

## Jojo Rabbit - A Lesson in How Hate is Taught

■ **Emily Burack**  
Jewish Telegraphic Agency  
Abridged by Managing Director

*Jojo Rabbit* sounds like a film that is difficult to pull off amid the state of rising anti-Semitism in 2019. It's a comedy set during the Holocaust about a 10-year-old German boy being brainwashed by Nazi ideology and his imaginary friend, a playful version of Hitler who likes to dance.

But before you get outraged or assume it downplays the horrors of the Holocaust, like multiple critics have argued already, take a deep breath: *Jojo Rabbit* is a very good movie with a meaningful message.

The film is written and directed by Taika Waititi, a Maori Jew, who also stars as Hitler. His version of Hitler is the imaginary projection of a boy named Jojo who is set on joining the Hitler Youth. Jojo discovers early on that his mom is hiding a Jewish girl in their attic. The two kids develop an unlikely friendship, and their relationship is at the heart of the film.

Though the movie is set during the twilight of Hitler's reign in Germany, Jojo is still trained to hate, and the impact of the Nazi ideology on the young boy is clear. He believes ardently in the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jews, and that only begins to change when he befriends Elsa, the Jewish girl in the attic. But Jojo is vulnerable at his core and just wants to be one of the cool kids. In World War II Germany, they happened to be the Nazis.

The premise of the film – a boy who believes in Nazi ideology begins to learn that Jews are human – and the fact that the viewer feels for this shamelessly Nazi boy feels absurd. Yet it's absolutely necessary



Davis, Waititi and Johansson in *Jojo Rabbit*: good battles evil at the family dinner table

viewing. Not because we need to learn Jews are human, but because we must be reminded of how easy it is for children to be indoctrinated into hate. Taika Waititi calls the film an 'anti-hate satire.'

"I experienced a certain level of prejudice growing up as a Maori Jew," he says. Making the film in 2019 "has been a reminder, that we need to educate our kids about tolerance and continue to remind ourselves that there's no place in this world for hate. Children are not born with hate, they are trained to hate."

Throughout it all, the viewer is never allowed to forget that Jojo is a 10-year-old. These are kids, they can still be taught the power of love and acceptance.

Waititi drew upon his own background to create the film. He grew up in Raukokore, New Zealand. His mom is Russian Jewish, and his dad is Maori.

"Most of the prejudice I've experienced has been because of the colour of my skin," he explains. "Traditionally in New

Zealand, there's been prejudice against Maori people. I did experience that growing up, and I learned to kind of brush it off, which is not a great thing, but you do what you have to do.

"Still, I think I wound up subverting a lot of these feelings into comedy. That's why I feel very comfortable poking fun at the people who think it's clever to hate someone for who they are."

In that sense, he is following in the footsteps of Mel Brooks. "If you can reduce Hitler to something laughable, you win," the famed Jewish comedian once said.

Waititi cast himself as Hitler after a frustrating search. When he started filming, he wrote on Twitter, "What better way to insult Hitler than having him portrayed by a Maori Jew?"

*Jojo Rabbit* isn't trying to be a typical Holocaust film. It's about understanding what makes people hate – how they are taught so early to hate – and truly laughing at them.

## Jewish Kitchen

### Shakshuka



*Shakshuka* is one of Israelis' most loved foods. The dish, which was brought to Israel by Jewish immigrants from North Africa, traditionally consists of spiced stewed tomatoes topped with poached eggs. Now a staple on the menus of coffee shops and restaurants around the country, modern interpretations augment the sauce with all sorts of vegetables, cheeses or meats, including eggplant, kale, feta or sausage.

Serve alongside good bread to mop up the sauce and egg yolks.

#### Ingredients

¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)  
 1 cup cubed tofu or feta (optional)  
 6 eggs  
 2 tsp tomato paste  
 ¼ cup vegetable oil  
 6 cloves garlic, roughly diced  
 2 tsp salt, or to taste  
 1 tsp sweet paprika  
 1kg fresh tomatoes, unpeeled and cut in quarters, or two 400g cans of tomatoes

#### Directions

Place the tomatoes, garlic, salt, paprika, tomato paste, and vegetable oil in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, over low heat until thick, for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Ladle the tomato sauce into a greased frying pan. Bring to a simmer and break the eggs over the tomatoes. Gently break the yolks with a fork. If adding feta, tofu, and parsley, sprinkle them on top. Cover and continue to cook for about 3 to 4 minutes, until the eggs are set. Bring the frying pan directly to the table. Set it on a trivet and spoon out the *shakshuka*.

# NZ PM Distances Herself from Online Hate Group

## ■ Israel Institute of NZ

At the start of October, the Israel Institute of New Zealand (IINZ) exposed antisemitic material within a Facebook group of New Zealand based anti-Israel group *Kia Ora Gaza*. This included posts that compared Israel to Nazi Germany, comments that dehumanised Jews, and open support for terror against Israeli citizens.

IINZ has now found that four New Zealand members of parliament, including the Prime Minister, were part of the Facebook group where anti-Semitism was posted and tolerated.

This is concerning as being involved with antisemitic groups online was one of the first signs the UK Labour anti-Semitism crisis and part of the reason the UK Labour Party is being investigated by the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Just like the initial reaction of the UK Labour party, the leader of *Kia Ora Gaza*, Roger Fowler, denied the material on his Facebook group page was anti-Semitic, though did admit to a “serious problem” of anti-Semitism within the “international and local solidarity movement” and that his moderators were “continuously try to eradicate this vile rubbish”.

The Israel Institute of New Zealand is aware that *Kia Ora Gaza* moderators have deleted comments and blocked people who post pro-Israel messages or challenge assertions made on the page. Yet the dozens of examples of anti-Semitism remain in the group.

The posts and comments prompted emphatic condemnation from Race Relations Commissioner, Meng Foon, who called the material IINZ exposed “abhorrent”. Chief Human Rights Commissioner, Prof Paul Hunt, was equally clear in a statement made to IINZ that the posts and comments crossed any reasonable line, “Your [IINZ] article exposes utterly deplorable anti-Semitism... I am grateful to you for bringing your important article to my attention – and for calling out such appalling examples of anti-Semitism.”

The Human Rights Commission also endorsed the recent call of the United



PM Jacinda Ardern | Photo: NZ Herald

Nations Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion and Belief for all States to take a human rights-based approach to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of religious intolerance, and to better identify and document antisemitic hate crimes, saying “It’s up to all of us to stand up to racism, hate and anti-Semitism.”

The four MPs who are members of the *Kia Ora Gaza* Facebook group are Green MPs Marama Davidson, Golriz Ghahraman, and Gareth Hughes; and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

The office of Ms Ardern responded to IINZ saying she was added without her knowledge and will remove herself from it.

*“We have established that until recently, Facebook users could sign other users up to groups without their consent – this is what has happened in this case, and is how the Prime Minister’s profile is listed as a member of the group. The Prime Minister did not proactively join the Facebook group you highlight. When she has the opportunity, she will be removing herself from this and other groups which she has unknowingly been signed-up to. Thank you again for raising the issue, which we weren’t aware of until your email.”*

*...The Prime Minister has made clear on a number of occasions [that] she rejects all forms of racism and oppression, including anti-Semitism.”*

According to Techadvisor, it is only recently that Facebook changed the rules that made it possible to add friends to a group without their consent. That means that Ms Ardern has a Facebook friend who is a member of *Kia Ora Gaza*. The Facebook rule update also, apparently, automatically removed members who had never accepted an invitation or visited the group’s page.

Nevertheless, Ms Ardern has not commented on the site herself and has clearly distanced herself from the group now and is standing up to anti-Semitism.

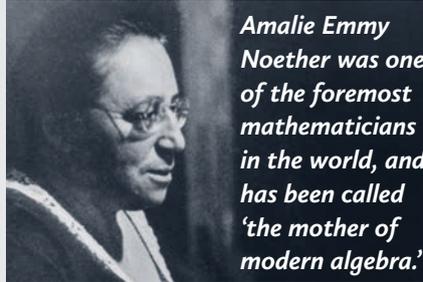
None of the Green party members responded to IINZ. Green co-leader, Marama Davidson, cannot claim to have nothing to do with the group, like Prime Minister Ardern, as she worked with KOG to join the “Woman’s Peace Flotilla” in 2016. Also aboard the ship was Ola Abed, co-creator of a video game designed for Palestinian children, in which extra points are awarded for headshots on Israeli soldiers; and Norsham Abu Bakr, an outed anti-Semite and friend to Hamas leadership, that has shared posts accusing Mossad of being behind the terror attacks in Nice and Munich.

The quick and unequivocal responses from both the Race Relations Commissioner and Human Rights Chief Commissioner are encouraging, as is the Prime Minister distancing herself from a hate group and making a stand against anti-Semitism.

Hopefully, the Green Party MPs follow suit, rather than remain silent and contribute to the normalisation of anti-Semitism in New Zealand.

## Jews Who Shaped the World

### Emmy Noether The Mother of Modern Algebra



*Amalie Emmy Noether was one of the foremost mathematicians in the world, and has been called ‘the mother of modern algebra.’*

Born in 1882 in Germany, Emmy grew up in a Jewish family. Her father and brother were both mathematicians. Emmy was initially interested in music, dance and languages, and in 1900 became a teacher of English and French. But just a few years later, she decided to study mathematics, but had to wait until 1903 to do so at university, as prior to that women could not enrol.

In 1907, Emmy received her doctorate from the University of Erlangen. In 1909, she went to Göttingen University to teach, but was unable to under government restrictions on women

teaching so she assisted a lecturer on a voluntary basis, until the restriction lifted four years later. Emmy became the first female mathematics lecturer in Germany. But under the Nazi regime, Emmy, being a Jew, was stripped of her teaching license, and later dismissed for teaching ‘Jewish-Marxist mathematics.’

Like many other Jews, she emigrated to the United States in 1933, where she received a visiting professorship at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, and gave lectures at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, where Albert Einstein also taught. It was during this time that Emmy made vast contributions to the fields of advanced mathematics and theoretical physics.

Her life was cut tragically short when in 1935 Emmy traveled to Europe to visit family and died there during surgery on an abdominal tumor. She was only 53-years-old. Following her death, Albert Einstein described Emmy Noether as “the most significant creative mathematical genius thus far produced since the higher education of women began.”

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## Travel to Israel

### Beersheva to Become New Tourist Magnet

In order to stimulate tourism, create new residential areas and give the metropolis on the edge of the Negev Desert in the south of Israel a 'green lung,' two years ago the *Beersheba River Park* project was started.

"The highlight of this project is a lake complex, which will be an attraction for all residents and visitors to the city," said Mayor Ruvik Danilovich at the beginning of the construction work.

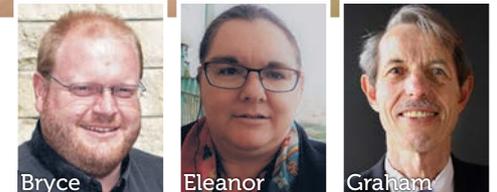
Part of the massive facility was recently inaugurated and opened to visitors. The huge man-made lake, now home to numerous fish, covers an area of 55.5 acres and the adjacent grassy area is another 365 acres. This is now the second largest lake in Israel after the Sea of Galilee. A number of entertainment venues have already opened, and many more are planned. All around the lake, entire forests, picnic areas, hiking trails, cycling paths, cafes, restaurants, leisure and recreation complexes for the whole family are to be created.

It is believed that the River Park will be one of the most beautiful places in the country and therefore a magnet for tourists, serving not only the 200,000 inhabitants of Beersheba.



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