

MPs hijack SONA debate with antisemitic diatribes

#### TALI FEINBERG

arliamentarians used the opportunity of the State of the Nation (SONA) debate on 14 February to descend into an anti-Israel and antisemitic freefor-all, without being hauled over the coals or ordered to stop.

"If you think the people of this country are going to allow you [the Democratic Alliance] to take this beautiful country, this city of Cape Town, of ours and hand it over to the Zionists, [then] the City of Cape Town will be a bloodbath, I can assure you that," The National Freedom Party's Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam said during the debate.

"We will not allow you to make this a Jewish state. My message to South Africans is, if you want to go back to the days of apartheid, you will pay the ultimate price."

Mogamad Ganief Hendricks, a member of parliament and leader of the Al Jama-ah party, took the opportunity to pay tribute to Hamas, saying: "At this point in our history, it's fitting to pay tribute to Palestinian resistance movements, led by Hamas.

"Arrest warrants for complicity must also be issued in South Africa to religious leaders like a respected rabbi [presumably Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein], and organisations like the [South African Jewish] Board [of Deputies] and the [South African Zionist] Federation. These organisations, president, must be shut down."

This is the second time that Hendricks has called for the arrests of South African Jewish community leaders.

Hendricks also stated that "Al Jama-ah unequivocally states that it will never forget those South African political parties for having pledged their support for the Zionist's state's agenda."

"Sitting in SONA was like sitting in Disney World," says Member of Parliament Darren Bergman, the deputy shadow minister of trade and industry, and former shadow minister of international relations and cooperation. "Politicians playing to the emotions of the anti-Zionist vote, trying to impress the ANC [African National Congress]. Coming from a divided past in South Africa, it should be obvious that people would want to preach peace and unity. However, some were so hellbent on pushing a violent rhetoric that you were left wondering whether their passion was for the complete destruction of Israel.

"It was obvious that a lot of politicians have already gone into the danger zone that the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks warned the world about when he said that this was the language of the 'new antisemite'," says Bergman. "Thankfully, the house is balanced by people that are well-versed in world affairs. It will be up to South Africans to use their power at the ballot box to drown out the warmongers and vote in peace lovers."

Indeed, at the same SONA debate, African Christian Democratic Party leader, Kenneth Meshoe, wearing a blue-and-white tie bearing the Star of David, said the

government taking Israel to the International Court of Justice wouldn't improve the situation in Gaza. Meshoe accused the ANC of denying Israel's right to exist within secure borders, and emphasised that to end the war, South Africa should prevail on Hamas to release all hostages.

Justice and Correctional Services Minister Ronald Lamola criticised both Meshoe and the Democratic Alliance (DA), echoing Emam's conspiracy theories. "The reason the DA government harasses the people who support Palestine is that they understand nothing about freedom and human rights. They want to create a white enclave state within the Republic of South Africa," said Lamola.

Advocate Mark Oppenheimer, who has appeared in the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court in cases that seek to determine the boundary between freedom of expression and genuine hate speech, says Emam's speech "strikes me as incredibly threatening language, by saying that there will be a 'bloodbath'. It appears to be a call to violence. There are obviously antisemitic undertones on the basis that this will occur if Cape Town is turned into a 'Jewish state', whatever that may mean. It's a speech that may very well amount to genuine hate speech and should be roundly condemned.

"The statements made by Al Jama-ah are also highly antisemitic, and call for the state to use its own police force to subject harm to the chief rabbi and the leaders of Jewish nongovernmental organisations. This type of antisemitism shouldn't be tolerated," he says.

MP Michael Bagraim, the shadow minister for employment and labour, says, "The speeches given by Emam and Hendricks were so detached from reality that it was almost like living in another universe. Both individuals have bought into the ANC plan to discuss the Middle East, trying their utmost to avoid discussing the complete collapse of our civil service and the South African economy. Very willingly and vociferously, Emam and Hendricks completely fell for this nonsense. Unfortunately for them, their rhetoric has exposed them, warts and all. Modernday antisemites try to avoid using the words 'Jews' and 'Jewish'. **Continued on page 8>>** 





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## Israel staves off attack on AU observer status

with a coalition of African states

forming to oppose the initiative

Nevertheless, some African

leaders last weekend condemned

called for an immediate end to

Said Benji Shulman, the

director of public policy

Israel for its "flagrant offensive"

against Hamas in Gaza, and

the hostilities.

from South Africa and Algeria.

#### **NICOLA MILTZ**

hrough a widespread diplomatic initiative,

Israel staved off a concerted attempt by the South African and Algerian governments last weekend to remove its observer status permanently from the African Union (AU).

Israel's foreign affairs ministry said that South Africa and Algeria, whose leaders were at the 37th annual summit of AU heads of state in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the weekend, planned to convince the union's 55 member states to cut off relations with Israel and introduce a proposal that would declare Israel guilty of genocide for its war against Hamas in Gaza.

They failed to achieve this. "There was an event which had

the potential to cause serious damage, but we were able to successfully repel the South African and Algerian attempts," said Sharon Bar-Li, the deputy director general of Israel's ministry of foreign affairs' Africa division.

The diplomatic effort to foil the attack on Israel was led by Foreign Minister Israel Katz and

ou on track

• andrea.attic@gmail.com

included President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to foreign ministry spokesperson Lior Hayat. "They all sent appeals and

> African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Chairperson of the African** spoke to African leaders," Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat SA Jewish Report. In response, a coalition of African states was formed to

Photo: African Union Facebook page

at the South African Zionist Federation, "The recent defeat of the South African and Algerian delegations' attempt to expel Israel from the African Union is a victory for diplomacy. "South Africa is acting as a

proxy for Iran and attempting to deprive Africa of the numerous technological means in which Israel contributes positively to global innovation and development. Such actions show how out of touch South Africa is with the trajectory of the rest of the continent."

South Africa led the campaign. It has been opposed to the decision by the AU commission chairperson to grant Israel observer status from the get-go. It has been a fight that South Africa hasn't been willing to give up, analysts say.

> Israel was granted observer status in 2021 after 20 years of diplomatic effort, but at last year's summit, a debate on the issue was suspended in a bid to avoid a vote that would create an unprecedented rift in the union. The AU

chairperson created a sixcountry committee to examine the issue.

During last year's summit, an Israeli delegate was unceremoniously removed from the plenary hall amid a row over the country's observer status at the continental body.

Continued on page 11>>



us, they didn't destroy us. We emerged stronger than before.

This is what G-d wants to teach us. Challenges are opportunities for endurance and growth, to shine our light that illuminates the environment.

Today, we see this light shining strongly. Young and old, people from across the political and religious spectrum, are shining their light and uniting for am Yisrael. This week's Torah portion reminds us that though the horrific attacks of 7 October have certainly crushed us, they haven't destroyed us but revealed our light, a light of morality and unity that stands firm, illuminating the dark world around us. This week's Torah portion challenges each of us and asks, how will you shine your light?

#### Kindling the soul **Rabbi Motti Hadar** Easy to follow schedule Supportive Private Facebook and WhatsApp groups **Pine Street Shul** Tips and tricks to streamline and simplify life ne has to wonder why Exclusive checklists to help keep

the Torah goes into such great detail to describe the construction of the Mishkan - the Tabernacle - which the Jews built in the

Hayat told the

oppose the move.

Hayat confirmed.

The Israeli embassies in Africa

also got involved, each in their

senior foreign affairs ministry officials were sent to states

in which Israel doesn't have a

permanent diplomatic presence,

own country, and in some cases,

If the Torah is meant to be an instruction book for life, what lessons can we learn from these very specific details about the vessels and structures of the Mishkan?

The Kabbalists teach us that the Mishkan and all its details are really a model for living a life of spirituality, meaning, and purpose. G-d doesn't just desire a home in one space – in a Mishkan or the Beit Hamikdash, or even today's shuls and yeshivas. G-d wants each one of us to create a mini-sanctuary in our own homes and lives

By studying the structure of the Mishkan and its furnishings, you can learn about the structure and furnishings of your life.

This week's Torah portion of Tetzavah opens with the instruction to kindle the menorah daily in the Mishkan. The Talmud explains that the glow of the menorah extended even outside the sanctuary and was meant to light up the entire world. In our own lives, in our mini-Mishkans, the menorah represents the soul, whose light can radiate outward and light up the world around us. Kindling this light to illuminate the darkness of our world is a lifetime of work. The instructions in this week's parsha on lighting the menorah teach us how to cultivate our inner light. G-d instructs Moshe, "You shall command the children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for the luminary, to kindle the lamps." Why does the Torah include the phrase "crushed for the luminary"? Surely we already know how olive oil is extracted? On a halachic level, it teaches us that the oil for the menorah needed to be extracted with

the intent of using it for the menorah. But if we look closer, the wording itself doesn't seem to make sense. Wouldn't it make more sense to say "crushed to illuminate"? After all, the purpose of the oil was to illuminate, not to sit in the

us how to approach life's challenges. "Crushed for the luminary" teaches us that when we're crushed - when we go through challenges, when we're pressed - the soul's essence is revealed and Jews experienced great difficulty, they Haman, the Greeks, the Crusades, the





A vote reportedly enabled

Israel to retain its observer state,

menorah, the luminary. In this one verse, the Torah teaches

shines brightly. Throughout history, when remained committed, proud Jews. Their souls shined through the evil decrees of Spanish Inquisition, and the Holocaust. Although these experiences crushed

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In this week's parsha, Moses' name isn't mentioned. Our sages explain that it was in response to Moses' plea to G-d when the people sinned with the golden calf: "Forgive them or erase me from your book." Even though the people were ultimately forgiven, Moses' request was fulfilled through the omission of his name in this parsha.

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Advertising Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za • Laura Kaufman – laura@sajewishreport.co.za Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits - bryan@designbandits.co.za • Distribution Sandy Furman • Subscriptions Avusa Publishing (Pty) Ltd Tel: 0860 525 200 • Advertisements and editorial copy do not neccessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff and board of directors. Tel: 011 430 1980. SA JEWISH REPORT 3

## Expats urged to register before voters' roll closes NICOLA MILTZ

outh Africans living abroad are urged to register to vote before the official proclamation of the election date comes into effect - which could happen any day now - after which the voters' roll will be closed

At the time of going to print, online registration was still in effect.

And expats living in Israel who have registered to vote are waiting in limbo to hear if they will be able to exercise their democratic right.

There has been an absence of consular services since the closure of the South African embassy in Tel Aviv at the end of last year.

Voters living in other places abroad are also waiting for news about whether more voting stations will be made available to make

the process more accessible.

South Africa's electoral system doesn't allow for electronic voting, this being the first year eligible voters could register to vote online.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced on Tuesday, 20 February, that South Africans would go to the polls for the 2024 general elections on Wednesday, 29 May.

South Africans living abroad will vote before this date provided they have registered to vote, which they still can.

The department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) earlier informed the IEC (Electoral Commission of South Africa) that it had

closed voting missions in Israel, Ukraine, and Sudan due to "security concerns". Up until this week though, the IEC encouraged South Africans living in these countries to register online, although it remains unclear whether they will be able to put that right into action.

For South Africans living in Israel disillusioned with the souring of relations between the government and Israel, this election is particularly momentous.

"It's likely to be an historic election," said

Leanne Zabow, a clinical psychologist who lives in Ra'anana, "challenging taken-forgranted outcomes and bringing to the fore domestic and foreign policy issues, with the South African government's stance on Israel having particular relevance for Jews and South Africans in Israel."

However, Dorron Kline, the chief executive of Telfed in Israel, which supports the community of Southern African and Australian *olim*, said that at the moment, there's no place in Israel for South Africans to vote "unless people are prepared to travel to Ramallah, where there's a South African office offering consular services, which is highly unlikely given the situation. Or perhaps travel to countries like Cyprus, Greece, or London, which is also unlikely."

options available once numbers became available. The SAJBD has

been engaging with Dirco since the embassy closed on

17 November to obtain consular services for South Africans who are in difficult situations, said SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn.

"The sudden closure resulted in many not knowing where to turn," she said. "This lack of consideration for its own citizens living in Israel was raised at our meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa on 13 December." She said the Board had been working closely with Dirco and had managed to resolve some

> of the issues, but there were still some serious issues outstanding.

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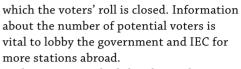
"Our priority is to finalise an acceptable system to provide consular services for Israel. Once we have done that, we'll start to focus our attention on how we can ensure that these systems can be used to allow our citizens to vote," Kahn said.

"I'm hoping that Dirco agrees to a voting station in Israel and more stations elsewhere, but at the very least, to those able to travel to vote, South Africa needs your help," said Kim Kur, the founder and lead volunteer of **Community Circle** SA, a 25 000-strong organisation of South Africans and dual nationals abroad living in more than 100 countries.

"It's estimated that there

are about two million South Africans living abroad," Kur said. "The IEC has said that 45 000 have registered to vote, which sounds like a drop in the ocean, but every single vote counts. Fifty thousand votes can get one seat in Parliament. If you don't vote, you remove any chance of having your voice heard."

There has been a last-ditch attempt by political parties such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and communal organisations over the past few weeks to urge all eligible voters abroad to register to vote before the official proclamation of the election, after



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The DA approached the Electoral Court on 15 February to force Dirco to open more voting stations abroad. The party has been battling this issue for several months following complaints from South Africans living in countries like Australia and China about lengthy travel distances to embassies. The DA has requested the inclusion of all embassies, high commissions, and consulates as voting stations abroad.

> "This lack of consideration for its own citizens living in Israel was raised at our meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa on 13 December."

Michael Bagraim, the DA shadow minister for employment and labour, said he believed the African National Congress (ANC) was "deliberately retarding the process".

"In essence, both the ANC and Economic Freedom Fighters are fully aware that those that have left South Africa have left for good reason. The electronic voting system needs to be upgraded, improved, and put into full working order pending the forthcoming elections," he said.

"This is a watershed election in South Africa. Each seat can make an enormous difference in a coalition government come the end of May 2024," Bagraim said.

According to recent figures, the total registration abroad as of 19 February was 45 723. Only 15 374 out of an estimated 217 000 South Africans living in the United Kingdom are registered – 7% of the total.

There are 4 542 South Africans registered at The Hague; 1 923 in Dublin; 1 890 in Dubai; and 1 898 out of about 206 000 South Africans in Australia are registered (9%).



Voting in Israel during the 2019 South African general elections

Kline said 25 000 South Africans had made aliya since 1948. "Many of those have passed away, and some of them are children. You are looking at between 15 000 to 18 000 potential voters," he said.

The exact number of those who registered to vote wasn't known at the time of going to press.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the South African Zionist Federation have been urging potential voters abroad to register to vote in the hope of lobbying the government to make voting



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# SA's failed ICJ application— 'a political stunt'

TALI FEINBERG

he International Court of Justice (ICJ) outright rejected on 16 February the South African government's urgent request to stop a political offensive on Hamas fighters in Rafah.

The United Nations top court stated that a new order was unnecessary because the existing measures "are applicable throughout the Gaza Strip, including Rafah".

"It's a great pity that once again, instead of engaging to find an end to this terrible war and calling, most importantly, for the release of the hostages, South Africa is embarking on this pointless, unnecessary path," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks agreed, saying, "This application was a means to protect Hamas, particularly in light of significant military losses suffered by the terrorist organisation, including 18 out of 24 Hamas battalions. This raises serious questions about the motivations behind the African National Congress [ANC] government's actions."

The South African government filed an original complaint against Israel at the ICJ on 29 December 2023, alleging that its war in Gaza breached the Genocide Convention. On 26 January, the court demanded that all hostages be released and ordered Israel to ensure that it protected Palestinian civilians and allowed in humanitarian aid. It declined to grant South Africa's central request for a ceasefire

"The court had already set measures relevant to the conduct of the war, and couldn't be expected to set any additional measures," says political and economic adviser Dr Frans Cronje. "The South African application was most likely an urgent attempt to stop or undermine Israeli military actions that have severely degraded Hamas's operating abilities. Hamas - and Iran needed a break in those military actions to stem further and deeper losses, and the South African action was likely brought with that in mind."

In response to the ICJ's denial of South Africa's request, Israel Foreign Affairs Minister Israel Katz says, "We'll continue to fight the blood libel that South Africa is promoting, and to uphold our right to defend ourselves against the Nazi Hamas murderers."

Israel's foreign affairs ministry spokesperson, Lior Hayat, says, "South Africa's failed attempt to undermine Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens from the Hamas terrorist organisation provides further proof that its claims are baseless and unsubstantiated. Through its actions, South Africa is serving as the legal arm of Hamas, and is working to advance the interests of this terrorist organisation which operates

to uninvolved civilians," says Hayat. "This while Hamas terrorists commit war crimes and crimes against humanity and attack the citizens of Israel while using the civilian population of the Gaza Strip as human shields.

"The ICJ says that the order it has written stands," says advocate Mark Oppenheimer. "This may chasten South Africa from bringing srael Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel Katz further complaints. The Israeli response made it quite clear that no further relief was

warranted and that the new relief sought by South Africa was an abuse of the court process. The latest order from the ICJ echoes that sentiment. It also operates as a signal to Israel that it must abide by its existing obligations, but it definitely doesn't stop it from engaging in a military campaign in Rafah."

Professor Glen Segell, research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran and & Gulf States Research, says, "The ICJ rejected the request as it was confident that Israel was doing everything that bound it to comply with existing measures. Technically then, the South Africa request is redundant as Rafah is part of Gaza and Israel is complying with the decision of 26 January. The

ICJ and Israel are working in close contact, including the conveyance of information 24/7 on all its activities in photo: Screenshot Gaza. "I'm surprised at the lack of professionalism of the department of international relations and cooperations' legal team in not understanding how the

ICJ works," says Segell. "It's rather embarrassing to see this new

South African request to the ICJ that shows such a complete lack of legal knowledge.

"This new request may be aimed domestically," he says. "I'm not surprised that the ANC would persist in political rhetoric and anti-Zionism, especially as the South African elections are approaching. South Africa is digging its own grave internationally and in relations with Israel as it's now challenging the ICJ's working

processes. It further distances Israel and South Africa's relations."

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations, says, "I wasn't surprised that the ICJ rejected South Africa's request. It would have required the ICJ to decide how the war should be conducted. This isn't its job, and it's probably for this reason that its original judgment didn't order a ceasefire. That was beyond said remit.

"All that the ICJ could do to show it was giving consideration to South Africa's request was to reiterate the obligations it imposed in the original judgment," says Gon. "Since the Rafah operation hasn't yet properly commenced and it's making efforts to get the population to leave the area first, no complaint can be laid.

"South Africa is overreaching because it's saying in effect that Israel, and literally only Israel, has to safeguard civilians above all other aims," she says. "That's not Israel's military or political priority. Anything it does has to be assisted by Hamas or the international community. I think the non-existent relationship between the ANC government and Israel will become more than non-existent - if that's possible. Israel will really look at us [South Africa] with the contempt we deserve.'

South Africa, however, said it welcomed the ICJ's decision. "The court affirms our

view that the perilous situation demands immediate and effective implementation of the provisional measures indicated by the court in its order of 26 January, which are applicable throughout the Gaza Strip, and has clarified that this includes Rafah," said the presidency in a statement. "South Africa will continue to use existing channels such as the United Nations Security Council to ensure full and effective implementation of the existing provisional measures."

Says Milner, "The South African government has again been somewhat sparing with the truth in the way in which it has depicted the latest ICJ ruling. The ANC government requested that the ICJ take action to prevent Israel's action in Rafah, and this was refused by the ICJ: a clear denial of South Africa's position that Israel is committing genocide."

Says Marks, "The SAZF welcomes the recent rejection of South Africa's application for additional provisional measures by the ICJ. It's evident that South Africa's application wasn't grounded in genuine efforts to promote peace and stability in the region, but rather served as a thinly veiled attempt to shield its ally, Hamas, from accountability.

"We urge South Africa to reconsider its approach and instead focus on initiatives that promote genuine dialogue, reconciliation, and ultimately lasting peace for all parties involved."

### Budget 2024: a parev presentation HAN ALTMAN

parev cholent would be the best way to describe the Budget speech made by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana on Wednesday afternoon, 21 February, but then it's an election year.

We're all aware that the endemic problems in South Africa range from infrastructure to burgeoning debt, low growth predictions from the International Monetary Fund earlier this year, and of course, rampant corruption that's hampering any improvements.

There's no immediate panacea to crippling national debt, and the weakened mining sector, among others, is no longer ripe for the pickings for the South African Revenue Service to make easy revenue.

Furthermore, with South Africa in a crucial election year, careful strategies are demanded while taxpayers battle with increased prices and inflationary pressure.

The weak performance of our economy driven by these very issues has resulted in a collection of tax revenue in 2023 R56.1 billion lower than estimated in the 2023 Budget. The shortfall has to be made up in some way, balancing the needs of the communities at every socio-economic level.

The Budget therefore contains a clever methodology of raising a significant portion of the R15 billion in 2024/25 needed to alleviate immediate fiscal pressure and support faster debt stabilisation. In essence, this is done by keeping things the same. Unlike in previous years where levels of tax brackets, rebates, and medical tax credits have been adjusted for inflation, this year, this won't be the case. This means that inflationary - or other salary increases may in fact push taxpayers into a

higher tax bracket. This is a great opportunity for all the Section 18A organisations out there [whose donations may qualify for a tax refund].

Some bad news for the Haftorah club, Purim party, and Pesach wine purchases though. The minister proposes to increase excise duties on alcoholic beverages by between 6.7% and 7.2%.



This means a bottle of wine will cost 63c more, and a bottle of spirits almost R6 more.

The minister kindly responded to a mail sent to him requesting an increase in the cost of hubbly bubbly, e-cigarettes, and other alternatives. He mentioned that the country had experienced an increase in the number of youth smoking these products, and parents weren't pleased with this at all. I hope and pray that this isn't our kids, but if it is, keep their pocket money levels the same because the Budget has tabled an increase of excise duty on electronic nicotine and vapes - to R3.04 per millilitre.

liquid fuels from 0.66c/litre to 0.69c/litre.

It should be noted that all the Woolies bags you have should be left in your car for shopping purposes as the government proposes to increase the plastic-bag levy from 28c/bag to 32c/bag from 1 April 2024.

> And if anyone hasn't yet switched to LEDs to make their solar/ inverter/generator more efficient, the government is raising the incandescent light-bulb levy from R15 to R20 per light bulb from 1 April 2024.

On the exchange control front, there's no good news for those looking to make aliya or any other emigration plans. You can still use your R1 million travel allowance. There's a slight relaxation for South African private equity funds to invest

offshore up to R5 billion. And for those trading internationally, the local banks have a little more leeway in their treatment of related party transactions cross border.

In short, the Budget failed to address specific infrastructure needs, and certainly hasn't offered an increase in the number of products in the basket of zero-rated goods. We should however, be grateful that no additional taxes were instituted.

from within the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, including Rafah, as was witnessed in the hostage-rescue operation recently.

"Israel is acting and will continue to act based on its right to protect its citizens and to release the hostages, while remaining committed to upholding international law, facilitating the transfer of humanitarian aid, and making every effort to prevent harm

There's also no need to stress about any major increases in fuel prices as there's a nominal increase from 1 January 2024 on the taxes of

As expected in an election year, we sit with a parev presentation from a government trying to hold things together and not upset too many people.

• Jonathan Altman is a tax adviser at Zeridium.



22 – 29 February 2024

#### SA JEWISH REPORT 5



# 'Israeled' billboard puts past participle into present hatred

#### **STEVEN GRUZD**

huge billboard emblazoned with "Israeled [verb]: taking something that isn't yours, and then shamelessly pretending it belongs to you while playing the victim" in Johannesburg this month has raised ire about antisemitism and sharp questions about language and the abuse of maps.

This anti-Israel billboard in Fordsburg is far from the first time outdoor advertising has been used in South Africa to express a view on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Fordsburg Muslim Youth Organisation (FMYO) recently erected other billboards with the slogan, "Genocide Isreal, ethnic cleansing Isreal, occupation Isreal". Others historically have depicted Nelson Mandela and Iran's leaders supporting the Palestinians, or the notorious four maps showing the size of "Palestine" shrinking over the years.

This latest billboard also shows two maps - one labelled "Palestine 1946" indicates virtually the whole of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza in green to be "Palestine". In the second map, just the tiny area of Gaza is marked as "Palestine 2023". The billboard adds "#SavePalestine" and features the logo and name of the FMYO.

Former English lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, Hazel Cohen, said, "I hate it. It's inaccurate politically, grammatically, and sociologically. The term is a past participle, but the definition refers to the present. Of course, language shifts and grows all the time. But if this becomes part of spoken usage, it's dangerous. This is basically hate speech, is it not?"

Looking at the use of language, Dr Evan Cohen, from Tel Aviv University's linguistics department said, "English has a simple morphology - the structure of words and sentences - and you can easily make any noun a verb. You just make the necessary sound and spelling changes. You can't do it so easily in a language like Hebrew. On 'Israeled' specifically, it seems that it's just that form, and it acts more like a participle, as an adjective."

The disparaging term "Israeled" isn't unique to this billboard. It has been popular on the crowd sourcing online Urban Dictionary, which tracks slang and neologisms, gaining traction since October 2023. The platform chronicles how internet users give new meanings to old words and manipulate the English language.

When anti-Israel billboards go up, Israel supporters have frequently countered with boards or symbols of their own. Asked if outdoor advertising works, a veteran ad man and expert in outdoor advertising, Ken Varejes, said, "It does get awareness, but they would need multiple boards to break through. So, one can definitely retaliate with boards near those. We have done just that in the past with Nelson Mandela boards. We used this sentence from Mandela, 'I cannot conceive of Israel withdrawing if Arab states do not recognise Israel, within secure borders."

Experts weighed in on whether the billboard is antisemitic. David Saks, the associate director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said, "The inclusion of the phrase 'playing the victim' makes it obvious it's a vicious dig about Jews, which combined with portraying Israel's creation as a criminal enterprise does make it antisemitic, but antisemitic with permissible boundaries, since it only intimates as opposed to being explicit. In spite of it staying - just - within the lines, something so inflammatory and calculated to cause offence should really never have been accepted in the first place by the billboard company concerned."

Antisemitism expert and emeritus professor at the University of Cape Town, Milton Shain, said, "I had never seen the term [Israeled] until now. It brings to mind the old dictionary term 'to Jew', the verb for tough bargaining. It's disparaging, and to my knowledge is included today - if at all - in dictionaries with a warning. Hopefully this



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will evolve with the verb 'Israeled'. After all, Israel was legitimately created by the United Nations. The message in the billboard ignores this entirely."

Rolene Marks, the spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation said, "The recent placement of an antisemitic billboard in Fordsburg featuring an inaccurate map of Israel is deeply concerning and unacceptable. Such deliberate misrepresentation through maps isn't only factually incorrect but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and falsehoods.

"The Jewish connection to the land of Israel spans thousands of years, which includes archaeological evidence and is supported by historical, cultural, and legal foundations, including international law. Denying Jews their right to self-determination, as evident in this distorted map, falls squarely within the realm of antisemitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, which explicitly condemns denying the Jewish people's right to self-determination.

"This incident isn't an isolated one but reflects a broader pattern of extremist groups promoting hateful ideologies on billboards. It's imperative to recognise and condemn such actions unequivocally. It's unacceptable to

use falsehoods and misrepresentations to demonise the Jewish community.

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"Furthermore, the use of the term 'Israeled' is disturbing, and reminds one of the concept of 'Gazalighting' - when a terrorist group from Gaza carried out a massacre, then later denied it, and blamed the victim. We've witnessed a growing trend of 'Gazalighting', as certain commentators deny or minimise the atrocities that took place on 7 October."

"It's 100% antisemitism. It treats Jews differently from anybody else," Cohen said. "There are wars raging in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Sudan, so why is there this treatment of Israel alone? Israel didn't start this war, but it's doing what it has to do. Those other wars are a lot less justifiable than the war on Hamas."

Huge billboards like this don't come cheap. Varejes said "Just the production cost would be about R20 000 to R25 000. It really depends on where the outdoor hoarding is situated. Different areas have different rates. The rate can vary from R100 000 to R150 000 per month. Also, if a Hamas sympathiser owns the site and doesn't have an advertiser, then they may do it at no charge."

The war of words is set to continue on billboards and banners as the conflict in Gaza rumbles on.

### Habonim yellow ribbons shed light in dark times OPINION

inclusivity, freedom of speech, and

s the year begins, Jewish university students are bracing themselves for sight of the flags of terrorist organisations flown on campus. Kids at school are greeted in the morning by armed men, with whispers of "shutdown" and "protest". In non-Jewish spaces, speaking about one of the worst terror campaigns in history is "controversial", and shied away from.

The world right now is topsy-turvy. Not that this craziness is a recent phenomenon. But it feels like this moment is the culmination of what would be a great piece of absurdist theatre if it wasn't so real and hurtful.

It has taken only four-and-ahalf months to enter this new reality - our own Bizarro World. Of course, nothing comes from nowhere. Antisemitism is a hate which hides in the dark, always there, never visible. Until suddenly, its attack is overt and all-encompassing. It takes only a quick Twitter excursion to understand that many have given up on the subtle forms of antisemitism we've grown accustomed to, feeling comfortable now putting their names next to old tropes wrapped in shiny new contexts. Yet, in spite of the hurt of denial and feeling of endangerment, we cannot accept this reality. One of our Habo principles is to be people of conviction and action, and that's exactly what this time calls for. We feel the need as Jewish youth to act against the "black and white" framing of Hamas terror as anything but. We believe that 134 Israelis kidnapped and held hostage isn't normal and should never be normal. Yet the world turns a blind eye to this injustice, maybe even arguing in defence of what's framed as "freedom fighting".

Inspired by former Habo campaigns throughout our history - involvement in the Black Sash organisation or the fight for just access to HIV/AIDS treatments - we

Yellow ribbons being tied along the Sea Point promenade in **Cape Town** 

wanted to take action.

At 04:30 on Sunday, 18 February, madrichim from Johannesburg and Cape Town woke up, and in our respective cities, placed yellow ribbons in busy centres with chalk inscriptions saying, "Bring them home!" It felt freeing to take action, and in a very physical way show support for our chaverim in Israel who are grieving the unimaginable.

Once the sun began to rise on the Sea Point Promenade, and the James &

Ethel Gray Park, people slowly trickled in. Though some eyes met us with unspoken hostility, the Jews walking past paused to speak to us. Coming from different ages, backgrounds, or political orientations, one fundamental is understood: that community is more important than ever right now. And that a show of visibility is necessary. Our togetherness and solidarity against the extremist anti-Israel rhetoric which has entered the mainstream can be the light in an incredibly dark time, just like the yellow ribbons.

coexistence. The African National Congress government discarding the values it once fought for isn't a reflection on the rest of the country. As South Africans, because of our history and values, we're in a unique position to form bridges and we cannot let the actions of a few take this away.

Habonim has been reeling from the 7 October attacks because they targeted the core of our movement kibbutzim. Communities that we once contributed to building were reduced to nothing in the span of a few hours. Slowly throughout the day, we heard names familiar to the Habonim family in the context of the unfolding plot.

Ofir Libstein, the chairperson of Habonim Dror Olami, was killed while defending his community against attackers. Vivian Silver, a Habonim olah to Kibbutz Be'eri and unyielding peace activist, was missing until her remains were found in the place she gave so much to. Our own shaliach's brother-in-law in Sderot fell as a victim of Hamas terror.

Our community's response to the project has been touching and shows the power of strength in unity. We cannot lose hope. Although the dust is far from settling and every day is uncertain, we'll continue to speak out against Bizarro World until there's an end to this war and our hostages are returned. Peace will never be achieved through terror and violence, but only when there's belief in the potential of trust and partnership.

We shouldn't have to feel "othered" in our own country, especially one which has been built on values of Aleh ve'hagshem! (Rise up and fulfil)

• Brad Gottschalk is Habonim Dror S'gan Mazkira (deputy head).

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# Jewish Report

### Tie a ribbon around our youth movements

n Sunday, I happened to stumble on yellow ribbons on a fence in the James & Ethel Gray Park in Johannesburg, and I immediately recognised that it was a reminder of the 134 hostages from the south of Israel who are still being held by Hamas in Gaza.

I smiled, and felt such a kinship with Israel and our local Jewish community, and wondered who had created this campaign and when the ribbons were tied.

I then went about my day, not forgetting about it, but not seeing anything obvious that could enlighten me as to who was behind this. I was however proud and grateful to whoever did it.

Little did I know that in Sea Point, yellow ribbons had also been tied wherever there was space and they were visible to people walking on the beachfront promenade. "Bring them home" was also painted large in yellow on the seafront wall.

On Sunday evening, I found out that it was Habonim Dror madrichim who launched this campaign in Johannesburg and Cape Town. I was even more impressed because the source of it was a Jewish youth movement, and it was young people who had given of their time early on Sunday morning to do this. Kol Hakavod to them!

Only, why did no other communal organisation initially promote it? And when they did, they didn't give credit to Habonim.

This made me very sad because, as with some of the Bnei Akiva leaders, I know some of the Habonim leaders and how passionate they are about their organisation. They are passionate about Israel, devastated by the war, and they feel much like the rest of us.

But I'm also not blind or deaf to the anti-Habonim sentiment out there in our community, which frankly sickens me.

Open cards here: I started out as a child at Bnei Akiva, and later moved over to Habonim, which was more suited to me. Many members of my family are deeply involved in Bnei Akiva, but my children have chosen to be members of Habonim.

This is as it should be. Both are phenomenal Jewish youth movements, as is Netzer for progressive Jewish children. All three have an incredible ethos, and add such an amazing element to a child or young adult's life. They give something you can get nowhere else.

They create leaders and people who become independently thinking youngsters, as well as people who operate well in groups. Youth-movement children set up bonds for life with likeminded Jews from all over the country and the world.

However, children aren't the same just as families aren't the same. And so, those children who are naturally drawn to Bnei Akiva aren't the same children drawn to Habonim or Netzer. That's the way it is.

Now remember, not long ago, there was also Betar, a proud and strong right-wing Zionist youth movement. Betaris were proud of their movement, and held phenomenal camps in December that people still rave about.

But there's no long a Betar youth movement in South Africa. This seems so strange to me, considering how strong the right-wing is in Israel. But this is a fact. And once a youth movement is gone, it's not easy to revive it.

Herein lies our problem. There's a serious anti-Habonim prejudice in our community that's totally unfounded. Habonim is a genuine left-wing Zionist youth movement. Its values are the values of the founders of eretz Yisrael.

When you think of kibbutzim and the backbone of the growth of Israel, that's Habonim Dror. When you think of the *chalutzim* – the people who made aliya in the early days of the country to build it agriculturally - that's Habonim. The name itself, translated as "the builders", explains exactly what the organisation represents.

When I hear adults from within the community - who should know better - running Habonim down and saying it isn't even Jewish anymore,

I get angry. This is a lie. There are also vicious rumours that Habonim is anti-Israel, which again is an out-and-out lie.

A large proportion of the kibbutz movement in Israel is made up of Habos. In fact, the 7 October attack hit Habonim hard because the biggest impact was on kibbutzim. To this day, there are still annual groups of young Habos making aliya or spending at least one year in Israel after school.

Habonim engenders a Zionist society that cares about equality, peace, and stability and building a nation that once didn't exist. Habonim isn't a religious youth movement although it ensures that those who are religious have a *minyan* and are able to fulfil their *mitzvot*. It's kosher and as Jewish as Bnei Akiva, but it's different and offers different things to different children. And we should be encouraging what's different. We should be encouraging variety. We all need choices, as do our children. What's good for me may not be good for you. So, if I'm not a King David Linksfield kid, surely I should have the option of King David Victory Park, or Torah Academy, or Hirsch Lyons? Each offers its own benefits, much like Habonim, Bnei Akiva, and Netzer.



# I vote for you, SA, not the ruling party **OPINION**

'm filled with mixed emotions as we head towards the seventh election since the dawn of democracy.

I remember all the times in the past when it felt like this country had reached a point of no return, times from both our apartheid past and our post-apartheid present. Certain dates are seared into our consciousness -21 March 1960: the Sharpeville massacre; 16 June 1976: the Soweto uprising; and 10 April 1993: Chris Hani's assassination.

Each of these dates were turning points in South Africa's history in which the cruelty of the apartheid regime and the motives of the antidemocracy forces within our society were laid bare.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there are events rather than dates that exposed the rot at the heart of the current African National Congress (ANC) government. The Marikana massacre was the first, in which unarmed strikers were mown down by a callous police force. Then, there were the revelations of state capture and the Zondo Commission, televised so we could watch for ourselves the venality of those in government.

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a further blow to our country and community, and then the Durban riots - the opposite of the Soweto uprising. This wasn't a liberatory movement confronting a repressive regime, but rather a looting mob, instigated and supported by those with sinister ulterior motives.

Interspersed through these events, however, have been moments of indescribable hope and joy.

The first democratic elections in 1994: I recall with perfect clarity standing in the queue for hours at the Yeoville voting station. Yeoville itself was then a slightly grimy beacon of hope, a non-racial suburb even during apartheid, filled with shuls, clubs, pubs, brothels, and a kosher restaurant.

Voting for the first time in 1994 was a transcendent moment that all subsequent failures of later ANC governments can never take away

**PROFESSOR KAREN MILNER** 

merely going against the government's policy of "nonalignment", but standing happily with the representatives of unashamed rapists, murderers, and kidnappers.

Culminating on 29 December, when the social compact of South African society was ripped apart as the government chose international grandstanding above a genuine attempt to engage in peace-making, knowingly sacrificing its relationship with the South African Jewish community.

Since then, we have seen some horrific antisemitic acts in South Africa, including stripping a sportsman of his captaincy on entirely spurious grounds, and just this week, allowing Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam to use Parliament for vile antisemitic rhetoric and incitement, without censure.

At the same time, Justice Minister Ronald Lamola and President Cyril Ramaphosa himself separated out the Jewish community from fellow South Africa citizens in their rhetoric.

Lamola used the language of "othering" on the steps of The Hague, and denied hate crimes against Jews, including the violent assault of a rabbi. And Ramaphosa referred to those who don't share this country's moral compass - yes us - in an admittedly disastrous State of the Nation Address. All of this being aided and abetted by a tiny minority of token Jews, seeking their space in the corridors of power.

So where does that leave those, like me, proud South Africans but bitterly disappointed and let down by Ramaphosa's government?

We need to change our narrative. We now live in a multiparty democracy, and we don't need to accept the ruling party's hypocritical foreign policy stance as gospel. Unlike the governments of Presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, this ANC government is battling to hold on to a 50% majority. Also, its friendship with the enemies of democracy - Iran, Russia, and China - have beclowned its foreign policy image. We're also not alone.

> In addition to opposition parties and a sizeable proportion of Christians and Hindus having no truck with the government's misguided foreign policy, we're unfortunately not the only ones Ramaphosa has let down.

Hunger once again stalks our streets and villages, and rape and murder statistics are higher than any war zone. Though this seems like cold comfort, it's important to recognise that we're not fighting a credible, morally upstanding government.

Instead, we're facing a crumbling edifice, so mired in its own internal wrangling and corruption, it has no time for the people of this country. And fight them we will.

We live in a constitutional democracy where we don't have to be frightened of calling out the government's manifold failures.

In spite of Lamola's denialism, we'll test our antisemitism cases in the courts and hold our government to its constitutional principles. We'll support the businesses affected by the anti-Jewish boycotts, which seek to hurt Jews and place a foreign conflict above South



In the years following the first democratic elections, there have been many more times of deep pride and commitment to this fledgling democracy. President Thabo Mbeki's "I am an African" speech; Rugby World Cup wins in 1995 and 2023; Black Coffee's Grammy win.

And at a deeper level, I watched my own children get an outstanding education at a Jewish school in South

Look around you at our communal leaders. How many of them come from youth movements? Most. Do they all come from Bnei Akiva? No. Do they all come from Habonim? No.

They are from four different Jewish youth movements, and they bring with them the incredible grounding that only the youth movements provide. It's unique and special.

So, let's not try and destroy one of them by badmouthing it and furthering ugly rumours. Let's keep them all afloat for the different children they will provide a phenomenal base for.

We need Habonim! We need Bnei Akiva! We need Netzer! We needed Betar, but it's gone for us now. Let's encourage and hold high our youth movements. Let's do all we can to hold them all afloat for our children and our future.

#### **Shabbat Shalom!** Peta Krost Editor

Africa, and a brilliant tertiary education at University of the Witwatersrand where I teach, and where I've watched a new generation of "born free" students enter, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, with inspiring, brilliant, enquiring minds.

And so, I've always rejected the notion of the "wandering Jew" without judging those who chose to leave but knowing that I'm a South African, committed like all patriots to the well-being of my homeland.

And then another date occurred - a date that will forever be seared into the consciousness of all Jews and all those with an ounce of humanity – 7 October. And amid the worldwide condemnation of the barbaric invasion of Hamas from all progressive, democratic countries, my government released a statement, standing with ... Hamas.

We're all aware of the subsequent statements and actions of the ruling party, including the foreign affairs minister calling Hamas in the immediate aftermath of the massacre. Then the ANC met Hamas at Luthuli House as it called for the removal of the Israeli ambassador, not African jobs.

We'll continue to call for the release of the hostages and for peace in spite of the ANC government's amnesia about this key outcome of its International Court of Justice case.

And we'll continue to hold our heads up as proud South Africans because governments come and go, but the spirit of South Africa and its presence in the beauty of our country; in the beauty of the South African bush; in our sports teams and in our fellow South Africans is undimmed.

We're the last Jews left in Africa.

We have a magnificent community, envied throughout the world. We'll not be pushed out of this country without a fight.

So, while we keep an eye on the storm clouds on the horizon and the real threats to our way of life, we'll also not be bullied out of our pride as South Africans.

• Professor Karen Milner is the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

# Israel visit brings Hamas Holocaust home

**HOWARD FELDMAN** 

few weeks after the start of the war following the 7 October Hamas attack, I heard of a "solidarity" mission to Israel. My feelings were mixed. Whereas there was no doubt that the idea came from a good place, I wondered it if was a

little self-indulgent and if it was fair to ask a country during its own horror to host people from outside the country.

Six days into a six-day solidarity trip to Israel, organised by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) South Africa, the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), and Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL), I know that none of these are concerns. Especially for a group travelling from South Africa.

The mission had a dual purpose: to show support to Jews and citizens of Israel and to send a message that the South African people aren't their government. And that there are those who stand alongside a country facing a war that it didn't start.

Over the few days, the mission met with members of the media; government spokesperson Eylon Levy; and senior officers running the war campaign including Brigadier General Dan Goldfuss. It visited three different army bases, and did the South African thing of braaiing for the soldiers - an unforgettable evening where it was clear to the group that I wasn't built to stand behind the braai, and

more suited to chatting to soldiers.

But it was the day spent in the Gaza envelope that gave me some of the perspective that I have until now been lacking. And in not having the perspective I have, like others, perhaps erred in how we informed people of the events of 7 October. This wasn't a terror attack. It was a fullarmouries. The brutality and scale of the murders at the Nova musical festival added to the chaos and confusion.

From the most senior officer to the person in the street, there's widespread recognition that there was a massive systems failure that resulted in the 7 October invasion. Person after person recounted the day and the



scale invasion. It was

meticulously planned and executed. Sixty sites were hit simultaneously, including army bases and police stations. In some cases, the kibbutzim were cut off, making them enormously difficult to reach, even had the army not been fighting its own battles. Three thousand Hamas operatives descended on a sleepy area, where rifles were locked in the

process that they went through as recognition slowly dawned on them about what this was.

I asked the question to Keith Isaacson, who heads up the security of the Eshkol region: "What can you do to make residents of the south feel secure so that they will be able and confident to return and rebuild?" His answer wasn't the one I was expecting. He said, "Take

away the word 'feel'. It's not about feeling secure. It's about being secure. The residents felt secure before 7 October. It didn't help them." When I asked about what went wrong, his emotions and language expressed a heaviness that I know will never leave him. A responsibility that although not all his, will be felt forever.

All of this was made more real when a

JNF, SAZF, and KKL memorial service for South Africans who lost their lives brought us closer to human suffering. Set in the beautiful JNF memorial forest, we heard from parents who had lost children, and from Aviva Siegel, a South African, who along with her husband was taken hostage. He remains a captive of Hamas.

The horror is overwhelming. But so, too, is the strength, warmth, and resilience of the people. In many ways on the surface, the country appears to be "getting on with it" and carrying on as needs be, but a few seconds into any conversation, and it's clear that this is a people hurting more than it's able to express.

But from what I saw, it would be a mistake to confuse pain with weakness. There's little doubt that the power of the people will triumph.

The priorities are clear: bring back the hostages; destroy Hamas; and determine what went wrong so as to ensure that this will never be allowed to happen again.

I came to Israel to see for myself. And I'm deeply grateful that I did.





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KEREN HAYESOD קרן היסוד

# A Pandora's box of difficult decisions

s many commentators predicted, the war in Gaza is reaching an inflection point, with the Israeli leadership having to make some difficult decisions, each of which then in turn leads to another difficult decision.

#### Accept a ceasefire deal?

The first is whether to accept a ceasefire deal with Hamas. Although the current deal on the table is undoubtedly not the final one, the core concepts of any deal are

clear: Hamas will release all the remaining Israeli hostages but in return, Israel will have to agree to a ceasefire of at least six weeks. In addition, Israel will have to release many Hamas operatives who are serving jail terms, possibly including those that have killed Israeli civilians in the past and who are therefore referred to by Israeli negotiators as "having blood on their hands".

Any Israeli leader would love nothing more than to bring back all the hostages given the harrowing stories from those who have already been released of how badly they were treated and the terrible conditions they faced daily in the tunnels. There are still hostages who are old, injured, many who require medication, and everyone's hearts break at the thought of these people suffering so terribly. However, a six-week ceasefire is likely to start the process of ending the war, which means Israel won't achieve its ultimate objective of destroying Hamas or eliminating its leaders. In addition, releasing Hamas operatives with blood on their hands creates a serious risk for Israel that these people will revert straight back to their old ways and more Israeli civilians will be killed in future. Who can forget that the architect of the 7 October attacks, Yahya Sinwar, was himself released as part of a prisoner/hostage exchange years ago with Gilad Shalit?

It has been clear for a long time that bringing home the hostages and Israel taking the war through to a successful conclusion are likely to be mutually exclusive, but now, unfortunately for Israel, it has reached that decision point.

#### Start the process of a bigger deal?

Assuming some form of ceasefire is eventually reached, the next decision will present itself. The United States (US) is pushing hard for a bigger deal in the Middle East, to once and for all try and bring some peace deal to fruition. The deal involves a Saudi-Israel normalisation, with the Saudis recognising Israel and establishing diplomatic relations as long as Israel commits to a Palestinian state in future. Again, this presents a tricky choice. Every Israeli leader would love to bring a Saudi deal to fruition, but there's a cost. First, the Gaza war will have to end, as the Saudis won't do any deal with the war still raging. Second, Israel will have to make concessions to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and in the West Bank in general. Although the Saudis have moderated their demands from Israel creating "a clear path to a Palestinian state" to Israel now "committing to a Palestinian state in the future", there's no doubt that major concessions still need to be made. The US administration and the Saudis clearly want some deal to be finalised before the US election, as the Saudis are demanding a US defence treaty in return for recognising Israel. Getting such a treaty through the senate - which is required for



Many are calling for a ceasefire in some form to be reached between Israel and Hamas

any such treaty to be valid – will be extremely challenging, if not impossible, if there's a Republican president in the White House after November.

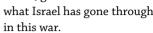
In addition, the US would love to bring the Saudis "back into the US camp", and a major Saudi deal with Israel would anchor the Saudis securely into the pro-Western cluster in the Middle East.

A Saudi deal would benefit Israel and be a major game changer in the Middle East, but again, it's a trade-off.

#### What concessions will Israel have to make?

This is the crux of any Saudi normalisation deal. Israel can probably live with "a commitment" to some form of a Palestinian state sometime in the future – although that will collapse the current coalition - because that's ostensibly official Israeli policy anyway after the Oslo accords, but the details become very important. Though Israel might be able to commit not to create any new settlements in the disputed territories, while allowing growth in existing settlements to continue, and to build up and deal with a new, reformed, and less corrupt and incompetent PA, especially one that's being assisted, funded, and guided by the Saudis and other Gulf states, no Israeli leader is going to be able to make more concessions in the current environment. Having lived through the ongoing disaster in Gaza from 2005 onwards and the current war, no Israeli leader can at this stage honestly be expected to withdraw from any territory in the West Bank, especially knowing how much support Hamas still has in this area. Even committing in principle to a future Palestinian state, whatever it's form, is likely to be difficult

#### for any Israeli leader, given



Probably the way forward, if a ceasefire is eventually reached, is in small, incremental steps. Israel commits in principle to some form of a Palestinian state that is demilitarised and reformed, but with no fixed timeline. The Saudis agree to normalisation based on that commitment, and undertake to help reform the PA, train its leaders and security teams, and provide

financial assistance. The Saudis then get their defence treaty with the US. The relationship between Israel and the new PA can then start to improve. That can start a slow and gradual process to some kind of eventual settlement.

Unfortunately, there's a lot that can go wrong. Hamas and its allies have every incentive to collapse any deal, and are very likely to try. Second, everyone on the US side seems to be forgetting that there has never been agreement, going back to 1993, on what the final borders of any Palestinian state would comprise, what would happen to Jerusalem, the refugees, and so on. This isn't a quick or easy problem to fix, like some in the US administration seem to believe. It will take time, probably a generation. Finally, as can be seen from the history of Gaza, any withdrawal by Israel from territory in the West Bank creates great danger for its people. No Israeli leadership is going to take this risk, at least for the foreseeable future, after what has transpired in Gaza.

The post-war period is going to present great risks for any new Israeli leadership. It will be pushed hard to acquiesce to some kind of deal. Simply rejecting any deal outright will anger the US, and possibly lead to it not vetoing some future United Nations Security Council resolution against Israel - a la Barack Obama - and even worse, possibly even recognising a Palestinian state. But accepting a bad deal will put Israel in grave danger. This post-war period will call for extremely smart and creative manoeuvring from any Israeli leadership, and it will need to walk a fine line between keeping the US onside and endangering national security. • Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.

# MPs hijack SONA debate with antisemitic diatribes

They tend to speak about 'Israel' and 'Zionism' as if it has nothing to do with being Jewish, which they believe will create a certain immunity for them.

"In this case, the real meaning was exposed by Emam stating, 'We will not allow you to make this a Jewish state.' Herewith lies the true meaning of their speeches," says Bagraim. "Coupled with this antisemitism, we see the threat from Emam, 'You will pay the ultimate price.' This is a direct threat to South African Jews, and is both unparliamentary and criminal. Hopefully action will be taken in due course." South African Jewish Board of Deputies Associate Director David Saks says, "This isn't the first instance of Emam using Parliament as a vehicle for his antisemitic statements nor of the DA being smeared as 'the Jew party' for vote-grabbing purposes, particularly in the Western Cape. What's new is his readiness to use inflammatory language that borders on incitement to violence. Add Hendricks' brazen demands for the fundamental rights of the Jewish community to be abolished, and if allowed to continue, this will poison our democratic culture. We're considering our options."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Mark says the SAZF "has noted the recurring trend of political parties leveraging hostile rhetoric against Israel as a means of garnering support. It's crucial to recognise that such expressions align with an Iranian and Hamas agenda, serving to sow division.



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Disclaimer - Specific apartments and prices are subject to availability, and advertised materials are as of the date of advertising. Prices and availability could change and vary from time to time without prior notice. We cannot guarantee a specific apartment or price without signing a registration form. "It's evident that this tactic of using inflammatory rhetoric isn't only desperate but also counterproductive, and won't change voters' minds on the core issues affecting South Africa," Marks says.

"It's important to emphasise that these parties don't represent the majority of South Africans. Their actions not only align our country with the worst autocrats in the world, but also hinder our ability to engage in meaningful relationships on the international stage. By attacking Israel, they are trying to cut ties with its innovative technologies and shared interests. This isn't the will of the South African people. The SAZF, its partners, and allies will continue to fight against this negative influence. The SAZF encourages all South Africans to register to vote in support of parties that are in favour of a positive future for South Africa."

## 'We'll dance again' - reflecting on the Nova memorial

#### PERSONAL STORY

ourteen years ago, I walked into the memorial for the Treblinka death camp in Poland. The memorial has stones scattered around a massive field that was used by the Nazis to exterminate thousands of Jews at a time. Each stone carries the name of a Jewish community or shtetl that was annihilated there. It's quiet and almost peaceful. There were flowers blooming and bees buzzing, and I sat in the grass in shock after reading name after name of town and shtetl. I asked, "How can this place seem so peaceful and beautiful when it's soaked in Jewish blood?'

Never in my wildest imagination did I think that 14 years later, I would visit a modern-day Treblinka on my home soil, in my country, my Israel. This was what it felt like walking into the Nova Festival Memorial, where more than 300 of my brothers and sisters were massacred on 7 October by the Hamas Nazis.

This time of year, the fields across southern Israel are covered in beautiful wild red anemones. We call it "*Darom Adom*". This year, in the wake of the 7 October massacre, "*Darom Adom*" has taken on a different meaning for Israelis.

As I entered the massive field of the memorial, which lies between Kibbutz Re'im and the Be'eri Forest, wild anemones were blooming, bees were buzzing, and everything was so green, that same question I had 14 years ago, came back to me, "How can there be such beauty in a

are so many names

you start to recognise

in Gaza.

from the news and the stories, like

Shani Louk and Alon Werber; those

who were kidnapped from the festival

like Romi Gonen and Ran Gvili - Ran

was later pronounced dead, believed

to have been murdered on 7 October.

His body is still being held by Hamas

A moment that truly broke me was

a tree planted in memory of 22-year-

old Rotem Neiman, the small placard

place covered in Jewish blood?" Name after name, picture after picture. It felt never-ending as I walked through the makeshift memorial. Some marking those murdered at the scene, others marking those kidnapped. There standing next to it reading in Hebrew, "With lots of love, dad."

The scars of that day are still visible all over the festival area, on the bomb shelters covered in bullet holes and explosive marks. One still had blood stains inside, there was dry blood in places on the grass, or on the bottom of a tree.

And yet, there was another heart-

wrenching moment during my visit in

which soldiers sat on the edge of the

memorial playing melancholy songs

quietly on their guitars. It was sad and

hope

beautiful, but it also gave me a sense of

Months later, it still feels surreal to

happened in our Jewish homeland. How

think that the worst massacre of the

Jewish people since the Holocaust

could such a thing have occurred? How can so much Jewish blood be soaked into the holy ground of our country?

The 7 October massacre has touched everything in the south – physically and emotionally. Frankly it's touched everything across the Jewish world.

The roads and pavements around *Otef Aza* (the Gaza border communities) still carry indents and marks from explosives and rocket-propelled grenades during the attack. So do the roads to Be'er

Sheva, where I live. It's clear that battles

happened

The makeshift memorial at Kibbutz Re'im clear that battles with terrorists

in certain places as you drive past. Seeing this so close to home, especially when you see signs to "Be'er Sheva" all over the Otef, hit home hard. In Sderot, tank marks cover the street next to where the police station once stood. It was destroyed during the massacre. What happened in a town I love and know so well is a story for another time. So many stories of pain and heroism took place there, I could fill pages. Stories not so well known include those of mines that the Hamas terrorists placed in the fields around certain areas, including an army base I visited. They're still working to find all of them. And then there's just simply walking into an Aroma Cafe at a



gas station to pick up coffee, and in the corner, a memorial

ILANIT LIBERMAN

stands for one of their workers, Chen Ben Avi, who was also murdered at the Nova Festival.

There was one final stop that I made on my visit to Otef, a place that embodies the spirit and resilience of my people: Shuva. During the first few days of the war, many of the victims' bodies, as well as the injured were brought here. It was the "safest" emergency point closest to where the attacks were taking place. As things "calmed", three local brothers decided to open a coffee stand here in the hope of "doing something good where so much bad happened". Today, Shuva has become a 24/7 oasis of calm for Israel Defense Forces soldiers serving in the south and protecting our country. Hot meals, coffee, warm clothes, and more are supplied to soldiers for free. And it's all run by volunteers. There were even a few soldiers singing and playing guitar, food was being served and again, a sense of hope washed over me.

Though I'm still processing, one thing is clear: in spite of everything – the unbearable pain and trauma we've gone through as a people and a nation – we'll get up dance again. *Am Yisrael Chai!* 

 Ilanit Liberman worked as a reporter for nine years. She now works at an international communications and public relations company.



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# Two wars in two years - Ukrainian Jewry speak out

TALI FEINBERG

"My family is now in Israel, and the biggest injustice is that my son [who is six years old], is facing his second war in two years," says Ilya Bezrucho, a Kyiv-based entrepreneur and the representative of the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry in Ukraine.

"Sometimes he cries and says that he feels bad because his native country is at war and his new home was also attacked," says Bezrucho, who sent his family ahead of him to Israel when the war began, and joined them later. "At six years old, he understands the axis of evil and the connection between Russian and Iranian regimes." Bezrucho's parents remain in Ukraine as they refuse to leave.

It's been two years since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. On this sombre anniversary, "I express my deep appreciation that the Jewish community of South Africa remembers its fellows Jews and the war in Ukraine," says Bezrucho. "This is the biggest war in Europe since World War II, which is changing the shape of the world's geopolitical alliances. More than a million Ukrainians, including Jewish communities, in the south-east of Ukraine are under Russian occupation. People are being tortured and killed.

A volunteer packing boxes for the 'Holiday to every house'



"I feel like this war is endless, unless a 'black swan' event seriously influences the battlefield," says Bezrucho. "If this 'black swan' appears in Russia, it may lead to civil uprising and change of the ruling regime that will end the war. I feel sad that the United States and other Ukrainian allies shortened their supplies [to Ukraine], and Ukraine had to pay for it with lives of soldiers and civilians.

"Ukrainians support Israel," says Bezrucho.



For example, on 8 October 2023, more than 350 digital advertising spaces on the streets of Kyiv displayed the Israeli flag in solidarity after the Hamas massacre, and on 11 October 2023, Ukrainian soldiers expressed their support for the Israel Defense Forces.

Rabbi Dov Lipman, the founder and chief executive of *oleh* support organisation Yad L'Olim, says Ukrainian refugees have stopped coming to Israel. In the early days of the war, his organisation was at the forefront of helping thousands of Ukrainian and later

Russian refugees streaming into Israel, and it continues to support them on the ground.

"We still have Russian and Ukrainianspeaking staff who assist these olim with their bureaucratic struggle in Israel," says Lipman. They have "absolutely" been affected by the events of 7 October and the war, he says, and "are struggling with mental health issues. We provide them with services to address this. They have a lot of trauma, and we're giving them coping skills in their native language. Our effort to help them with Hebrew and being part of a community are a big support."

Meanwhile, Rebbetzin Rochi Levitansky, formerly of Johannesburg, says she and her family have returned to live in their home town of Sumy in Ukraine after fleeing as refugees in the early weeks of the war. "Baruch hashem, we're all okay, and so is our community."

South African expat Ronny Apteker, who fled Kyiv for South Africa with his Ukrainian wife and young son, wrote on his blog on 2 February 2024 that "later this month marks two years

since the start of this evil war. A war that no-one here understands. And by here, I mean here in Kyiv. I'm at home and have been here for a few weeks. End of next week, I will go back to Wroclaw [in Poland] and then a month later, I will come back to Kyiv. And so it will go for 2024

"Putin and his henchmen are pure evil," he



says. "Russia is a problem to Ukraine and the world. What has to happen here in Ukraine for someone to scream, 'Enough!'? The quote, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing', comes to mind."

Liubov Abravitova, the Ukrainian ambassador to South Africa, notes that "Russian aggression against Ukraine started on 19 February 2014. This means, we're marking 10 years since the start of a well-planned campaign by [Russian president Vladimir] Putin to destroy Ukraine.

These 10 years have had a devastating toll on people in Ukraine, its infrastructure, agriculture, environment, and culture.

"The lesson that the world should learn is that lack of adequate response to Russian aggression in 2014 was taken by Russia as a sign of weakness and allowed it to bring an invasion on a different level," she says. "Lack of unity among the international community allows Putin to continue his brutal, unprovoked war of aggression, threatening not only to the security architecture of the European region, but global security.

"Let me underline that today, we Ukrainians are fighting not only for our identity and the survival of our country, but also for the rest of the world," says Abravitova. "To overcome this evil, Ukraine needs all the support available."

Rabbi Mayer Tzvi Stambler, the chairperson of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, lives in Dnipro with his family. "We've found ourselves dealing with things we never imagined, as rabbis, as community leaders, as Chabad emissaries. Saving lives, sometimes risking our lives and those of our volunteers, evacuations. It was difficult, but we've done

> a lot. We feel respect from the government and the president himself.

"What really hurts is that many families are apart, with men unable to leave. The economic situation is tough. When you see people who were sponsors in the community who still have fancy cars but come to pick up food, it's heartbreaking," he says.

"We know that before Moshiach comes, we'll see situations where it becomes clear who is good and evil," says Stambler. "Right now, things are getting very

clear, from Russia to Hamas. And we feel G-d everywhere. Even our chaplains in the army - they go to work with Jewish soldiers, but find that everyone wants to know more about Judaism. We also witness many Jews, who never saw their Judaism as important, coming to shul. Both Israel and Ukraine need your prayers and support."

Sana Nelina, speaking to the SA Jewish Report from Odesa, says it has been "730 days and nights of fear and hope. Seven hundred and thirty days of support and resilience. I don't want to describe all the horrors we see day and night. I would rather speak about the feelings I have living among the tired yet resilient Ukrainians and Jewish community.

"You know, every time I visited Israel, I had the same question: how people could get used to the everyday danger and continue living their ordinary life. These two years of full-scale war have given me a clear answer: to live in the middle of war doesn't mean getting used to the fear. It means accepting the unpredictable and unknown and gaining skills you would never have thought you would gain. "For example, most of us have the skill to be fast when we have only two hours of electricity a day. Many of us learn how to live without water. We're able to overcome with the help of volunteers and workers from Jewish and non-Jewish organisations. "We have the skill to celebrate every new day and every new holiday even after the hard sleepless nights," she says. "Every one of us has some personal 'recipes of recovery'. All of us have the skill of multitexting our loved ones, and sitting in corridors or shelters while there are drones and rockets. Seven hundred and thirty days of war have taught many of us how to feel gratitude, pride, support, and unity. I'd like to thank people of the world for standing with Ukraine. Please, keep going!"



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# **Chabad for Cape Town's Israelis and other tourists**

habad makes a point of ensuring that Jews feel welcome around the world and encourages a Jewish way of life. Now, Rabbi Chezkin Yehudah Malka and his wife, Channah, have taken on the role of making Israelis and tourists in Cape Town feel that love.

Taking on the role of this specific Chabad House seven months ago was a rite of passage for them. Having grown up in Chabad, they believed it important to find the right place to go as a Chabad emissary.

Malka grew up in Kfar Chabad in Israel, and Channah grew up in Sweden, where her parents ran Chabad House in Gothenburg for 32 years. They grew up immersed in the Chabad way, met at a yeshiva in New York, fell in love, and married.

After having two children, Mendi and Mushkah, in New York, the couple started looking for somewhere to go on *shlichut* – assignment elsewhere to foster Jewish life and serve the community - after helping Channah's parents with Chabad House in Gothenburg.

"This is an important thing in our house – to bring light to the world, to take the idea of how to help every Jew," said Malka. "We asked friends if they knew of anything for us, and this idea of Cape Town came up because it's a big Jewish community and there's a big family of Chabad shluchim."

"We believe Israelis who speak Hebrew and live here don't necessarily feel part of the local community. They feel bad because they speak Hebrew, or they have a different mentality, or a combination of all three. We found more than a few hundred families, many of them with kids, and we started to build the idea that perhaps we could open a special Chabad for these Israeli locals," Malka told the SA Jewish Report.

Malka also spoke to Cape Town shluchim and the head of Chabad in Cape Town, Rabbi Mendel Popack, about what

they could offer this group of foreigners.

"At the same time, we understand that many tourists come to Cape Town, and we want to be there for them.

Channah Malka and Rabbi Chezkin Malka with their two children



We wanted to create a Chabad House like people know it around the world. There are many types of help they need: questions about kashrut; some want a Jewish experience in

the middle of the trip, so they have a place to stop at Chabad House and talk and to learn something," Malka said.

"Our Chabad House is a specific place to answer their questions and give them a Jewish experience," he said. We have a Shabbat meal every week, and up to 40 people attend. We meet up, celebrate, and teach." The couple also organises activities for various Jewish holidays as well as shiurim.

Other than Israelis, they have had guests from France, America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Brazil, Spain, Dubai, among other parts of the world.

"We came to Cape Town mainly because of hashgacha prati [divine providence] – the idea that Hashem oversees things happening in the world and will show you the way. We just looked for a place, this idea of coming to Cape Town came up, and we saw the potential and the need," said Malka.

## Israel staves off attack on AU observer status

#### >>Continued from page 2

Israel had previously held observer status at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), but was thwarted in its attempts to regain it after the OAU was disbanded in 2002 and replaced by the AU.

Analysts say that if the AU wants to have influence in the Middle East, building a deeper relationship with Israel is important.

The debate about Israel remaining an observer at the AU dates to 2021, after Moussa Faki Mahamat, then chairperson of the AU, accepted unilaterally Israel's accreditation to the bloc, triggering protests by several member states. Following criticism by some countries, notably South Africa, opposing Israel's observer status, a committee was appointed to examine the issue.

Mahamat defended his 2021 decision to grant Israel observer status. He also criticised those who campaigned against it, implying that they had double standards.

As many as 44 member countries of the AU recognise Israel and have established diplomatic and trade relations with the Jewish state. Many member states asked for it to have this accreditation.

Interestingly Mahamat, the chair of the AU Commission, said at the weekend that Israel's offensive was the "most flagrant" violation of international humanitarian law, and accused Israel of having "exterminated" Gaza's inhabitants.

The two-day summit began on Saturday, 17 February, under the theme: "Educate an African fit for the 21st century: building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa".



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# Christians pray for 'peace of Jerusalem' around country

HEATHER DJUNGA

hristian prayer for Israel in South Africa has become more fervent since the 7 October massacre, and participation is increasing on and offline.

Some gather in person to pray, others do so in WhatsApp prayer groups, but they are all standing with the Jewish community and praying for "the peace of Jerusalem", as scripture instructs, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may those who love you be secure." (Psalm 122:6).

A prayer meeting in the upper room of the Mount Zion Prayer Hill building on the Beula Park International Conference Resource and **Prayer Centre** premises in Meadowdale last Wednesday, 14 February, was one of those inperson gatherings.

Said the centre's founder, Dr Nico Landman, "We're commanded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. The word of G-d says that we stand as watchmen on the walls of the city. I've posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent, day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest." (Isaiah 62:6)

Landman said he believed Jerusalem was already a miracle city. When he had visited the city on numerous occasions and "stood at its gates", as in Psalm 122:2 – "Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem" - and looked down its streets, he had seen layers of time and a beautiful story which defied human limitations and prejudice. He believes Jerusalem is the "epicentre of the world".

Bedfordview worship leader Chris Pretorius, who is also a designer and musician, said he lived in a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood in Johannesburg, and considered his family to be a part of the immediate community.

"This is a peaceful neighbourhood, and it's a joy to see Orthodox Jews walking to and from temple as families every week," he said. "As Christians, we share the Jewish people's history. We study, follow, and consider Abraham, Moses, Elijah and all the prophets, and believe this to be our heritage as well. We know that G-d will never forsake Israel, and therefore neither should we. "We pray for all involved and for all the innocent people, including children, who have been brought into the skirmish and impacted by the tyranny. We pray for peace in the region, for Israel and Palestinians alike." Pro-Israel Sowetan resident Thando Magopeni said that he had fallen in love with Israel

through his friend, photographer and tour guide Ilan Ossendryver, and had visited Israel about four years ago. He stayed in Ra'anana

and murdered. The events have awakened me to the times and season we're in, and made me realise that we who are standing



with a Jewish family with whom he had built a strong

> connection by, for example, experiencing the "spirit of Shabbat". His first thoughts after 7 October were

in Ra'anana and their children. "I pray for the situation in the Middle East because I don't want any children to suffer," Magopeni said.

Emma Kubeka, a domestic worker for a Jewish family, speaks with a zeal about Israel, saying that when she first heard about the 7 October attacks, she was traumatised as it hit close to home. Through her relationship with the local Jewish community, she has learned to cherish the feasts and traditions, which she believes are the origins of her own faith, and has been kept updated on the situation in the local community and Middle East.

"We pray for peace in Jerusalem because we understand where it all started," Kubeka said. "G-d chose Abraham and his descendants, and as Christians, we believe that by the grace given through Jesus Christ, he allowed us to enter into this blessing. The scriptures say that when we bless Israel, we're blessed."

To pray for Israel, she and other Christians of different denominations get together on WhatsApp voice-call meetings. Such prayer meetings are common in the Christian community as they are an easy way to meet frequently. Also employed by a Jewish family, Sima Zondi said she had a strong affiliation with the Jewish community. She and her friends meet regularly through WhatsApp voice calls in addition to their weekly Saturday meetings as the congregation of The Twelve Apostles Church to lift Israel up in prayer. Deborah Mafujane from His Light Shines Ministries believes it's her mandate as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to pray for Jerusalem. "The war that's underway has deeply affected me - seeing how innocent people are being horrifically abused

with Israel might also endure persecution," she said.

Though she hasn't been to Israel, she's still hoping to go. "Each time I read the word of G-d, I build up my own pictures, and this connects me to the birthplace and life of our Lord Jesus. It makes me look forward to being there one day. Israel is the apple of G-d's eye, and what hurts it has deeply touched the heart of G-d, and thereby affected us. We continue to pray for Israel, guided by Psalm 122:6.

At last Wednesday's prayer meeting at Mount Zion Prayer Hill, Landman echoed the belief of many - that only G-d can bring peace and reconciliation to the land of Israel, which is why it's important to stand in unity in prayer. He and his team are working on a manifesto for Jerusalem with specific prayer

points to release to the many prayer groups in South Africa as a way to facilitate unity.

Speaking on behalf of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies at the prayer meeting, the head of communications, Charisse Zeifert, said, "We're appreciative of the support of our Christian friends. The love for Israel in the upper room at Mount Zion Prayer Hill was palpable. It's important that our friends show solidarity at this time, and that there's more than one narrative out there."

"Jewish people have already faced dark times. The Holocaust was something that never should have been allowed to happen," Pretorius said. "To see the Jewish people recover from such tyranny only to have to go through a similar occurrence again isn't right."

completely different things. You suddenly say, 'Hold on a second,

where's Goofy?' Things can change. When a company no longer

"The South African economy isn't made up of high-level

# Shares are a good investment, but don't go blindly Mouse anymore. They were going on YouTube and watching

SAUL KAMIONSKY

hen global equity specialist David Shapiro sits at his desk in Johannesburg, he relishes the fact that technology allows him to buy shares in companies anywhere in the world.

"The beauty about saving and investment is that you no longer have to be confined to your geographic area," Shapiro said on 15 February in part one of Chabad House Johannesburg's Responsible Living Series on saving for the future. "You can invest anywhere in the world

and buy any stock or any product. Thousands and thousands of investments are available to us." Now is a good time to invest, Shapiro said. "I

think it's going to be a great year globally in the market. We've already seen market records broken, certainly in America."

Interest rates are going to start coming down in South Africa as we get on top of inflation following an incredibly difficult few years, he said. "No-one was prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. We had never seen this before. We closed down the world. We closed down economies, cities, suburbs, everything. Of course, it had to have consequences. When we found the vaccine and people started to get their lives together again, we came up against

the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We've had all kinds of other issues around that."

Shapiro said the markets had prevailed over these obstacles and disruption to supply chains. "On top of this, a lot of things that are now driving the market, we never knew in lockdown. You talk about artificial intelligence. This is serious stuff. It's a

big theme that's going to change the way we live, and has become an area in which a huge amount of money is being spent."

Shapiro compared buving equities to being in a relationship. "You meet someone, go on a date, and don't propose marriage to them straight away. You David get to take them on further Shapiro dates, you learn about their characteristics, and eventually you decide this is a person I want to live my life with. It's the same thing with equities." You research companies and by learning about them, "you start to make decisions and feel comfortable about putting your money into those businesses". Shapiro encourages people to keep in touch with what's happening in the markets. "I wake up at 04:45 in the morning, and I turn on Bloomberg. For about 15 minutes, I watch what happened overnight. Why do I do that? Just to know that the shares I've bought for clients or the path that I've taken for them is still intact. Every day, I have to remind myself that the reason for buying these shares is still relevant. If it's not, you'll make changes."



fulfils the expectations you had, just move out.

His advice to people in the 21 to 30 age group is to start saving by investing in equities. "Maybe you want to retire when you're 75. That's in 45 years' time. You know what happens? You're going to live until you're 90 or 95 with the kind of drugs that we have. The biggest problem is that we're outliving that money. So, in those 35 years that you're working, you've got

to save enough for those retirement years. You've got to know who you are financially."

When Shapiro looks at an index like the Standard & Poor's 500, he notes the top companies and does research on them before buying equities. The kind of companies catching his eye are Microsoft, "with its \$3 trillion market capitalisation", as well as Alphabet, Google, and Amazon, "all companies benefiting from artificial intelligence". "What's important about these businesses isn't just that they're growing, but that they generate huge profits. They reinvest that profit into maintaining their dominance in those markets."



concern for the family Emma Kubeka

> Shapiro shared the example of Disney. "I started to watch my grandchildren. They weren't watching Star Wars and Mickey

ASML Holding in Holland is also grabbing Shapiro's attention. "This is a company that makes the machines you need to make chips and semiconductors. It's kind of a monopoly because it's so advanced in its technology, it's difficult for other companies to catch up."

Shapiro likes buying equities in luxury brands such as Ferrari and LVMH. "I always have the saying, 'Buy the shares, not the product." As many cars as Ferrari produces it sells, he said. "That applies to LVMH as well. Buy H&M, but invest in LVMH."

The emergence of companies that create weight-loss drugs has also whetted Shapiro's appetite. "Every kugel - not only female but male - who is slightly overweight, beats their chemists up for Wegovy or Ozempic, or something like this. Why has this taken off? Obesity is now a disease. Before, it wasn't. Why do we buy equities in these companies? Because there aren't enough factories to produce these drugs."





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Every one of us, together.









ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

# Rachel Smith in the pink after Midmar sprint

The 20 pink-capped swimmers have a massive

advantage, Alan says. Rachel and her sister, Gabriella,

started the race in the dam in a crowd of nearly 1 000

swimmers, but the pink-capped swimmers were able to

"The 20 pink caps get to swim on the fastest part of the

lake because it's a straight swim to the finish," Alan says

However, Rachel had never worn a pink cap before,

and the orange cap made the day more special for her,

a time of just more than 23 minutes for the 1.6km race.

"I didn't expect it because I swam with an orange cap,"

Gabriella, in Grade 10 at KDHSL, finished 50th in

the 14 to 30 age group with a time of just less than 27

minutes. Last week, she and

Rachel were selected for the Central Gauteng Aquatics team

after meeting the qualifying

times for the South African

Nationals. "I qualified for the

3km and 1.5km swim," Rachel

says. "Gabby gualified for the

representing Gauteng at the South African National Open Water Championships in Jeffreys Bay in the Eastern Cape

Alan's youngest daughter, 12-year-old Romy, in Grade 7 at King David Sandton, came

18th overall in the 13 and under

1.5km swim." They will be

she says.

Rachel says it felt good to finish tied for fifth place, with

"Historically, that's where your top 10 comes from."

says her dad. "It didn't deter her. It motivated her."

dive off a raised platform with clear water in front of them.

SAUL KAMIONSKY

hen the top 10 women swimmers in the 14 to 30 age category crossed the finish line at the Midmar Mile in KwaZulu-Natal earlier this month, the race's commentators were doffing their hats to Rachel Smith.

The King David High School Linksfield (KDHSL) matric student was the lone orange-capped swimmer among nine pink-capped swimmers who were the favourites for the top 10. The commentators expressed surprise that a swimmer from the nearly 1 000 swimmers with slower seeding times was going stroke-to-stroke with the likes of Michelle Weber, who competed at the 2016 Olympics. "The commentators had no idea who Rachel was," her dad, Alan, says. "It got her noticed by a lot of people because it was sort of an anomaly."



Rachel Smith (in the orange swim cap) at the Midmar Mile finish line

Rachel came into the race seeded 11th in her category and should actually have been wearing a pink cap allocated to those ranked in the top 20. However, she unfortunately didn't receive an SMS sent to the top-20 ranked swimmers telling them to go to the VIP [very important persons] tent and wait there for the race. category at Midmar. The sisters train under the tutelage of Dean Price, who has coached the likes of 13-time Paralympic gold medallist Natalie du Toit. "I swim about five days a week," says Rachel, who also swims for her school. "Sometimes I go to morning training, and then I'll leave out the afternoon to study, but I find swimming is where I'm free

in March.

## A day in Chuck Norris nation

he night is dark, but not too dark, so we can make out the silhouette of two men as they fight in the moonlight. They are weary but resolved, and it becomes clear that this is the last and final battle. This is the how the story will end, and invested as we are, we urge victory for the hero. The scene around them is one of devastation. Broken and burned buildings smoulder and punctuate the skyline, reminding us that this battle isn't for anything material. It's much, much deeper than that.

As deep as the tunnels in Gaza.

Our camera pans the scene, and then pulls in for a tighter shot. Slowly, we start to recognise the faces of the combatants. First, it's the large ears that can be attached only to the head of Yahya Sinwar, and then we note that he fights his nemesis, Israel Defense Forces Brigadier General Dan Goldfuss, one of the men in charge of Israel's war in Gaza.

We know how it will end. In an ironic and somewhat predictable conclusion, Sinwar will lose his footing by tripping over a human shield. And in doing so, he will plummet downward head first into a 70m tunnel shaft, screams that fade as he falls to his undignified death. Monday, 19 February, in Israel felt like Chuck Norris Day. Breakfast with Eylon Levy, Israeli government spokesperson; a visit to the helicopter air force base where I met the pilot who rescued the South American hostages. And then on to an off-the-record session with Dan Goldfuss. The day concluded with a meeting with Rabbi Doron Perez, the father of hostage Daniel Perez.



instincts to wonder and surmise;

- The civilian infrastructure, which will stop at nothing to assist those who are fighting and those in need;
- The residents of the south, who in spite of what they have endured, return to walk people through the burned-out shells of their lives, where they are reminded of death, loss, and torture with each step and each description. Because they understand that people need to understand;
- The Bedouin taxi driver, who on 7 October took the back roads of the Negev to get to the Nova music festival to save 30 lives:

and it takes away the stress from all the work."

When the sisters go to gym, their parents come and swim with them. "My wife and I were never major swimmers, we just sort of had it as a lifestyle," Alan says. "We liked open water and swimming in general. Rachel started as a baby. She loved it from Moms and Tots. She started competitive swimming aged nine. Because Rachel was there, the other two were there as well. Romy started around age eight.

"People ask, 'How do you get time for all this?' But it's better than sitting on TikTok and this and that. The people they've met from different communities outside of their normal school are lifelong friends who have gone through ups and downs with them. Swimming is a lifestyle, a healthy one. It definitely adds to discipline. They're all straight-A students too."

#### KDL siddur ceremony celebrates Jewish education milestone

ing David Primary School Linksfield held its annual Grade 6 Kabbalat Siddur ceremony on Monday, 12 February, at Linksfield Shul, celebrating a milestone in the students' Jewish education. Accompanied by their parents, each student received a new Koren Aviv Siddur.



#### King David Linksfield Grade 6 students with their new Koren Aviv siddurim

They also received a magnificent compilation of *tefillot* for *eretz Yisrael* which each student had carefully crafted.

The combination of pride and empathy created a profound experience, instilling unity, solidarity, and compassion in the participants.

### 

n combating antisemitism, the Board deals both with direct instances of abusive behaviour against Jewish individuals or institutions and offensive statements made in the public domain by designated leaders, officials, or influencers. When it comes to private individuals commenting on social media, it has to be accepted that within certain boundaries, many prejudiced and unpleasant things will be said about our community that cannot realistically be responded to, and that they therefore simply have to be lived with. The same isn't true, however, when such comments emanate from public figures such as political representatives or public intellectuals, including university academics. This week, we responded to two such incidents of antisemitism in the public domain, the first a comment by an academic from the University of South Africa (Unisa) that appeared in a mainstream newspaper, and the second a rant in Parliament about a supposed imminent Jewish takeov

In addition to being selected for Central Gauteng Aquatics, Rachel was selected for the South African National Junior Championships, which was held a week later in Durban, but this time in the pool.

"I just want to carry on swimming and see how it goes. Maybe do a scholarship," Rachel says.

For now, the Smiths are taking pride in her Midmar swim. "Rachel came into the race seeded 11th because she's been doing extremely well over the past year," Alan says. "Last year, she finished as the 23rd female in her age category. In the past six months, she's won quite a few open water seeding events or has come in the top three."

Rachel's aim was just to swim across the dam and do the best she could. She says the water was choppy, but she had practiced in that kind of water.

#### Yeshiva entrepreneurs sell out stock



rade 10 and 11 Business Studies students at Yeshiva College conducted a successful Entrepreneurship Day on 14 February. Most students sold out their wares as a result of the support from staff and pupils. A variety of goods were available for sale including burgers, chains, bracelets, sweets, chocolates, ice cream, candy floss, popcorn, perfume, snow cones, boba iced tea, and iced lattes. A portion of the profit will go towards Shabbos meals for Israeli soldiers' families, as well as to Durban-Israel Victims of Terror Enterprises (Divote).



responding to National Freedom Party Member of Parliament Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam's paranoid rant about a supposed planned Jewish takeover of Cape Town facilitated by the Democratic Alliance (DA). Speaking during last week's debate over the State of the Nations Address, Emam declared among other things that there would be "a bloodbath" if the DA were to hand Cape Town over to "the Zionists", and that the people wouldn't "allow [the DA] to make this a Jewish state". He combined these warnings with claims that the DA and its Zionist backers had "pawned the land in the Western Cape to the United States and others".

In our response. I likened these racist, defamatory. and xenophobic ravings to how Nazi-supporting white supremacists had once used the opposition benches in Parliament to rail against supposed Jewish control of the economy and clamour for restrictions on Jewish immigration. Nor was it the first instance of this individual having used Parliament as a vehicle for peddling his antisemitic bigotry. I referred to his declaration back in June 2021 when he informed the House that the reason why Jews had been thrown out of so many countries was because they made themselves unwanted. What was new this time was his readiness to use dangerously inflammatory language that at least bordered on incitement to violence. Our statement concluded by calling on the government and all political parties to condemn Emam's remarks, as well as urging Parliament to censure him for having flouted the democratic principles and human rights values of our Constitution.

If there's something I've learned from a short trip to the country, the first since the war began, it's that Chuck Norris comes in many forms:

- The soldiers who leave their families and put their lives at risk, to defend their country;
- The parents who don't sleep, and who haven't slept since 7 October;
- The hostages and their families, who live each day in untold agony. And who fight their own

- The medical staff and first responders;
- The haredim, who have made the decision to enlist in spite of social pressure not to; and
- The people, who live each day with positivity and hope in spite of the agony.

Israel is the country of Chuck Norris. Its people are in more pain that I can describe, yet more in love, and more in hope than I would have thought possible.

The battle of Gaza will end. And it will conclude with Sinwar and his ears falling to death into a tunnel of his own making. In the final scene in my mind, the battle might take place between him and the brigadier general, but the reality is that it's not just him who fights. It's every person in the country, and every Jew and supporter of Israel around the world that stands proud in the final act. It's thanks to all the Chuck Norrises of this nation that the music will once again start to play and the terrible scene will finally fade to black. of Cape Town.

In the first case, the Board responded to a reported comment by Unisa political scientist Boitumelo Senokoane, who characterised a certain family that had recently made a substantial donation to another political party as "a Jewish lobby group", and asked what their view was on the war in Gaza. In spite of its name, the family concerned hasn't in fact been a Jewish one for generations, which naturally was pointed out to the paper. However, the real issue we stressed was Senokoane's assumption that merely having a Jewish name amounted to having a specific Jewish agenda rather than a broader South African one. It portrayed Jews as being somehow separate and un-South African while at the same time playing into negative stereotypes about their true loyalties being to global Jewry rather than the countries to which they belonged. It was bad enough when such prejudiced notions were expressed by the person in the street, but coming from an accredited academic, it was frankly scandalous.

• 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





### New R250 million Wits Brian and Dorothy Zylstra Sports Complex promises world-class facilities,

cutting edge sports science research and a residence for elite athletes.

It features the Zylstra Sport and Health Building, the Zylstra Aquatics and Rowing Centre, and a 44-bed Zylstra Residence for elite athletes.

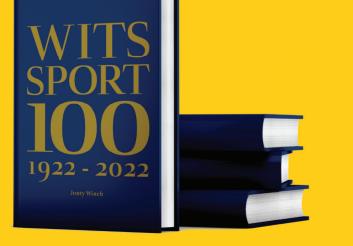
The flagship Sports Complex opens in 2025.



Phil Zylstra, on behalf of the Zylstra family and the Skye Foundation who made the legacy investment, says: "We feel that the Wits Brian and Dorothy Zylstra Sports Complex will be a landmark building and a resource for Wits and for the schools and sporting organisations from South Africa and abroad that will use it. It will be a fitting testament to my parents, Brian and Dorothy, and a sign of gratitude for the role the University played in many of our lives."







**Get your copy of the** *Wits Sport 100: 1922 – 2022* written by sports historian Jonty Winch. Email **Peter.Bezuidenhoudt@wits.ac.za** for details.

# Patricios

Professor of Sport and Exercise Medicine at Wits and Director of Wits Sport and Health, Jon Patricios, adds: "Physical activity is the most powerful tool that we have for disease prevention and intervention, and this unique Sports Complex will service our greater Wits community through dynamic teaching, research, high performance training, and clinical practice."

## www.wits.ac.za

### Changing children's lives, one wheelchair at a time

mange Ntsanta's life has been made so much easier since he received a wheelchair from the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), says Kay Ross of the Marian Rose Foundation.



Ross contacted WIZO Johannesburg at the end of January to say how much easier Ntsanta's life has become now that he can be pushed around in the specially designed childfriendly wheelchair instead of being carried, and can join the others at the table for meals and other activities.

Ntsanta, a disabled child with medical challenges who attends the Ezibeleni School for Physically Disabled Children,

received a Wheelchair of Hope from WIZO in 2021. The wheelchair forms part of the organisation's local outreach programme to secure donations for the import of child-size wheelchairs from Israel.

The child-friendly design is an Israeli innovation by nongovernmental organisation Wheelchairs of Hope, a humanitarian mission specifically for disabled children in developing countries. The wheelchairs were developed by specialist Israeli doctors and engineers from Alyn Hospital, Israel's leading paediatric and adolescent rehabilitation centre, with the simple wish of empowering education through mobility.

#### Letters

#### JEWISH EXCLUSION NO LONGER A RELIC ON REDDIT

Growing up in South Africa in the 1970s, I have vivid memories of passing by the Parkview Golf Club and hearing my mother comment, "They don't like Jews there." With the demise of apartheid in the early 1990s, I believed that the exclusion of Jews from clubs was a relic of the past. Yet I've discovered a modern echo of this exclusion in an unexpected place: Reddit.

Built on principles of open access and freedom of information, Reddit offers anonymity and a platform to connect with others. Among its many communities is r/SouthAfrica, a subreddit where one might expect to engage in discussions pertinent to South Africa. This forum proclaims a strict "no-hate-speech" policy.

A recent demographic survey published by r/SouthAfrica (https://t.ly/hXFeT) notes the diversity of its readership in terms of religious affiliation: 35% Christian; 23% non-affiliated; 19% atheist; 11% agnostic; and 5% Muslim, with a sprinkling of Pastafarians. Notably absent from this list, however, are Jews. Why?

My personal experience offers one explanation. I was permanently banned from r/SouthAfrica after posting a non-inflammatory, peace-promoting video titled Shalom from South Africa on 12 October, which included a projection of the Israeli flag onto the Ponte building in Johannesburg. No rationale for the ban was provided nor was there an opportunity to appeal. Subreddits, similar to Facebook groups or WhatsApp groups, concentrate power in the hands of a few administrators. Unfortunately, this can lead to absolute corruption. Following my ban from r/SouthAfrica, I faced similar exclusions from r/AskSouthAfrica and r/Johannesburg.

Curious about the survey's omission of Jews, I suggested to its author that their absence might be linked to bans on those expressing Zionist views. My attempt at dialogue was met with an accusation of harassment, leading to a report to Reddit. Although the subsequent appeal overturned the warning, the damage was done.

The exclusion from Parkview Golf Club never bothered me much. Anyone I've told about Reddit's antisemitism just shrugs their shoulders in a "meh" reaction, kind of like my own reaction to the golf-club exclusion.

However, the issue of free speech on Reddit and the broader implications of such bans deeply concerns me. Though the problem may not be unique to r/SouthAfrica, it tarnishes the ideal of a progressive and inclusive community. As we strive to embody the diversity and unity symbolised by the rainbow nation, it's crucial that we address these instances of exclusion. **- Ryan Heitner, Modi'in, Israel** 

#### DONATIONS DESPERATELY NEEDED FOR EAST LONDON JEWISH CEMETERIES

The once vibrant East London community and Chevrah Kadisha has dwindled to 27 members whose responsibility it is to maintain the two cemeteries, as we receive no assistance from the local municipality.

We rely entirely on donations to maintain the Tahara House and keep both cemeteries in a dignified state at ever increasing monthly costs, with our members volunteering to do the work. Most of the people buried in East London have family members scattered throughout South Africa and the world, and we do this work on their behalf. We therefore appeal to all people who have family buried in East London to assist us by sending either annual, occasional, or monthly donations. For banking details, email

elchevra@telkomsa.net.

– Ellen Ettinger, East London Jewish Helping Hand

Read the South African Jewish Report online <mark>www.sajewishreport.co.za</mark>



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