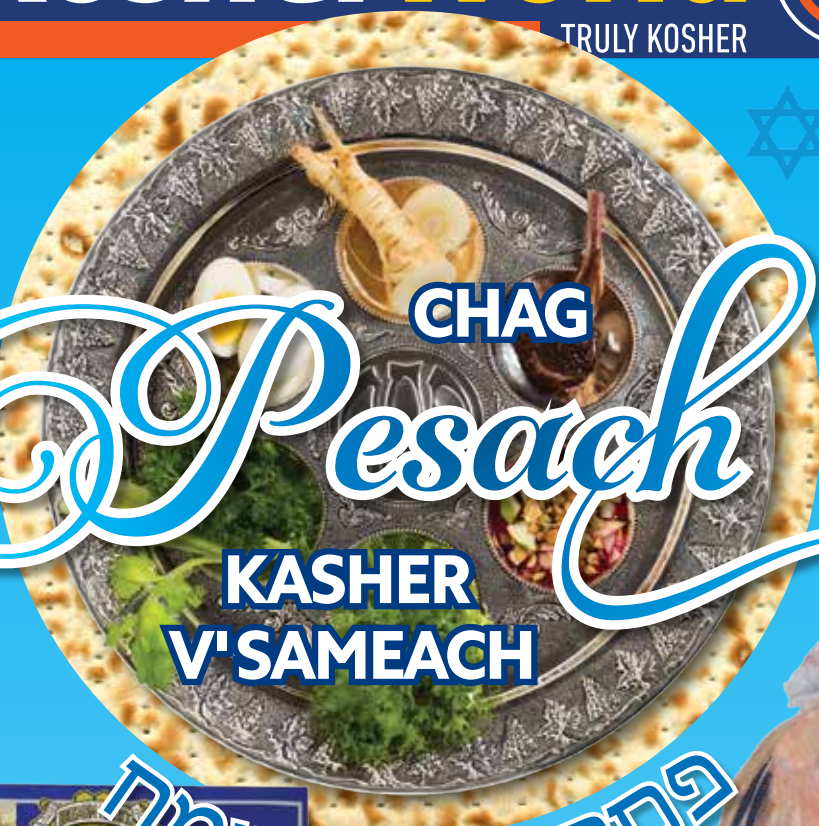


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