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Antisemites and Jews see red over Markovitz's EFF comments

TALI FEINBERG

When a white Jewish student in the red garb of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) spouted extremist rhetoric outside Brackenfell High School on 20 November, South Africans sat up and took notice. Jack Markovitz' inflammatory statements, economic status, family history, and most of all his Jewishness resulted in a deluge of antisemitism on social media, as well as pain and anger in the Jewish community and beyond.

In one foul swoop, Markovitz called Nelson Mandela "a sell-out", the Democratic Alliance (DA) "a white supremacist party", the residents of Brackenfell "poor whites", and called for the "transfer of generational wealth and land to the disenfranchised people of this country".

As the grandson of the late Leon Markovitz, a former mayor of Cape Town, Western Cape finance minister, DA fundraiser, and community stalwart, Markovitz emphasised that he was "trying to rectify the situation here today".

The 21-year-old said protests must be taken to wealthy areas, and called for a possibly violent confrontation with white people. He accused "every single white neighbourhood

in this country" of "yearning for apartheid". He said he saw racist attitudes at his "private school with mostly white kids". Alumni of a local Jewish school say he was a scholar there. He is reportedly studying at the University of Cape Town.

The reaction to his comments was explosive, with thousands saying he should be the first to hand over his family's wealth. Many said that his father was Neil Markovitz, the owner of the prestigious Newmark Hotels, and suggested these be offered to

the masses. But a close friend of the family, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Neil isn't Jack's father.

Thousands of abusive and antisemitic comments flooded social media. "No surprise that he's a Jew, they've always supported terrorists"; "He is part of the new world order trying to control the world"; "Jewish youth voting for the SA Holocaust 2021"; and "Zionistiesejood [Zionist Jew], friend of Soros" (implying that Markovitz is linked to billionaire George Soros,

who is accused by antisemites of controlling the world) were just some of the venomous responses.

Now, a South African from the other end of the political spectrum, Anthony Hall of the "All South African Lives Matter" group, says he has "decided that Jack Markovitz must be taught the lesson of his life. Next week in the Western Cape High Court, I will institute civil proceedings against him and the EFF for calling the people of Brackenfell 'poor whites'. It's derogatory, libellous, offensive, and vindictive."

Hall called on Brackenfell residents to come forward to give affidavits, "to ensure that he [Markovitz] pays for what he did, and retracts that statement in a full-page advert in the *Cape Times* and the *Argus*".

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) chairperson Tzvi Brivik lamented Markovitz' comments as well as the way South Africans responded to them. "Twitter became flooded with vitriolic and racist comments, for which the primary motivation wasn't what the young man said, but rather the fact that he bears a Jewish name."

"His Jewish origin is irrelevant to the conversation about a high school in Brackenfell. Instead, racists, antisemites, and conspiracy theorists of every stripe used the video

as a green light to propagate a host of abhorrent smears, not just against the youth leader himself, but against Jews in general.

"While any issue may be debated, the manner in which the debate takes place is of concern to the SAJBD. We have just launched a #WordsMatter campaign locally, challenging our community to become practitioners of careful thoughtful and deliberate speech, engaged listening, and meaningful interactions in spite of and because of our different views and experiences. We cannot allow a debate to degenerate into hateful speech that harms our community, regardless of the opinion espoused by this young man. No matter the provocation, this kind of rhetoric is callous, hateful, and deeply dangerous. There is simply #NoPlaceForHate."

DA MP Michael Cardo, speaking in his personal capacity, told the *SA Jewish Report* that "Jack Markovitz' description of the DA as a white supremacist party is farcical. In part it reflects just how much the term has been stripped of any meaning by third-rate thinkers peddling fourth-rate ideas to students in the name of transformation."

"The great irony is that Jack Markovitz, who is infinitely more privileged than the vast majority of white South Africans, breezed into a predominantly working-class suburb and proceeded to hold forth on generational wealth while all his own class prejudices and bigotry were on full display."

"The EFF is a proto-fascist party

Continued on page 6>>

Teddy bears to help abused children



Photo: Ilean Ossendryver

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Big skills for kosher pricing panel

JORDAN MOSHE

Mandy Yachad and Herschel Mayers, who both have extensive legal and commercial experience, have been appointed to the new independent pricing review panel for kosher manufactured products. The board of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) announced this late on Wednesday.

This follows the UOS board's announcement of measures to address pressing kashrut issues raised in recent weeks. These measures include effective kashrut query monitoring, new *hechsher* pricing categories, and the establishment of the panel.

Yachad and Mayers will review any complaints from food manufacturing companies with regards to either pricing or processing of Beth Din kosher certification. The UOS board has stressed that the panel will deal only

with these issues and won't be involved in any other UOS or kashrut-related issues. Additionally, the review option is open only to those companies which have fully exhausted a bona fide engagement with the kosher department and still remain unsatisfied.

The board says Mayers and Yachad will have the power to appoint other panellists on an ad-hoc basis as they see fit to deal with issues which may arise in future.

Mayers, an actuary, is the co-founder of Discovery Life, and was previously the head of Vitality in the United Kingdom (UK). He was also previously part of Liberty Life as head of individual and group business, underwriting, systems, technology, product development, and finance, before leaving in 2000 to found Discovery Life.

Mayers was appointed chief executive of Discovery Life and Discovery Invest in 2006, and in 2007, became chief executive of PruProtect in the UK, a joint venture

between Discovery and Prudential Assurance Company.

He remained chief executive when Discovery took full ownership of the business, and rebranded it VitalityLife in 2014. In June 2018, he assumed the additional role of chief executive of VitalityInvest.

Yachad, a BCom LLB graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand, is a trustee and director of a number of charitable institutions including the Rambam Trust and the Gesher Small Business Relief Fund. He previously practised at Werksmans Attorneys for almost 15 years (the last nine of which were as a partner in the commercial department) before joining Peregrine Group.

Yachad was appointed an executive director to the group board in November 2010, in which capacity he served until March 2019.

The panel can be contacted at sakosherreview@gmail.com

Dutch right-wing politician resigns over antisemitism scandal

The leader of the Dutch right-wing Forum for Democracy party resigned on Monday, 23 November, following reports that members of its youth movement had engaged in antisemitic behaviour.

Thierry Baudet, a colourful politician who in 2018 published a nude self-portrait on Instagram, said that assuming responsibility for the antisemitism scandal wasn't the immediate reason for stepping down. Rather the trigger was demands within the party that the guilty members be kicked out before completion of an internal disciplinary review of their actions.



The review is of members of the party's section for young members who in a WhatsApp group shared Nazi songs. One of them called *Der Untermensch*, or *Subhuman*, a 1942 Nazi propaganda book inciting hatred of Jews and Slavs, a "masterpiece", the *Het Parool* newspaper reported last week.

Some party members seek to "skip the process and throw people under the bus before we know what's

happened", Baudet said in a video he shared on social media announcing his resignation as party leader. He warned against a "trial by the media, which isn't trustworthy".

If the accused engaged in antisemitism, he said, "they should leave the party, and my resignation will be an act of assuming responsibility for what happened".

Forum for Democracy seeks a Dutch exit from the European Union, and stricter immigration policies. It's also consistently pro-Israel.

It won only two seats out of 150 in parliament in the 2017 elections, but three of the 26 in the 2019 Dutch elections for the European Parliament.

Plea for life of physician on Iran's death row

The Swedish foreign minister has pleaded with Iran to spare the life of a Swedish-Iranian physician who was convicted on charges that he was spying for Israel, saying they were trumped up.

"Sweden condemns the death penalty, and is working to ensure that the verdict against Ahmadreza Djalali isn't enforced," Ann Linde said on Tuesday, 24 November, on Twitter, adding that she had spoken to her Iranian counterpart, Javad Zarif.

Djalali, a renowned emergency medicine physician, was visiting Iran in 2016 when he was arrested. He was charged with, among other things, spying for Israel.

The doctor has told human rights groups that his confessions in 2017 were extracted by torture and threats against his family. He also said the charges were in retaliation for refusing to spy for Iran. Djalali told his wife that he was moved in recent days to a different prison to prepare him for execution.

Biden win spurs antisemitic attack

A Jewish couple in Columbus, Ohio, say their neighbour yelled antisemitic threats at them and threw rocks through their window on the day that Joe Biden was declared the winner of the presidential election.

Federal, state and county authorities are investigating the incident as a hate crime, according to the local ABC affiliate.

Nick and Tiffany Kinney say that on the night of 7 November, when media outlets called the election for Biden, their neighbour approached them, spat on them, and said he was "tired of us liberals", then said it's no wonder Hitler burned our people, he knows we are Jewish, Nick told ABC-6.

According to Tiffany, the neighbour said, "I'll put a bullet through your head like Hitler."

The couple believe the neighbour then threw the rocks that shattered their door and window.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Shabbat times this week		
Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:19	Johannesburg
19:15	20:19	Cape Town
18:15	19:17	Durban
18:15	19:34	Bloemfontein
18:15	19:50	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:38	East London

Torah Thought

The significance of Jacob's headstones

In this week's Torah portion, we read that Jacob journeyed to his mother's family in Haran while on the run from his murderous brother Esau. As night approached, he stopped for a rest. Before going to sleep, he gathered some stones and arranged them around his head. The Biblical commentator Rashi explains, "He arranged them like a gutter pipe around his head because he feared wild beasts."

Other commentaries ask the question that if Jacob wanted to protect himself through natural means rather than relying on a miracle, why did he erect the stone barrier only around his head? On the other hand, if the reason he didn't build a blockade around the rest of his body was because he trusted that G-d would protect him, why did he take extra measures to guard his head?


Clearly, Jacob placing the stones around his

head to keep away intruders must hold deeper significance.

Jacob was about to enter a new stage of life. Until now, the Torah tells us, Jacob was, "an innocent man who dwelled in tents", a reference to his extended studies in the "tents of Shem and Ever", the centres of Torah study at that time. Now, on the cusp of marriage, Jacob would be entering the workforce, living in Haran, and working with the sly Laban. He realised that the journey to Haran alone already exposed him to "wild animals", an allusion to the spiritual dangers that even the lead-up to his impending transition could pose. At this critical point, says the Torah, Jacob protected his head.

In doing so, Jacob demonstrated that to ensure our commitment to Torah values, even when we are absorbed in earning a living, our heads must be guarded. In the words of King David in Psalms,

Rabbi Pini Pink,
Chabad Greenstone



"If you eat from the toil of your hands, you are praiseworthy, and it is good for you." Invest and preoccupy only your hands – your physical energy – in your toil and labour; save your head and heart for the study of Torah and for passionate prayer.

As long as we keep our head safe, taught Jacob, and reserve our higher faculties for our relationship with G-d, then our integrity and sense of direction will stay secure even when our body goes to work.


Often it's difficult to make the time in our heads and hearts to build that spiritual protection and connection, especially with everything going on in today's world. We can use the opportunity of the upcoming December holidays to take some time out, re-think, and strengthen our connection with G-d.

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Satirical videos of UOS and chief ‘beyond disgusting’, say rabbis

NICOLA MILTZ

The South African Rabbinical Association has strongly condemned two community-made spoof videos which have been circulating on social media that depict Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein as Adolf Hitler. The videos also depict members of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS), its kashrut department, and other high-ranking rabbonim as his Nazi generals. Apparently intended as satire, the

The second video mocks the rabbinical association by quoting from its letter of condemnation. Both videos show Hitler in an absolute froth ranting in German at his generals who cower in his presence. The English subtitles cover a range of serious issues that have been raised in the community in recent years in a bid to make light of them. The videos are in response to animosity within certain sections of the *frum* community over the cost of kosher food, the increase in kosher certification fees, and

the alleged lack of corporate governance at the UOS, which includes the office of the chief rabbi. The videos, which may have been intended to be funny, have in many people’s minds over-stepped the mark. A disgusted Goldman told the *SA Jewish Report*, “I may be a rabbi, but I have a very healthy sense of humour. Sadly, I see nothing funny whatsoever in the Hitler spoof on kashrut and the Beth Din. You don’t have to be a child of a Holocaust survivor to find the whole attempt absolutely disgusting and worthy of total revulsion. Hitler is not a joke! “If a non-Jew did this he would be roundly condemned and hauled before a human-rights tribunal. On top of that, to use it to ridicule our leading rabbi/s is pathetic and sickening. Very disquieting, too, were the communal protests which, thus far, have been insipid at best.” Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, the rabbi of the Oxford Synagogue Centre and chairperson of the rabbinical association, says that 2020 has been an interesting year. “It has brought out the best in us in so many ways and there are some amazing stories of selflessness,

caring, and resilience. Sadly, there’s a lot of ugliness as well, and the past couple of months have shown some horrible behaviour. The recent satirical video was really painful.” When he viewed the second video, he said it left him “shaking”. “It took me a while to compose myself. I was personally beyond disgusted by the news that a second video, along the lines of the first, was now doing the rounds on WhatsApp. Comparisons to Nazis and the Holocaust are always odious and an affront to the memory of the six million. Using such imagery in relation to fellow Jews is an insult that our community cannot tolerate,

and I hope that everyone condemns it in the strongest terms.” Earlier this week, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies also said in a statement that it condemned the satirical videos. “The utilisation of Holocaust themes or analogies to make political or other statements, including as a vehicle for satire or humour, is offensive and hurtful to many. Holocaust analogies as a source of amusement are unacceptable.” The letter by the Rabbinical Association was signed, “With hope for *shalom* and respect in our community”.



A still from the spoof video

videos have backfired, sparking revulsion and disgust in members of the Orthodox rabbinical community. In a strongly worded letter of condemnation, the SA Rabbinical Association last Friday said that the videos made use of movie footage featuring infamous Nazi characters “to malign senior rabbinic leaders in our community”. “The videos are offensive to all our sensitivities. They constitute a total affront to Torah and its scholars. Its creators must be denounced outright. We cannot remain silent in the face of such disgraceful behaviour, to which we object in the strongest terms.” Rabbi Yossi Goldman of Sydenham Shul and president of the rabbinical association, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that the creators of the videos should be “revealed and reviled”.

In response to an article in last week’s *SA Jewish Report*, which highlighted the first video, the creators – hiding behind the platform captiongenerator.com – produced another spoof video along the same lines. The videos were created by local Jewish community members well versed in the goings on in the Johannesburg religious community. Captiongenerator.com enables people to create memes using humorous foreign language or silent-movie scenes with unique English subtitles.

UAE makes historic donation to Israeli medical centre

JORDAN MOSHE

When an ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) attends an event in support of an Israeli medical centre, it’s a momentous occasion. When that ambassador then donates R2 million to the centre on behalf of his government, the occasion is historic. Such was the case this past Sunday at the international virtual gala hosted by the African Friends of Sheba Medical Center at the Saltzman Family Community Centre in Linksfield. The event – held in support of the medical centre based in Tel-Hashomer – brought together attendees from the United States, South America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and the UAE. “The evening was aimed at supporting Sheba’s efforts to fight the coronavirus,” says Naomi Hadar, the executive director of African Friends of Sheba Medical Center. “The event was streamed live in all the participating countries, but it was only in South Africa that we came together physically for the gala evening, subject to strict social distancing protocols.” As unique as that was, Hadar wanted to add another special dimension to the event by inviting Mahash Saeed Alhameli, the UAE ambassador to South Africa. “I love challenges,” says Hadar. “Sheba Medical recently signed an agreement of medical co-operation with the UAE, and I wanted to do something special that would bring Israel, the UAE, and South Africa together at this event.”



“I asked the Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Lior Keinan, for help. He and Alhameli are actually friends, and he gave me his number. I called Alhameli to invite him, and I was bowled over when he said yes. I was stunned.” The event – sponsored by Ivan and Lynette Saltzman (the former being the chairperson of the African Friends of Sheba) – featured an auction in support of the Sheba Medical Center. Alhameli attended the gala, and was one of the first to arrive and the last to leave, says Hadar. He also addressed the gathering, twice receiving a standing ovation from those in attendance. Also in attendance was Dr Thesi Reddy, a Durban paediatrician whom Hadar escorted to Sheba Medical in Israel earlier this year after being diagnosed with a brain tumour. “Thesi shared his story and even got to see the doctor who had treated him in Israel over the live feed,” said Hadar. “Professor Yitshak Kreiss, the director general of the hospital, and even Shira Haas (the Emmy nominated actress from Netflix’s *Unorthodox*) were also present, and they raised a

l'chaim to Thesi.” It was during the course of the evening that the ambassador offered the donation on behalf of his country. “He turned to me and said, ‘We are the first in the UAE who felt it was time we became friends with Israel, and it’s time we change the perception people have of Israel and the Jews,’” says Hadar. “From today, Naomi, you are my sister.” Alhameli then offered to donate R2 million to Sheba Medical Center, telling Hadar that this was just the beginning of a long partnership. According to Hadar, when the event ended, one of the guests approached her and said, “I’m a historian, and what I witnessed here today was nothing short of historic. I don’t think we can actually grasp that for the first time in history, a representative of the UAE attended an event arranged by Israel. This is the highlight of my life.” “The UAE’s involvement at Sheba is an incredible development,” says Hadar. “It’s a historic moment that I think has the potential to improve relations between Israel and South Africa as well. “Sheba has so much to give everyone, not just Jews. I regularly receive requests from people in need of help, and to date, we’ve been able to get some of them the treatment they need in Israel, among them Thesi. “One of my goals is to save lives, Jewish and non-Jewish,” Hadar says. “I believe that if we save one life, we save an entire world. As Kreiss says, if you save the life of one who hates you, he will never be able to hate you again. Healing is a bridge for peace.”

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A rabbi’s battle to give a man a Jewish burial

NICOLA MILTZ

An Umhlanga rabbi will make sure an old man’s memory is kept alive thanks to a pair of tefillin and a tallis found in his room at the Jewish retirement home where he lived.

Rabbi Shlomo Wainer of Chabad of Umhlanga will see to it that these religious items, belonging to the late Oscar Voight, 101, will be worn every day to honour the centenarian’s memory.

This after Wainer lost an urgent court bid last week in the Durban High Court to ensure Voight be buried according to Jewish law. Wainer was trying to prevent him being cremated as was stipulated in his last will and testament, which was written when he was in his nineties. Jewish law mandates that human remains be buried after death, and this has been the dominant Jewish practice for millennia.

Voight was cremated after acting judge Ian Topping ruled that he couldn’t grant Wainer’s application because Voight, who died on 15 November, had left a will saying he wanted to be cremated. The retired engineer, who had worked for a scrap metal company in KwaZulu-Natal, had no surviving close relatives.

Voight and Wainer became acquainted five years ago when Wainer arranged for Voight – then 95 – to move into the Beth Shalom Jewish Retirement Home in Durban. The old man’s pension had fallen behind inflation and was no longer sufficient to cover his expenses, and he was experiencing some difficulties.

“I remember meeting him at his Warner Beach flat. He was a bright guy in good health, nicely dressed, and we spent a while talking. We later put on tefillin, the first time he had done so since his Barmitzvah, and it was very emotional for us,” said Wainer this week.

Wainer verified with the Beth Din that Voight was Jewish, and set out to assist him with communal support.

According to records, Voight’s Hebrew name was Asher ben Shmuel Moshe. He was born on 21 January 1919 in the Free State, before his parents, Max and Sarah, moved

to Cape Town where he was raised and had a Barmitzvah.

He met his wife Rebecca “Ruby” Karpelowsky while living in Johannesburg, and they were married in the Yeoville Street Shul on 14 June 1955. The couple had no children. They weren’t a religiously observant couple, and lived in Amanzimtoti and later Warner Beach removed from the Jewish community.

When his only sister passed away, Voight attended to her funeral arrangements and made sure she was buried according to Jewish law in Johannesburg.

Voight and Wainer formed a special bond, and enjoyed pleasant interludes with one another at the home during the rabbi’s regular visits.

“He wasn’t very sociable, more private, but I used to go up to his room and spend time with him. When he turned 100, we put on tefillin together,” said Wainer this week.

“I believe Oscar would have chosen a Jewish burial had we discussed it,” Wainer told the *SA Jewish Report*.

According to him, Voight identified with his Jewish heritage and enjoyed experiencing Jewish life and its traditions once at the home. He has fond memories laying tefillin with him several times, and doing things like shaking the lulav and etrog during Sukkot.

He last saw Voight before the nationwide lockdown, when visitation restrictions were imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to him, Voight was healthy and strong, so he was very upset when he heard of his passing.

“It was a shock in and of itself to hear he had passed away. It really jolted me when I heard he had a will and that he wanted to be cremated, something that Judaism abhors,” said the rabbi.

“Straight away, I realised this was going to be a massive challenge because once it’s in a will it’s a legal document and it’s very difficult to change.

“I knew I needed a miracle,” he said, but this didn’t deter the rabbi, who pulled out all the stops, managing to delay the cremation until the judge had made his ruling.

He said Voight didn’t have an estate, so his decision could have been based on cost.

“A cremation costs far less than a funeral, and possibly Oscar didn’t want to be a burden to anybody. He was a simple, unassuming guy. I assume it would have been on the shoulders of the community, and therefore he didn’t want to put anybody out. His wife was also cremated some time ago, and this is possibly another reason for his decision. These are the only reasons I could think of,” said Wainer.

According to those who knew him at the home, Voight was a private and humble man. He wanted to go quietly without a fuss. He even chose not to have a death notice in the papers.

“The lesson I think everyone can learn from this isn’t to separate oneself from the community. One should try to be part of a community, and feel connected to it. Oscar came to KwaZulu-Natal as an engineer and worked for the same company for 40 years. During that time he had little to no contact with Jewish people,” said Wainer.

Wainer said people should stipulate in their will the desire to be buried “because that’s the Jewish way”.

“It’s not a matter of being Orthodox, Reform, Progressive, conservative, gay, or lesbian – this of no concern. If a person is a Jew, they should be buried as a Jew. Irrespective of who we are when it comes to the end of life, we should be buried. The body is a holy vehicle, a vessel for the soul. We are souls with a body, not a body with a soul. This vehicle needs to be looked after and honoured with dignity.”

The Torah and Jewish tradition is consistently pro-burial, considering the burning of the body a violation of the person’s memory and G-d’s image. Reform Judaism still favours burial, but doesn’t oppose cremation. Cremation has become more popular in recent years for a number of reasons.



Rabbi Shlomo Wainer and Oscar Voight

According to Karen Krausey, the chairperson of the Progressive Chevrah Kadisha, Voight’s remains will be interred at the Red Hill Jewish Cemetery.

“We have received his remains. This was an unusual situation. It has happened many times in the past, but this is the first time we have seen the matter going to court. We have to abide by the decision of the court. The deceased’s last will and testament was witnessed, dated, and signed, and it stood up in a court of law.

“I would have loved to have seen him, maybe spoken to him, heard his last few words, to have said the Shema with him, but unfortunately this didn’t happen,” said Wainer.

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland.

Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important things is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn’t exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved!

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

Adv. Horesh closely collaborates with professionals who assist him in tracing documentation in Europe required for successful applications of reinstatement EU citizenships.

Due to Corona virus, I'm not sure when will I visit SA again. However, I do plan & hope to arrive by the end of 2020
You are most welcome to contact me on adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com or whatsapp +48783953223

SA abstention on Israeli resolution could signal ‘a significant shift’

TALI FEINBERG

When the United Nations (UN) Second Committee passed an Israeli resolution on “Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development” last week, it was supported by 144 nations. South Africa was one of only eight countries to abstain, but does the fact that South Africa didn’t vote against the resolution signal a shift in its approach to Israel?

The resolution supports the UN’s Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and focuses on actions needed for post-COVID-19 recovery. According to a statement from the Israeli mission to the UN, the resolution will help to “remove barriers facing entrepreneurs and unleash the talent that is innate in all societies. It will increase access and opportunities for women, youth, and individuals with disabilities by promoting entrepreneurship education through capacity-building, training programmes, and business incubators.”

While this is something that South Africa could only benefit from, it chose to abstain from the vote. Yet in light of the country’s strained relationship with Israel, this could still be a positive move.

“It’s indeed interesting that South Africa seems no longer to be taking an activist position against Israel. Abstaining shows a significant shift,” says local political analyst Ralph Mathekga.

“Within a context in which South Africa hasn’t shied away from voting against Israel, this seems to indicate a shift in attitude. Abstaining is a big step from acting against Israel. The issues in the resolution are also concerns for South Africa, making it difficult to vote against the resolution.”

But local political analyst Steven Gruzd disagrees. “I don’t think we can declare a shift based on a single resolution, and this one wasn’t about the Palestinians, so perhaps it was easier for South Africa to abstain.

“South Africa routinely votes against Israel in the UN. Another explanation might be that South Africa chairs the UN Security Council next month, and may not want to antagonise the big powers with this vote. And South Africa would most likely support the content of the resolution, but just couldn’t bring itself – ideologically – to vote for anything Israel proposed.”

Interestingly, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Jordan, and Egypt voted against the resolution, even in light of their peace agreements with Israel. Gruzd says it’s not a surprising response from Jordan and Egypt which “voted with the other countries in the Arab bloc. Their peace treaties with Israel didn’t result in warm relations between the countries, and certainly not UN votes.

“The UAE and Bahrain may want to balance their recognition of Israel with solidarity with the Arab bloc, but I’m sure Israel would be disappointed with their vote, given the energy that has gone into shoring up relations recently,” he says.

Political analyst Daniel Silke believes that, “Countries voted on the merit of the resolution rather than political considerations. So it was largely irrelevant that Israel sponsored that resolution. Countries that saw it as being in their own national policy interests were in favour of it or perhaps even abstained like South Africa, and others voted against it. I don’t think there’s anything larger to look at in terms of Israel’s diplomatic standing. It really was a vote on the merits of the resolution as the various countries saw it,” he says.

But Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, said to the UN committee, “Unfortunately, there are some in this body who despite recognising the value of innovation, decided to vote against it. Their ‘no’ vote wasn’t driven by reason or logic but by antisemitism and intolerance. These member states should be ashamed. Instead of advancing a more sustainable future, they cling to racism and bigotry. We should all feel outraged.”



Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan

Erdan’s comments referred to the decision of some Arab countries, whose entrepreneurs are among the most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, to vote against the resolution because of political bias.

“Today’s resolution is a great victory for Israel and for all countries that care about the future,” Erdan said.” It addresses the steps we need to take so that every country can enjoy the benefits of innovation and build a sustainable and inclusive economy. And despite attempts to sabotage it, it was adopted with an overwhelming majority.”

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Jewish Report

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True heroes don't badmouth others

As we enter the most significant weekend of the *SA Jewish Report's* calendar, that of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, there is a great deal of anticipation about who will be crowned the heroes this year.

The theme of this year's awards ceremony is "heroes", and we certainly have a significant number of outstanding heroes among us. In truth, this year, it has become apparent that there are so many more than we could possibly give nine awards to.

During this incredibly challenging year, so many people stand out for going well beyond any expectation in fighting COVID-19 or the devastating fallout from the virus and the national lockdown.

As many of you are aware, the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is the annual *SA Jewish Report* fundraiser. Our aim is to recognise and give *kavod* to the incredible people who make a real difference in society and in our community. They are all genuine heroes.

However, this past week, mainstream and social media focused on a 21-year-old white man wearing the Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF's) red beret, who mouthed off outside Brackenfell High School, upsetting almost everybody in his wake. His name is Jack Markovitz, the grandson of the former mayor of Cape Town, Leon Markovitz, and his wife, Anthula. The Markovitz clan are an iconic Jewish family in Cape Town.

In his rant, young Markovitz called the Democratic Alliance "a white supremacist party", and claimed he was trying to rectify the situation by transferring generational wealth and land to disenfranchised people in the country. He said he believed the EFF should be doing more, taking their fight to Clifton and Houghton Park – where the rich whites live. He even called Nelson Mandela a sell-out. He insisted: "We need to take the land from the white people and transfer it to the people of this country."

Although he identified himself openly as the grandson of the former mayor of Cape Town, there was nothing in what the young red beret said, did, or intimated that had anything to do with him and his family being Jewish.

In fact, the reality may be that this young man – who claims to have been an EFF member since he turned 18 – may well not have any relationship with his Judaism. However, when push came to shove, it was the fact that he was Jewish that has been rammed down his, his family's, and all of our throats on social media this week.

It's astonishing! I guess, as Hitler taught us more than 70 years ago that you can deny your Judaism, but you can't escape it, even if you want to.

I'm not sure what this young red beret was thinking when he spoke out, or exactly why he has found his home as a "sore thumb" in the EFF. He could hardly be more noticeable, but did he deserve the antisemitic lambasting he got? Of course not, nothing he did had to do with him being Jewish.

However, every one of us has our own personal identity and belief system. Some of us are closely aligned with the community, and some are not. Some find fault in general communal ways, and don't get involved. However, as seen this week, no matter what we choose, we are so often lumped together as Jews whether we like it or not.

I recall many years ago, when I was working at the *Zionist Record* and was an End Conscription Campaign political activist, a group of us were arrested at a meeting. That night, those arrested with me were called communists and a host of derogatory words, but just as soon as the police learnt where I worked, I was known only as the "f-ken Jood". I was released the following morning, a whole lot wiser about how many people see us.

I'm sure young Markovitz has learnt a lot in a very short space of time too.

However, in spite of the fact that I have seen his face over the week with "hero" written underneath, this young man is no hero, not even close.

There are so many ways to protest and right the wrongs in this country. In my opinion, standing up and badmouthing white people, inciting further unpleasantness, and calling people names isn't one of them.

Frankly, I do believe that this young man wants to do the right thing for the disenfranchised of this country and I respect his spark and commitment. However, I believe he has chosen the wrong way to make change happen.

Running certain people down to make others look good is no way to fix anything. I guess this is a theme that keeps coming up in our community.

Meanwhile, as we will celebrate on Sunday, there are those incredibly selfless human beings who just give of their time, money, energy, and commitment to help others. They avoid the limelight – much to our distress, sometimes – and simply dedicate their efforts to doing good for others.

And while we may often focus on the difficulties in our community and some of the ugliness we experience, these angels or heroes abound.

So much so, that this year at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, we will be honouring far more than nine winners. We have created, specifically for 2020, an honour roll to commend the many who have done so much good this year. And there were many...

While I'm talking about heroes, I have to salute Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of our board, for the endless work he has done behind the scenes of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. He's not alone. There is the rest of the board and the incredible team who are about to make the impossible possible.

When we were discussing Absa Jewish Achievers earlier this year, so many were convinced it couldn't happen because it has always been a magnificent big event, at which we all gather together to celebrate our winners.

This didn't deter Howard, the team, the board, and the staff who worked tirelessly to make this now cyber event a reality. They pulled out all the stops, and made things happen against all odds.

This year's awards evening will be different to what you expected or were used to, but you can count on it being spectacular.

I look forward to celebrating our heroes. I'm keen to put the tough part of what this year meant for so many of us to one side, and bask in the amazing achievements of those phenomenal people in our community. *Kol Hakavod!*

Shabbat Shalom and see you at Achievers!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

Holocaust analogies are hurtful no matter what

MARY KLUK

The Holocaust was a catastrophe of such epic proportions that the Jewish world will never fully recover. There are still those alive who experienced the horror of it, and for whom it's not just a distant memory or historical fact. It's therefore not surprising that emotions run high whenever the subject is broached.

In this milieu, sensitivity around it can and should be expected. Yet, it has become increasingly common for different forms of Holocaust analogies and comparisons to be made.

However hurtful, not all Holocaust analogies are intended maliciously. For many, it's used carelessly and for different gains, including the making of political points. However, some are obviously and intentionally offensive, and aim to evoke as much harm as possible. I think here of the placing of posters of Anne Frank wearing a keffiyeh around the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand by the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement during the so-called Israel Apartheid Week in 2018. It took the symbol of the innocence of the Jewish child who died in Bergen-Belsen. It's clear that in this case, the context, message, intention, and appropriation of the Holocaust was consciously done to evoke the most hurt possible. And the hurt was, indeed, deep.

This past month, there have been a number of high-profile examples of analogies both here and in America. Christiane Amanpour used it as comment about Donald Trump, while the Democratic Alliance (DA) used it to comment on the Economic Freedom Fighters. There was a huge uproar in response to these comparisons, not least as both were made on the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

While the intentions of Amanpour and the DA weren't directed at the Jewish community, it was the Jewish community among others in both countries that protested. Again, Jewish communities were hurt.

This past month, there was also a parody in which the chief rabbi was portrayed as Hitler. Seemingly made by Jewish members in the community, it was intended as a spoof around a polemic that has been discussed in the community. While the intention may have been satirical, many members of the community were extremely hurt.

The deepest, darkest moments of our history shouldn't be used to score political points or elicit cheap laughs. This

is particularly egregious when the target is the chief rabbi. Nobody, whether they are leaders of the community or not, should be compared to Hitler. It's clear that irrespective of the intention of those making comparisons, the effect on the Jewish community is the same: hurt, disbelief and anger. Inconsequential comparisons with the Holocaust undermines the unprecedented horror that it was.

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) is often tasked with deliberating on how to respond to these types of offensive and hurtful incidents. And there is a great sensitivity in our community around our response. It's our job at the SAJBD to determine the most appropriate response, and we take our role seriously. We look at where the content originates, the context in which it is said, the intention of those that say it, and how it's felt by those who are targeted.

The SAJBD has years of experience in doing this, and consults broadly with fellow Jewish community organisations across the world, such as the Anti-Defamation League, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee, as well as local and international academics.

One of the aspects we look at is how the message is received. While not all messages will be received by all members of the community in the same way, the level of hurt is the same.

What's clear is those who make the comments shouldn't be the ones who determine whether those comments are offensive or harmful or even antisemitic. For example, the BDS movement (and Jeremy Corbyn for that matter) deny wholeheartedly that their words, actions, and associations are antisemitic. In fact, they try to turn our accusations against us. And, no doubt, they will claim that "some of their best friends are Jewish". But they are antisemitic.

Ultimately, though, all Jews have been affected in some way by the Holocaust. And it's not for anyone (Jewish or otherwise) to use these terms lightly. It's the reality of the Jewish people that we have learnt throughout our entire history that words spoken have consequences.

• *Mary Kluk is the president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, and the director of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre.*

Antisemites and Jews see red over Markovitz's EFF comments

>>Continued from page 1

Jack Markovitz

Screengrab from video

Afrikaans friends who asked him if Markovitz' views represented those of the Jewish community, "seeing I am the only Jew they know".

Speaking in Afrikaans, he said he has lived in Brackenfell in the past. "The people there are salt of the earth. I can tell you 100% that Jack Markovitz doesn't represent the views of the Jewish community. On the contrary, 90%, if not more, want nothing to do with him. I can tell you that religious Jews don't support

these radical views. The Jewish community supports the Afrikaans community," he said amongst other points.

Commenting on Kriel's video, one person wrote, "I knew the late Leon Markovitz. He was a man who changed the skyline of Cape Town. These men worked hard and preserved wealth for their families. They also had social responsibility. I always marvelled at the plaques I saw around Cape Town. As a Jewish volunteer paramedic, I would enter care homes, hospices, day hospitals, and schools. Everywhere I went, I would see donation plaques from Markovitz and other captains of industry who grew Cape Town and cared deeply about its people. Jack isn't only defaming their legacy, but also destroying the practical logistics they built that every resident in Cape Town benefits from."

A small number of people offered their support. "Read the comments and weep. Hang your heads in shame, you judgemental folk. Why belittle and insult someone standing up for their beliefs? And dismiss him as if you know him?" wrote Caryn Gootkin on Facebook.

"I salute you Jack Markovitz. Not because I am an EFF supporter [I'm not], but because you have the courage to stand up and own your privilege despite what you know will be a hideous backlash," she added. "We need more Jacks in South Africa. While I may not agree with everything you said, your general message was spot on. When will white South Africans wake up and see what's really going on in our country? Put their privilege aside, and seek to understand the pain of black South Africans? Wake up!"

In spite of multiple requests for interviews, Markovitz and his extended family refused to comment.

Antisemitism – the oldest hatred in history

JORDAN MOSHE

Wherever political, social, or economic dislocation manifests, the longest-standing hatred in history – antisemitism – rears its ugly head, and unless we do something about it, nothing will change.

So said historian and Holocaust educator, Trudy Gold, at a virtual conference held on Sunday, 22 November. Gold was the keynote speaker at the 36th national conference of the Women's International Zionist Organisation of South Africa.

"Antisemitism is a form of racism like any other, but has unique qualities," said Gold. "Like any disease, it mutates from time to time, and much of its horror is now directed at Israel.

"Because we live in such uncertain times and because we have more time to think, we need to come up with a strategy to combat it. If we have knowledge, we can devise ways to change it."

Most historians trace the hatred of Jews back to the birth of Christianity. Although Jews had been an issue for the polytheistic Greek and Roman empires, true conflict really began when Christianity entered the religious arena.

"In the world of monotheism, the problems arose," said Gold. "Jews are central only because Christianity and later Islam see Judaism as a parent religion.

"The accusation that Christianity makes about the Jews is that they killed Joshua of Nazareth. The Gospels, written 14 years after his death, share very little about the origins of Christianity and are a propaganda document which tell the story

of a wonder rabbi who preached goodness and love and was murdered by the Jews."

Consequently, the Jewish people are seen as guilty of committing the most heinous sin in all of history. So deep is the negative stereotype this engenders that



Trudy Gold

it penetrated the psyche of the West for centuries to follow.

Said Gold, "Written into Christianity's creed is the negative image of the Jew. Jews were squashed out of most professions, and became moneylenders and traders as a result. The Catholic Church forbade moneylending to Christians, and Jews were useful to secular rulers because they weren't Christian."

It was only during the Enlightenment that matters improved. New ways of thinking encouraged society to include Jewish people, resulting in their emancipation in most places barring Eastern Europe.

"The Jew could become part of society, part of the modern world," Gold said. "They

helped to take the new world forward.

"The modern world is Freud, Marx, and Einstein, who came from the Jewish religion. Jews developed much of modern society, were involved in revolutions, and people started to ask what it really meant to call someone a Jew."

Tragically, the changes wrought by modernity led to insecurity and a rise in nationalism across Europe, ultimately leading to Jews being targeted for a variety of reasons.

"People didn't like change, and they looked for a scapegoat. They noticed the Jews, who had entered trades such as medicine and law, and while they had no real power, they had become visible."

Out of an aggressive nationalism came the idea of race and racial identity, the insider and outsider.

"That's where antisemitism came in," said Gold. "It's a modern racial term, and it doesn't matter if you're a Rothschild, a pious Jew, a Karl Marx, or a convert. It's Jewish blood.

"This ultimately led to the most evil moment in mankind's history, a time when the most educated people murdered a third of world Jewry. Yet at the end of it all, antisemitism didn't disappear."

This time, however, it would become a feature on both the right and left of the political spectrum.

"There had previously been a widely held belief that Jews were capitalist," said Gold. "But in 1948, the second country to recognise Israel was Russia, and Stalin put his support behind the Jewish state. The London-based communist paper lauded Israel for fighting feudalism, and it seemed

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the Soviet bloc would support Israel."

This support stemmed from the fact that Israel, a left-wing socialist state, had more in common with Russia than the Arab states, a group of mainly feudal countries comprising kingdoms and kingships.

"It all changed when many old monarchies fell and socialism and nationalism rose in the Arab world," said Gold. "Nasser became receptive to Nazism and socialism, and gradually, the Soviet press became anti-Zionist and accused Russian Jewry of putting Israel before Russia, and selling out socialism."

Because of socialism's alignment with the left, antisemitism stopped being the preserve of the right-wing, and found its way into the liberal camp.

"The Palestinian Liberation Organisation was founded in 1964 alongside all the civil-rights movements," said Gold. "Anti-Jewish propaganda seeped into the left through Russian youth movements all

marching against the bomb, promoting brotherhood, and espousing the Palestinian cause."

This was coupled with a trend of demonising Israel. Pernicious lies took off about Zionists collaborating with Nazis in order to create a Jewish state, penetrating even the minds of politicians in the British parliament.

Said Gold, "With time, it developed into a world Jewish conspiracy, saying that Jews work together to topple Western society. Today, the nasty right has been joined by a nasty left, and we can see that with Jeremy Corbyn. It's not over."

Gold stressed the need to rethink education of our children about Jewish history if we are to have a hope of making a difference.

"You will never destroy Jew hatred, but I don't believe every non-Jew is antisemitic. You can get through to some people with a reasoned argument, but it demands that we educate our children."



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Lessons from an oracle: Elisha Wiesel reflects on his childhood

JORDAN MOSHE

How do you grow up in the shadow of a renowned father who survived the Holocaust, won the Nobel Peace Prize, and inspired millions?

This was the reality for Elisha Wiesel, the only child of the famed author, political activist, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. Raised in Manhattan, New York City, Elisha learned much from his father throughout his life, and although the great man passed away in 2016, the lessons he imparted remain as relevant as ever.

Wiesel reflected on these lessons in an online discussion hosted by Rabbis Yossy Goldman and Yehuda Stern of Sydenham Shul this past Thursday.

“Growing up with a father who survived the Holocaust wasn’t easy,” Wiesel told his Zoom audience. “It often meant not having a sense of where I fit in the world.

“I would go to the playground with friends, and one would say, ‘My father is a pilot’, another would say that his father owned a pharmacy. I would say, ‘I think my father is a victim of something really bad and I still don’t understand it fully.’”

Nonetheless, Elie Wiesel never really shared his harrowing ordeal with his son at first.

Said Wiesel, “My father never hit me over the head with Holocaust education. He tried to protect me as much as he could as he felt that there was a big burden on me not just because of the Shoah, but because I was an only child. He felt pressure that he was the last of his line, concerned that I should continue with the faith, and he saw the pressure that put on me.

“He didn’t want to give me a burden I would

run away from.”

Because his father never sat him down to tell him the story, Wiesel learned about his family’s history in other ways.

“It was all ambient,” he said. “My friends would be going to the Hamptons on vacation, and I would be flying to Poland to visit camps. For me, I picked a lot up myself because my father couldn’t bring himself to burden me.

“I was 14 when he won the Nobel Prize. I attended a modern Orthodox school, and it was difficult to have my own identity distinct from my father. People looked at me and didn’t see Elisha Wiesel. They saw the son of Elie Wiesel.”

This came with a large amount of expectation, something which Wiesel resented and sought to escape.

“I wasn’t a happy kid, and I made a decision to do things that would get me further from my father,” he said. “I found friends beyond the Orthodox Yeshiva world, and I used the early chat rooms online to connect with people from around the country who weren’t necessarily Jewish and who didn’t know who my father was.

“It was a great relief. I spent my teenage years trying to escape, to run away and explore the world on my own terms.”

It was only after college that Wiesel finally felt comfortable with his father’s identity and story.

He recounted, “I took a trip after college with my father, who had been saying he wanted to visit his hometown of Sighet one last time. We flew with a cousin, and it was powerful trip for me.”

“I saw my father in a new light. I saw him vulnerable, at a loss for words, and really saw the child within him. I saw someone other than the confident adult.”

Wiesel didn’t always see eye to eye with his father, however, telling him in the 1990s that



Elisha Wiesel with his late father, Elie

he wanted nothing to do with Judaism, that he wanted his father to accept that he didn’t see things the same way.

“My father was very patient with me,” said Wiesel. “A lot of parents might have yelled, got depressed, or sat *shiva*. My father just loved me, and kept loving me more. He never yelled or got into an argument. It wasn’t about convincing me about something.”

Elie Wiesel’s outlook and teachings remain apt in our time, his son said, especially for us as Jews.

“Before he died, my father asked me to do two things. The first was to sit *shiva* for him, and the other was to marry Jewish. I realised later that those things weren’t for him – they were for me.

“We can talk about the right political outcome or what the Jews should do, but it’s all based on whether there is a Jewish people to begin with. Jewish people need to be Jewish, not run away from their people, marry out, or turn their backs.

“We need to live Jewish, not just through observance but how we treat people,” said Wiesel, who learned this lesson first-hand from his father.

“He saw each person as the emanation of a

divine spark. My father treated a head of state and a taxi driver with equal respect. He gave people his time.

“My father was a Jew who had his feet fully in the Jewish world and also walked fully in the world of human affairs. He saw no contradictions, but embraced and lived in both worlds.”

It’s imperative that we maintain our sense of Judaism at all costs, Wiesel said, adding that his father tied his identity as a Jew to his identity as a human being.

“My father was raised by a loving family who gave him an identity,” said Wiesel. “He knew where he was in the world and even when the Nazis came and ripped it apart, it wasn’t enough to break the structure he had.

“He taught me that I’m part of *Am Yisrael*, that we’ve been around for thousands of years, and that while we have and will continue to see tragedy, we’ve persevered. We have a role to play.”

Wiesel concluded, “He knew each of us has to find a place, and that each Jewish family needs to give their child a sense of who they are. This isn’t just a badge you wear on a hat – you are Jewish.”

Pittsburgh now a hub for white supremacists

BEN SALES – JTA

In the days after the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history, Pittsburgh became a symbol of the enduring dangers of hatred as well as the Jewish communal solidarity that followed the synagogue shooting.

Two years later, the city has become a symbol and pilgrimage site of a far more insidious sort: for white supremacists who see the Tree of Life gunman as an inspiration.

In just the past several weeks, a white supremacist group held a march down a main boulevard there. About 100 people attended a white supremacist music festival in the area. A vocal white supremacist who had posted a call online to murder local Jews was released from prison. And flyers with white nationalist slogans have papered the city.

“We have, since 2018, seen a dramatic increase in white supremacist-related violent incidents and in the overall presence of white supremacists within our [area],” John Pulcastro, a supervisory intelligence analyst at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), said at a symposium last week at Duquesne University’s Wecht Institute of Forensic Science and Law.

“Having worked this for more than 20 years, I can tell you this area is worse than any that I have seen throughout the entire country,” he said.

Mass shooters have long aspired to imitate previous high-profile attackers. The “Columbine effect”, in which school shooters seek to follow the example of the two teens who opened fire on a Colorado high school in 1999, has been observed more than 100 times, according to *Mother Jones*, a progressive magazine that documented the phenomenon.

White supremacists follow the same pattern. In

their manifestos, the shooters in the attacks in El Paso, Christchurch, and Poway, California, all referenced previous far-right attacks and the ideas that motivated them.

Security specialists in the Pittsburgh Jewish community say white supremacists have come to the western Pennsylvania city in part because of the synagogue shooting, which killed 11 people. The far-right, they say, views the shooter as a role model – something that has already been apparent in white supremacist forums online, where they refer to the



The 2018 antisemitic attack on the Tree of Life*Or L'Simcha synagogue has become an inspiration to white supremacist groups

gunman by name as a “saint”. And he’s not alone. A T-shirt celebrating the Boogaloo anti-government extremist movement features a picture of the Poway synagogue assailant.

“The shooter is typically revered in some of these white supremacist neo-Nazi organisations,” said Shawn Brokos, the local Jewish federation’s director of community security. “So for that very reason, Pittsburgh was placed on the map and became synonymous in many ways with white supremacy, solely based on the events of 27 October,” the date of the attack.

Continued on page 14>>

south african

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Unsung hero who fought fascism, racism revealed in son’s book

TALI FEINBERG

By the time Jock Isacowitz died in his mid-forties, he had achieved more than a whole team of people would in their lifetime.

He fought in World War II as part of South Africa’s forces in East and North Africa, and chaired an organisation for soldiers’ rights. He also joined and then later left the Communist Party, and was a founding member of the Liberal Party. He became a leader of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), and worked with refugees in Europe and migrants in Israel. Over and above all that, he got arrested in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, and died of leukaemia a year after his release from prison.

For his son, Roy, who was just 10 at the time of his father’s death, this extraordinary life and legacy lay dormant but ever present. It was an undiscovered but powerful influence that was largely forgotten by the historical record.

Sixty years later, he decided to explore and record his father’s life and times in a book, *Telling People What They Don’t Want to Hear: A Liberal Life Under Apartheid*.

“Had he stayed on in the resistance, the name Jock Isacowitz would have become as famous as Arthur Goldreich, Harold Wolpe, Ruth First, Ray Alexander, and Denis Goldberg,” former Constitutional Court Justice and struggle stalwart Albie Sachs told the *SA Jewish Report*.

So for Roy, a journalist by profession, “this book is something I had to do. It’s one of those things that if you don’t do, it makes you anxious. I’ve known ever since I was in my 20s, but it took me another 40 years to write it. I felt I owed it to him, and also because he deserves to be better known.

“Most people don’t know much about that history of white non-parliamentary opposition to nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s. So the book is part biography, part memoir and history of a relatively unknown period,” Roy says.

He explains that his father’s father was born in South Africa, but his parents were from Lithuania. His father’s mother was also born in South Africa, but her parents came from England and Lithuania. His father was an ex-Bundist, and his mother was a Zionist, but it wasn’t a particularly radical household.

Jock was a pharmacist by trade and “a politician by nature”.

“That was what he put his heart into,” says Roy. “In 1940, South Africa joined the war. Jock volunteered along with 400 000 other South Africans of all races to fight fascism, and served in East and North Africa.

He and others became activists for ex-servicemen’s rights. He was the founder and chairperson of the Springbok Legion, a veterans’ organisation that was profoundly anti-racist. This was where people like Bram Fischer and Joe Slovo cut their teeth as activists.

“It’s fascinating that while South Africa was fighting the Nazis, fascism was developing at home in many purely Nazi organisations,” says Roy.

Says Sachs, “Jock deserves to be remembered as part of an extremely brave group of people who fought against the racism of Hitler and Mussolini ‘up North’, and then fought against the racism of apartheid South Africa.”



Jock Isacowitz



Roy Isacowitz

He also joined the Communist Party and declared himself an atheist, but later took an equally strong stand by leaving the party in light of Stalin’s atrocities. Horrified by the Holocaust, he went from being anti-Zionist to joining a Zionist socialist organisation.

“He was chosen to be a delegate on the national executive of the SAJBD. He was sent on missions to displaced persons camps in Europe and absorption centres in Israel. He was a leading member of the Liberal Party, and was arrested in the state of emergency after the Sharpeville massacre,” says Roy.

On his death in 1962, Peter Brown wrote about the crucial role Jock played at this time. “To say that his death leaves a gap in the ranks of the Liberal Party would be an unforgivable understatement. Jock attended the meeting in Cape Town at which the Liberal Party was launched. There were people at that meeting who had doubts about whether a new political party should be formed, but Jock had none. He was convinced of the need at that moment in 1953, just after the Nationalists had won their second election victory, for a non-racial party.

“The contribution which Jock Isacowitz made towards building the Liberal Party probably outweighs anything any other individual has done.

He served us in many capacities – as Transvaal chairperson, as national vice-chairperson, as a brilliant organiser, an outstanding conference chairperson, a most perceptive political student, an incisive debater, a warm friend and, even on the darkest days, an inveterate optimist.

“The government recognised Jock Isacowitz for what he was – an opponent to be respected. So it banned him from all meetings for two years and, when the 1960 emergency came, it put him in gaol for three months. We cannot replace Jock. All we can do is try to emulate his example.”

For Roy, he recalls how “we knew they were coming for my father. It was the first time I learned of the word ‘contraband’, and we spent three days burning books and pamphlets in the stove. When they came, they searched the house all night. I thought it was very funny when a cop searched my sister’s school satchel and his hand got covered with apricot jam from her sandwiches. By the time they left the house, it was light. He kissed us, and walked off. In prison, he was with Joe Slovo, Harold Wolpe, Rusty Bernstein ... all the people who figured in the struggle later on.”

The rest of his memories of that time are blurry, but Sachs says, “I get the sense that Jock’s detention broke his spirit somewhat. But Roy has every right to feel proud of his dad, and the exceptional role he and his comrades played. They were a great generation – feisty, funny, brave, sharp-witted, and passionate. They weren’t armchair liberals, they were activists on the frontline of resistance, and profoundly anti-racist.”

After his release from prison, Jock considered leaving the country, possibly going to Israel or England. But he died a year later. For Roy, he remained “a myth”, but writing the book has revealed a father who was both ordinary and exceptional.

Working on the book wasn’t easy, mostly because Roy’s mother, Eileen, and most of that generation had passed away by the time he decided to write it. He spent many hours in the archives, piecing together a lost legacy.

“I know my father was smart and dedicated – a doer and an activist. He saw the full dreadfulness of nationalism very early on. He was possibly a man before his time.”



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Life, the universe, and everything according to Pirkei Avot

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

Most parents think their teenagers spend too much time on the internet and too little time engaging with the real world.

Chabad has come up with an unusual way to address this problem. It’s setting up online lessons for parents on the ancient Torah wisdom of Pirkei Avot (Chapters of the Fathers) so that they can spend more quality time engaging with their kids in debates about life and ethics.

“Children are spending too much time on the internet, and we’re not communicating enough with them. It’s out of control,” says Rabbi David Masinter, the director of Chabad Johannesburg.

But, the online tutorials aren’t just about helping adults to engage with children, they are literally a “five-step programme” in how to transform all of our lives, something badly needed in this “mad world, full of sickness, and lack of vision”.



“You have no idea how tough it is for some people at the moment,” Masinter says. “This is very serious. In this world, now more than ever, we need to do this.”

From Monday, 30 November,

people can sign up for the online lessons, which will be delivered free of charge by numerous teachers, including Masinter. Learning is flexible, with the ability to study for 15 minutes a day, or once a week, for example.

Those who sign up will be sent a free copy of the Pirkei Avot, valued at R500, to study with their children. Asked why Chabad is sending a book to kids rather than an online game, for example, Masinter says, “There are enough games out there. That’s the point. We need to engage more with our kids.”

“The Chapters of the Fathers is a truly remarkable work, which gives one tools for life in every area, from learning how to have patience to business advice. Written by our sages 1 800 years ago, its lessons are more vital today than any other time,” Chabad says.

Masinter points out that in just the first chapter, we learn about the importance of humility, perseverance, vision, consequences, and the imperative of making a difference.

“This book has the tools for life. Each Mishnah is more down to earth than the next. This is a transformational programme to get hope flowing.”

To sign up for the tutorials, WhatsApp 082 370 1770.





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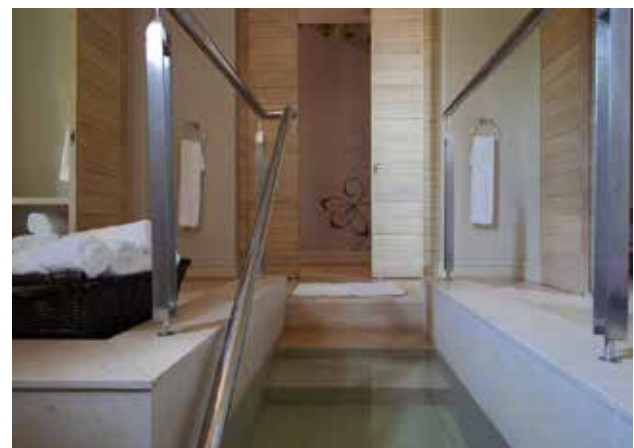
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Fighter pilot ‘Smoky’ Simon takes to the skies at 100

JORDAN MOSHE

South African born but long-time Israeli aviation legend Harold “Smoky” Simon may be 100 years old, but that didn’t stop him from taking to the skies again for the first time in 70 years.

In celebration of his centenary in April this year, this flying legend and former chief of air operations of the Israeli Air Force (IAF) took off in a Tiger Moth biplane from a small airstrip in the Israeli Negev on 14 September.

“It was absolutely magical to be in



the air again,” Simon told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “Apart from being a passenger in civil aircraft, I haven’t been in the air since the War of Independence.

“I got the most memorable birthday present imaginable.”

Dan and Saul, Simon’s sons, also participated in the flight, joining their father in the sky in separate aircrafts as friends and family – including Simon’s wife, Myra – gathered below and cheered them on. The event even featured on YouTube, showing a grinning Simon clad in a flying helmet being pulled from the hangar by a

team sporting face masks before taking off into the blue.

“My sons are both ex-air force pilots, and they had spoken to some flying colleagues about my reaching the 100-year landmark,” Simon says. “They decided to turn the celebration into an air force event, bringing together a flying club of former Israeli pilots and mechanics who had mostly retired from service and who spend their time looking after vintage aircraft like parents look after children. It created a wonderful spirit that took me back to 1948.”

Born in the Orange Free State, Simon displayed true South African mettle in the founding years of the IAF. After being discharged from the South African Air Force in November 1945, Simon opened an accounting and auditing business. He and his wife made their way to Israel to volunteer in the War of Independence shortly after marrying in 1948.

“I had the privilege of being on the first flight of the IAF in the war on the very day Ben Gurion declared the state. When we took off from Tel Aviv, it was Palestine, and when we landed, it was Israel. The state was declared during that flight.

“The situation at the time was desperate. Israel didn’t have a single fighter aircraft, while Egypt had 62. We started off with a tremendous imbalance and to this day, I believe we pulled off an absolute miracle.

“As Ben Gurion put it, the Machal forces were really the diaspora’s greatest contribution to the survival of the state.”

The air force really got started in the heat of battle in 1948, Simon says.

“On 29 May, the IAF really saved the state,” he says. “The only country which came to Israel’s aid was Czechoslovakia. Guys in the United States smuggled aircraft out of the US, flew them to Czechoslovakia, and prepared them for action.

“Crafts were ferried between the two countries, a dangerous and thrilling experience because we depended entirelyly them. It was a sheer joy to get those planes – they were our lifeline.”

Smuggled craft included B17s and Spitfires, supplementing the Tiger Moths which had become the first Israeli planes in the late 1930s and were used to train pilots who would go on to become the first pilots of the Palmach flying unit.

During the war, Simon was appointed chief of air operations at IAF headquarters. In addition, he participated in 18 missions in a diverse range of aircraft. At the war’s end, he accepted an offer from his commanders to serve another two years in the air force. Although the Simons returned to South Africa after the war, they made aliyah in 1962.

Simon’s centenary celebration flight closed a circle that brought him back to those early days.

“Today, the IAF is recognised as one of the foremost in the world. My flight reconnected me with history and allowed me to share it with my family. My family has really been closely identified with the air force, and this flight was the culmination of a special relationship with the IAF.

“It was wonderful to be back in the sky again, having both my sons together with me in the air and the family on the ground cheering along the way. It was really a celebratory event.”

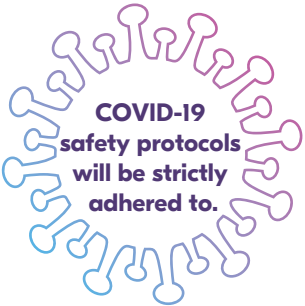
Looking back on Israel’s development, Simon says that the progress the Jewish state has made is beyond incredible. However, he also warned that the threats to its safety are far from over.

“We are still faced with enormous difficulty. Right now, our main issue is Iran, and the present Israeli government is determined to prevent it from getting a nuclear bomb. We also have to deal with Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. The stakes are very high.

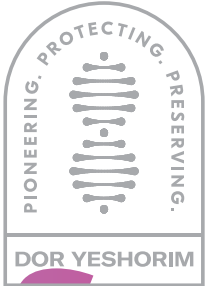
“The world is divided, and Israel is right in the centre, geographically and historically. We are facing enormous problems, but we have surmounted so many before that I’m sure we will emerge strong.

“We need to be confident and keep our faith,” he says. “Israel is the only Jewish country, and we’ll do everything humanly possible to preserve this land of ours. Peace will take time and effort, but I remain confident that it will come.”

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Bears dressed for success and care

TALI FEINBERG

A teddy bear is a timeless symbol of comfort, reassurance, and innocence, and now it’s becoming an icon of bravery and hope. Penny Stein, who has been active in the fight against women and child abuse in South Africa for many years, has teamed up with Women and Men Against Child Abuse (WMACA) to launch the first annual Brave Heart Bears Initiative to raise money for therapy for abused children.

The launch coincides with the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, from 25 November to 10 December. Fine jewellery designer Jenna Clifford and more than 35 other top South African designers, popular brands, and South African personalities have come together to create a unique collection of beautifully dressed and exquisitely styled teddy bears that will be sold in aid of abused children desperately needing support.

“This initiative will give us a much-needed financial injection to help those broken little souls by giving them the tools to navigate their pain.”

“Each one-of-a-kind teddy bear is valued at R2 200, which will pay for twelve therapy sessions for one child,” says Stein. “Over the past eight months

under lockdown, WMACA has assisted with 3 500 children’s therapy sessions, 90 parent sessions, and 120 family sessions. Their services are free to all children and parents.”The original aim was to create 80 outfits, but the response was so overwhelming that 103 teddy bears are now dressed for success and ready for their new owners.

Stein lends her expertise to organisations in this field for six months at a time, and Brave Heart Bears is her passion project for WMACA. “The numbers of abused children has sadly increased under lockdown. It’s always been a pandemic, so essentially we are fighting two pandemics at the moment. During all of this, we have thought about the importance of the teddy bear to a child, and sourced bears for children having therapy. This group of teddy bears was donated, and we wanted to do something with them that’s positive and creative.”

Stein was overwhelmed at the response of designers and well-known South Africans to taking part in the project. “They all jumped at it, and thanked us for including them. They responded with so much love and warmth. We have included a range of designers from established to up-and-coming, to fashion and jewellery designers.

“South African-based George Malelu, who designed Beyoncé’s gown for the Global Citizen concert, and Carina Louw from South African design house ERRE, who dresses Princess Charlene

of Monaco, each designed five outfits. We have every kind of bear you can think of – grannies and grandpas, a bride and groom, gym bears, princesses, LGBTQI+ bears, and many others. Each is one-of-a-kind, never to be repeated.” “We have 35 movers and shakers that

“Sexual and physical abuse is a form of trauma, and children who have been affected suffer post-traumatic stress. Healing requires understanding, safety, validation, and patience as children face complex emotions. Ideally, we need to allow them to work at their own pace.

she is a trustee. Kim Tobias donated a cake for the launch. Hayley Kilov offered scents so that the bears smell fabulous. Sharon Smith donated flowers for the launch. Every single person has done it for nothing, just out of love, kindness, and passion.

“Warm the World [a non-profit organisation that distributes blankets to more than 50 beneficiaries] has been supplying blankets to some of the childcare centres that WMACA has been involved in. Recently, we sent them 75 blankets when they assisted women and girls who had been held for human trafficking,” says Weiner.

“I have been on several webinars on gender-based violence. I’ve given the perspective of the judiciary, and it’s one of the things I’m very concerned about. So both in my personal capacity and as a trustee of Warm the World, I wanted to be involved,” she says. “It’s a wonderful way to get the message out and get people involved.”

Lisa Lowenthal and Sue Young Koton of the jewellery brand YOUNG + CO say their involvement in the initiative is part of their commitment to social responsibility. “We feel privileged to have been included, and to work with Penny Stein for this unbelievable initiative and cause that is so close to our hearts. Styling our Brave Heart Bears has re-ignited a real sense of childhood joy and playfulness, and it’s our hope that we can somehow be a part of bringing back this joy and spirit to another brave little warrior.”



are part of this, so they will get the word out,” says Stein. The launch will take place at Jenna Clifford Studios in Morningside on 25 November, and will be on display and available for purchase until 20 December. The launch is supported by radio station YFM.

“Even in our high-tech world of gadgets and gizmos, children’s love affair with the simple teddy bear runs deep, which is why Brave Heart Bears was the perfect initiative for what we are working towards,” says WMACA founder Miranda Jordan-Friedmann.

This is often difficult when working within the criminal justice system.

“The initiative will give us a much-needed financial injection to help those broken little souls by giving them the tools to navigate their pain. Now in our 20th year of helping vulnerable children, we are honoured to have undertaken more than 146 000 treatment services for our beloved children,” she adds.

Stein says that the Jewish community has been a huge support. “Judge Sharise Weiner donated two outfits from the Warm the World organisation, of which

MOST SA JEWS (BOTH OF ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDI HERITAGE) ARE ELIGIBLE TO REINSTATE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND, ACCORDINGLY, AN EU PASSPORT.

A common misconception is that European citizenship and EU passports can only be obtained if one has documents providing his/her lineage. The fact is that not having any documents proving lineage, doesn't lead to disqualification of eligibility. Jews of Ashkenazi heritage can rely on documents obtained in Lithuania or Poland. Jews of Sephardi heritage need no proof at all!

In his experience, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived, and therefore they are entitled to reinstate it, and accordingly obtain an EU passport.



Adv. Horesh has been operating in SA market with the Jewish community since March 2018. He arrives regularly to South Africa, and can meet in person with Jews who are interested to do so.

Ashkenazi: This ad refers to Jews of Polish & Lithuanian heritage only. The most important things is the understanding that prior to the end of WW-I, the European map was very different than the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania did not exist as independent countries, and until 1918 these territories were only known as Lithuanian or Polish regions/counties of the Great Russian Empire who ruled all of north eastern Europe. Accordingly, until 1918, residents of these territories were Russian citizens, as Polish and Lithuanian citizenships didn't exist. Therefore, since applications for reinstatement of these citizenships can only be based on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen, whoever is a descendant of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 will not be eligible.

In addition, it is highly important to remember that since borders in Europe were shifted once again during and after WW-II, one's eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor hailed. Horesh explains: Shifted borders resulted in cities changing nationalities, and that the resultant effect for descendants of Jews left Vilnius is that their application for Lithuanian citizenship will be declined whereas a similar



Adv. Avi Horesh is an Israeli attorney, who lived in Poland for seven years. Horesh is recognised in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship may very well be approved! Horesh has an in-depth knowledge and a full understanding of European immigration laws.

Sephardi: This ad refers to all Jews of Sephardi heritage – Jews who arrived from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, as well as many descendants of Jews who arrived from Holland and the UK. Most descendants of Sephardi Jews (who were exiled 500 years ago) are eligible to reinstate Portuguese citizenship and, accordingly, an EU passport. If applicable, Adv. Horesh will apply for (on behalf of the applicant) an official certificate confirming such eligibility, on the basis of which, an application for Portuguese citizenship is most likely to be approved.

Horesh resides in Israel – a four-hour flight from Warsaw and Vilnius – enabling him to travel to Poland and Lithuania, as well as to Portugal, where he collaborates with local professionals who assist him in tracing documentation required for successful applications of reinstatement of European citizenship.

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Due to Corona virus, I'm not sure when will I visit SA again. However, I do plan & hope to arrive by the end of 2020
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Lion’s Shul in crisis as congregants and funds dry up

JORDAN MOSHE

Taking its popular name from a pair of cast-iron lions flanking its entrance, the Lion’s Shul in Doornfontein has been part of Jewish life in Johannesburg for more than a century. With fewer people attending *minyanim* and dwindling finances, however, the iconic landmark may soon have to close its doors for good.

“Fundraising this year has been an enormous problem,” says Stan Rothbart, a member of the shul for the past 45 years. “We’ve had none of our weekly pledges, nor could we raise anything as we usually do over Simchat Torah.

“We depend on our die-hard members who do their best to keep us going, and there’s less money available than before.”

Constructed in 1905, the shul is the last of 10 shuls which originally stood in the area. In spite of being restored after being severely damaged by a fire in 1935, it retains its early glory inside and out.

“It became a businessman’s shul,” says Rothbart. “When I started work in the 1960s, I worked a five-and-a-half-day week, with Saturday morning being a work morning. Many Jews who lived and worked in the area attended the shul’s 06:00 service, which ended at 08:00 with a *brocha*.

“I went to say kaddish there myself as I couldn’t be in shul the whole morning. It suited me to start early, finish by 08:00, and I could do my thing. I kept going there because of the environment and the sense of warmth I felt. It was quite unique and marvellous.”

Over the past few decades, the shul continued to hold regular Wednesday mincha ma’ariv services, Friday night, and Shabbat day services, as well as services on major *chaggim* like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah. Men needing to say kaddish for a loved one and work at the weekend found the Saturday *minyan* times convenient, drawing together a close-knit



Lion's Shul in Doornfontein, Johannesburg

Photo: Ian Ossendryver

core of members who became regulars even after their mourning period.

Says Rothbart, “We have a base of about 30 core members, but it can get to about 70 if there’s a function. Unless you’re a part of it, you can’t really understand the *chavershaft* [comeraderie] that connects everyone – it’s something special.”

While a considerable sum was spent on renovating the shul, there has been a significant decline in attendance in recent years, with funding sources dwindling at the same time. Various properties owned by the shul were sold off, but further fundraising efforts were needed to ensure that the shul could remain afloat.

These included the sale of bronze sculptures depicting the shul crafted by plastic surgeon cum sculptor, Dr Laurence Chait, with nine of the 10 commissioned pieces having been sold to date. In addition, an arrangement was made in 2014 with the late renowned photographer, David Goldblatt, to have photographs of the shul building reproduced as prints to be sold to the public.

“David had always been really interested in the Lion’s

Shul since taking photographs of it in 2014,” says Neil Dundas, senior curator of the Goodman Gallery. “When the shul appealed to him to use the photographs to raise funds, he was anxious to do what he could to help conserve the building.”

At the time, Goldblatt didn’t print photos on demand, having been a photo documentarian and later joining a gallery as an exhibiting photographic artist. In this instance, however, he not only agreed to the prints, but also broke from the standard limited edition of 10 works and to make 30.

Fourteen prints were produced initially, and while they were launched at a dedicated event, attendance was poor and only three were sold. A further five were subsequently sold before Goldblatt passed away in June 2018, resulting in a problem with obtaining permission to print.

“David’s will was clear that no posthumous printing was allowed,” says Dundas. “Unfortunately, photography is problematic in the art world as it’s too easy for people to reprint. Even though this was a charity case, the will made no distinction, and nobody had the right to print anymore.

“Only the first eight were signed, leaving us with six that were handed over after years of negotiation. Certificates were issued to confirm that these were seen and approved by David, but they are the last that will ever be printed.”

Although some funding has been secured, the shul has remained closed since the onset of lockdown in April this year, compounding an already pressing issue

of a shrinking community.

“Fewer and fewer people were coming,” says Sol Gordon, previously the shul’s secretary. “Doornfontein has become a dangerous part of the world, and people are reluctant to come here and park their cars in the road. It’s also too far away from areas like Glenhazel, so people can’t walk here either.

“People are immigrating, youngsters aren’t interested. We really don’t know what will happen to the shul.

“We had our last *minyan* there on 23 March. We hoped to reopen in November, but that isn’t going to happen because of COVID-19. We’re aiming to try again in January, but I don’t think that’s realistic either. People just won’t come.”

The pandemic also caused the loss of the shul’s long-serving chairperson, Michael Baum, who passed away after contracting the virus in hospital earlier this year.

“A rich history will be lost if the shul doesn’t open again,” says Gordon. “One doesn’t know what will become of the shul. There’s a funeral parlour next to the shul, and I wonder if they might want to take it over. It’s very sad.”

Rothbart agrees, “The shul is very close to my heart, and I would hate to see it close. Once it’s closed, it’s gone forever. At worst, we could keep it going as a museum, but that would be such a pity. This needs to continue.”

Funding would go a long way towards helping the shul to remain open, says long-time shul member, Kevin Handelsman, and the Goldblatt prints offer a valuable asset in return for a contribution.

“The Lion’s Shul is a major part of the history of Johannesburg itself. We would love to see the artwork sold, and have the proceeds help us sustain the shul. It would be a real shame to see it all come to an end.

“It’s a building that’s beautiful inside and out, which represents the history of Johannesburg Jewry. This was the shul of the Jewish community in Doornfontein.”

Says Dundas, “David’s work has quadrupled in value, even unsigned. He has captured a truly magnificent building, an important part of cultural history, and a place that the Jewish community must want to see preserved.

“We hope that the last six prints are sold and raise enough funds to help keep the iconic shul in existence.”

The prints are available for purchase at R60 000 each. Enquiries can be directed to David Behr on 082 447 7477.

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Pittsburgh now a hub for white supremacists

>>Continued from page 8

Analysts all cited the recent white supremacist demonstration as particularly concerning. A Texas-based extremist group called Patriot Front brought more than 100 members to march down the city’s Boulevard of the Allies on 7 November, according to the FBI, blasting a smoke machine and carrying a banner reading, “Two parties, one tyranny” in capital letters.

The group has a relatively small presence in Pittsburgh, said James Pasch, the region’s director for the Anti-Defamation League, which means they brought in members from across the country.

Patriot Front, which espouses violent white nationalism and evolved from a group that was active at the 2017 far-right Charlottesville rally, has also embarked on a flyers campaign in Pittsburgh. Its red, white, and blue propaganda bears slogans like “America first” (a slogan also favoured by President Donald Trump) and a map of the United States alongside the words, “Not stolen, conquered.” The Ku Klux Klan has also posted flyers across the city that tend to be densely typed pages of racist invective.

The flyers and antisemitic graffiti have been seen in the Jewish neighbourhood of Squirrel Hill, where the synagogue shooting occurred, and elsewhere. In early September, Brokos also received multiple reports of someone yelling antisemitic profanity at Jews in Squirrel Hill.

Pasch said the flyers weren’t limited to Pittsburgh. In neighbouring Ohio, they increased more than fivefold from 2018 to 2019.

“[The Patriotic Front] is marking its territory, just like old gangs used to,” Pulcastro said at the symposium. “They’re recruiting. They’re trying to push for individuals to come to the fold who also find this material and ideology appealing.”

The Patriot Front demonstration happened about a month after a white supremacist concert called “Won’t Say Sorry: A night for the white working class.” Days earlier, a white supremacist who had posted a call online to murder Jews in Squirrel Hill was released from prison.

Day to day, hate doesn’t feel like it’s in the atmosphere in Squirrel Hill, said Ellen Surloff, who was president of one of the congregations in the Tree of Life building, the Reconstructionist Dor Hadash, at the time of the shooting. But she’s worried about white supremacist violence – especially amid the current political tension.

“My reaction is that in this political climate, this is like a tinderbox. You’re just waiting for the match to strike,” she said.

Pasch said the heightened activity in and around Pittsburgh mirrored a rise in white supremacist activity nationwide and on extremist websites.

“My largest concern remains the growth of white supremacist ideology and hate online,” he said. “It knows no geographic boundaries, and people can cross state lines to commit acts of hate.”

Brad Orsini, Brokos’ predecessor, said that even as Pittsburgh Jews continued to process their trauma from the 2018 shooting, the community had remained prepared for hate to strike again.

“I think there’s a higher level [of risk] in Pittsburgh because of what happened,” said Orsini, the senior national security advisor of the Secure Community Network, which co-ordinates security for Jewish institutions nationwide.

“However, I do see the Pittsburgh Jewish communal programme doing everything it can to keep that community safe.”

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Botox no longer women – or men’s – best-kept secret

TALI FEINBERG

“The discovery of botulinum toxin (Botox) as a cosmetic treatment was a ‘a happy accident’,” says Dr Jemma Simpson, a doctor working in the field of aesthetic medicine at TASH360 in Cape Town. In the past, it was used for medical treatments.

“Initially, the response to the treatment was conservative,” says Dr Maureen Allem, the founder and medical director of the Renewal Institute, who pioneered the non-surgical anti-aging revolution in South Africa. But over the past few years, the industry has exploded,



Dr Jemma Simpson

and many women and men in the South African Jewish community see it as a necessity that they cannot go without – and are happy to admit it.

“I started doing Botox 10 years ago when I was 29. I was invited to a friend’s house for a Botox party,” says one Jewish woman, speaking on condition of anonymity. “I must say once you have it, it’s addictive. You never want to see those lines again. I used to have it every four months, but now I go twice a year because I was becoming resistant and it was wasn’t lasting as long anymore.

“I have had filler under my eyes – I really loved the difference it made – and I’ve had a bit in my lips. It’s very important to go to a doctor who is experienced in doing filler. My doctor is amazing and keeps things natural,” she says.

“I’m totally open about having Botox and filler; I don’t think it’s anything to be embarrassed about. All of my friends have Botox. Some of their husbands do too. Frum women definitely have Botox and filler. It’s not against the halacha, and it’s important to look and feel your best for yourself and for your spouse,” she says. “As with all things though, moderation is key. The goal is to keep the signs of aging at bay, not change your face. Less is always more.”

“I’ve been having Botox treatments since I was about 30 years old, and I’m now 43,” says another Jewish woman speaking on

condition of anonymity. “I started Botox because I was developing frown lines. I’ve continued with it both because it’s preventative, and it reduces the lines in my face in a relatively natural-looking manner.”

To her, “Botox is simply another beauty treatment. Most of my contemporaries have manicures, pedicures, facials, use anti-aging products, and have laser treatments. Botox is another tool to fight the aging process and make ourselves look better.”

She had fillers done once, many years ago, but didn’t like it. “I find it makes people look puffy and unnatural,” she says. She goes for Botox treatment about twice a year. “I’m not secretive about it at all, but a lot of people are. My best friends and sister don’t use Botox, but I would say the majority of my friends do.”

Even men are getting on board. One Jewish man who asked not to be named says, “There is more pressure on men in the workplace [to look their best]. The fact that people are living longer means they retire later, which means they might need to compete with younger people. Although I’m comfortable getting Botox, I do find that there is still a negative stigma.”

But, according to Allem, “Men have had Botox for quite some time, and their reasoning would be the same as women – to feel better about themselves and look more approachable in the workplace. As for discretion about their treatments, it’s similar to women – some are very open about it whereas others keep it private. Very often men get referred to us by their wives.”

Says Simpson, “According to the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, the number of men having cosmetic procedures has



increased by more than 100% since the early 2000s. ‘Bro-tox’ is definitely becoming more popular, and less taboo. In my experience of the few men I have treated, it’s usually their spouse who has pushed them to have cosmetic treatments. The spouses even pay for it!”

So why is Botox so popular? Allem says studies have shown that it can boost mental health, and if started early enough, can prevent the aging process down the line. “The fact that people can do something about their appearance that’s natural yet impactful has made this a popular treatment. Injectables are non-invasive, and can be done over a lunch hour, meaning that it’s very convenient and requires little down time.

“Injectable aesthetic treatments are generally much more affordable compared to surgery, and more and more people can look younger even on a budget. If done correctly and naturally, the results can be life-changing,” says Simpson.

Regarding how secretive some people are about the treatment, Allem says, “It depends on each patient. Some are happy to share their journey, and view it as a status symbol to post on their social media pages. For others, it remains their best-kept secret. Generally, it’s becoming more acceptable, and people are more open about talking about it. It’s similar to the sixties, when women started to colour their hair. Initially, there was such a stigma around it, but it’s a very acceptable practice today.”

“On the one extreme, I have patients who hide it from their family and even pay cash to make it untraceable,” Simpson says. “Usually, this is because their spouse disapproves. On the other extreme, I have patients who are open [about it]. This is usually because family and friends don’t see it as something negative.” Both doctors have had patients in their 20s, but most are older.

They advise against Botox parties. “You need a medical environment to perform the treatment as botulinum toxin is a prescription product, and dermal filler is a scheduled product,” says Allem. She warns of possible complications, and says that the alcohol often served at these parties can make it even more risky.

Furthermore, “There are also many grey and dodgy products available, and a treatment price should be an indication of whether you’re getting the correct product. If it’s cheap, it could be a grey product.” Finally, “should something go wrong, you would want the necessary equipment to be on hand, and if you realise after a few days that you aren’t happy with the results, you want to be able to return to the doctor to discuss it”.

What about those who choose not to have Botox or fillers – will they stand out in a world of enhanced appearances? “Having injectable treatments is a personal choice, and isn’t for everyone. People have different ideas about aging gracefully, and it is important to respect this,” says Simpson. “Some patients change their minds down the line, and some don’t.”

As for the future, “The industry is dynamic and evolving, with constant new discoveries and advances in medical treatments and technology,” says Simpson. “Watch this space – there are so many incredible and exciting things to come in this field of medicine.”

Jewish performers top the 2021 Grammy charts

EMILY BURACK – JTA

This year’s Grammy Awards will almost certainly be different from past years, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. But in spite of the lack of detail surrounding the ceremony, it’s still taking place, and as usual, several Jewish artists made the nominations list announced on Tuesday.

Ranging all the way from the sister rock band Haim to comedian Tiffany Haddish, these are the Jewish artists who made the biggest impact on the recording industry this year.

The big awards

Leading the way are the Jewish Haim sisters – Alana, Danielle, and Este – who are nominated for album of the year for *Women in Music Pt. III*, and for best rock performance for their song *The Steps*. The album, which is their third, was released in June to rave reviews. Jack Antonoff – the Jewish musician who has become a go-to producer for some of the industry’s biggest pop stars and often wears a Star of David in public – is up for producer of the year for his recent work with Taylor Swift, The Chicks (formerly the Dixie Chicks), FKA Twigs and Sia. He received another nod for his work on Taylor Swift’s album *Folklore*.

Also nominated for producer of the year is Jewish musician Dan Auerbach, the frontman for the rock band The Black Keys, for his work on music by CeeLo Green, Early James, Marcus King, and others. His father is of Polish Jewish heritage. Breakout Jewish rapper Doja Cat (real name Amala Ratna Zandile Dlamini) had a standout 2020 after going viral on TikTok, and is nominated for best new artist. Her hit song *Say So* also received a nomination for best solo pop performance. She was born to a Jewish mother and non-Jewish South African father in California.

Daniel Maman, better known by his professional moniker, The Alchemist, shares a nomination for best rap album with Freddie Gibbs for their record *Alfredo*. The prominent hip-hop producer, who has

worked with dozens of rappers, from Eminem to 50 Cent, has a father with Israeli heritage.

And singer JP Saxe shares a nomination for song of the year along with Julia Michaels for their hit ballad *If the World Was Ending*. Saxe’s grandfather was Janos Starker, a renowned Grammy-winning cellist and Hungarian Holocaust survivor.

Jewish comedians, of course

Two Jewish comedians are up for best comedy album: Jerry Seinfeld for *23 Hours to Kill* and Tiffany Haddish for *Black Mitzvah*. Haddish celebrated her Batmitzvah on the same day the Netflix special premiered.



Photo design by Emily Burack/Getty Images

From left: Jack Antonoff, Doja Cat, and the Haim Sisters

“When I came up with the concept for my special,” Haddish explained to *alma*, “I was trying to figure out a way to tell my truth, my experiences in life, and also maybe open other people’s eyes to the fact that in African American culture, there is nothing that says, ‘Okay, you’re officially a woman’, or, ‘You’re officially a man.’ There’s no ceremony. There’s no rite of passage.”

Musicals and movies

Stephen Schwartz’s West End adaptation of *The Prince of Egypt* received a nod for best musical theatre album. The recording was released shortly before Passover, fitting for a production that tells the tale of Moses and the Exodus story.

“A lot of times, you put stuff out there and don’t know how it’s being received. So if people have found something inspiring or comforting, there’s just no greater gift a writer can ask for,” Schwartz told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Schwartz will be competing against a Jewish superstar pair: Alan Menken and Howard Ashman. The new off-Broadway cast recording of composer

Menken and lyricist Ashman’s *Little Shop of Horrors* was also recognised in the musical category. The two of them also worked on *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Aladdin*. Ashman passed away in 1991 at age 40.

In the film soundtrack category, Jewish composer Thomas Newman received a nomination for his score for *1917*. If he wins, this would be Newman’s seventh Grammy. *Jojo Rabbit*, the Taika Waititi-led Holocaust satire, received a nomination in best compilation soundtrack.

For best music film, Spike Jonze’s *Beastie Boys Story* received a nomination. It’s a documentary that premiered on Apple TV earlier this year telling the tale of the pioneering rap group whose three members were all Jewish. Jonze, known for directing the movies *Her* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, is also Jewish.

And while superstar Beyoncé isn’t Jewish her visual film *Black Is King*, which adapts the story of Moses, also received a nomination in that category.

An orchestral Anne Frank adaptation

Nominated for best classical compendium is an orchestral adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, narrated by Isabel Leonard and conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Thomas produced the work back in 1990 with the help of Audrey Hepburn, who originally read Frank’s words in performance. Israeli cellist Matt Haimovitz is also in this classical compendium category, for *Woolf, L.P.: Fire And Flood*. His last nomination was a decade ago, in 2010.

Other notable nominations

Black Jewish rapper Drake added three Grammy nominations to his long list of accolades – for best music video, for the accompaniment to the track *Life Is Good*, and for best melodic rap performance and best rap song for *Laugh Now, Cry Later*.

Leonard Cohen, who passed away in 2016, received a posthumous nomination for best folk album for *Thanks for the Dance*. The record, his fifteenth and final studio album, was finished by Cohen’s son, Adam.

And Joanie Leeds’ *All the Ladies* is up for best children’s album.

The Grammys will air on 31 January on CBS, hosted by Trevor Noah of *The Daily Show*.

Keeping to your ‘pod’ is the answer to December holidays

TALI FEINBERG

After this tough year, we all want our traditional summer holiday, but even making that annual trip to Plettenberg Bay or Cape Town is no longer straightforward. Many have sacrificed or altered their holiday plans because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A group of South African scientists calling themselves the Scientists Collective, including Professor Lucille Blumberg, emphasised in a recent advisory written in Daily Maverick that travelling together in a “pod”, where you maintain close contact only with those in that pod, is the safest. The pod, they say, is only as safe as its weakest link. It just needs one lapse of judgement by one person to inadvertently expose everyone within the pod.

“Make sure everyone in the pod is on the same page, has a common understanding of what’s expected, and understands the risk of lapses. Adults should exercise greater vigilance over younger people at this time, but, as experience shows, co-operation is best achieved through persuasion not threats,” they write.

Deciding how to navigate the December holiday has been a quandary for many in our community. A Johannesburg Jewish woman, speaking on condition of anonymity, says she has been going to the Beacon Isle Hotel in Plettenberg Bay every December for more than two decades, but this year, with a heavy heart, she decided to make alternate plans.

“It really is my happy place. We usually go with all our friends, but this year, how much socialising would we be able to do? My kids also love Plett, but have also decided not to go. My concern is that if there is an outbreak of COVID-19, there’s only one small hospital nearby. There’s no Hatzolah, and what would happen if we were locked down? Instead, we are renting a house in Ballito, and we will stay in our “bubble”. It’s comforting to know that if something happens, we can get in the car and drive home.”

She says some of her friends have decided to have their regular annual hotel holiday “come what may”,

while others have cancelled trips altogether. She knows of a family who were all going away together but then split up accommodation because they realised that partying grandchildren staying with elderly grandparents wouldn’t be a good idea.

While she’s sad to be missing her traditional holiday, she’s grateful that she’s still going away, knowing that others locked down around the world can’t even dream of that possibility right now.

COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on Monica Solomon’s holiday plans. She and her husband, daughter, and son-in-law decided in early March to book a holiday to Croatia for the end of the year.



“My daughter lives in Cape Town and we are in Johannesburg, so this holiday would be a chance to see her and spend quality time together,” says Solomon. Little did they know that just days after their trip was booked, the idea of flying across the world for an overseas holiday would become almost unthinkable.

For months, they questioned whether they should cancel their plans. “It was emotionally draining, and the potential financial loss was a concern.” Eventually, they decided to postpone their holiday until December 2021, and were reimbursed with vouchers. “Once we cancelled, the relief was huge,” Solomon says.

They have since chosen to holiday with family in Cape Town so that they can still see their daughter. They are “taking a chance” with flying down, but will follow strict COVID-19 protocols.

“COVID-19 hasn’t really had an impact on my holiday plans in any other way than I want to get out of Johannesburg more than ever before,” says Steph Moon. “It’s been an exceptionally long year, and I really feel like I need a break. We’re doing a family holiday with grannies, cousins, aunties, and uncles in a self-catering unit, so any interaction with other people will be very limited. We’re going to Marloth Park [a wildlife sanctuary on the southern boundary of the Kruger National Park, about 400km from Johannesburg] and will be driving there.”

Health professionals say it’s possible to have a safe getaway. “My basic advice is enjoy your holiday, but plan one that minimises COVID-19 risks as much as possible,” says family physician Dr Andrea Mendelsohn.

“The basic principles are: outdoors is always better than indoors. Have a lunch braai with family rather than an indoor supper. Go to outdoor restaurants with tables spaced far apart. Crowded indoor bars, clubs, and restaurants with poor ventilation are probably the highest-risk venues for COVID-19. Enjoy South Africa’s natural beauty – beaches, parks, and the mountains are COVID-safe and family-friendly,” she says.

“Keep your distance – avoid big crowds, especially indoors, as much as possible. Self-catering cottages in which you have your own space are better than hotels with lots of other people around common spaces and dining halls.”

You may be feeling footloose and fancy-free, but she says it is still crucial to “wear a mask over your nose and mouth whenever you go out and will be around a lot of people. If you fly, wear a mask during your entire trip, and space out when waiting in the queue. Don’t crowd together when entering and exiting the plane. Wear a mask when you use a public restroom.

“When you are indoors, open the windows to improve ventilation and space out. Wash your hands and give holiday house surfaces a wipe down when you arrive. Avoid people who are sick. Stay home if you are sick, and get tested if you have a new cough, sore throat,

fever, loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath,” says Mendelsohn.

Should you visit family? “Visiting family isn’t risk-free. However, it’s also important to maintain social connections with those we love. You have to decide your own risk factors, and if the family visit is worth the risk. For many, visiting family is worth it and important. If you are visiting a high-risk family member [for example, the elderly, or someone who has diabetes], you can consider a two-week quarantine prior to travelling in order to minimise the chance you could be asymptotically infected. It’s also safer not to stay in the same house, and to socialise with your high-risk family members outside, with a mask on,” she says.

“Finally, limit visits to those family members who are ‘essential’, and put off the huge parties and multi-family gatherings until next year – reunion 2021, post vaccine! None of this advice is fool proof. However, we can minimise the risk of COVID-19 while still enjoying the holidays with close family and friends.”

The Scientists Collective notes that in the holiday season “there is a real danger that the virus may spread to areas that have been less affected. People from urban areas, where there is ongoing transmission, may take the virus to rural communities, and people visiting these urban areas from rural areas may be at greater risk of exposure.

“There is a danger if people let their guard down, as we have seen with some ‘super spreading’ events locally and abroad. Contagion happens in nightclubs, churches, funerals, weddings, and anywhere else where large crowds gather,” it advises. “Large family gatherings at home, where people might let their guard down, could prove to be more dangerous than going away on holiday.

“There may be a resurgence of infection in December – the so-called ‘second wave’ – especially if there is complacency about the use of face masks and physical distancing and an increase in large gatherings and indoor activities. However, even without a ‘second wave’, there is still significant risk,” the group says.

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Ettie Buch shares centenary and lifelong service with WIZO

Ettie Buch has been an active member of Bnoth Zion (BZ) WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Association) in Cape Town for 72 years, so it's fitting that she celebrates her 100th birthday on 24 November, in the same year that World WIZO celebrates its centenary.

Born in the Strand, Western Cape, Buch is the proud mother of two daughters, six grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren. Working for BZ WIZO beneficiaries in South Africa and Israel has been her life's work, and she has overcome many obstacles, including surgery just recently following a fall.



Ettie Buch

"My involvement with BZ WIZO began in my school days when I helped my mother to collect JNF Blue Boxes from the Jewish congregants in the Somerset West/Strand community," Buch says.

"The women in our small congregation formed the Somerset West/Strand Ladies Zionist Society, and by default while I was at school, I became their secretary after I noticed that members had been invited to come to a meeting at the shul at 'ate' pm instead of eight!" The rest is history, and Buch is still actively fundraising for projects that support vulnerable families locally and in Israel. Mazeltov and happy 100th birthday, Ettie Buch!

KDVP 'mathletes' excel at Wits tournament



Brent Butkow

In spite of the disruptions of 2020, 28 students at King David High School Victory Park participated in the Wits Mathematics Competition in the third quarter, with five students – Brent Butkow, Dan Rom, Jonah Kollenberg, Jarrod Kapelushnick, and Samuel Blou – qualifying for the final round of the competition.

In the team competition, the school's senior team was placed fourth overall in Gauteng, and in the individual competition, Brent Butkow was placed third.

Maths Head Liesl le Roux said, "We're happy that in spite of the challenges of the year, our mathletes had plenty of opportunity to flex their mathematical muscles."

Abel choice for Rhodes scholarship



Zac Abel

Zac Abel, the son of Raella Abel and Chris Purcell, and the grandson of Myrna Nel and David Abel, has been selected as the 2021 SACS and Partner Schools Rhodes Scholar Elect.

After completing his schooling at SACS, where he was an accomplished oarsman, cyclist, and cross country runner, Zac studied economics at the University of Cape Town, graduating with a first-class honours degree while volunteering as a rescue crewman at the National Sea Rescue Institute's Bakoven Station.

Zac works for the Boston Consulting Group, where he has gained experience across several industries in Africa.

He intends reading an MPhil in Economics during his time at Oxford University.

Grave project for Gauteng SAUPJ's Mitzvah Day

Coming up with an activity for international Mizvah Day on 15 November was a no-brainer for the Gauteng Progressive movement, whose members spent the day cleaning up the Wall of Remembrance and children's section at West Park Cemetery in Joburg.

Congregants from Gauteng progressive shuls spent the morning dusting down memorial plaques, before moving onto the babies' section, where they raked up winter leaves, pulled weeds from graves, and gave it a general tidy up. The organisation will attend to minor structural damage to the Wall of Remembrance early in 2021.



Rabbi Julia Margolis at Westpark Cemetery

The movement thanked Rabbi Julia Margolis, Rabbi Sa'ar Shaked, and congregants from the Gauteng South African Union for Progressive Judaism for their involvement and hard work in the scorching sunshine, saying that it hoped to do this more than just once a year.

Symanowitz soars in Wits maths challenge

Crawford College Sandton is extremely proud of Grade 9 student Jayden Symanowitz who came eighth in Gauteng in the Junior Secondary Schools' category in the Wits Mathematics Competition.

This is an awesome achievement, and would almost certainly give him automatic entry into future competitions.



Jayden Symanowitz

Israeli Embassy helps women fight back



Self-defence classes being given to women and children at Masiphumelele Creative Hub

The Embassy of Israel in South Africa has joined Fight Back SA, a non-profit organisation focused on the empowerment of women and children, to provide free self-defence classes to individuals living in high-risk and crime-ridden areas.

In honour of International Day of Eliminating Violence against Women and the start of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) this month, the embassy donated

funds towards the establishment of a safe centre for women and children in Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats, which will provide a secure and permanent space for Fight Back SA self-defence classes.

Ambassador Lior Keinan said, "The embassy is committed to the empowerment of women across South Africa, first for their own safety, and to increase their participation at all decision-making levels."

The embassy's donation will fund 25 workshops, providing thousands of women across the Western Cape with vital tools to defend themselves and immobilise an attacker. The training is based on the principles of Israeli combat system Krav Maga.

The founding director of Fight Back SA, Nicole Mirkin, said, "Over the past two months, Fight Back SA has been able to reach more women than ever before due to the help and funding we have received from the Embassy of Israel in South Africa. The embassy's generous donation towards the safe centre will ensure the best care of victims of GBV, and it will serve as a safe space for Fight Back SA to operate to deliver permanent free self-defence classes to women living in the Cape Flats."

This project is a continuation of various women-empowerment projects sponsored by the embassy such its sanitary towel initiative that has reached most provinces around the country. The embassy promotes gender-based and youth empowerment projects in communities across South Africa.



Fight Back Instructor giving self-defence classes to women at Belhar in the Western Cape

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Paint your fence

It's that time of the year when we are asked to consider the past 12 months, and then look towards the next. It's never easy to do, but this year, given its complexity, presents us with challenges that we couldn't have imagined.

With all our knowledge and new-found expertise, we are still in a position of relative ignorance when it comes to the first and second quarter of 2021.

Which made the question I was posed particularly challenging. The forum was a panel discussion where a number of people were approached to consider the near future.



"List three things that we should do to make 2021 a better year." Although I was asked this in relation to South Africa specifically, the same answer would apply elsewhere.

- Paint your fence;
- Be a human "Panado" (paracetamol); and
- Read the room.

Some years ago, I recall chatting to friends who were living in South Africa, but who were uncertain of their commitment to the future in the country. They had, along with many others, been debating whether it was worth their while to renovate their house.

The discussion was circular and torturous. It hardly seemed worth spending the money if they were leaving, but on the other hand, their fence needed painting and they were desperate to re-do their floors. They debated this for years and when last I checked, they were still living in Johannesburg.

I have it on good authority that their fence is in disrepair and their third child has terrible asthma from dust on the old carpets. They continue to live as temporary residents, refusing to commit to a

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



place, even for now. The alternative is to commit to living and to employ people who will benefit from your doing so.

Jake Shepherd, the founder of Synthesis, strongly believes that we each need to be a human Panado. The metaphor isn't complicated: we need to be the reason for people to "feel better". Whether at home with our families, at work, or in relation to the country, one of our responsibilities is to take the headache away. If we can do that, then 2021 will be an improvement on the past year.

As someone who follows politics and social media closely, I'm constantly amazed at how so many politicians in particular seem unable to "read the room". If they were able to, they would see that South Africans are concerned about employment, education, and healthcare, and that most of us want the same thing for ourselves, for our families, and each other. We want to live in a united country.

What we don't want is a racial divide, we don't want to be told that we hate each other, and we don't want to pretend that corruption is being dealt with while the plundering goes on. In essence, we want transparency, accountability, and honesty. It's not only politicians, but each of us needs to "read the room" because sometimes the obvious is in front of us.

The past year has shaken our confidence in the future. It has made us question the fundamentals, and robbed many of the freedom that was so valued.

We can't change the circumstances of the pandemic, but we can make the next year better than this one.

To do so, I recommend that we invest in the present and in society by painting the fence, by being the tonic that is needed, and by reading and understanding what others really want.

And who knows, perhaps we will enjoy those new floors more than we thought possible?

Cultural comparisons build bridges

On Friday, starting at 12:10, 101.9 Chai FM will be broadcasting the third in a four-part radio series, titled *Abraham's Children* that looks at similarities and differences between Jewish and Muslim cultures.

Hosted by Charisse Zeifert, the head of communications at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) on her weekly *Jewish Board Talk* show, the series features Rabbi Ramon Widmonte, heads of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning (AJTL), and Muhammad-Nur Nordien, who provide Jewish and Muslim perspectives. Among the topics discussed are food, dress codes, festivals, fasts and feasts, and gender roles.

By acknowledging, drawing on, and developing the common religious-cultural roots of the respective traditions, the initiative helps to build bridges of respect and understanding between our two communities. Hopefully, it will lead to further such engagements in the future. As a follow-up to the series, on 13 December, the AJTL will be hosting a live Q&A on Zoom based on questions submitted by listeners.

To register or for more information, go to <https://www.theacademy.org.za/>

Antisemitism, racism, and the collective-guilt principle

Last Friday's protest in Cape Town by Economic Freedom Fighters supporters wouldn't have been expected to be turned into a Jewish issue, but that was what happened once it emerged that the young white spokesperson for the party was a member of the Jewish community. A video in which the individual was interviewed had hardly been uploaded

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

ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev



before the Twittersphere was awash with the usual slurs, smears, and conspiracy theories. It would have been bad enough had it been solely a matter of a person's Jewish identity being used to vilify him when it was in fact entirely irrelevant, but much of the invective went even further than that to malign Jews as a collective.

This, indeed, is how racism, antisemitism, and bigotry tend to play out. Such thinking doesn't recognise that every community is made up of different individuals with their own distinct beliefs and character traits. Rather, the actions of one or a few members of a particular community are laid at the door of that community as a whole. It's the collective-guilt principle in action, and is pernicious in the extreme. That social media is today the primary vehicle through which such slanders are spread underlines the ongoing need for anti-racism advocates across the board to work together in bringing appropriate pressure to bear on the companies that host such platforms. It has been encouraging to see over the past several months how these efforts have begun to result in real breakthroughs with some of the companies involved. The SAJBD continues to be part of global Jewish initiatives working towards this end.

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

Letters

LAMPRECHT'S HATRED OF JEWS LEAVES ME FLUMMOXED

First, I would like to compliment you on your newspaper, which I picked up for the first time from my local Pick n Pay in Hyde Park this week..

In reference to the article "Face to face with an 'ordinary' looking antisemite", (*SA Jewish Report*, 12 November 2020), I'm appalled at the behaviour of Jan Lamprecht. I can't understand such hatred of a people who – in my experience – are good, kind, and upstanding citizens. I've always admired the Jewish people I've met. I love their traditions, and their loyalty to family, friends, and those in need.

To put this in context of who I am, I grew up in Cape Town near the Schoonder Street Shul in a dual Afrikaans/English family. I'm a Christian, and worshipped at the local Presbyterian Church in Gardens. At school, I had many Jewish friends, and we visited each other's homes on a regular basis. At no time was I ever made to feel different in their homes, and I would believe the same was true when they visited my home.

Thank you to the Jewish families I have always admired, and who have inspired me

I look forward to my next copy of the *SA Jewish Report*. – **Chrisna Pretorius, Broadway, Johannesburg**

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE JEWISH DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO MAKE HOLOCAUST JOKES

Although in theory I'm not offended if anyone depicts Nazis as blubbering idiots, I stay away from jokes about the Holocaust. Why? Because they're not funny. I can't seem to bridge the huge gap between the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust and a joke which is supposed to be funny and elicit laughter.

There's an idea that people from a certain group can make fun of the group they're in, but others outside the group aren't allowed to cast ridicule on this same group. Therefore, Jews shouldn't get offended by jokes about Jews if other Jews make those jokes. But what constitutes a group?

Regarding the Holocaust, the group would be Holocaust survivors. Other Jews, who weren't direct victims of Holocaust atrocities, aren't in this same group, and therefore shouldn't be making fun of the

Holocaust. Why? Because they weren't there. They have no right even to pretend to be able to relate to something so devastating.

If a Holocaust survivor says something to make light of the Holocaust or jokes about it in some way, it's because behind the joke is a lot of pain. The joke is a temporary distraction to cover up their enormous pain even just a little bit.

I find it in poor taste that a member of our community thought (or didn't think – as the case would have it) that it would be in any way appropriate to infer that the chief rabbi, or anyone for that matter, could be compared to Hitler (*yemach shemo v-zichro*). Would the creators of the video like to be the subject of a similar meme? Probably not. I don't blame the chief rabbi for not responding. – **Michele Engelberg, Johannesburg**

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Israel Rugby 7s to camp with the Blitzbokke

ILAN HERRMANN

The thrill-a-minute Rugby 7s have captured the hearts of fans around the world. The Blitzbokke, South Africa’s national Rugby 7s team, ranks second in the world, and is among the most exciting, formidable, and feared of 7s teams.

Exactly 9 191 km away are the Israelis, an emerging rugby nation that has talent, determination, and a world-class coach in South African Kevin Musikanth. Now, these two squads will meet. The Israeli 7s side will be travelling to the SAS Rugby Academy in Stellenbosch to train with the Blitzbokke.

The Blitzbokke will have the opportunity to prepare for the coming 7s rugby season by measuring their skills of play against the Israelis. And the Israelis, well, they will be rubbing shoulders with, and learning from the best in the world and honing their skills for their coming European Rugby season.

“It’s an opportunity for our boys to learn from the world’s best,” says Musikanth. The SAS Rugby Academy is run by the legendary Frankie Horn, a technical expert whose coaching guidelines and methods are second to none in World Rugby 7s.

Musikanth took over as Rugby 15s head coach in Israel in 2018, and in October 2019, he became director of rugby for the Israeli Rugby Union and head coach for the national programmes of both the 15s and the 7s.

Horn visited Israel last December at the behest of Rugby Israel and its supporting Olympic body and since then, the partnership has continued

to grow. The upcoming training camp will begin in Israel, where Horn, together with Phil Snyman, the former Blitzbok captain and multiple world champion winner, will spend a week with the players and coaching staff at Wingate, Netanya, the home base of Rugby Israel. They will then all travel to Stellenbosch for a week’s camp with the Blitzbokke.

“We’ve already seen the difference through our partnership with Frankie. Two of our players were spotted by him on his previous trip to Israel, and have been training at SAS on the off-season,” says Musikanth. The two players are Omer Levinson (scrum half) and Yotam Shulman (lock).

Horn, technical advisor to Rugby Israel’s 7s, says “It is a great opportunity for both teams to derive positive benefit



Frankie Horn (right) and Kevin Musikanth (second from right) sightseeing in Jerusalem



It's a go! Frankie Horn gives the thumbs up to Kevin Musikanth



Kevin Musikanth (second from left) and Frankie Horn (third from left) spending some downtime on Ben Yehuda, Jerusalem

100th test match against Cyprus and celebrated with a 34-22 victory.

We’re in the top 25 in Europe in 15s and in the top 16 in 7s, the toughest, most competitive continent in world rugby,” says Musikanth, “and I can realistically see us setting our sights on the Top 15 and Top 12 respectively in the future.”

Currently, there are three eligible South Africans who are on the Israeli national squad: Jayson Ferera as flanker (Pirates Rugby Club), Daniel Stein as fly half (studying in Israel), and Jared Sichel as prop (Hamilton’s Rugby Club, Cape Town). Eligibility to play for a national team in rugby is stricter than in other sports. One does not qualify just because one has a passport. One has to have had a parent or grandparent that was born in that country or one has to have lived in the country for at least three years.

“With so much Jewish rugby talent around the world, we would be able to put a world-class Israeli national team together if not for the measures that restrict eligibility to national call ups,” says Musikanth.

The Israel Rugby development project was accelerated thanks to Musikanth initiating Bridges through Rugby. This project is the collective effort of a few South African Jewish businessmen who appreciate the long-term vision of Israel becoming a stronger rugby nation. They have come on board to assist with this most opportune tour. National financial support is fixed and, as such, is limited. While the strong players and national coaches will be attending the training camp in Stellenbosch, there will be some that will, unfortunately, have to stay behind.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our players and coaches. To get to see the best upfront and feed off their knowledge is going to be incredible,” says Musikanth. “Everyone is eager to go, of course, but there is a cap to the support we have in place. We would like to take a development u20 squad as well as coaching staff who would carry the benefits of this into the future. A rugby visit to Stellenbosch can change rugby lives in many respects. Stellenbosch is rugby utopia!”

Rugby aside, with the Israelis and South Africans camping together, the question of what will be for dinner after a gruelling day’s training may be a matter of contention. A tussle for whether to serve boerewors or shwarma may result in a scrum in the SAS dining hall to determine the outcome.

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