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First criminal conviction for antisemitism – a warning

NICOLA MILTZ

The first criminal conviction in an antisemitism case in South Africa may have an impact on how the courts will rule in pending cases where Jews are the subject of attack.

Matome Letsoalo, who lives in Limpopo, was last week found guilty in the Randburg Magistrates Court of crimen injuria – a crime defined as “unlawfully and intentionally impairing the dignity or privacy of another person” – for a string of vile and abusive posts targeting the Jewish community.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) described the verdict as a “major step forward in the battle against online antisemitism”.

The SAJBD’s attorney, Ian Levitt, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the conviction was important, and could serve as a lesson to others who attack the community.

“Criminal charges have been laid against others who have spewed their antisemitic hatred. I’m sure that this successful prosecution will find its way to them, and if they ignore this judgment, they will do so at their peril,” he said.

The case against Letsoalo, who pleaded guilty, goes back to June 2018 when he posted on Twitter, “@SAJBD The #Holocaust Will be like a Picnic When we are done with all you Zionist Bastards. Fuck All of You.” He attached an image of Holocaust victims. Later that day, he put out another post, which read, “@SAJBD Must get Decimated. We Can’t have Scandanavian Rats, Fake Jews, Zionist Bastards Running our Economy.” In subsequent Twitter exchanges with Jewish community members who

challenged him, he posted further abusive messages on his since blocked @JustSmartRage Twitter account.

Police eventually caught up with Letsoalo, who seemingly went to ground for nearly a year, tracking him down to Seshego township in Polokwane. At the time of his offensive posts, he also posted distressing Holocaust photographs, a swastika, and images of burning Israeli flags.

When criticised online for calling Jews “rats” and “scum”, he posted a picture of a semi-automatic weapon and tweeted, “I’m ready for you.” It’s believed that Letsoalo has been blocked from both Facebook and Twitter, and has been banned from writing for News24, where he has featured in the past.

At the time of the postings, Letsoalo also allegedly threatened Levitt in a tweet in which he said, “You won’t take me to court cause I would Shoot you Dead in front of Police. Don’t mistake me for the common Native.”

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SAJBD, said it was the first time the Board had gone the criminal route with an antisemitism case. “This is an important precedent in terms of future antisemitism cases, including other matters that we have sitting in the courts.”

Milton Shain, emeritus professor of historical studies at the University of Cape Town, welcomed the verdict.

“There should be no impunity for those making racist, sexist, antisemitic, and homophobic comments. This is a welcome decision. The Jewish community can take sustenance and be pleased that its efforts to quell ugly behaviour have borne fruit,” he said.

Meanwhile in a separate matter, the

SAJBD has laid a criminal case against Jan Lamprecht, describing him as a purveyor of pro-Nazi, white supremacist, and radical antisemitic ideologies.

Lamprecht, an English-speaking “ex-Rhodesian” who lives in Johannesburg, has allegedly spewed vicious hate against Jews and all people of colour for a number of years on social media.

He is prolific on social media, managing multiple websites including one called HistoryReviewed, and uses homemade YouTube videos to rant inflammatory racist material.

He lauds white supremacists, including Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue mass

shooter Robert Bowers, and Charleston Church mass killer Dylann Roof.

The SAJBD has applied for a protection order against Lamprecht following the abusive comments he made on social media targeting the Gauteng chairperson, Professor Karen Milner.

He posted a photograph of her online with disparaging comments about her, as well as some of her personal details, after she laid crimen injuria charges against

him. It resulted in her receiving further hate mail from local and international right-wing hate groups.

According to David Saks, SAJBD associate director, Lamprecht is part of a global network of ultra-right white supremacists whose ability to share and disseminate their ideology has been greatly facilitated by online communication.

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COVID-19 taking a toll on our teeth

JORDAN MOSHE

COVID-19 may be a respiratory disease, but our teeth are taking a knock from the stress of the pandemic and lockdown.

Dentists in the community confirm that the anxiety and psychological distress caused by current circumstances has resulted in a considerable increase in dental issues.

“We’ve seen a pattern of people coming in with jaw aches, chipped and broken teeth, and aches across the face as well,” says Dr Charles Joffe.

“Underlying stress often manifests in the mouth. People are always



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

stressed, so we usually see patients come in with issues caused by anxiety. However, people are under far more stress than usual, with uncertainty causing concern.

“While the dental problems stress is causing aren’t overly severe, we’ve definitely seen more stress-related injuries manifesting in the mouth,”

Joffe says.

Dr Stephen Hammerschlag agrees that increased stress due to the virus is making dental and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) issues worse.

“COVID-19 has played a part in every aspect of life since the

Continued on page 5>>



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SACC defends billboard protesting Israeli annexation

TALI FEINBERG

A billboard hangs over the highway on the way to OR Tambo International Airport loudly proclaiming: “Churches Against Israeli Annexation of Palestinian Land.” It displays the logos of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and Africa4Palestine (formerly the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) South Africa movement).

“The SACC is committed to social justice in South Africa and other countries, and annexation is injustice in our eyes,” SACC general secretary, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, told the *SA Jewish Report*. The billboard has been up since June.

The SACC is made up of about 30 churches and church bodies that have between 23 and 25 million followers in South Africa, and six non-governmental organisations. The organisation has an activist history, and was founded in 1968 as a way for Christian South Africans to have a united front against apartheid. Mpumlwana and his wife were active in the Black Consciousness Movement.

“While the SACC is made up of many different churches, our common cause is that we don’t do doctrine, we do social justice. So we need to respond to that commitment,” he says. “International law governs global relationships, and Israel is no exception. Our observation is that the 1 July decision to annex parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley virtually obliterates a future of two states living side by side with internationally recognised peace and security.”

To him, there are three options for Israel and the Palestinians, but only one is fair and sustainable. “The first – which we support – is that two states exist alongside each other, with peace and security for all. The second is that there is one state that’s democratic, which Israelis don’t want, as there will be a Palestinian majority. The third option, which is the option pursued by the Netanyahu government, is Israeli sovereignty over all the land.” This would lead to a minority ruling over a majority, he said, “and South African



photo: Ilan Ossendryver

The billboard over the highway to OR Tambo International Airport

Jews cannot have it both ways: abhorring apartheid here, but supporting it there.”

The SACC chose to erect the billboard to protest annexation, not Israel’s existence, Mpumlwana says. However, his statements in the general media and the SACC’s past actions sometimes conflict with this line. In an official statement on 25 June, he called on the international community to “consider comprehensive sanctions against Israel should it continue with the illegal annexation of Palestinian land”. In addition, the SACC has taken part in and endorsed Israel Apartheid Week for many years. Writing in *City Press* on 28 June, Mpumlwana stated, “The world must prevent Israel’s brand of apartheid, which will make Verwoerd’s designs look like a Sunday school play.”

When the *SA Jewish Report* pointed out that in its rhetoric, Africa4Palestine makes it clear that it doesn’t believe in Israel’s right to exist, the bishop said he was unaware of this when he asked the organisation to join him in erecting the billboard. “We walk the path of justice. Even if we disagree with others who choose to walk it, we don’t abandon it,” he said. “We defend Israel’s right to exist with the same vigour. We believe a Jewish state should exist, and we believe in a two-state solution.”

The billboard was part of a larger campaign on social media and to lobby organisations to oppose annexation, he said. Although the annexation was put on hold thanks to the Abraham Accords with the United Arab Emirates, the billboard remains up, and the bishop is unsure when it will be taken down.

Contrary to what one might expect, the SACC doesn’t support the idea that all of the Biblical land of Israel should belong to the Jewish state. “That’s like saying because white people aren’t indigenous to South Africa, they should all be driven out. We can’t use 4 000-year-old scripture to define the boundaries of our modern world. We need to respect international boundaries and law,” he said.

He believes that the Nation State Basic Law of 2018 and the notion of annexation are “in stark contrast to the basis on which Israel was founded and its declaration of independence. This says that Israel will ‘foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete

Continued on page 4>>

Torah Thought

The Abraham Accord a promising name

Now Sudan has joined the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in reconciling its differences with Israel. The Abraham Accord is growing, and promises even greater things to come soon.

I love the name “The Abraham Accord” and have, in fact, always argued that our father, Abraham, was the single most influential person in human history. Not only 14 million Jews, but all the trillions of Christians and Muslims throughout history owe their faith in one G-d to Abraham, the founder of monotheism.

In this week’s parsha, Lech Lecha, Abraham is tested. “Go from your land, from your birthplace, from your father’s house to the land I will show you,” said G-d to him. And it was there – far from his natural environment and immediate comfort zones – that Abraham accomplished G-d’s mission of monotheism. He spread the name of the one G-d to a pagan world and, in the process, his own name and reputation was established for eternity.

It is, of course, much easier to be good

and pious at home and in our sequestered ghettos than it is in the outside world, so often oblivious – or even hostile – to the Torah and its values. Yet, it was only after leaving home that Abraham grew his reputation and became the founding father of the Jewish people and all the Abrahamic faiths.

A hundred or more years ago, a generation of Yiddish-speaking, observant Jews migrated from Europe. They came to South Africa, the golden land of opportunity, to escape pogroms and persecution. With blood, sweat, and tears they transformed themselves from rags to riches. It was an amazing and inspirational success story. But the fact is that for many, as their businesses succeeded, their religious lives failed. Unquestionably, Judaism took a severe body blow. Most were unable to sustain their old-world values in new world South Africa. The transition from shtetl to suburbia proved too formidable, and too many children and grandchildren grew up significantly weaker than their parents in

their knowledge and observance of the Jewish way of life.

It’s like the story of the shadchan, the old-fashioned matchmaker, who suggested a young lady to a fellow and was absolutely raving about her. After their first date, the fellow calls up the shadchan and gives him a piece of his mind. “How dare you introduce me to such a girl; didn’t you know she limps?!” Quite unflustered, the *shadchan* retorts, “But, what’s the problem, it’s only when she walks!”

It’s when we walk away from our comfortable cocoons and spiritual safety nets into the wider society that we may find ourselves losing our Jewish equilibrium. It’s then that our faith, our values, our morals, and beliefs are truly challenged.

Please G-d, the children of Abraham will emulate their forefather, who left his land and remained strong in faith and family, going on to achieve remarkable success, spiritually and materially.




Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Sydenham Shul

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UOS commits to transparency and better all-round service

NICOLA MILTZ

For the first time in the country’s communal history, the leadership of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) has laid bare its financials and governance vulnerabilities for the community to scrutinise and dissect. And, it has made a solemn commitment to rectify burning issues around kashrut which have bubbled beneath the surface for years, threatening in recent weeks to splinter the community into shards.



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, the UOS, and the kosher department, offered to answer questions in a webinar hosted by the *SA Jewish Report* earlier this week – marking a turning point in transparency. This follows a dramatic outburst from members of the community about the cost of kosher food and kosher certification fees, resulting in a showdown on social media and on ChaiFM. “We have to meet the expectations and the needs of the community. We have something precious, that we should be proud of and work to fix. If there are problems, let’s fix those problems together,” Goldstein urged. He said it was a unique community, united under one *hechsher* and one Beth Din that was globally recognised, and this was something to be proud of. The chief rabbi said that while there was always room for improvement and growth, the UOS had been radically transformed and modernised in recent years. In the next few days, the democratically-elected UOS

board will appoint a new, totally independent ombudsman to help speedily resolve any impasse between the kashrut department and manufacturers and kosher consumers. The kashrut department under Rabbi Dovi Goldstein admitted that customer service was lacking and was a “bugbear in the community”. He said the kosher department committed itself to vastly improving customer service, and would try to achieve a tighter 24-hour turnaround time in addressing consumer issues. The kashrut department has acquired 154 new companies in the past three years. This means an increase in the number of kosher products on the shelves, additional revenue for the department, but it has also added to the administrative workload. For this reason, the board will look at employing someone to help improve service levels and customer relations. “We know there is service failure and we have to turn this around,” said Kenny Rabson, non-executive member of the UOS board. A scientific pricing model came into effect about two years ago following the overhaul and radical restructuring of the kashrut department. This model has increased revenue, enabling the UOS to now scrap the *simcha* fee of R12 per head for kosher functions, and the shuls’ UOS affiliation fee. The UOS board made a commitment to review costs when it came to smaller producers and manufacturers who were struggling to pay increased kosher certification



Rabbi Dovi Goldstein

fees. Rabson said the smaller producer wouldn’t get their certification for free “as there are costs to be borne”, but the UOS would make sure it was more affordable and acceptable. Rabson committed to making the audited results of the UOS available to the community, saying they would be posted online as soon as Grant Thornton and BDO completed the audit in the next week or so. He revealed that the total revenue of the UOS was R31.9 million for the last financial reporting period, of which R29.4 million (94%) came from kashrut. The unaudited profit for the period was roughly R216 000. He divulged that the annual payroll of the 41 salaried employees at the UOS was R22.7 million, explaining that 30 were employed in the kashrut department, and the others in the Beth Din and the office of the chief rabbi. Rabson said the salaries were funded from the money coming in from the *hechsher*. He revealed that the annual cost of the chief rabbi’s office is R2.6 million, of which about R600 000 comes from the Cape Town community. This pays for the chief rabbi, the five people who work in his office, and the costs of running the office. It doesn’t pay for any of the chief rabbi’s major initiatives like the Shabbos Project and Generation Sinai. Those initiatives, he confirmed, are all totally paid for by private donors. Rabson, who wouldn’t be drawn into discussing individual salaries, confirmed that the average annual salary at the UOS was about R480 000, which is less than the salaries of equivalent jobs in the corporate world. On the controversial high cost of kosher meat and chicken, Rabson emphasised that the UOS didn’t make a profit from *shechita*. The annual revenue generated from kosher food services such as butcheries and abattoirs is R7.7 million and the expenses are R7.8 million, running at a small loss of R100 000. He said the costs incurred for the *shechita* process divided by the number of units slaughtered was between R4.30 and R4.60 per kilogram depending on whether it was beef or chicken.

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“The translation into the price of a kilogram of beef is less than R5. So, if four people are eating a kilogram of meat, our costs are R1.25 per person eating that meal,” said Rabson. The chief rabbi said the *shechita* fee made up a small percentage of the overall cost, and the UOS had nothing further to do with the price. “It’s a free market, so prices are set by the butcheries. We are just involved in charging the slaughtering fee, which makes up a small percentage. The price of meat and chicken is not set by the UOS. If anyone feels they can bring prices down through the free market, it can certainly be done,” he said. The cost of kosher meat and chicken is high globally because of smaller volumes and the added cost per unit price of things like *shochtim*, they said. Goldstein said the UOS was in the process of setting up a review committee headed by UOS board member Bradley Sifris and labour expert Professor Andrew Levy to assist *mashgichim* who have complaints and labour issues. The intention is to help improve their working conditions. For a while, *mashgichim* have been speaking to the media on condition of anonymity for fear of losing their jobs, and have expressed concern about coming forward publicly with complaints. Rabson assured them that they wouldn’t lose their jobs by coming forward to address their issues. There are more than 100

mashgichim described by the chief rabbi as “the heart and soul of kashrut”. Rabbi Dovi Goldstein said it was on the UOS “wish list” to have *mashgichim* employed by the UOS itself as opposed to being paid by individual caterers, restaurateurs, and retailers. Though this had been considered, it was difficult to implement from a cost and practical point of view. On the issue of local manufacturers seeking an overseas *hechsher*, the chief rabbi and Rabson agreed that it could fragment the community. “I don’t believe dollar-based costs are going to be dramatically cheaper than in South Africa, and I still think going overseas will take what we have built up over years and start to destroy it brick by brick. Once we go down that road, you will start to see many aspects of South African Jewry start to fragment and something very special will start to dissipate,” said Rabson. “This is all a learning experience for us, and we are happy to take the lessons and do better,” the chief rabbi said.



Kenny Rabson

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Iconic Cape Town mayor and art patron taken by COVID-19

TALI FEINBERG

It's not often that one individual becomes iconic across a range of spheres, but David Bloomberg was one such person. A pioneer of the arts, a leader in law, business, and politics, and the author of seven books, he is most well-known for being the youngest mayor of the City of Cape Town. He tragically passed away on 26 October after a short battle with COVID-19.

"I last saw David in September. He was healthy and well," says theatre veteran Percy Tucker, who knew Bloomberg for more than 60 years. Bloomberg was born in Sea Point in 1932, and educated at Christian Brother's College and the University of Cape Town. His father, Abe, was a leading lawyer and the mayor of Cape Town from 1945 to 1947, and his mother, Miriam, was a ballerina and ballet teacher. Bloomberg would eventually also become mayor of the Mother City and marry a ballerina, the late Toby Fine.

Len Anstey grew up with Bloomberg, and remembers playing tennis with him when they were youngsters. Anstey's brother joined Bloomberg as a doubles partner in the Western Province Open Tennis Championships, where they were up against Springbok Davis Cup doubles pair Ian Vermaak and Eustace Fannin. "As the game went on and it was clear what they were going to lose, my brother went up to Vermaak and said, 'Please let us win one set, we have girlfriends and family watching in the audience'," remembers Anstey. Although the Springbok team didn't grant that request, Bloomberg's love of tennis remained. "He would watch Wimbledon every year, in the same two seats," says his life-long friend Brian Van Rheede. "Last year, he brought back a tennis ball signed by Roger Federer for me because he knew I love Federer.

That's the kind of person he was." Bloomberg made his name as a lawyer in his father's firm, Bloomberg, Baigel & Co. At the same time, he was passionate about the arts. "He created the Barn Theatre in the garden of his family's home in Constantia, and gave Cape Town audiences access to some of the best plays ever written," says Tucker. "He travelled around the world many times, seeing anything and everything."

He is credited with kickstarting the careers of a number of actors and mentoring leaders of the industry, including Pieter Toerien. "He brought out plays like *Porgy and Bess* and *South Pacific*, an incredible musical with racial undertones," says Van Rheede. "The apartheid government tried to stop the play, but he did everything he could to allow it to run. He even showed it at theatres where people of all races could see it. He was a great activist. He never spoke about it, he just did it."

"He did more for Cape Town than most mayors," says Tucker. Bloomberg served on the Cape Town City Council for 20 years. He was deputy mayor for two years before holding the office of mayor from 1973 to 1975, beginning when he was only 41 years old.

"He had such vision," says Van Rheede. "The city was going through its most difficult period of apartheid, and he was leading it through. He did so much – roads, theatre, upliftment. And he dealt with a constant backlash from the nationalist government."

"He played an integral role in the creation of what would become the Artscape Theatre. He planned the whole thing, visiting opera houses overseas to get inspiration. But when he was told that it was going to be called the Nico Malan, he fought desperately against it. He was so

adamant about that name that he ever attended opening night."

Debbie Turner, the chief executive of the Cape Town City Ballet, agrees that



David Bloomberg with his second wife Rochelle at Wimbledon

Bloomberg couldn't tolerate the idea that it wouldn't be a "theatre for all". She shares extracts from a letter that Bloomberg wrote to her in June as the

two were discussing the institution's 50th anniversary.

"Those wishing to celebrate the anniversary of the opening of the Nico Malan Centre have a choice of dates: 19 May 1971, when Sylvia was staged amidst great controversy before a whites only audience in a venue with a racial policy that excluded non-whites; or 21 February 1975, when *Who Saw Him Die* opened before a fully integrated audience in a theatre with a completely multiracial policy," he wrote.

Turner says that after a chance meeting with Bloomberg shortly after she took up her post two years ago, he invited her to lunch and, in the space of an hour, offered his support for a project that enabled the ballet company to restore a Balanchine work that his first wife had performed.

"He didn't know me, yet with incredible generosity of spirit, he offered to assist," she says. "In the following months, he again lent his resources for another project, enabling the staging of two treasured works that an independent company could never

usually afford to do." Bloomberg and his first wife had two children, and moved to London and then Switzerland seeking treatment when Fine became ill, but she passed away at a young age.

"David was the visionary who privatised the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra (CPO)," says Louis Heyneman, the chief executive of the CPO. "In the late sixties, when the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra became too much of a financial drain for city coffers, David's clever footwork saved Cape Town's orchestra."

He also wrote an important chapter about the sixties and seventies in Heyneman's book *Century of Symphony, The Story of Cape Town's Orchestra*. "After many years abroad, he returned to Cape Town a few years ago, and joined the CPO's advisory board," says Heyneman.

"He loved people and life. He was a so self-effacing, a quality you don't find much in people today," says Van Rheede. "His generosity of human spirit was defined in the moments before they put him on a ventilator. He called everyone he loved. He was dying, but giving comfort to the living."

Flowers to brighten heroes' Shabbos Project

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

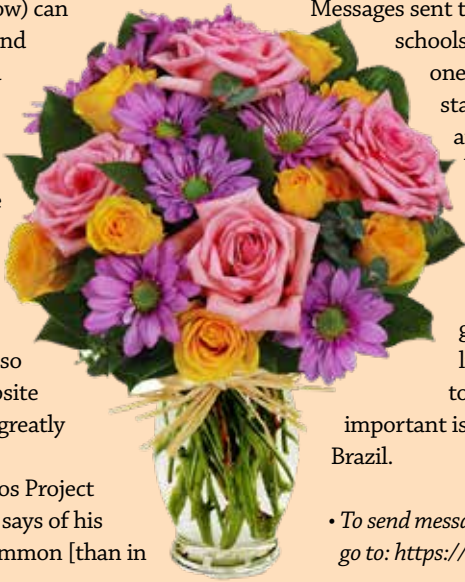
This year's Shabbos Project will be a little more bountiful thanks to social entrepreneur Zvika Arran, who has created a Flowers for Shabbat project together with Shabbos Project founder Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein.

Flowers for Shabbat allows people to send flowers and messages on Shabbat on 6 November to people who have been drawn from an extensive list of heroes in South Africa and Israel. The list includes health workers in the frontline of COVID-19, teachers, elderly carers, food providers, Holocaust survivors, emergency response workers, laboratory workers, creators and artists, singles on welfare, and cancer patients, among others.

Visitors to the site (address below) can pick one of 50 different clusters, and automatically a name is generated that they can send a message to. Thousands of recipients are scheduled to receive a bouquet of flowers, and recipients can receive many messages from various senders.

Importantly the donation is free, and is funded by donors to the Shabbos Project. People can also make a small donation on the website along with their messages, which greatly helps to cover costs.

"We wanted to make the Shabbos Project more meaningful in Israel," Arran says of his idea. "Shabbat in Israel is more common [than in



the diaspora], so we wanted to offer something unique. The project is about the Shabbat value of giving to others you don't know."

In a virtual world of lockdown, Arran wanted to give something tangible, something people could smell and feel, and that would arrive at their doors.

The project, which was initiated in mid-August, involved gathering thousands of names and addresses of people in South Africa and Israel, and networking with a multitude of organisations. Just eight weeks later, it's live.

It's been a hit in Israel, with almost 33 000 messages written so far. Even Israeli President Reuven Rivlin is sending a bouquet. Messages have also come from all over the world. "Unexpectedly, thousands of donations are coming from the website as well," Arran says.

Messages sent to South African teachers in Jewish schools from around the world include: "From one teacher to another, I hope that you are staying safe, well, and in good spirits! It's an incredibly difficult job at the moment, but know that you are appreciated and admired by your students and the community!" reads one from the United Kingdom.

"Thank you for your service! We are all going through a tough time, and people like you are going above and beyond to help others, especially in such an

important issue like education," reads another from Brazil.

• To send messages and donate flowers, go to: <https://flowers.theshabbosproject.org/en>

SACC defends billboard protesting Israeli annexation

>>Continued from page 2

equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture; it will safeguard the holy places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the charter of the United Nations'."

He notes that there are Christian followers who disagree with his perspective, and they are given ample opportunity to make their voices heard and debate the issues at hand. An example, as one blogger pointed out, was that at the same time the billboard went up, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng was fighting for his right to express his unconditional love of Israel. The South African Friends of Israel has thousands of supporters, and when the Anglican and Methodist churches adopted resolutions to support BDS, many church members expressed disagreement and disappointment.

The bishop laments the fact that resolution of the conflict is in

the hands of politicians, and envisions leaders of the Abrahamic faiths "making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem" to sit down together and resolve it. "The SACC is ready to work with others in South Africa, in the Holy Land, and the world, on a quest for peace in the Holy Land," he says. "This is a call I'd like to make as loudly as possible."

Since 2006, Mpumlwana said, the SACC had sent Christian South Africans to the region, where they live with Israeli and Palestinian families for three months. He has spent a lot of time in Israel, and has also been to the West Bank and Gaza. As recently as last year, SACC leaders went on a pilgrimage to the region, visiting Yad Vashem and studying the Bible with rabbis, as well as visiting Palestinian communities.

"We work with Israelis, Palestinians, and Israeli Arabs, so we know how painful the conflict is," he said. "We are committed to a peaceful solution, but annexation isn't sustainable."



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Time for a bit of tolerance

Can you imagine what this community would be like if we were all tolerant of each other and, instead of thinking the worst, had positive thoughts? It sounds wonderful, and would mean we would all get on, work well together, and see the best in each other. It also seems unbelievable, a “cloud-cuckoo-land” pipe dream.

In the past two weeks, as we witnessed growing discontent among people regarding the kashrut department and Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS), I have to admit I found it astonishing just how venomous people got.

When people have a genuine gripe, it’s easy to understand their anger, but when they don’t and simply jump on the anger bandwagon, it loses me totally. Yet, it happens.

People hear someone’s tale of discontent and supposed abuse, and they don’t always question their instant sympathy. They then happily spread the anger.

Before you know it, there’s an electric storm of rage and venom. In this case, it was unfortunately topped by an unpleasant clip of Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein voicing his unhappiness at how the situation was being dealt with in the media, and suggesting a form of protest.

I’m not getting into the nitty gritty of this argument or debate, it’s not relevant here.

However, what is relevant is that because of the anger that abounded, the chief rabbi suggested a no-holds-barred interview with himself, UOS board member Kenny Rabson, and the head of the kashrut department, Rabbi Dovi Goldstein. The chief rabbi gave his assurance that we could ask whatever we deemed necessary – and we did.

I won’t go into all the details because you’ll find them in the story on page 3, but I believe it had really positive outcomes. Many commitments were made to improve the situation by Rabson and the chief rabbi. They came across as genuine, with a real will to improve the situation for the community, *mashgichim*, consumers, and Jewish manufacturers and producers of kosher food.

They didn’t just speak about how they planned to improve things, they made very clear and pointed commitments. I believe they came across as open and honest, accepted their responsibility in this situation, and that a great deal could be improved on at the UOS.

I don’t believe I’m gullible, in fact, many say I’m too critical and questioning at the best of times. This is an occupational hazard of a journalist.

However, when I began hearing some people the following day mocking and questioning the integrity of those making the commitments, I was dumbfounded.

Why can’t we be tolerant? Why must we always look for the negative and the bad in people? Why not give people a chance, especially those who are willing to put their heads on the block to prove that their commitment is genuine?

Why not rather commit to keeping a close eye on what they are going to do to fix the situation? If you are one of the people with a genuine issue, take it to the structures being put in place, and see what can be done about it. Let’s rather give them the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to prove that they are as committed to make this work as they say they are.

There is a strong school of thought that we make our reality. And, those who speak about the downfall of the Jewish community in this country because they can’t find the good in leadership may be creating such a scenario.

I understand that some people have had a rough time with the kashrut department, but the UOS board has now committed to putting a number of concrete things in place to deal with that.

So, are we going to shoot it down before it has even begun, or can we stop and give the UOS the opportunity to make it right?

Please can we stop badmouthing people, and try our best to look at the fact that promises have been made. Surely we all understand that if these promises are fulfilled, it could be outstanding for the whole community?

Now, I understand that there are, in fact, a lot of people who aren’t derisive and have thrown their support behind these commitments and the possibilities they offer. Once again, I’m not referring to everyone, but a small percentage of the community who have chosen to be doomsayers.

I do hope they don’t scupper the good that could be done for the rest of us.

You can be assured that the *SA Jewish Report* is going to keep an eye on the commitments the board and chief rabbi have made. We are going to follow this up all the way. That’s my commitment to you.

I do, however, trust that the commitment is genuine, and that there may well be glitches along the way. But as long as the process is transparent and there is integrity, we should experience a marked positive difference going forward. We will keep you in the loop.

I believe it would be far more helpful to be tolerant and try to see the effort that people are making to get things right for our community.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



The case for Trump in 2020

OPINION

ADAM SACHS AND DANIEL FISHER



The imminent American election is top of mind for many of us – and rightly so. The results of any American election have far-reaching consequences in this globalised and interconnected world.

We note with much concern that it’s becoming extremely fashionable for so-called critics of Trump to vilify and attack anyone who expresses any support for Trump and the Republican Party. Those who are on the attack are generally ill-informed or malicious. They are so secure in their assumed moral superiority that they aren’t willing to entertain any argument that counters their narrative that Trump is just “the worst person in the world”. We reject this view because the facts simply don’t support it. When you put the (manufactured) hysterical outrage aside and engage with the facts and Trump’s actual record of governance, it becomes clear that his presidency to date has been one of the most successful in recent history and warrants a second term.

This piece isn’t intended as a defence of Trump’s sins such as his multiple bankruptcies, failed product lines, endless lawsuits, creepy sexual scandals, loud public spats, or crude language. It defends the fact that there is a major difference between the sins committed while Trump was a self-declared wheeling and dealing multi-billionaire in private enterprise, and the sins committed while holding office, or rather the lack thereof.

The fact is that Trump hasn’t abused the American people’s trust by acting unethically while in office. The same can’t be said for one Joe Biden, who has been using his political influence to enrich his family for many years, and who is facing very credible and serious accusations relating to his term as vice-president, and his son’s dodgy dealings with Ukrainian and Chinese entities.

For those of you who have reservations when it comes to Trump’s character, let’s be quite clear that there are good reasons for having such reservations, as the list of sins above refers. But, let’s be equally clear that it’s the actual record of governance that’s important. You don’t have to like

Trump’s character or his Twitter account to vote for him.

You don’t have to approve of the sometimes crazy things that he says or the way he often acts. But to quote conservative commentator Ben Shapiro of the *Daily Wire* speaking to an American audience, “If you care about the Constitution, economic freedom, and the security of the United States, you really don’t have a whole hell of a lot of choice, and should probably vote for Trump.” This isn’t an emotive argument, it’s grounded in facts and policy. And, of course, the same critical lens should be applied to Biden and his 47-year record of governance.

When it comes to defending traditional liberal and also conservative values (and there is less tension in that statement than you might think), sane economic policies, measured foreign policy, and also the dangers of unfettered and unregulated big tech (think the Googles and Facebooks of the world), then the current incarnation of the Democratic Party offers us very little besides Bernie Sanders-style leftist slogans, and the uncritical support of political organisations like Black Lives Matter.

One must also understand that this election isn’t just Republicans versus Democrats. It’s not just Trump versus Biden. It’s now increasingly clear that it’s the Republicans versus the Democrats plus mainstream media and big tech. This is incredibly significant, and I dare say many readers of this publication find themselves consuming a majority of their news and analysis from the aforementioned “mainstream” outlets which profess to be objective when they are deeply partisan.

To make this real, why are the mainstream outlets desperately refusing to entertain and address the very real spectre of corruption on the part of the Bidens – and while Biden was vice-president no less? Why are these same outlets so quick to jump on any allegation about Trump no matter how flimsy and manufactured (think back to the Steele Dossier)? Say what you like about Fox News, but at least it admits to being partisan, right leaning, and pro



American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and has brokered the first meaningful peace deals in the Middle East in more than three decades. Just last week, a truly historic peace deal between Israel and Sudan took shape. Sudan is a country which has technically been at war with Israel since 1948.

Trump has also resisted using the federal government to control everybody’s life during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also a really

big deal because history teaches us that governments are generally not in the habit of giving up the emergency powers they grab during times of crises. Look no further than our current South African context and the worrying extension of our state of disaster, effectively allowing our government to operate with very little parliamentary oversight.

Trump has also restored due process on college campuses by undoing Obama’s incredibly problematic Title IX executive action. Contrary to what the mainstream media would have you believe, Trump hasn’t actually threatened democratic institutions, he hasn’t threatened freedom of the press, and he hasn’t threatened the legislature. Ultimately, he hasn’t used the executive branch in nearly as powerful a way as Obama did. Of course, it must be acknowledged that if you’re not an advocate of small government (we’re looking at you Bernie), then you wouldn’t view this positively. But for the rest of us who want the government to interfere as little as possible in our lives, this is hugely positive.

In conclusion, we believe this election is going to be a damning referendum on progressive politics and the power that the mainstream media, out-of-touch Hollywood elites, and the dangerously partisan and political tech giants, currently wield over society. As strange as it may seem, Trump is the one willing to take a stand and challenge those that would control and influence society with their own political orthodoxy. This plus a pretty stellar record of governance is all the reason we need to be team Trump.

- Adam Sachs has an honours in philosophy and also majored in politics and English. He is a specialist in Digital and Agile Transformation, currently working with the Nedbank Group.
- Daniel Fisher is currently the Head of Legal Operations at Over by GoDaddy.

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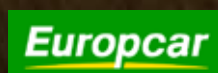


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Getting the Jewish community BACK 2 WORK


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



Andi Colley
Experience: Software QA Analyst
Education: Matric [Herzlia High School]; ISEB and SASTQB Certification in Software Testing in Agile environments
Looking for a position in: Remote or work-from-home contract as a QA Analyst
More information: During lockdown, I worked from home on contract for a company in Miami, doing QA on legal software being rewritten for MS Azure Cloud. I attended daily Zoom meetings, and corresponded with the Agile Sprint team. My contract ended recently. I have worked perm and on contract in development and testing in the corporate world. I have worked in the US (Boston and San Francisco) and in London. I am meticulously attentive to detail.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: abcolley@mweb.co.za




Darren Enfield
Experience: Project Manager
Education: BCom [Unisa]; CAPM [PMI: Project Management Institute]
Looking for a position in: Assistant Project Manager or Project Manager
More information: I have 20 years experience in IT and business, and five years experience in project management.
Email: darrenenfield3@gmail.com




David Bourgestein
Experience: Retail management
Education: Matric [Yale College]
Looking for a position in: Retail management
More information: Experienced retail manager looking to run a small business (can be retail). I have over 50 years experience including running a chain of own retail stores. I have run my own chain of stores and am highly focused on driving sales and customer service.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: spikeroslyn@gmail.com




Diane Wolpert
Experience: Personal Assistant
Education: Matric 1978; and over the years I have obtained various certificates
Looking for a position in: Personal Assistant or Virtual PA
More information: Looking for opportunities to offer my services as a Virtual PA. Virtual is the “new normal” because it cuts costs, saves on unnecessary staff, and beats legislation on employment red-tape. Plus you have an office PA 24/7 at your disposal. I have over 30 years’ experience, working side by side as a PA to the chairman, where I was fully involved in the intensity of the business.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: diwolpert1960@gmail.com



Ezra Sahar
Experience: Programmer and Developer
Education: Matric in Israel, and have diplomas in computer programming, business management, and bookkeeping; BCom [UNISA] (incomplete)
Looking for a position in: Business Intelligence (BI) Developer looking for freelance position in Gauteng. Freelance developer in MS Power BI Development and Data Analytic solutions. I model your data and turn it into meaningful information.
More information: I was born in Israel and emigrated to South Africa in 1980. I matriculated in Israel and did army duty, got diplomas in bookkeeping, programming, and business management, and did many trainings locally and internationally in IT. I was a programmer and developer, and from 1988 to 1991 was the Software Manager at Philips SA Telecom and Data Systems.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: Yes
Email: ezrasahar24@gmail.com



Ilana Ackerman
Experience: Various creative fields
Education: Matric; Floristry diplomas Ceramics (own studio), and dabbled in several art forms
Looking for a position in: Anything in a creative environment or reception area in a stimulating environment
More information: I have experience in various creative fields, and am looking for full-time employment. For the past six years, I have been the director/owner of a gift shop at the Post Office Centre in Illovo. The store’s merchandise included the works of several ceramicists, original jewellery, and painted work by different artists. Kids and baby gifts were also a major part of the sales.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: ilana.ackerman@gmail.com




Ingrid Sevit
Experience: Diamond Grader, administration, and office management
Education: Matric [Damelin College]; Secretarial course [Birnam Business College]; and Diamond Grading Course [Jewellery Council of South Africa and Gemmological Institute of America]
Looking for a position in: Administration and office management
More information: Qualified Diamond Grader with experience in diamond and jewellery manufacturing, diamond sales, and office management. Looking for a full-time position in Johannesburg. I have worked for various companies in the diamond trade. I have also worked in medical and optometry practices.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: ingrid.sevit@gmail.com



Ivor Shaskolsky
Experience: Tour guide
Education: MB.ChB; DMRD; M.MED retired
Looking for a position in: Tour Guide specialising in historic Cape Town and Jewish Cape Town

More information: Let me show you around. It’s time for the locals to learn about Cape Town in the absence of foreign tourists. I am in love with Cape Town, and have been tour guiding for 18 years.
Email: ivorshaz@gmail.com



Jeffrey Dworetzky
Experience: Food and beverage and wholesale supply
Education: Matric
Looking for a position in: Administration and assistance with management
More information: I am currently unemployed, but I have work experience at management level.
Email: jaydee_59@hotmail.com



Larry Jasven
Experience: Laboratory technician
Education: Matric [Yeshiva College]; National diploma in Microbiology; Purchasing and General Management [Damelin]; OHS Act Safety Officer [Makrosafe]
Looking for a position in: Lab tech, or purchasing,safety officer in the Johannesburg area
More information: Laboratory technician with 35 years experience in laboratories. Extensive knowlege of most laboratory equipment, computers, Word, Excel, Pastel, and LIMS. I have exceptional communication skills. I did the purchasing for my previous company for over 10 years, and was also part of the safety committee as a firefighter, first aider, and incident reporter.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: Yes
Email: ljasven@gmail.com



Neville Hoffman
Experience: Experienced Risk Consultant
Education: Matric [Herzlia High School]; B.Com; CIS; Certificate in Insolvency Law
Looking for a position in: Risk and Recovery Consultant
More information: Risk and Recovery Consultancy to credit providers; Credit Director at Macsteel until retirement; and Risk Consultant to credit insurance companies and brokers.
Email: nevlin1617@gmail.com



Ryan Krawitz
Experience: Operations management
Education: Matric [King David Linksfield]; Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Business Management and Finance [University of the Witwatersrand]; Bachelor of Commerce Honours; Advanced Business Management [University of the Witwatersrand]; and I am currently studying and sharpening my IT skillset in the Commercial Business Analyst field
Looking for a position in: Operational Management, Commercial Business Analyst
More information: Experienced professional looking for an operations management role.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: r.krawi@gmail.com



Sabra Kruger
Experience: Call Centre Agent; Software Support; Administration; Bookkeeping
Education: Matric [Milner High School Klerksdorp]; and Computer Information Technology [Wits Technikon]
Looking for a position in: Call Centre Agent; Software Support Agent; Administration; or Bookkeeping
More information: Experienced software support consultant, bookkeeper, programmer, and call centre agent. I have 16 years experience in software support. I’m driven and a mathematical problem solver who is solution orientated. I love working with people, and am always eager to contribute to my team.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: sabra.k@hotmail.com



Sean Guthrie
Experience: Qualified plumber
Education: BIFSA-trained qualified plumber
Looking for a position in: Plumber
More information: I have 30 plus years working experience, and can provide a comprehensive CV on request.
Email: aviva_guthrie@hotmail.com



Tracy Rosin
Experience: Training Coordinator
Education: HDip.Ed and Postgraduate Diploma in Management (Business Administration)
Looking for a position in: Training coordination or any kind of business administration
More information: I am an experienced training coordinator and educator with a Postgraduate Diploma in Management from Wits Business School. I have successfully coordinated a number of training programmes including a TETA learnership. I was also involved in quality control of the training department. While my background is in training and development, I can complete all administrative tasks efficiently.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: tracynosin@gmail.com



Tziporah Orkin
Experience: Pre-natal lessons and birth assistant (doula)
Education: Matric [Damelin College]; studied in Israel for three years; Speech and Drama qualification; Ceridian prenatal teacher and birth assistant [WOMBS and CBI accreditation]
Looking for a position in: The health sector
More information: I am calm and have a good predisposition. I am diplomatic, and passionate about women having a positive birth experience. I have worked in the public and private sector as a doula (private birth assistant). I teach private pre-natal lessons and focus on the psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the journey, as well as giving information for an empowered birth experience.
Current location: Johannesburg
Willing to relocate: No
Email: tziporahorkin@gmail.com

SA expat wows Wellington with Jewish delicacies

JORDAN MOSHE

It's a truth universally acknowledged that a Jew who doesn't appreciate good food must be in want of reason. Be it perogen or pastrami, kugel or kitka, food is a firm part of a Jewish foundation, and to say otherwise is almost heretical.

Few people perhaps understand this as well as South African expat and culinary maestro, Steven Scheckter, a man whose knowledge of all things food has captured the hearts and stomachs of his fellow residents in Wellington, New Zealand.

Owner of On Trays Deli, Scheckter has brought South African flair and Jewish know-how to his kitchen, and the locals just can't get enough.

Originally from Vryburg in North West province, Scheckter emigrated to New Zealand with his wife, Valda, in 1997. Since then, he has blazed a trail across the food scene in Wellington, offering customers imported delicacies from around the world as well as the best Jewish deli dishes conceivable.

"It all began when I started selling cheese," Scheckter told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. "I had worked in the motor business in South Africa originally, and when we arrived here from Vryburg, my wife had a job lined up as a nurse, but I couldn't find anything.

"After eight months, my visa came through, I was allowed to work, and I heard of someone looking for a person to sell cheese, so I took it up."

As a cheese supplier to stores and restaurants, Scheckter's work brought him into contact with another local Jewish family, the Chait's, who owned the oldest deli in Wellington, Dixon Street Deli. Teaming up with the Chait's, Scheckter and his wife began a gourmet sandwich-making venture, one considered years ahead of its time.

"We always liked food and eating in good restaurants," he says. "We had a sandwich trolley which we pushed around for hours on end, having



Steven Scheckter and his family serving guests at the Wellington On a Plate food festival held in his deli

started making the sandwiches at 02:00 every day. We wore uniforms, offered printed serviettes, and we later had two trolleys before we branched out into a bit of wholesaling and then gave up the sandwich venture."

Seeing a gap in the local market, Scheckter moved into retail and began stocking imported foodstuffs, becoming Wellington's largest supplier of products from Israel, Greece, Italy, Argentina, and, of course, South Africa. Among his stock are kosher products such as matza, kosher wines, and pickles, catering for the extremely small Orthodox core of about ten religious families.

"There are about 70 000 South Africans here, so we sell staple South African products like rooibos tea, ProNutro, Marmite, rusks, biltong, and more," he says. "People always seek these things out, and they're always popular. Our kosher shop is also quite popular, and it's amazing to see that while the community is small, there is a Jewish presence here."

In spite of his move into retail, Scheckter still yearned to make sandwiches. This dream owed some of its inspiration to the Jewish delis of his younger days, South African establishments which had perfected the art of making the gourmet sandwich.

"I'll always remember the places I'd go to for a pastrami on rye," he says. "There was Wachenheimers in Doornfontein, which had a little

yellow room at the back where you could sit and eat, and there was the Menorah Delicatessen in Cyrildene. They knew how to make sandwiches."

"I really wanted to make pastrami on rye like they had, but I could find no pastrami in New Zealand. I had to make it happen."

Scheckter spent years studying how to produce pastrami, understanding the process of pickling, cold smoking, and later steaming the meat. Five years ago, he perfected the process, and resumed making sandwiches, reviving his business officially as On Trays Scheckter's Deli alongside his retail store.

"We gained a reputation for our Ruben sandwiches very quickly," he says. "People came to love our pastrami, and we grew our business by being innovative and making sure we kept up with the gourmet scene."

Not only has the business kept up, it also left a mark on the Wellington On A Plate food festival this year. In spite of global pandemic restrictions, New Zealand's largest culinary event went ahead this month, offering locals an opportunity to sample mouth-watering food prepared by various eateries.

Unique though many of them were, Scheckter offered something no one else could: a Jewish deli experience.

"All the local restaurants get involved, so we decided to throw our hat into the ring and put on a

Jewish experience," he says.

"While they know about South Africans, braais, and wors, locals don't have much exposure to Jewish tradition because there aren't too many Jews in the country. We decided to give them a real taste of Jewish cuisine and raise some awareness about who we are."

Working with Valda and their daughter, Maxine, (a pastry chef and the owner of Wellington patisserie Sugar Flour), Scheckter presented a gastronomic extravaganza which would make any Jewish mother proud. Starting with a round challah and honey, the meal featured iconic dishes like matza with chopped liver, chicken soup with kneidlach, buckwheat and pasta kasha varnishkes, and pastrami on rye (served in the Wachenheimer fashion with a dollop of piccalilli). A baked cheesecake served with coffee, halva, and Israeli wine capped off the experience.

The significance of each dish was also explained to the diners, all of whom enjoyed their food with considerable relish.


Says Scheckter, "Our clients gave us fantastic responses. We sold out the first three events within an hour, and we put on a fourth as well.

"We had some phenomenal people participate. There was a young man from Boston at the first one who took me aside and said, 'Your kasha varnishkes are better than my gran's, but you can never let her know I said that.'

"It's an opportunity to share our stories and traditions with New Zealand, and it has been such a rewarding experience."

At the end of the day, Judaism depends on all of us keeping what we have, and telling others about it, Scheckter believes.

"What makes us different is what makes us Jews," he says. "We need to tell people about who we are and what we're about. It's an important part of what I do in the food business, and I think we all need to go out of our way to share with others."



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Sweeping changes ahead if Biden wins

TALI FEINBERG

“I don’t think there will be any kind of civil war if [United States President Donald] Trump loses,” said foreign correspondent, author, and broadcaster John Matisonn in his talk at the eLimmud2 series of webinars on Sunday, 25 October. “If Florida goes to [presidential nominee Joe] Biden early, that will be the end of it.”

Matisonn has covered the White House, state department, and US houses of congress for six years. He spoke on his predictions of the outcome of the US election, and how things might change or stay the same.

He believes Biden will win the election for a number of reasons. “First, the Trump campaign spent huge amounts of money early, so Biden has a cash advantage. Second, the polls have been relatively stable since January – in Biden’s favour – while in 2016, the polls were more volatile.”



While the polls were totally off the mark four years ago, “they weren’t as wrong as people thought,” he said. They were mostly wrong in that they “underweighted” white non-college-educated voters. This has now been “re-weighted” in new models.” However, he notes that some analysts say Trump has much more support on social media, and that the election will therefore go to him.

Matisonn said that Trump had shown “autocratic tendencies”, and one of the “ironies of Trump” was that while he modelled himself as a successful businessman, he was a grossly incompetent manager who couldn’t keep staff or maintain their loyalty. “So many senior figures in his campaign and cabinet have rejected him. Even generals don’t support him. He can’t organise complexity, and has little idea of how government works,” he said.

Matisonn implied that voters now know this, and it may have an impact on their choices. By contrast, “Biden is the better candidate. He is more likeable and a better politician, who has run a strategically clever campaign – in fact, the most disciplined campaign of his life. Strategy matters. He has made very few errors.”

Matisonn said Biden had refused to take an extreme line. For example, he rejected outright a purely governmental medical aid. When #BlackLivesMatter protestors called for the defunding of the police, he said that the police need more money, not less, to improve the way they functioned. Essentially, he has “insulated himself” against any charges that Trump throws at him.

Even though Biden has his age against him and will probably only do one presidential term, he has done very well to “define himself,” said Matisonn. “He is known in America as ‘the poorest man in the senate’, who used to ride the train to and from work every day. He lost his wife and child in an accident, and later his son to brain cancer. People are empathetic to him, and he is more popular than Hillary [Clinton].”

Matisonn said there were “more undecided voters in 2016, and they voted for Trump.

Now there are less undecided voters. Four years ago there were also more third party supporters. Biden has gained more support [than Hillary] in the white population, especially among white women. He has also gained [popularity] with the elderly and non-college-educated. Trump has gained support among the Hispanic population, especially in Florida. He has made Biden out to be a communist, and many in this population group fear communism. But ultimately Trump has run a really poor campaign. COVID-19 hurt him, and he has tried to get away from it, but everything he has done has just brought the discussion back to the pandemic.”

In 2016, Matisonn said, “Trump was the beneficiary of an underlying condition. He represented the grievances of ordinary working people.” These people, mainly in the “rust belt”, were the voters who gave Trump his victory. They lost their jobs when factories closed and moved to China. Many are also military veterans. “The social conditions of white poor people include high suicide rates and the use of opioids. Something bigger has to be done to change things for them. Their grievances need to be attended to, or there will be constant disruption.”

“A new president is usually a remedy for the past president,” he said, as can be seen in the way former President Barack Obama and Trump are total opposites. After the divisions sown by an “uncontrollable Trump”, it’s likely that Americans will want Biden to come in as the “soothing unifier”.

However, “We can’t go back four years, and Trump has done many things that can’t be undone.” Biden will, however, try to remedy them. “There is no question that Biden will rebuild relationships with allies and ‘unilaterals’ like the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO). He will rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iran deal. This is not because he thinks Iran is a benign player, but because he believes Iran and Saudi Arabia are two strategic powers and that the US should act as the middleman to stop them both getting nuclear weapons.”

His approach to China will be more hard line than Obama’s, but he won’t want to start a Cold War with them. China is “the only major country that has grown this year”, so Biden will try to “catch up”.

Meanwhile, “If Trump wins, the break with democratic allies will deepen, which will have long-term consequences,” said Matisonn. “America will be sidelined even more, and other countries will make their own deals and find their own way, becoming less dependent on the US. I don’t think Trump has a long-term strategy. Traditional Republicans dislike Trump, but they got what they wanted from him, and now wouldn’t mind if he goes.”

In terms of Israel, Matisonn said the difference between the two candidates was that “Trump backed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s policies. Biden is a strong friend of Israel, but not necessarily Netanyahu.”

“Biden will be good for South Africa,” Matisonn believes, saying he’s quite enthusiastic about the country. “Once he restores multilateral relationships with the WHO and the UN, it will be good for South Africa, especially during a global pandemic. There is a lot for South Africa to gain. Under Trump, there was very little engagement, and South Africa can be blamed for some of that. Biden will have more of an ‘open door’, and we will probably see President Cyril Ramaphosa go to Washington.”

Holocaust horror not exclusively European

JORDAN MOSHE

The Holocaust wasn’t an exclusively European tragedy. Beyond the camps of Eastern Europe, Nazi Germany intended to oppress, deport, and murder all Jews across the Mediterranean and Middle East, a horror not realised thanks to the victories of the Allied forces.

American journalist and author Gershom Gorenberg says the potential reality which faced world Jewry in the 1940s was far grimmer than we may realise.

“Think about the places you associate with the Holocaust,” Gorenberg told his virtual audience at eLimmud2 held via Zoom this past Sunday, 25 October. “You’ll probably think of camps, places in Germany, Russia, or Poland. Even the standard prayer for victims of the Holocaust asks G-d to have mercy on the fallen of Europe, fitting the nearly universal memory as being bound by the European continent.”

This Eurocentric definition of the Holocaust is grossly inaccurate, he stressed.

“It depends on how we actually define Holocaust,” he says. “If it includes the steps the Nazis took leading up to mass murder, then it’s not true it only took place in Europe, but well beyond it.

“There were Jews whose deaths were the result of Nazism and fascism, and to overlook that is to erase the memory of Holocaust victims.”

The rapid advance of Nazi forces across Northern Africa threatened the lives of Jews living outside of Europe, he said.

“Everyone in Cairo knew they faced the same fate as people in Paris or Warsaw. In July 1942, the British embassy in Cairo burned hundreds of documents in anticipation of the arrival of Nazi forces. People were queuing to withdraw their money from banks. They were certain the Germans would arrive.”

Such fears weren’t farfetched given that Erwin Rommel, the acclaimed Nazi general, had taken the Libyan port of Tobruk in a blur ten days earlier after rapid advancement. Given his incredible speed, not even Palestine seemed safe for Jews.

Said Gorenberg, “It was a very uncertain refuge at this time. If Rommel set out rapidly again from El Alamein [midway between Tobruk and Tel Aviv], he would be in Palestine within ten days. The expectation in Palestine was that Rommel was coming.”

Hard as this is for us to understand now, the meaning of Axis forces reaching Palestine wasn’t clear even to those who lived there at the time. News reports of Jews being murdered in Europe were considered mere rumours even amongst Jews in the Middle East, such that the fear of Rommel didn’t actually fully take in the extent of the threat his advancement posed to world Jewry.

Gorenberg said Rommel shared a close relationship with Hitler, and was more than willing to help him advance his murder apparatus across the world.

“He knew what a German conquest really meant,” he said. “Rommel had spoken to Walter Rauff, the engineer of the mobile gassing units which murdered about 1.5 million people. He knew that Jews must be killed.”

This seemed a chillingly likely reality for Jews living in the region between Libya and Egypt in 1940. For almost three years, Axis forces would battle Allied troops across the Mediterranean front in a bid to take over the region. Under Benito Mussolini, fascist Italy attempted to persecute Jews living in cities taken by Italian forces, including the city of Benghazi.

Said Gorenberg, “In 1941, British troops retook Benghazi, which was 5% Jewish. Many Jews

greeted them as liberators, and the joy among them was a response to what had been going on under fascist rule.

“Until 1938, Italians had tried to force Jews to become Italian, to assimilate. They later enacted race laws against them. The idea was that Jews were an inferior race, and Italians were Aryans.”

When Rommel retook the city, Mussolini blamed the Jews for the Italians’ earlier defeat, and decreed that they should be expelled to concentration camps in the desert. Libyan Jews were rounded up in trucks and transported over five days to camps, where they subsisted on 100 grams of bread a day, and endured forced labour.

The situation was no better in Baghdad in Iraq. Although the Nazis didn’t reach the city, a coup carried out in 1941 resulted in pro-German Iraqi colonels seizing control of Bagdad. Supported with Nazi supplies, the junta drove out the regent ruler, broadcast anti-Jewish propaganda on local radio, and gave free rein to pro-Nazi movements in Iraq to attack Jews.

“Baghdad was one-sixth Jewish,” said Gorenberg. “It was more Jewish in 1942 than New York is today. The regent successfully returned, and when the Jews went out to welcome him, a mob attacked them.”

The attack lasted two days, and several hundred Jews were brutally murdered before the regent had the police restore order.

Said Gorenberg, “This pogrom is known in Iraqi Jewish history. These people may be the least acknowledged Jewish victims of Nazism.”

Had Rommel successfully invaded the cities of the Nile Delta, a nightmare would have come to pass. Gorenberg said that the SS was so sure of Rommel’s success, it already had plans to carry out the mass murder of Jews in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. All this changed dramatically when Rommel’s trusted intelligence source in Cairo went inexplicably silent.

“At the exact moment Rommel was committed to his invasion, he lost his source,” said Gorenberg. “He didn’t know the British were mounting a defence at El Alamein. Rommel never reached Cairo.”

In spite of the turn of fate, the Nazis remained committed to deporting Jews from Tunisia, their final African foothold.



“The SS expected to murder the 66 000 Jews there, as well as those in Morocco,” said Gorenberg. “The classic process followed: yellow stars, massive fines levied against Jews, adults sent to labour camps, and plans made to deport them to Europe. About 700 Jews were killed.”

That the Nazis not only intended but actively took steps to extend the genocide of Jews to the Middle East is a fact we cannot forget, Gorenberg said.

“El Alamein shows that the borders of the Holocaust were drawn by the Allied army,” he said. “They drew the line in the sand in Africa.

“The Jews who died in Iraq, Libya, and Tunisia were victims of the Holocaust. They were part of the broader picture.”

CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON IMMIGRATION FRAUD

THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT RECENTLY SUSPENDED ITS CITIZENSHIP THROUGH INVESTMENT PROGRAMME FOR ULTRA-WEALTHY INVESTORS – WITH A MINIMUM €2.3 MILLION (R44 MILLION) INVESTMENT – AFTER AN EXPOSÉ REPORTING ABUSES OF THE SYSTEM WAS AIRED ON AL JAZEERA ON 12 OCTOBER.

MPs voted to withdraw the investment programme in its current form at an emergency parliamentary meeting held the morning after the programme aired. The government's commitment to act so swiftly is an indication that this is a clean up, not a cover up. Cyprus will re-launch a revised programme at a later stage.

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Can a robot be Jewish? AI’s quandaries for humanity

TALI FEINBERG

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already a part of our world, and as it grows, it will have a profound impact on ethics, religion, and humanity. So says Paul Root Wolpe, the Raymond F. Schinazi Distinguished Research Chair in Jewish Bioethics, professor of medicine, paediatrics, psychiatry, neuroscience, and sociology, and the director of the Center for Ethics at Emory University.

Wolpe presented “A Jewish perspective on artificial intelligence and its ethical challenges” at the eLimmud2 series of webinars on Sunday, 25 October.

“At the moment, there is no aspect of your life [that’s] not impacted in one way or another by AI,” he said. “AI already helps fly planes and drive cars, select what services and products we see in our social media, determines who gets a mortgage, and how healthcare is delivered. In the future, we may see robotic personal assistants, autonomous surgical robots, thought controlled gaming, real time universal translation, virtual companions, and real time emotion analytics.”

Yet all this comes with important ethical concerns, and according to Wolpe, rabbis are already exploring these quandaries. He referred the audience to the writing of Rabbi Daniel Nevins, who asks fascinating questions about AI and Judaism.

For example, “Are Jews liable for the halachic consequences of actions taken by machines on their behalf, for example, Sabbath labour? Should ethical principles derived from halacha be integrated into



the development of autonomous systems for transportation, medical care, warfare, and other morally charged activities, allowing autonomous systems to make life-or-death decisions? Might a robot perform a *mitzvah* or other halachically significant action? Is it conceivable to treat an artificial agent as a person? As a Jew?”

In Judaism, there are hardly any rituals or rites that only a rabbi can perform, “but in other religions like Christianity, would robots be allowed to perform rites?” asked Wolpe rhetorically. “What about robots that can search the Talmud and analyse it with a speed and thoroughness that human beings simply don’t have? During an experiment in Germany, a robot wrote the entire script of the Torah perfectly. Can this Torah be kosher? Probably not, as this is one of the few things in Judaism that a human being is commanded to do.”

Wolpe showed a famous experiment of a Microsoft chat bot programme from

2016, which learned and modified its behaviour according to its interaction with others. “They figured that if people interacted with it, it would start to sound more like a human being. But that isn’t what happened. People started playing with it – they didn’t hide that it was a bot – and it began to modify its responses. It made racist, antisemitic statements, and even denied the Holocaust. In 24 hours, it became a hate-filled bot because of the way people responded to it.” This example shows why people are fearful of AI and its ability to create hate and division in the world.

Wolpe explained that all AI is based on algorithms, “which are like a formula or recipe. The problem is, we don’t know how AI makes the decisions it makes, as algorithms are often opaque. When making AI, you ‘plug in’ existing algorithms to make something new, and sometimes add your own. These are thousands and millions of lines of code, but we sometimes have no way to explain how these decisions are made. For example, if a doctor tells you that you have cancer, you want to know how he came to that conclusion. But AI might not give that reasoning.”

This is crucial when it comes to something like the ethics of automated cars. If a car is driving itself and something goes wrong, it may need to make a decision: drive into a group of pedestrians or smash into a wall, possibly killing the occupant. For human beings, that decision may need to be made in a tenth of a second, and they do their best. “But a tenth of a second is an eternity for AI. It can make millions of calculations. So we need to programme in what we want it to do in these situations,” Wolpe said. “What do we tell it to do? With AI, we will be programming moral decision-making into machines for the first time in history.”

Taking this question one step further, he asked, “Would we tell the car what kind of pedestrians it can and can’t hit? Will we give it the ability to tell the difference between a baby and a businessman?” Consumers have actually been asked these questions, and most say the car should save the pedestrians. But when asked if they would buy such a car, they say no. Yet, if we are going to develop automated cars, we will need to programme such decisions into them.

It’s the same with automatic weapons. “While some say robots in warfare will reduce casualties, where are the ethical limits? Can we programme a machine to ‘take someone out’? What if terrorists have drones? Should robots be used in riots?” he asked.

Robots that look like baby animals are already used to comfort elderly people with dementia. “How ethical is it that they aren’t aware that this is a robot? And what about robots that remind people to take their medication – what if the person refuses?”

There is also the question of

“companion robots”, where people buy a human-size robot and form a relationship with it. “How would Judaism respond to this if it’s a religion that places so much emphasis on the interactions between people?” he asked.

Exploring this further, Wolpe asked if robots developed some form of “self-awareness” or higher consciousness, could they become Jewish? While this may seem like a ridiculous question now, it might be something that needs to be answered one day.

He said “all questions about AI” in Judaism go back to the Golem, the legend of a clay creature that has been magically brought to life. The classic narrative of

the Golem tells of how Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague creates a Golem to defend the Jewish community from antisemitic attacks. But eventually, the Golem grows violent, and Rabbi Loew is forced to destroy it.

If robots are ever going to become a danger to humans, we need to heed the story of the Golem, “which had a built-in ‘kill switch’ to stop it if it got out of hand”, said Wolpe.

These are all questions that Wolpe believes need to be answered if the human race is going to develop AI. For Judaism, a religion based on a strict set of ethics, they are going to be difficult to ask, and to answer.

Falling in love with the world’s hottest real estate



JORDAN MOSHE

Falling in love with Jerusalem was the last thing Sarah Tuttle-Singer could have imagined. However, the love story that would unfold between this American-born writer and the ancient Jewish city proves that their match was ordained from the start.

A journalist and the author of *Jerusalem Drawn and Quartered*, Tuttle-Singer shared her story at eLimmud2 this past Sunday, 25 October. It began in the first summer she spent in Israel at the age of 16 in 1997. Raised in Venice Beach, California, today she lives in Israel with her two children and has made it her mission to come to grips with what it really means to live in the Jewish capital.

“Going to Israel was the last thing I wanted to do,” she said. “I wanted to hang out at the pool, go to the movies, and to the mall. But my parents had another idea, and I remember the afternoon my mother called me into her office.

“I walked in and saw her sitting at her old library desk, drinking her coffee, and smoking a cigarette. She said, ‘Sarah. Sit down.’ I wondered what sin of mine she’d found out about, but then she said, ‘I’ve decided it’s time for you to go to Israel, experience your roots, and meet the people who are your family.’”

Such a trip wasn’t a priority for her daughter, in spite of having grown up on stories of her mother’s travels in Israel in 1967, involving camels walking through Damascus Gate and the smell of rose water and the peals of church bells in the Jerusalem markets. But her mother remained adamant.

Her intuition proved right.

“I fell in love,” said Tuttle-Singer. “For the first time in my life, I didn’t have to explain why I kissed a mezuzah on the side of the door or explain why I didn’t eat shrimp tempura. It was the first time all the pieces of my identity came together, and it all made sense. I stood on a rooftop overlooking the Old City, and I fell in love. I felt at home.”

Tuttle-Singer swore she would return on aliyah, knowing that Israel was where she belonged and that the root of her belonging was in Jerusalem. She returned for brief subsequent visits, feeling connected to Jerusalem and its people, believing this was where she ultimately belonged. However, it didn’t occur to her that things weren’t as positive as they appeared.

“One night, I took a walk in the Old City, and ended up at the Damascus Gate,” she recalled. “I was standing there having a fantasy moment, and I suddenly felt a searing pain in my head and neck. I touched my head and my hand was sticky with blood. The pain hit, and I realised that someone had been throwing stones at me. I was terrified.

“I was standing there covered in my own blood. I ran headlong into the Muslim Quarter, and found myself surrounded by loud and scary Arabic, jarring sounds, and my senses were bouncing. I found two border police officers, they walked me out, and I sat at Jaffa Road and cried.

“I thought I’d never go back again.”

In spite of returning to America, Tuttle-Singer married an Israeli, and while they led comfortable lives in

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'Golden Girls' reunite during lockdown

TALI FEINBERG

Lockdown has had numerous negative repercussions, but it has also led to some new beginnings. For a group of Sephardi women who grew up together, it offered a chance to build an even closer bond and to start a walking group that has given them a new lease on life.

"We call ourselves the Golden Girls," says Yvette Zive. "There are about four to six of us who meet every day to walk together. We all come from the Congo [now Zaire], and were friends from about the age of three. Our parents were friends from Rhodes Island. Some of them were sent to the concentration camps, survived, and they met up again in the Congo," she says.



Jenni Stephen, Rina Ades, Yvette Zive and Rica Klugman are just some of the Golden Girls who enjoy a daily walk together

"So we are the second generation. Even as we raised our own families, we kept in touch. Some members of the group eventually moved to Belgium or South Africa, but we all celebrated each other's simchas together. Of those in Cape Town, we lived in different suburbs, but are now all in Sea Point." In a case of coming full circle, they all live within walking distance of each other, just like when they were children.

"We always kept our traditions," says another member of the group, Rina Ades. "At home, our parents spoke in French and Ladino, which they passed on to us, and of course, our mothers taught us to cook Sephardic food."

Most of the Golden Girls lost their husbands in the past four years, and while they are close to their children and grandchildren, lockdown gave them an opportunity to strengthen their bond.

"In early lockdown, we WhatsApped every day, and sometimes delivered flowers to each other. When we were allowed to go out, we decided to walk together for an hour. None of us were really 'walking people', but it was the only way we could see each other." They now can't imagine life without their daily walk.

"We walk and reminisce about our younger

days, our parents, their friendships, and how we used to ride bicycles to each other's houses. Monique Cohen and I come from the same village – Kipushi – and we lived in the same street. It's 69 years of friendship," says Zive. "We keep threatening to hire bikes and ride on the Sea Point promenade!"

"We have known each other since birth," Cohen says. "In 1967, Yvette went to Rhodesia, and I went to Belgium. We met again in South Africa."

Three of the women, including Zive, celebrated their 70th birthday under lockdown in May, June, and July. Although it wasn't what they expected, being able to see their childhood friends to celebrate more than made up for any big parties that couldn't happen. "It's important

to always look on the good side of things. Being negative is easy, being positive is much more difficult, but it makes the world of difference," says Zive.

If it's raining, the Golden Girls WhatsApp each other and discuss their days. "Some enjoy cooking or painting. I love arts and crafts, so we have also been to Clay Cafe to paint ceramics. When we walk, we sometimes stop for coffee or ice cream, always in the open air," says Zive.

As the women are in the age bracket that is more

at risk of COVID-19, they are careful and responsible in how and where they gather. "You have to live each day at a time, and do your best," says Zive. Over Shabbat and on the weekend, they are usually with their families, but sometimes see each other.

To others who are alone or feel lonely under lockdown, Zive advises that they "reconnect with someone. It doesn't necessarily have to be a friend, it can be a neighbour or family member. In our building, we phone each other on a Friday to wish each other Shabbat Shalom. It's important to find someone to connect with."

The group's regular walkers are sometimes joined by others who come and go, and who are always welcomed warmly with open arms. "As long as we are all still in South Africa, we will always get together. Our children are also friends – the third generation of friendships," says Zive. "Then, we have members of the group in Brussels, Israel, and all over the world. With all the new technology, it's easier to keep in touch. We are a very close-knit community."

"COVID-19 has been quite stressful, so going on a walk with old friends is just the best medicine," Cohen says.

Falling in love with the world's hottest real estate

>>Continued from page 12

Los Angeles, they resolved to make aliyah. Plagued by fear and doubt, however, she was reluctant to leave the safety of home and return to Israel with her husband and two children. Still, she resolved to rediscover her love for Israel but chose to stay away from the Old City.

Reeling from a breakdown in her marriage and subsequent divorce, it wasn't until colleague and journalist Avi Issacharoff convinced Tuttle-Singer to venture back into the ancient quarters that she slowly reignited the passion of her youth.

"My heart was in my throat, and I felt sick to my stomach," she recalled. "It was my first time back in 15 years, and the last time I had been there was I hurt." Tuttle-Singer gradually overcame her trauma, and with the help and care of local residents, rediscovered her love of Jerusalem.

"I slowly realised that I wanted to live in the Old City, to go into it as deeply as I could and be part of it," she said. "I divided the year into four parts, just like Jerusalem is divided into four, and I wanted to be part of each community."

Over time, Tuttle-Singer engaged with people across the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian quarters, and came to a realisation.

"This is the hottest piece of spiritual real estate in the world," she said, "and we're afraid to look each other in the eye in spite of being in love with the same space. I resolved to go into the city again to see beyond the borders and the fear that divides us."

While her experience has blended uplifting spiritual moments with physically frightening ones, Tuttle-Singer said that she learned the importance of connecting with others based on a shared love of the ancient city.

"I learned that you can have a treaty between governments, but unless people live by the treaty, it's meaningless. We won't live by it unless we know each other, unless we take steps to begin having conversations, it will never happen."

"One conversation may not change the world, but if it leads to more conversation, you have a friendship, and that can become a basis for positive change."

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Herzlia hat finds its owner – 40 years later

TALI FEINBERG

As United Herzlia Schools celebrated its 80th anniversary with an online musical extravaganza on 25 October, Barry Lipchin was thousands of kilometres away, sleeping, in Auckland, New Zealand. He was awoken with a flurry of text messages from family and friends telling him that Herzlia had found his hat.

“I asked, ‘What hat?’” says Lipchin. “It turned out it was one I lost when I was really little, more than 40 years ago. I was laughing. I couldn’t believe it!”

As part of the evening’s presentation, Herzlia Director of Education Geoff Cohen and his co-host, Lisa Chait, shared some lost property that had remained on the school campus for decades, and Lipchin’s name was written in the cap. Chait asked him to “please come and collect your hat from lost property”, and as thousands of Herzlia alumni from 48 countries across the world were enjoying the show, the message quickly made its way to him. He has since unearthed a photo of him wearing it, along with his “safari suit” Herzlia uniform.

“It’s quite remarkable. My mother wrote my name in it, and she passed away a month ago, so it was very meaningful. I do remember

losing it. I was a diligent little boy, so I looked for it! I’ve also still got my kippah from that time.” Lipchin started at Herzlia 1977, and matriculated there in 1988.

“I told my colleagues I wish I would hit the lottery like that! It almost seems like the same chance that my hat would be found 40 years later.”

Says Cohen, “We have a storeroom in the building that we use for lost property. Generally, after a while, we give a lot away to charity. Some of the uniform items are given to pupils as second-hand items. We have kept some as archival items, and Barry’s cap was in that box.”

Lipchin recalls an idyllic childhood in Rocklands Avenue, a street away from the school, and he would often walk home at lunch time. “Most of my friends are from our Herzlia days. I spoke to two of them yesterday. Many of us lived close to the school, and my dad had a pharmacy in District Six and then at the top of Derry Street in Vredehoek. So this moment



Barry Lipchin in his Herzlia uniform

made me feel very nostalgic.”

Lipchin, his wife, Hayley, and their three school-going sons emigrated to New Zealand in 2018, and one thing he says is impossible to replicate there is the Jewish education that Herzlia offers.

“It’s a tiny and very fragmented Jewish community here, and it’s difficult to be Orthodox. If I look back at the education level at Herzlia, it was off the charts, especially in

Hebrew, Judaism, and Zionism. You just can’t find that in New Zealand.

“Up until the age of 13, Jewish kids here can have a secular education with a ‘Jewish flavour’. I call it a smattering of Judaism,” says Lipchin. “They learn the *chaggim* and a bit of Hebrew, but I’m teaching my youngest son the rest, and I got that knowledge from Herzlia. I’m teaching him Hebrew because I want him to be able to read fluently at his Barmitzvah in four years’ time. Herzlia gave me that grounding and identity.”

Lipchin’s brother-in-law, Yinon Levy, collected the cap from Herzlia, and Lipchin will pay for it to be posted to him. He promises to share photographs when it’s finally returned to him.

Herzlia alumni and supporters enjoyed the online event to celebrate the school’s eight decades, which included messages from prestigious alumni like Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and music and dance numbers from current and past pupils. It was presented live from the school’s library, and a stream of messages from the audience allowed alumni and supporters to celebrate and connect from all over the world.

Letters			
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN WESTERN WORLD UNSURPRISING <p>“Islamophobia, a worldwide phenomenon, has become increasingly menacing in parts of Europe and the US.” So writes Iqbal Jassat in <i>The Star</i>, 13 October 2020, and those of us who know our history, aren’t surprised. Who can forget the 3 000 deaths of 9/11 and the Muslim terrorists who hijacked the four passenger-laden planes involved, murdered and replaced their pilots, and then flew those planes to their final destruction in the United States?</p> <p>Or, the five wars that have been forced on tiny and mostly outgunned Israel by surrounding Muslim countries, all of which the Muslims lost, but which cost the Israelis heavily in death and injury? Or the fact that almost all terrorist attacks worldwide have had a Muslim background? It’s not just a matter of religious antipathy; there are two main Muslim factions: Sunni and Shia. They have been attacking each other with Russian assistance, and in Syria alone, casualties have amounted to more than half a million.</p> <p>Jassat is a spokesperson for Palestinians. They are adamant that Palestine is theirs “from the Jordan to the sea”. In spite of the fact that Jews have lived in the territory for the past 3 000 years, had their kingdoms and temples in Jerusalem, developed and industrialised the country, replanted its vanished forests, made its deserts bloom, and drained its malarial swamps, they arrogantly and obstinately refuse Jews any role in its history. After each of its conquests, Israel offered to share territory with the Palestinians in spite of ongoing terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Israel is regarded as the only democracy in the Middle East. Its government is elected by popular vote by all its citizens, Jew and Arab. This makes Jassat’s description of its government as a “settler/colonial regime” all the more puzzling. Regimes aren’t elected by popular vote. Nations colonise territories that have exploitable assets, gold, diamonds, or oil. Hence Ephraim Kishon’s title for a book on Israel: <i>No oil, Moses</i>.</p> <p>Jassat lauds the anti-Israel movement BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) four times, and reports that there is a pro-Israel group named PJTN in South Africa, opining that its existence “ought to be of concern to the intelligence and security cluster and Palestine solidarity movements”. But even when BDS has been known to disrupt a concert held here by an Israeli musician with antisemitic shouts, his disapproval isn’t on record. – Don Krausz, Johannesburg</p>	ANC’S OBSTINATE CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL INCREASINGLY OUT OF STEP <p>How out of step is the South African African National Congress (ANC) government firstly with its African Union comrades, where more and more African states are warming towards Israel, but more importantly with its partners in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China), all of which have strong relations with the Jewish state? Who is the odd man out? The ANC finds great solace in burying its head in the sand.</p> <p>Both the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have established formal diplomatic relations with Israel. The latest to reach an agreement is Sudan, one of the largest countries in Africa and a country that was technically at war with Israel. Sudan is a real signal to the ANC to reassess its stand on Israel. If, indeed, it wanted to repay an old debt, that debt should be to assist the Palestinians to establish their long-sought-after homeland, and help to cement the Oslo Accords with the aim of establishing a two-state solution.</p> <p>Does the ANC really want to play any meaningful role in establishing a safe, viable state for its Palestinian friends and ending the long-sought-after occupation? There seems to be a realistic approach amongst many Arab states in the region to shed</p>	<p>the obstinate narrative of not allowing a Jewish homeland in their neighbourhood, to recognise the benefits of peace, and as an off-spin from that peace, to partner in the technological advancement of the start-up nation.</p> <p>It’s not just about technology. It’s about the stability of the entire region, which would benefit exponentially from co-operation with Israel.</p> <p>Surely even the most obstinate cadre in the ANC must understand that instead of its continued hostility to Israel, the best way to support its Palestinian friends would be to encourage these recent developments instead of criticising them? Many in the ANC have long accused Israel of human-rights abuses, yet at the same time not only supported Omar al-Bashir, the wanted criminal leader of Sudan, but gave him refuge on a visit to South Africa.</p> <p>It’s indeed unfortunate that the ANC is still so out of step with a world that supports stabilising such a volatile region. For an ANC so mired in its own catastrophic cycle of corruption, ineptitude, and maladministration, open hostility to Israel will deflect from the real problems it fails to confront. – Allan Wolman, Israel</p>	<p>literature, economic sciences, and peace. This year, four Jews were among the 12 laureates – 33%!</p> <p>Jewish awards in 2020 included the Nobel Prize in Literature, awarded to Louise Glück for “her unmistakable poetic voice”. She is also a former United States poet laureate. The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine went to Harvey Alter, aged 85, who shared the prize with two others for his discovery of the Hepatitis C virus, which is a cause of cirrhosis and hepatocellular cancer. The Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences went to Paul Milgrom, who shared the prize with his former mentor, Robert Wilson, for their research on auction theory. The Nobel Prize in Physics went to Sir Roger Penrose, aged 89, for his research on black holes. The prize was shared with two others. Sir Roger is an atheist, but his maternal grandmother, born in Russia, was Jewish, which, according to halacha, makes him Jewish. He told the <i>Jerusalem Post</i> that while he may be considered Jewish from a religious point of view, he doesn’t consider himself as such. – Professor Roy Shires, Johannesburg</p>
CONFLATION OF ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM STARTS WITH JEWS <p>I read with interest the article by respected Professor Milton Shain titled “Anti-Zionist left has more in common with far right than it thinks”, (<i>SA Jewish Report</i>, 23 October 2020).</p> <p>Professor Shain makes the distinction in the article, albeit somewhat gingerly, between anti-Zionism and antisemitism: the two cannot be “axiomatically equated”, he says. That, in my view, is a salutary departure from current thinking, in my experience, amongst most members of our Jewish community, who would indeed be surprised to discover that there is any difference at all.</p> <p>I would, however, be interested to learn Professor Shain’s views on the question to what extent the almost institutional conflation of those two matters by many Jews themselves all over the world, but especially in South Africa, may be responsible for the very same conflation said to feature so significantly in the utterances of the “anti-Zionist left” he criticises.</p> <p>If, as a Jew, one recognises and expresses no difference between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and indeed hastens to blur the distinction at every turn, can one fairly expect others readily to do so? Just because many people (whether Jewish or not) may be incapable of making the distinction, this doesn’t mean that the distinction doesn’t exist or isn’t of crucial importance, keeping in mind, of course, that there can never be any justification for antisemitism properly so called. The remedy, it seems to me, is in our own hands. – Brian Slon, Johannesburg</p>	THE OTHER JEWISH ACHIEVERS IN 2020 <p>It’s the season of the Jewish Achiever Awards, but Jews also came out winners in this year’s Nobel Prize. This isn’t surprising.</p> <p>Jews comprise a mere 0.2% of the world’s population (15 million out of 7.6 billion). By that criterion alone, one would expect one Nobel for every 500 awarded, or put another way, just one prize every 40 years. Yet Jews, which includes those with either one or two Jewish parents, have won very close to 200 Nobels or 22% of all awards since they first were made in 1901. This amounts to 110 times the number expected based purely on population size.</p> <p>In Rishon LeZion, one can visit the Nobel Prize Laureates Boulevard, Tayelet Hatnei Pras Nobel.</p> <p>There have been predictions that such Jewish “dominance” is unlikely to endure, perhaps due to prizes being won in the future by more and more scientists from the Far East and Asia. For now, that hasn’t happened, although it’s likely that more will be won from those emerging scientific powerhouses.</p> <p>The prizes are awarded in six categories, namely physiology or medicine, physics, chemistry,</p>	COUPLES REFUSE TO LISTEN UNTIL IT’S TOO LATE <p>I was most interested to read Howard Feldman’s insightful thoughts after the passing of his father in last week’s <i>SA Jewish Report</i> (23 October 2020), titled “That damn kittel”.</p> <p>As a couples therapist, I’m often left wondering why those in a relationship so often refuse point-blank to listen to the advice or suggestion given by their partner or spouse. Yet, once they are no longer around to witness the benefits of their goodwill – or should someone else perhaps make the same suggestion – then they fall into line immediately. – Michael Kallenbach, Johannesburg</p>	<p>Disclaimer: The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the <i>SA Jewish Report</i>. The editor is not obliged to use every letter and will not publish vitriolic statements or any letters with inappropriate content. Letters will be edited and – if need be – shortened.</p> <p>Guidelines: Letters are limited to 400 words. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. Letters should be emailed to editorial@sajewishreport.co.za</p>



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