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Tshwane to use Israeli water expertise – Jozi may follow

SAUL KAMIONSKY

A delegation of Israeli water experts have arrived in South Africa to help the Tshwane municipality solve its water issues, and Johannesburg may follow Tshwane's lead in calling on Israel for help.

Confirming the delegation's visit, Tshwane Executive Mayor Randall Williams said, "Israeli academics [such as Dr Clive Lipchin, the South African-born Israel-based director of the Arava Institute's Centre for Transboundary Water Management] are here in South Africa and will consult with us, discussing crucial issues affecting wastewater infrastructure and how we can leverage their expertise."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) National Chairperson Rowan Polovin says Israel has much to offer as a world leader in water technology.

"This co-operation between South Africa and Israel is a welcome step forward for our country towards mitigating its serious water crisis. We hope other municipalities will follow suit," Polovin says.

"This delegation offers an important opportunity for South Africa and Israel to work together to help solve these issues. The team will conduct site visits with officials from our Tshwane municipality, culminating in recommendations to improve the capital city's water management."

The mayor agrees that it's an "important opportunity for South Africa and Israel to work together in solving these issues". He said that, "The City of Tshwane looks forward to the delegation's findings. As a municipality, we're committed to using leading international expertise to improve the lives of our residents."

The initiative, funded by Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF SA), followed a recent meeting held between the City of Tshwane, JNF SA, and the Israeli ambassador to South Africa,

Eli Belotsercovsky.

Benji Shulman, SAZF director of public policy, says that according to comments from the Johannesburg city officials, "Johannesburg is already involved in looking more seriously at Israeli technology".

The reason for engagement with Tshwane was twofold, Shulman says. First, the election of a new mayor at a similar time to the arrival of a new Israeli ambassador was fortuitous, heralding the possibility of new interactions.

Second, "Tshwane is governed by a coalition that doesn't include the ANC [African National Congress] and EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters]. The mayor is a practical man, and sees why this is needed. It's an important signal – and a glimpse of the future – that politicians and the

people are tired of the politics around Israel and South Africa. They want service delivery, and will take it from the best people who can help. The people are putting themselves first and fixing their own problems. Israel can be part of that solution."

Shulman says there has also been interest from the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape. "Water is an issue everywhere. Most people just want to move forward. It's positive all round."

He says in Tshwane, the issues that have arisen aren't all over the system. The main problem is wastewater treatment. That's why they specifically brought out Lipchin as a wastewater expert.

The visit took six months to plan, including

engaging with city officials on the ground about their needs. "There's no Israeli silver bullet in the face of decades of neglect," says Shulman. "However, Israel can help manage the problem and lessen the load on the plant, giving the municipality breathing space."

South Africa, like Israel, is a water-stressed country relying on rainfall. "If Johannesburg has a drought for one or two years, we can go the same route as Cape Town and have a Day Zero," said Etienne Hugo, general manager operations at Johannesburg Water. Some municipalities are already heading towards Day Zero, when municipal water is no longer available. Nelson Mandela Bay has already reached this point.

Hugo was speaking during a discussion about Johannesburg's water crisis at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre in Houghton on 11 August. Lipchin and Democratic Alliance City Councillor Daniel Schay participated in the discussion.

Following the Tshwane municipality's move to enlist Israelis to help with its water problems, Hugo said it was possible that Johannesburg could do the same thing.

"There's always the need to explore other countries' expertise, especially if they have implemented projects or technologies successfully which we might identify a need for. Within the Municipal Finance Management Act, there should be room to take on this offer of help."

He said the City of Johannesburg would be interested in expertise and technology, whether from Israel or another country, "to treat the effluent not only to irrigation standards but to potable stage".

He spoke about the urgent need to replace the city's ageing water infrastructure, and said the challenge was funding, or the lack thereof. "Therefore, we prioritise areas to make sure problematic areas can be targeted first."

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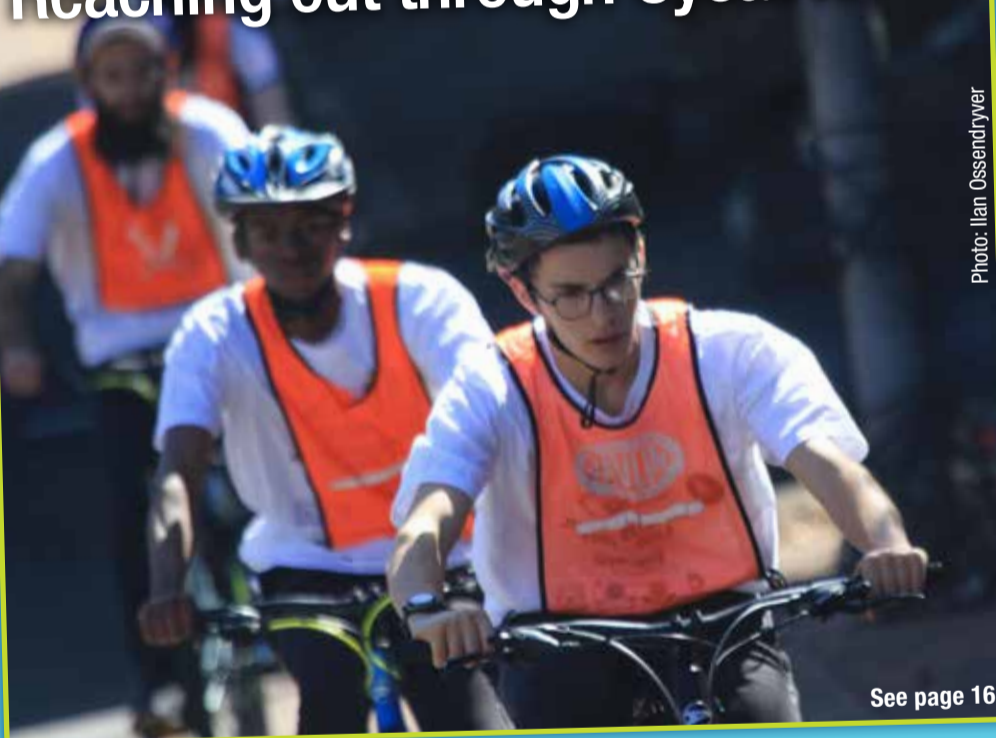


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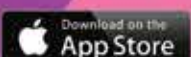
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2 SA JEWISH REPORT

18 – 25 August 2022

German chancellor criticised for silence at Israeli Holocaust accusation

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of committing “Holocausts” at a press conference after meeting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, and Scholz’s muted initial response is spurring criticism.

Abbas used the term on 16 August in response to a reporter who asked if the Palestinian leader would apologise for the murder 50 years ago of 11 Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics. An arm of the Palestine Liberation Organisation carried out the attack.

“If we want to go over the past, go ahead,” Abbas said in Arabic, standing alongside Scholz, *The Times of Israel* reported. “I have 50 slaughters that Israel committed ... 50 massacres, 50 slaughters,” before switching to English to say, “Fifty Holocausts.” Scholz winced at the term, but didn’t speak up.

Five Americans among eight shot in Jerusalem



A shooting incident just outside the Old City of Jerusalem this weekend left eight wounded including multiple members of a family from Williamsburg,

Torah Thought

Making a living or a life?

I like a good advert. Some years ago, McDonald’s was running a campaign, and in the centre of the full-magazine page was a big, fat, juicy double burger. It was literally bursting from the roll on either side. The bread was dwarfed by the beef, and the caption read, “Man does not live by bread alone.”

A good ad indeed. But no ad agency will convince me that scripture meant to teach us that bread is inadequate, and what man really needs in life is meat! No. The Torah is teaching us about the nature of men and women and the spirit of humanity.

“Man does not live by bread alone” is a verse from this week’s parsha, and refers to the miraculous manna which fell from heaven daily during the Jewish people’s sojourn in the wilderness. The conclusion of the verse is that man lives by the word of G-d, reminding us about the true source of human sustenance.

Contrary to popular belief, it’s neither our earthly toil nor the sweat of our brow nor all those conferences, meetings, and sales seminars that ensure our success. It’s actually G-d who sustains us. In the very same way as our ancestors trekking through the desert were totally dependent on Him for their daily bread, believe it or not, so are we. Wealth is a gift from G-d. At the end of the day, it’s not our hard work or business acumen alone that gives us prosperity, but blessings from above.

But “Man does not live by bread alone” means more than that.

The human spirit is such that we crave more than bread. Now, “bread” colloquially means money and symbolically refers to all things material. So, “Man does not live by bread alone” means that man simply cannot live by bread alone, that human beings cannot possibly be satisfied with bread, money, or materialism alone.

Money is important, but we cannot live by it exclusively. I know people who have it all financially, but are nonetheless unhappy. They’re very successful and very miserable. The successes we achieve don’t guarantee our happiness. After we’ve bought the house

of our dreams and our fantasy sports car and all the latest electronic toys, we tire of them all. For satisfaction to be lasting, it must be more than material, it must be spiritual. We need more than bread and money; we need stimulation and a sense of meaningful achievement. To know that our lives have purpose and that, somehow, we have made a difference. We want to be assured that our work is productive and will have lasting value.

Men and women need to know that their life’s work is purposeful, materially and spiritually. When we understand that every good deed is attached to a complex spiritual system and that our every action has cosmic significance, then our lives

**Rabbi Yossy
Goldman –
Life Rabbi
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become endowed with a deeper sense of meaning and purpose.

We desperately need to know that, in some way, our work is helping others – that we are contributing to society beyond our own selfish needs. Then, we are living. And then we are happy.

Man does not live by bread alone. We cannot. We dare not. There’s more to life than bread.

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Hymns sung on Sabbath meals are called zemirot. These medieval songs represent a unique blend of the holy and the secular, and allow family and friends to enhance the Sabbath experience. The most famous of the zemirot is “Shalom Aleichem” (Peace be upon you), which traditionally is sung as the family gathers around the table on Friday night to welcome the “angels of peace”.

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Anti-Israel group peddles age-old antisemitic conspiracy theory

TALI FEINBERG

“It’s clear that the SAJBD [South African Jewish Board of Deputies] is a lobby group for a foreign regime and works closely with the Israeli spy agency Mossad together with the Israeli embassy in Pretoria. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies must decide if they are South African or Israeli agents.”

This is the latest accusation that local extremist group Africa4Palestine (A4P) put out in a public statement on 9 August 2022, which said that the SAJBD had no right to criticise International Relations Minister Dr Naledi Pandor for her anti-Israel comments.



“Their attack is against Jews in South Africa,” says one of the world’s foremost Holocaust experts, Professor Yehuda Bauer. “Attacking South African citizens because they are Jewish, imputing their disloyalty to South Africa, is the way antisemitic regimes acted in the past. Their propaganda shows that they believe that there’s a worldwide international conspiracy led by Israeli Jews. There’s a free press in Israel, and accusations that imply that there’s an international conspiracy are clearly antisemitic.”

“A4P’s discourse seems to be getting more aggressive and menacing,” says Günther Jikeli, the Erna B. Rosenfeld Professor in Jewish Studies at Indiana University. “Anybody who doesn’t share an irrational, demonised picture of Israel is also demonised. Questioning the belonging of Jews to the nation is an old antisemitic trope. The Dreyfus affair in France is the most prominent historical example. It was also a regular theme in Nazi propaganda to accuse Jewish organisations of attacking the government and acting in the interest of foreign countries. Africa4Palestine’s rhetoric comes very close.”

Bauer agrees that “for the Nazis, the Jews ‘controlled’ the foreign powers opposed to Nazi Germany”.

“The accusation of dual loyalty is an old canard, dating back to the ancient world,” says antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, Milton Shain. “It has flourished among the far-right in modern times. One wonders if Africa4Palestine

knows that it’s echoing the writings of SED Brown, the editor of the far-right *South African Observer* and other conspiracy theorists in apartheid South Africa.

“Its language is that of Edouard Drumont, the editor of *La Libre Parole*, at the time of the Dreyfus affair,” says Shain. “More than that, Africa4Palestine is demonising a minority and ignoring the South African Constitution and its values. In essence, it’s harping on the old and well-worn trope of Jewish subversion. Again, it echoes the worst of right-wing extremists at the time of the Treason Trial in the 1950s and the Rivonia arrests in the 1960s. This is astonishing.”

SAJBD Associate Director David Saks says, “Depicting Jews as a disloyal fifth column working against the interests of the host society for their own nefarious ends is a classic antisemitic canard. It serves to ‘other’ Jews by holding them up to be an alien, separate, and essentially destructive element that right-thinking, patriotic citizens ought to distrust, shun, and in general exclude from any positions of influence and authority. Given its contemptible track record of inciting hatred against

the mainstream Jewish community and its representative leadership, it’s hardly surprising that Africa4Palestine has adopted this tactic.”

A4P’s comments came at the same time that leading South African news outlet News24 published a piece by Dr Oscar van Heerden, the deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Fort Hare. The article described Jews as seeing Palestinians as ‘not human’ and ‘animals’. It equated Israel’s legitimate self-defence with the Holocaust, and equated Jews with Nazis.

“The SAJBD was in direct contact with News24 following the publication of the article,” says the SAJBD’s head of communications, Charisse Zeifert. “We expressed both our and the community’s disgust, and that we regarded it as antisemitic. News24 took our complaint seriously and referred the matter to its internal ombud.

“The ombud found that while a right of reply was in order, the article didn’t contravene the Press Code, and no apology was deemed necessary. David Saks took up the right of reply. While we accepted the ruling, we explained our belief that the article by Van Heerden did, in fact, express malice towards the community and expressed regret that News24 couldn’t apologise for the hurt that the article caused our community.”

A4P’s accusations aren’t new. A4P’s statement was made almost five years to the day since the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in the United States on 11 August 2017, in which neo-Nazis called out, “Jews



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will not replace us!” casting Jews as foreign interlopers who need to be erased.

Both statements by A4P tie into an antisemitic idea that has spanned the ages – that Jews ‘have too much power’. Jews who pursue or occupy leadership roles in elected office or other stations of public life are often deemed by antisemites as conspiratorial rather than commended for their investment in the concerns of the collective, says the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), one of the world’s leading authorities on antisemitism.

According to ADL resources, “Antisemites frequently suspect Jews of holding allegiance only to fellow Jews and to a uniquely Jewish agenda. Jews are accordingly seen as untrustworthy neighbours and citizens, as if they are inherently disloyal or have inherently

dual loyalties.”

“Africa4Palestine isn’t a human rights but a human ‘wrongs’ organisation that’s wrongly obsessed with Jews and the Jewish state,” says South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. “It’s no surprise that this antisemitic lobby group targets the South African Jewish community as part of its modus operandi with intent to stir hate and division in our country.

“A4P’s vulgar antisemitism has no place in our South African discourse, and should be rigorously challenged. It represents a sad group of Jew-haters in our country who are increasingly desperate to achieve their ends. Their antics and behaviour reflect this. Our answer to A4P is simple: we’ll continue to be proud Jews and Zionists in South Africa.”

Absa Jewish Achiever Awards – time to party

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2022 is going to be the party of the decade.

In previous years, we have had delectable dining – if a little staid and conservative – sit-down award ceremonies, but not this time around.

After two years of being stuck behind masks and our high walls, we’re coming out for a wild and wonderful party like we’ve never had before.

Imagine the party of your dreams, but think bigger and better. That’s what you can expect. Think outstanding DJs, tequila shooters, acrobats performing while suspended from the ceiling, crazy but brilliant dancers, and much, much more. It will be all we missed out on during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, we’ve done away with the formal red carpet and cocktails and are welcoming the party animal in each one of you.

We’re still going to honour the best in our community, but we’re also going to celebrate each one of us getting back to life.

We’ll not scrimp on *kavod* for our winners, but we’ll cut down on unnecessary or long speeches.

Don’t for a moment think we’ll scrimp on tasty food or brilliant entertainment, because you would be wrong. We’re just doing it in a new and much more fun and fabulous way.



The *SA Jewish Report* recently surveyed what people wanted at this year’s Absa Achiever Awards ceremony and whether they wanted it in person or online. Fifty percent of those questioned wanted it to be an in-person only event, while 41% favoured a hybrid that gives us the option of either. Only 9% opted for online only.

As many as 86.4% want to be there in person, and 72.7% want their guests there in the flesh. We understand that not everyone is ready to be out in person yet but would still like to be part of the celebration.

We give you our assurance that if you’re part of a table but would prefer to have your party in the safety of your own home, we’ll make sure you have a party in a box delivered to you so you can join the fun online.

Nominations for this year’s awards are streaming in. We already have more than 300 nominations, and we’re expecting many more.

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Till a gett us do part: man freed as wife accepts divorce

TALI FEINBERG

People often see difficulties in getting a gett (a Jewish divorce) as a purely male issue. A man may refuse to give it, and will therefore make the woman an *agunah* (chained woman). But what if it's the other way around – a wife refusing to accept a gett that her husband wants to give?

This was the case recently when a South Africa couple had a civil divorce, lived in different countries, and had moved onto new relationships. Yet the woman refused to accept the gett, meaning that the pair was still married according to Jewish law.

"I felt angry, like she had a hold on me and my life was in limbo," says the man, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* on condition of anonymity. "My advice to anyone in a similar situation is to get as much help as you can. This isn't just for women. It's about a power struggle. Men are suffering too, and there's help out there. I finally feel like a free man."

Meanwhile, Go Getters – the South African Gett Network, wrote on Facebook on 10 August that it was "thrilled to announce that a South African man was freed from his now ex-wife today who lives in Australia. She finally accepted the gett this morning after a long time offering a multitude of excuses."

"Go Getters worked with a wonderful organisation in Australia called Unchain My Heart," it said. "There's now an umbrella group of gett organisations internationally called Cheirut. There's no longer anywhere to hide whether you're male or female. It's simply not reasonable to refuse to give or accept a gett when your marriage is over. In this case, Go Getters liaised primarily with the Johannesburg Beth Din and the husband who is based here, and Unchain My

Heart liaised with the wife in Australia and the Melbourne Beth Din."

"These kinds of cases aren't so rare," says Go Getters founder Michelle Blumenau. "We have had a few of them. The gett process requires two willing parties who are willing to give or accept it. If either is unwilling, it can't proceed."

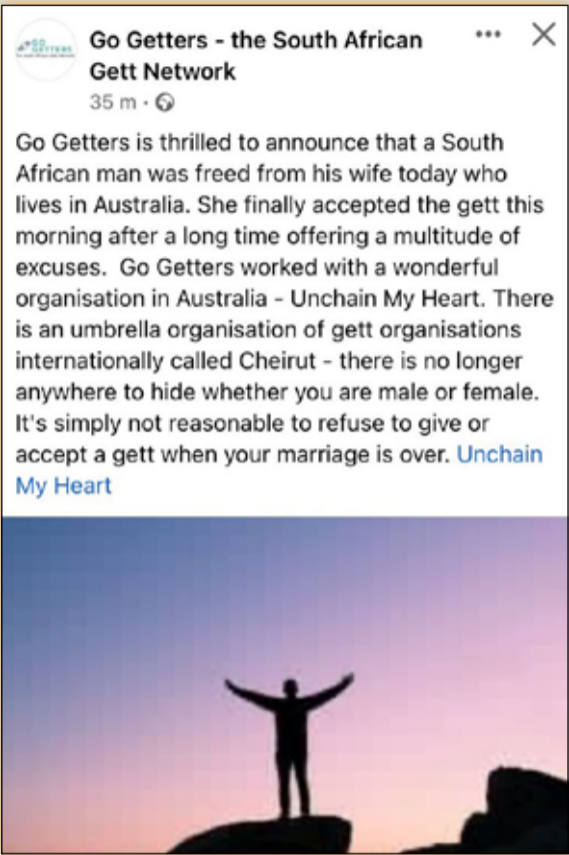
"All cases (where one party is unwilling) are essentially the same," she says. "They are about abuse, and exerting power." She says often a party will refuse to accept or give a gett because they are vindictive or spiteful. In most cases, the "marriage has been dead a long time".

"I had one case where a woman said, 'I hate him, he'll never be free!' So, rarely is it a case of one party genuinely wanting to hold onto the marriage."

Yet, a woman refusing a gett doesn't happen every day. Even the mandate of Go Getters is directed mainly at women. "Go Getters aims to support Jewish women in various ways," says the organisation's Facebook page.

"We want to support *agunot* with recalcitrant husbands actively in ways that they would find useful. We stand for liberation and social justice for women and their families. There are men whose wives are refusing to accept the gett. We are open to working on these cases too! We don't advocate physical violence against gett refusers. This is illegal in South Africa."

Blumenau says there's a Jewish law that can help free a man whose wife refuses the gett if every other avenue has been tried. *Heter meah rabbonim* (permission by 100 rabbis) can be applied to certain extreme cases, such as a man whose wife is missing or refuses to accept a gett



for an extended period, or when the wife is mentally unable to give consent to receiving a gett.

To get a *heter meah rabbonim*, a man would previously have to wander from town to town and one country to another with a letter from the Beth Din and would have to plead his case with every town rabbi to get their approval. Later on, written permission by mail was accepted, and sometimes an intermediary was used to plead the case. In the past century, with the ease of communication, the process has become more formal and the Beth Din takes

the lead and secures the 100 signatures required.

Blumenau recalls at least two cases where this has happened in South Africa. Thankfully, this most recent case didn't require it. However, both Go Getters and the Beth Din had to deal with a litany of excuses and refusals, such as blaming lockdown and social distancing. At one point, the woman said the gett was "in no way to my advantage as I don't intend to remarry".

Go Getters co-founder Balu Nivison works with Blumenau from Cape Town. Both are passionate about their cause. They also have a strong informal network which supports them, from social services to lawyers.

Blumenau says working with gett-advocate organisations internationally has helped resolve cases like these. International gett organisations also work closely on cases like that of infamous gett refuser Hershy (Hermann) Fried.

Fried's divorce in Israel was never finalised as he escaped the country in spite of a court order that prohibited him from leaving. Since then, he has run from country to country (including South Africa) as a fugitive, keeping his wife, Susie, tied to their non-existent marriage. He has been *in cherem* (excommunicated) for at least half a decade already. He continues to ignore all court orders and decisions imposed on him by rabbinical courts as well as the family court. There is a warrant for his arrest in Israel.

Blumenau suggests that ideally, Jewish couples getting divorced should secure their gett prior to their civil divorce. "If you don't, you must highlight this for the judge and insist that there's a clause that mentions the gett in your divorce agreement," she says.

Tshwane to use Israeli water expertise – Jozi may follow

>>Continued from page 1

Currently, the City of Johannesburg is replacing 100km to 120km of pipe a year, predominantly asbestos pipe, Hugo said. "Since the late 1980s, the City of Joburg has

been reducing infrastructure replacement because of financing not always being available. Therefore, you push your asset to the limit, but you can also push it over the edge."

South Africa must ensure it improves its infrastructure – whether it be reservoirs, reticulation systems, or pumping stations – in tandem with its energy supply, said Lipchin. "If

you don't have reliable and stable energy, you're always going to run into problems. It puts strain on infrastructure. If your energy goes down, the pressure on your pipes will change, exacerbating

leakages."

The City of Johannesburg aims to start looking at effluent reuse (basically recycling water) and alternative water resources such as groundwater and boreholes, said Hugo. "We're working quite hard on our Water Conservation Water Demand Management Masterplan, a five-year plan to limit water losses, so even if there's a drought, we can sustain it. The city is busy with an approval process for our drought management plan, which is more or less based on what the City of Cape Town did."

Israel is a world leader in recycling wastewater, said moderator Michael Kransdorff, the JNF SA chairperson who facilitated the discussion.

"Wastewater treatment and reusing effluent is something everybody has to begin to internalise," Lipchin said. "I don't think anyone can continue to manage and provide water without factoring in the water supply budget and alternative water sources. Israel has the technology to do that. We're irrigating more than 60% of our crops. This frees up freshwater for domestic use. The biggest challenge for water quality is to provide water for human consumption. Of course, freshwater will always be the most preferable water resource."

Through effective wastewater treatment, Israel has lessened its dependency on freshwater, Lipchin said. "This enables us to override drought. If we look at the long-term hydrological models for our region, droughts are going to get longer and the impacts greater because of climate change and population growth."

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Durban festival opens its screens to Israelis

TALI FEINBERG

A year ago, the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) banned Israeli filmmaker Yakie Ayalon from screening his film just because he was Israeli. So it was a positive step when this year’s festival backtracked on this bias.

It allowed Israeli filmmaker Oz Zirlin to show his short movie titled *His Best Friend*. Zirlin’s film is a 15-minute piece that recreates the day his best friend committed suicide three years before. He got his friend’s family and friends to play their roles, recreating the most painful day of their lives.

In addition, the festival, held from 21 to 30 July, now includes the following statement on its website: “The Centre for Creative Arts [which hosts the festival] upholds freedom of expression and freedom of creativity, as guaranteed in Section 16 of the South African Constitution.



Screenshot from *His Best Friend*

“The Centre for Creative Arts [at the University of KwaZulu-Natal] recognises that artists may sometimes live and work in states whose values may not always be in accordance with the values of the South African Constitution, but it commits itself to protect and advance the rights of any artist who freely chooses to participate in the centre’s festivals where their voices and artistic expressions can contribute to building a better world for all people.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, the festival’s management said, “The Durban International Film Festival engages a new set of independent pre-screeners, curators, programmers, and jury for each year’s festival. The criteria for submitting and selecting films for each year’s festival are determined by its independent curator in consultation with the independently appointed programmers. Oz Zirlin’s *His Best Friend* was selected for inclusion in the student film festival by the festival’s independent team of curators and programmers.

“The Centre for Creative Arts recognises that different sets of pre-screeners, curators, programmers, and jury will draw on their own professional and lived experiences to interpret curatorial criteria and arrive at their selections. The festival remains consistent in respecting and advancing the independence of its pre-screeners, curators, programmers, and jury regardless of choices that sometimes spark disagreement or disappointment.”

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), says, “The SAZF welcomes the news that the Durban International Film Festival has abandoned its ill-conceived boycott against Israeli films. Over the past year, the SAZF has worked extensively with members of the cultural community to ensure that the basic rights of freedom of expression and

association are protected in our country. We’re happy that these rights have been restored to DIFF this year.

“The decision taken to affirm freedom of speech and include an Israeli film is another welcome blow to ailing members of the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement, who seek to undermine Israeli cultural exchange with communities in South Africa,” says Shulman. “Like South Africa, Israel has a vibrant and democratic cultural sphere and it’s only through the exchange of ideas and perspectives that peace, understanding, and tolerance can take root.”

Zirlin wrote on Facebook that the film wasn’t accepted at any festivals until a friend convinced him to send it to DIFF. “This is the first festival this film has been accepted to – and maybe the last,” he said. “But I choose to thank everyone who did an experiment with me at the cinema for a family that every day, wakes up in the morning without their son, to

everyone who has seen the film and told me that they were moved by it. I hope somehow it will find its way to more viewers. Maybe it will show people how much love they leave behind.”

Ayalon welcomed news of Israelis being accepted at the festival, saying, “I’m happy to see that the festival changed

its policy and accepted a film directed by an Israeli this year. I’m glad that DIFF reached the understanding that targeting individual filmmakers isn’t the answer, since boycotting an individual filmmaker is itself an act of violence.”

His film *Scatteries* was originally chosen to participate at DIFF in 2021. Though his participation was initially welcomed, he was then told he could no longer participate. “I was saddened by the cancellation, since we were already discussing final details,” he said at the time.

Scatteries has since been screened at several festivals, “and was received very well”, Ayalon says. “The response is always heartwarming, and I believe that whoever sees the film will be able to identify with the ‘other’ that he generally doesn’t encounter in his daily life.”

He says he would still gladly screen the film at DIFF if invited to do so. “It could be a wonderful opportunity to show that art isn’t part of politics and against violence of all forms. Almost all my films, including *Scatteries*, deal with issues which aren’t in the main discourse, promote equality, and strive to give a voice to those who usually aren’t heard.”

Ayalon is now working on a documentary film called *Exodus* about a boxing club based in Lusaka, Zambia. “Inspired by Zambia’s female boxer Esther Phiri, who rose to capture successive international boxing titles, young women and girls are turning to boxing. As more young women enter the ring, defying the constraints of poverty and patriarchy, they hope to take a shot at a better and brighter future.

“I would like to thank the South African Jewish community for their ongoing support,” says Ayalon. “I’m positive that this is part of the reason why DIFF changed its policy.”

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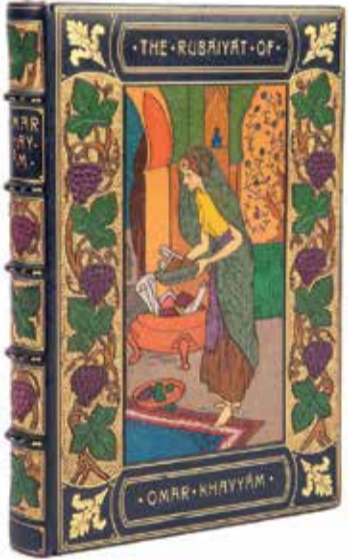
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Let go of the grumpiness and get real

We have a lot to be grumpy about, but if you think a little further than that superficial grumpiness, we have so much to be grateful for. More than that, we have reason to feel uplifted in a somewhat unpleasant environment.

I may not be making sense on first read, but I went into a panel discussion last Saturday night at Limmud to discuss the psyche of our community wondering why anyone would want to come and listen when there were so many inspiring talks at the same time.

Interestingly, those people who were there – and there was a full room – claim to have left feeling uplifted and inspired.

They all came to hear what SA Jewish Board of Deputies Chairperson Karen Milner, South African Zionist Federation Public Policy Director Benji Shulman, and psychologist David Abrahamson had to say about the state of our psyche. I merely facilitated the discussion. I didn't think people would flock to hear it as it had the potential to be depressing.

We dealt with antisemitism and anti-Zionism, the African National Congress (ANC) and government's unfortunate blind spot and abhorrence towards anything to do with Israel. It sounds like a real downer, right?

Well, apparently, it had the opposite effect. We spoke about the reality that we don't experience antisemitism day to day in South Africa. We're able to live a proudly Jewish life and have absolutely no stress about it. Yes, the ANC uses Israel and Zionism as a political football, but it's apparent that its days ruling the country are numbered and, when it leaves, it will take its affiliation with BDS and sentiments with it.

It's true that we walk around with post-pandemic trauma because of the impact of lockdown and the death of so many, but we're not alone in this. We're just one of the many communities in the world carrying this pain into the future.

Having said that, we've passed the worst. The pandemic as we knew it is behind us. We have a new lease on life, and being able to spend time together with others in our community at Johannesburg Limmud was such a treat. We just need to acknowledge just how wonderful that was. We needed to be cognisant of just how lucky we are that we are able to get together with others within our community and enjoy what we have.

There were mutterings of not having a way of meeting people in the community – particularly those who are single and looking for a life partner. That's real, but can I say, let this be our biggest problem.

Yes, times are tough and money is tight. We don't have the kind of wealth we used to have within our community, but we're surviving. Whatever isn't at our beck and call in the country, our community has made a plan to ensure is available.

We have a national ambulance service that isn't so great. Behold, now there's Hatzolah. We don't have a social welfare system that enables those battling to survive. Behold, we have the Chev and a few other organisations that help those within our community in need. During lockdown, people around the country didn't have access to oxygen, well, Hatzolah made a plan. When companies were about to collapse because of the threat of the pandemic, an organisation emerged that made sure that they would survive. That's this community.

The take-home quote from the panel was from Milner, who cited Avrom Krengel in saying that while Israel may be the "Start-Up Nation", South Africa is the "DIY Nation". And so we are. If we really need something and it isn't readily available, we make a plan to create it for ourselves.

As a community, we don't lack for anything because if we do, we create a plan to change that.

So, if you really think about the state of our psyche and our situation as a community and as individuals in South Africa, it's a happy story.

Having said that, we unwittingly find ourselves persuaded otherwise far too often. Think about it, all you have to see on Facebook is someone selling all their household goods to emigrate to make you think you must be mad to stay. But are they really all going?

The truth is, most of us are staying and the grass really isn't greener elsewhere.

Let's compare our time during lockdown to most ex-South Africans in London, New York, or even Tel Aviv. We couldn't buy alcohol or cigarettes. Oh, woe is me! However, we could enjoy the sunshine in our beautiful gardens while most expats spent their time holed up in flats with their entire families.

Consider those you love who have left South Africa for other countries. Are their lives really better than ours? Have they really found their nirvana? How many friends do you know who battle trying to hold down jobs, keep their homes clean and running, all while managing their family's lives? How many do you know who long for the close-knit Jewish community that we have here? How many don't necessarily say it out aloud, but wish they could reconsider their emigration?

Yes, I know, we do a fair bit of complaining, and I, too, am guilty of this. I so often get mad at the ANC and government for being blind to the truth about Israel and the Palestinian issue. I get upset with our government about corruption and not doing enough to safeguard our economy.

I can find a great deal to be angry and complain about. I also find my month is way too long for my money.

However, I, too, felt uplifted when our panel discussion was over because I wouldn't give up what we have in this country for the world. Just being able to reconnect with people I haven't seen for years and enjoying Shabbos with people who have the same background as me is a gift I wouldn't be able to get elsewhere.

So, let's be honest about our situation here, and acknowledge that we have our problems, but boy, we have a phenomenal existence!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



African migrants need more specific word for hate – Afrophobia

OPINION

JAMIE MIGHTI



The year 2016 heralded the resurgence of a political period of authoritarianism and nationalism in global mainstream politics. In 2016, Donald Trump became president of the United States, and the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. These events were driven by a rise in far-right politics and a hostility to immigration, more specifically immigration from the Middle East and Africa.

In 2022, South Africa has witnessed the most prolonged wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, and one cannot help but wonder if it will reshape the region in ways that undermine democracy, liberalism, and ultimately the region.

Though the population of foreigners living in South Africa represents only 4% of the population of people living in South Africa and only 7% of the workforce of the population, this issue has predictably come to feature disproportionately in the public discourse.

When Trump announced his campaign for president, he began a global trend of using anti-immigrant rhetoric to gain power. He came down an escalator, saying, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems to us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."



There are similar trends in South African political rhetoric. First, there's a rise in confrontation with African foreigners due to the emergence of Operation Dudula, which is hostile to African immigrants in South Africa. Second, there's the deadline for the termination of a special status visa given to hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans in 2009. And finally, there are rising levels of unemployment and poverty and failure to offer any tangible solutions from the government. In lieu of solutions, there seems to be the decision to scapegoat African migrants for unemployment and crime.

This anti-immigrant sentiment has been escalated by the fact that the figures driving anti-African migrant rhetoric have been able to access national media platforms easily and in turn get international media coverage. There have also been instances of violence which have captured the public imagination and made these issues topical on social media platforms.

Government ministers have also participated in anti-immigrant rhetoric, and rejected descriptions of their rhetoric as xenophobic. Their participation has lent legitimacy to voices that would otherwise have been on the fringe of mainstream politics.

I believe this rhetoric should be classified as Afrophobia, not merely xenophobia.

There are many forms of recognised hate crimes and hate speech in the world, for example, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Asian hate. In many countries, they have been codified and legislated against.

The same level of qualification should be extended towards anti-foreigner sentiment, which is specifically targeted against African migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Afrophobia should be the word used to describe the activities of Put South Africans first, Operation Dudula, and the political rhetoric of prominent politicians such as Gayton McKenzie, Herman Mashaba, and Aaron Motsoaledi.

Codification of a genre of hate creates a clear

understanding of what forms of language and narratives are harmful and hurtful. It allows for identification of the groups that are actively spreading particular narratives, and it creates social disincentives for those who participate in those narratives.

More than that, it also creates a path for legal deterrents, as those who perform those speech acts can be held directly liable for their actions and in some territories, even arrested for them.

The use of the word xenophobia is overbroad and misses the fact that these aren't blanket attacks on all those of foreign descent but specific those of African descent. Consider that South Africa has large immigrant communities of people from the United Kingdom, which ranks fifth in the percentage of immigration, but British nationals in South Africa aren't targets of xenophobia.

Xenophobia doesn't go far enough in informing the public about what's happening.

Let's consider antisemitism, which is its own distinct form of hate crime. Prejudice against the Jewish people is centuries old. Among its most common manifestations throughout history were pogroms, the violent riots launched against Jews which were frequently encouraged by government authorities. Pogroms were often incited by

blood libels – false rumours that Jews used the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes.

The harmful narratives and perceptions of Jews weren't always formally labelled. The term antisemitism actually came into being in 1879 when German journalist Wilhelm Marr originated the term to denote hatred of Jews.

The existence of this term helped the world understand the hateful rhetoric of the Nazi party and the crimes against humanity committed by the Third Reich. It helped the world create laws to constrain the spread of hatred of Jewish people post World War II.

Parallels can be drawn between Afrophobia and antisemitism. They're both forms of hate that are derived from harmful narratives that the specific groups are harming society.

For practical purposes, African migrants are in need of this specific classification because they are often subjected to harassment, intimidation, and quite often violence, which has led in some instances to death.

This protection is necessary because African migrants are often the most vulnerable of migrant communities. Many lack the economic means to seek legal recourse, many are unable to challenge Afrophobic movements for fear of retaliation, and many refugees don't have any other refuge because they face imminent risk to life and limb in their home countries.

African migrants are being accused of being criminals, drug dealers, human traffickers, stealing jobs, and being rapists, among other things. Following these harmful narratives which are specifically targeted at a group of people, there have been attacks and profiling of those communities.

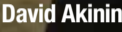
It's important to note that this isn't just rhetoric targeted at those who don't have legal status in their home countries. Often on Facebook groups and on Twitter, the anti-African migrant rhetoric is generalised to everyone. Those who spread the narratives don't make a distinction between those who are documented or undocumented, and those who are fully acclimatised citizens of South Africa. It indicates that this isn't just about legality or illegality, it's about fostering hatred of a specific group of people based on an arbitrary characteristic that they have no control of.

The introduction of a new term may seem unnecessary, but this is how language evolves, and clearly, there's a distinction between antipathy targeted at all foreigners and antipathy targeted specifically at African foreigners. That is why we must call it Afrophobia.

• *Jamie Mighti is an African policy researcher and analyst, and the founder of the African think tank Research and Dialogue Africa. He gave a talk on this topic at Limmud Johannesburg.*

TALI FEINBERG

He says the South African Jewish community has played an



To the South African Jewish community, he says, "Thank you to all who have welcomed my brothers and me to your country. Never take for granted the institutions you have built, the values that define you, and the people that preceded you. We're inspired every day by who you are."

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The Mountain Jews who have seen it all

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Jews of the Caucasus have “been through it all”, said Ruben Shimonov, a Detroit-based educator, community builder, and social entrepreneur, speaking at Limmud Johannesburg last weekend.

This isn’t surprising considering that these communities, named after the Caucasus Mountains which separate southwestern Russia from Georgia and Azerbaijan, lie just north of the Middle East, just west of Central Asia, and just south of Russia.

“This is a region at the crossroads of important parts of the world, important empires, and civilisations, so the cultures here will probably reflect all those histories, empires, and civilisations,” said Shimonov.

“It’s a geostrategic area, in many ways a bridge from Asia to Europe, from the Middle East to North Africa. It’s been conquered and reconquered many, many times. The Jewish communities there have been through it all to the present day. This has given Kavkazi, Georgian, and Bukharian Jews a sense of deep pride.”

Georgia has one of the oldest surviving diaspora Jewish communities, starting from Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE, said Shimonov.

For three millennia, this community has survived successive empires – such as the Achaemenid, Greek, Roman, Arab, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires. The Georgian Jewish community predates Christianity and Islam in the region. Jews have been in Georgia for more than 26 centuries.

Mass aliya of Georgian Jews occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, said Shimonov. “How did it begin? In August 1969, 18 families wrote a letter to Prime Minister Golda Meir and the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. They requested permission to emigrate to Israel because the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics wasn’t letting Jews out.

“In 1971, Georgian Jews organised a hunger strike outside a Moscow post office, asking to be let free and go to Israel. This deep Zionism was among the traditional Georgian Jewish community.

“Ultimately it led to the migration of more than half, 30 000 of the 50 000 Georgian Jews, to Israel in the 1970s and 1980s.”

In the 1990s, 20 000 more Jews made aliya, said Shimonov. Having once been home to

100 000 Jews, Georgia’s Jewish population today is no more than 6 000. The country has at least one Jewish museum and kosher restaurant. There are 200 000 Georgian Jews in Israel, and 10 000 in Queens, America.

Kavkazi Jews are also known as Mountain Jews (because they come from the Caucasus Mountains), Gorsky Jews, Caucasus Jews, and Juhuro, which means “Jews” in the Kavkazi language, said Shimonov.

“A narrative within the Kavkazi Jewish community says that at least part of their story begins with migration first to what is essentially Kurdistan today, and then from there, farther north into the Caucasus. This is one theory.”

Shimonov said some theories suggest that Kavkazi Jews migrated to protect the frontiers of the Persian Empire.

“During the Khazar empire, a Turkic empire, the higher-ranking part of the kingdom, including the king, converted at some point to Judaism. Probably Kavkazi Jews living in this empire made the king and those in power more aware of Judaism.

“In the 1600s, 1700s, mass migration occurred to a semi-autonomous Jewish region or governing body known as the Jewish Valley. It was in Pakistan. For more than 100 years, this was the real centre of Kavkazi Jewish life. Because of tribal wars and the region changing hands, these Jews escaped a bit more south to the Quba Khanate, a Muslim dynasty under the direct protection of King Huseyn Ali Khan and his son, Fatali Khan. They were good to the Jews. They built an all-Jewish town known as Qyrmyzy Qasaba.”

Situated in Azerbaijan today, this town is believed to be the world’s only all-Jewish town outside of Israel and America, said Shimonov.



Ruben Shimonov

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Decoding “de-Nazification” in Ukraine and other his-stories

SAUL KAMIONSKY

“In five or 10 years’ time, there’ll probably be a museum dedicated to what’s happening in Ukraine. What will be in that museum? Will it be a genocide museum? Will it be a museum of war?”

David Deutsch, the section head of the Asia and Africa Section at the International School for Holocaust Studies, raised this question during the Limmud Johannesburg panel discussion titled “De-Nazification? – the Ukraine crisis in a historical and contemporary perspective.” He was emphasising that in most cases of genocide, such as the Holocaust, history doesn’t accurately shape what occurred.

Inaccurate information – such as Russia claiming to have invaded Ukraine to “prevent a genocide” and “de-nazify” the country – is being reported about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, said some of the panellists. They believe this can be addressed through education.

“As people from education institutions, we need to empower others with knowledge,” said Tali Nates, the founder and director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

When people ask, “How large is the right-wing in Ukraine?” or “Are Nazis in the Parliament,” Nates said they needed to be given the facts. “In Ukraine, right-wing political parties are supported by less than 1% of the people and aren’t even represented in Parliament. Ukraine has a law that Nazi symbols and antisemitism aren’t permitted. When you speak about another country

as Nazis, you need to understand it in an educational setting.”

The term genocide, Ukrainian ambassador to South Africa Liubov Abravитova said, stems back to 1944 when Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin used it, in part to describe the Nazis’ systematic murder of Jews during the Holocaust. “He spoke about acts that include killings, causing serious harm to a certain group, making living conditions impossible, or forcibly transferring children to another group. Basically, that’s exactly what’s happening today in Ukraine.”



Ukrainian Ambassador Liubov Abravитova

While a word itself is important, the intention behind it needs to be looked at even more closely, said Deutsch. “As sensitive listeners, we can be very clear if that word is used to justify violence, express pain, or stop the violence. I’m not the judge of our people using that word rightly or wrongly. However, I do think that as sensitive listeners of international politics, we can look if that word is used to justify an unjust, violent act, or used to minimise violence.”

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) perceived the Holocaust differently to the West, said Roni Mikel-Arieli, a historian interested in the intersections between Holocaust memory, Jewish history, and African studies. “The USSR saw the Holocaust as part of the Great Patriotic War. It actually didn’t see Jews as unique victims of the Holocaust. It claimed that the Jews were persecuted because they were Communist and were part of the war against fascism.”

Nates spoke about how people throw a term around loosely. “People say ‘never again’. After the war in 1945, it was ‘never again’. Nelson Mandela said, ‘Never again will our people suffer injustice.’ These words are still used in every commemoration. Yet, on 24 February 2022, [the Ukraine] crisis started. So, ‘never again’ is ‘never again until the next time’.”

Abravитova said the world’s struggle today is the struggle for values that unite everyone. “If we’re agreeing that it’s okay to violate those values, we’ll find ourselves in a completely different world. If you ask me, ‘Is the world united enough? Could the crisis have been prevented?’ I would say that if the world had been unanimously in support of Ukraine in 2014, we wouldn’t have had this [situation]. Since 2014, thousands of people in Ukraine have been killed, and more than a million internally displaced.”

Moreover, “For years, Russia has been trying to take away our culture and language in Ukraine,” said Abravитova. “It has been happening for 300 years. We have been resistant for that many years. This is why we have been so resistant during the current crisis.”

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Youth movements trying to bridge the gaps

PETA KROST

Jewish youth movements in South Africa are finding new ways to deal with the needs of a post-pandemic youth but still figuring out how best to deal with the divide between youth movements, university, and post-studies.

“Kids after lockdown are craving freedom,” Bnei Akiva Johannesburg Rosh Rebecca Matisonn said at a special youth movement panel discussion at Limmud Johannesburg last weekend.

“They don’t want to be around their parents. They don’t want to be told when to do something, why they should do it, and how. They want to be able to make choices for themselves, and this is quite hard as a youth movement that provides a structure and a programme to follow.

“Many think they are much older than they are, but mentally, they are younger because of the lack of development they have had during the pandemic,” Matisonn said.

Another problem she cites among those she loosely refers to as the “TikTok generation” is a sense of apathy.

“People don’t care about Judaism the way they used to. There’s a lack of focus. The schools struggle to get kids involved in sport or productions the way they used to. As a youth movement, we see it too, but we’re here to combat it and bring back the care and the love for all the things our community has to offer,” Matisonn said.

Habonim Dror South Africa Sgan Mazkir Klali Mira Rudnick agrees, but believes that what appears to be a “will to be free” is in fact “anxiety, insecurity, and lack of confidence”.

Children aren’t getting involved because they’re scared, Rudnick said. “Youth movements give young people confidence. They give them a sense of freedom and an understanding that they have their own space in the community.”

Rudnick said that youth movements had been fighting tooth and nail to continue programmes over the past few years, and “so regretted” the disappointment

last year when the *machanot* (camps) were cancelled at the last minute.

“Kids were unbelievably disappointed,” Rudnick said. “I believe this uncertainty manifests in this weird arrogance in which teens claim they don’t need youth movements anymore because they managed without them for two years.

“It’s a copout. They actually don’t know what to do with themselves, and it’s our job to help them understand that we – their *maddies* – can be their guide and help them through this time.”

Bethia Milner, the chairperson of South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) at University of the Witwatersrand, said that what SAUJS is experiencing was a microcosm of the issues Jews face in South Africa.

“We face remarkably little antisemitism on campus,” she said. “It feels like we have an incredibly safe space for Jews on campus. People are comfortable wearing kippot and identifying as Jewish.”

However, she added, “Students are hesitant to call themselves Zionists and say they went to Israel.”

This has caused students to create bubbles and remain within them to feel safe, resulting in little mixing with other South Africans. “The more time you spend with other Zionists, the less people there are to counter the anti-Zionist narrative,” Milner said.

The problem is that these bubbles are small, with people who have the same political or religious views, like in Habonim or Bnei Akiva, and they don’t necessarily engage with other Jews.

“As in the case of teens, there’s a general lack of engagement at university, creating communal divisiveness,” Milner said. “So, when SAUJS says, ‘Let’s put all that aside and have a party,’ there’s this hesitancy and lack of buy-in.”



showing that we’re here, and offering a unique support system. It’s about listening, and not imposing our own ideas of what they’re facing.”

Rudnick said Habonim was doing its best to address the post-school and university gap, and to work with other youth movements for the greater good of the community.

For Milner, though, the gap she worries about most is what happens after university, when there’s no longer SAUJS or youth movements.

“It’s after you graduate and enter the workforce, and suddenly SAUJS, Bnei Akiva, and Habonim ends and there’s nothing, no connection to the community,” said Milner. “This is where the real issue lies.” How do people connect with the community then,

she asks. “This is a real area of concern, and the community needs to look at how to ensure it doesn’t lose these young adults.”

Rudnick agrees, saying Habonim is also having this “pertinent conversation”, trying to work out what can be done about it.

Matisonn thinks it’s a vital issue, but it doesn’t help the crisis of the many Jewish school kids falling through the cracks who don’t want to be part of any Jewish youth movement.

She believes youth movements need to bridge the divide, and make sure that no Jewish child is left behind. “If our organisations aren’t working together and there’s animosity between us, this is a major problem,” she said.

“I don’t see the need for a divide between youth movements in a community the size of ours. We should work together. If it turns anyone away from any youth movement, then we’ve absolutely failed,” says Matisonn.

Rudnick made a plea to the adults in the community not to ignore these issues, and to get involved in helping to sort them out for sake of our community’s future.

Joburg mayor pledges to make city work

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Dr Mpho Phalatse, the executive mayor of Johannesburg, has called on the private sector to help sort out the city’s economy and job creation, while she’ll make sure to provide a working city for them.

“What’s our role as a city? The private sector has said to us, ‘Don’t worry about growing the economy. Don’t worry about creating jobs. It’s our job to do that. You give us a city that works,’” she told a packed audience at Limmud Johannesburg.

Since being elected mayor in November 2021, Phalatse has had to address the fact that Johannesburg is the most unequal city in the world according to the Gini coefficient. “Across the M1, you see Alexandra, one of the poorest urban spaces. On the other side, you see the richest square mile in Africa, all in the same city of Johannesburg,” said Phalatse. “How do we start to address that? We facilitate the social migration of people who are underprivileged.”

In 2018, Phalatse found herself suspended from her role as the MMC (member of the mayoral committee) for health and social development by then Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba after she publicly declared her support for Israel.

She recalls that back then, “the Israeli ambassador to South Africa asked me to lunch, and I got to know the nice kosher restaurants in Norwood”.

But since being mayor, she has had a massive job on her hands getting Johannesburg back on an honest and lucrative footing. She asked if the audience had read in the media lately about Group Forensics and Investigation Services coming under attack.

“It’s the corruption watchdog of the city. That’s why it’s under attack,” said Phalatse. “Since its inception in 2016, it has dealt with 8 000 cases of corruption to the



Dr Mpho Phalatse meets a young Limmudnik, Asher Joffa

value of R45 billion. Of that, we have been able to help the city recover R9 billion. We hope to recover as much as possible.”

She said she had been focusing on getting the basics right – “stabilising energy supplies, having a clean water supply, fixing roads, keeping the city clean, making sure there’s affordable and reliable transport, and so forth”.

The city had hosted a two-day energy indaba to look at how to stabilise electricity in Johannesburg, Phalatse said. “We hate loadshedding. We’ve worked out that we need to generate an additional 500MW of power to offset loadshedding in Johannesburg. We’ve started asking the private sector to tell us how it can help us do that. City Power is now finalising the process.”

Phalatse said she planned to combat cable theft and attacks on infrastructure. “We’ve started applying for critical infrastructure to be declared critical infrastructure in terms of the Infrastructure Protection Act. That will help us access resources to increase its protection.”

She said she would soon be bringing out her *Golden Journey* newsletter to keep the residents of Johannesburg up to date with the latest developments in the city.

A medical doctor by profession, Phalatse has gone from private practice to public service.

“I’m a very simple girl from Mabopane township north of Tshwane, raised by two educator parents,” she said. A big turning point in her life was when she found herself in a rural town in North West Province, rendering disability services on behalf of the South African Social Security Agency.

“Many of the people who came to me for this benefit

Continued on page 11>>

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Central Europe “not just about death camps and shtetls”

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Hungarian-born Tamas Buchler is doing what he can to dispel the myth that central Europe is all about death camps, encouraging people to recognise that Jews have a good life there today.

Speaking at Limmud Johannesburg last weekend, Buchler said the image of central Eastern Europe Jews being happy and thriving is suppressed to reinforce the narrative that American Jews are in “the golden country”, living the American dream.

“Actually, life is really great in Europe. It’s safer and cheaper,” said Belgium-based Buchler, the project co-ordinator of Networks Overcoming Antisemitism – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe.

Buchler said central Eastern Europe didn’t fit into the mainstream Zionist narrative in Israel and the American Jewish narrative. “When American Jews think about central Eastern European countries, they usually think about shtetls, Yiddish, *Fiddler on the Roof*, etc. This cultural context isn’t true. Yiddish was never a language in Hungary. Most of the Jews in Czech Republic, Slovakia, never heard the word ‘shtetl’ in their life. They were urban, cosmopolitan Jews, most of them heavily assimilated.

“The initial Israeli experience of central Eastern Europe is the March of the Living, a government-subsidised programme for young Israelis. It’s a brutal experience. They visit the death camps in Poland. They see death of Jews, genocide, antisemitic Eastern Europeans, ugly landscapes, and unkind people. So, they grow up thinking that this is central Eastern Europe. There’s no counter-narrative.”



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

Tamas Buchler

“A couple of years ago, an Israeli woman started an artistic project called, *And Europe Will Be Stunned*,” Buchler said.

Israelis dressed up as kibbutzniks, and marched in the streets of Warsaw in 2010 for this project. “A tower and wall were built in line with the idea that you start building a kibbutz by raising a tower and getting a fence.”

The idea behind the project centred on what would happen if Israeli Jews of Polish origin left Israel and moved back to Poland, said Buchler. “All of a sudden, Jews arrive in contemporary Poland and build a kibbutz in the middle of a park. Of course, it’s a mad idea. Nobody ever considered it for a second, but she wanted to play with the idea of the way we think about Europe and Israel today.”

“Often, most American Jewish media and Israeli media talk about the possibility of massive immigration from Europe due to antisemitism. This is factually untrue. “Statistically speaking, Jews haven’t had a safer place in the world than central Eastern Europe since World War II. Jonathan Ornstein said that if you look at hate-crime statistics, Poland is by far the safest place for Jews.”

As for Hungary, the majority of Jews in Budapest survived World War II, and continued to thrive afterwards, said Buchler of the city where he was born and raised.

“Today, Budapest is home to 120 000 Jews, the third most Jews in any European city behind Paris and London. Even with the Hungarian government being homophobic, racist, and not nice people to work with, it’s a trailblazer when it comes to combatting antisemitism.

Israel is way too important to be left to Israelis

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

In spite of what Israelis may think, Israel needs the input of all Jews living in the diaspora, especially those in South Africa, says Israeli activist Anat Hoffman.

Speaking at Limmud in Johannesburg, Hoffman stressed the need for global Jewish dialogue around Israel’s complexities.

“If you believe Israel is your country, you have a voice,” said Hoffman. Hoffman is the executive director of the Israel Religious Action Center, the public and legal advocacy arm of the reform Jewish movement in Israel, and served as the Jerusalem city councillor for 14 years as the leader of the opposition.

Discussing the 400 000 Arabs who aren’t Israeli citizens and reside in East Jerusalem in abject poverty, Hoffman provided insight into Israel’s challenges. This group cannot vote for the Knesset and generally reject their right to vote in municipal elections in the “Zionist” state, exacerbating their service issues. On their travel documents, their nationality is listed as undecided. They don’t know where they belong. “It’s a time-bomb waiting to explode,” Hoffman said.

“Such complexities illustrate why Israel needs all the advice, guidance, and sharing it can get.”

Many diaspora Jews think the best gift they can give to Israel is to support it unconditionally, Hoffman said. Yet, around the dinner table, families have discussions about their shared values. “You’ve denied Israel and yourselves this dialogue. Often, Israelis themselves are the ones to silence you.”

That’s because Israelis say they’ve all served in the army and paid their taxes, so they ask who you are to tell them how to run their affairs. Yet, in spite of mandatory conscription, statistics show that half of

18-year-old Israelis don’t go to the army, Hoffman says. Israel also has a high rate of tax evasion.

Jews in South Africa generously give when Israel faces a crisis, she said. “You give because you know that Israel is a joint project, the historic Jewish project of our lifetime. Don’t let anybody turn you away from the table. You don’t just have the right, but an obligation to say what you think.” This is particularly true of South African Jews, who in their gut know “bulls**t”, particularly when it comes to racism or discrimination.

Hoffman highlighted the Yiddish word *freier*, a common part of the Israeli lexicon. This is the belief that anyone who follows the rules, takes no for an answer, and does things like stand in line for a bus without pushing someone out of the way, is a sucker.

“This is something you can help Israelis with,” she told the audience. “How you behave and treat people is inspiring. You have a gift for Israel. Israelis don’t want this gift, but I think you need to save us from ourselves.”

Hoffman also spoke of a lack of leadership in Israel, especially in terms of brokering a peace deal between the Palestinians and Israelis. Here, she said, Israel can learn from the example of Nelson Mandela.

“We need someone with that kind of vision and power who will make Israelis and Palestinians do what needs to be done to create a two-state solution.”



Anat Hoffman

Misconceptions about antisemitism work against fighting it

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

To fight antisemitism effectively, we need to understand common misconceptions about it, American journalist Yair Rosenberg said.

“The problem,” said Rosenberg, “is that more people than ever say they’re against antisemitism, but around the world it doesn’t seem to be getting better. In some cases, it seems to have got worse.” For example, in the United States, the biggest percentage of hate crimes are committed against Jews in spite of them constituting just 2% of the country’s population.

Rosenberg, who writes for *The Atlantic*, where he runs his *Deep Shtetl* newsletter, is a frequent commentator and speaker on the issue of antisemitism in the modern era. The first of three main misconceptions surrounding antisemitism – that lead to ignorance about what it actually looks like and therefore inaction in stopping it – is the word itself, said Rosenberg. This is confusing as some mistakenly give it positive connotations associating it with “anti-racism”, or argue about who the semitic race actually is.

The word was coined in the 19th century by an antisemite seeking a scientific-sounding name to make his Jew hatred more respectable. “Over time, Jews themselves appropriated the term to describe prejudice towards them, but it was a word designed purposefully to obfuscate the hate, not explain it,” said Rosenberg. Therefore, debates around the word can overshadow the need to tackle the term itself. When discussing antisemitism, he suggested, incorporate terms like “anti-Jewish prejudice”.

The second misconception about antisemitism, said Rosenberg, is what he calls, “the Holocaust trap”. Though



Yair Rosenberg

countless movies have been made about the Holocaust, only about 15 have been made purely about antisemitism without reference to the Holocaust.

This pattern can be damaging, Rosenberg said. “It’s taking a pervasive historical phenomenon, a living force that continues to this day, and reducing it to its most extreme manifestation.” So, people equate the Holocaust with antisemitism and therefore see it as an ancient relic that doesn’t happen anymore. This is why there’s shock when antisemitic attacks occur today.

“In educating people about antisemitism, we need to contextualise the Holocaust as part of a broader, antisemitic conversation, not as its totality,” said Rosenberg. “The Holocaust was built on a foundation of antisemitic ideas and structures which still reverberate today.”

Finally, Rosenberg spoke about the conspiracy theory that largely underlies antisemitism – something most people don’t understand. “When people think about prejudice, most think about social prejudice, saying those people are different to me and I don’t want to hire them or live near them,” he said.

Though antisemitism has that component, it also has a unique, additional aspect – the conspiracy theory of Jewish control of the world. This is the idea that Jews are behind everything from politics to the media, causing all the world’s problems, Rosenberg said.

“This isn’t something that you see in most forms of social prejudice, which is why most non-Jewish people aren’t aware that this is how antisemitism manifests in the world.”

By understanding these misconceptions, he concluded, we can better fight any antisemitism we may encounter.

Whither the Israeli left?

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Israeli left-wing is in tatters following the failure of the Oslo Peace Process, Benjamin Netanyahu’s 12-year rule, and the dramatic decline of the Israeli Labor Party, Gilad Halpern told a Limmud audience.

An Israel-based journalist, broadcaster, and media historian, Halpern pointed out that the left-wing Labor Party had gone from 54 parliamentary seats in 1965 to just seven in 2021.

He said the party’s first decline occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.

“First of all, geopolitical developments undermined the basic ethos of Israeli society that was promoted by the leadership of the Labor Party. Then, there was the great crisis of the Yom Kippur War [in 1973], which in large part the Labor government of Golda Meir was blamed for. Later, in the 1980s, other political developments arose which led to many questioning the basic assumptions that prevailed in Israel, namely whether Israel was a victimised country fighting for its life or a country with imperious tendencies with some sort of intransigence in its unwillingness to engage with its surroundings.”

All of this caused resentment and disgruntlement, which Likud, a centre-right to right-wing political party in Israel, capitalised on, leading to decline in support of the Labor Party, said Halpern.

“There was a shift in voting from the left to the right. To this day, we see a great separation along ethnic lines in voting patterns between the predominantly Ashkenazi middle class voting for left-leaning parties, and the lower middle working class voting mainly for Likud and other right parties.”

Following the onset of capitalism in the 1980s, Israel, a centralised economy in its early years, experienced a

financial crisis which led to a political crisis, said Halpern.

In 1992, “a bump on the road on the way down was Yitzhak Rabin’s victory as leader of the Labor Party. He ran on a rather progressive ticket with the intention of starting the diplomatic process with the Palestinians mainly,” said Halpern, who is completing a PhD dissertation on the Jewish press in Mandatory Palestine. “He enjoyed a rather slim majority in Parliament. His term in office tragically ended with his assassination, but it’s more than likely that had he lived to run for re-election more than a year later, he would have lost.”

When Netanyahu became Prime Minister in 1996, “he made the Palestinian peace agenda impossible and undesirable. This led to the complete decline of the left.”

Around this time, “Israel was a secluded country surrounded by very hostile countries imposing a pretty successful embargo. With this and the thaw in relations with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, the Oslo Peace Process failed.

Until today in the Israeli Parliament, almost nobody talks about the Palestinian peace process.”

Halpern said the Labor Party was saved from extinction by its current leader, Merav Michaeli.

“Young, ideological, socialist politicians are now calling the shots within the party. The question is whether what’s worked so well within the party membership will work well within the larger electorate.”

Although the peace agenda has been neglected entirely, other items on the Zionist-left agenda are still going strong, “such as support for the independence of the Supreme Court and other socially liberal agendas like civil liberties and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights”.



Gilad Halpern

Bacher and Teeger a hit for KES and history

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Both King Edward VII School (KES) head boy Dean Bacher and Grade 11 student David Teeger are batting all-rounders. Both are the only current students at KES to have full sporting and academic colours. Both hope to play for the Proteas. Both are sons of prominent Jewish cricket players, with Bacher’s father, Adam, having played for the Proteas between 1996 and 2005, and Teeger’s father, James, having kept wicket for Transvaal during the 1992/1993 season.

For the past year, Bacher and Teeger have been the respective captain and vice-captain of the KES first cricket team, leading the team to victory in winning the Johnny Waite Knockout competition, a Gauteng T20 tournament.

“It’s been a good experience,” says Bacher. “Obviously, it’s quite an honour to captain a team at KES with all the rich history that surrounds the school, especially on a cricketing front, but it’s been a privilege.”

When Teeger succeeds Bacher as captain next year, he hopes to create a team culture that enables all kinds of players and cricketers to grow and thrive.

Coming from a family in which his dad was a professional cricketer, Teeger has been playing the game since he was six. “My love for the game just grew through primary school,” he says.

Following his dad’s footsteps into cricket “is nice because there’s always someone to talk to. He experienced the same stuff as me, so whenever something happens in one of the

games, you almost know he has experienced it”, Teeger says.

Bacher, meanwhile, isn’t just following in the footsteps of his dad, but also his great uncle, the legendary Ali Bacher.



Dean Bacher and David Teeger

“I try not to think about it too much because I want to create my own legacy,” he says, “It’s special that two members of my family played for South Africa. It’s nice to look up to that, but at the same time, I want to create my own path.”

Bacher remembers holding a bat almost since he was born, and has a good cricketing brain.

In the first term in 2022, he memorably scored hundreds against Affies and Hoërskool Waterkloof, while Teeger notched up three figures against Grey High School and St

Stithians College.

Away from the cricket field, Bacher has been invested in his role as KES head boy, a position he thinks hasn’t been occupied by any other Jewish student this century.

“It’s quite a diverse role,” says Bacher. “You have to oversee all the leadership in the school, all the prefects. My main goal is to inspire the boys to become better men in society.”

He attended King David until Grade 2. “I was always going to go to KES high school because my dad was an old boy and so was my grandpa and great uncles. But I attended one open day in 2012 and just decided from that point that it was the school I belonged to. I begged my parents to take me out of King David and put me into KEPS, the primary school.”

Bacher says he’s one of only two Jewish students in matric at KES, adding that there may be a maximum of 20 Jewish kids in the whole school.

“There isn’t a lot, but I wouldn’t say it matters. We’re a very diverse school. We don’t really judge or anything based on religion. The Jewish boys do try to stick together as much as they can.”

Teeger was originally at Hirsch Lyons before going to KES at “the last minute”.

“I always wanted to go because my coach, Jimmy Cook, works at the school and he encouraged me. My parents originally weren’t too keen on the idea. They wanted me to go to Jewish schools, but I really wanted to go, and ended up there. I think I was the latest applicant in my whole grade in the school.”

He says he’s now used to being at a school without many Jewish students. “It’s an inclusive school. If I have to miss school because it’s a Jewish holiday, everyone understands, but you know your place. The Jews are quite tight. We all get along with each other because it’s something we have in common.”

Joburg mayor pledges to make city work

>> Continued from page 9

couldn’t afford food. I realised what I really wanted to learn was how to get the government to work for the people, so I started researching and became attracted to the Master of Medicine programme at Wits University. In 2011, I moved to Johannesburg to study for four years. At the end of that, I ended up in Alexandra.

“One Sunday morning, five young men were wheeled in, all of them with multiple gunshot wounds after somebody had walked in and started shooting randomly. We lost two in that casualty. They died in our hands. I couldn’t stop crying for a week. I realised I had to do something.

“While I was getting ready to establish my business, I started complaining, writing to everybody who I knew had some influence.”

The then Democratic Alliance [DA] deputy shadow minister for health responded, “Have you ever thought of getting involved in public service?” she was asked.

Phalatshe applied to be a PR [proportional representation] counsellor based in Alexandra to help the people drive their issues, while continuing with her work plans. “Elections came. We ended up in a coalition government. Without warning, the DA mayor announced me as the MMC for health and social development [in 2016]. It was a full-time job, so from that day onwards, I became a full-time politician.”

Nevertheless, she eventually put up her hand to be the Johannesburg mayoral candidate for the DA. “We got only 26% of the vote. We needed 50% plus one, but I came out as the mayor. It can only be by the grace of G-d.”

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Marikana still haunts a decade later

PETA KROST

The Marikana massacre, which took place exactly 10 years ago on 16 August 2012, was a horrific watershed moment for post-apartheid South Africa.

It was the most deadly use of violence by the South African security forces against its own civilians since the Sharpeville massacre.

Multi-award winning Jewish photojournalist Alon Skuy was there to document the horror of this deadly event. His work from this time was documented in a book called *Marikana 2012/2022*, launched at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in Parktown on 3 July.

Skuy created the book from this deadly event because he “wanted to put a record together to honour the unity and resolution of the miners and community fighting for a living wage, and to pay tribute to the memory of those that perished”.

He told the *SA Jewish Report* this week, “I wanted to reflect the awful senselessness of the day and the far reaching repercussions, and to have a physical representation as well as a digital record of this watershed moment in South Africa’s history.”

The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre was the perfect place for the launch, said Skuy, because it’s “a solemn and important institution that reflects pain and hope”.

For Skuy, the events of Marikana were “extremely difficult to photograph and process”. It was “one of the lowest points in South Africa’s democracy”.



“The far reaching consequences and pain for the families and communities are still so deeply felt, and many still don’t have closure,” he said.

Considering the events, he said, “After the events at scene one [when the police shot the first 17 striking miners], it wasn’t immediately clear what had happened. It was important

light only in the weeks and months after 16 August 2012.”

Having since emigrated to Miami in the United States, Skuy said that looking back after 10 years, “I would hope that the events serve as a lesson about the sanctity of life, and how healing is an ongoing process.”

Looking back at his career to date, Skuy describes Marikana as “one of the most significant and haunting” of his photographic experiences – and he has covered a plethora of violent, volatile, and traumatic events including the ongoing



killed beside him”. This still haunts Skuy 10 years on.

Skuy’s book of photographs is contextualised by the words of journalist Ufrieda Ho.

Writing about Skuy’s book, journalist Niren Tolsi said, “Alon Skuy’s unflinching photographs document the moments leading up to, during, and after, the massacre at scene one. They go on to document the grief that accompanies death before sensitively exploring the socio-economic conditions that still wrack mining towns like Marikana because the



Alon Skuy

to document what was accessible to have a starting point and record of the tragedy.

“The images are confronting and hard to look at. They aim to be a humble contribution to the many other records along with other photographers and investigative journalists. The events of scene two [which took place 15 minutes after scene one, when another 17 miners were killed without the media being able to cover it] came to



scourge of xenophobic violence in South Africa over the past decade, the earthquake in Haiti, and famine in Somalia.

He has never been able to forget the image from the Marikana massacre of “a police officer gesturing to a severely injured miner to stay down on the ground after many of his fellow workers had been

government won’t hold mining companies to account for their deficient transformation record. Skuy demands that we look not just at Marikana and the massacre it has become synonymous with, but how these are connected to our own lives and what kind of country and world we’d like to live in. This book behoves us to imagine something beyond individual interest. It asks us to relocate our humanity among pages that reflect violence, trauma, grief, inequality, and injustice and to rekindle our solidarity with each other.”

Skuy has given the *SA Jewish Report* permission to use his photographs in commemoration of this deadly day in our history.

I’ve won Mrs SA even if I never get the crown

Comedian **Claudine Herman** (formerly Ullman) is a finalist in *Mrs South Africa*. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with her in the run-up to the big night.

What does it mean to be a finalist in Mrs SA?

I’m doing this not only to prove to myself, but to prove to my son and whoever else can be inspired that you can do anything you set your mind to. Little girls like me aren’t supposed to dream of becoming beauty queens. I always say that I’ve walked on hot coals, performed in front of thousands of people, given birth, and now I’ve walked the runway in a tiny winy, itzy, bitzy, yellow polka dot bikini. What can I not do?

What did it take to get this far?

I didn’t realise that this journey was going to be so difficult, in-depth, and taxing, and that I would be pushed out of my comfort zone and have to learn about myself. It’s a hell of a lot of work, but anything that takes this much work, time, and effort, is important. It’s a deep dive into my self-worth, really revealing what I’m capable of.

What do your family think about it?

When I first told my husband I was entering, he thought it was a big practical joke and I kind of thought so too because I didn’t realise what it entailed. When I went to the first workshop, I was like, “This could be the greatest thing I’ve ever done,” because this was really going to be an MBA of life.

I’ve learnt what makes me an incredible, gorgeous, worthy Claudine. A lot of people think that comedians are always happy, but I’ve suffered from depression and anxiety, and this has really solidified for me what makes me unique and special and what I have to offer this world. I have had the privilege of finding my voice in this process.

How do you compare to the other finalists?

When I first started this competition, I was intimidated by the beautiful, inspiring, and unique women who all have these incredible stories. Some of the women are cancer survivors. What they have overcome to be part of this competition is truly remarkable. I’m surrounded by incredible and inspiring women, so instead of seeing them as competition, I look at them and ask myself what I can learn from them.

I understand why it’s called a sisterhood because no one is trying to sabotage anyone else to get the crown. When I entered, I though thought it would be like *Miss Congeniality*, and there would be women pouring olive oil on the stage or pearls under our heels, but the women in the competition have been supportive, they have had my back when I needed them to. I see the other finalists as powerful women I look up to.

What do you think your chances are?

If you asked me at the beginning of the competition, I would have said I’m not a beauty queen, I’m doing it for fun. But at this stage of the competition, we’re now in the final, down to the top 30, and I think I have what it takes to win. Just saying those words, I’m so proud of myself because I’m a comedian, I’m not supposed to be a beauty queen.

The competition is about finding your authentic inner beauty, and I have reached the point where I see myself as authentically beautiful. So I think I have what it takes to win.

What’s the first thing you would do if you won?

I would call my sisters in London and Australia and jump up and down for joy. The funny thing is that although I’m just a finalist, I feel like I’ve already won. I entered



to get out of my comfort zone and prove anything is possible and I can do whatever I set my mind to. I feel like I’ve done that. It has been so rewarding. The crown would feel like a bonus now.

What did you have to overcome to get this far?

So much, starting with caring about what other people think of me. People initially

said I shouldn’t do this because it wasn’t for me, it wasn’t comedy. The biggest thing I needed to do was stop giving a damn what other people thought of me. That has been the most liberating part of my journey. If that isn’t winning, I don’t know what is.

Don’t Jewish girls have too many insecurities to enter such competitions?

I don’t think it’s only Jewish girls – all girls. We all worry about the giggle and the wiggle and what’s rubbing together and stressing over crap like that. I had those insecurities, and I was worried about my thighs and the giggle in my costume and my cottage cheese cellulite thighs. I worried about what people thought of me, and I actually wasn’t living, I wasn’t feeling the ocean water, I wasn’t experiencing life to the fullest because I was so worried about what people would think of me. It’s true that women, Jewish or not, have many physical insecurities that stop them from living their lives. I decided I wasn’t going to do that for one more month, day, or second. I wasn’t going to allow my physical insecurities to hold me back from living my life and my dreams.

Isn’t the age of “beauty pageants” dead and buried?

Hell, no! It’s a huge industry that’s empowering women around the world. If you can get over those complexes and walk out on that runway, saying, “This is me, take it or leave it,” what could be more empowering than that?

What do you plan to do after Mrs SA if you don’t win?

I’m still a comedian, I still create content for brands, I’m still a hilarious human being, so whether I win or don’t win, I have won! I’m already taking so much out of this competition about my self-worth, how I can empower myself as a woman, and how I can empower those around me.

I’ll be proud of all the lessons I’ve learnt. I’ll use this Mrs SA platform to create characters or even a new show around the journey. I might create comedy around being in a beauty pageant. I have loads of material, and I’m going to continue being the hilarious, funny, gorgeous me.

Do you believe the community has a role to play in such competitions?

The Jewish community has supported me through this. It has completely had my back, and followed my journey from the beginning. I’ve had overwhelming feedback from the community on social media – people who don’t know me, saying we’ve got your back, we’re rooting for you, we want you to win. It’s because of them that on days when I feel it’s too much, I know I’ve got to continue. I’m grateful.

When are the finals and what can we expect?

The finals are on 11 November, my number in the competition is 11, and my life path number is 11. So if you’re into numerology, it should mean we can expect an amazing night. I’m just ready to rock that runway. I look forward to a hell of a good time.
• Follow Claudine on @claudinecomedy on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok.

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Ghosted by the ministry of relations

I try not to take it personally but sometimes, in my darkest moments, I suspect that Naledi Pandor doesn't love me. It happens in the small hours of the morning when the world is quiet and I'm at my most vulnerable, when I wonder if she even cares about me at all, and if I mean anything to her. Those are the times when the words of all of 80s group Air Supply's songs feel the most real.

"I'm lying alone with my head on the phone thinking of you till it hurts."

As South Africa's minister of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), and with the actual word "relation" in her title, I would have thought she would have been a little more skilled at the whole communication thing. And yet, time and time again, her department ghosts me.

They never call. They hardly write, and even when they do agree to speak to me, they either cancel or they stand me up. I'm beginning to suspect that they don't want to chat.

Which is surprising given that they are quick to communicate when they choose to.

Following the latest conflict in Gaza, both Dirco and the African National Congress were quick to make statements condemning Israel for most of the evil in the world. (If they can use poetic license, then so can I.)

My morning show producer contacted them to arrange an interview in which we could debate the legitimacy of what they had written. Unfortunately, and even understandably, they were busy with the visit by United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in South Africa. I imagine he was here in an attempt to illustrate to the "Minister of Relationships" why her attraction to the bad boys like Russia will bring her no joy. The department promised to catch up with us as soon

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



as he had left and it had caught its breath.

And then Blinken left, and we contacted them again. Only this time, we called Dirco spokesperson Clayson Monyela from a blocked line, meaning he couldn't see who was trying to contact him. Which is likely why he answered the phone and why, out of embarrassment, he agreed to speak to me on air the next morning.

Only, when we called him at the arranged time, he killed the call. And then killed his phone, leaving us no way to get hold of him.

Imagine if I were sensitive?

The fact that Dirco chooses to not speak with a community radio station in of itself speaks volumes. Dirco is the foreign ministry of the South African government. It's responsible for South Africa's relationships with foreign countries and international organisations, and runs South Africa's diplomatic missions. In essence, it represents us. And it's meant to reflect the values and ideals of South Africa.

Like any government department, it's also answerable to the electorate.

I don't know why Pandor has ended the relationship with me and the Jewish community. I don't know why she's chosen to alienate and demonise Israel. What I do know is that her views already matter little to anyone outside of the country, and that it won't be long until it matters nought to those of us who used to care.

The illumination of Limmud



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Since its founding 14 years ago, Limmud has provided our community with an unrivalled array of outstanding local and international speakers presenting on topics relating to the full gamut of the Jewish experience. As a result, the annual Limmud festival has become one of the most keenly anticipated events on our communal calendar, and it's indicative of the continued high levels of Jewish identity, literacy, and interest in our community. The heightened enthusiasm at this year's Limmud weekend in Johannesburg was in large part due to it being held in person for the first time in three years, adding that crucial element of togetherness and immediate shared experience that draws participants to one another and contributes so much to the general sense of excitement and buoyancy generated by such events.

Limmud embodies the values of inclusivity and respect for diversity that underpin our own mission to be as fully representative as we can of the Jewish community in South Africa. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies has been a firm supporter of Limmud from the outset, and its lay leaders and professional staff members have regularly spoken on its platforms. This year, I participated in two of the sessions while National Director Wendy Kahn participated in a third. Kahn was part of a panel discussing the implications of the Bongani Masuku judgment in terms of how the law prohibiting antisemitic and other forms of hate speech is applied by our courts.

In my first session, I again had the opportunity of being in conversation with Jonathan Ancer on

Mensches in the Trenches, a book recording the stories of some of the less high-profile stalwarts of the anti-apartheid struggle from our community. The book, authored by Ancer, was brought out under the auspices of the Board earlier this year. This was followed by session titled "The state of the Jewish community psyche", in which I was a panellist with Benji Shulman and David Abrahamson. The subject being debated was obviously a serious one, but all those present were genuinely invigorated and energised by what came out of the session. The undoubted physical and psychological strains that South Africa's challenges are placing on each of us were acknowledged, but there was also a recognition of the many strengths we have as a Jewish community and how this ensures the continued richness, vibrancy, and resilience of Jewish life in our country.

Limmud provides a welcoming, respectful space for exploring, debating, and learning about every kind of Jewish-themed topic, from art to Zionism. We're fortunate to have this opportunity to be enriched by our Jewish heritage and to have so many dedicated people in our community who on an ongoing basis work to make this possible. I warmly congratulate the organisers of Limmud 2022 for their passion and enthusiasm, and wish them all success in their upcoming events in Durban and Cape Town.

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

Thursday 18 August
• The SA Jewish Report hosts a webinar — Saray Khumalo, <i>Conquering Everest & Life</i> . Time: 20:00. Contact: bit.ly/jrlive136 or editorial@sajewishreport.co.za
Friday 19 August
• King David Pre-Primary School Victory Park hosts its open day. Time: 09:00 to 11:00. Contact: 011 446 7865 or vpmarketing@sabje.co.za
Saturday 20 August
• The South African Zionist Federation hosts former Israeli soldier Roei Ben-Tolila in <i>From Crisis to Opportunity</i> . Time: 20:00. Contact: 011 640 2601 or admin@sazf.org
Sunday 21 August
• New Beginnings presents Rayana from <i>Saris for Change</i> . Time: 10:00. Venue: Pine Street Shul Contact: 082 568 6016 or lynarch@worldonline.co.za

Monday 22 August
• The Union of Jewish Women hosts Dawn Norton on <i>Domestic workers and the changing legal landscape</i> . Time: 10:00. Entry: R40. Contact: info@ujw.co.za or 011 648 1053
Wednesday 24 August
• ORT SA presents <i>Business Bootcamp — Basic Business</i> with Aki Kalliatakis. Time: 09:00 to 10:30. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za
Friday 26 August
• ORT SA presents <i>In The Boardroom</i> with Karen Schneid. Time: 08:30 to 10:00. Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za



Letters

COMMUNAL ORGANISATIONS SHOULD DEMAND PANDOR'S REMOVAL

Following hot on the heels of our international relations minister's declared anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment was news of the terror attack in Jerusalem on 14 August, when a shooter opened fire on a bus near the Old City.

It's no coincidence that this attack follows the three-day conflict between Islamic Jihad militants and Israel which ended only a week ago after Egypt negotiated a truce.

It would be most surprising if Dr Naledi Pandor issued a statement condemning the attack. It's no secret that her views on Israel and Jews in general were made clear to American Secretary of State Antony Blinken during her meeting with him in South Africa recently.

Our government has officially adopted a neutral stance to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and as a result, I call upon the South African Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to seek an urgent meeting with the South African president and demand that he remove Pandor from his cabinet immediately. Her continued presence does little to advance the government's stance that South Africa belongs to all who live in it including members of the Jewish community, and does nothing whatsoever to enhance South Africa's image internationally.

– Leslie Kobrin, Johannesburg

DONATE SIFREI TORAH TO GROWING COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL

In several Jewish communities throughout South Africa, the population has diminished through emigration to Israel, the United States, Australia, and other countries, or the local population "semigrating" to Johannesburg and Cape Town. Brakpan, Benoni, Boksburg, and Springs all had thriving, vibrant communities some years ago, but their shuls have since been closed and sold, or in the case of Brakpan, turned into a museum.

Israel has fortunately grown phenomenally. New communities are springing up, and Ramat Bet Shemesh and Modiin are prime examples of Anglo growth, in

which South African, American, and English young from communities have established synagogues.

Most of these shuls are operating borrowed Sifrei Torah.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Sifrei Torah which aren't being used and are possibly deteriorating or have been given on as supernumerary to the needs of the few thriving shuls in the two big cities could be donated to these new shuls in Israel where they're so needed?

– Colin Frankel, Netanya Israel



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New youth leaders at King David Victory Park

her dedication to the social responsibility in her work and the positive impact she made, which World ORT hopes will inspire others.



Cycalve bike ride a life altering event

Torah Academy Principal Rabbi David

It's not an easy journey, and concentration



Photo: Ilan Orenstein/ONYX

is needed at all times to deal with huge potholes, speeding trucks, and slow-moving cows. The best evidence of togetherness occurs on the uphill, in which everyone shouts encouragement. As the hills seem to get steeper, they keep going, knowing that on the fifth day, they will cycle into Durban at sea level to the cheers of the Durban Jewish community and a well-earned dinner. That goal keeps their feet pedalling, and for some, it will be their first time they put their toes in the ocean.

Sandringham Gardens and Golden Acres turned up in large numbers for Jonathan Birin's Women's Day Concert in the gardens of Sandringham Gardens on 9 August. Birin's repertoire revolved around film classics, ranging from *Fiddler on the Roof* with *Sunrise Sunset*, to a medley from *Jailhouse Rock*, which had residents rocking 'n rolling on the patio. A good time was had by all.



Rhona Gross and Phyllis Birin

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