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Achieving new heights



Absa Jewish Achiever Award winners Cara Saven, Professor
Lucille Blumberg, and Glynne Wolman toast their success.

See Achievers' section from pages 9 to 15, and the 2021
Absa Jewish Achiever magazine with this edition.

Photo: Ian Ossendryver



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AUTO AFRICA

Israeli ambassador to UK evacuated
amidst protest

TALI FEINBERG

A shocking video has emerged of the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom (UK), Tzipi Hotovely, being evacuated from an event at the London School of Economics (LSE) on the evening of 9 November amid a large crowd of pro-Palestinian activists.

The clip shows Hotovely being rushed to a vehicle under heavy security while others try to fend off a group of activists which booed and jeered.

The protesters specifically targeted Hotovely, preventing her from taking part. She had been invited by the prestigious university's student union to speak on "A new era in the Middle East".

The protesters said she "advocated for settler colonialism, engaged in Islamophobic rhetoric, and has perpetuated anti-Palestinian racism".

Hadi Nasrallah, who bills himself as a researcher focused on Syria, Lebanon, and global jihadist terrorism, was the first to share the video on Twitter. He wrote, "Israeli ambassador Tzipi Hotovely was forced to flee London's LSE university after students protested her presence and refused to give her a platform. This is how colonial war criminals must be treated everywhere. #FreePalestine."

Many have questioned if Hotovely is the right person to be ambassador to the UK as she is a member of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party and was appointed by him to the post after serving as settlements minister. The move drew a petition by left-wing British Jews, who called on their government to reject her as ambassador.

Before the event, a person on Twitter using the name "LSEclasswar" said, "Whoever smashes the ambassador car window [Lincoln's Inn Field] gets pints. Let's f**king frighten her."

The call to violence came as many were marking the 83rd anniversary of Kristallnacht, when the windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues were smashed by Nazis and their supporters across Germany.



Tzipi Hotovely

The incident was condemned by education secretary and Conservative MP Nadhim Zahawi as "deeply disturbing" in a public apology to Hotovely on Twitter.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews called for those "who exceeded the bounds of peaceful protest" to be disciplined and prosecuted by the LSE and the police if necessary.

It also praised Hotovely for "facing down intimidation", saying, "the bullies will not win".

The Israeli embassy released a statement on Wednesday, 10 November, saying, "The violence we witnessed when the ambassador left the premises after the talk won't deter Israeli diplomats from engaging in meaningful dialogue with all parts of British society."

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Torah Thought

Finding our ladder to heaven

In Vayeitzei, we once again experience Yaakov's wonderful dream of the ladder reaching up to heaven, on which angels ascend and descend whilst Hashem promises protection and guidance from above.

We can imagine the many ways in which our father, Yaakov, could have reacted to such a vision and promise – perhaps the most obvious is with euphoria. If our sages describe heaven as a place in which "there's no eating and drinking [physical pleasure], jealousy, and competition, but rather the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and bask in the radiance of the divine presence" (Gemara Brachot 17a) and they teach us that the greatest of all possible joy is the ecstatic moment of closeness to G-d, then Yaakov could well have awoken with a spring in his step and a secret smile on his face that he was blessed with such revelation and promise.

In fact, the Sfate Emet, Rabbi Yehuda

Leib Altar of Ger, warns that great spiritual accomplishments can actually lead to a self-congratulatory moment. Yaakov is to be praised for responding, instead, with quiet humility. Rather than viewing the revelation as a sign of his own holiness, he understands that he is in a holy place, and that it played an integral role in bringing him close to G-d (indeed, our sages teach us that he was on the Temple Mount, the future site of the Beit HaMikdash). The Sfate Emet takes this a step further, and says that Yaakov's acknowledgement of the holiness of the place, his lack of self-congratulation, is part of what made it a holy place.

We are all, at times, blessed with spiritual inspiration. It may be more or less often, but we can all learn from Yaakov to accept such moments with reverence and humility. We can also learn to seek and value such experiences – a combination of internal preparedness and an encounter with a holy space. Whilst all of Hashem's world

is created by His hands and presents opportunities for inspiration, some places have been sanctified for a greater holiness, and these places give us our best chance for genuine connection. A shul, apart from being a *beit kneset*, a house of assembly, is a *beit tefilla*, a house of prayer. A space purpose built for human beings to seek and speak with the divine. Every word of prayer uttered in shul goes to heaven, but is also absorbed within the walls, floors, and roof of the shul itself. Every time we enter the holy space, we have an opportunity to sensitise ourselves to the spiritual energy that the shul absorbs and provides. My blessing for us all is that we all experience the holiness of the holy place, and do so in such a way as to leave it an even more holy place for those who come after us.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Sam Thurgood,
Beit Midrash Morasha

Miss SA headed to Miss Universe despite bullying

NICOLA MILTZ

Miss SA, Lalela Mswane, is headed for the Miss Universe pageant in Israel in spite of incessant harassment by anti-Israel activists on social media intent on intimidating and tormenting the young contestant.

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)-aligned group, Palestine4Africa, incorrectly announced this week that Miss SA had withdrawn from the pageant when she had not.

The so-called human-rights group has now accused the chief executive of Miss SA, Stephanie Weil, of “making a U-turn” on the announcement.

It has further bullied the young 24-year-old by threatening to “embark on a vigilant campaign including protest action”.

Weil said this week that after consultation, Mswane had chosen to represent her country on the Miss Universe stage next month in Eilat.

“This is contrary to any indication otherwise,” Weil said in a statement this week.

She said she was aware there were statements indicating that Mswane had pulled out of the pageant but that these were “completely unfounded and untrue”.

The KwaZulu-Natal beauty is facing a backlash by a small group of anti-Israel activists hellbent on derailing her chances of competing on the world stage with contestants from about 70 countries including Miss Morocco and Miss Universe UAE.

PREVENTING HER FROM PARTICIPATING IN MISS UNIVERSE WILL MAKE NO CONTRIBUTION TO ATTAINING RESOLUTION TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT, ONLY DENYING THIS YOUNG WOMAN THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPETE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.”

While there has been a large chorus of support for her by fans on her Twitter and Instagram accounts, there has also been a constant trickle of criticism and harassment. There have been a number of posts of the Palestinian flag and various hashtags including #NotMyMissSA and #BoycottMissUniverse as well as snide remarks and disturbing images.

Earlier the Palestinian Solidarity Alliance

threatened in capital letters on Instagram that it was “time to fight harder”, “time to make our presence felt” after it claimed that Miss SA had blocked it on social media.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies told the *SA Jewish Report* that it fully supported Mswane in attending the Miss Universe competition. “There’s no reason why she shouldn’t go,” said the organisation, accusing the BDS movement of bullying and lying.

“Preventing her from participating in Miss Universe will make no contribution to attaining resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, only denying this young woman the opportunity to compete on the international stage.

“Once again, BDS is intimidating South Africans to comply with its political demands. It returns to its modus operandi of bullying and intimidation, and when that’s not successful, it resorts to lies and deceit. When its fraudulent claim that Miss SA had withdrawn from the pageant was exposed, it added to the lie by saying that there had been a ‘U-turn’.

“Our community has been the target of BDS intimidation, bullying, and lies for many years and it’s regrettable that Lalela has become its latest scapegoat. We wish Miss Mswane success in her pageant.”

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) said it was “appalled at the tactics of peddling fake news generated by various BDS lobby groups”.

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the SAZF, said, “This form of cyberbullying and the targeting of Miss SA, Lalela Mswane, is a



Lalela Mswane

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new low and shouldn’t be tolerated. Both Nelson Mandela’s grandson Mandla Mandela and the director of the BDS organisation driving this campaign have themselves been accused of assaulting women and are further undermining South African women with their actions.”

He said Miss SA’s participation on the international stage was “an incredible opportunity to showcase South Africa in a positive light”.

“It’s clear that BDS activists are simply scared that by going to Israel, she will expose South Africans to Israel’s democratic, diverse, and vibrant society. Furthermore, no other countries are boycotting Miss Universe, and those that aren’t attending are doing so due to COVID-19 restrictions. On the contrary, there will be participants from the UAE, Morocco and Lebanon, and many African countries, some for the first time.”

Weil earlier said that the Miss SA organisation was thrilled to be able to make Mswane’s childhood dream – to wear the crown while representing her country globally – come true.

“Mswane has spoken out openly about being bullied as a child. She won’t be bullied as an adult against fulfilling her ambition,” Weil said, pointing out that a “very, very small but extremely vocal group” had attempted and failed to derail Mswane’s chances at the prestigious international pageant.

Weil said on radio this week that that Miss SA would use the opportunity in Israel to learn about the conflict and engage on the topic, and would represent South Africa to the best of

her ability.

Earlier, she said that, “South Africa was placed very firmly in the 21st century when Zozibini Tunzi, proudly wearing her natural hair without trying to conceal it under a weave or a wig, was crowned Miss Universe.

“Her refusal to bow down to pressure to look a certain way was ground breaking, and opened the door to diversity and the rise of the individual as opposed to look-alikes. Like her, Lalela will be a role model to young women, not just across the country, but across the African continent.

“Anyone who wants to rob Lalela of her moment in the spotlight is unkind and short sighted. She’s the shining beacon for young women everywhere, showing them that being beautiful while being clever and educated is possible,” Weil said.

“We aren’t a political organisation and the Miss Universe pageant isn’t a politically inspired event.”

It will be the first time an Emirati has competed in the pageant. Emiratis were previously not permitted to visit Israel, but the two countries have welcomed each other’s citizens since normalising relations last year. The president of the Miss Universe organisation, Paula Shugart, has said that the theme of the show will be “Israel”, and there are plans for contestants to visit places like Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

Mandla Mandela, has urged South Africans to boycott the Miss Universe pageant. He initially congratulated Mswane on her crowning, but called on her to boycott the event after he learned it was taking place in Israel.

Meanwhile radio personality DJ Warras posted his support for Miss SA on Twitter. The Gagasi FM radio jock said, “Miss SA & organisers must NOT be bullied into taking sides in 100-year conflicts. She has earned her crown and has a right to live her dream and compete for Miss Universe! This nonsense that we have to take sides in conflicts that have nothing to do with us. Mandela told them in 92.”

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TALI FEINBERG

Explaining how he came to take on the new role, Baumgarten said, "Rabbi Emanuel and I worked

He said enquiries had come from some companies which had been kosher-certified in the past and some which had not. "Various companies

Meanwhile, the managing director of the kosher department of the UOS, Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, said it was also offering international

Said Goldstein, "The kosher department of the UOS will continue to innovate to ensure more people eat more kosher more often. The UOS is a non-profit organisation that ensures all aspects of Orthodox Jewish life and halachic observance are of the highest standard in South Africa. To this extent, we ensure the community has a well-respected Beth Din, kosher *mikvahs* and *eiruv*s, halachic supervision of marriage and divorce, and importantly, the highest levels of kashrut."



Rabbi Yossi Baumgarten

Rabbi Berel Rodal

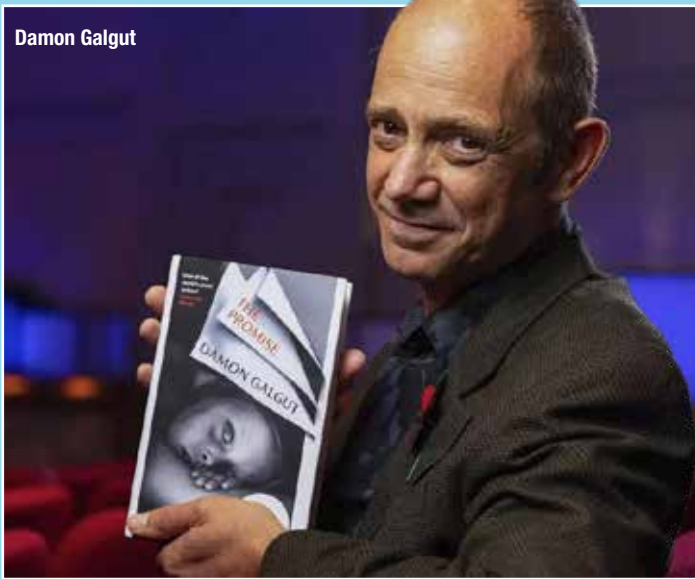
Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from the United States where he had just arrived for Kosherfest, Goldstein said, "We have partnered with the world's largest hechsher, the OU [Orthodox Union], with the launch of Kosher Arabia several months ago. We are

TALI FEINBERG

"I myself was converted to Judaism at the age of two, though I was never subsequently raised in the Jewish tradition. I speak no Hebrew and never had a Barmitzvah," he says.

"It's taken a long while to get here and now that I have, I kind of feel that I shouldn't be here," he said in his acceptance speech. "This has been a great year for African writing, and I would like to accept this on behalf of all the

The Promise is very much a critique, questioning if the new South Africa is fulfilling the hopes and dreams behind it. Galgut doesn't shy away from exposing the fault lines in a complicated society, and he doesn't provide easy answers. Just like the Jews looked to the Promised Land as a dream yet to be



Damon Galgut

Yet his win is a cause for celebration for this country, and could be seen as a sign to not give up hope quite yet and to keep writing the stories that need to be told. Galgut, meanwhile, says he feels "dazed and exhausted" in the wake of winning the prize. Where to from here for him? "It's too soon to be sure of what the future holds," he says. "I hope I'll continue to write, that's all."



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“Hit back hard,” Holocaust scholar says of “Zio-Nazi” slur

TALI FEINBERG

Levels of hatred against Jews in South Africa were taken to a new height in recent weeks when the Media Review Network (MRN) started calling South African Jewish organisations “Zio-Nazis” on Facebook.

A leading Holocaust academic said that the community and fellow South Africans should fight back, with this kind of casual antisemitism being a danger to South Africa’s democracy.

“This hate group with its hate speech endangers both the majority and minorities in our society. Fight it!” renowned Holocaust scholar Professor Yehuda Bauer told the *SA Jewish Report* after seeing Facebook posts describing the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), and the *SA Jewish Report* newspaper as “Zio-Nazis”.

Another post by the MRN also described Israel as “the Zio-Nazi entity”. The MRN describes itself as “a Johannesburg-based organisation dedicated to exposing Zionist apartheid and the occupation of Palestine”. Ironically it says it works to “counter racism and hate speech”.

The term “Zio” is a pejorative for “Jew” and was brought into prominence by former Ku Klux Klan “Grand Wizard” David Duke. It’s often deployed by

white supremacists.

Meanwhile, on 4 November 2021, a cartoon posted by local Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions group the Afro-Palestine Forum showed an antisemitic caricature of a Jew. The cartoon depicts a Jewish man being given a map of Palestine by the British (the Balfour Declaration). Along with a Magen David on his arm, he is drawn with a big nose, eyes, and teeth, a straggly beard, and the expression of a greedy predator.

In response to this cartoon, Bauer said, “This is straight out of the *Stürmer*. This kind of Nazi antisemitism endangers South African democracy.”

Regarding the term “Zio-Nazi” he said, “Zionism here is, as I understand it, equated with Israel as a Jewish state. If the Jews in Israel and their state is ‘Nazi’, then it has to be eradicated. So the term indicates potentially genocidal ideologies. That means it’s clearly antisemitic.”

He thinks the response should be aggressive. “Calling Israel ‘Nazis’ indicates that the person or group who publishes such slander not only favours genocide against the seven million Israeli Jews, but is a danger to our society. It goes back to the most extreme racist apartheid policies of the apartheid regime. It doesn’t really endanger Israeli society, which is strong enough to resist South African racists, but it does endanger our multi-ethnic culture.”

Dr Günther Jikeli, the Erna B. Rosenfeld Associate Professor at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University, notes that the MRN “positively relates to even more radical news outlets such as the Quds News Network that has disseminated praise for terrorists who kill Israeli civilians. This kind of defamation and this way of conspiratorial thinking is dangerous, and every

democratically-minded person should condemn it.

“The MRN links many articles with false and defamatory statements about Israel and organisations that co-operate with Israeli organisations or with the Israeli government as if this was a crime in itself,” he says. “The term ‘Zio-Nazi,’ goes well beyond criticism – it’s an extremely offensive slur. It tries not only to demonise the state of Israel and the idea that there should be a Jewish state, but does so by alleging that Zionism is the same as Nazism, an ideology that had as its core the extermination of Jews. There is no way that a rational argument can be made for this comparison. It is a manifestation of irrational hatred of Jews.”

Author, political scientist, and former research associate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dr Matthias Küntzel, told the *SA Jewish Report* that, “The hate-speech expression ‘Zio-Nazi’ is extremely antisemitic in several ways. First, everyone who uses it plays down and denies the essence of the Nazi dictatorship. They mock the victims of this dictatorship when they put the Nazi system on a par with democracy in Israel.

“Second, there’s no doubt that this term falls into the category of antisemitism according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism, which countless governments and the European Union acknowledged as a benchmark.

“This definition condemns as ‘contemporary examples of antisemitism’, the following statements, among others: ‘Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis’ and ‘denying the Jewish people their right of self-determination, for example, by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour,’” he says.

However, “this is exactly what the antisemites, who use the dirty word ‘Zio-Nazi’, want to achieve, they want to put Israel’s policy on the same level as that of the Nazis and deny the Jewish people the right to self-determination.”

Dr Shmuel Lederman, of the Weiss-Livnat Center for Holocaust Research at Haifa University, says, “As far as I’m aware, the term ‘Zio-Nazi’ goes back to the 1980s and was later popularised by David Duke. In recent years, it has become common in some leftist circles. So it’s ironic that a term popularised by a white supremacist is being used by an organisation that [says it] fights against Islamophobia and hatred.

“We need to distinguish between critiques of Zionism, including anti-Zionist views, which are part of a legitimate political debate, and expressions that turn anyone who believes Israel should be a Jewish homeland into a Nazi. In my view, this is hate speech as it creates extreme demonisation of millions of people. The same goes for calling Israel a ‘Zio-Nazi entity’, although in my view demonisation of individuals and organisations is worse than demonisation of a state.”

SAJBD national chairperson Karen Milner says, “The epithet ‘Zio-Nazi’ is an egregious form of Jew-baiting masquerading as moral outrage, and those who resort to it are well aware of the fact. It’s always problematic when

Continued on page 7>>



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It’s a women Achievers year!

There’s magic in celebrating the success of others, and therefore there’s real magic in the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. These days, it’s not so much about glitz and glamour because most of us watch it from the comfort of our own living rooms, but it’s about being inspired by what people we know are capable of doing.

Many of us recognise that if they can achieve it, so can we. It takes effort, passion, perseverance, and the will to succeed, but it’s clearly possible. That’s inspiring, isn’t it?

So much goes into making the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards happen and along the way, nerves get frayed and people get stressed. Not everyone can win awards, it’s that simple. But it’s really worth the effort.

And then, when you watch the awards, there are always going to be those winners you think are the best ever, and you’re surprised they haven’t won before. But on the flipside, there are also going to be those you aren’t so sure should have won, and you always have lots of reasons why. I guess this is the nature of who we are as a community.

It also makes for excellent material for what we used to call “watercooler conversations” or perhaps “Shabbos-table chatter”.

The point is, there are no losers in the Jewish Achievers. Everyone involved is a winner because the experience is unique and worthwhile.

I was impressed with the number of incredible women who won this year. Hence, the reason for our front-page photograph of the three women who won independently. They are Cara Saven, who won the Europcar Women in Leadership Award; Professor Lucille Blumberg, who won the Absa Professional Excellence – From COVID to Hope Award; and Humanitarian Award winner Glynne Wolman.

These are three powerhouse women each in their own way. They have created their own paths, doing what they believe is right and for the good of so many.

They are such clear icons, mentors, and trailblazers.

But the record number of women who won included Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman, who with Rabbi Yossy Goldman, won the joint Community Award. When people speak of Rochel, they speak of her as an innovator, trendsetter, and about what she has done for other women.

And as for Lynette Saltzman, who together with her husband, Ivan, won the Absa Business Icon Award. They have literally changed the face of pharmacies in South Africa. She, too, is a hugely powerful woman!

In the past, we have certainly mourned the dearth of female winners of Achiever Awards, wondering where they were. Well, this year, we have made up for it with a record of five incredible, powerful, trendsetting women! It makes me so proud.

I would like to think that the COVID-19 era – which unfortunately isn’t over – has made us all question what is or isn’t important to us. It has made us choose what works for us and what doesn’t. In some situations, this has been heartbreaking, but it has also been inspiring and empowering.

As I see it, these and other phenomenal women were out there doing what they are passionate about and succeeding beyond measure, but they didn’t necessarily see the need to put in the effort or time that it took to participate in the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. I understand. As the mother of two and a full-time editor/journalist, I have to steal sleep time in order to exercise and do the things I want to do for me. I know I’m not alone.

I belong to a very exclusive club, which I like to call “the midnight working mother’s club”. So often, when I send work emails late at night, the people who generally respond immediately are members of my club, the working mothers. There are simply not enough hours in our day, but we make it work.

However, over this COVID-19 era, we couldn’t drive to and from the office, and used that time to work from home. We also didn’t have as many engagements, so we prioritised. And I’m so pleased that these powerhouse women have put themselves forward because they deserve the accolade.

Generally – and I’m generalising now – for a woman to get ahead, she has to work three times as hard as a man.

As Cara Saven says, she left the corporate world to start her own business because she didn’t want to see her children only in the dark. But when she started on her own, she chose to employ moms because she knew just how hardworking and dedicated they were, even though they did their work between fetching kids and doing homework. I’m thrilled that the judges recognised this woman for what she is doing.

As for Glynne Wolman, how does one woman and her network of angels save the lives of so many people? It’s truly astonishing! And she’s a lovely, approachable, kind human being to boot. Go figure!

I can wax lyrical about the other three women too, but there’s no need. I don’t need to convince anyone that they are winners, the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards has already done so.

Congratulations to all the Achiever winners from the *SA Jewish Report*, and thank you to all who made our annual event a sterling evening.

Miss SA bullying

On a far more sour note, I’m appalled at the bullying of Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane just because she’s going to compete in the Miss Universe competition, which happens to be held in Israel.

Once again, the proverbial knives are out because she didn’t back down when the Israel haters started throwing stones at her. They have used such ugly tactics, including lying that she has backed out when she hasn’t.

Haven’t we seen this all too often? I like to call it the “Shashi Naidoo syndrome” after the celebrity who was actually pro-Israel until she was bullied into backing down on a statement she put on social media. They made her life a misery until she not only backed down and apologised, but turned tail and joined the side that bullied her.

The truth is, it’s hard to stand up to people who are threatening to cancel you and make your future difficult. Unfortunately, these thugs will stop at nothing.

It’s deplorable, and totally takes away any democratic choice Mswane has to compete.

I, for one, back Mswane 100% and believe she should be given her right as Miss South Africa to go forward to compete in Miss Universe. Let’s find a way to help her against these bullies.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor



The extensive impact of the Ethiopian crisis

OPINION

PAULA SLIER



Foreigners are being urged to leave Ethiopia immediately while commercial flights are still operating. Israel, Britain, and the United States have advised against all travel to the country, except for Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (where advice remains against all but essential travel).

This comes as thousands of opposition fighters are just more than 300km from the capital Addis Ababa, which they’ve vowed to overthrow. Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) has warned that the risk of the country “descending into widening civil war is only too real”. The government has detained at least 16 UN staff and dependants without any explanation.

Last week, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, who won the Nobel Peace Prize two years ago, declared a state of emergency. Since then, police have been going door to door in the capital arresting, without a court order, anyone suspected of collaborating with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). The government considers its members secessionist terrorists.

For a year, Addis Ababa and Tigray fighters have been at war, mostly in the north of Ethiopia where the group is dominant. In recent months, the conflict escalated rapidly after fighters began to retake most of the Tigray province and expand into neighbouring regions. The civil war now threatens to engulf the capital.

The TPLF claims to be pushing toward Addis Ababa to force the government to lift restrictions on aid flowing to their region. The UN accuses Ahmed Ali of operating a de facto blockade which he denies. But it has been four months since the last big shipment of medicines and health supplies were allowed into the north of the country.

More than seven million people are estimated to need humanitarian assistance with about 400 000 people in Tigray alone living in famine-like conditions. Thousands have been killed, and more than two million have fled their homes since last November.

The UN reports “extreme brutality” being meted out by both sides on civilians. It says there are reasonable grounds to believe that violations of international human rights and humanitarian and refugee law are being carried out by all sides. Their intransigence has scuttled hopes of a ceasefire that international mediators including the African Union and United States were pressing for.

The war has also sparked an internal conflict in Israel. Since fighting broke out a year ago, more than 2 000 Ethiopian Jews have been airlifted to Israel in state-run operations. “We must continue to act to bring them over to Israel quickly,” vowed Israeli President Isaac Herzog recently.

But after the new immigrants were settled in various absorption centres, suspicion about the information they had given to Israeli authorities started surfacing. A probe by the Immigration and Population Authority raised “serious doubts” as to whether 61 of them were, in fact, Jewish. In spite of their affidavits, an investigation also found that “most of the petitioners didn’t come from a combat area as claimed, and weren’t in life-threatening danger”.

It turned out that the list of names compiled for rescue came from a man who emigrated to Israel from Ethiopia 25 years ago. According to media reports, among the 61 were his sons, his ex-wife, who is Christian, her husband, and their children, and a number of people he worked with in the past.

It has dampened efforts by Pnina Tamano-Shata, the Israeli aliyah and integration minister, to bring more Ethiopians to Israel. She is urging

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to speed up the immigration process. There are thought to be between 7 000 to 12 000 Ethiopian community members still waiting to make aliyah, many of whom live in the Tigray region, the heart of the conflict.

It’s here where Israeli intelligence officials are warning Israelis and Jews to be vigilant. According to Israeli media, the country’s national intelligence, the Mossad, recently thwarted multiple attacks by Iran against Israeli tourists and businessmen in at least three African countries. The targets were visiting Tanzania, Senegal, and Ghana.

Five suspects, all with African passports, have reportedly been arrested. The concern is that in countries where security is compromised, particularly in Africa, Iran is seeking to avenge the death of its top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated last November. Tehran blames the Mossad.

The ongoing shadow war between Iran and Israel goes back decades, but Iranian efforts recently spiked. This is likely to continue until the country’s leadership feels it has achieved some

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali



kind of revenge and deterrence against Israeli attacks on it.

The Ethiopian crisis could provide fodder for increased attacks against Jews and Israelis in that country. Aware of this, the Israeli foreign ministry has started evacuating the families of Israeli diplomats from Ethiopia and is urging Israeli citizens residing in the country to exercise vigilance and be regularly updated on the progress of fighting in general and in the capital in particular.

Addressing the UN Security Council on 8 November, Rosemary DiCarlo, the UN under-secretary-general for political and peacebuilding affairs, said that in spite of much speculation about how the Ethiopian crisis would unfold in coming weeks, “in a country of more than 110 million people, more than 90 different ethnic groups, and 80 languages, no one can predict what continued fighting and insecurity will bring”.

The TPLF dominated Ethiopian politics for three decades before Ahmed Ali took power in 2018 and sought to reduce the group’s influence. Tigrayans are deeply resented by many of Ethiopia’s non-Tigrayans and Ahmed Ali has vowed to “bury this enemy with our blood and bones”. The prime minister has called the fight against former government soldiers and volunteers from the country’s Tigray region an “existential war”.

The conflict has already taken thousands of lives and spawned one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. There are fears it will spill beyond the country’s borders as the heavyweight of the volatile region teeters on the brink of chaos.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East bureau chief of RT, the founder and chief executive of Newshound Media International, and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

Lessons we can learn from our Kurdish brethren

OPINION

GRANT GOCHIN



I have just returned from an educational tour of Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) where I studied the parallels of genocides and persecution.

As Jews, we're familiar with genocide. Most of us South Africans were raised in small families, our extended families slaughtered in Lithuania. Our grandparents generally shielded us from the horrors of their youth.

Today, we visit Lithuania in "murdered-Jew tourism" to see the blood-soaked lands and sterile monuments in the land of our annihilation. We Jews have suffered repeated efforts to eliminate us, physically and culturally.

In Northern Iraq, the land is similarly soaked in blood. Kurds and Yazidis have been wantonly slaughtered, repeatedly, consistently, and virtually without external assistance. The parallels in human-rights crimes are shocking.



Kurds are a distinct ethnicity in Iraq with their own autonomous region. Their historic land, collectively "Kurdistan", exists in Northern Iraq, southern Turkey, eastern Iran, and western Syria. However, only the region in Northern Iraq is autonomous.

They have been the subject of endless genocide attempts and forced Arabisation. The most recent genocide effort against the Kurdish people was by Saddam Hussain's Baathist regime in 1991.

Kurds are Muslim, possibly of Jewish heritage. Ties between Kurds and Jews run deep and are profound. There's no place in the world that I have felt such love and respect for Jews and for Israel as among Iraqi Kurds. There's nowhere in the world I have felt as safe and protected.

Kurds are the world's largest minority without a homeland of their own. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas vigorously opposes Kurdish independence, openly confirming that this is in order to avoid Israel having another firm ally in the Middle East.

The Palestinian cause sucks so much attention in the world, it appears there's little capacity remaining for the world to see or hear the needs of the Kurdish people. Meeting Kurds in person and understanding their unique culture and needs was certainly informative and life altering.

Also living in this region are the Yazidi people. Theirs isn't a religion I was able to comprehend, yet their experiences are intimately familiar. There have been 73 distinct efforts to eliminate the Yazidi people. Only 400 000 Yazidis survive.

The most profoundly moving experience of my trip was meeting Lisa Miara, an Israeli Jew living in Iraq who is rescuing Yazidi children from ISIS (Islamic State) and trying to heal their physical and psychological wounds.

Yazidi males between the ages of eight and 80 were murdered. Yazidi women and girls were abducted, sold into sexual slavery, physical slavery, brainwashed into becoming Islamist terrorists to be turned against their own people, and used for organ harvesting.

ISIS sells Yazidi organs on the international black market. In each of the children's tortured faces, I could see the suffering of our own European Jews. Miara, a giant among humanity, is doing all she can to help these tortured surviving children while international nongovernmental organisations are absent.

The Amna Suraka Museum in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, reminded me of the 9th Fort in Lithuania. Here, Kurds were tortured, raped, and slaughtered by Saddam's Baathist regime, exactly as happened to our own families in Lithuania.

Again, as in Lithuania, Baathists now cannot seem to recall who perpetrated the murders, and can't explain how these Kurds were murdered. They admit murders took place, but Baathists are mostly unredeemed and unrepentant. As in Lithuania, Baathists still consider many of the murderers their heroes. Their insincere regret is for public display only.

Unlike us Jews, surviving Kurds have long memories, and until the full truth has been told and sincere apologies made, they won't allow Baathists to manipulate their tragedy to reform their own image. To prevent the propagandisation of their slaughter, they won't even allow Baathists into their hallowed burial grounds. Jews should learn this lesson.

Starting in 1941, the persecution of Jews in Iraq was rampant with pogroms and mass murder. Jews were then ethnically cleansed from Iraq by the early 1950s. Baathists made multiple efforts to expel and intimidate Christians who were members of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Chaldean Christians, and Assyrians. As in Lithuania, history has been rewritten to give the perpetrators a veneer of respectability.

Genocide has been a state of being for humans since the beginning of time. Inverting truth is the tenth stage of genocide, which means the genocide of our own Jewish Lithuanian families is currently continuing in the form of genocide of truth.

While countries such as Iraq blatantly continue to engage in this stage of genocide in front of an enlightened world, it means that ongoing genocides such as those perpetrated against the Tigray, Uighurs, Rohingya, and others are facilitated without consequence.

My tour of Iraq included visiting sacred places, seeking opportunities to assist victims of genocide, and establishing the truth. Our Jewish dedication to "never again" requires that we demand the truth from perpetrators, and that reconciliation be based on truth first.

Allowing Holocaust and genocide denial from governments perpetuates and enables the status quo. We Jews can take lessons from our Kurdish brothers: truth is a prerequisite to reconciliation.

Visiting Iraq was entirely different to our Lithuanian "murdered-Jew tourism". I saw how Kurds and Yazidis are building modern and vibrant societies in the places they were slaughtered. Iraqi Kurdistan is a "must visit" destination for the resurrection and resiliency of humanity.

It's a vibrant, modern, colourful society in its glory. For us, visiting Lithuania is visiting death, while visiting Kurdistan is visiting life. Not only might the Kurds be our Jewish cousins, their life experiences parallel our own.

• South African-born Grant Gochin is actively involved in Jewish affairs, focusing on historical justice. He has spent the past 20 years documenting and restoring signs of Jewish life in Lithuania. In March 2019, he took the Lithuanian government to court to get it to recognise its active role in the Holocaust.

"Hit back hard," Holocaust scholar says of "Zio-Nazi" slur

>>>Continued from page 5

obviously false analogies with Nazism are made, not least because it belittles the true extent of Nazi crimes.

"However, pointedly directing such smears at Jews, Nazism's primary victims, is especially repugnant, and is clearly intended to be as hurtful and insulting as possible," she says. "Fortunately, this latest flurry of invective from the MRN appears to have got minimal traction.

"It's actually quite typical for Jew-haters of every stripe to attribute to Jews what they themselves are in reality guilty of," Milner adds. "This is certainly true of the MRN. Throughout its existence, it has been a strident and unapologetic cheerleader for Hamas, an organisation whose very founding charter calls for the mass killing of Jews everywhere."

SAZF national chairperson Rowan Polovin says, "It's abhorrent and deeply hurtful for our

Jewish community to have to continue to endure the odious statements from some antisemitic organisations such as the MRN that deliberately and egregiously compare the horrors of the Nazis to Israeli actions, in order to insult and injure living Jewry alongside the memory of the Holocaust. It's distressing and damaging for Jews to even begin to explain why this comparison is false, malicious, and antisemitic to the core."

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SA’s devolution of power a hopeful change, say analysts

MIRAH LANGER

The recent election results offer hope of a new kind of unity in diversity, one in which South Africans work together in broad alliances to promote shared values, election analysts say.

“For the ANC to fall below 50% is a psychological and seismological watershed moment,” said former South African ambassador and former leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA), Tony Leon.

“This election has certainly given us the greatest number of takeaways and quite a few positives, coming from where I do,” he said.

Leon was speaking at an online seminar hosted by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein this week.

Unpacking the election results were also Mondli Makhanya, *City Press* editor-in-chief, and Frans Cronje, the chief executive of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

This election was the first in which the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), fell below a 50% majority, getting 45.59% of the vote. In addition, voter turnout was markedly low, with only 45.87% of eligible South Africans showing up to mark their ballots.

Leon said that although South Africa “followed its own rhythm”, there was a historical precedent of liberation movements reaching an “expiry date” by which they eventually lost their emotional grip on the nation and consequent political monopoly.

Leon cited the example of the labour party in Israel as an example, to which Makhanya added the example of Zambia’s liberation party that eventually went “to the cemetery”.

“Liberation parties do run out of steam unless they take remarkably proactive action to maintain themselves,” said Leon. “Our country is in a lot of trouble, and I think voters have woken from a torpor and have said, ‘I no longer actively support the ruling party.’”

Makhanya said that the roots for what happened during these elections were laid in 2009, when the Congress of the People (COPE) first broke away from the ANC and contested the elections.

Prior to this, the opposition was associated with a lack of progressiveness and opposition to transformation, suggested Makhanya.



Tony Leon, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Mondli Makhanya, and Frans Cronje

“When the COPE breakaway occurred, it made it possible to say that it was okay for traditional voters of the ANC to vote against the ANC, and that it wasn’t a betrayal of the liberation or one’s identity.

“Then again, in 2014, the Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] also came from the ANC and told voters that it would take on the ANC. As such, by 2016, people were voting freely.”

Makhanya said that behind this month’s vote “was a lot of anger. People see the country going in the wrong direction.”

While some expressed their frustration by voting for other parties, the significant proportion of people who didn’t vote at all were also taking “an active decision”.

“They were saying [to the ANC] that we don’t trust you; we don’t believe the promises that you have made us. That’s a huge shift. The ANC now ceases to be the epicentre of everything South African.”

Now, the playing field is open “for a different party to make themselves a winning proposition”. However, at the moment, no opposition party seems able to build this support basis, suggested Makhanya.

In this absence, he cautioned against the mobilisation of voters along ethnic lines.

“Both the EFF and the DA seem to have reached a ceiling. The parties on stage right now aren’t speaking the language of South Africa.”

He noted, for example, the strides made by the Inkatha Freedom Party in KwaZulu-Natal and rhetoric shaping a narrative of coloured nationalism that had drawn in other voters.

“What is disconcerting is that this comes from a negative place of feeling disenfranchised. Real issues are exploited and ethnicised. You are beginning to see people going off into their corners.”

Both Makhanya and Cronje dismissed notions that the EFF would become the kingmaker going forward.

“South Africans reject extremism, and the EFF was attractive at a certain point because it was a bulwark against the [Zuma] government and people wanted to send a message to the ANC, to cut the ANC down at that point – that’s why it had a decent outing at its first election.”

This most recent election however, showed that South Africans didn’t find the party’s populist rhetoric attractive.

Cronje concurred, saying that polls showed that South Africa was a “more pragmatic and conservative country than often assumed. There’s vast respect amongst people across every line of race, class, history, and politics that one can imagine.”

Most likely in this scenario was that South Africans would now draw together based on these shared values.

South Africans held values founded on a “great well of common good and decency. It’s [based on] hardworking G-d-fearing, law and order [principles]. It doesn’t mean that there’s one line though, the world is a very granular place. However, South Africans will form these very broad alliances,” suggested Cronje.

Moreover, suggested Leon, if current political structures didn’t offer this, new ones would be formed. He said that though the DA had an “okay outing”, ultimately “if there is an issue with the vehicle or the vehicle is running out of road, then you must reengineer a different vehicle”.

In closing the discussion, Goldstein asserted that it boded well for the future if South Africans collaborated on shared values. “We have shifted from a democracy of paper to a competitive democracy. That leaves me feeling hopeful because that will bring out the best in us,” he said.

The dramatic, daring life of doyen of children’s theatre

ROBYN SASSEN

“Whenever there are children, there’s a spark of life that makes theatre a riveting adventure,” children’s theatre doyenne Joyce Levinsohn told the *SA Jewish Report* in 2004. The founder of Johannesburg’s oldest traditional children’s theatre, Levinsohn championed theatre for youngsters, over generations. She succumbed to Alzheimer’s on 6 November 2021. She was 86.

Blessed with talent to dance and perform, Levinsohn (nee Zinman) was born in Johannesburg on 19 February 1935. Schooled in Berea, she started her career in ballet and was the Johannesburg Youth Ballet’s first lead dancer. Like many little girls of her era, she learnt elocution from the age of 10.

Mentored by iconic theatre personalities Elizabeth Sneddon and Taubie Kushlick, Levinsohn pursued both her performative loves. In the early 1950s, she qualified with an Associate Speech and Drama Teacher’s Diploma from Trinity

College in London, a teacher’s diploma from the Royal Academy of Dance, and a Licentiate in Speech and Drama, also from Trinity.

Apartheid had just been ratified. Levinsohn vowed to do what she could to make a meaningful difference in her black peers’ lives. In 1954, she co-established the Zinman-Green Speech and Drama Studio, where she readied performers for eisteddfods and taught teachers theatre-in-education.

As her drama students flourished, so they began to need a platform. A Sandton communal hall served the purpose until 1976, when the company Children’s Theatre Productions was established with Levinsohn at its helm. It thrust her into the eye of the creative storm: 1976 was the year of the Soweto Riots, the arrival of television, and the establishment of the Market Theatre. The

country was a cauldron of creative protest. With no promise of state funding, Levinsohn had to take on the mantle of



Joyce Levinsohn

financial director, theatre co-director, and voice coach simultaneously for her new

company. During this time, she learnt how to knock on government and corporate doors to raise funds.

In 1987, at the height of South Africa’s state of emergency, Levinsohn conceived of an “interactive, eco-musical to promote the message of conservation”, which also aimed to address a lack of awareness of African folklore traditions. The show, *Songs and Tales Under African Skies*, was born. It toured the country and the world, opening up theatre awareness to everyone, including children who may never have had access to theatre. It also put Levinsohn’s work on the map.

The Johannesburg Youth Theatre Trust was formalised as a non-profit educational theatre trust in 1990. It was granted a 50-year lease by the Johannesburg City Council on the Parktown heritage site, where it still operates as the National Children’s Theatre.

And with the intrigues of the Brothers Grimm, magical princesses, and social awareness told by bears and ducks,

the theatre thrived, bringing to fruition many of Levinsohn’s dreams about theatre especially for young audiences and the doors that the industry could open for life. Many of today’s seasoned theatre professionals passed through Levinsohn’s hands, from Daphne Kuhn of Auto & General Theatre on the Square to Jill Gerard of the People’s Theatre in Braamfontein.

Levinsohn received a Vita Award for her contribution to children’s theatre in South Africa in 1990, a lifetime achievement award from the Arts and Culture Trust in 2001, and a Naledi award for lifetime achievement in 2005.

Levinsohn, who stepped down from the theatre in 2011 due to ill health, lost her husband, Lionel, last year. They were married for 64 years. She leaves her children, Steven, David, Lawrence, and Della and their families, as well as generations of theatre lovers who had their eyes and souls opened by her work, from both sides of the footlights.



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Absa Jewish Achiever Awards winners – painting a masterpiece of hope

STAFF REPORTER

The extraordinary personalities who won the 2021 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards tonight have brought hope to us all. Glynne Wolman of The Angel Network kept hundreds of thousands alive, while Jewish burial societies around the country worked around the clock to help families who lost loved ones.

Thousands of South African Jews locally and internationally have gathered to watch the 22nd SA Jewish Report's annual gala fundraiser, which was celebrated for a second time virtually.



Howard Sackstein and Felicity Kantor

This year, we focused on celebrating those who have brought hope to us all at a time in which positivity was limited. The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2021 has painted a masterpiece of hope when we really need it.

We recognised home-grown South African talent across a



The board of the SA Jewish Report



Adrian and Lauren Gore with their son receiving their meal from Zanele Nhlapo

spectrum of award categories, focusing on the work done to bring hope back into our lives.

We celebrated business legend Eric Ellerine as Kirsh

Family Lifetime Achiever Award in honour of Helen Suzman winner for his impact on retail and private equity. His name is synonymous with old-school business in South Africa.

Ivan and Lynette Saltzman, the founders of Dis-Chem, were honoured as winners of the Absa

Business Icon Award. This couple forever changed the face of pharmacies in this country.

Glynne Wolman, Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris winner, epitomises hope. With The Angel Network, she has kept millions of South Africans from starvation since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. And that's not all...

Professor Lucille Blumberg won the Absa Professional Excellence Award – from COVID to Hope. Blumberg, the founding head of the division of public health surveillance and response, now one of the largest units at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases,



Lynn Joffe

designed a COVID-19 national hospital surveillance system for South Africa.

The Community Service Award

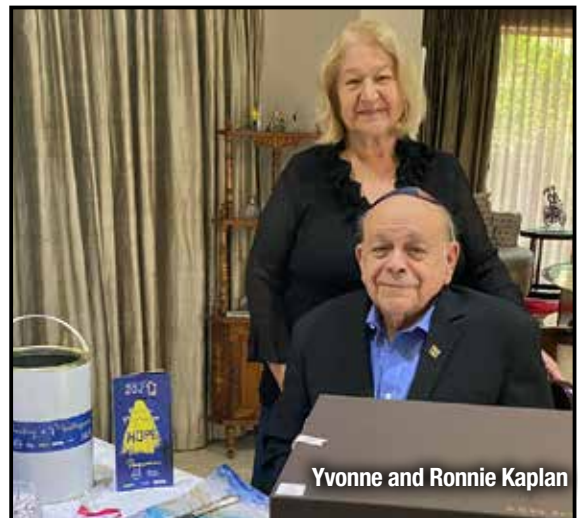
was jointly won by Rebbetzin Rochel and Rabbi Yossy Goldman, the latter now life rabbi emeritus of the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, and the South African Jewish burial societies. In very different ways, their joint contribution was immense.

The Goldmans' life-long religious innovation and dedication to this community is immeasurable, and the members of the burial societies are unsung heroes in the time of COVID-19.

The Mann Made Media Arts, Science, Sports, and Culture winner is one of the world's all-time top-selling musicians, Manfred Mann.

From leaving corporate life to starting her own business in order to spend more time with her children, this year's Europcar Women in Leadership Award winner Cara Saven has created an internationally successful business.

company's withdrawal of funding from South African state-owned enterprises at the height of state capture. He and the company have gone from strength to strength



Yvonne and Ronnie Kaplan

since then.

Entrepreneurship Award winner Barney Isralls has created a company that is helping to create food and water security in Africa.

"For the past 21 years, we as a community have gathered in hotel boardrooms and convention centres to celebrate the remarkable and disproportionate contribution made by the Jewish community to the development of post-apartheid South Africa," said Howard Sackstein, the

chairperson of the SA Jewish Report and the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.

"In a complex and complicated world, hope is a choice, an active decision, a decision to believe that our best days are still before us. We have reason to be hopeful.

"As a community, we have made a profound and disproportionate contribution to the development of

South Africa. We have done so in the struggle for freedom; in the development of the economy; and in the arts and sciences, culture, and philanthropy.

"This is us – this is who we are as a community. We are proud, unabashed, and unwilted as we emerge into hope.



Lisa Hayden

Andrew Canter, Futuregrowth Asset Management executive director and chief investment officer, won this year's Absa Business Leadership Award – from COVID to Hope. He took a huge risk back in 2016 by defending his

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2021

To see the recording go to

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The angel at our table who disrupted mass starvation

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Few individuals have saved as many lives as this year’s Absa Jewish Achiever Humanitarian Award winner Glynne Wolman, founder of The Angel Network.

“The Angel Network and Glynne have been angels in our lives and we are standing because of them,” said Clive Mashishi of the Clive Mashishi Foundation in a video at the awards on Sunday, 7 November.

Mashishi marvelled at Wolman’s “passion for helping others, her zeal, determination, and her personal conviction to say, ‘People cannot starve whilst we have the necessary resources to help them.’”

Dorianne Weil, a clinical and organisational psychologist, said, “Glynne exhibits a real resilience and determination. She just doesn’t give up. She is a consummate human being and a real mensch, and it’s fitting that she has won the Cyril Harris Humanitarian Award.”

On receiving the award, Wolman said she felt honoured, humbled, and enormously grateful. “I accept it on behalf of a phenomenal team that I’m fiercely proud of and privileged to work with. I dedicate this award to the countless community leaders we work with who are on the ground and give their all with no thought of reward. They teach us daily about the generosity of spirit. They are the true heroes.”

Wolman launched The Angel Network as a non-profit organisation in 2015 because of the need by so many who have so little. “Initially, we did the nice-to-do things like providing Easter eggs, school shoes, and blankets,” she said. “But we soon found that we were able to do other things like assist with education, upskilling, training, and job creation.”

Unfortunately, the negative effects of COVID-19 meant that The Angel Network had to turn its focus to giving handouts to prevent millions from dying of starvation. “Everything was urgent,” recalled Wolman. “We had to feed people and help them stay warm. People were becoming unemployed. There were many more people that needed assistance.”

Wendy Kahn, national director of the South African



Glynne Wolman

Jewish Board of Deputies, said, “Towards the beginning of the pandemic, we saw the terrible suffering around us as a result of the lockdown. We looked to find the person and the organisation that could help us get the food to beneficiaries quickly, directly, and responsibly. That was when we connected with The Angel Network and the phenomenal Glynne Wolman. She is a social disrupter who has changed the way that charity is given and poverty is alleviated.”

Said Mashishi, “The Angel Network helped us to help our people and give them hope. It has donated equipment, food parcels, and shoes to us.”

Hella Ledwaba, executive director of the non-profit Vuka Skhokho, said, “We had only been able to work with a few waste pickers here and there, but after connecting with Glynne, we were able to see them regularly and be close to them.”

Hayley Glasser, who sits on The Angel Network’s executive committee, said, “Glynne’s belief in others and her ability to help them believe in themselves is a defining characteristic of hers. It has contributed to making The Angel Network the success it is today.”

An infectious passion for tackling disease

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Internationally distinguished but refreshingly humble, Professor Lucille Blumberg, epidemiologist and former deputy director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, has devoted her life to the study of infectious diseases.

“Lucille is tireless,” says Professor Marc Mendelson, the director of infectious diseases and HIV medicine at the University of Cape Town. “She is the go-to person in South Africa if you have a problem in infection – she’s my go-to person. She brings together an amazing ability to amalgamate clinical expertise with the laboratory side, and most importantly, the public-health side of infectious diseases.”

Mendelson was just one of the many medical experts and professors who paid

tribute to Blumberg, who received this year’s Absa Professional Excellence Award – From Covid to Hope. Among her myriad achievements, Blumberg has most recently been instrumental in developing a system to document South Africa’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“She realised right at the beginning of the pandemic that as a country, we didn’t have a hospital surveillance system and so she very quickly mobilised and spoke to the right people to make sure that this happened,” says Professor Lynn Morris, the deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand. “She recruited volunteers, who were inspired by her vision and call for action to help her set up what is now called the Datcov Hospital Surveillance System.” This system collects comprehensive,

real-time data on morbidity and mortality including demographic, clinical, and treatment information, and it’s shared through daily and weekly reports.

The Datcov system has very quickly become a vital source of information and continues to guide the national response to the pandemic. “Lucille is extremely passionate about everything she does and will stop at nothing to make sure that things happen as they should,” says Morris. “She’s a force of nature and a can-do person – just the sort



Professor Lucille Blumberg

Transforming spaces for working moms

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Cara Saven, the founder and chief executive of Cara Saven Wall Design, isn’t just fulfilling her company promise of “transforming spaces around the globe, one wall at a time”, she’s also working to change the corporate landscape for working mothers.

“Cara’s created her business around doing the work and being a mother all at the same time,” says Stacy Closenber, the company’s sales and operations director. “In this business, we’re all mothers, all doing this massive juggle between trying to run the business as well as fetching from school and running around. Cara’s given us the opportunity.”

Indeed, Saven started Cara Saven Wall Design 15 years ago out of a desire to be available to her children. “I’d entered the corporate world and while I loved my job with all my heart, it had no place for me when I became a mother,” Saven said upon accepting her Europcar Women in Leadership Award at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards on 7 November.

“I wasn’t yet living in a society where they saw the benefit of retaining mothers in their ranks. So, I did what many women in my position who refused not to see their babies until 18:00 did, I quit, and figured out another way to make money.”

In doing so, Saven decided to employ fellow mothers. “I decided I would grow my company with the most competent people I knew – mothers – women who had mastered the art of efficiency and time management. So, we got building. With schoolwork and snotty noses and homework thrown in between. With flexible

hours or working from home, we built.”

Today, Cara Saven Wall Design is an internationally successful business, offering a range of more than 1 000 wallpaper designs as well as customisable options. The company’s growth has been exponential. “Cara went from operating in South Africa only, to opening up international branches, with agency agreements and printers in the Netherlands, Australia, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates,” says Bryce O’Donnell, the managing director of Construct Capital. “She did this all in such a short space of time, it was inspiring to watch.”

“Not only is Cara exceptionally talented, she’s always striving to better her product, herself, and everybody works around her,” says client Andy Graff, of Andrea Graff Interior Design. O’Donnell agrees. “She lives and breathes her brand. The way she runs her business, the way she treats her people, the service they provide, there’s no doubt that she embodies excellence in everything that she does.”

Saven’s employees echo these sentiments. “Cara has been a personal leader who is inspirational and motivating,” says Creative Business Director Megan Sherratt. “I’ve seen the company grow exponentially, and I believe this is from the passion, the dynamism, as well as the hands-on approach she takes in managing her business. Her positive nature is what makes her grow.”

In her acceptance speech, Saven spoke of “lucky women”, women who have more opportunities than the female generations that came before them. She believes COVID-19 and the resultant fusion of our work and home lives has “broken down the illusion that we don’t have private lives that are happening while we work”. It gives her reason to believe that her daughters won’t have the same struggles she did. “They will be lucky enough to live in a society that doesn’t offer only two choices for corporate women, nine to five or quit when they have children. They are lucky women.”



Cara Saven

of person you need in an emergency.”

Having started her career in clinical medicine, Blumberg later discovered what she calls, “the magical world of microbes”. An exciting field that always offers something new to discover, the study of infectious diseases combined with the management of outbreak responses remains her passion and one for which she is internationally respected. Indeed, Blumberg has done extensive work with the World Health Organization and other international bodies on globally important outbreaks and epidemics.

“I’ve been working in outbreaks for almost 20 years and never came across anything like COVID-19,” says Blumberg. “It’s changed all our worlds and it’s required a tremendous effort, huge resilience, and extra resources. It’s put vaccines on a new trajectory and brought many different players together.”

In accepting her award, Blumberg said, “Public health is never about one individual, it’s always about a team and making a difference to community lives.” She paid tribute to the SA Jewish Report and the webinars it hosted for lightening the dark days of COVID-19, her beloved mother for teaching her all the important things in life, and her team who helped establish the Datcov system.

“I want to recognise the wonderful nominees, especially the healthcare workers who have shown great courage, worked long hours, and saved many lives on the frontline,” she concluded. “They are the true heroes. We will get through this, we will continue to show great resilience and come together as a community. It’s vaccines that will open up our world and allow us to travel and dream again.”

Celebrating the heroes who care from all corners of the community

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

This year’s joint winners of the Community Service Award epitomise the strong foundation on which South African Jewish life is built. Rabbi Yossy and Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman, who have built a legendary South African shul community, and Jewish Burial Services, who serve at times of heartbreaking loss, are part of the glue that continues to bind us together.

“With his wife, Rochel, he has forged the way for all the other rabbis by the example that he has set,” said Rabbi Dovid Hazdan of the Great Park Synagogue speaking of Rabbi Yossy Goldman who, together with Rebbetzin Rochel Goldman, was honoured at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards ceremony on 7 November. “Rabbi

Goldman has shown the way that the rabbinate can be relevant to the modern world. He is the consummate rabbinic leader.”

Reflecting on Rochel’s invaluable contribution to her community and adopted country, Lynette Saltzman, the managing director and co-founder of Dis-Chem Pharmacies, said, “With 11 children and a family to look after, she still had time for the community, with a passion and dedication to working towards her goals of furthering education in the country and looking towards helping, empowering, and uplifting women.”

Sent to South Africa in 1976 by their teacher, mentor, and guide, the Lubavitch Rebbe, the United States-born Goldmans got to work at Sydenham Shul, steadily establishing one of South Africa’s most influential



Rebbetzin Rochel and Rabbi Yossy Goldman

shul communities. “Our vision was to help bring more light into the world, more understanding, and more depth,” said Rochel, reflecting on their journey. “Together, we were a good team.”

Raising 11 children, who have gone on to serve and educate

Jewish communities in South Africa and the wider world, the Goldmans are proud to have propagated a legacy of community service – one of their greatest gifts to the world.

In accepting the Community Service Award, Goldman said, “This humbling award emphasises that when you’re in my business, you’re not just a private person, you’re a community person. I’ve always said that the rabbinate cannot be a career, it must be a calling.

“If our personal and family lives are consistent with our faith and sacred values, then and only then can we have a genuine,

meaningful influence to inspire others,” he said. “It’s my prayer that we have done that until now and that we can continue to do so.” The couple emphasise that they’re here to stay even as their roles in Sydenham Shul evolve.

“We are living in a beautiful African garden,” said Rochel. “Our life’s calling over these four and a half decades has been to discover the delicious fruit and help others to notice the abundant gifts that are just waiting for the picking in every corner of South Africa and particularly in our community. We hope you’ll be inspired to join us.”

Honoured for their work in providing dignity in death and support and comfort in the most trying of times, the various Jewish Burial Societies and Chevrah Kadishas around South Africa were also recipients of the Community Service Award.

“We’ve lived through the most difficult and challenging period in modern history,” said Saul

Tomson, group chief executive of the Chevrah Kadisha, “but sadly we’ve suffered tremendous loss also. The excess death rate in South Africa is really one of the largest in the world. In Johannesburg alone, we have experienced a nearly 40% increase in deaths over the past 18 months. These aren’t just numbers, these are people.”

That’s why in accepting the award, the burial societies paid tribute to the individuals around South Africa who have been lost over the past 18 months and their loved ones.

From Victor Gordon, a key figure and leader in the Pretoria Jewish community for many decades, to Zoe Cohen from Johannesburg, who showed true devotion to her work in the area of adoption, to Leo Bornman, buried in East London and best known for spearheading a deal to produce Mercedes Benz in South Africa, memories were shared and thanks given to those who buried each person with respect and dignity.



Volunteers of the Jewish Burial Services in Johannesburg

Speaking of Elliot Wolf, the legendary former headmaster of King David High School Linksfield and director of the King David Schools Foundation, who was buried in Johannesburg on 3 November, his close colleague and friend, Raelene Tradonsky, said, “His life’s mission was to transfer our rich Jewish heritage and values to the next generation. He really cared.”

“Caring is what it comes down to. We have witnessed heroes in every corner of this community over the past difficult 18 months,” said Tomson. “The silent heroes are those that work with the deceased of this community, those who are there to assist the families at their most difficult time with kindness, compassion, care, and always with love and professionalism. They quietly go about their work, but we recognise every single one of them – all of whom have gone above the call of duty.”

Lynette and Ivan Saltzman: the chemistry of Dis-Chem

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

They’re best known as the co-founders of renowned retail pharmacy chain Dis-Chem, but for married couple Lynette and Ivan Saltzman, true success lies in the ability to give

back to others.

“They’ve shared their good fortune, not only with their business partners but with the community,” said Dis-Chem’s operations divisional director, Brian Epstein. Epstein was among those who paid tribute to the Saltzmans when they received the Absa Business Icon Award at the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards on Sunday.

Explaining their philanthropic emphasis, Lynette said: “Business isn’t just about ourselves, and it never has been. It’s also what we can do to give back to our customers and to the community.” That’s why, among the many hats she wears, Lynette serves as the director of the Dis-Chem Foundation, which she founded in 2006. “The Dis-Chem Foundation is an integral part of the benefit programme where we give back to the communities in which we work and live,” she said.

Yet what has enabled the Saltzmans to make such a significant impact on these communities is their entrepreneurial prowess. “Lynette and Ivan are perhaps the most remarkable businesspeople that I know,” said Gerald Olitzki, the executive chairperson and founder of Olitzki Property Holdings.

Indeed, what began with one small pharmacy is today a public company with more than 200 pharmacies. Operating across South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana, Dis-Chem directly employs more than 23 000 full-time staff members.

“In the beginning, we had the same start, the same products, and the same prices as all the other pharmacies,” recalled Ivan. “It became apparent to me that to be successful, to grow the business, our offering had to be different.” Through perseverance, innovation, and an understanding of one another’s strengths, he and Lynette managed to grow a business empire.

Along the way, the couple also built a rich family legacy. Their three sons, Saul, Mark, and Dan, who each paid tribute to their

parents, are testament to this. “They’re very passionate about the business while at the same time maintaining very traditional family values which they’ve instilled in me and my brothers,” said Mark.

These values extend to the workplace. “Their entrepreneurial



Ivan and Lynette Saltzman

spirit and family values run deep in the DNA of Dis-Chem,” said Bronwyn Botha, Dis-Chem’s group category manager: beauty. “Their integrity and their values are still within the business after more than 40 years of running it.”

“For me, they’re bigger than just business icons,” said Zev Krengel, the vice-president of the South African Board of Jewish Deputies, “they are true icons of our community and our country.”

In accepting their award, the Saltzmans paid tribute to their family, the Dis-Chem management team, each of their 23 000 employees, and most of all, their loyal customers.

“I believe that recognition should be given to those entrepreneurs who start businesses and create as many jobs as possible,” said Ivan. “For the millions of South Africans who are currently unemployed, this is where our hope for the future lies. Awards of this nature create the awareness needed to inspire people to follow the same journey that Lynette and I have undertaken. If more people can achieve this, confidence and trust is built, and we can extend the benefits of tomorrow’s world to more and more South Africans.”

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Eric Ellerine, the retail icon and quintessential businessman

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Eric Ellerine is a leader, a mensch, a man for all occasions, and an all-around quintessential businessman with a happy disposition, a video about him at the 2021 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards declares.

The 88-year-old veteran business leader said he was humbled to receive the Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of Helen Suzman.

“Eric’s success in business and family life is a tribute to who and what Eric is,” says Colin Datnow, the group chairperson of the Chevrah Kadisha. “My own experiences with Eric have been magnificent and he has been gracious and magnanimous in his remarkable support for the less privileged and the aged.

“There were 14 other furniture shops in Germiston when I opened my store [at the age of 16] but my prices were way below the other ones,” recalls Ellerine on accepting his award. “I was giving customers such good service and price that they were falling over themselves. We did a lot of business, getting off to a flying start, and it snowballed. But by that time, I needed help and my brother Syd, two years younger than me, joined me.”

In 1969, when Eric’s Furnishers was a holding company for a group of retail furniture stores with 18 outlets operating in the non-white market, it decided to go public and be listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. “We issued shares at R1.90 per share,” says Ellerine. “Before I knew what was happening, the share was trading at R4.40, and it built up quickly. Between



Eric Ellerine

1989 and 1992, we opened up a new store every 11 and a half days throughout Southern Africa. And by the year 2000, we had been in the business for 50 years. We decided that it was enough. You would have thought that after 50 years, it would be sad to leave. But it wasn’t, we were proud to leave because we knew that we left it in good hands.”

Ellerine said he felt confident and happy, having handed over his company to his youngest daughter, Dionne.

“She’s my boss now because I’ve retired. I’m now the non-executive chairman and she’s the chief executive. So, she gives me the help that I used to give her.”

Dionne says her father has an “old-world charm” and still goes to work in his tie and sits at his desk with his lunchbox. “He’s always educating people,” she says. “He really does like to look after the next generation and instil the wisdom that he’s learned over the years.”

Nick Imerman, Ellerine’s grandson, says, “Eric is much more than just the regular old grandfather. He’s really a mentor and one of the most humble people you’ll ever meet.”

Ellerine came from a humble background and learned what struggling felt like, though his family was never short of food. “We were happy with my mom, my dad, a brother, and I. But it also taught us that you have to share in life. And once you’ve got more than what you need, it’s pure greed if you want to continue by just building up your stake, your money.”

Paul Salomon, the head of Stockdale Street, says, “To be able to watch someone like Eric operate with such integrity and to achieve such success, it’s a real shining light and an inspiration to everyone in business to show them the way that one can achieve success and still maintain complete integrity.”

James Hirschowitz, Ellerine’s grandson, says, “Eric has the most positive outlook on life. He’s constantly breaking out into song and dance.”

Danna Yates, Ellerine’s granddaughter, says, “He’s literally dedicated his whole life. So, if it’s a Lifetime Achievement Award, it goes to him because this is his life.”

Agriculture plus Zionism equals rapid business growth

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Vegtech Netafim founder Barney Isralls says it was the combination of his two passions – agriculture and Zionism – that led to the success of his company and ultimately to winning the 2021 Absa Jewish Achiever Entrepreneur Award.

“It was a simple formula: Israeli agricultural technology to grow safe food with limited water,” he said about his company, the leading supplier of undercover growing solutions in southern Africa, in his virtual acceptance speech on Sunday, 7 November.

“I’m most proud of [the fact that] Vegtech is one of the solutions to a serious global problem. With the growing world population, limited natural resources, and global warming, food and water security are vital for the survival of humanity.”

He made the point, though, that he’s “saddened that the South African government refuses to acknowledge the contribution that Israeli technology could make to solve local problems of water and food security”. However, he’s humbled, grateful, and very surprised to win this award.

In a video before the conferring of the award, those who know Isralls said he was a hardworking and conscientious businessman who had excelled in many aspects of his life.

Having worked on the cotton fields in a kibbutz in Israel, Isralls’s love of agriculture and passion for Israel led to him starting Vegtech to export Israeli technology all over the world. “It was when I was standing in those cotton fields that I realised that agriculture was my passion and would be my lifelong course,” Isralls said in the video.

In spite of not having a formal education in business, he has grown his business into one of the leading high-tech agricultural companies in



Barney Isralls

Africa. “Money has never been the major motivator,” said Isralls, pointing out that his goal has always been to “supply an excellent product at a fair price and give people the service they want”.

“I’m very enthusiastic about the projects I take on, and that enthusiasm rubs off on the people around me,” he said.

He believes the enthusiasm he shows when he takes on projects rubs off on others, including his wife and son, who both work at Vegtech. Martin Feldman, investment banker and Isralls’s good friend, said, “I love Barney’s values. I love the sort of business side to Barney, the Israel side and green side to Barney. He’s persistent. When there’s an issue, he tackles it head-on. He’s surrounded by a bunch of really smart people.”

Dennis Cuzen, the director of Next Entertainment, said, “Barney is a team player, and he’s built up an impressive business in Vegtech.” Ben Levitas, the managing director of African Pipes, Valves & Fittings, said, “He’s a person with immense experience in agriculture, the highest integrity, a person who has introduced knowledge and sustainable farming to remote communities all around the country.”

Isralls’s message to young entrepreneurs is to “never forget the end goal, and enjoy what you are doing. If you don’t enjoy it, you will never succeed.” He said creating a business was never easy on family. “So, most of the credit must go to my amazing wife, Ann, who has worked beside me from the beginning. Without her, I don’t think the company would have survived. Thank you also to my amazing children who lived through the journey.”

Canter’s ability to face adversity and stand up for what he believes in is probably the most important quality that one should possess in the fiduciary industry, especially when you’re looking after other people’s money, says Khaya Gobodo, the managing director of Old Mutual Investments.

Muitheri Wahome of the Asset Management Research Institute says that Futuregrowth and Canter have contributed to ensuring the growth of sustainable investment. “The firm that Andrew and his team has built over the past 21 years is the repository of rising talent in impact investing in South Africa,” she said. “It’s the place where industry peers go to unearth talent. This business and Andrew have made a

particular contribution to the growth of investment professionals in investing sustainably for impact.”

Justin Blend, the director of Africrest Properties, says, “I’ve always admired Andrew for being a unique individual, doing things his way, and not being afraid to fight for what’s right.”

On receiving the award, Canter said, “Winning an award like this is a moment to pause and reflect because in the investment business, there’s no finish line. The successes of last week can easily be messed up tomorrow. Situations change, the world changes. When you look smart yesterday, you look dumb tomorrow. So moments like this, being given an award, being given recognition, are a valued opportunity to pause and say, ‘Thank you.’”

Poster child of responsible investor activism

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Andrew Canter, this year’s Absa Business Leadership Award – From COVID to Hope winner, isn’t scared to risk raising issues that should be raised and dealing with them, according to those who know him well.

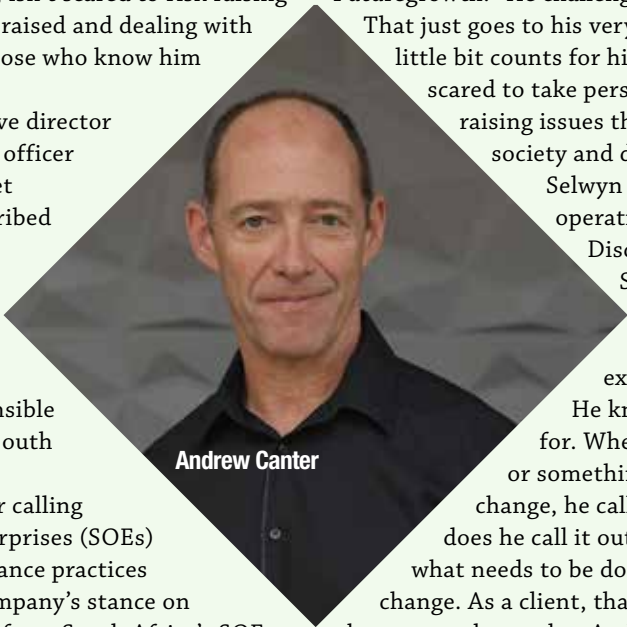
Canter, the executive director and chief investment officer of Futuregrowth Asset Management, is described by those who know him as “deeply passionate about Futuregrowth’s clients” and “the poster child of responsible investor activism in South Africa”.

He is recognised for calling out state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for their poor governance practices and defending his company’s stance on withdrawing funding from South Africa’s SOEs in 2016.

“When we made the decision not to fund SOEs, he didn’t step down and let people get away with what was untruth,” says Paul Rackstraw, the managing director of Futuregrowth. “He challenged every single point.

That just goes to his very character, every little bit counts for him. Andrew isn’t scared to take personal risk in terms of raising issues that should be raised in society and dealt with.”

Selwyn Kahlberg, chief operations officer of the Discovery Health Medical Scheme, says, “I’ve always seen Andrew as somebody who is extremely courageous. He knows what he stands for. When he sees an injustice or something that needs to change, he calls it out. Not only does he call it out, but he knows what needs to be done in order to affect change. As a client, that’s critical to us because we know that Andrew is looking after our best interests.”



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Mann-made original rocks fame and recognition

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Probably the most successful musical export South Africa has ever seen, Manfred Mann has long been out of the spotlight. Yet, at 81, he remains a working musician armed with talent, humour, and a unique way of looking at life. “Manfred Mann is exactly like Manfred Mann, there’s no one else in the world that’s like him,” says his manager, Steve Fernie. “There are very few people who have achieved what Manfred has. The number of internationally successful records that have been released over the years and the extent to which the name Manfred Mann appears, he’s quite an astonishing chap.”

A keyboard player who co-founded and inspired the name of hit British rock band Manfred Mann and later Manfred Mann’s Earth Band, Mann is the winner of this year’s Mann Made Arts, Sports, Science, and Culture Award. The new sponsors of the award just happen to share a surname with the musical legend – yet it wasn’t really his to begin with. Before the professional name change – the result of a writing pseudonym inspired by a jazz drummer – 20-year-old Manfred Lubowitz took a train from Park Station to Cape Town

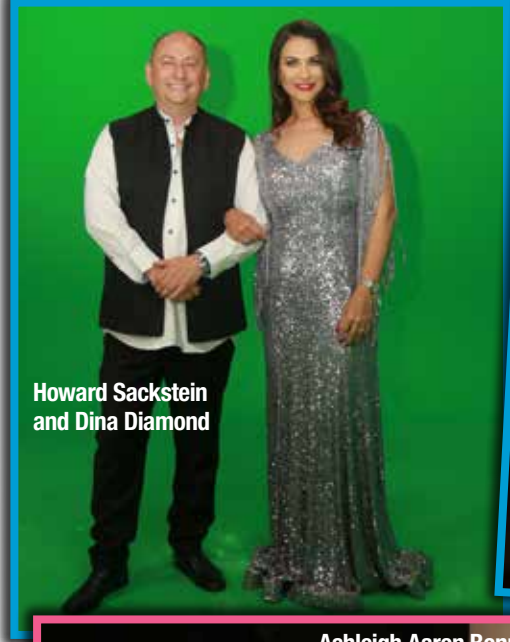
and boarded a boat to the United Kingdom. Cheap but lengthy, the journey took three weeks. “It was very inefficient, but it was also



very good because you disconnected very slowly from your home country, you had time to adjust,” recalls Mann. “I’d never been out of South Africa at all.” In London, Mann was overwhelmed by his own insignificance. “Big dreams and stuff is just stupid, the idea that one would get into the pop music [scene] at all, let alone become a pop star was inconceivable. The only person who thought I might do something was my sister.” And she was proved right, when Mann’s rhythm and blues group and namesake wrote and performed 5-4-3-2-1, the theme tune to ITV pop music television programme *Ready Steady Go!* which became a

huge hit. “If you’re a lawyer or a doctor, you’ve made it,” says Mann. “If you’re in pop music, now suddenly you’ve made it, but just for three months, and now you’re nobody again.” Competing against the likes of the Beatles, Mann ultimately realised that his band’s strength would be in reworking lesser-known songs that other people had written. One such song was *Do Wah Diddy*, and with it came superstardom. “One of the reasons I carry on recording to this day is that I know that it’s possible to sit in a room, make a record, and the whole world sings it – eventually,” says Mann, reflecting on the simplicity of recording one of the best-known songs of all time. “I know that’s possible.” Treating viewers of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards to some keyboard stylings,

Mann spoke about how he googled how to do an acceptance speech. “The first requirement was that you had to be humble,” he said. “Then I remembered something Golda Meir, former Israeli Prime Minister, said to former United States secretary of state, Henry Kissinger in the 70s: ‘Henry don’t be so humble, you’re not that great.’ So, you can’t be too humble because that means you’re thinking you’re really important.” With trademark humour, Mann admitted that he did feel rather important, even though he wasn’t sure whether or not he deserved his award – or whether it would give him a discount on cheese. “The thing that’s nice,” he concluded, “is that I got the award from my home country, which I’m not connected to on a day-to-day basis, and from my own regional tribe.”



Mazeltov to Cara Saven on winning the prestigious Europcar Women In Leadership Award 2021.

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Entrepreneurs big and small inspire hope

NICOLA MILTZ

"The economy looks more resilient than we thought," said Jeff Gable, Absa's chief economist and head of research, one of the keynote speakers at the Absa Jewish Achiever breakfast last Friday, 5 November.

"We thought it would take a long time for the economy to recover, and we thought the initial damage from COVID-19 was larger than we had anticipated," he said

Though different sectors would have had different experiences, it was anticipated that overall, the South African economy would get back to where it was pre-COVID-19 not in 2023 or 2024 – which had been the earlier projection – but by the first half of next year.

However, Gable said there were still some "chunky challenges" facing the economy, most notably vaccine hesitancy, persistent inequality, and rising interest rates globally.



Simone Penn

Entrepreneur GG Alcock, the author of *Kasinomics* and *Third World Child*, spoke about the multi-billion rand informal economy made up of a multitude of small businesses. "In the shadows of Sandton and elsewhere, there's an invisible army, another economy which should inspire hope and belief," he said.

"It's made up of small people doing big things, transforming the continent and economies. While there's doom and gloom around, COVID-19 has shown us the amazing resilience of these

businesses in this space."

Alcock cited numerous examples of these everyday people performing everyday miracles in the economy. Gogo Delicious, for example, makes 3 000 *amagwinya* (vetkoek) – the croissant of Africa – and sells them for R1 each in downtown Johannesburg every day. She also sells about R500 worth of polony and cheese slices, tea, and coffee, making about R3 500 a day.

"She has been doing it for 10 years with her husband. They wake at 02:00 in Soweto, and carry 20 litre drums of dough that they prepared the night before, grab a taxi, and by 03:00, they are on the streets of Jozi selling.

"They represent this fast-food sector that exists – worth R50 billion a year – which has about 150 000 traders," he said.

"She is an entrepreneur. These are the people who drive our economy," Alcock said.

He spoke about the roaring *ikota* trade. An *ikota* is the hamburger of the township, and consists of a quarter loaf of bread which comes with polony and cheese, slap chips, with extra add-ons including an egg or a Russian sausage.

One woman in her 30s, a university graduate, recognised the need for township fast-food and started a franchise called Sphahlo Paleis. She now has six

"We have seen an awful lot of jobs disappear," he said. Data reveals that jobs have been lost across all age groups, placing huge strain on vulnerable communities.

"An enormous amount of the youth are unable to put their skills to use," he said, pointing out that in the 25 to 34 age group, data showed that South Africa had gone from "terrible to diabolical".

Economic growth, stability, and recovery rested largely on the population becoming fully vaccinated, Gable said.

As South Africa exited the third wave and eased social restrictions, the number of new daily infections is at its lowest since the outset of the pandemic.

"That's fabulous news, but does it mean we are three waves and done? Lessons from elsewhere in the world suggest not," he said.

Only about 30% of the South African adult population is fully vaccinated, with little more than half the population having had at least one jab. "We still have a long way to go, sitting at only 150 000 vaccinations per day in South Africa," Gable said. "This is because of vaccine hesitancy not because of a lack of vaccines."

Because of this, a fourth wave seems like a very real possibility for the country, and with that further restrictions on economic activity.

Howard Sackstein, the chairperson of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and the *SA Jewish Report*, welcomed this year's nominees, judges, and VIPs to the 22nd annual awards.

The awards, Sackstein said, celebrated people in the community who had found hope in the time of darkness, opportunity in a time of despair, and those who steadfastly believed that the best days were still to come.

Though it had been an indescribably tough year on all fronts, many lessons

could be learnt, and there was lots to be hopeful and positive about, he said.

Sackstein delivered his rousing speech on the dusty streets of Kliptown, saying that though there was still much to be done, and communities remained vastly different from one another, South Africa was for all who lived in it, as stated in the Freedom Charter signed only a train track away many years ago.

Ronnie Mbatsane, the managing executive at Absa Retail and Business Banking, said Absa, the title sponsor of the awards, valued its relationship with the community.

The bank saluted the men and women in the community that "kept the candle burning and flourished against all odds" during the pandemic.

Absa celebrated those in the community who excelled in business, entrepreneurship, and continued to make a difference in society in spite of the pandemic and the effect it had on the economy.



Barbara and Geoff Rothschild

branches in the centre of Pretoria and Braamfontein in Johannesburg, and sells about 4 000 *ikotas* a day.

"She has a fleet of youngsters with electric scooters who shoot through the streets delivering *ikotas* to the high court, businesses, and government departments. She's an inspirational person who represents this invisible economy, young entrepreneurs who have complete confidence and belief in these spaces," he said.

One man started by selling chicken, potatoes, and packaging to 31 *ikota* outlets in Soweto using his late grandfathers bakkie and storing his goods in his grandmother's back room.

"In mid-2019, he was turning over about R25 000 a month selling to 31 outlets. Today, he sells to 81 outlets and turns over R980 000 a month."

"He typifies a spirit and a sense of hope for the

future of what South Africa can represent outside of the formal economy and outside the depressing economic figures," Alcock said.

The impressive spaza sector led mostly by Somali traders in places like Khayelitsha in the Western Cape have "transformed the township retail space", he said, comparing them to the entrepreneurial, resilient early Jewish merchant traders.

"The informal economy typifies entrepreneurial zeal. They get no support from the government and from most financial institutions yet every day, they're out there.

"We have to change our perception of misery and unhappiness. Most of these entrepreneurs are incredibly proud, and we should give them the dignity, respect, and admiration they deserve. There is real hope."

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Nadav and Corinne Ossendryver

Tale of a much-loved, now-kosher, Jozi caterer

NICOLA MILTZ

“These are people’s memories, this is for somebody’s photo album, we have to make it happen.”

This is what Delores Fouché, much-loved Johannesburg caterer, tells her loyal staff before every *simcha* and event.

For 20-odd years, her kosher-style catering company, Food By Flavours, has wowed clients with dishes known for taste, flavour, and creative, stylish presentation.

This month, she became certified kosher under the Beth Din much to the delight of *frum* guests who for many years have stared longingly at her colourful dishes at *simchas*, unable to partake of the feast before them.

So what finally prompted this momentous move into the certified kosher space after years of people asking her to do so?

“I guess I’m ready,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Her decision was also influenced by the dire effects of the pandemic, the loss of valuable clients to emigration, and the need to search for different catering avenues, as well as “a new generation of supportive rabbis”.

“I needed to broaden my horizons and explore other markets. Now everyone can enjoy food at my table,” Delores said.

When the country went into lockdown last March, she lost 46 functions in what felt like a minute. “I literally didn’t know where my next cent was coming from,” she said.

So, like most caterers, it was a case of sink or swim. Within weeks, she gave new meaning to the COVID-19 buzz word “pivot”.

“COVID-19 pushed us into a corner, and I was forced to adapt. I began doing Shabbos boxes for people stuck at home. I did Mother’s Day and Father’s Day boxes for the parents of former clients living overseas because people couldn’t travel so it became a way to make relatives feel special.”

Home deliveries and partnering with trendy venues to sell ready-made dishes also helped. She was also there to assist clients during *shiva* with COVID-19-style meals.

It was all hands on deck for her staff, who she managed to retain, and even for her husband, Phillip, who also had to pull his weight.

“It was a crazy shift,” she said.

Her foray into a strictly kosher weekend came with a bang, starting with a Barmitzvah last Shabbos for a boy whose bris she had catered; and culminating in the glitzy, annual Absa Jewish Achiever Awards – a mammoth virtual event in which she had to call on about 20 extra temporary staff to help prepare the labour-intensive elaborate food boxes.

Delores, 58, “proudly” grew up in Port Elizabeth, where she was influenced by her late mother’s talent for “making something out of nothing” and her bobba’s Lithuanian-style home cooking.

“My mother was the warmest, most hospitable Jewish woman, who always said, ‘Stay for a bite’, even when there was hardly anything in the house.

“She could make sliced cucumber on a water biscuit taste delicious. She made simple, basic food. It wasn’t fancy, but it was tasty,” said Delores, whose humble beginnings brewed



grit, determination, and inspired a lasting spirit of entrepreneurship.

She came up to Johannesburg in Grade 11, and left on her own for Israel after completing matric at King David Linksfeld.

She spent eight years in Israel soaking up the tastes and flavours of the many cultures, and put herself through university, where she studied her “first love”, English literature and poetry, at Hebrew University.

While a student in residence, she began experimenting with food and soon became known among hungry

students for producing the most delicious meals. “Living in Israel influenced me hugely. There are so many Mediterranean tastes and flavours. It’s a real melting pot,” she said.

She met her husband of 31 years during a vacation job at Smiley Blue in Johannesburg, where he also worked. The couple married after Phillip’s Orthodox conversion, and started an events, marketing, and public relations company which, she said, soon lent itself to food.

She began making meals from her

kitchen at home. Soon it was making a cheesecake for this person and a salad for that person and before long, she was catering for children’s birthday parties and other small functions, all from her kitchen where she could keep an eye on her three young sons.

“It was always important to me to be home while my children were young. Catering is a harsh business. You can be up at 04:00 and work till 23:00, so I always needed my home kitchen.”

However, when the boys grew older and the company expanded, she bravely decided to purchase new

premises for Food By Flavours, and moved into “a small, homely space” in Norwood.

“Food is my signature. I live life through food. Sometimes I think being a cook sounds trivial and that I could have done something different with my life, but it’s heartening to know that I’m there for people’s best memories. I’m a part of their happiest *simchas*.”

Watching families evolve and over the years, becoming friends with her clients, is what keeps her going.

So how does she describe her food?

“My food is home food that tastes really good. It’s not fancy. I’m not a trained chef, I’m a cook,” she says.

“I don’t know about the acidity levels of white wine or balsamic vinegar, but I have a knack for flavour and taste, it’s something I just know.”

With a recently built, separate meat kitchen and the presence of a permanent mashgiach, Delores is looking forward to this exciting challenge.

“It’s a huge shift in many ways, an expensive exercise that translates into rands and cents, but I want to experiment with fresh ideas and see where this new chapter takes me.”

Spur founder’s taste for life – a searing back story

TALI FEINBERG

Spur Steak Ranches is so much part of the South African landscape, it’s difficult to imagine life without it. So many South Africans have celebrated special moments – especially with kids – in those horseshoe booths beneath the gaze of the Native American chief.

But did you ever wonder how this South African success story began, and did you know that the founder is a Jewish entrepreneur who lost family members in the Holocaust?

Allen Ambor’s new autobiography finally puts this iconic franchise’s evolution into words. Aptly titled *A Taste for Life: How the Spur legend was born*, it begins with a bang, literally, as he describes almost losing his life on a cliffside in the Karoo. In many ways it was this moment that spurred him to make an impact in the world and grab opportunity with both hands. Ironically, he later describes how holding so many hot plates at Spur meant that his fingerprints were worn away. If anything, this anecdote shows how Ambor threw himself into even the most menial tasks as he built an empire.

The only child of two German immigrants, Ambor’s father lost three siblings and both parents in the Holocaust. Most of his mother’s family survived, except for her sister. “When I was old enough to understand, or at least old enough to listen, my mother told me a story that has stayed with me for life,” he writes. Describing a train making its way through the French countryside on its way to Auschwitz, he writes about the moment a woman slipped her baby through a slat, with a note attached. “The story had the quality of a fable, a biblical parable. It made me think of Pharoah’s daughter finding the baby Moses in the bulrushes. But this wasn’t a fable.”

The woman was his aunt, Judith, who perished with her husband at Auschwitz. Miraculously, the baby, his cousin Jossie, was found and survived. Growing up in Johannesburg’s Highlands North, Ambor had a carefree childhood. But these

losses, along with the miracle of his cousin’s survival, weaved their way into his family’s outlook. As he writes about how he tried to find his place in the world, Ambor carries this history and eventually channels it into a dream that makes a major impact. One thriving restaurant wasn’t enough for this go-getter, who conceptualised franchising so that his business could reach all corners of the country.

The autobiography is a rock-and-roll ride through an eventful life and career, delving not only into how Spur became a household name, but how the brand was built with Ambor’s blood, sweat, and tears and the backing of so many people who believed in it. There are stories behind the iconic wooden menus, the beautiful stained glass batik designs, the Indian chief logo, and the flames and food at the centre of it all. Ambor’s passion for people, perfection, and excellence shine through, offering a riveting handbook for anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from his home in Cape Town, Ambor says he decided to write the

with all its ups and downs. He hopes readers will gain life and business lessons at a time when everyone needs a little inspiration.

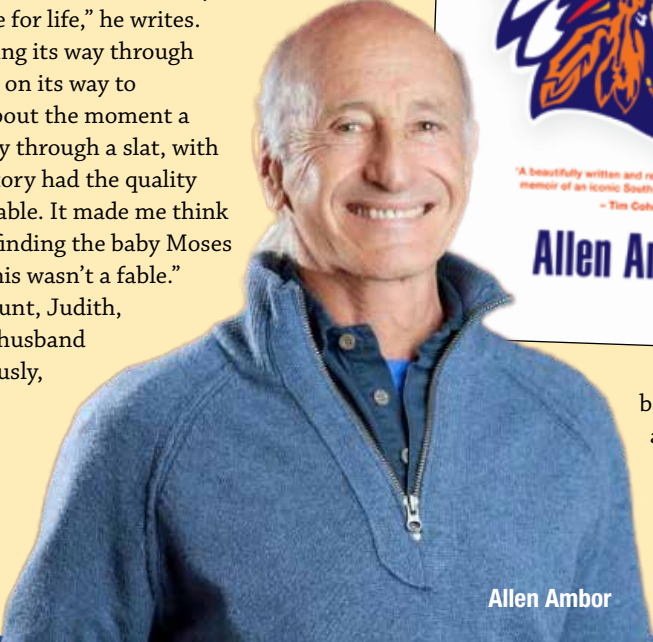
For him, the “secret ingredient” that made Spur such a runaway success was simply “enthusiasm”. This emerges as Ambor takes the reader behind the scenes of Spur’s humble beginnings. At its essence was joy and delight, which permeated every aspect of the business. And when so many people are cynical, his almost childlike enthusiasm for creating his dream steakhouse may just be the boost that everyone needs to keep going towards their goals.

Along with all the highs there are some lows, and Ambor doesn’t flinch from exploring them. He devotes a chapter to coming to terms with the recent suicide of former Spur Chief Executive Pierre van Tonder, and to the showdown at Texamo Spur, when an argument between two parents caught on camera quickly degenerated into accusations and boycotts.

Through it all, Ambor shows that positivity, hope, and connecting with people are key to resolving crises and conflicts.

Ambor has also always understood that nostalgia is a powerful force that drives people to seek out a warm environment that feels like home, and this is what he created for generations of South Africans when they think of Spur. Ambor’s advice to young entrepreneurs in South Africa today is to “be determined. Try to work in a field that excites and fulfils you. Keep your spirits up and your head down, and keep working towards your goals. If you feel useful and fulfilled, you are blessed.”

If going to a restaurant is a distant memory from before COVID-19, Ambor’s book is the ideal avenue for enjoying it from the sidelines. He describes the restaurant as a “theatre”, and the book allows the reader to be both backstage and in the audience of a carefully choreographed dance. There are lights, there are performances, and there’s a lot of action. Amidst the excitement is Ambor – as calm and clear as the yoga instructor that he has since become – describing how it all came together to create a sensation for the senses. It’s a quintessential South African story that we can all be proud of and aspire to emulate.



book “to leave a record of how tough it was” and to record his journey to success

Staying in SA should about “staying for good”, say young Jews

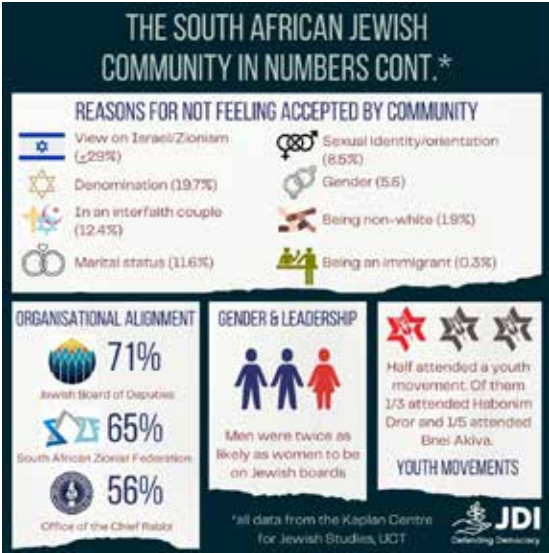
TALI FEINBERG

Young Jews need incentives to stay, succession planning, a stronger connection to South Africa, and acknowledgment of different identities if the community is to stem the tide of emigration. This was the message of a recent webinar titled, “Staying for good: South African Jews, migration and our civil commitments”, hosted by the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI).

The event took a deep dive into the motivation for migration and the factors that could accelerate or slow the tide. “We didn’t need a survey to tell us that the South African Jewish community has an emigration problem, but these numbers are certainly a wake-up call,” said one of the event’s speakers, Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies. He was referring to the Kaplan Centre survey of the South African Jewish community that took place in 2019, which showed that 43% of those surveyed indicated they had considered leaving South Africa permanently in the previous 12 months.

“There are now more South African-born Jews born outside of South Africa than within South Africa,” noted Mendelsohn soberly. This means that even more South African Jews may join families and networks overseas. At the same time, the aging nature of the community may put a break on migration, as the older people are, the less likely they are to leave. But he believes that

South African Jewry may soon dip below 50 000 people, a truly “psychologically significant milestone”. Delving into the discoveries made by



the Kaplan Centre’s survey, Mendelsohn highlighted increased levels of Jewish education over the past 20 years as a reason for Israel being the preferred destination for emigration for South African Jews, as opposed to Australia, the top choice 20 years ago. Also, with the South African Jewish community being an aged community, Israel is a destination that accepts older immigrants.

The survey reveals that a startling 51% of those surveyed would move to Israel if they left. Though the community will always see aliyah as a positive move, there is equal concern about shrinking numbers within South Africa. So, what can we do about it?

Two young people emphasised that it wasn’t all bad news. Community member

Ashley Fischhoff says her Jewish identity is one of the reasons she chooses to stay. She is a South African research chairs initiative fellow of the University of the Western Cape through the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies.

“Being part of a youth movement was significant for me,” she says. “It made me challenge what it means to be a Jew in the diaspora. Our history of displacement and dispossession made me feel a greater connection to South African history, and a greater sense of responsibility to work towards justice. I feel like South Africa’s my home, and my Judaism is a strong reason why I feel so committed.”

JDI director and incoming Cape Town co-chair for Limmud South Africa, Gabriella Saven, says “staying for good – as in forever” also needs to be about “staying for good – as in making a difference”. As a young person, she’s concerned that South African youth don’t feel connected to wider society. Anecdotally, she has seen peers emigrate because they feel they cannot escape the “Jewish bubble” in South Africa, but overseas, they can see themselves living in a more integrated way.

“Young Jews want to find inclusive communities. They also lack a socio-cultural connection to South Africa,” which means they are less committed to staying and feel less of a sense of belonging to South Africa. In contrast, a strong Jewish education may mean that they feel more of a sense of belonging in Israel. Though this is positive, Saven believes that ties to South Africa need to be strengthened if young Jews are going to have the incentive to stay.

In addition, there’s a “level of disconnection from the Jewish community for those who don’t fit a narrow mould”, she says. These include LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) Jews or Jews in interfaith or interracial relationships. With our numbers shrinking, we cannot afford divisions and not allowing every identifying Jew inside our tent. Ironically, these divisions often get deeper the smaller a community gets.

“Democratisation of society needs to include our own democratisation process,” says Saven. “In some ways, we are very progressive, in some ways not. If we don’t open our institutions to varying identities, then we will be left behind as young people choose Jewish communities that do offer these things.”

Fischhoff says being a young Jew in South Africa today isn’t easy, and the community needs to acknowledge the many complexities young Jews face as they think about their place in the world. “We are living in an era dominated by identity politics, and that needs to be addressed. It’s really challenging to be a young South African Jew. Having been victims of persecution, living in a country built on apartheid injustice, and being criticised that your other homeland is a perpetrator of injustice all leads to a lot of internal conflict. Not engaging with that and the youth meaningfully is setting us up for failure.”

In addition, “comprehensive succession planning”, as is being done in Cape Town, is crucial for a stable communal future. In addition, “we need to encourage and facilitate engagement with South African identity from a young age”.

If we are here, we cannot live in an isolated and disconnected way, Saven says. Though the examples of Jewish involvement in wider society are admirable and endless, “we have a responsibility to demonstrate that we are committed to the longevity of the country as well as our own communal structures. Commitment to South Africa should be inseparable from a commitment to our own people. We have a lot of work to do if we are going to stay in South Africa. If one of the main ‘pushes’ is government instability, then what are we doing as a community to change that, to make it more safe and stable?” she asks rhetorically.

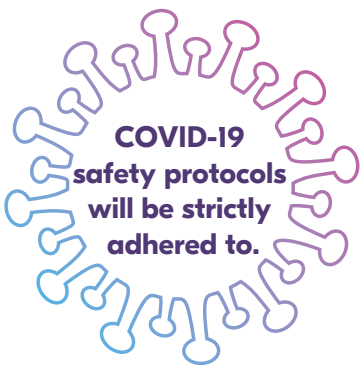
Mendelsohn says one startling insight from the Kaplan Centre’s research was that grandparents were encouraging grandchildren to leave. But he believes all hope isn’t lost, and “we aren’t at the tipping point yet. We are seeing many counter-currents and new initiatives that are helping the community prepare for the future.”

Audience member Dr Tony Lachlan commented that after having lived overseas for 30 years and then returning to South Africa, he thinks that people need to look at emigration with their eyes wide open. He believes opportunity in South Africa is as great as anywhere else, and connectivity to community much stronger in South Africa.

“What happened on 6 January in the United States was frightening, and antisemitism is more blatant in the United States and the United Kingdom,” he said. “As a mentor once told me, ‘Wherever you go, you take yourself with you.’ If you’re not prepared to roll up your sleeves and get involved here, you’re not going to do it anywhere else.”

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DOR YESHORIM

96-year-old cellist recalls horror of Kristallnacht

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Although 96-year-old cellist, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, says what she saw as a little girl on the Berlin streets on the morning after Kristallnacht is “indescribable”, the memories are still vivid 83 years later.

“There was liquor – gallons of it – running down the street, and glass. Unbelievable,” Lasker-Wallfisch told Trudy Gold, the former chief executive of the London Jewish Cultural Centre, during a webinar on 9 November organised by the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre (RCHCC) in commemoration of “Kristallnacht”.



During “the Night of Broken Glass” as Kristallnacht is also known, which was a pogrom carried out by the Nazis throughout Germany between 9 and 10 November 1938, synagogues were torched, homes, businesses, and schools vandalised and 30 000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Lasker-Wallfisch spoke about surviving the hell of the

Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen concentration camps and going on to live an extraordinary life.

Born in Breslau in 1925, Lasker-Wallfisch was one of three sisters. Her father, who had been awarded the Iron Cross in World War I, was a lawyer. Her mother was a violinist and her uncle a chess master.

Lasker-Wallfisch said Germany was at “absolutely rock bottom with tremendous unemployment” when Adolf Hitler started promising to provide jobs if he came into power. “It was all very primitive, really. People thought, ‘If we are working, we are somebody again’, and from that it grew into this madness.”

In 1933, the same year that Hitler came into power, Lasker-Wallfisch experienced antisemitism for the first time. She was an eight-year-old in a private school when her fellow student refused to allow her to wipe the blackboard because she was a Jew.

She said “ridiculous happenings” like that this resulted in the rise of antisemitism. “The poison came in slowly, and took hold.”

Her family unsuccessfully tried to leave the country, although her sister, Marianne, managed to escape to England in 1939.

In April 1942, her parents were deported and murdered. Lasker-Wallfisch and her sister, Renata, were working in a paper factory and spared. They began to forge documents to enable French forced labourers to escape. In September 1942, she and Renata tried to escape, but were arrested by the Gestapo at the train station and imprisoned.

“I wasn’t prepared to sit and wait until somebody came to collect me in order to kill me,” said Lasker-Wallfisch.

“That didn’t somehow fit into my repertoire. So, we were quite the cheeky children, we were going to do something to escape. We weren’t successful, but at least we tried.”

According to German law, being arrested as a criminal was still better than being sent to a concentration camp as a Jew.

“A criminal actually got a court case; a Jew got eliminated. So, we advanced to a better category as criminals, which allowed us to stay in prison for about a year. Had I gone straight to a concentration camp, I wouldn’t be speaking to you today.”

The two sisters were sent to Auschwitz in December 1943. Lasker-Wallfisch told the prisoner who shaved her hair that she was a cellist. By the time Lasker-Wallfisch was naked with a number on her arm, the conductor of the Women’s Orchestra of Auschwitz came and asked her if she could play the cello for them. The cello saved her life because cellists were difficult to replace.

In the wake of the Soviet advance, Lasker-Wallfisch and her sister were part of the evacuation from the camp in October 1944.

From the hell of Auschwitz, Lasker-Wallfisch arrived in the hell of Bergen Belsen. After the British army liberated the camp on 15 April 1945, she served as a witness at the Belsen Trial of 1945 before arriving in Britain in 1946. “I was hell-bent on making up lost time. I wasn’t thinking of anything other than starting to catch up with what I had lost – eight years of my life.”

She went on to co-found the English Chamber Orchestra, which today has Prince Charles as its patron, and marry the pianist, Peter Wallfisch. She has two children, four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Lasker-Wallfisch recounted what she described as her husband’s “mysterious” story of escaping the Holocaust. “A man in Palestine had the brilliant idea to try and save musically talented children. He managed to get an advertisement into the paper in Germany and Austria, asking talented children to present themselves on a certain day. Peter was one of the children chosen.”

Lasker-Wallfisch spoke about how she returned to Germany in 1994, her first time in the country since being liberated from Bergen Belsen. She had noticed that the orchestra she played in was going to tour two towns near Belsen. “I had this inspiration that I would quite like to see what had become of Belsen.” So, she travelled with the orchestra which first touched down in England. While there, the orchestra was waiting for the music stands to arrive when Lasker-Wallfisch was approached by a young German in London who said he could take her to the camp in Belsen. That’s how she returned to Germany.

Since then, she has contributed to various memorials, opening three in Germany.

In 2018, she gave a commemorative speech in the Bundestag, the German federal parliament, to mark the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

“That was extraordinary,” said Gold. “You were there with the president of Germany and Mrs Merkel, and your speech was superb. I can remember when we went to Innsbruck, you were awarded a doctorate by 16 different departments in the university and the president of Austria got one. You wrote a brilliant book. When Prince Charles went to Yad Vashem, he talked about you in his address.”

Hazel Cohen, one of the RCHCC’s operations managers, said, “Anita’s story is a testament to the triumph over evil, to the triumph over man’s inhumanity to man.”

Campaigning for Trump from Jerusalem was illegal, investigation finds



RON KAMPEAS – JTA

A federal investigation said that Mike Pompeo violated the Hatch Act when, as secretary of state, he addressed the Republican National Convention in 2020 from Jerusalem.

In its lengthy report issued on Tuesday, 9 November, the Office of Special Counsel also faulted several of former President Donald Trump’s top Jewish officials for violations of the Hatch Act, which bars federal employees from campaigning. Among the implicated officials are David Friedman, former ambassador to Israel; Jared Kushner, Trump’s top Middle East policy adviser and son-in-law; and Stephen Miller, Trump’s top immigration adviser.

In total, the report identified 13 officials who violated the Hatch Act during Trump’s failed re-election campaign last year.

Pompeo’s Jerusalem appearance took up a substantial portion of the report, in part because he initiated a change to state department policy banning employees from campaigning just days before his speech on 25 August from atop the King David Hotel – a policy he had reaffirmed just months prior to his appearance.

Additionally, the bulk of Pompeo’s four-minute speech was dedicated to lauding Trump, said the report, and Pompeo also gave himself an exemption from a state department policy banning employees and spouses from engaging in political activity while abroad.

“The ultimate effect was that while all other United States citizen state-department employees stationed overseas, their spouses, and family members weren’t allowed to undertake many actions related to the 2020 election, Secretary Pompeo was permitted to record an address to the RNC while traveling abroad to Israel for the purpose of supporting President Trump’s re-election,” said the report.

It emphasised that Pompeo appeared to have been

pressured by Trump into making the speech, but that didn’t exonerate him. There were formal requests to investigate Pompeo, including from Congress, almost as soon as the speech was broadcast.

The report named Miller, Friedman, and Kushner for making media appearances in their official capacities in which they effectively campaigned for Trump’s re-election.

Friedman spoke on Al Ain, a United Arab Emirates-based news channel on 4 October 2020, a month before the election. “Joe Biden was part of the Obama administration which negotiated and implemented the Iran deal ... [which] created a pathway for Iran to gain a nuclear weapon [and] did nothing to restrain Iran from its malign activity,” the report quotes Friedman as saying.

The Office of Special Counsel is the agency designated to investigate Hatch Act violations, but doesn’t itself have the authority to enforce them when violations are committed by senate-approved officials and certain senior White House staff. The report and its lengthiness seemed aimed at underscoring obstructions to enforcement of the Hatch Act; for senior officials, only the president may initiate enforcement. That becomes a problem when the president (who is exempt from the Act) appears to be encouraging his officials to violate the Act, as the office alleges Trump was doing with Pompeo and the other named officials.

“The 2020 election cycle raised new and unanticipated challenges to OSC’s Hatch Act enforcement efforts,” it said. “OSC concludes that the Trump administration tacitly or expressly approved of senior officials violating the Hatch Act by campaigning for President Trump’s re-election. This conclusion is based upon the administration’s refusal to hold officials accountable for their violations, the frequency and similarity of the violations, and the fact that some administration officials repeatedly ignored the advice OSC provided to them.”

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It's never too early (or too late) for a festival

I didn't realise until way too late that Chanukah is very early this year. It falls in November, which isn't just early, but also enormously confusing given that lighting candles on a school night isn't something that South Africans are used to.

We have become accustomed to Easter and Passover overlapping, of Heritage Day and Sukkot being intertwined, but I have no recollection of Chanukah and Black Friday ever being celebrated on the same weekend. And if I thought that maybe it was a sign, I'm certain it was not.

It's no surprise that Jews have a poor reputation for punctuality. The concept of "Jewish time" has been around since the first Jewish school held its first PTA fundraiser. It should be obvious, considering that our festivals never fall when they are meant to. We often hear that "Pesach is early this year". Or "Pesach is really late." But never have we heard it said that it will be arriving smack on time. Because it never does. It's crazy early. Or weirdly late, which makes me wonder if anyone actually knows when it's actually meant to be.

Festivals are always on the weekend, which is too terrible. Or during the week, which is a disaster. Or it's a three-day marathon because of Shabbat, which is impossible, or it's two days, but with one day between Shabbat and the festival, which makes it ridiculous.

Never in the history of observance have festivals fallen on the right days at the right time, neither too early nor too late and in the right season. Because as we can attest, they're invariably too hot, or too cold or it needs to rain when we want it to be dry. Or it's too dry and dusty when we want showers.

Non-Jewish holidays, much like men, seem to be particularly uncomplicated. New Year's Day by way of example, cannot fall on any day other than

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



January the 1st. It is always in summer in the southern hemisphere and winter in the north. All which makes planning convenient but does limit conversation. It makes me wonder what it is they talk about?

I'm not making this up, but one of our guests this past Shabbat actually slapped his frustrated hand on the table and said, "You are not going to believe this, but Tish B'Av is on a Sunday again next year!"

Considering that the fast isn't scheduled until August in 2022 (it's late next year), I thought that others at the table would give him a short sharp smack to the back of his head and tell him that he is completely mad to be worrying about something that is still 10 months away when we might well be dead.

Instead, others at the table were quick to share his outrage and vocalised the horror of it all. And being a reasonable host, I too joined in. Especially because Sunday is the worst day for a fast.

It's often said that it's Shabbat or perhaps antisemitism that has ensured that Jews have continued to survive against all odds. I have a different theory. And when I heard how early Chanukah falls this year, I realised that it's not either of the commonly accepted reasons that has kept us around.

Rather, it's the fact that we need to be constantly engaged and alerted to the fact that one of our festivals might well be happening, either early or late, on a Shabbat or a week day, but certainly, just when we least expect them to.

Troll hunting needn't be a blood sport

Earlier this week, we were alerted to an incident involving several highly offensive posts belittling the Holocaust on a matric WhatsApp group. Unfortunately, the relative anonymity of cyber communication lends itself to such abuses. The question is how best to deal with it when it arises.

From the point of view of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, bringing perpetrators round to understanding what they did wrong and sincerely apologising for it is always preferable to simply punishing them. In the first instance, therefore, we will always try to address the matter through a process of restorative rather than punitive justice, and this is how we were able to resolve this latest case. Having engaged with the main culprit, as well as his school and parents, we are satisfied that there is genuine contrition on his part. A satisfactory apology has been posted by him on the same WhatsApp group, and the Board has arranged for him to attend a facilitated session at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

Seeking answers (and solutions)

A low point in another tumultuous year was the shocking outbreak of looting and vandalism that swept through KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July. Last week, together with other members of our national executive, I participated in a consultation with an expert panel appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to investigate the preparedness and shortcomings of the official response to the violence. As

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

representatives of a faith-based community, we were invited by the presidency to share information and perspectives on what happened, make suggestions on measures that might be put in place to respond to future such occurrences, and the role that leaders in faith-based communities can play in maintaining peace and order. It was a valuable opportunity for us, as representatives of the Jewish community, to share in the discussion and give our input.

The coalition era – challenges and opportunities

With no party having a clear majority in five metros and overall support for the ruling party having dropped below 50% for the first time, the municipal elections have transformed our political landscape. In many important regions, coalition government will henceforth be the order of the day. This will entail a give-and-take process of compromise, consensus-broking, and balancing of different interests, and as such, will be complicated and no doubt sometimes messy. It has, on the other hand, brought a welcome degree of fluidity to the local political scene. We can also take heart from South Africa's previous track record of finding negotiated solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

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

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

WIZO wheelchair gives hope to five-year-old

The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) recently enhanced the life of five-year-old Bontle Tshabalala by donating a customised wheelchair from Israel, which will help her to move around more easily. Tshabalala has cerebral palsy and cannot walk unaided.

The wheelchair will allow her to join her family on walks, and give her a comfortable chair to sit in without the danger of falling out.

The chair was handed over at Tshabalala's school, Special Moments Daycare, in Kempton Park which caters for learners with autism, Down Syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other disabilities. The school aims to give each child with a learning barrier every opportunity to have an education, from Grade R to Grade



Andrea Wainer, Kayli Ginsberg, children and teachers at Special Moments Daycare

7. The staff heard about WIZO's Wheelchairs of Hope initiative, and reached out on behalf of Tshabalala and her family.

Wheelchairs of Hope were developed by specialist Israeli doctors and engineers from ALYN Hospital, Israel's leading paediatric and adolescent rehabilitation centre, with the simple desire to "empower education through mobility". Aimed at children from five to nine years old who have upper-body strength and weigh up to 40kg, these colourful, ergonomically-designed wheelchairs are lightweight and robust enough to handle urban and country terrains.

If you know of a child who may be a good candidate for one of WIZO's Wheelchairs of Hope, please contact Lauren on 011 645 2515.

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CSO golf day raises much-needed funds

The CSO Johannesburg team held a fundraising event at the Soweto Country Club on 3 November, giving golfers in our community a rare opportunity to play on its Gary Player designed course.

The event and venue was chosen as it was COVID-19-protocol friendly, as opposed to the organisation's usual fight-night event.

Tracy Josef and Melissa Goldberg from CSO marketing, and Genevieve Solomons and Romi Levenstein from Black Sugar Events, part of the

fundraising team, were assisted by avid golfers Larry Nestadt and Selwyn Nathan, in making the day a success. Because Nathan and Nestadt were instrumental in the redevelopment of the Soweto Country Club, they suggested that it be held there.

The golf day, which helped to raise much-needed funds for the protection of Jewish life in Johannesburg, was also an opportunity to give back to the Soweto community, creating jobs for the caddies and employees of the Soweto Country Club.

Organisers also asked all participants to bring gently used golf clothes and equipment to donate to the golf academy in Soweto.

The event, which included auctions and raffles, culminated in an outdoor shebeen-style cocktail event and prizegiving catered by Kosher Nando's and with Barney Girnun as MC.

The winning four ball of the day was made up of Jason Nestadt, Shaie Zindel, Dean Sacharowitz, and James Carmichael. The event was sponsored by Blue Label Telecoms.



Enjoying a round of golf at the Soweto Country Club

Stern’s Spanish Lady turns 100

Famous artist’s model and patron, Pamela Amelia Frampton, has enjoyed a lifetime of tennis, dancing, speaking French, painting, playing piano, art galleries, lectures, shopping, eateries, and travel.

Frampton (nee Vorenberg), who lives in Killarney, Johannesburg, turned 100 last week. She was born on 4 November 1921 in Johannesburg to parents Harry William and Minnie Vorenberg, who lived in Houghton. She went to Barnato Park Primary School in Berea.

At the age of 13, she was enrolled at Roedean School in Brighton, England, as a boarder. She remained there until World War II broke out, when she returned to South Africa on the last mail ship that sailed out of Southampton, England. Passengers on the boat weren’t allowed to switch on lights or smoke on the deck at night in case they would be seen. The boat had to zigzag through the water to avoid being chased by U-boats.

She spent the war years back in Johannesburg, and after the war, when Hyman George Frampton was demobbed, he came to South Africa, and they were married in Cape Town in January 1946. They had an only child together – David Richard Frampton.

Frampton was a talented artist, and she studied art at the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London.

In 1964, she was at a party in Cape Town where she met Irma Stern, the famous artist. Stern was inspired by Frampton’s dark complexion, and asked her to pose as a model for a painting the very next day. She insisted that she wear the exact outfit she had on. This painting, titled *The Spanish Lady with a Mantilla* is now part of the collection of the Irma Stern Trust, and is in the gallery in Cape Town.

Frampton is a culture vulture, and loves to follow what is happening around her. She belongs to many clubs, social groups, and societies, and can be found at most talks and lectures on a variety of topics throughout Johannesburg. She used to paint regularly. She reads newspapers and magazines from cover to cover, keeping abreast of the social news and current affairs. She loves to attend art galleries, and cultural events. She enjoys the theatre, and attempts to attend every production. She



was very involved in commercial property. She loved to travel, and was fortunate to visit many countries around the world, many of them with SAPOA (the South African Property Owners Association). She lives life to the full!

A robotics coup for ORT SA, teachers and pupils

Starting by upskilling teachers, teaching pupils and then coming second – 1% away from declaring victory – in an international coding and robotics competition is a huge coup for ORT SA on 20 October.

In this, ORT SA perfectly accomplished its goal of not allowing a person’s background to predetermine their success. The organisation strives to incorporate this ethos through its mission to upskill and educate young South Africans in disadvantaged areas for a promising future.

This particular journey began four years ago, when ORT SA, in partnership with STET, implemented a coding and robotics extra-curricular programme in 2017 at Curtis Nkondo School of Specialisation. The primary focus of the extra-curricular programme was to help teachers empower their students with technological and entrepreneurial skills.

In October, the ORT SA YEP team, comprising of four teachers and 12 pupils, called Team CNSOS, participated in the World ORT YEP Competition, which consisted of seven competitors from



Coding Facilitator, Amini Murinda and the YEP Beneficiaries at Curtis Nkondo School of Specialisation in Soweto

different geographic locations such as Argentina and Brazil, to name a few.

For the final competition, Team CNSOS decided to create a prototype health booth that will alleviate pressure at clinics, and be of convenience to public citizens of South Africa.

After months of hard work and preparation, Team CNSOS showcased their invention to the panel of the YEP Final Competition judges and did a phenomenal job that was recognised and commended.

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KDVP’s *Peter Pan* brings childhood back

Peter Pan, was alive and well, performing this King David Primary School Victory Park musical production to five ‘sold out’ audiences.

The school was grateful it put on a play of this magnitude amidst hard lockdowns and online schooling because it provided the perfect tonic to the dreariness of the past 18 months.

“KDVP’s play, *Peter Pan*, is delightful, creative, funny, moving, and just beautiful to watch. To see our children in theatre, performing, singing, dancing, and creating after these 18 months was really a moment of *modeh ani shehezararta et nishmati*. It felt like the return of the soul and the life force,” said Adina Roth, a parent at the school.



Demi Cohen, Max Yutar, and Rio Immerman in King David Primary School Victory Park’s recent rendition of *Peter Pan*

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