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‘City of cold’ as extended outages cause outrage

NICOLA MILTZ

Power outages resulting from the effect of loadshedding on stressed and old infrastructure are causing mayhem in Johannesburg, and are unlikely to improve soon.

Frail care and elderly patients at hospitals, senior residents at retirement villages, as well as those reliant on oxygen machines, are just a few severely affected by these ongoing power outages.

Though people have adapted to loadshedding, the huge pressure it has had on a strained and tired infrastructure is causing hundreds of localised trips and pockets of exasperating outages that disrupt life for much longer periods of time.

This past week, residents across Johannesburg were pulling out their hair with periods of up to a week without electricity. Johannesburg power utility City Power has blamed Eskom and high stages of loadshedding for the large number of outages across the city.

The city's grid has been groaning under the weight of daily scheduled power cuts by Eskom, say councillors. It's evident by the number of calls they are fielding that it's buckling under the twin stressors of age and power cuts.

"I'm inundated with calls every day, and I receive at least 300 WhatsApp messages daily. It's utterly overwhelming," said Ward 81 Democratic Alliance (DA) Councillor Joanne Horwitz. Areas under her watch include hospitals and retirement villages, most of which are subjected to regular outages, causing chaos, confusion, and misery.

These power-dependent institutions include places like the Edenvale Hospital, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, Sizwe Tropical Diseases Hospital, Elphin Lodge, Tarentaal Village, Inyoni Creek Retirement Village, Sappers Retirement Village, Thembalami Care Centre, and the SANCA Wedge Gardens Treatment Centre.

"These places are all affected by unscheduled outages caused by ongoing loadshedding. There are people on

oxygen and other machines that really suffer. Elphin Lodge has had no power since Monday this week – it's on the edge," she said.

"Kitchens are struggling to cope and have to feed, between them, hundreds of elderly and vulnerable people. Everybody is crying, not moaning. People are in pain, businesses are going in. It's all encompassing. I lie awake at night worrying about people on oxygen and those with Alzheimer's disease who don't know what's going on. It's agony," Horwitz said. "All I can do is commiserate and tell people that it's likely to take at least 24 hours, but probably longer than that, and to make a plan in case it's days before power can be restored."

Said DA Councillor Daniel Schay, "The sudden drop in temperature coupled with rain hasn't helped.

City Power technicians are running around like headless chickens responding to call after call from frustrated residents literally in the dark waiting to be switched back on.

"There's a constant backlog of repair work and a limited budget constrains things further. I have received a fortune of calls," said Schay.

"Half of Sydenham, Linksfield, and Orange Grove went down. The system isn't designed to be switched on and off, and it hasn't been maintained properly. So it cools down when offline and then the sudden spike in load on cold equipment causes it to fail.

"There's definitely an increase in outages, and City Power is totally overwhelmed, with no night shifts only day shifts. This means it takes longer for it to restore power because it has to fix 20 more things before it gets to you," he said.

DA Councillor Eleanor Huggett of Ward 73, which covers suburbs such as Norwood, Oaklands, parts of Orchards, Killarney, Houghton, and Orange Grove told the *SA Jewish Report* that the problem was widespread.

"Our infrastructure was built, as it should be, to stay on permanently and not be turned on and off," she said.

"This causes power surges, and even with new and

well-maintained equipment, would cause problems, never mind ancient, falling apart, infrastructure. The whole system in Johannesburg is virtually being held together with string, and officials and electricians are having to make do with makeshift repairs due to the depots not having stock."

She said this was a factor "beyond the depots' control" due to lack of budget.

Eskom has let us know that stage 6 power cuts are here for a while, which means most of the country will be without electricity for up to six hours a day, prompting fears of a grid collapse.

Energy consultant Chris Yelland and University of Johannesburg solar energy expert Professor Hartmut Winkler told the *Daily Friend* that we're likely to be in the same mess for the next five to 10 years, due to Eskom's declining generation capacity.

In spite of ministers' assurances that things will get better in about 18 months' time, citizens remain unconvinced after the state of emergency seemed to do precious little to deal with the crisis. There are three government ministers involved in electricity and a National Energy Crisis Committee, yet people remain despondent because the situation is worsening not improving.

"The biggest impact is seeing the effect it has on my children. They are scared of the dark. We don't have an inverter, so we use portable lights and it's unsettling for them," said Grace Chait of Morningside.

Israel under fire



The Iron Dome protected Israel on Wednesday from a hail of rockets from Gaza

See story on page 5

"A couple of weeks ago, we were down for four days because 34 sub stations in the area blew. This week, it was because of a transformer issue, I think. The Eskom guys on the ground are amazing, sometimes working through the night. The community has been awesome, those with generators offering to store frozen foods and giving the technicians refreshments. Ward councillor Lynda Shackleford is hands on doing her absolute best."

Chait does an online course at night, and had to make a plan to find Wi-Fi and recharge her laptop.

"I had to schlep my kids with me who were up till late on a school night while I did my course on Zoom at a friend's house. It is what it is."

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Texas gunman suspected of posting antisemitic rhetoric

BEN SALES – JTA

The suspect in the shooting on 6 May at a mall in Texas appears to have posted antisemitic, anti-LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer), and misogynist messages to a social media account.

According to researchers at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), as well as a report in NBC News, the gunman, a 33-year-old who killed eight people at an outlet mall in Allen, a suburb of Dallas, had an account at OK.RU, a Russian social media platform. On the account, he cited sites popular with white supremacists, such as 4chan, and white supremacist figures such as Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes. His posts repeated antisemitic conspiracies, using an abbreviation for the “Zionist occupied government”, and claims that Jews have “engineered society so that men cannot mate with a woman”.

“An initial assessment of a massive social media trove, which ADL researchers can link to Garcia with a high degree of confidence, reveals a preoccupation with violence that manifests in a wide range of hate, including towards women and Jews,” read an assessment by the ADL’s Center on Extremism, using the shooter’s last name. The report cited Bellingcat, an investigative journalism site, in its research.

The shooter also posted photos of a jacket with a patch featuring the acronym for “Right Wing Death Squad”, a far-right term, as well as a shirtless photo where he is shown with tattoos of a swastika and the logo of the Nazi Waffen-SS force. “Here’s what I think about your diversity you f...g loser’s [sic],” he wrote in the photo caption, according to the ADL, which added that at least one post included the phrase “Heil Hitler”.

His posts also included misogynistic and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric. According to the ADL, he wrote that he was inspired by “Libs of

TikTok”, an anti-LGBTQ social media account run by Chaya Raichik, an Orthodox Jew. Law enforcement officers are investigating the alleged shooter’s social media and haven’t publicly shared a motive for the shooting.

The mall shooting, in which the gunman was killed by police, comes a week after another mass shooting in Cleveland, Texas. It also comes roughly a year after another white supremacist shooter killed 10 people at a mall in Buffalo and, 10 days later, a gunman killed 21 people in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. According to the ADL, three-quarters of the people killed by extremists over the past decade were killed by right-wing shooters.




The site of the shooting

“As the ADL has consistently documented, right-wing extremist violence poses the greatest extremist threat to America,” tweeted ADL Chief Executive Jonathan Greenblatt. “The #AllenTexas shooter’s social media appears to underscore this clear and present danger.”

Respecting each other

Torah Thought



Rabbi Rodney Richard – Emmarentia Shul

The Parsha of Bechukotai contains the tragedies and punishments that G-d threatens to bring upon the Jewish people if they stray from the dictates of the Torah. The section is introduced with G-d’s words, “*Im bechukotai timasu*” (if you find my laws disgusting).

This language seems absurd and extreme. There may be non-observant Jews, but do they really consider the *mitzvot* disgusting? Inconvenient and troublesome perhaps, but disgusting? Surely not! Rashi addresses this question by stating that this phrase refers to people whose disgust is directed towards those who perform the *mitzvot* diligently, rather than the *mitzvot* themselves.

How often do we hear snide remarks being passed about those who are extra meticulous in their observance of *mitzvot*? Does her skirt really have to be that long? Is our kashrut not good enough for him? Rather than admiring the conduct of the observant, it’s met with cynicism, ridicule and, yes, even disgust.

Don’t we realise that by mocking our brothers and sisters for their conscientious level of observance, we are, in fact, scorning G-d Himself? It’s Hashem who gave us the Torah and commanded us to observe the *mitzvot* to the best of our ability – “And you shall love [by fulfilling the *mitzvot* out of love] Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources.”

We honour Hashem by honouring His followers. We show respect to the Torah by respecting its adherents.

Of course, the respect must be mutual and reciprocal. The more religiously observant, who ought to have internalised the teaching “to love your fellow

as yourself” should, too, show tolerance and understanding of the less observant.

Although we have just celebrated Lag B’Omer, the day was but a reprieve. We (the South African Ashkenazi community) haven’t yet concluded the mourning period of Sefirah. We still mourn the plague that killed the students of Rabbi Akiva – a plague occasioned by the students’ failure to accord proper respect to one another.

It may be part of our history, but the message of the plague should ring loudly in the present. Be tolerant, be respectful!

In the couple of weeks leading up to Shavuot, let’s commit ourselves to show greater respect, sensitivity, and tolerance towards each other. Let’s strive to replicate a time past, where, at the foot of Mount Sinai, our ancestors stood, in the words of Rashi, “*K’ish echad b’lev echad*” (like one man with one heart).

Like one body with one heart, let’s realise that each of us is a limb or an organ vital to the entire Jewish body; each of us is equally important, albeit with distinct roles to play.

And, of course, let’s recommit ourselves to the Torah and rejoice in the divine gift of the *mitzvot*.

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Why don't we know the location of Mount Sinai, where the Torah was given? There is just one biblical mention of anyone going back to Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai itself was not inherently holy, so once the people received the Torah and moved on, Sinai was no longer holy. It has been suggested that it's not the place that honours the person; rather, the person honours his place.

Lithuanian government vows to tackle obstructions to SA Litvak citizenship

PETA KROST

The Lithuanian government is openly encouraging South African Litvaks (Jews of Lithuanian descent) to claim Lithuanian passports if they are eligible to do so, however the Lithuanian migration department is making it increasingly difficult.

Lithuania's speaker of parliament, Viktorijos Čmilytės-Nielsen, told the *SA Jewish Report* that it was a symbolic gesture on the part of the government that, she said, "cares about historical memory and justice". She said it was also done to acknowledge "our Jewish compatriots, those people who helped created Lithuania and were then forced to move, sometimes trying to escape mortal danger".



Lithuania's Speaker of Parliament, Viktorijos Čmilytės-Nielsen

Lithuanians aren't allowed to have dual citizenship according to their constitution, which is very strict on this, according to Čmilytės-Nielsen. If a Lithuanian wants to apply for another passport, they have to give up their Lithuanian citizenship. This ancestral citizenship is an exception to the rule, which is for obvious reasons not always welcomed by Lithuanian nationals.

However Čmilytės-Nielsen said there was consensus in parliament about the Litvak ancestral citizenship because, though they "cannot fix the injustices of the past", they can make a "symbolic but nevertheless important move toward healing the bonds". She said that this was "impossible to do without acknowledging the painful past", which she says the government clearly wants to do.

She was referring to the history of the Jews in Lithuania.

At the beginning of 1941, there were between 225 000 and 250 000 Jews in Lithuania and most of their families had been there for centuries. In fact, there was such a Jewish presence in the capital, Vilnius, that Napoleon called it "Jerusalem of the North" when he passed through in 1812. In 1941, there were 60 000 Jews living in Vilnius alone, making up 30% of the city's population until they were murdered that year.

Jews at the time made up close on 10% of the population, and in some towns they represented more than 50% of the townsfolk. It was shortly after the Nazis invaded Lithuania in June 1941 that mostly ethnic

Lithuanians implemented the Nazi's systemic murder of Jews.

By November of that year, most of the Lithuanian Jews had been shot, killed, and thrown into pits in about 200 sites around the country.

Today's Lithuanian government, according to those the *SA Jewish Report* spoke to on a recent visit to Lithuania, is making it clear that it wants to do what it can to reconnect with the Litvak community.

Rolandas Kriščiūnas, the deputy chancellor of Lithuania and advisor to the prime minister, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the Lithuanian government "wanted to build bridges", which is why it was doing all it could to encourage South African Litvaks to take up the offer of applying for ancestral citizenship. He said there were shared histories and deep tragedies "like the Holocaust, which is a big cloud in our current history".

Kriščiūnas said, "for me, it is impossible to understand how this was ever possible, especially just 25 years before I was born.

"I know there are those in Lithuania who try to avoid, not ignore, this uncomfortable truth, but they can't deny it," said the deputy chancellor.

But, as committed as the members of government are to Litvaks reclaiming their historic citizenship, the process through the Lithuanian migration department has become stilted and increasingly difficult.

In fact, many South African Litvaks are being prevented from being able to restore their ancestral citizenship.

For many Litvaks, recent bureaucratic changes introduced by the migration department prohibit them from being able to use the same documentation their siblings used to prove their right to Lithuanian passports.

"We are faced with unrealistic expectations in providing proof," said one person whose siblings have Lithuanian citizenship.

"There seems to be no end to the additional requirements they expect of us. I mean, we are having to double apostle documents and even that doesn't do the trick," wrote another. People ask not to be named as they are concerned this may impact on their getting their ancestral citizenship.

"Requests for additional evidence for identical claims are ridiculous because the citizenship law remains unchanged, in fact, it was made more straightforward in the past few years," said one lawyer dealing with these applications. "In some cases, the documents are acceptable, but in others they are clearly not."

It seems to depend on which desk the application lands.

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The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to Remigijus Stankevičius, who represents the migration department, who insisted there was nothing untoward about his department's dealing with Litvak ancestral citizenship applications. "Our department has to ensure that we allow only those who are eligible to get citizenship," he said.

However, Dalia Asanavičiūtė, who chairs the parliamentary commission dealing with the world Lithuanian community, admits that there are apparent obstacles placed in the way of restoring citizenship.

Asanavičiūtė was instrumental in initiating the improvements to the Law on Citizenship in February 2022 that made the application process smoother.

"There were laws that enabled Litvaks to reclaim citizenship, but somehow it was corrupted and obstacles



Member of the Lithuanian Parliament, Dalia Asanavičiūtė

put in the way," she said. "So I did what I could to get the obstacles out the way and the unanimous amendments were made. Unfortunately, somehow these obstacles have come back. However, these problems are not in the law itself, but in the migration department. We're trying to rectify it bit by bit."

Asanavičiūtė said she believed it was important for Litvaks to reclaim their citizenship and ties with Lithuania. "Please take home the promise of the Lithuanian government's commitment to the South African Litvak

community. We're truly sorry for what happened here, and want to prove the goodwill of our government to you."

She insisted that where there were frequent problems that needed ironing out in reclaiming citizenship, the Litvak community need to communicate them to the Lithuanian government.

The deputy chancellor agreed that the government wanted to solve these problems. "It's important for us to know what these problems are so we can fix them. Our political will should be proof that we really want to solve them," he said.

Čmilytės-Nielsen also said it was valuable that these problems had now been brought to parliament's attention. "We can keep an eye on how the laws are implemented, and make sure the intention of what we are doing in parliament is working in practice," the speaker of parliament said. "We can also have the process analysed and see where these blockages are that should be removed. Perhaps there is some kind of system on the lower level that can be slightly altered to run smoothly," said Čmilytės-Nielsen.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) recently sent a letter to numerous members of the Lithuanian government calling on them to iron out these problems.

"We see these passports as a part of the healing process", said Zev Krengel, SAJBD vice-president. "The truth is that if Jews had been treated well in Lithuania, we would never have left."

He hopes that the Lithuanian government will ensure that the glitches in the way of Litvaks getting their Lithuanian passports are removed, which is why the SAJBD sent a letter in this regard.

He said he believed there were many Lithuanians who are frustrated that Jews are getting passports and they cannot have dual passports. "I can understand this, and believe that as a European country, they should be able to."

He pointed out that Litvaks also need to play their part in the healing process by "understanding more about Lithuania, seeing where our forefathers come from, and what the country has to offer".

"Though we hold a lot of pain from what happened to our people there, we cannot punish people for what their fathers did. Healing is essential and anger and hatred prevents healing," said Krengel

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Ninety seconds to safety in Israel rocket barrage



Photo: StandWithUs Facebook page

Civilians taking cover in Ramat Gan

TALI FEINBERG AND NICOLA MILTZ

“We have our granddaughters here, three and five years old, so I have to act brave,” said South African *olah* Jolleen Hayon, from her home town of Ashkelon. “There are lots of sirens, one after the other, and loud booms.”

Hayon was speaking at about 13:00 on Wednesday, 10 May, as Gaza militants indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians with a barrage of about 350 rockets. However, after the vow by Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other Palestinian factions to retaliate vigorously, Wednesday afternoon’s attack was over almost as soon as it began. About 150 projectiles either fell short inside the Gaza Strip or landed in the sea.

The Israeli population had been waiting with bated breath for a possible attack after the Israeli military struck PIJ leaders and weapon manufacturing facilities in the Gaza Strip in the early hours of 9 May in response to months of attacks from the PIJ. Senior group members Jahed Ahnam, Khalil Bahitini, and Tarek Az Aldin were killed in what Israel called Operation Shield and Arrow, which was launched at the end of Lag B’Omer.

Though schools and universities were closed, hospitals remained open. South African Erin Midzuk, who is doing her *sherut leumi* (national community service) at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, said she could see rockets being fired from Gaza and heard the booms on impact.

“One patient told me to look outside. I thought he was showing me a bird or something, and then I realised he was pointing to the rockets being fired from Gaza. I could see them through his hospital window. I work on the top floor, so we’re the most exposed. We have 90 seconds to get to a safe place. When the alert went off earlier, nurses were running up and down the rooms telling patients who were able to walk to make their way downstairs. It was the worst feeling ever leaving patients behind who couldn’t leave

their beds.

“About two hours ago, the rockets started,” said South African *olah* Gila Nussbaum, an emergency physician, speaking around the same time as Hayon. “[It was] initially in areas close to Gaza like Sderot but now also Ashkelon and Ashdod. We’re waiting with bated breath for the sirens to start closer to the *mercaz* [centre]. So far, all calm in Modi’in [where she lives]. But I’m going in to Ashdod for a night shift tonight.”

South African *olah* Leanne Manshari and her family “decided to leave Ashkelon this morning [10 May] in dreadful anticipation [of the expected attack]. We are at my sister-in-law up north.”

Olim in Jerusalem reported that all was quiet, but Lili Kovler, who lives there, came to Tel Aviv for work on 10 May. “As I arrived in Tel Aviv, we heard interception booms but no sirens

yet,” she said. She feels confident that she’s safe, and says “as long as you’re indoors or near a shelter you’re okay”.

In Tel Aviv, Ra’anana, and Holon, other South African *olim* said they had sheltered as sirens began, but the alerts were over quickly. In Be’er Sheva, *olah* Dani Weinstein said nothing had happened yet, but there was a “tense calm”. She planned to move her 2.5 year old and 15-month old into her *mamad* (shelter room) to sleep on the night of 10 May.

A rocket fired from Gaza hit a house in the southern town of Sderot, but there were no injuries. One rocket landed on the roof of a kindergarten in the Eshkol region, causing minor damage.

Israel’s Iron Dome intercepted most projectiles. Flights were briefly stopped from landing at Ben Gurion Airport, and then returned to normal. In response to the rockets, The Israel Defense Forces said its warplanes and helicopters had hit about 40 PIJ rocket launchers and mortars in Gaza. It was continuing to attack sites belonging to the terror group.

“

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Getting used to the dark

Do you remember how in the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, we got so used to living with masks on that we felt naked without one? Do you remember being nervous about bringing anything into the house before spraying it with sanitiser? And how worried that you were about getting too close to people you didn’t live with?

Now, we’re learning to live without electricity, and a day without loadshedding is like a holiday, or at least a reason to celebrate.



I write this in darkness, not having had power in my home since last Thursday at 18:00, when I last experienced loadshedding. The power was meant to return just after 22:00, and it did for a few seconds. I heard a bang outside, and that put paid to my power to date. This is the third time in the past three months that this has happened and, once again, our house was the only one affected in the immediate area.

You can guess that when I realised that it was only our house, my heart sank because I knew it meant that this was my fight alone and, as we know, there’s power in numbers.

Had it been my street or area, it would more likely be a quick outage – a day or two – because lots of people would report the fault, and many problems would be solved by one solution. However, when it’s only one house, it’s only one problem, and priority always seems to be given to the single-solution-fixes-many problems. Such was the case.

So, I did what I always do, I reported a fault online, messaged my area councillor, and waited.

I kept an eye on the online fault and checked in with my councillor over the weekend, but I had a good sense that if it wasn’t sorted by Saturday morning, I was unlikely to get any joy until Monday. By Sunday, my reported fault was automatically closed, no word to me at all.

So, I contacted my councillor and opened a new fault. I did this three times this week, regularly pleading with my councillor, the only person I knew to contact. I think she was doing her best, but she was inundated, and I wasn’t the only person on her case. I’m sure she has had to grow a thick skin because how else do you take the abuse, desperation, and pleading from people who are just trying to get their power back?

When I was stressing about this early on, my son asked me if there was anything I could do that I hadn’t already done to fix the situation. I said no. He responded, “If there’s nothing you can do, then stop stressing. It won’t help!” He was right, and I did my best from then on. A week later, this is no joke!

However, much like COVID-19, we adapted to the darkness. I managed to ensure we have Wi-Fi and can charge our electronic devices and battery-operated lamps. We have a gas stove so we can cook, and I transferred everything from my freezer to my neighbour’s. There are many things we can’t do and don’t have, especially hot water. But, the human spirit is indomitable, so we have made a plan.

But why should we have to?

I have been told on several occasions that the technician was on the way, or would at least be there yesterday, the day before, today ... but he hasn’t yet arrived.

Many have suggested that I contact an electrician to fix the problem. Great idea, only I’m told that the electrician and I would be breaking the law by having him fix a municipal problem. That box atop the pole outside my house doesn’t belong to me, it belongs to the municipality. So, although it supplies electricity to me, I’m not allowed to pay someone to fix it if it’s broken.

So, I’m prevented from fixing the problem, but it’s okay for the municipality to leave me without electricity for a week and ignore my requests and pleas.

As you can see from our lead story, I’m not alone. Not even close.

So, while loadshedding is harming all of us to a certain degree, the impact of loadshedding on overused and distressed infrastructure is causing these further outages. I watched as the numbers of complaints grew from 464 on the second day to more than 700 a few days later. I’m sure that the technicians are worked to a standstill, but there are once again not enough of them, and so the complaints grow and grow. And people like me get put on hold. And the problems get plastered over rather than fixed, so they reoccur.

How many of us have to deal with this?

There’s an obvious solution: going solar. I have no doubt that to avoid this distress, most of us – if we can afford it – will go that route.

However, here’s the rub. Do you know that you must get permission from City Power to install solar panelling and whatever it takes to make it work? What’s more, City Power insists on ensuring that the solar system you choose is acceptable (to City Power) and the same department has to “witness and approve the installation after ensuring proper grid-connection compliance”, according to City Power. I kid you not! So, City Power technicians are too busy to come and fix my electricity, leaving me without power for a week, but they are going to find time to do all of this. And I will have to pay for the pleasure. Really?

While all of this was happening, I happened to hear about the 201st mass shooting in the United States this year. It was in Texas. I also heard how Israel was being rained on by rockets from Gaza. Thank G-d for the Iron Dome keeping people safe!

Suddenly I realised that the grass was not necessarily greener on the other side.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost Maunder
Editor

BDS’s anti-Israel campaign an abject failure



OPINION

DAVID SAKS

At the beginning of the present century, a new movement calling itself BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) emerged on the international scene. Its core aim is to delegitimise the state of Israel and push for it to be isolated and boycotted by the international community.

A problem those fighting BDS must continually confront is the perception that BDS’s proponents have been able to foster in the public mind. Almost unfailingly, BDS groupings describe themselves as “human rights” organisations, and the mainstream media, certainly in South Africa and no doubt in many other places, uncritically refers to them as such.

By positioning itself in this way, BDS generates the aura of being on the side of all that is just, humane, and progressive. This perception, described by Gerald Steinberg of NGO Monitor as “the halo effect”, routinely results in the claims of self-styled “human rights” groups being accepted with little or no scrutiny, no matter how biased and politicised they might be.

One of its consequences is to imbue BDS activists with a bogus moral authority that helps them to smear those who oppose their agenda or refuse to accede to their demands as being complicit in apartheid, racism, colonialism, and indeed every manner of human rights violation. The stifling effect even the possibility of being so labelled has on the way people behave and express themselves can hardly be under-estimated.

In a great many cases, it can amount to career suicide.

At the same time, BDS groups are never themselves challenged or required to account for their own actions, goals, and ideologically affiliations, which in South Africa include overt hate speech and antisemitism.

One sees from this how even without resorting to the threats, harassment, and violent disruption, for which the movement is deservedly notorious, BDS proponents are frequently able to discourage dissent and enforce their will, whether on institutions or at the personal level.

When confronted with opposition, however, they have shown little compunction in resorting to intimidation to get their way. Often, this doesn’t work.

The past decade has, among other embarrassing BDS fails, included:

- The ignominious failure of its long-running attempted boycott of Woolworths for stocking Israeli products;
- Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane standing up to an unprecedented campaign of bullying, including from certain government ministers, to try to get her to withdraw from participating in the 2021 Miss Universe pageant in Eilat; and
- The 2018 Davis Cup tie between Israel and South Africa going ahead as scheduled in Irene, in spite of hyperbolic threats from BDS and affiliated groups to cause mayhem.



BDS protests in South Africa

The last example is important considering the Mzansi Challenge-Tel Aviv Heat debacle.

Whereas the mere threat of violence was enough for the South African Rugby Union (SARU) to cave in to BDS’s demands, the South African tennis authorities stood their ground and made appropriate security arrangements. On the day, they were confronted with a mere few score protesters waving flags and shouting slogans at a safe distance from the venue.

That SARU failed to similarly call BDS’s bluff sets a dangerous precedent that could well encourage further such thuggish tactics by BDS exponents and any other fringe protest group seeking disruption.

The primary casualty of it all has been South Africa’s

hard-won culture of tolerance and democracy. So far as both Israelis and Palestinians are concerned, it might as well not have existed.

That South Africa, by accident or design, was the birthplace of BDS is significant since the movement explicitly models itself on and is inspired by the global anti-apartheid movement that was instrumental in bringing about the demise of white minority rule.

The case of pre-liberation South Africa is held up as an example of how an unjust regime confronted by no serious military threat from without or within can be brought down by collective moral pressure from the international community.

The BDS movement is driven by the firm belief that the same can be made to happen concerning “apartheid Israel”, hence its single-minded endeavour to affix the “apartheid state” label on the Zionist entity.

Central to BDS’s strategy is appropriating the methods used by the anti-apartheid movement against South Africa by making false and inappropriate analogies between Israel and the apartheid regime. By demonising Israel in this way, BDS seeks to target Zionists as being beyond the moral pale, justifying their harassment and abuse.

Whenever the BDS rhetoric or actions has had an impact on the South African Jewish community, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has been at the forefront of confronting this dangerous phenomenon. Indeed, it was only a matter of time before BDS agitators, notwithstanding their routine pious claims to being against Zionism, not Jews, began to target the local Jewish community directly.

It has included aggressively campaigning for Jewish candidates to the Constitutional Court to be ruled out of contention because of their associations with organisations supportive of Israel. It has campaigned for Jewish students at a KwaZulu-Natal university to be “deregistered” and, most recently, for the student representative council at Pretoria University to break all ties with the South African Union of Jewish Students on campus.

How serious a threat does the global BDS movement realistically pose for Israel and world Jewry in general?

With a little more than 20 years having passed since the de facto launch of the movement at the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, the answer is that BDS has had zero impact on Israel or Israeli policy.

So far as its core aim of delegitimising the Jewish state and isolating it in the international arena goes, it would appear, in fact, to have been a distinct failure.

Israel has over this century been remarkably successful, not only in strengthening existing ties with other countries – economic, diplomatic, and other – but in forging many new ones. In addition, its economy, a key target of BDS activists, is thriving.

The inability thus far of BDS to make any tangible gains in terms of its core aim of isolating Israel therefore suggests that the movement is going nowhere. Though it has yet to cause any harm to Israel’s objective interests, BDS has nevertheless had an impact on diaspora Jews. It has attempted to force them to give up or hide their historical, religious, and cultural ties to the only Jewish state or face exclusion, bullying, and intimidation. For many

Jews, the language and actions of the BDS movement are reminiscent of old Eastern European anti-Jewish tropes, similarly designed to bait, bully, and discomfort Jews for not fitting into the prevailing system of beliefs.

Like all totalitarian systems, BDS and the radical anti-Israel lobby in general are bent on imposing their views in totality, without allowing for the slightest dissent.

Their tactics seem to rely heavily on instilling fear in those who oppose them rather than relying on belief in their cause.

Any “victories” based on such tactics have to be seen as morally bankrupt.

- *David Saks is the associate director of the SAJBD.*

What’s behind surge in Cape Town’s anti-Israel protests?

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



In recent months, the Cape Town Jewish community has been confronted by provocative anti-Israel protests, whereas Johannesburg, with a much larger Jewish community, hasn’t experienced the same degree of protest. What has amplified aggressive demonstrations in Cape Town?

As an example, ugly scenes played out outside the venue for the recent Yom Ha’atzmaut celebrations in Cape Town. A small but noisy group of anti-Israel protesters shouted slogans at patrons through a loudhailer, which included “Cowards!”, “Death to Israel!”, and “One Zionist, one bullet!” Parents had to shield their young children. In a 20-minute video posted on social media, a demonstrator was incredulous about how the government could allow Zionists to exist in South Africa. There was no similar protest at the Johannesburg event.

A few weeks before that, a gathering outside Parliament included the burning of an Israeli flag. The emblems and flags of terrorist organisations Hamas and Hezbollah were on full display. And Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders recently spoke on a webinar held at the University of Cape Town.

“I can’t give an exact reason” for protests being more provocative in Cape Town compared to Johannesburg, said Stephen Goldberg, the Gauteng chairperson of the Community Security Organisation. “I think the relative sizes of the cities, and the Jewish and Muslim communities within them are a factor. Also, Parliament is in Cape Town and Johannesburg isn’t a political capital. Parliament is an obvious public place to go and shout.

He said having such a right-wing government in Israel perhaps makes it an easier target, and helps stoke radicalism and extremism.

It’s also a fact that demonstrations increase in size and intensity when the security situation in Israel deteriorates. There are often spikes in protests in South Africa when Israeli forces strike Gaza or Lebanon, for instance, in response to terror attacks or rocket launches.

A member of a Jewish communal organisation who requested anonymity said it’s important to understand

the links between South African anti-Israel groups and Iran, which is known to support these organisations around the world. This person also noted that there has been a split in the anti-Israel camp in South Africa, with Africa4Palestine having a more Islamist character and closer links to Iran than BDS-SA (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions South Africa). The person recalled that there had been formidable protests in Johannesburg in years gone by.

“Geography and the zealotry of leadership cannot be discounted,” the person said. “And in the Western Cape, Islamist elements in that community are older and more organised. Politics between the Democratic Alliance-led provincial and local government and the African National Congress which rules nationally must also be factored in.”

Though recent extremist activity has centred on Cape Town, vigilance is required everywhere. Goldberg noted that previous Yom Ha’atzmaut celebrations in Johannesburg have been targeted, and could be targeted again in the future.

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

Burning of the Israeli flag during anti-Israel protests in Cape Town in April 2023



“Geography may also be important,” said Goldberg. “In Cape Town, much of the Jewish community is in Sea Point and surrounds – urban areas – whereas in Johannesburg, the community is more widespread in suburban areas. You get different dynamics.

“Everyone has a legitimate right to protest and to free speech except where it incites hatred and violence. ‘One Zionist, one bullet’ isn’t a far stretch to calling for Jewish people to be killed, and therefore is completely unacceptable,” said Goldberg.

Professor Hussein Solomon, a terrorism expert at the University of the Free State, has received death threats from Muslims in Cape Town for his perceived pro-Israel research and opinions. “You would expect people in Cape Town to be more *rustig* (relaxed and laid back), but this is not the case,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*. “It’s interesting that radical groups like Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) that were active in the Cape Flats in the 1990s tried to open ‘branches’ elsewhere, but didn’t get much traction at the time.”

Jasmine Opperman, a consultant on extremist violence in South Africa, countered that the history of Pagad in the Western Cape “shows the internationalisation of Islamist ideology and extremism. These historical roots are still at play. So, the use of aggressive engagement isn’t unfamiliar in the Western Cape. It still has to show that face in Johannesburg.”

Opperman noted that many activists are students, who spend hours being radicalised on platforms like YouTube and TikTok where malign actors like Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic State, and Lebanon all have a significant presence. “These are the voices that find more audience in Cape Town.”

Solomon said that protests can revolve around the charisma of leaders and their ability to organise and draw a crowd. “If you have a firebrand who can stoke people up from the community, that makes a difference. It depends on who is active. I have no doubt there is radicalisation in all of South Africa’s big cities. Islamic State cells have been discovered in Mayfair in Johannesburg and in Durban.”



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SA’s first possible Holocaust remains consecrated in Cape

TALI FEINBERG

In the early 2000s, two small, round, cement-like disks, with numbers written on them, were donated to the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC). Many of these disks were taken and distributed by Allied soldiers after the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp in 1945.

“The clay tablets were donated anonymously to the centre inside a cigar box, alongside a diary and a wind-up army torch,” says Dmitri Abrahams, the head of archives at the CTHGC. “I remember the first time I handled the disks. They were wrapped in tissue paper as I held them in my hand. I knew I was holding something special.

“In 2012, former CTHGC archivist, Michal Singer, presented a paper at the South African Museum Association Conference on archiving the Holocaust in South Africa, which contained a section on the mystery surrounding the disks. According to the diary, written by a South Africa medic who toured the camp (he was stationed in Germany at the time), a survivor told him that they were made from compressed bone and ash from the crematorium.

“We later found out that these disks had been handed out to soldiers who toured the camp,” says Abrahams. “Michal’s paper was published and discovered by Dr Donald Siegel, a senior scientist from the Chief Medical Examiner’s [CME] Office of New York. Siegel was conducting tests on a similar disk which had been given to the CME by The Center for Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Studies of North Carolina, which had been donated by the son of an American World War II veteran.

“Siegel approached the CTHGC and asked if we would like to be a part of the study, and we agreed. The study grew, and disks were discovered at Belzec, Sachsenhausen, and Yad Vashem. Five samples were included in the study – two of which came from the CTHGC, two from Yad Vashem, and the original. Using a cutting-edge method known as proteomic mass spectrometry, they tested for the presence of formally living biological material either from humans or animals.”

The test concluded that “the South African disks possibly contained human proteins. Since this possibility existed, we decided to bury the disks. They were buried in a small meaningful ceremony in April 2019 at the Pinelands Jewish Cemetery in Cape Town.

“This year, the CTHGC erected a memorial stone generously donated by Gardiner Stone, which was consecrated by Rabbi Osher Feldman on 24 April 2023, just a few days before the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the camp. We hope the burial of these remains can restore dignity to the unnamed victims of the Nazi regime who were killed and cremated against

their will, and in doing so, honour their memory.”

The gravestone was erected with the words: “Buried here are the possible cremains [crematorium remains] of people who died at Dachau Concentration Camp 1933-1945. We honour all victims of the Holocaust. Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre. Remember never to forget.”

The ceremony was attended by the trustees and staff of the centre, as well as members of the community. The

stone is in the Pinelands II section of the cemetery.

“We encourage the community to visit the memorial stone to pay their respects to the first and only burial site of Holocaust victims in South Africa,” says Abrahams. “We continue to encourage the community to donate relevant documents and artefacts to our archive.”

Dachau was the first concentration camp established by



the SS in March 1933, originally for political prisoners. Over time, other groups were interned there, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Roma, homosexuals, repeat criminal offenders, and Jews. The camp was liberated by American forces on 29 April 1945.

• To read Dr Siegel’s paper, visit: www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-16192-5

Seeing six million, one brushstroke at a time

TALI FEINBERG

What does six million actually look like? And what would it be like to contemplate each life extinguished in the Holocaust, marking their loss in some way? These are the questions that are driving Capetonian olah, Liora Blum’s, *Six Million Project*, in which she’s painting six million small rectangles. The whole project could take two decades.

As the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, “I’ve always been obsessed with the Holocaust, and have tried to understand antisemitism then and now,” says Blum. “Last December, sitting at my computer, I wondered how much six million actually is. I thought of making an installation to visualise it, but quickly realised I couldn’t afford to buy 6 000 000 paper clips or matches. What I did have was plenty of gouache – my favourite kind of paint,” says Blum, who has always loved to draw and paint and has her own graphic design agency.

Blum didn’t tell anyone about it at first, “Because I was a bit ashamed of being too obsessive about the Holocaust. After two weeks, I found the courage to explain to my family what I was doing. Everyone thought it was a great idea. Visitors were instantly drawn to it, without knowing what it was.”

Delving into her family history, Blum says, “My late father, Sanyi Glazer, was born in Hungary in 1932. His family lived in a town called Oradea Mare [now part of Transylvania]. As the war progressed, my grandfather, Yenő Glazer, sensed that Budapest would be a safer place for them, and they moved in 1941. Dad was the middle of three sons, who were followed by a younger sister in 1944. The family was forced into the Budapest ghetto that year, and my grandfather was enlisted into the Hungarian army for slave labour, never to be seen again.

“At the end of the war, the family were lined up on the banks of the Danube by the Gestapo, about to be shot, and were miraculously saved by the approach of the Russian army.

“Realising that [then] Palestine was the only place for Jews, my grandmother, Erszabet, sailed with her children on the legendary Exodus, only to be sent back to Hamburg, Germany, for a year and a half. When they eventually arrived in Israel in 1948, it was on the day the state of Israel was born! My mother, Linda, from Cape Town, met my father in Tel Aviv in 1969, and they were married in the same year. They moved back to Cape Town and started a family.”

Blum describes her father as a “fun, loving father to me and my brother, but he couldn’t shake off his demons. He shared his helplessness in the pre-war years, when he was taunted by antisemites. He remembered the hunger, the cold, the bombing, the terror. He recounted how he begged for potato peels to feed his nursing mother and baby sister. I felt his raw despair, waiting for his father who never returned. His grandparents were killed in Auschwitz. I heard him shouting out from nightmares, and was deeply affected.”

Her father-in-law, Avraham Blum, was also born in Hungary. He was transported to Auschwitz and lost his entire family. “He came to Israel after the war, where he met his wife, Ninette, and they had four children. Avraham is 93 years old and lives in Haifa. He loves Israel with every fibre of his being.”

Blum was born in 1970, and went to Herzlia. “I loved school, and was blessed to be in an environment that was fertile for the mind and the soul.” She now lives in Ra’anana,

married to Ilan, with two daughters.

She paints the rectangles at home. “The paintings call me from the moment I wake up until the moment I go to sleep. When I’m painting, I listen to audio-books about the Holocaust or documentaries about World War II. On weekends, I paint for six to eight hours, and during the week, one-to-two-hour sessions. I would like to speed up the process and turn this project into my day job. This is why I intend to seek funding for it.”

The rectangles aren’t painted in a specific sequence. “I choose colours from my intuition. I don’t want patterns because I want to show the individuality of each person. No one is more important than the other. Each colour is vibrant, and tells its own story. Some are grouped by hue or shade, there are the occasional ‘twins’ or ‘triplets’, and some may form a ‘family’, but it’s all in the eye of the beholder. I paint spontaneously with only a rough overall plan.”

Her ultimate goal is to “to see for myself what six million looks like. I would also like this project to help fight antisemitism, combining art and maths to create a shock. People, especially the younger generation, will get to visualise the numbers of the Holocaust, and the catastrophic results of an antisemitic political platform.”

There are still about 150 000 Holocaust survivors in Israel, many of them living in poverty. “I would like the proceeds from this project to be channelled directly to them, to allow them to live out their last years in comfort,” says Blum. “My dream is to exhibit the full 100 pieces on one huge wall or construction at a Holocaust museum.”

She would love to match names to the rectangles. “Ideally, I would like to link each rectangle digitally to the database of the [Yad Vashem] *Book of Names*. My idea is that the whole image will be scanned and that when a viewer rolls their mouse over each rectangle, they will be able to see the name of a person, and clicking on it, they will be able to view the notes about that person. I hope that people will be able to share the names of family members with me. I haven’t yet figured out how to deal with something this huge, but it would be an ultimate goal.”

She asks that people support the project by “liking and sharing my posts about it on Facebook and Instagram, and my Patreon page, which would give me more time to paint. As I move forward, I will upload digital scans of the paintings, so people can purchase their own rectangle. The proceeds will go directly to Holocaust survivors and Holocaust educational projects.”

Blum has been asked if people can take part in the painting and says she’s “still trying to figure that one out”. However, she recently hosted a gathering at her home on the eve of Yom Hashoah, where four guests were invited to paint. “I let everyone choose the colour they wanted, explained how to paint the small areas with my super-fine brushes, and let them paint in any area that had not yet been filled. One participant said, ‘I’m honoured to have painted some of those rectangles. Never has it hit home like this before.’”



Liora Blum

“If I painted six million brush strokes, what would they look like all packed together? The biggest page of quality watercolour paper I had measured 1m x 70cm. I worked out that one of these pages could fit sixty thousand small brush marks (6mm x 2mm each) and therefore, one hundred of these pages would make six million. It seemed a bit insane, but I was curious to see if it was possible to do. I marked out a grid with a 2H pencil and my extra-long ruler. And then I began to paint...”



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The Jew-el in the coronation of King Charles III

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS

Vivat Rex! A king has been crowned! Seventy years after the historic coronation of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles was crowned in Westminster Abbey this past Saturday. Forty monarchs have been crowned in the medieval abbey, and the scenes on Saturday were simply spectacular. The Carolean era has arrived.

The ornate architecture lent itself to the solemn, spiritual ceremony, which had many beautiful moments. From the ancient ritual of adorning the monarch with his symbols of state – the super tunica, spurs, sword, bracelets, orb and sceptre – to the sartorial splendour of the guests (a special nod here to Princesses Catherine and Charlotte, and Anne, with her feather doing double duty as an obscurer of



King Charles III and Queen Camilla

wayward princes), and the intoning of blessings, the coronation was spectacular.

There were many emotional moments as well. The king's heir, the Prince of Wales, pledging to be "liegeman of life and limb" and gently kissing his father on the cheek had many, including his majesty, misty eyed with emotion. The magnificent singing of Handel's *Zadok the Priest*; the moment the crown was placed on the king's head; the familiar words of the blessing of the high priests, the Kohanim; the military parades to and from the abbey; were Britain at its best. Not to

mention the iconic balcony scene at Buckingham Palace and the roaring cheers of massive crowds.

A coronation is an event of great constitutional and spiritual significance. Britain is a constitutional monarchy, and though the king may have no real power, heavy is the head who wears the crown. King Charles has a clear idea of what kind of reign he intends to have. Having served the longest apprenticeship in history, he's ready.

"I come not to be served, but to serve," were the stirring words of the king's prayer, which opened the ceremony. This is what monarchy is all about. It's not about the castles, jewels, and ermine robes (although those are fabulous) but duty, service, and responsibility, qualities which Queen Elizabeth II exemplified.

Known to be a deeply spiritual man with a keen interest in various religions, King Charles has always vowed that he would be a "defender of faith". As king, he is the head of the Church of England but is well aware that the United Kingdom of 2023 is vastly different to that of 1953. His deep commitment to religious diversity was reflected in the multifaith representatives present at the coronation.

Centuries ago, following the coronation of King Richard I, Jews were killed in a pogrom after many prominent English Jews arrived at Westminster Abbey to pay homage to their new king. Many Christian Englishmen harboured superstitions against Jews being present at such a holy occasion, and the Jewish attendees were flogged and thrown out of the banquet following the coronation. After the incident at Westminster Abbey, a rumour spread that Richard had ordered the English to kill the Jews. Christians attacked the predominantly Jewish neighbourhood of Old Jewry, setting the stone houses on fire at night and killing those who tried to escape. Hundreds of years later, Jews were very much a part of the honoured proceedings.

The chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who quite possibly made more media appearances than royal correspondents last week, spoke proudly about how Jews would be included in the service, including blessing the king as he left the abbey. There was special consideration for the laws of Shabbat and as such, a microphone wasn't used. The rabbi and his wife had spent Shabbat at St James Palace at the invitation of the king so that he



Why it works to have a king and a King

OPINION

RABBI ADAM ZAGORIA-MOFFET — JTA

Perhaps the strangest part was sitting through a Sunday service in the 1 000-year-old nave of St Albans Cathedral (the longest nave in England) and hearing the Hebrew Bible (specifically I Kings 1:32-40) read aloud in English. Maybe stranger yet was hearing part of that passage set to the music of 17th-century maestro George Friedrich Handel! These, and many other oddities, were only a fraction of the wonderful and unusual experiences of being an American-born British rabbi during the first coronation this country has had in 70 years.

As with the funeral last year of the late Queen Elizabeth, the scale of organisation and competence required to pull off such an event is astounding. For a country where it often feels that small-scale bureaucracy can get in the way of day-to-day life, the coronation was, by all accounts, seamless. This of course makes it the exception rather than the rule, as coronations past were often marred by logistical issues, bad luck, and sometimes straight-up violence.

It was the coronation of Richard I in 1189 that unleashed anti-Jewish massacres and pogroms across the country and led to the York Massacre in 1190, in which more than 150 local Jews killed themselves after being trapped in Clifford's Tower, which was set ablaze by an angry mob. During that year there were attacks in London, Lynn, Bury St Edmunds, Stamford, Lincoln, Colchester, and others. It was exactly 100 years later, in 1290,

that Edward I would expel Jews from England altogether. They wouldn't return (officially) for 400 years – or get an official apology from the church for 800.

This weekend's festivities, thankfully, were of a very different calibre. Not only were Jewish communities front and centre, but Jews, religious and not, were active and welcome participants in the ceremony in Westminster Abbey. Indeed, in spite of the ceremony taking place on Shabbat, the United Synagogue (a mainstream Orthodox denomination that accounts for 40% to 45% of British Jewish synagogue membership) was represented by Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who, together with other faith leaders, played a role in greeting the king as he left the church. This was especially unusual as it has long been the position of the United Synagogue that their rabbis and members shouldn't go into churches (much less on Shabbat). In many ways, this demonstrates one of the consistent themes of the coronation: the interruption of normal routine and the continued exceptionalism of the royal family.

Judaism is agnostic, at best, about kings. Our own monarchy came about because the people insisted on it, but against the will of the prophet Samuel, and against the desire of G-d. Once it was established – a process which involved several civil wars, a lot of bloodshed, and the degradation of many historical elements of Israelite society – it did, for a brief time, bring some stability to the

fragile confederacy of Israelite tribes. But it was really only the half-century golden era under King Solomon that managed this feat. After him, and ever since, the monarchy has been a source of conflict and violence. While we still hope that a righteous heir of the Davidic monarchy will reappear and take their place as king of Israel, we,



King Charles III meets faith leaders, including Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, at the coronation ceremony

famously, aren't holding our breath.

Our approach to non-Jewish monarchs is even more complex. While King Charles III was being coronated to the words of our holy texts and being anointed in oil (the ceremony for our monarchs) from the Mount of Olives (in our holy land), we were at the same time reciting a litany of prayers, as we do daily, to remind us (in the words of our prayers): "We have no king but you" (Avinu

Malkeinu); "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (Ashrei); "G-d is king, G-d has ruled, G-d will rule forever (Y'hi Khavod); "G-d's kingship is true, there is none else" (Aleinu).

These words were chosen by our sages for our prayers in part because they shared the biblical anxiety about monarchs. Halachah, Jewish law, does retain the notion of a king over Israel, but that king is so heavily bound by legislation, it's far from the absolutist monarchies of most of Europe.

However, since 1688 at least, after the brief (and failed) experiment with the notion of divine right of kings, England (and now the United Kingdom) has endorsed the notion of a constitutional monarch – a king or queen who is esteemed, but also bound by the law and by restrictions imposed by the people. In practice, this makes today's monarchy an awful lot like that of ancient Israel, and very different from historic European monarchies, as well as very different from how Americans and others often see it. After



Continued on page 11>>

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A 3D take on teaching and leadership

STEVEN GRUZD

“The most transformative type of education is ‘teaching without teaching,’” said Professor Thuli Madonsela. “It’s what we learn from our teachers without them consciously setting out to teach us. Teaching is leadership – influencing and inspiring yourself and others to think and act in ways that achieve your purpose.”

Madonsela, the former public protector of South Africa, was keynote speaker at the Education 3D conference at Investec in Sandton on 7 May. Hundreds of teachers and others attended this inspirational event, including many from King David, organised to commemorate 75 years of King David Schools in South Africa, with the first campus having opened in 1948.

Our parents are our first teachers, Madonsela said. From hers, she learned about human solidarity. They let



Rabbi Ricky Seeff, Lesley-Anne Gatter, and Mandy Wiener

total strangers who missed their bus or their train sleep in their home, respecting their shared humanity. “We don’t have to live in a selfish world where it’s ‘eat or be eaten’ or ‘kill or be killed,’” she said.

She spoke about teachers who had had a profound influence on her. Mr Banjwa at her primary school taught her that all of us have greatness within, whether rich

or poor. “Greatness comes when we excel in an area of passion and skill, to give purpose to our lives,” he told her. He also showed that one can be a leader at any age. “You don’t need anyone’s permission or a title.”

Later, John Daniels, a lecturer at the University of Swaziland (now eSwatini), taught her “to bloom wherever you are planted”, and to leverage adversity for good. He was instrumental in arranging United Nations scholarships for students in need to lift them out of poverty. Madonsela said she was grateful to the strangers who had paid for her education.

Madonsela offered some insights from the “teaching without teaching” she had learned in her life. “What we reward, grows,” she said, and “there is power in the images and the stories we tell. We can diminish humanity through images, but we can also elevate it. Great leaders discover and unleash their innate greatness.” She noted that teachers are among the most important role models that young people will emulate.

A panel moderated by journalist Mandy Wiener discussed the education revolution spurred by new technology. The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly accelerated the use of virtual learning platforms such as Teams and Zoom. “We live in a hybrid environment where there is more than a single path to learning,” said educationist Colin Northmore. “We need to move beyond the teacher being ‘the sage on the stage’. Technology offers us the opportunity to create choice, variety, and specialisation.”

Michele Botha from the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) said that assessments shouldn’t be thought of as doors to the next stage, but rather windows for learning

experiences. The IEB’s Robyn Mowatt said that technology, like artificial intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT, would “be a disruptor in all aspects of life, and this shouldn’t surprise us”. She said teachers should be careful about sending a message that assumes students will cheat with AI, and instead should look at how to integrate these technologies into the classroom. “Teachers need to upskill and become lifelong learners,” she said.

Educational entrepreneur Taddy Blecher said, “Technology is just a tool; the human being is what really matters . . . Kids know more about these technologies than teachers, therefore we need to unleash their creativity, with teachers as their guides.” He spoke about how his work has put 22 000 young people through university education, people who were abandoned by society, and that 22 000 of them have good jobs. “Never settle for second best, and put all the time,” Blecher said.

The panellists all agreed that students need to become more adept at fact checking and assessing the reliability and bias of information gleaned online. Technology won’t slow down, so humans must catch up.

In a break-out session, Dean McCoubrey of MySocialLife gave advice to teachers and parents on how to understand the digital world that children and teens inhabit, and how to keep them safe from online predators. He also discussed how many students were finding specialised teaching offerings online on platforms like YouTube and TikTok.

A second panel featured psychologists Naomi Holdt and Paul Bushell, who addressed the social and emotional toll of COVID-19 and other contemporary stressors on pupils. Depression and anxiety in teens and preteens has

grown tremendously over the past decade, they said, and mental health-issues have been fuelled by technology and social media. Said Bushell, “Technology can be a connector and a disconnecter. COVID-19 increased our connections with our inner ring, our immediate family, but distanced us from the outer circle. We learned how valuable connections are in human experience.” Both lauded the resilience shown by teachers, pupils, and



Education 3D conference held at Investec

parents in the pandemic, but said not enough attention had been paid to their mental health.

The thought-provoking event was rounded off by the dynamic Darren August, the author of the book *A Teacher Changed My Life*. August revealed a worrying statistic: though about 5 000 teachers are trained annually in South Africa, about 10 000 teachers leave the profession every year.

August held the audience in rapture as he described the ways in which various teachers influenced him. His Grade 2 teacher awarded him 13 out of 10 for recitation, building his confidence in his gift for public speaking. Later, he was bullied for being a “goody-goody teacher’s pet”, but his teacher told him to ignore it and just be himself. He left the audience feeling inspired and positive about the difference that teachers make in our lives.

For resilient children, start with yourself

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

We cannot control or predict what the future holds for our children, but by connecting with them and building loving relationships, we can give them the tools they need to bounce back after any setback, said renowned educational psychologist Naomi Holdt. But the first step is to examine your relationship with yourself, she told attendees at an event at the Linksfield Shul Community Centre which formed part of the King David Wellness series.

“There is so much pressure on us as parents, in our world, on our kids, and our teens,” said Holdt. “We are in a mental health crisis affecting people of all ages, globally.” That’s why it’s so important to grow children who are resilient, which begins with becoming more resilient ourselves. Resilience develops naturally in the context of a loving relationship, she said.

Holdt maintains that coupled with an adult-motivated pessimism that is rubbing off on our children, adults and children are also experiencing the lingering adverse mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re seeing a lot of meltdowns, greater separation anxiety, higher general anxiety, more anger, more testing of boundaries, increased impulsivity and distractibility, exhaustion, and lower tolerance levels,” said Holdt, reflecting on the crisis. These are all normal behaviours when you’re under excessive stress – among adults and children. The worst thing we can do, however, is allow these issues to fester and move on, as the problem will only get worse.

We need to focus on what we can and cannot control – what’s known as the circle of control, Holdt said. In the outer circle are the things we cannot control, and in the inner circle are the things we can. By focusing on the inner circle, rooted in all the little things that we as parents say and do every single day, and going back to basics, we build resilience.

Ultimately parents want happy children. “Resilience cannot be separated from happiness,” Holdt said. “Lower rates of anxiety and depression correspond with higher degrees of resilience, yet 25% of kids and teens face depression and anxiety.” There’s no protecting our kids from every “bullet” they’ll face, be it bullying, pressure, conflict at home, learning difficulties, and so on. As parents, we know our kids will get knocked down, which is painful to witness. Yet if we bullet-proof them, they may go down, but they’ll be able to get back up again.

“Yet, resilience has very little to do with our children and so

much to do with us,” said Holdt. “Far more powerful than genes is the environment because that determines whether that gene is expressed. This is where your power comes in, because the environment is your home and your relationship with your kids. This relationship, which represents safety, is the best buffer against stress. Therefore, for resilience to exist, connection is a priority.”

Holdt discussed the simple things that make a massive difference to building resilience. Parents of resilient children are resilient themselves, she stressed. Often, we expect things of our kids that we are struggling with ourselves. “We are role models to our kids – that’s how their brain develops,” she said. “If we want resilient children, we must show them how we handle and navigate the big things in life.”

That’s why self-care – prioritising ourselves physically and emotionally – is so important. “When we aren’t looking after ourselves, we cannot regulate emotionally. For our children to learn how to regulate themselves and stay calm, they need us to be able to regulate ourselves,” Holdt said. “Parents of resilient children are brave enough to look in the parenting mirror.”

Often your children are acting out when you’ve had a bad day because they’re absorbing your emotional space. You need to examine your stress levels, which are often related to work pressure, which means you’re preoccupied and unable to connect fully with your kids.

What’s more, we often react to our kids’ behaviour, but it generally arises for two reasons, said Holdt. It’s either developmentally appropriate, or it indicates that there’s something else going on. “Behaviour is always a message. Too often, we react and punish the behaviour instead of stopping and asking what the message is. If you don’t first figure that out, you’re never going to meet the need, and that behaviour will continue or morph into something else. When you meet the need, everything changes.”

Our kids need to know that it’s ok to express big emotions, said Holdt. Suppressed emotion turns into anxiety and depression, so normalise and talk about emotions. “Vulnerability is the greatest opportunity for the deepest connection,” she said. Children need to know that we love them unconditionally, even in their darkest moments.

She also stressed the importance of maintaining consistent boundaries for our kids especially in hard times as it gives them



Naomi Holdt

a sense of safety. When you’re facing exhaustion and trauma, it’s easy to let the boundaries slide, but this is when they need to be the strongest. “Without boundaries, our kids will be anxious. Within the safety of boundaries, they can grow, develop, and learn.” Though many parents want to be their kids’ friend, what kids need most is a leader, someone who creates a safe space in times of uncertainty.

That’s not to say that we must rule by fear, she said. Discipline and punishment are very different things. Discipline means to educate or to instruct, yet a brain in fear cannot grow. Holdt also challenged the idea that there was a perfect way of parenting. “Nobody’s home is without meltdowns and yelling now and then,” she said. “Parenting is a messy dance, and sometimes we step on each other’s toes, but that’s okay.” We must teach our kids that everybody makes mistakes, and that’s how we learn and develop resilience.

Focus on values rather than rules, she said. Rules are changeable, but values like kindness and respect are constant and can consistently drive good behaviour. It all starts with cultivating a strong foundation and a good sense of family that will give your child a sense of belonging. It’s in the small, everyday, playful moments that we connect with our kids. Listen mindfully, put your phone away, and be accessible to your children. “The storms will come, but we need to know that when they do, the roots are strong,” she said.

Ties that bind: Netflix singles come from SA

TALI FEINBERG

When Dani Bergman connected with Shaun Civin on the new Netflix show *Jewish Matchmaking*, they already had one important thing in common: both their families came from South Africa. This background helped them to hit it off immediately, with Bergman speaking about how “my parents always said, ‘You need a South African man’”, and Civin quipping, “Dani tells me the best biltong in the world is in LA [Los Angeles], not South Africa.”

Biltong aside, “I feel a special connection to the South African Jewish community through my parents and family, and I’m grateful to be a part of it,” Civin told the *SA Jewish Report* from his current home in Hawaii. “I have extended family in South Africa consisting of aunts and uncles and cousins on both of my parents’ sides. My mom’s grandfather, Max Goodman, was the founder of Greenside Shul and the first Jewish mayor of Johannesburg. My dad’s dad, Zeida Joe Civin, a huge inspiration and mentor to me, was born in 1919 and passed away at the age of 100 in 2019.”

Bergman (27) was born in California. “I grew up on a Cape Dutch-style farm in the suburbs of California,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* from her home in Miami. “My family owns Diemersfontein wine farm in Wellington [in the Western Cape], and my dad grew up going there in the summers. He always had a dream of re-creating the farm in the States, so when I was about 10 years old, my parents bought a large property and built a replica of the farm.” She owns and operates a social media agency for restaurants and brands.

Both Bergman’s parents were born in Johannesburg and moved to America when they were young. “Coming from this background, we strongly connect with the values and traditions of the South African Jewish culture. We regularly have braais, search for the best biltong, and I have my friends ship me Cadbury Top Deck from South Africa! I spent a year studying abroad at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where I further connected with my roots and made life-long friends. My great uncle, David Sonnenberg, still lives in Wellington.”

Civin (26) grew up in Jupiter, Florida. “I’m a CPA, which I believe is the equivalent of a chartered accountant in South Africa. I’ve spent the past two years working remotely as a finance and accounting consultant. I enjoy travelling to places where I can surf.”

He landed up on the show because just like any other Jewish mother, his mom thought it would be a good way for him to meet a nice Jewish girl. “My mom saw a post on a Jewish moms’ Facebook group, sent me a quick form to fill out, and I was on the show the next month! It all happened super-fast.”

When Bergman first moved to Miami, “I joined a Facebook group called ‘Jews in South Florida’. There was a post that mentioned casting Jewish singles for a dating show on a major streaming platform. About four months later, I randomly got a call from casting. They interviewed me on the spot, and offered me a place on the show.”

The most rewarding part of the show for Civin “has been all the connections from Jewish-geography – family and friends have been calling from all over the world who saw the show and made the connection. People with last names in common have been reaching out about family history. It’s been a lot of fun.”

The most challenging aspect “was probably waiting for the show to come out. We never got to see any sort of preview, and after filming, I heard nothing for almost a year until they announced that the show had been released.”

He believes there’s still a role for matchmakers in a world where everyone’s profile is online. “There’s definitely a need for a personal touch. I was excited to meet Dani because of the South African connection and how much we had in common. Dani is awesome. She’s really fun to be around and made the whole experience something I’ll remember fondly. We’re not romantically involved, but we keep in touch and are friends.”

“Matchmakers teach us to look past the superficial and truly connect with what matters,” says Bergman. “I would definitely recommend this experience. Meeting [matchmaker] Aleeza and learning how to date intentionally was extremely rewarding. Through this experience, I was able to hone in on what I wanted in a partner, notice what didn’t sit right, and act on it. I always knew to never settle, however navigating this experience with Aleeza’s guidance led to an immense amount of



self-growth. “Being able to stand up for yourself in romantic situations can be tough,” she says. “I know from personal experience there are always thoughts that things will change, or he’ll turn around. The truth is, you can move only as fast as the slowest person in the relationship – Aleeza’s saying – and not everyone is for you. That’s okay! It’s our responsibility to know ourselves well enough and have the self-respect to go through life and make the best decisions for our long-term growth. “Shaun is a great guy – amazing energy, great family, and similar values,” she says. But for all Jewish mothers hoping that Civin is single, he reports, “I’m currently in a happy relationship!” Since studying at UCT, “I visit [South Africa]

once every couple years,” says Bergman. “I haven’t been back since 2019, but need to make my way down for a Cape Town summer soon! When visiting, I spend my time on Clifton Beach, Camps Bay, and going to festivals with friends. My personal favourites are We Love Summer and Wolfkop Weekender.” Civin visited South Africa almost every summer growing up. “My sister actually had her Batmitzvah at Greenside Shul. Most recently, a few of my friends and I did our college graduation trip to Cape Town. South Africa has a special place in my heart and I hope to be back again soon.” “Our country is one of the most beautiful in the world, and our people have a depth to them that’s hard to find elsewhere,” says Bergman. “I love you. Stay shining.”

Why it works to have a king and a King

>>Continued from page 9

nearly six years living and working on these green isles, I’ve come to appreciate the complexities and absurdities of the British monarchy, and to value the role that the ceremonies play in the collective life of Britons.

Many here are surprised to find that, being a Yankee, I’m not also a republican (an anti-monarchist, in the British context). Indeed, while I have my doubts about the idea of monarchy and while, religiously, there is a strong argument against human authority, the monarchy as it operates in modern Britain is fairly compatible with the idea of kingship as established by halachah – restrained, limited, and primarily occupied with being a moral exemplar rather than an authoritarian ruler. Maybe then it shouldn’t be so strange that so much of the ceremonies this weekend were drawn from our texts, and so much of the symbolism referential to our tradition. We can be grateful that King Charles’s coronation, the first in a generation, went off without a hitch and without bloodshed, and with the support and involvement of a diverse representation of Britain’s peoples and faiths.

To the outside, this weekend has likely appeared

to be just a lot of pomp and pageantry. No doubt, it’s often Americans who are camping out on the Mall in see-through tents or wearing the royal family’s faces as masks in coronation parties, but this American, after more than half a decade here in Britain, can appreciate the depth of the monarchy in ways I couldn’t before. I see both its deep significance and history, its connection to our own tradition (sometimes through appropriation), and its negatives. As a rabbi and a Jew, I will always be of the opinion that there is only one sovereign who truly rules, but there is something to be said for having a king as well as a King.

- Rabbi Adam Zagoria-Moffet is the rabbi of St. Albans Masorti Synagogue. He was ordained from the Jewish Theological Seminary where he also received an MA in Jewish Thought. He grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, and has lived in Minnesota, New York, and Israel before moving to the United Kingdom in 2017.
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THEATRE ON THE SQUARE

Kneidel and coffee – the Jews who ignite AfrikaBurn

TALI FEINBERG

“Part of the motivation of going to AfrikaBurn is to show my kids that you can keep Shabbat wherever you are,” says Karen Kallmann. “In a way, it’s like Shabbat – the amount of preparation you put in before will determine what you have on the day. Like Shabbat, you need to be present, live for the day, and be your best self.”

Kallmann is one of a number of observant and secular Jews who attend the festival, finding spirituality and freedom in the desert.

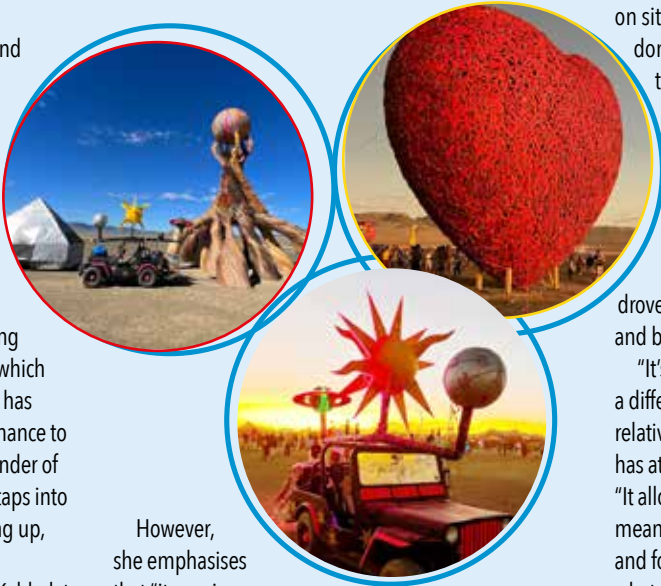
AfrikaBurn is a community who come together in the Tankwa Karoo every year for a festival of art, performance, theme camps, music, and togetherness. No money is exchanged, and everything is “gifted” by participants.

“The essential message of AfrikaBurn is gifting – finding the joy of giving rather than taking – which is really unusual today,” says Nicola Brivik, who has attended the festival four times. “It gives us a chance to remember that joy, and fulfils that childlike wonder of finding just what you need. The whole festival taps into that freedom of being a child – playing, dressing up, and having pure freedom.”

Jarryd Lake, an observant Jew, has brought Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat dinners, and even a Pesach seder to the festival. “In 2016, we hosted Camp Exodus, where we held a Pesach seder. It was the best Pesach I’ve ever had. In 2017, the Kneidel Maidels brought more than 100 people together for Shabbos. There’s a Jewish gene of wanting to be connected to community and each other and to be part of something bigger. That’s what draws many members of the Jewish community to AfrikaBurn and our Pesach and Shabbat events.”

Kallmann has been to AfrikaBurn “five times as a family – we have five children – and my husband went

by himself this year. I love being disconnected from the ‘default world’. There’s no cellphone reception or WiFi. I love the community that’s created. You don’t feel that you have to live up to anybody’s expectations. ‘Radical self-expression’ is one of the principles. I also love the art – magnificent, enormous sculptures – and the desert and its extreme beauty and temperatures.”



However, she emphasises that “it requires a huge amount of preparation. Another of the principles is ‘radical self-reliance’, which means providing all your own shelter, water, and food as well as energy for cooking, lighting etc. I remember our lounge being packed with all sorts of goods including rebar to keep our tents pinned to the ground, and us needing to hire a one-ton trailer to get all our goodies (including bicycles) to the Tankwa Karoo. Gifting is another principle which requires a lot of prep – what are you going to gift and how are you going to get it to The Burn?” [as participants call AfrikaBurn].

Brivik is part of a group of about 50 who host a themed camp called Sunrisers. “We gift coffee every morning, which requires massive amounts of planning. We need generators and a huge amount of water.” They also bring everything one can imagine to go with the coffee, from oat milk to cinnamon to rusks. They even bake croissants and toasted sandwiches on site, and have a DJ playing music. Everything is donated by camp participants, who also work shifts to serve coffee. At one point, they were serving 900 cups of coffee a morning.

“Once you have been to AfrikaBurn you’ll always want to go,” says Brivik. “It’s creativity and collaboration at its very best. It’s curated by the people who go. It’s what you put in and take out.” Her team also created a “mutant vehicle”, which drove around as movable art, changing the landscape and bringing childlike joy.

“It’s a temporary community of people who want a different way of living and sense of community in a relatively inhospitable environment,” says Lake, who has attended the festival since its inception in 2015. “It allows human beings to connect in a deep and meaningful way. It takes you out of your comfort zone, and forces you to grow from that. You don’t always get what you want, but you get what you need.”

Last year, he didn’t plan any Jewish events, but then heard that people were asking about it. “It shows that people want to connect with their Judaism. I ended up putting it together last minute, and asked people to bring what they could. It was an impromptu, crowd-sourced Shabbat.” He feels he’s able to be an observant Jew in the environment because it’s so respectful.

Kallmann worked with Lake in creating the Shabbat and Pesach events. “We gifted a Shabbat meal, which was very meaningful, especially for young Israelis who had been travelling through Africa and hadn’t had a

Shabbat experience until they got to The Burn. It took a huge amount of effort, but was incredibly rewarding. We hosted two seders, which were really spectacular, and served kneidlach on most evenings of Pesach. We were also the place people could come to say kiddush during and over Shabbat.”

“The artwork is phenomenal,” says Brivik. “For example, this year there was a massive red heart gifted to a couple who got married at The Burn. Every year, a *Clan Man* is burned. I loved all the mutant vehicles – from puppets to an elephant blowing fire out of its trunk. Ours was decorated to tie in with this year’s theme of space.”

During the festival, artworks are burned to show the impermanence of life and the need to leave no trace. “The first time I saw the art burn, I felt heartbroken,” says Brivik. “But then I realised the beauty in the ephemeral nature of our world. Sometimes the art becomes even more beautiful when it burns.”

In this extremely free environment, anything goes, but Kallmann believes it’s a positive environment for children. “I really believe you find what you’re looking for. We were looking for fun things for our kids to do, and that’s what we found. People aren’t openly and obviously drunk, and the kids weren’t up until the wee hours of the morning.

“Our experience is that participants are all incredibly kind to children,” she says. “AfrikaBurn provided an incredible opportunity to spend quality time with my kids without any distractions. However, if you’re sensitive to nudity, you shouldn’t go. My kids were appropriately amused and/or disgusted by the nudity, but I don’t believe it harmed them.”

“I see people’s eyes light up when they’re able to find community and connect with their Judaism in the desert,” says Lake. “They’re connecting with G-d, themselves, and each other in a pure way. I’m proud to be part of that.”

Portrait of a gritty city

Photographic artist **Caroline Suzman** has an exhibition, *I Declare I am Here*, at the Wits Art Museum. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to her about it.

What made you choose this medium?

My parents gave me a box brownie camera for my birthday when I was six, and it opened a whole world of seeing things – it was like a cube of magic. I love architecture, art, design, and portraiture, and exploring social issues in a nuanced way. Photography allows me to combine so many different elements.

What do you look for in a project?

I look for a hook – a picture that sparks thoughts about a particular subject. The thoughts often have literary or historical references, or might radiate from a poem, which often happens as I love poetry and find that poetry and photography go particularly well together. This can be expanded into a narrative that can be explored in various ways – literal, allegorical, metaphorical.

I like projects that can be layered in this way. An example of this is my series, *Expectations*. I found myself repeatedly driving past a man with a grass kiosk in Greenside and the stack of grass on the side of the road looked so inviting, I wanted to stop, even though I didn’t need grass. The grass seller had placed a large orange glove on top of the grass that to me said something about his expectation of selling grass. I expanded this idea into a series that reflects on our expectations of one another, parents’ expectations of children, children’s expectations of parents, and our expectations of the sensory world.

What inspired the photographs in your latest exhibition?

In 2016, I was standing in an underpass of the highway in Newtown. The rush of cars overhead, people streaming in and out of the city, creates a sense of time simultaneously standing still and feeling

that you are hurtling into the future. The massive concrete pillars that prop up the highway seemed to bear down on me, it felt oppressive. I read somewhere that South African photographer David Goldblatt said that the reason he used black and white film during apartheid was that “colour was too sweet for apartheid”.

This series, *I Declare I Am Here*, is a kind of call and response to that statement. The photographs reflect on the powerful way that people stand their ground in a city that is at once inviting and at times inhospitable. The images are super saturated with the natural vibrancy of street art, and I have pushed the design elements to extremes, for example mixing traditional Ndebele design on a traditional costume with graffiti, symbolic of the old and the new, and the eclectic layering of the city’s diverse cultures.

The work reflects on people “reclaiming” the city after the end of apartheid, taking a stand, and navigating the decaying urban infrastructure of Johannesburg with grit and grace. I was also inspired by the way many people dress on public holidays like Freedom Day and Heritage Day, which reflects a certain pride in the way they see themselves in relation to the city.

How did you choose your subjects?

As a portrait photographer, I’m always looking at people. I’m interested in how they feel about living in cities, and I’m interested in the themes of the city and country in general, like migrancy and xenophobia. Photographic portraits allow for reflection on social themes in a soulful way.

I drive and walk around Johannesburg a lot because I love the layered architecture, and there’s always something crazy and interesting happening on the street. While walking around, I always

meet amazing people and I strike up conversations. Sometimes those people are dressed in a particular way that makes them stand out. In my mind, I fleetingly match their dress with some urban fabric (architecture, murals, graffiti, etc). Sometimes it works, sometimes not. Part of the experience is just the freedom of meeting people and the joy of taking in the urban fabric with no expectations.

What are you trying to portray?

I try to let my subjects radiate their own energy and portray whatever they want. I often just stand still until they almost forget they are being photographed, and they go into their own world. I like the moment of disengagement because it feels more natural.

How do you feel about Joburg?

Like many, I have a love/hate relationship with the city. The hate comes from the loss of freedom to walk around without having to be on guard because of crime, chronic social inequality, and xenophobia. What I love about Johannesburg is that people are so kind and friendly, creative, and innovative.

Street art plays a big part in this body of work. What does it represent to you?

I was concerned with the play between the social and urban fabric, not the street art in itself. The portraits have street art in them because much of Johannesburg is full of graffiti and street art. Street art is interesting because often it reflects social issues.



Photo: Caroline Suzman

Londiwe Dhlamini and her daughter Kutwane

The very nature of street art is such that it comes and goes, it can get overpainted or vandalised in a heartbeat, and photography is a way of freezing the work in time and giving the artist ongoing recognition. When I’m able to identify the artist, I include their name in the caption of the work so that people can look them up. Many are involved in public-art projects which uplift communities by employing local people and beautifying spaces.

Over time, you have visually documented much of this country. Why?

Photographers have great power, and if you can, you should try use that power for good.

There are many issues in the country that need focus. One of them is land ownership. My great aunt, parliamentarian Helen Suzman’s, motto was, “Go and see for yourself”, and that’s exactly what I did. For 20 years on and off, I travelled thousands of kilometres, mostly on my own, to find out what was happening with rural violence, land reform, and restitution in South Africa. The result is a book project called *Heartlands*.

I also just love this country so much – and any excuse for a road trip, the longer and off the beaten track the better.

What’s next and why?

I’m working on a full-colour book of the series *I Declare I Am Here*, which will be published later this year.

I’m simultaneously working on a new series with a conceptual approach. It’s a collection of random, disturbing things in suburbia that are related to apartheid spatial planning. It’s a bit irreverent, a bit serious, a bit disturbing, and a bit funny. I’m also working on my book, *Heartlands*, about land ownership in South Africa, and continuing my legacy nature project series – commissioned projects for games reserves, parks, and special gardens, creating records for future generations.

• *I Declare I Am Here* “is at the Wits Art Museum until 13 May. The gallery is open Monday to Saturday, 10:00 to 16:00. Suzman will be doing walkabout through the exhibition on Thursday 11 May, at 12:00; Friday 12 May at 12.30; and Saturday 13 May at 12:00 and 14:00.

Israel to recognise victims of antisemitism in diaspora

TALI FEINBERG

For the first time since Israel’s establishment, the ministry of diaspora affairs and combating antisemitism has decided that non-Israeli victims of antisemitic terror attacks in the diaspora should be officially mourned by the state of Israel, specifically on Yom Hazikaron, which commemorates fallen soldiers and victims of terror.

“This is an important and necessary step for a nation and a country that has struggled with antisemitism since its inception,” said Yaakov Hagoel, the chairperson of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO). He initiated the move last year, based on a study by the Boston-based Ruderman Family Foundation, which lobbied for it.

Shira Ruderman, the executive director of the Ruderman Family Foundation, said, “This is a historic day for the Jewish people and Israel. With this decision, Israel has proved, without a shadow of a doubt, that it’s the state of the Jewish people, and that only through our unity as a people and the mutual guarantee between us can we guarantee our security and prosperity.”

“Our brothers and sisters living in the diaspora are an inseparable part of us and unfortunately, they struggle every day with antisemitic events,” Hagoel said. “We’ll work together with our partners to implement this decision for the sake of all the people of Israel.”



Lori Gilbert-Kaye who was killed in the Chabad of Poway shooting in 2019

The proposal, adopted by the cabinet, was brought forward by the Minister of Diaspora Affairs and Social Equality, Amichai Chikli. His ministry will formulate

the recommendations for recognising Jews and non-Jews killed in antisemitic attacks in the diaspora.

Ruderman said that Israel’s role in commemorating antisemitic attacks around the world would hopefully encourage other governments to take them more seriously.

According to the panel survey commissioned and released in January 2022 by the Ruderman Family Foundation, 93% of American Jews are concerned about current levels of antisemitism in the United States (US), with nearly half of US Jews (42%) experiencing antisemitism either directly or through family and friends over the past five years alone. As a response to the rise in antisemitism in the US, President Joe Biden declared May 2023 as Jewish American Heritage Month. “I will not remain silent in the face of this antisemitic venom, vitriol, and violence,” Biden said in a statement.

The foundation first began working on the issue more than a year and a half ago, speaking to everyone “from security officials to the foreign ministry, to people who lost their dear ones”, Ruderman said.

Around the same time, Hagoel started considering a similar idea. “I initiated the move about a year ago after I met bereaved families from the diaspora and felt their pain,” he said.

Ruderman said that once it became clear that the WZO was also working on the same idea, the two organisations banded together.

The victims of the 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and those who died in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires are expected to be memorialised, amongst many others. About 200 diaspora Jews have been killed in antisemitic attacks since Israel’s founding in 1948.

This includes individuals like California



French Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll who was stabbed and set alight in 2018

student Blaze Bernstein, killed by a white supremacist in 2018; Lori Gilbert-Kaye, killed in the Chabad of Poway shooting in 2019; French Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll, stabbed and set alight in 2018; and Dr Sarah Halimi, attacked and thrown out of a window by a neighbour in 2017.

The ministry is forming a committee that has until 1 September to submit recommendations for carrying out the new policy. It will need to determine what would be considered an antisemitic attack, and will also consider cases of non-Jews who were

murdered in attacks of an antisemitic nature. For example, Alexandre Strens, a non-Jewish employee of the Jewish Museum of Belgium, was killed in a terror attack at the site in 2014.

Chikli called the decision “an important achievement”, and praised the Ruderman Family Foundation and the WZO. “For the first time since the founding of the state, the government approved a decision to recognise the responsibility of Israel – the state of the Jews – to commemorate those killed in terror attacks who were murdered because of their Jewishness abroad,” he said.



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Stand-in moms fill the void for mothers

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

No-one can fill the void of losing your mother, but having a special woman in your life who plays a similar role is priceless. This Mother’s Day, three women pay tribute to women who supported them through heart-breaking loss and their own motherhood journeys.

“If it wasn’t for the amazing women in my life – my aunties and mother-in-law – I can’t even begin to imagine how differently things would have turned out,” says Robyn Rosen. After giving birth to her daughter in January, Rosen suffered a severe stroke. Paralysed and unable to speak, she remained in intensive care for 12 days and underwent months of intensive rehabilitation to learn to walk and talk again.

With the help of her support system, Rosen made a full recovery and now is back to work and immersing herself in motherhood. Having lost her mother to breast cancer, Rosen, who was 16 at the time, is no stranger to overcoming adversity – with the help of loved ones.

“My aunts all did whatever they could, from school lifts to helping with homework to taking us on holiday with them,” she says. “They were just there for my brother and me. My mom’s sister, Sheryl Ginsburg, was like my mother. She’s looked after me ever since my mom died. My other aunts, Sheryl Ozinsky, Caz Freidman, Hayley Pogrand, and Debby Myers, were also very much involved.”

Originally from Cape Town, Rosen now lives in Johannesburg and says her aunts dropped everything to fly to Joburg and help look after her baby when she wasn’t able to. “My mother-in-law, Cynthia, would do night shifts with her, and my aunts did the day shift until we got nurses and determined exactly what was wrong with me,” she says.

With no family living in Joburg, Rosen has also leaned on Cynthia. “She was also in ICU when she had her children, so it was like déjà vu for her, she

understood, it just solidified our bond. Her daughter had her first baby just two weeks after me, so her hands were full, but she’s just selfless.”

Though Rosen was sad not to be able to be hands-on with her baby at first, she’s grateful to her “mom network”.

“My biggest fear when I was pregnant was not having a mother to help me. I was scared that I wouldn’t know anything, being a first-time mom without my mother. But my aunties and my mother-in-law filled that void. Of course, my mother will never be replaced, but they mobilised, as Jewish women do, with grace and unconditional love.”

Jade Dracht was also supported by her aunt when her mother passed away from cancer in 2016. The eldest of six siblings, Dracht’s mother was particularly close to her sister, Rolene Hovsha, who was two years younger than her. “Rolene and I have also always been close, and we just became more so as we dealt with my mom being sick,” says Dracht.

“Towards the end, my aunt stepped in financially, physically, emotionally, and helped take care of my mom, myself, and my brother.” Dracht’s father suffered a stroke the year before losing his wife, which impaired his speech and left him paralysed. “I went from having these wonderful, largely healthy parents to moving my dad to Sandringham Gardens and losing my mom. Rolene essentially took over the role of parent.”

When her mother passed away, Dracht had two-year-old twin boys. “She was the most amazing bobba in the time that she could be with them. Now my aunt does whatever she can to be involved in my kids’ lives. She’s genuinely interested because she feels that pain, loss, and emptiness as much as I do, and she knows how besotted my mom was with them. Having this comfort from the one person in the world who actually gets it has been huge.”

A year after her mother passed away, Dracht gave birth to a baby girl. “Falling pregnant with my daughter was a complete shock because my boys had



Sian and Ariela Propheta



Rolene Hovsha with her newborn great niece

Sheryl Ginsburg, Robyn Rosen, and Cynthia Rosen



been fertility babies,” she says. Dracht believes her daughter was a gift from her mom. “For Rolene, it was also very special. She was there for the birth and during the pregnancy, which was really difficult for me, having just lost my mom. In every aspect, as much as she’s not my mom, Rolene is just there.”

It was also through having her own children that Sian Propheta most appreciated the support of her own “mother figure”, her mother-in-law, Ariela. Having lost her father at the age of five, Propheta had a complicated but loving relationship with her mom, who was left alone to raise two daughters.

When her mother later died of cancer, Propheta was just 26. Later, the support of her mother-in-law as she entered motherhood was invaluable. Coincidentally, her in-laws had been good friends with her parents when they were all in their 20s.

“When my mom got ill, I was already dating my husband and Ariela was a big help to me. It was special because there were a lot of pictures and stories that my in-laws had of my folks that I would never have been exposed to if I hadn’t met my husband. From the beginning, there was a special bond because of this family connection. Ariela has been my maternal rock.”

Now a mom to two small children, Propheta has leaned heavily on Ariela. “The biggest thing about not having a mom when you are a parent is just having someone to hold you and say, ‘Everything’s going be okay’ and ‘What you’re doing is enough’ when you’re feeling desperate,” she says.

“Nothing can replace your mom, but I feel like I’ve got to that point with Ariela, for which I’m so grateful. Her being able to share how vulnerable she felt as a new mom makes me realise what I’m feeling is ok. The biggest lesson I’ve learned from her is that you can give all of yourself to your children, but make sure that you look after yourself as well.”

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Igniting spirits on Lag B’Omer

Community members in shuls and schools across the country light up Lag B’Omer on 8 May, with bonfires, braais, boerewors, and their besties.

Sydenham Preschool

King David Primary School Linksfield

Yeshiva College Pre-Primary School

King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield

Marais Road Shul

A mother-of-all day

Mother’s Day is the one day a year when I don’t miss my late mom. Not because we weren’t close, and not because I didn’t want to celebrate her. But because we never seemed to be able to get it right. For whatever reason, once a year on Mother’s Day, we were set up to fail. And worse than that, to disappoint.

There’s a chance that my late mom herself didn’t enjoy the day. It might have been that that she resented sharing it with other mothers because being the mother that she was, perhaps she felt that she should be given her own day. Dedicated to her.

Other mothers were fine, in her view of the world. And they were perfectly entitled to their own notion of motherhood. But they were obviously not of her standard. And whereas they might have thought that they had something to be proud of when it came to their children, she knew without a shadow of a doubt that those other mother’s kids wouldn’t hold a candle to her offspring.

Shame. Mother’s Day presents two main challenges: the gift and the get together. Whereas for many this provides two opportunities to demonstrate love and appreciation, for us it offered multiple stress points.

Because there was slim-to-no chance that we could get both right on any given year. A successful year would be one out of the two.

In fairness, my late mother never communicated her disappointment. She would accept the gift with the good grace and delight of someone who had been waiting the whole year for that scarf. She would even manage a “This is just what I needed” – not that “need” was something she could relate to. An onlooker would be convinced. But we knew that it was a

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



matter of time until the truth would become clear when we would spot an Oaklands car guard adorned in the same Hermes scarf that my mom had really needed.

It took us years to get used to seeing our offerings worn by random strangers who indeed really did “need” it. And try as we might to convince ourselves that it was the thought that counts, we knew that it really wasn’t.

To make matters worse, if confronted, she would look us in the eye and deny the accusation with the horror of the genuinely innocent. “I wear it all the time!” she would insist so sincerely that we would doubt our own eyes and sanity. And then she would artfully change the subject so as not to dwell on such nonsense.

Kids. There’s an awful trend, started by us orphans I assume, to make those with mothers feel guilty about feeling poorly about the day. The idea is to make victims of the motherless, and to force those navigating the day to spare a thought for those of us who can no longer celebrate the day with our moms. It’s absurd and unfair. Because it’s not about Mother’s Day at all.

The reality is that Mother’s Day without a mom might feel empty. But then, for me, so does every day when I hear a story that she would appreciate. Or when I reach for my phone to call her to tell her something wicked. Or when I drive past Oaklands, and I see a car guard in a Hermes scarf.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

How far Britain has come

The coronation over the weekend of King Charles III was a leading news story even in countries with little or no affiliation to Great Britain. The event also provided telling insights into how the United Kingdom has changed since the last royal coronation 70 years ago. In keeping with Charles III’s undertaking to be seen as “defender of faiths” in the diverse society that Britain has since become, the ceremony was adapted to include representatives of different faiths. We were proud to learn that our good friend and colleague, Gillian Merron, now Baroness Merron of Lincoln, had been chosen to represent the Jewish community. Following a successful career in politics including a stint as minister in Gordon Brown’s cabinet, she served as vice-president of the Jewish Leadership Council before being appointed chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. In that capacity, she engaged regularly with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), in particular with her counterpart, Wendy Kahn, and in 2017, was among those in attendance at that year’s memorable World Jewish Congress National Director’s Forum in Cape Town.

Baroness Merron’s designated role was to present the Imperial Mantle, or Robe Royal, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, after which it was placed over the king’s shoulders. Interviewed by the *Jewish Chronicle*, she commented on how “deeply conscious” she was of the significance of this honour, not just for herself but for the community she was representing. This spirit of inclusiveness and respect for diversity is indeed remarkable in a country where for centuries, members of religious minorities were as a matter of course excluded from public and political life. Seeing representatives of the Jewish, Muslim,

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Hindu, and Sikh communities participating for the first time in so significant a national occasion was also a reminder of how our own country has scrupulously respected the right to equality of all faith communities, and ensured that its representatives are duly included in all public state occasions.

The right to dignity and equality for all faith groups is today also upheld and protected by legislation prohibiting unfair discrimination, including hate speech. There was a time not too long ago when there was little or no recourse for those victimised, insulted, or otherwise unfairly treated on account of their colour, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and other such identity-based grounds. Today, however, a range of remedies are available to address such cases, and the SAJBD has made full use of them when dealing with antisemitic incidents that come to its attention. Over the past week, the Board was able to speedily resolve a number of such incidents. This included addressing two cases of antisemitic hate speech, one in the workplace and the other on a local university campus, and successfully intervening to prevent the screening at a popular public venue of a highly antisemitic documentary film. This last issue was timeously brought to our attention by the Anti-Defamation League in the United States, which shows the enduring value of the working partnerships we have forged with our international counterparts, particularly in recent decades.

• 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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Hatzolah fundraiser raises almost half a million

Hatzolah raised R405 210 on 27 April 2023 in an event on the bowling greens of the Bedfordview Bowling Club, with a further R21 000 contributed by Cable Max. More than 150 people participated in the event, which was held with the help of Sharon and Vernon Goldwasser, many watching the action on the greens. Special thanks to Accumulo, Shaleen Endres, Philip Neville, and the sponsors.

Darren Kahn, Philip Neville, Shaleen Enres, Sharon and Vernon Goldwasser



Unity Yom Ha'atzmaut connects King David community

Communal values and support for Israel were the feature of a unity Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration by King David primary and high schools on 26 April. More than 2 000 students from King David schools came together to celebrate 75 years of Israel's independence and 75 years of King David. The event included performances from all the schools, singing, dancing, drumming, and a moving *Hatikvah* moment. In spite of being steeped in tradition with a history of excellent academic results, inspiring Jewish moments like these are what enrich our students and connect King David alumni all over the world.



Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations at King David Linksfield

Letters

REFLECTIVE GEAR WOULD HELP KEEP NIGHT WALKERS SAFE

People who walk at night on Shabbat aren't wearing enough reflective gear. It's difficult to see people as it is, and loadshedding has added a whole new layer of danger. When people wear black jackets and scarves, it makes it worse, and the prams are black too. The Glenhazel area is where this is most evident. It's nerve wracking as a driver!

I'm sure Hatzolah, the Community Security Organisation, or Takealot have gear available. I'm scared to think that we would have to wait for a tragedy to hit the community before people take this seriously. What about *pikuach nefesh* (the preservation of human life)?

- Romi Blumenau, Johannesburg

ROAD HAZARD RESPONSIBILITY OF JOBURG WATER, NOT JRA

I refer to the article "Tragic death spotlights Joburg's crumbling roads" (*SA Jewish Report*, 4 May 2023)

The JRA is saddened by the tragic loss of Dr Waner during this most unfortunate incident on the road wherein he was undertaking a selfless act of caring for other road users by warning them of the dangerous road hazard. Our sincere condolences to the Waner family, colleagues, and friends. We understand that a case has been opened by the South African Police Service against the truck driver.

We would, however, like to bring to your attention the fact that the specific road hazard in question is a Joburg Water

excavation to repair damaged water pipes, which Joburg Water would reinstate once the issue was satisfactorily attended to.

The hazard was therefore not a road defect, such as the pothole mentioned in your article, but in fact an emergency maintenance excavation. Your article is therefore misleading. Had you contacted the JRA for comment, we would gladly have set the record straight. We would be most appreciative if you could correct the misinformation in your next issue. Kind regards - **Bertha P Scheepers, Operations Manager: Marketing and Communications Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA)**

WHAT'S ON

- Women's International Zionist Organisation Cape Town hosts a girl's movie night. Time: 17:30. Venue: Labia Theatre, Gardens. Cost: R100. Contact: 074 338 3981
- Second Innings hosts a magic show by Jeremy Kushner. Time: 10:00. Venue: Golden Acres Building, Sandringham Gardens. Cost: R40 (R20 for members). Contact: 082 561 3228 or greciagabriell@gmail.com

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