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South African Jewish Report

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“It doesn’t end with the Jews,” US antisemitism expert warns

NICOLA MILTZ

World-renowned antisemitism expert Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt has confirmed that the cartoon that led to the *SA Jewish Report* leaving the South African Press Council was, without doubt, antisemitic.

The *SA Jewish Report* wrote about this cartoon after it was posted on the Facebook page of the South African Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Coalition two years ago depicting a caricature captioned “Greedy Clover Bosses”.

The cartoon depicts a gluttonous, overweight man with a hook nose stuffing a pile of money into his mouth while a worker is drawn as a diminutive figure sitting in front of an empty plate.

It’s accompanied by the caption, “Greedy bosses connected to apartheid Israel. Blood curdling milk [and cheese, yoghurt, etc.]. Every reason to boycott Clover! Change your brand.”

At the time, South Africa’s largest dairy producer, Clover, had been bought by an Israeli consortium in a multi-billion rand investment deal.

This controversial cartoon led to the *SA Jewish Report* leaving the Press Council rather than apologising to the anti-Israel group for labelling the cartoon antisemitic, following instructions from the council to do so.

“Are Clover’s bosses Jewish? Then there’s no debate,” said Lipstadt, a historian and the United States

special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, who was visiting South Africa last week. Lipstadt is professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, has published multiple books on antisemitism and Holocaust denialism, and has devoted her life to fighting antisemitism and Holocaust denialism.

During her visit, Lipstadt, who is concerned about rising rates of antisemitism globally, met local Jewish communities, government officials, university students, scholars, and civil society representatives. She discussed actionable strategies and opportunities to work with them to counter antisemitism, as well as anti-Muslim hatred, racism, and other forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Without knowledge of the cartoon saga, a cursory glance at the offending cartoon elicited this response from the esteemed professor: “It certainly is a caricature. The stuffing of the mouth, the nose, the greediness, the jowls, are all traditional attributes used by antisemites, and then Clover has been bought by Israelis, so they’re greedy bosses. There’s no debate. If it had been bought by Italian mafioso, [it would have been different], but it’s been bought by Israelis, that closes the circle.”

On hearing about the *SA Jewish Report*’s refusal to apologise she said, “That’s guts, that’s standing up.”

She said the cartoon had echoes

of an offensive mural featuring antisemitic tropes painted on a wall in London in 2012 by a US-based graffiti artist supported by former leader of the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn, who was accused many times of failing to act against antisemitism especially in connection to hatred of Israel, later conceded that he was wrong to support the antisemitic artwork. The saga was referred to in Lipstadt’s book, *Antisemitism Here and Now*.

The mural, which was subsequently scrubbed off, was titled *Freedom for Humanity*, and depicted a group of

businessmen and bankers, some of them Jewish, counting money around a Monopoly-style board balanced on the naked, bowed backs of black workers.

Referring to the Clover cartoon, Lipstadt said, “It’s that kind of thing.”

In an interview with the *SA Jewish Report* at the Apartheid Museum last week, Lipstadt, who has visited the county four times before, this time in her new role representing the White House, said, “I’m not here to preach or wag a finger, I’m here to spread the message that it’s important to take the small things seriously. Words matter.

Take antisemitism seriously because it’s a threat to democracy.

“Take this issue seriously. Recognise that something that starts with the Jews may not end with the Jews. There’s an interconnectedness of hatred. You cannot fight hatred and prejudice in silos. You can’t say, ‘I’m against only racism and antisemitism is fine with me, or vice versa’, because someone who hates one usually hates the other, and there’s a deep-seated connection.”

Lipstadt is arguably best known for the libel suit filed against her in the UK by Holocaust denier David Irving in 1996, whom she had called a Holocaust denier in her book, *Denying the Holocaust*. Lipstadt won the case in 2000. She went on to write a book about it, *History on Trial*, which was the basis of the 2016 film, *Denial*, starring Academy Award winner Rachel Weisz as Lipstadt.

The celebrated historian, who is single, told the *SA Jewish Report* that if she had young children at home, she didn’t know if she could have given up six years of her life and 12 weeks in London during the trial, thereafter contributing to the making of the movie. “Being single has made it easier to do what I do. I’ve found my calling in other ways.”

Asked why it was so important for governments to take antisemitism seriously, she said, “Antisemitism threatens democracy and a society

Continued on page 4>>



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt at the SAJBD Gauteng Conference



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“May this sapling grow tall and strong” – Eli Kay honoured in Israel

ROLENE MARKS

“Israel was everything to Eli, and Eli was everything to Israel,” Eli Kay's father, Avi Kay, told people gathered in the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael – Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) Lavi Forest to pay tribute to the South African lone soldier who was brutally murdered last November in a terror attack on his way to work at the Kotel tunnels.

This coming Monday, 21 November, marks a year since Kay's brutal murder at the hands of a Hamas terrorist.

News of his murder reverberated around the world. From Johannesburg to Modiin, where his family had made aliya, and all across the globe, the news was devastating.

In the wake of his death, more and more people from all walks of life would share stories about how Kay had made an impact on their lives, and many sought to honour his memory with a variety of projects and mitzvot.

“Eli loved all of Israel's citizens.

The words that are inscribed on his tombstone describe that love. It didn't matter if you were haredi, or secular, or Arab – Eli loved everyone,” Avi said in an emotional speech at the unveiling of a memorial plaque in Kay's honour.

The KKL-JNF Lavi Forest is situated in the verdant hills of Israel's north. A moving memorial that pays tribute to the South Africans who fell in defence of Israel is at its heart.

Representatives of KKL-JNF Israel, JNF SA, Telfed, a group of students from South Africa from the MTA Limmud programme, and several others joined the Kay family for this special unveiling.

The names on small plaques on the memorial tell the stories of South



An event honouring Eli Kay at the South African Memorial Forest in the Lavi Forest, Israel

Africans who, since before the birth of the modern state of Israel, paid the ultimate sacrifice, in battle or felled in terror attacks. Kay's name was added, and dedicated with prayers of remembrance.

Focusing his address on the young people gathered, Avi told Kay's story, “Who was Eli? Eli was a Yeshiva *bocher*. He made aliya,

**IT DIDN'T MATTER IF YOU
WERE HAREDI, OR SECULAR,
OR ARAB – ELI LOVED
EVERYONE.**

and as a lone soldier, served in the army. He gave his army service his all. After the army, he found his place and passion in agriculture, working the land. Eli was a South African and South Africa was in his DNA, it was his moral compass, and made him who he was.

“The words said at a *brit milah* are written at the top of this memorial, and they are fitting,” Avi continued. “The words speak about *am Yisrael* [the people of Israel], and

the memorial contains the names of those who died giving their blood so that we can continue to build this amazing country.”

Avi told the youth representatives from MTA Limmud that they were the next generation, and it was up to them to take what Kay had built and continue to build on that, putting their values first.

In spite of a torrent of rain, everyone gathered around a small sapling that Avi and his son, Kasriel, planted in Kay's memory.

Avi mentioned that he was planting a tree in the name and memory of Eli, named for his grandfather, Eliyahu, and that he had with him a photograph of his father planting a tree. “We have come full circle,” he said.

Kasriel also spoke about how Kay, an ordinary guy, had made an impact.

As the anniversary of Kay's brutal murder approaches and the opportunity to reflect on his memory and his extraordinary legacy with it, participants are calling for his tree to take root, growing tall and strong like the impact Kay had on so many.

The KKL-JNF Israel; JNF South Africa, represented by Michael Kransdorff, Bev Schneider, and Isla Feldman; and Telfed, represented by Dorron Kline, were behind this memorial.

Sefiros give us strength

Torah Thought



**Rabbi Ryan Goldstein –
West Street Shul**

“He sent them away from Yitzchak, his son, while he was still alive, to the land of the east.” (Chapter 25;6)

The building block of Kabbalah is understanding the 10 sefiros. Sefiros are manifestations of Hashem in this world.

In fact, they are the only way that we can relate to Hashem. Any other image or concept we may have is tantamount to *avoda zara* (idolatry).

One of the *sefiros* is *gevurah* (strength, might, justice). When we feel that something is unfair or unjust, we're tapping into an aspect of Hashem in this world. Another example is *tiferes* (beauty or truth). When we struggle with falsehood, we're struggling with an aspect of Hashem in this world. When we tap into our thoughts and intellect, we come face to face with *binah* (understanding) and *chochma* (wisdom), two more of Hashem's attributes.

Malchus is the last of the *sefiros*, and is often erroneously translated as a regal feeling. However, this isn't correct. *Malchus* means kingdom, and the way we interact with this aspect of Hashem is by accepting a system and realising that things fit into place as subjects do in a kingdom. Part of this acceptance is seeing the universe as being organised by a supreme king and ruler, not chaotic and random.

(You can also appreciate *malchus* by studying Kepler's mathematical principles of planetary motion and become awed by the precise equations that rule a

universe. A universe that's so exacting, with no room for chaos and chance.)

On a personal level, we can see and feel that there's structure and direction in our lives or we can choose to accept that everything is random and ruled by chaos. But one thing is certain, we can never straddle two systems at the same time.

It's for this reason that Abraham

sent Yishmael and later the other children that he had with Keturah away to the Land of the East. If they couldn't accept the G-dly Torah system, then there was no place for them in the house of Avraham and later Yitzchak. It was better that they build lives elsewhere, under a different system.

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In this week's parsha, Sarah dies at age 127.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew, marries Isaac.

Abraham fathers six additional sons.

Abraham dies at age 175, and is buried beside Sarah by his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

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Istanbul blast rips tourist centre apart

TALI FEINBERG

Almost everyone who has visited Istanbul would recognise the busy pedestrian street near Taksim Square where a bomb exploded on 13 November, killing six and injuring more than 80.

But for one South African Jewish woman, it hit especially close to home. “For 18 months, I lived just off Istiklal Street, around the corner from the site of the explosion. I would walk past that exact spot daily, sometimes multiple times a day,” she says, speaking on condition of anonymity.

“I would go to Istiklal for everything from banking to grabbing a coffee, catching the subway to work, and going out for a meal. Basically anything you need can be found and done there. The street is a long pedestrian avenue stretching from Taksim Square to Galata. It’s a shopping hotspot and somewhere people go to eat, drink, and party. There are two major subway stations on either end. You’ll find shops like H&M and Zara along with small souvenir and jewellery shops. Carts selling roasted chestnuts and sesame breads are dotted along the avenue, as well as busking musicians.

“Istiklal symbolises a cultural and religious meeting point for Turks in that people from all sectors of society frequent the area,” she says. “Just off the avenue, you’ll find fancy hotels, mosques, low-income neighbourhoods, historic sites, conservative neighbourhoods, fine dining restaurants, and museums. It truly is a kaleidoscope of all Istanbul has to offer, and I’d say is also a source of pride for Istanbulites.”

Her friends living in the area “are shocked and nervous, but they’re resilient, and have lived through tumultuous times in the city, including the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and the attempted coup in 2016. They say things have quickly returned to ‘normal’ because people cannot avoid Istiklal Sreet, it’s too central a hub.”

She says the area is always crowded with Turks and tourists alike. “It’s always buzzing, and therefore [a terror attack] would cause maximum fear and casualties. The attack comes just as Turkey’s tourism sector is beginning to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. This attack will certainly set it back. For residents, this attack shatters the sense of calm they’ve enjoyed for the past five years since the last major terrorist attack in Istanbul in 2017. Turks are also worried about

the possibility of further attacks ahead of the presidential and legislative elections next year.”

Tens of thousands of tourists pass through the thoroughfare every day. Another South African Jewish man in Johannesburg, also speaking anonymously, says, “We loved our visit to Istanbul in 2014. We stayed on Istiklal Street, and found the energy and vibe to be unlike anything we had experienced before. It’s hard to believe that this special part of the unique city of Istanbul could be attacked in such a horrific manner. It’s upsetting that these extremists are destroying a secular, vibrant country.”

A video on social media showed a massive red and orange ball of fire and a loud bang as the explosion erupted, with people fleeing. Later images and videos showed victims lying motionless on the ground as first responders rushed to their aid. An image of forensic teams working at the site showed an abandoned baby pram amidst debris.



The incident has been deemed a terrorist attack, according to Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay.

CCTV footage shows a woman sitting on a bench for more than 40 minutes and then getting up one or two minutes before the explosion, leaving a bag behind, according to Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ. He said Turkish security forces believe the woman is the suspect, and officials are investigating her.

Istanbul Governor Ali Yerlikaya confirmed those killed as a woman and her daughter, a man and his daughter, and a man and his wife.

According to the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, the blast took place as Istanbul’s Jewish community was hosting a Jewish culture day,

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in which they welcomed large crowds into the Neve Şalom synagogue. The event was cut short as news spread about the blast, which took place just blocks away.

Neve Şalom was one of two synagogues bombed during a 2003 wave of attacks that killed 55 people in two days. The event was to be followed by a commemoration of those attacks, which killed six Jews in the synagogue bombings.

As Turkish-Israeli relations have warmed in the past year, Turkey has become a major tourism hotspot for Israelis, with nearly 7% of Israel’s population visiting Turkey this past summer, according to the *Jerusalem Post*.

Local political analyst Steven Gruzds says, “This isn’t the first high-profile attack in Turkey – remember the deadly Istanbul airport attack in 2016. Like this recent one, no one claimed responsibility. So there are a number of possibilities. It could be ISIS, Iran, or its proxies, or the PKK. The latter has denied involvement and sent condolences to the bereaved.

“Terrorists target tourist areas to get maximum publicity, sow fear, and create chaos,” he says. “However, I’m not sure why this would happen now. It could be connected to Turkey’s involvement in Syria. It could be Kurdish separatists, or it might even be connected to Ukraine. In June this year, Israel issued a warning to tourists in Turkey that an attack by Iran might be imminent, but I don’t see a direct connection to this incident.”

After the explosion on Sunday, Israeli security officials issued a travel warning for Turkey, and urged Israelis who were already in Istanbul to stay in their hotels and follow Turkish law enforcement’s instructions.

Many South Africans also visit Istanbul, but “at this stage, I cannot comment on whether people should avoid travelling to Turkey”, says the Community Security Organisation’s Jevon Greenblatt. “The truth is that attacks like this can happen anywhere in the world, including South Africa.

“My advice is that people should go about their business without fear, while at the same time exercising vigilance, have a plan to get away from any dangerous situation they may encounter, report anything suspicious to the local authorities or security, and finally, research any location they may be travelling to in order to understand risk factors and avoid no-go zones. We cannot live in fear, but we also mustn’t become complacent.”

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Kidnapping ordeal spotlights dangers of online dating

NICOLA MILTZ

A Johannesburg man is “lucky to be alive” after being kidnapped and brutally beaten for nearly three days when a person he met through an online dating app turned out to be a vicious scammer.

Shayne Kaplan, 45, is a single, shy, slender-built man who has always battled to make friends. He works in the accounting profession and belongs to a crochet group that meets every so often. He turned to Tinder in October to connect with someone and possibly begin a friendship.

The person he met online last month, he said, “seemed decent”, so he agreed after a few days of communicating with him that they should meet. “He didn’t ask for money, taxi fare, or airtime, which I believe to be red flags, he just seemed nice,” said Kaplan.

Never in his wildest dreams did he think that this potential match would turn into a nightmare.

Kaplan has agreed to share his ordeal in the hope that it will act as a warning to others of the potential dangers of online dating.

“I’m hoping my story will save people from going through this trauma,” he said, after spending two weeks in intensive care while doctors battled to save his right eye injured during the ordeal.

Kaplan agreed to meet the man on Saturday, 22 October in Denver, an industrial suburb in eastern Johannesburg. He told his mother, with whom he lives, that he would be home in a few hours.

Soon after meeting, they drove to a shack nearby where all hell broke loose.

“Within seconds, about five men entered the shack, tied me up, and told me it was a robbery. I feared for my life,” said Kaplan.

They demanded his wallet and bank cards, which he did not have on him, and then proceeded to search his phone for his banking apps, demanding his secret pin codes. “They soon started transferring money out of my account,” he said.

The following day, he said he was beaten for not providing a password for a different account, which he said he didn’t know.

“They beat me with a wire hanger, tried to strangle me with it, I think I passed out three

or four times,” he said.

“They said they would let me go, but after a while, I started to lose all hope, thinking that I wasn’t going to get away. I davened to G-d to get me out of there. I was anxious about my mother and my family, whom I knew would be worried.”

When he didn’t return home on Saturday evening, his mother contacted Kaplan’s brother, Peter, who frantically tried to reach him on his cell phone.

“It was out of character for my brother,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Eventually the Kaplans received a text message saying that Shayne would come home on Sunday. “When he still didn’t arrive, we decided to go to the police to report him missing,” said Peter.

He said the family was given the run around by Shayne’s kidnappers, believing him to be in the Heidelberg area. “We soon realised this was just a decoy, and remained in the dark about his whereabouts,” said Peter.

Eventually, the family reported the matter to the Community Active Protection (CAP). CAP deployed its special operations unit, field tracing unit, and intervention unit as part of a multidisciplinary team involving members of the Community Security Organisation to locate the victim and suspects. Information received by its operations teams “led the team to the Johannesburg CBD, where the victim was found”, CAP said.

They found Kaplan in his car shortly after he had been released by his attackers on Tuesday morning.

“I didn’t know where I was, I was disorientated. If it wasn’t for CAP, I don’t think I would have made it home,” Kaplan said.

Hatzolah got him to hospital, where he underwent two surgeries to repair his eye.

Kaplan said the incident had scarred him. “People must be careful who they speak to on social media and not be too trusting. They should



really know somebody before agreeing to meet them in person, and rather meet someone in a public place,” he said.

“I blame myself for this. I didn’t see his urgency to meet me as a red flag. It has made me feel like I can’t trust anyone anymore. I’ve seen the cruelty that people are capable of, the lack of respect for a human being, and the lack of remorse.”

“Online dating is one of the most popular ways to meet a potential partner and form relationships,” said clinical and forensic psychologist, Pam Tudin, who is also the founder of Klikd, which provides resources for parents, teachers, tweens, and teens to navigate the digital landscape.

“We know 50% of people are trying online dating as a way to connect. What we also know is that \$1 billion [R17.2 billion] has been scammed by online scammers on dating platforms in the past three years,” she said.

“We have to question what’s driving our need to connect to people online. Obviously, loneliness and a need for a relationship are a huge part of it. What we can do in the face of that loneliness is have a measured response and ask other people for their input. Meet the person sometimes with a friend so that you can gauge together what your response is so that you aren’t so clouded by the wood-for-the-trees factor,” she said.

Scammers vary from romantic scammers, in which the romance feels so real, intense, and intimate, it opens the person to the possibility of financial fraud, to crypto scammers, sextortion scammers, and fishing scammers.

“At best, you’ll be left embarrassed and at worst, you can lose a lot of money or be physically harmed,” Tudin said.

She advises people not to give away too much personal information online.

“Do a quick Google search of their photos, do a Google reverse-image search to make sure you’re not coming up with a too-good-to-be-true Vogue model image that doesn’t belong to the person. When you decide to meet the person offline, always ensure it’s in a public place and meet more than a few times to get a true sense of the person,” she said.

“If they start talking about needing money or some sort of help, or having a medical emergency, that’s a red flag.”

A case has been opened at the Cleveland Police Station. The investigation is ongoing and no arrests have been made yet.

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“It doesn’t end with the Jews,” US antisemitism expert warns

>>Continued from page 1

which is based on tolerance. Antisemitism is a conspiracy theory which inculcates a lack of faith in democratic institutions – the media is no good as it is controlled by Jews, the banks are controlled by Jews, the government is controlled by Jews, so you end up not believing that your democracy works.”

“I’ve been told by many that actual acts of antisemitism in South Africa are quite low,” she said. “What has worried more people is rhetoric, whether it’s associated with Israel or other things. Bad things, including genocide, always begins with words and escalates from there. Part of what I’m here to say is, “Take the small things seriously, because the small things become big things.”

The important thing is to get people to understand that antisemitism and attitudes towards Israel – criticism of Israel – are two separate things,” she said on the South African government’s stance. “Criticism

of Israel isn’t necessarily antisemitic. It’s important to understand that antisemitism is a pernicious prejudice with terrible ramifications, and this isn’t just a matter of a particular position vis-à-vis Israel but is something that often morphs into antisemitism and uses antisemitic language.”

The negation of Jewish nationhood is a form of antisemitism, she writes in her book *Antisemitism Here and Now*. Though America hadn’t made overt efforts to encourage South Africa to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism, she hoped South Africa would.

“It’s important to continue to speak up. You’re never in trouble if you stand up for truth,” Lipstadt said. “You may have a hard time, but in the end, you’ll be on the right side.”

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Criticism isn’t always hatred

Having someone like international antisemitism expert Professor Deborah Lipstadt in our midst is eye-opening. Not only do we have access to the wealth of her expertise, but she brings us views that are untainted by our familiarity with the South African anti-Israel lobby’s form of antisemitism. We’re exposed to large scale anti-Israel hatred, and it never seems to let up. Those behind the campaign also never seem to tire. However, Lipstadt is right that it’s important to differentiate between what’s just people having a go at Israel because of something specific the Jewish state or its leaders have done, and blanket anti-Israel hatred. They are different, and even South African Jews and Jews around the world may criticise Israel for certain things it might do, but still support the state of Israel 100%. We may not like something the country has done, but we still believe it has every right to exist and – like any country – has a right to make mistakes. As South Africans, we’re constantly criticising our government, parastatals, and national leaders – it’s almost a national pastime. Who didn’t verbally decimate former President Jacob Zuma when he was still in power? Exactly – no one I know! Who hasn’t had a go at the government for loadshedding, the state of our economy, and I could go on? We all have. Does that mean we were or are anti-South African or haters of this country? It certainly doesn’t. For the most part, it means we love our country, want it to succeed, and would prefer that the rot that has set in is removed. We’re critical because we want to find a way to get rid of the problems we have so that we can heal our nation. So, when this week I heard many South African Jews criticising reinstated President Benjamin Netanyahu and the fact that far-right-wing fanatics have made it into government, it didn’t mean that they were Israel haters or anti-Israel lobbyists. It meant, quite simply, that they were unhappy that such people were in government in Israel because they believe such people will be detrimental to the country they love. They want the best for Israel, and they believe that Itamar Ben-Gvir, the head of the fanatical right-wing Otzma Yehudit party, and Bezalel Smotrich, the leader of the Religious Zionist party, will be harmful to Israel. This doesn’t make them Israel haters. And when people who aren’t Jewish have the same reaction, it doesn’t make them Israel haters either, nor does it make them antisemites. It makes them critical of a political situation in Israel, which is anybody’s right. Just as it’s their right to be critical of the British, United States, or any country’s government or actions. In fact, in Zvika (Biko) Arran’s opinion piece on this page, we have an Israeli calling on South African Jews to stand their ground and make their criticism of the election results known, not just to each other, but to the Israeli government. So, while in this case, it’s clear what this reaction is about, it does sometimes get murky, especially when we have so many Israel haters in our midst. These aren’t people who are critical of the result of a democratic process in Israel. These are people for whom Israel and its people can do nothing right. For these people, Israel is a monster, one that’s abusive and genocidal. Now, when you constantly face their babble about Israel this and Israel that, in which Israel is often blamed for things it didn’t do, it’s easy sometimes to doubt when and where they crossed the boundary into antisemitism. So, I bring you back to a situation that I would sometimes rather forget but I was reminded of this when our senior journalist, Nicola Miltz, this week asked Ambassador Lipstadt whether the cartoon that was behind the *SA Jewish Report* being “turfed” out of the Press Council was, in fact, antisemitic. We had no doubt about it, but it was great to ask someone who wasn’t well versed in the South African Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement or our particular issues with it. She was categorical that it was antisemitic. And I have to say, after being battered about it for so long, and having people debate it in the media, it was good to hear her unfaltering response. I was also happy to hear her tell us not to back down – not that we would – in the face of such antisemitism. We won’t ever accept this or any other form of antisemitism. We also won’t be silent when it comes to our own disquiet about situations that arise in Israel or around Israel – a country we love and want to thrive. And we’ll not be ashamed to hold these views, nor will we be browbeaten by Israel haters.



Right-wing Israeli coalition goes against everything you hold dear



OPINION

ZVIKA (BIKO) ARRAN

A few days ago, I had the privilege of meeting Professor Deborah Lipstadt, the United States special envoy for monitoring and combating antisemitism, after her keynote speech at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng conference. I was the only Israeli there who wasn’t on duty as an official of any establishment or institution. I was able to appeal to her for a frank response from the American government to a possible appointment of racist ministers and the creation of an extreme-right-wing coalition in Israel. With kind *Yiddishe Mama* eyes, the ambassador answered in fluent Hebrew: the American administration will react to the new Israeli coalition, but she couldn’t do so because it’s not part of her portfolio of confronting antisemitism. Yes, antisemitism is apparently something else. The SAJBD gave a great example of this when the Board and its lawyers paid tribute to the lengthy case against Bongani Masuku that ended a few months ago with a clear verdict from the Constitutional Court, namely that demonstrating against Israel with anti-Jewish slogans and symbols like swastikas is hate speech and an act of antisemitism.



Leader of Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), Itamar Ben-Gvir

In a few days, Israel will be led by a purely radical right-wing coalition for the first time. Re-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn’t have any moderate parties willing to sit with him in government. They don’t want to back a criminal defendant who intends to change the Israeli judicial system in order to postpone his own trial. So, to get back in power, Bibi had to co-operate with the extreme forces he promoted in order to maximise his bloc. However, it’s evident that he doesn’t really want them as partners. Those influential allies – more than half of the Likud’s new coalition – have their own reasons to reform the courts and attorney’s office. And obviously, they also intend to make their own changes to suit their beliefs and needs. These are the political leaders who protest under the slogan “Death to all Arabs”. These are the party heads who call for the segregation of Jewish and Muslim women in hospitals. These members of the Knesset just a few days ago attended the *yahrzeit* of the racist Meir Kahane and their hero, the murderer of dozens of Muslim worshippers, Baruch Goldstein. These are the provocateurs who want to release the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s murderer from jail. These are the leaders who insist that they want the law of Israel to be solely based on the *halacha*. These same leaders want to change the Law of Return and prevent the right of people with one Jewish grandparent to become Israeli citizens. These are the parties with an agenda against the LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer, intersex) communities, against women’s rights, against the pope visiting the holy land, and who support so many other strict and offensive values. I understand that from a distance, here in South Africa and across the globe, you generally support Israel as a Jewish state. The land is ours. Nothing

should threaten the Zionist dream we’ve held for generations. I also believe that if you had the opportunity to vote in the diaspora, many of you may have voted like 10% of Israelis and supported the Religious Zionist Party. You would have done so for many reasons. This is, in fact, even easier when you’re outside of Israel and far from the details and practicalities of what this means. I also don’t have any doubts about our right to Israel, a Kruger National Park-sized piece of land. But this corner of the former Ottoman Empire was never empty. Other people lived there for centuries, and will continue to do so. It doesn’t matter what you call them. There are millions of other people living in Israel – at least 20% to 50% of the population, depending on who’s counting and how. The Balfour Declaration and United Nations resolutions – which gave the Jewish people international support and permission to build a homeland and fulfil the dream of *Shivat Zion* (return to Zion) – all mentioned and acknowledged those natives of the land. The Torah itself commands us, “The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens [Leviticus, 19, 34],” and reminds us, “for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” I know. It’s hard for Jewish communities to criticise the Israeli government. Especially in a situation in which you have an elite and national leadership which is hostile towards Israel, as is the case in South Africa. So standing up against Israel over one issue, you may believe, will get you into trouble in other areas. However, you need to behave like your British sister community, which refused to meet one of those extreme leaders. You, as a community in South Africa, need to stand up against specific ministers in Israel because they go against the moral and ethical values you hold so dear. You have fought for so long against racism and extremism, and you need to lend your voice to stop this in Israel. Tell the Israeli prime minister frankly that you respect Israeli democracy, but as Jews and South Africans, you cannot co-operate with those people he now has as partners. Condemn this co-operation. Reject any normalisation in hosting those extreme leaders. As South Africans, you know better than anyone else exactly what segregation policies lead to. Please help us Israelis to understand this, and bear it in mind. Antisemitism has undermined Jews for generations. It still jeopardises Jewish existence, and diaspora Jewry’s proud full participation in society. Protesting and demanding the expulsion and deportation of a certain religious or ethnic group when it relates to Jews is certainly antisemitism. What then is it when it’s against whites, or Muslims, or Arabs? Does it become acceptable if it isn’t aimed at Jews? Surely we should all be revolted by any person or party who wants to do the same thing to people who aren’t Jewish? And isn’t it even more abhorrent if this call comes from Jewish people against another ethnic group on our own piece of land? Madam ambassador, when hatred of a collective happens at the hands of Jews or Israeli leaders, we must – and are in fact obliged to – regard it as being clearly within the portfolio of antisemitism. Let’s not turn the other cheek over this.

• *Zvika (Biko) Arran is a publicist, social entrepreneur, lawyer, advisor to philanthropists, and has been in Israel briefly working on the elections. He lives in Johannesburg with his wife and four sons.*

Jew hatred transcends race, income, and politics, says US antisemitism envoy

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Antisemitism is on the rise throughout the world, Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the United States (US) Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, told the audience at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Conference at the Sandton Convention Centre last Thursday, 10 November.

“The best wish I got for Rosh Hashanah walking into shul this year was, ‘May you have an easy year.’ Sadly, it hasn’t been that way,” she said.

The New York-born Lipstadt said no matter where we turn, we seem to see escalations of Jew hatred. “We see it in physical attacks, rhetorical expressions, antisemitic imagery, and stereotypes. We hear it from long-term haters, government officials, NGO [non-governmental organisation] leaders, and from the person on the street to the person posting online. We find it on all points of the political spectrum.”

Lipstadt, appointed to the position by US President Joe Biden on 3 May, is among those at the forefront of combatting antisemitism worldwide, SAJBD Gauteng Council Executive Member Lesley-Anne Gatter said in her introduction to Lipstadt.

Lipstadt said one pundit quipped, “An antisemite is someone who hates Jews more than is absolutely necessary.”

“I may hate you for a good reason or because I’m simply paranoid, but if I hate you one iota more because you’re Jewish, that’s antisemitism.”

Antisemitism is a prejudice like other prejudices, yet it also has unique characteristics, said Lipstadt, described by the White House as “a renowned scholar of the Holocaust and modern antisemitism”. “First and foremost, it’s a conspiracy theory. It conceives of Jews as engaged in a giant, powerful conspiracy to haunt all other groups for their [Jews’] own good, particularly groups that are less powerful than them. Since, according to the antisemite, the Jew is all powerful, this includes just about everything.”

Second, unlike most other prejudices which tend to come from the right of the political spectrum, antisemitism is free flowing, emanating from all directions, Lipstadt said. “Irrespective of one’s political worldview, one can be an antisemite. One person can stand at one end of the political spectrum compared to another person, and they can both still share the same view of the Jew.”

Third, virtually all prejudiced people, certainly in South Africa’s tragic history, think in terms of racism, Lipstadt said. “The racist looks at a person of colour and sees someone not quite as smart, industrious, and talented as they are. They see someone as lesser-than.”

Antisemitism has a further but unique element, she said. “The antisemite also sees Jews as more powerful, controlling, and smarter but not in a good way – conniving, manipulating. In other words, using those smarts for nefarious ends. They think, ‘The Jew is someone I have to fear.’ So, not only does the antisemite punch down, as the racist does, they also punch up.”

Lipstadt said this is significant because, since you loathe and dismiss people you perceive as inferior, when you perceive someone as superior, not only do you loathe them, you fear them. “To protect yourself and your family, you must stop them. You have an obligation not just to keep them away from you, but to fight against them.”

Lipstadt, the author of *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, said one of the reasons she’s anxious to help people understand antisemitism is that often – certainly in the US – institutions, universities, corporations, and NGOs don’t include antisemitism when they talk about their fight against various prejudices.

“People ask me, ‘Why is antisemitism missing? Doesn’t hatred against us count? Is the fact that it’s omitted an act of antisemitism?’”

Lipstadt said sometimes it may be, while at other times, it may be an innocent oversight or a case of people failing to recognise that antisemitism is a prejudice akin to all other prejudices. “Part of the reason for this is many people finding it hard to conceive of the Jew as a victim. Jews are resilient, maybe it’s because we have had to overcome antisemitism in our history. We’ve faced so many terrible travails that surviving and recovering are built into the Jewish communal DNA. Often Jews don’t seem to present as victims who need support and protection, as is often case with other groups.”

When Lipstadt first visited South Africa in 2002, “She was already an international celebrity, having been propelled into the spotlight because of the now famous trial involving notorious Holocaust denier and



National Director of the SAJBD Wendy Kahn and Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt

Nazi apologist David Irving,” Gatter said. “Since then, Professor Lipstadt’s stature has increased. She has

been one of the most sought-after speakers on the international lecture circuit.”

Lipstadt has made three additional visits to South Africa since her first visit, “so I feel like an old-timer here”, she chuckled. “Secretary of State Antony Blinken, my boss to whom I report, was here for broad discussion with South Africa’s top government officials a little more than two months ago. Just last week, when I saw him at the state department and told him I was heading here, his face lit up. He was absolutely delighted. He told me how much he truly values his dialogue and partnership with minister of internal relations and cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor. Of course, President Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris were honoured to have welcomed President Cyril Ramaphosa to Washington DC just a few months ago.”

Masuku prosecution a personal journey for legal team

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The team which won the 13-year case against Bongani Masuku had the challenge of proving that Masuku’s statements targeting the Jewish community were antisemitic although he never once used the word “Jew”, according to advocate Carol Steinberg.

Steinberg was speaking about the Constitutional Court judgment against Masuku on 16 February 2022, which upheld the findings of the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Court that Masuku was guilty of hate speech. She was speaking at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD) Gauteng Conference at the Sandton Convention Centre on 10 November.

SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn said Masuku, then Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) international relations secretary, was ordered to apologise for offensive and inflammatory remarks he made against the South African Jewish community during Israel Apartheid Week in 2009 following violence on the Gaza border.

Antisemitism levels were increasing drastically in the country at the time, said Kahn.

Masuku, having previously refused to apologise, “finally did, in a letter and on the COSATU website”, said Kahn. “After 13 years, the SAJBD’s hate speech case against Masuku was successfully completed.”

Steinberg said that when she stood in the packed Constitutional Court during the Masuka case in 2019, “I realised for the first time that I wasn’t just a professional advocate doing my best for my clients. I was there for myself too. It was an extraordinary feeling. I had carefully prepared notes.”

Steinberg, during her counsel, said symbols such as a swastika represented antisemitic hate, and was used in one of the anti-Israel marches in South Africa.

“One of the judges interrupted me and said, ‘Mrs Steinberg, are you going to explain why the

swastika is a symbol of hate? You just assumed it is,’” Steinberg recalled. “I stopped dead in my tracks because I realised I had assumed the judges would know about the history of European Jewry and the Holocaust. I was wrong.”

Steinberg said she threw away her prepared notes and spoke about the atrocities Jews had faced.

“The day the judgment was coming out, the email arrived, and I flipped to the end,” she said. “I saw that we had won. Then I quickly read through it. When I got to the last paragraph, and the last sentence of the judgment, I burst into tears. Written by the judge who asked me to explain the significance of the swastika, it read, ‘It was apt to end with some words from the Torah’, which it did. That’s not something we put into our argument. That’s something she had gone out and found.”

pretending to be anti-Zionist when he was actually antisemitic. That’s what the Constitutional Court found.”

Steinberg said the court held that focusing on the plain text and ignoring the objectively ascertainable subtext would be ignorant, inappropriate, and antithetical to what the Constitution of South Africa demands. “Finding Mr Masuku guilty in some of his statements of hate speech turned on that paragraph. The court said, ‘You don’t invoke Hitler to talk about Israel. You invoke Hitler to talk about Jews.’”

Steinberg said she felt perplexed about why Masuku had referred to Jews being friends with Hitler. “Why? What’s the logic there?”

She cited the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks’s quote, “The ultimate weapon of the new antisemitism is dazzling in its simplicity. It goes like this. The Holocaust must never happen again. But Israelis are the new Nazis, the Palestinians are the new Jews, all Jews are Zionists. Therefore, the real antisemites of our time are none other than the Jews themselves.”

Steinberg said Masuku’s comment was encoded with this kind of thinking.

“Freedom of expression is really the cornerstone of any open democratic society, an extraordinarily important right,” Trengove said. “But there are two countervailing constitutional rights. The first applies to dignity, which entitles any person to be respected for the human beings we all are. The second is the prohibition of discrimination, which prohibits discrimination on a range of prohibited grounds – qualities that define people for what they are: race, sex, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and so on.”

Advocate Christiaan Bester, another of the SAJBD’s legal counsels in the Masuku case, said one of the most important remedies the Constitutional Court applied in the Masuku matter was that of an apology. “An apology, as the Constitutional Court acknowledged more than a decade earlier, is an important method in our country, in our constitutional dispensation, to bring about restorative justice.”



Professor Michael Katz, Advocate Christiaan Bester, Advocate Wim Trengove, and Advocate Carol Steinberg

Advocate Wim Trengove, one of the SAJBD’s legal counsels, said the case exposed the fallacy of disguised speech. “The court held that although the defendant maligned Zionists, it clearly meant Jews. That, I think, was the most important point. Although I also made the point, the one who made it most forcefully was my co-counsel, Carol Steinberg, who spoke passionately.”

On what was ground-breaking about the judgment, Steinberg said, “Masuku declared, ‘I have no problem with Jews. Some of my best friends are Jews. My problem is with the state of Israel.’ He even pointed to where he said that from time to time.”

The main argument her team made was to claim that Masuku had used proxy words – one word to stand for another. “He was using what is a socially and legally acceptable word to cover for a meaning,

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SA Jews divided on far-right Israeli cabinet

TALI FEINBERG

"I really do worry about [Benjamin or Bibi] Netanyahu's ability to control the tiger he has ridden in on. A challenge not to be underestimated," tweeted local commentator Howard Feldman on 13 November.

Feldman is one of a number of Jewish individuals and organisations in South Africa who have expressed concern about the outcome of the recent Israeli elections in which there was a swing to the extreme right. But others say the results offer new possibilities for Israeli society.

The alliance of Likud, Religious Zionism [which includes Otzma Yehudit], Shas, and United Torah Judaism has won the majority of seats in Israel's Knesset. Headed by Netanyahu, this coalition will probably make up the next government.

"Judging by their election manifestos and statements, Israel will be ruled by ultra-nationalist, racist, homophobic, religious fundamentalists with little sympathy or actual antipathy towards minorities and those who don't observe their approved version of Judaism," says local organisation, the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI). "Democracy itself will come under attack, and the potential for violence instigated and encouraged by such far-right extremist ideologies and policies cannot be overstated."

"An important question for our South African Jewish community is how to react to the increased legitimisation and political power of openly racist and homophobic political parties and the politicians who represent them," the organisation says.

However, Benji Shulman, the national policy director at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), says, "The SAZF supports Israel's vibrant democracy, which includes its democratic election process and the outcome of that democratic process."

"The overall voting pattern of this election was similar to the previous ones held in this cycle, with an even split between two camps," Shulman says. "The

number of Knesset seats, however, this time allows for a path towards a right-wing coalition which wasn't possible before. It's important to note that the government isn't formed yet, and negotiations are still taking place. The SAZF will engage the new Israeli government on issues relevant to our community."

West Bank as well as ban Arab political parties. In addition, he opposes civil rights for the LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer, intersex] community, and is committed to banning mixed-faith relationships. He was quoted as stating that he's a 'proud homophobe'."

But, according to Kruger, "Both Ben-

Religious Zionist Party leader, Bezael Smotrich, and Otzma Yehudit leader, Itamar Ben Gvir

Photo: Facebook



Ari Kruger, a financial advisor and Israel advocate, says, "This government and coalition have incredible opportunities. A strong, stable, and right-wing government will provide the best coalition outcome and hopefully [Benny] Gantz and his party will join the government to provide balance."

"There's no one in Israel who can match the brilliance of Bibi," he says. "He transformed the Israeli economy, brought peace deals, and placed Israel as a preferred partner internationally, while bringing a prolonged level of relative quiet and security."

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, "is a disciple of the notorious racist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane", JDI points out. "Ben-Gvir also considers the mass murderer Baruch Goldstein a hero for massacring 29 Palestinians at worship. He has a history of criminal convictions for racist incitement, he threatened violence against Yitzhak Rabin a week before his assassination, and he has called repeatedly for the expulsion of Arab citizens of Israel."

Bezael Smotrich is the leader of the far-right Religious Zionist party. "He recently proposed a law that would impose full Israeli sovereignty over the

Gvir and Smotrich will find themselves leashed by the brilliant political genius that is Netanyahu. The positive [element] of these controversial characters is that the Palestinians and enemies of Israel understand only strength, and they provide the deterrence needed to remind the extremists who's in charge."

Local community leader Reeva Forman says, "Of course, an extreme right-wing government is very troubling, and we have to be concerned. An Israeli journalist friend pointed out the irony of Netanyahu being the nearest to the 'left' of this coalition. The most extreme political party, Otzma Yehudit, is already demanding the cancellation of recognition of reform conversions and the alteration of the Law of Return."

Attorney Larry Marks says, "The government of the past year got much wrong: inflation, unemployment, and very little political victories other than a poorly thought out maritime agreement. We were and are still seeing daily terrorist attacks and an emasculated police and military, too frightened to act decisively for fear of prosecution in the face of almost impossible rules of engagement."

"What the Likud-led coalition is offering is increased police recruitment to deal

with terror, a change in the rules of engagement to deal with terror, subsidies and tax breaks on property purchases and fuel and basic foodstuffs, and economic support, as an interim measure.

"The Jewish community should support a stable government with a plan of action which includes economic support for olim and citizens. This will make it more affordable to live in Israel, and strengthen the Israeli economy, which will in turn allow the Israeli government to foster aliya and assist diaspora communities that are under threat."

JDI Executive Director Ashley Fischhoff says the organisation released its statement because, "Israel is central to our identity as Jews, and our South African identity connects us to a constitutional democracy. Both of these

need constant evaluation.

"Our concern is that democratically elected officials will use their political power to diminish democracy. We're concerned that political leaders are moving closer to an authoritarian society."

"Furthermore, the legal system may be revised to remove the power of the judiciary as a moderating force over the legislative process. This illiberalism is out of step with values held by most diaspora Jews as well as many Israelis."

"We must state our opposition publicly to these attacks on the rule of law with the same vehemence we would employ if our own rights were being diminished," she says. "We cannot be blinded by love for Israel to become apologists for authoritarianism."

New SAJBD Gauteng Council narrows divide with broader SA society

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The new South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Council is focusing its attention on improving the South African Jewish community and broader South African society.

The council was announced by Wendy Kahn, the national director of the SAJBD, during the SAJBD's Gauteng conference at the Sandton Convention Centre last Thursday, 10 November.

It's made up of Astrid Berman, Reeva Forman, Lesley-Anne Gatter, Sheri Hanson, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, Ruby Ichikowitz, Harold Jacobs, David Kuming, Shaun Matisonn, Danny Mofsowitz, Nick Selamolela, Rabbi David Shaw, Bernard Shull, Monica Solomon, and Daniel Witz.

"It's important for the Jewish community to contribute to broader South African society," says Mofsowitz, the marketing director at Atlas Finance. "I'd like to get involved in these sorts of initiatives together with our affiliate organisations as well as through the SAJBD's other civil partnerships."

Forman, the managing director of Reeva Beauty & Health, says, "I will strive

to address the divides within our Jewish community and that of the larger South African community, be they religious or political, by seeking that which we have in common while respecting the differences."

Shaw, the head rabbi at Sandton Shul, says it would be a privilege to interact regularly with a council endeavouring to make South Africa safer by filling it with love and respect for all South Africans.

Shull, an attorney, hopes "to play a meaningful role in the protection of civil rights and promote co-operation with all our fellow citizens".

Photo: Facebook



Sheri Hanson, Reeva Forman, and Danny Mofsowitz

"My goal is to work with and for people who, although they may have different backgrounds and beliefs, aren't 'less' than anyone else," says Solomon, who has been involved in communal affairs since 1996. "No one should feel threatened or unworthy in any way whatsoever because of their race, gender, religious, or political beliefs. The open dialogue that the SAJBD has always encouraged will ensure this."

Witz, an attorney, hopes to encourage engagement with leaders in our community to open doors for fresh initiatives and growth, to involve everyone willing to work with the SAJBD in areas of leadership and education, and to secure the future of the South African Jewish community.

"I look forward to working together with our diverse team to ensure that Gauteng remains a vibrant place for all Jews to live freely and proudly, and to support our community to continue to play its important role in nation-building and contributing positively to the growth and development of South Africa," says Ichikowitz, a director of TransAfrica Capital.

Berman, a director of Werksmans Attorneys, says, "My aim is to work with an incredibly dynamic group of people, alongside existing partners and through the creation of new partnerships, to build understanding and trust between Jewish and non-Jewish communities."

Jacobs, the chairperson of the previous SAJBD Gauteng Council, told the conference about the work done by the council during the past year and during

Continued on page 12>>

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COP funding gives green light to renewables in SA

TALI FEINBERG

COP27 (the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change or UNFCCC) in Egypt from 6 to 18 November appears to be a high-level event that doesn't concern the average citizen, but it affects every person on the planet as well as future generations.

"COP, which is held annually, is where UN countries take on legally binding obligations in order to deal with climate change," says local energy engineer Jarryd Lake. "South Africa has taken on extensive obligations, primarily to reduce its carbon footprint."

Hannah Sack, climate change researcher for the South African Institute of International Affairs, says, "COP brings together world leaders, national officials, as well as civil society and non-governmental stakeholders to negotiate how best to tackle climate change as well as reflect on the progress of previous years."

She notes that "at COP26, South Africa, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States along with the European Union formed the Just Energy Transition Partnership, in which R8.5 billion was pledged to help South Africa transition away from fossil fuels.

"Since then, South Africa has developed a Just Energy Transition [JET] framework and a JET investment plan. The plan identifies \$98 billion [R1.7 trillion] in financial requirements over five years to begin South Africa's 20-year energy transition. On 7 November, at COP27, it was confirmed that the funds would be dispersed using various mechanisms."

If South Africa doesn't transition away from fossil fuels, "the economy will continue to suffer with rolling blackouts, infrastructure instability, poor economic growth, and growing inequality", says Sack. "Reliance on coal continues to degrade agricultural land and contributes to South Africa's growing problem of abandoned and unrehabilitated mines. The poorest continue to suffer, through unequal access to electricity, rising fuel and transport prices, and polluted water sources. Switching to renewables will put South Africa on an economic recovery trajectory. It's vital, however, that communities reliant on the fossil fuel industry are provided with alternative employment opportunities."

She explains that "at COP21 in Paris in 2015, the Paris Agreement (PA) was formed, which aims to limit temperature rise to below 1.5°C above pre-industrialised levels. Today, there are 197 countries that have committed to the PA. COP thus provides an important opportunity to reflect on commitments to meeting the PA."

COP also "provides an important opportunity for developing countries to request support to tackle climate change. For example, Africa contributes only about 4% of global emissions, yet the continent faces some of the most devastating effects of climate change such as droughts, floods, and cyclones," says Sack. "Thus, COP provides an important opportunity for African leaders to

negotiate climate finance support to mitigate against the onset of increasing climate disasters."

Lake says COP27 is important because, "The obligations countries take on will affect their national policy. These will usually result in significant short-term costs that many poorer countries cannot afford. Given that most of the climate damage has been caused by richer nations, and that this damage disproportionately harms the poorer nations, it seems unfair that poorer nations should constrain their economies in similar ways to the richer nations that caused the problem in the first place.

"South Africa is both the largest environmental voice and polluter in Africa," Lake says. "South Africa is in a very tight space, and the question is how to manage the huge cost of a green energy transition with the huge impact of not going green. Our coal power causes immense health damage, and international and private funding is on condition that we go green.

"At the same time, coal power would by far be the fastest way to stop loadshedding and stabilise

our economy – a measure other countries are taking by building more coal power stations. But our current path leads to health, climate, and/or economic ruin. The direction we're moving in is a balancing act of moving forward with international assistance and not landing ourselves in a health, climate, or economic disaster.

"The World Bank and other international financing groups will hopefully pour resources into South Africa so that we can afford to move away from coal," Lake says. "The UN also hopes that new technologies will be ready in time to save us from the worst of climate change."

"Vulnerable and poor countries continue to face loss and damage from climate change," says Sack, referring

to the recent Durban floods as a good example. "At COP26, a three-year Glasgow Dialogue on loss and damage was established. There's a lot of expectation that this year's COP will deliver on financing commitments for loss and damage through a dedicated financing facility. There's also hope that the Santiago Network will be put into operation. This aims to connect vulnerable, developing countries with providers of the technical assistance, resources, and knowledge on loss and damage.

"At COP27, it's important that Africa positions itself as a key player in the fight against climate change so that financial support from developed countries can be procured," she says. "Given the Ukraine war, discussions about investment in different energy

mixes and extraction in Africa will be important, but should also consider that Africa cannot be locked into a fossil-fuel-based future.

"The role nature can play in the fight against climate change will also be particularly important. For example, it has been proven that mangroves have an amazing ability to protect coastal communities against the onset of floods, cyclones, storm surges, and sea-level rise, and have huge carbon absorption capacity. These qualities make mangrove restoration a vital climate-adaptation initiative that needs to be upscaled in coastal communities in Africa and other developing countries."

"Ordinary people can help by doing what seems like the smallest things," she says. "For example, being conscious about switching off lights, saving water, and recycling can help. I encourage citizens to engage with policy, take part in public consultation, and submit comments on draft policies. Ultimately, being informed can go a long way to support global initiatives like the PA."

Says Lake, "As Jews, we have a biblical mandate and ethical duty to both look after the world and to 'repair' it. These fall in-line with much of the UN's sustainability goals. Our communal values of looking after each other and future generations mean that climate change is critical to manage – it's too late to prevent it."



Photos: Facebook

Former US Secretary of State John Kerry

Good Things Guy finds only good things in Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Brent Lindeque isn't Jewish, but he has discovered he has a deep connection to the Jewish state. This South African writer, radio host, speaker, and founder of the Good Things Guy news platform, says he's still trying to process his trip to Israel, which was "a lot to take in".

"I went there for me, to explore this holy place where I might have some history, to connect with my faith and find good news along the way," he says.

Though he was raised Christian, he says he recently found out that his great-grandfather "may have survived World War II only because he left everything behind. We know nothing about his past, except that he arrived in South Africa with just the clothes on his back, all alone, possibly losing his religion in the process."

He learned this from his mother's sister, who is researching their family tree. All other branches go back into the past, except for his great-grandfather. "His history is just erased, absent. We don't even know where he came from. All we know is that he came to South Africa in the 1940s, and his surname was Green. He may have cut ties with his past because it was safer. I strongly believe that there may be a Jewish link, and I feel like it's my job to find out.

"So, I had a sense that Israel was calling me," he says. "And then, I was on a work trip to the Seychelles, and heard that my nephew had died in a car accident. As I was sitting there crying on the other side of the world, an Israeli came over and comforted me. Later, she started telling me about her life in Israel. So again, it felt like a calling from the universe. A few weeks later, I got the email about a trip for journalists. I mean, can G-d shout any louder?"

He grabbed the opportunity. As he arrived in Tel Aviv, he says, "We got to our hotel at only 22:30, but everything was buzzing. Little street restaurants packed with people, bicycles whizzing past, buses full of people, and art galleries and shops still open."

After a busy day of touring, "I ended my day back in the city at a beach bar", he says. "The nightlife in the city is

something else. I ate all the food, drank all the drinks, and had all the fun! Some of the group went swimming in the sea last night, while others went clubbing. I did both."

He expected Tel Aviv to be "a first-world city like London or New York, and it was exactly like that. It's such a vibe. The city is so alive. It lived up to – even surpassed – my expectations. Jerusalem, especially the Old City, took my breath away. Growing up, Bible stories were like fairytales – so long ago and from a different world. So, being where these stories come from was soul-stirring. No one can prepare you for that. I don't think I've cried that much in long time."

First and foremost a storyteller, Lindeque was particularly struck by the stories he heard. "There's such a diversity of people wherever you go," he says. He wrote on Facebook that he didn't come to the region to write about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, "but yesterday, I found myself listening to a story about how we have this immense power not only to create positive change for those around us, but for generations to come. Yesterday changed me."

Lindeque met a Muslim man named Ihab Balha, who "explained how he was born into hate. That changed when he started working in his dad's restaurant. One day, he and a Jewish customer got into an argument, which

became a weekly occurrence."

One day, "the Jewish man stopped shouting. Just for a minute. Ihab couldn't understand what was going on. He asked, and the man told Ihab that his wife was leaving him. Ihab listened, and shared his own pain and struggles. The two men found commonality in

their pain."

It was that moment that planted the seed of change. "Ihab started learning about other cultures, religions, and communities. He invited friends to meet people they had also been taught to hate. At first, it was just two people. Then 20. Then 200. Then 2 000. And then 20 000."

Most importantly, "he helped his family unlearn what they thought to be their own truth, to the point that he received his parents' blessing to marry a Jewish woman, Ora. When their first child, was born, there were no schools that catered for children who were 'interfaith'. Ihab and Ora decided that they would open one. In 2010, a unique kindergarten was born. Thousands of children have been educated by the couple, promoting a new language of peace and love. With people like Ihab around, I know there'll be peace."

Another person who had a profound impact on him was Holocaust survivor Rene Quint, who survived the camps as a child, lost her entire family in the Shoah, was adopted, and now shares her testimony around the world.

"Hearing her story made me realise why my grandfather may have left behind his history," says Lindeque. "As someone who is always looking for 'good news', it was hard to learn about the horror of the Holocaust from her and at Yad Vashem. But Rene was like the antidote to that – the way she built a life for herself and is such a kind and forgiving person."

Another highlight was celebrating Shabbat in Israel. "Shabbat is an integral part of this incredible journey. I will forever treasure this memory," he wrote. "As Christians, we see family only a few times a year. That needs to change."

Visiting a kibbutz was also a fascinating experience. "They have managed to cultivate land for farming in the middle of the desert. Our tour took us into the heart of the farming region, where we picked our own food. It was a special experience. It would be amazing to replicate the kibbutz in South Africa to help alleviate poverty and food insecurity."

He would love to visit Israel again, possibly with family members. As a gay man, "Israel was so welcoming. I never felt unsafe. I've heard Pride in Tel Aviv is amazing, and I need to go," Lindeque says. He also hopes to share "good news stories" from the region.

"This trip strengthened my faith in religion, good people, and the world."



Lost in Shoah, found after lockdown – an extraordinary family reunion

TALI FEINBERG

It was just a momentary sense during lockdown in 2020 that led Michalya Schonwald Moss to finding a long lost cousin who had survived the Holocaust and who believed she had no surviving relatives. “I was sitting in a Sukkah, and I suddenly sensed my ancestors in that space,” says Schonwald Moss, an American who made aliya and moved here after marrying her South African husband. She was inspired to find her family’s roots. The result reunited the fragments of her family scattered by the Holocaust. Through this process, Schonwald Moss discovered a cousin, Alice Grusová, who had been wrenched from her roots and lost touch with her Judaism during and after the Shoah. Her parents left her on a bench as they escaped the Nazis, and so she lost touch with her biological family. Her survival defied all odds. Now that she has reconnected to her family, meeting kin she never knew, she has also rediscovered her Jewish identity. “It was a miracle I survived. It was a very brave act by my mother,” said a sprightly Grusová from her home in Prague, in the first reunion with her new family members on Zoom. In the same meeting, Schonwald Moss’ father, Rabbi Joseph Schonwald said *Shehechiyanu*, thanking G-d “who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this moment”. Schonwald Moss recalled feeling that as South Africa went into lockdown, it was as if the world was ending. “As a third-generation Holocaust survivor, it felt like I had to prepare for the worst,” she said. This unease led to her journey of discovery.

She initially found a record of a woman named Klára, who was Schonwald Moss’ great-grandmother, Jolán Schönwald’s sister. Schonwald Moss hired genealogist Peter Absolon, who discovered that Jolán, Klára, their brother, Nathan, and their sister, Irén, had all perished in the Holocaust. Schonwald Moss didn’t know of their existence because her grandfather, Moshe (Jolán’s son), never spoke of them or how he survived. “Irén had two daughters, Marta and Edita [or Edith]. Alice, born in Prague in May 1941, was Marta’s daughter.” Marta and her husband, Alexander, were murdered in Auschwitz, but Edita survived and went to Israel. “Peter told me that Alice was still alive, 81 years old, and living in Prague. I cried – the Holocaust was so much a part of my life that I didn’t even know where it ended and I started. And now, here was someone who had experienced it, was alive, and related to me – my second cousin once removed. “My mother is a very open-hearted person,” says Alice’s son, Jan. His mother worked as a paediatric nurse and later in a kindergarten. “Now, she’s enjoying being a grandmother to six grandsons and three great-grandsons.” He is the youngest of Grusová and her husband, Miroslav’s, three sons. He says his mother’s initial reaction was shock at the news that she had undiscovered family members. She was sad to find this out so late in life. Twenty-four hours before Schonwald Moss and her family met Grusová over Zoom, “we found out that she has a first cousin alive in Israel – Edita’s son, Yossi Weiss”, says Schonwald Moss. “Every family with Holocaust survivors has secrets, some that are kept on purpose

and some that survivors just couldn’t talk about,” says Weiss. He suspects that the existence of his cousin was the latter. He now knows that Grusová was left on a bench as her parents tried to flee the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (now the Czech Republic) in 1942. However, he doesn’t know if they left her before they departed, or when they were arrested. How her identity stayed with her is unknown, but the family suspects the connection may have been made when her parents were interrogated and then recorded in the Nazis’ meticulous documentation. Grusová was cared for in a Jewish orphanage, and later taken to the TheresinStadt ghetto (or Terezin). Somehow, she remained safe, even after contracting typhus. Grusová recalls being hidden behind a wall by a German nurse when she was ill. The family suspects that she was at Terezin at the same time as her parents, and her parents may have known this but couldn’t see her. Later, they were murdered at Auschwitz. Grusová survived, and was reconnected with Edita, who survived Auschwitz, but with many internal and external scars. “There’s a picture of them together – my mother looks like a teenager,” says Weiss. He doesn’t know why his mother left Grusová behind when she made aliya. “I heard my mother speaking about Marta and maybe mention Alice, but I didn’t know I had a first cousin. So, discovering Alice felt like a miracle. Ever since, I have wondered ‘what if’. I could have had a ‘big sister.’ The lost connection with her aunt Edita is possibly the one that has affected Grusová the most. Weiss says his mother “came back



Michalya Schonwald Moss and Alice Grusová at the Kotel

and everyone was dead. Her husband froze to death in Siberia. As a single woman trying to piece together her life, maybe she couldn’t adopt her or the authorities wouldn’t let her. But she stayed to ensure Alice found a good family.” Grusová’s son says his mother was adopted by a Czech Jewish couple who survived the war by being in England. Also, said Weiss, “Palestine was like a war zone. They lived in an absorption camp, and later three families to an apartment. She may have not wanted to take Alice into another unstable environment.” Why Edita stopped communicating with Grusová is also unknown, but it may have been because her niece was behind the Iron Curtain. Weiss says that when Grusová visited Israel in July to meet her newfound family members, he ensured they discussed the pain caused by Edith’s decision. “It was healing for both of us,” he says. Weiss also

took her to visit his mother’s grave. “My mother had cancer. She said, ‘I’m not afraid of death. I already died in Auschwitz. Being dependent on others scares me.’ So she took her own life.” Tragically, Weiss’ son also died by suicide. The cousins visited places around Haifa where Weiss grew up, such as his mother’s perfumery. Weiss, Schonwald Moss, Grusová, and their families toured Yad Vashem and visited the Kotel. “She signed testimonies for her parents and brother [from her father’s first marriage] at Yad Vashem,” says Schonwald Moss. Her brother’s name was René, but was registered as female, so we got to correct that. He was 16 and died in Auschwitz.” Grusová’s son says she lost her connection to Judaism living under Communist rule, but the reunion has brought Judaism back into her life. Before this, Grusová wasn’t known to Prague’s Jewish community and The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which ensures reparations for survivors. This has now been restored. Grusová will be interviewed by Steven Spielberg’s foundation, and has been invited to speak at a Holocaust Memorial Day event. A South African production company will make a documentary about her life, and the family plan to have their next reunion in Prague. They talk regularly. “Make space for your ancestors,” says Schonwald Moss. “Being in Africa, it’s part of the culture, and we can do more to incorporate this into the way we honour those who came before us. When it comes to the intergenerational trauma, repair is possible – but it takes courage. The connections are there to find.”

Operations Manager

Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa (UOS Cape Council)



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Use of diabetic meds to lose weight sparks furore

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

There's a global shortage of injectable Schedule 4 diabetes medication because people without a serious weight problem are using it to drop those pesky kilos, leaving type 2 diabetics in a potentially life-threatening situation.

Since the weight-loss benefits went viral on social media, the supply of Ozempic, a prescription medicine for type 2 diabetes, has diminished, and the use of this drug for cosmetic purposes has sparked a massive debate on social media.

Dr Dina Gulan, an orthopaedic surgeon who suffers from type 2 diabetes, became embroiled in one of these online arguments. "I got really upset with some of these women who claim to be obese and refuse to be apologetic about using Ozempic," she says. "Then you look at the photos of these people, and they're not obese. This is purely lifestyle-related weight loss."

Gulan has had a tumultuous time since the shortage began. "I had to stop taking Ozempic," she says. "I've had to change my medication three times, which has definitely affected my glucose control. My bloods weren't good a month ago, and I have to repeat them now. If they're still problematic, that's basically me on insulin."

Along with diet and exercise, Ozempic is proven to improve blood sugar in those facing type 2 diabetes. It also reduces the risk of major cardiovascular events such as stroke, heart attack, or death in those suffering from this type of diabetes and heart disease. Ozempic is a GLP-1 receptor agonist, meaning it mimics the action of a hormone called glucagon-peptide 1, which regulates blood sugar levels.

"Ozempic reduces glucose through stimulating insulin secretion, lowering glucagon secretion and reducing appetite via GLP receptors at the brain," says Dr Lana Marcus, a general practitioner whose patients include those with diabetes.

While type 2 diabetes sufferers often have to increase their medication over the years and may eventually require insulin therapy to regulate their blood sugar, it's



Ozempic is being used for weight-loss purposes

something doctors delay for as long as possible, using the many diabetes drugs at their disposal.

"When one of those classes of drugs becomes unavailable, doctors could be restricted to inferior choices of medication," says Marcus. What's more, some commonly prescribed alternatives like Trulicity, another GLP-1 receptor agonist, are now also out of stock due to increased demand caused by the shortage of Ozempic.

More recently, the newer medication, semaglutide was released. "The version of semaglutide registered for type 2 diabetes in South Africa is Ozempic," Wolberg says. "The weight-loss version is called Wegovy, and is registered and used in multiple countries for this purpose. We await its registration as a weight-loss drug in South Africa."

Though these drugs act similarly, liraglutide products must be injected daily whereas semaglutide medications are injected only once a week, adding to their appeal. "Ozempic produces

This is purely lifestyle-related weight loss."

But just how ethical is the use of Ozempic for weight-loss purposes? Dr Charlene Wolberg, a medical doctor with a Master's degree in nutritional sciences who runs a specialist obesity practice, says Ozempic is used to treat obesity around the world.

There are two groups of medication produced by drug company Novo Nordisk which are indicated for both weight loss and type 2 diabetes, she says. "The first, liraglutide, has a weight-loss version called Saxenda, and a diabetes version called Victoza. They're the same drug, it's just the dosages that differ."

better blood glucose and weight-loss control than Saxenda," says Wolberg, "It's slightly higher in the chain of development." Saxenda is also more costly than Ozempic, and isn't covered by medical aid."

The only GLP-1 receptor agonist that has officially been registered for weight loss in this country is Saxenda, says Marcus. "Use of any other drugs in this class is off-label and at the discretion of the treating physician."

"It's not [a case of] people randomly using a diabetic medication as a weight-loss tool," says Wolberg. "It does have registration for weight loss, it's just not registered

as such in this country." She says the debate around its use amongst obesity patients is disturbing. "The World Health Organization and many similar bodies have diagnosed obesity as a chronic relapsing disease. So, it's a disease just like type 2 diabetes is a disease. You can't say that one disease is more significant than another."

However, argues Marcus, the need for Ozempic in diabetes sufferers is more urgent. "The immediate consequence for diabetes patients who cannot access Ozempic is dysregulated blood sugars – an immediate risk to their health. Being severely overweight is definitely a risk to one's health too, but there are no immediate consequences for not having access to the medication and there are other avenues for weight loss."

There are other options in terms of diabetes medication too, says Wolberg. She objects to people making blanket statements about those who use Ozempic for cosmetic weight loss and those who use it to treat obesity. Obesity is a recognised disease, and equating the two amounts to "fat shaming".

"There are clear medical criteria when looking at weight-loss medication," says Wolberg, "namely, if you have a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 30 – classified as class-one obesity – or if you are pre-obese with a BMI greater than or equal to 27, but you also have a comorbidity." She also argues against Ozempic being used for cosmetic weight loss. "If you want a weight-loss drug for cosmetic reasons you must pay for and use Saxenda, you don't qualify for Ozempic."

Ozempic is available only on prescription, indicating that numerous doctors aren't making this distinction. "People always find a way to get it prescribed," says pharmacist David Kahn, dispensary manager at Dis-Chem Pharmacy Linksfield. "Many have their doctors and healthcare professionals on speed dial, and they do seem to get what they want a lot. In our society, people would rather consume a drug or a medicine than adjust their lifestyle habits."

Kahn says efforts to increase Ozempic production are in place, with supply expected to stabilise by February 2023.

From Jack Antonoff to Doja Cat, Jewish Grammy nominees span every genre

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

This year's slate of Jewish Grammy nominees offers a little something for everyone.

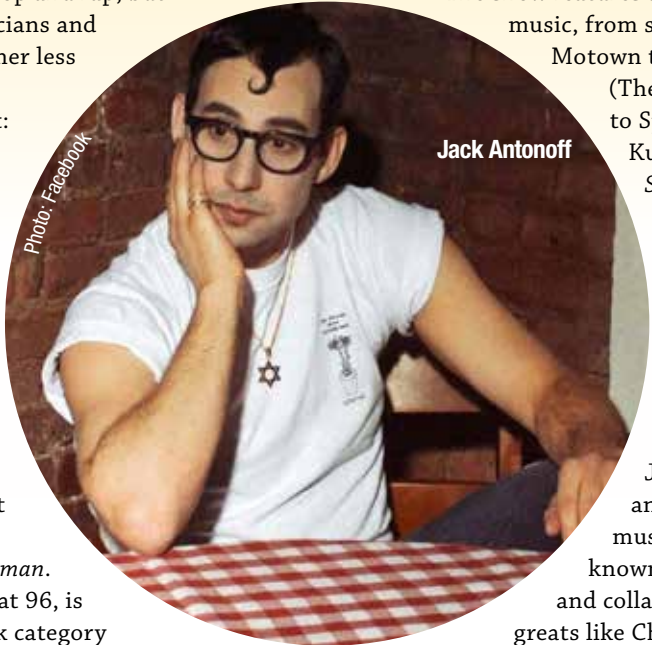
The nominees for the 2023 Grammy Awards, announced on 15 November, include prominent Jewish names from pop and rap, but they also recognise Jewish musicians and writers in classical music and other less popular genres.

Here's the full (and varied) list:

Jack Antonoff, a New Jersey Jewish school graduate who has become one of pop's most in-demand producers and songwriters thanks to his work with the likes of Taylor Swift and Lorde, is up for producer of the year — an award he won last year.

Doja Cat, a Jewish rapper and pop star, is up for five awards including record of the year, best solo pop performance, and best music video, all for her song, *Woman*.

Mel Brooks, still going strong at 96, is nominated in the best audiobook category for *All About Me!: My Remarkable Life in Show Business*.



Jack Antonoff

Tony Kushner, the playwright who through his collaborations with Steven Spielberg has become one of Hollywood's most prominent Jewish screenwriters, is nominated for best musical theatre album for a revival of the 2003 musical he co-wrote with Jeanine Tesori, *Caroline, or Change*.

The show features a range of music, from spirituals to Motown to klezmer. (The soundtrack to Spielberg and Kushner's *West Side Story* remake is also nominated in the compilation category.)

Flora Purim, a Brazilian-Jewish jazz and world music icon who is known for recording and collaborating with greats like Chick Corea and Dizzy Gillespie, is nominated for best Latin jazz album, for *If You Will*, her first solo release in more than a decade.

Dan Auerbach, the frontman for the rock duo The Black Keys, is nominated in the same category as Antonoff for his production work outside of his band. Auerbach's father is Jewish, and the rocker noted earlier this year that he lost several relatives in the Holocaust. (The Black Keys are up for two separate awards including best rock album for their latest, *Dropout Boogie*.)

The 65th Grammy Awards will take place on 5 February in Los Angeles, and will be broadcast on CBS.

New SAJBD Gauteng Council narrows divide with broader SA society

>>Continued from page 8

the COVID-19 pandemic.

"From the outset of the pandemic, the council has taken the lead in co-ordinating a range of support programmes, advisory projects, and relief initiatives," he said. "To this end, the council set up a COVID-19 Jewish community platform, which provided expert medical, financial, legal, and mental-health advice and updates on local developments and decisions."

Jacobs said the council's leadership held regular meetings in Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Durban with experts in the field of infectious diseases to discuss and deliberate on all issues, including the opening of shuls and schools, as well as guiding the community about safe practices during the lockdown.

"With the generous support of donors, the SAJBD Food Fund was established, which has since supported worthy projects throughout Gauteng, as well as in many other provinces," Jacobs said.

"The council continues to fulfil its core mandate as the representative voice and civil rights lobby of the Jewish community. All incidents of antisemitism, the product of a framework built on ignorance, were carefully investigated and appropriate action taken. In partnership with the South African Zionist Federation, the South African Union of Jewish Students, and others, the council worked to counteract anti-Israel extremism in the media, the political sphere, and on university campuses."

One of the council's perennial activities is intervening on behalf of *shomrei Shabbos* students when university exams are set on Shabbat or *yom tov*, Jacobs said. "To this end, we work closely with the relevant tertiary institutions to make satisfactory alternative arrangements."

The council also leads participation in South Africa's democratic and human-rights culture, Jacobs said. "In this regard, the flagship project has been our #MakeUsCount election, education, and awareness campaign, which has been run for every national and local government election since 2009."

Jacobs said the campaign for the 2021 local government elections featured voter-registration drives, multi-party election debates, and public meetings with party representatives. "As on previous occasions, it concluded with the Board heading up an interfaith observatory to assist the Independent Electoral Commission on polling day."

Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the SAJBD, said, "We would be completely remiss without recognising the incredible work the Gauteng Council has done. So ably led by Chairperson Harold Jacobs, and its executives, Marc Pozniak, Danny Mofsowitz, and Lesley-Anne Gatter. These are the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver on our mandate to protect the civil rights of Jews in South Africa. It should be a simple mandate. It isn't always. I want to give thanks and recognise Harold's leadership in heading up a council that has shown the most incredible dedication, commitment, and energy – everything that you could want for a group of representatives with nothing in it for themselves other than to work on behalf of the Jewish community."

Nicholas Riley, the head of investment banking and principal investments at Investec, said, "Investec has always had a close and mutually beneficial relationship with the Board of Deputies as well as South African Jewry, a community that has from the outset, played a vital, innovative, and contributing role in society."

Former President Rivlin honoured at Theodor Herzl Awards

ALANA BARANOV

This year's Theodor Herzl Awards Gala was a night of celebrating the astonishing lives of a true statesman and leader, former Israeli President Reuven "Ruvi" Rivlin, and acclaimed filmmaker Ken Burns, whose work has enlightened the world.

As the World Jewish Congress (WJC) held this gala event on 9 November, the foyer of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City was abuzz with leaders from across the length and breadth of the Jewish world.

A leading international organisation representing more than 100 Jewish communities around the globe to governments, parliaments, and international non-governmental bodies, the WJC holds its annual Theodor Herzl Awards to bestow the organisation's highest honour. Named after the father of modern political Zionism, the award recognises individuals who have done exceptional work to promote Herzl's vision of a secure and open-minded world for the Jewish people through support of Israel and an enriched understanding of Jewish communities, culture, and history.

Rivlin, the tenth president of Israel, received the Herzl Award for his brave and committed leadership on behalf of Israel and Jewish communities worldwide.

Rivlin was born in the Rehavia neighbourhood of Jerusalem in 1939. His father, Professor Yosef Yoel Rivlin, was an oriental scholar who translated the Quran from Arabic to Hebrew, and his mother, Rachel Rivlin, was a nurse. Just nine years old when the state of Israel was established, the ensuing years of the Arab blockade of Jerusalem left indelible memories for Rivlin. Growing up in the divided city has an influence on his outlook today, and he's greatly inspired by the philosophy of Jabotinsky.

Rivlin has had a long political career, serving on the Jerusalem City Council and then the Knesset for six parliamentary terms. Widely popular with the Israeli public for his consistent defence of the independence of the judicial and executive branches of the government and democracy in general, he was elected Israel's president on 10 June 2014, and ended his term in July

2021. During his tenure, he worked to safeguard Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state. He's honorary chairperson of the Israeli Democracy Institute.

As he called Rivlin to the stage, WJC president, Ambassador Ronald Lauder, said, "During a challenging moment in Israeli politics, Reuven Rivlin's positive voice, his optimism, and his spirit, has always been a reminder of the profound vision of hope for the Jewish state that welcomes all people, of all religions, and all ethnic groups." In his acceptance speech, Rivlin stated, "The Jewish people have the historical, legal, and moral right to sovereignty in our ancient homeland of *Eretz Yisrael*," adding, "sovereignty must also be earned by responsibility, by the fact that we respect our rights as a sovereign nation to uphold the civil rights of all citizens in our state."

Dr Henry Kissinger, a former United States secretary of state whose family fled Germany in 1938 and a former Theodor Herzl awardee, introduced the second award of the evening, in which Burns received the seventh WJC Teddy Kollek Award for the Advancement of Jewish Culture for his work. He has been making documentary films for more than four decades, and has directed and produced some of the most celebrated historical documentaries ever made.

In particular, Burns was honoured for his series *The US and the Holocaust*, which highlights the desperate plight of Europe's Jews to escape persecution from the Nazi regime before World War II, and how they were turned away as a result of American immigration policies.

Burns' other work includes *Baseball; Jazz; Jackie Robinson; The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*; and *X*. His documentary, *The Civil War*, was rated second only to Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* as the most influential documentary of all time, with *Real Screen* magazine calling him one of the "most influential documentary makers of all time". As David Zurawik of *The Baltimore Sun* said of Burns in 2009, "He turned millions of people onto history with his films. He showed us a new way of looking at our collective past and ourselves." Burns has previously won 16 Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards, and has had two Oscar nominations. He was honoured by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008.

At the gala dinner, Lauder shared that he had called an emergency meeting to expand the organisations' fight against antisemitism, particularly on college

campuses.

"Today's hatred of Jews has set its focus on one target: the world's only Jewish state, Israel," he said. "Now, they may be succeeding in undermining Israel politically. And they're concentrating their efforts in high schools, colleges, and universities to turn the next generation – even Jewish students – against Israel."

The evening included a commemoration of the 84th anniversary of Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, when in November 1938, the Nazi regime unleashed a wave of antisemitic violence across Germany and Austria as a precursor to the Holocaust. As part of marking this sombre event, the WJC has created an initiative to display digitally reconstructed images of four destroyed synagogues in Germany on the current buildings standing in their place.

Previous Herzl Award recipients include Dr Albert Bourla, the chairperson and chief executive of Pfizer; American President Joe Biden; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres; and Elie and Marion Wiesel amongst other luminaries. Actor Kirk Douglas was given the inaugural Teddy Kollek Award in 2016, followed by other leading names over the years, including philanthropist Robert Kraft, and violinist and conductor Itzhak Perlman.

On the days preceding and following the Herzl Awards, young Jewish leaders from the WJC's flagship programme, the Jewish Diplomatic Corps, as well as members from its newer programme for younger Jewish leaders titled NextGen, met at the WJC offices in New York to discuss operational plans for the coming year. Antisemitism topped the agenda, as well as community unity, and the situation on university campuses.



Photo: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90



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A photographic exhibition to defy the Nazis

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Nazis “tried to destroy and erase the Jewish nation. Even more than that, they tried to destroy the memory of the Jewish nation”, said Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky at the opening of the *Seeing Auschwitz* photographic exhibition at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) on 13 November.

They also tried to erase evidence of the terrible atrocities they committed, Belotsercovsky said.

The award-winning *Seeing Auschwitz* exhibition, developed by one of the world’s leading experts on the Holocaust, includes more than 100 scarce images of victims and perpetrators at what was the largest killing centre in human history. The exhibition also presents snapshots of the systematic extermination process and scenes of everyday life in Auschwitz, as well as audiovisual testimony of survivors. It’s open in Johannesburg until the end of March 2023. Entry is free.

“The *Seeing Auschwitz* exhibition, which has been brought to South Africa by the JHGC, allows us to see photographic evidence and proof of the crimes of the Nazis in Auschwitz,” Andreas Peschke, the German Ambassador to South Africa, said at the opening. “The images we see in the exhibition are those that weren’t

destroyed or didn’t disappear, so this is an exhibition to make us think, to sensitise us, to make us look at the world and our role in it with critical eyes.”

For example, the exhibition shows a picture taken of a Jewish prisoner by an armed and uniformed Schutzstaffel [SS] officer. No permission would have been asked for, reads the statement in the exhibition. The photographer just saw the prisoner as an interesting “object”, an example of the “unproductive”.

Another photograph in the exhibition shows a group of Hungarian Jews arriving at Auschwitz in 1944. Most people in this image were sent straight to the gas chambers and murdered.

The exhibition includes a map of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex created by the camp administration, with drawings of slave labourers engaging in backbreaking work while SS men sunbathe at a nearby resort.

Although most of the photos were taken by the perpetrators, the exhibition does present less well-known images created by the victims themselves and the Allies, and photos found in wallets, luggage, or lockets belonging to people arriving at Auschwitz.

“These pictures are no less valid today than they used to be,” Belotsercovsky said. “When we think of Auschwitz, the word brings up a strong dissonance in our minds,



The opening of the *Seeing Auschwitz* exhibition in the United Kingdom

something that I think is an almost unbearable thought. For most of us, we try to put these thoughts aside.”

Andrzej Kanthak, the Polish ambassador to South Africa, said the Nazis established the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1940. “The first transport of 728 Polish political prisoners arrived on 14 June 1940. Auschwitz Birkenau was opened two years later, and became the main site for the extermination of Jews. The first mass transport of Jews to Auschwitz departed on 25 March 1942. The Nazis killed at least 1.1 million people in Auschwitz. Most of them were Jews.”

The campsite was declared a national memorial site in 1947, Kanthak said. “All over the world, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Shoah.”

Oliver Grünbacher, the deputy head of mission in the Austrian Embassy, said, “In 1938, Austria had more than 210 000 Jewish citizens. More than 64 000 were killed, many of them in concentration camps. Taking responsibility for a dark chapter in our history is important. For this reason, Austria changed its citizenship laws in 2019, making it possible for descendants of persons who had to flee from Austria during the Nazi regime to claim their Austrian citizenship back. I’m delighted that we can welcome back a growing number of Austrian citizens worldwide, including in South Africa.”

Professor Michael Katz, the chairperson of the JHGC board, said, “The Holocaust didn’t start with Auschwitz. The crematoria of Auschwitz didn’t spring up overnight. It was the product of a slippery slope – prejudice, hate speech, discriminatory laws, detention centres, and then

gas chambers. This slippery slope is really the lesson of the Holocaust. What also follows from this is how ordinary, decent people can get caught up in this slippery slope. This is the challenge all of us face today.”

Grünbacher used an incident in Vienna in 2019 to illustrate why it’s important not to give way to antisemitism. “Oversized photographs of Holocaust survivors, which were exhibited in a public space, were slashed with knives and smeared with sausages,” he recalled. “In response, the public rose up and protested. Young people of very diverse religious and cultural backgrounds sewed them back together and protected them 24/7.”

Peschke said following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it was interesting to note that Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army, and its gate was opened by a Ukrainian soldier.

He said the *Seeing Auschwitz* exhibition encourages discussion about atrocities such as the war in Ukraine and African issues like antisemitism, xenophobia, and gender-based violence.

“*Seeing Auschwitz* includes South African connections,” said Tali Nates, the director of the JHGC. “The aerial photographs, for example, were taken in mid-1944 by the South African Air Force’s 60 Squadron. Portraits in the exhibition include those of Auschwitz survivors who settled in Johannesburg.”

Said Kanthak, “The exhibition gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of all victims, those who perished and those who survived the horrid crimes of the Holocaust, genocide, and other wars or atrocities.”

World Cup veteran says Qatar will definitely hack it

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Veteran South African football administrator Raymond Hack is excited about going to what he says will be an outstanding 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, starting this Sunday, 20 November.

This will be the eighth time that Hack, who was the director of the FIFA 2010 World Cup South Africa local organising committee, will attend the World Cup. He will be in Qatar for the opening game between the hosts and Ecuador at the 60 000-capacity Al Bayt Stadium on 20 November, as well as the final game, held at the 80 000-capacity Lusail Stadium on 18 December.

Hack, a seasoned Qatar tourist, marvels at the infrastructure, including the seven new stadiums the Middle Eastern country has built for the World Cup. “From an administrative and everything excluding football point of view, the tournament will be absolutely brilliant, from the facilities to the infrastructure, roads, telecommunication, hotels, and the new stadiums, which are absolutely magnificent,” he says.

Qatar has built a new airport, metro system, series of roads, and about 100 new hotels ahead of the World Cup, while an entire city has been constructed around the Lusail Stadium.

A number of people, such as former FIFA President Sepp Blatter and the 2014 World Cup-winning captain, Philipp Lahm, believe it was a mistake to bring the World Cup to Qatar.

“We’ll wait and see what comes out of this, and



And, with temperatures expected to range from 20°C to 30°C in Qatar during the tournament, all the country’s stadiums have a cooling system.

Hack says it’s not easy to pick a favourite for this year’s World Cup. “You’ve got the likes of Brazil, Argentina, Spain, and France. What you had in 2010, 2014, and 2018 has now gone, and you’ve got a new generation of players, so it’s going to be interesting.”

He hopes for good performances from the African teams – Cameroon, Senegal, Ghana, Morocco, and Tunisia. “It will be tough, but we’re good enough to get through the group stages.”

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

A rich and rousing conference

Following the previous Sunday’s Affiliates meeting, the second leg of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD’s) Gauteng Council conference for the community at large was held on Thursday, 10 November, at the Sandton Convention Centre.

A capacity audience, which included a range of political, civic, and religious leaders and diplomats, thoroughly appreciated the rich and diverse programme put together for the occasion. Highlights included the much-anticipated keynote address by the United States special envoy for monitoring and combating antisemitism, Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt; an enthralling video on how the Bongani Masuku hate-speech case folded; and a panel discussion on that case with four members of the legal team involved. To this can be added outgoing Chairperson Harold Jacobs’ insightful overview of the events of the previous two years and the work of the Gauteng Council during this time. We also took the opportunity to honour community activist Clive Mashishi for his ground-breaking initiative to educate and raise awareness about antisemitism in the communities within which he works, as well as for the partnerships that the Board and The Angel Network have forged with him in the social-upliftment field.

Ambassador Lipstadt’s address was the culmination of an exceptionally busy few days in the country. The Board helped organise parts of her programme, which included official diplomatic receptions in Cape Town and Pretoria, speaking at community events, engaging with academics, lawyers, and law students at the University of the Witwatersrand, and media interviews. I had the opportunity to participate with her and Professor Milton Shain in a panel discussion on contemporary antisemitism in the local and global context hosted by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Town. We’re deeply grateful to Lipstadt for the exceptional efforts she made on our community’s behalf, and I would further like to thank and commend the US Embassy for all it did to make her visit such a success.

Tribute to two outstanding Jewish civil servants

It was our sad task last week to pay tribute to two esteemed colleagues in the world of Jewish communal service: Michael Schneider and Goldie Goldsmith. At first glance, it would appear that they were very different to one another. Michael, after being forced to flee into exile because of his anti-apartheid activities, went on to become chief executive of the Joint Distribution Committee, one of the world’s foremost Jewish welfare organisations, and at the time of his retirement, was secretary general of the World Jewish Congress. Goldie, by contrast, always worked quietly and unobtrusively behind the scenes, initially on behalf of Arcadia and subsequently for many years as part of the SAJBD administrative staff. In vital respects, however, Schneider and Goldsmith, indeed, had much in common. In their respective areas of responsibility, both displayed the same qualities of professionalism, dedication, and integrity. Both, moreover, combined a commitment to fulfilling their own duties with readiness to support and assist their colleagues wherever needed. In their own way, each added significant value to their respective organisations, for which they gained the respect, trust, and abiding friendship of all they worked with. They will be remembered and very much missed.

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

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

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No “complaining” about machaneh

Much like Padel, summer camp is all the rage. What started when we were young, with parents finding an old “trommel”, throwing in a few odds and ends along with a cousin’s old sleeping bag, over the past few years has blossomed into what can only be described as a flourishing cottage industry.

Facebook marketplace now offers nifty carry bags for stretchers and chairs, artists provide designs for the painting of trommels, and there are different options for clothing and food.

I don’t want to be that “in-my-day guy”, but back then, nobody brought food, and it was only the asthmatics who slept above ground.

I’ve often wondered how the youth movements handle any of our children. I mean, no disrespect, quite the contrary, as somehow, they seem to manage better than actual qualified parents.

Especially if it’s for a period of three weeks.

If kids were travelling with their parents, the expectation would be tremendous. These would include making sure they have the Wi-Fi password on hand, that internet is uncapped, and that no one gets “bored”. Food allergies, meal preferences, snacks, and the occasional treat would be noted, along with the requirement of a weekly take-out order that specifies “no garnish!” Parents would be aware that removing the salad from a burger leaves a slight residue, and that Jewish kids aren’t likely to accept the offering.

Concerta would need to be packed along with a low dosage of Cipramol in the case of anxiety, and even whilst away, they would need to reschedule the occupational therapist, jiu jitsu, netball, soccer, and Tumbling Tigers, play therapist, and BodyTalk sessions ahead of time.

Holidays with parents also wouldn’t be able to be scheduled ahead of a dance recital, when practices are mandatory, and when the dance instructor is unlikely to accept Mauritius as an excuse for non-attendance. It’s one thing to be on a desert island, it’s quite another to be socially ostracised by the dance group. Especially if tickets have already been secured.

Travelling in South Africa would also pose some unique challenges. Backup power – preferably solar – would probably be an expectation, and parents would need to commit to at least two trips to Dis-Chem per week of holiday. For the entire period away, no voices could be raised, because that’s not how we talk, and our children would expect to be encouraged and not instructed to comply.

And all because the kids have had a hard year. It’s remarkable that the stringent requirements fall away as soon as campers leave home. The designer trommels and Wi-Fi requirements become irrelevant. For a few weeks, Dis-Chem isn’t a required outing, and garnish no longer has the power to destroy a perfectly good day.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



That’s something that thankfully hasn’t changed. Nor has the fact that miss our children as we do, there’s nothing quite like sending them on their way for a few glorious weeks.

KDL’s Gina Dave gets croc-ing on fundraising initiative

Grade 10 King David Linksfield pupil Gina Dave recently launched the “You ain’t rocking if you ain’t KD crocing” initiative to raise funds as part of the school’s outreach committee. Dave designed and had made a King David croc shoe jibbit (charm). The jibbit was sold on all King David campuses with the support of all the principals. A cheque for R10 000 was presented to Kids Haven, and the funds will be used to educate two underprivileged pupils for the 2023 school year. Another donation will be made early in the new year to food fund Yad Aharon & Michael.



Saturday 19 November

- The SA Jewish Report hosts the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2022. Time: 20:30. Register to watch here <https://bit.ly/jr142> or go to www.youtube.com/TheSAJewishReport/. Contact: editorial@sojewishreport.co.za

Sunday 20 November

- New Beginnings presents Aidel Kazilsky on *How do you maintain a healthy lifestyle*. Time: 10:00. Entry: R50 donation. Venue: Pine Street Shul. Contact: 082 449 3147 or 083 501 1250
- Chevrah Kadisha Bereavement hosts the *Growth from Grief* support group. Venue: Donald Gordon Centre. Time: 10:00. Contact sheila@jhbchev.co.za
- Hatzolah hosts Dor Yeshorim screening. Venue: 29 Durham Street, Raedene. Contact: 078 298 8035

Tuesday 22 November

- Lodge Negev hosts its Big Bingo Bash. Entry: R200. Time: 19:30. Venue: HOD Centre. Contact: stanklaff@gmail.com

Thursday 24 November

- The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre hosts the screening of *Raoul Wallenberg’s War*. Time: 18:30. Entry: Free. Contact: dowi@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100

Sunday 27 November

- The Chevrah Kadisha hosts a talk on *Understanding Narcissistic Abuse*. Time: 19:30. Venue: The David Lopatie Centre. Entry: No charge. Contact: <https://bit.ly/ChevTalk> or talyab@jhbchev.co.za



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