

# south african Jewish Report

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## Chabad rescued with court case win

NICOLA MILTZ

Members of Chabad have breathed a collective sigh of relief after successfully challenging a claim to repay a multimillion-rand loan by a company formerly owned by well-known benefactors, the twin brothers Solly and the late Abe Krok, that was made nearly 30 years ago.

It would have dealt a massive blow to the religious and charitable organisation that set up roots in South Africa five decades ago had the court decision gone the other way.

Phoenix Salt Industries, of which Maxim Krok, the son of the late Abe Krok, is director, was unsuccessful in seeking an order for payment by the Lubavitch Foundation of Southern Africa for an amount in the millions plus interests and costs.

Judge Swanepoel delivered his judgment last week in the matter between Phoenix Salt Industries, previously controlled by the Krok twins, who were iconic South African businessmen and philanthropists, and the Lubavitch Foundation of Southern Africa.

The matter goes back to 1994, when the Krok twins, who have had a longstanding relationship with the Chabad movement, generously came to the rescue of the Lubavitch Foundation after it got into financial trouble.

At the time, the Lubavitch Foundation was indebted to Nedbank to the tune of about R5 million, a loan of which was secured by mortgage bonds over properties in Orchards, Johannesburg, which included the popular Torah Academy, a community school founded on the teachings of the Chabad philosophy.

The foundation was experiencing difficulties servicing the loans and approached the Krok twins for assistance.

According to court papers, the Kroks proposed paying off the Nedbank debt and taking over the Nedbank loan through Phoenix Salt Industries, a company previously controlled by them.

They proposed that the Lubavitch Foundation enter into a loan agreement on more favourable terms than the bank loan, with the company also taking cession of the mortgage bonds as security for the loan.

The way in which the deal was structured at the time was fairly complex and intricate as set out in court papers involving the sale of various properties, loan, and sale agreements.

After some time, the twins resigned from Phoenix Salt Industries in 2003, and Maxim Krok became director.

It's understood that Phoenix Salt Industries claimed the agreement with the Lubavitch Foundation was a straightforward loan, and that debt had become due and payable.

The foundation, represented by Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, said the Krok brothers wished to assist the foundation by settling the debt in its entirety, and that he was assured by the twins on numerous occasions that they would never be required to repay the money.

A sprightly Solly Krok, 93, appeared in court last year during the hearing in solidarity with the Lubavitch Foundation and supplied a confirmatory affidavit supporting his friend, Rabbi Lipskar.

Lipskar said in court papers that the foundation had experienced difficulties in servicing loans to Nedbank in 1994. "Solly and Abe, to my knowledge, were extremely successful businessmen and had, over many years, been extremely generous donors to a range of Jewish charities including the foundation". In addition, he said, "they and I

were close personal friends".

He approached the Krok twins "to intervene with Nedbank and attempt to agree a reasonable settlement of the Nedbank claim, and to assist the foundation to pay whatever settlement amount could be agreed", according to court papers. "It was never envisaged nor intended that the foundation would be called upon to repay the loan." In fact, he insisted in court papers that both brothers repeatedly told him that they would never call for the loan to be repaid.

Lipskar said in the papers that the loan would be paid by a separate Krok-controlled company, Golden Hands, from the proceeds of the sale of cluster houses to be developed on the properties sold by the foundation to Golden Hands.

Lipskar was the first Chabad emissary to be sent by the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, as a *shaliach* (emissary) to southern Africa. Together with his wife, Rebbetzin Mashi Lipskar, the couple have been recognised for making an historic contribution to the well-being and growth of

the Jewish community after setting up the Lubavitch Foundation of Southern Africa.

Judge Swanepoel said in his judgment, "There's no reason to reject the evidence of Rabbi Lipskar and that of Solomon Krok."

The legendary Krok twins, Solly the accountant and Abe the pharmacist, rose to prominence with their first financial success being the creation of a skincare beauty range for the African community. The products became the largest cosmetic range sold in the country, although their complexion

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## SA olim join throngs in Tel Aviv protest

TALI FEINBERG

"It was my first demonstration since making aliya in 2021, and the atmosphere was electric," says Samuel Hyde, who was amongst the 110 000 people that rallied in Tel Aviv on the evening of 21 January. He was one of a number of South African *olim* who felt it was vital that they protest against Israel's new government and its possible changes to the judiciary.

"I agree with the basic fundamental principles of why people are protesting," says Hyde of the protest, the third week of demonstrations, in which thousands more gathered in other cities. "They are patriotic Israelis who don't agree with judicial reforms. They believe in the Zionist vision of the state as Jewish and democratic, and don't feel that the people in power right now are representative of that.

"The atmosphere was partially a carnival and partially outrage", says Jonathan Schwartz, who made aliya in 1978. "People



Jonathan Schwartz with family and friends at the protest in Tel Aviv

don't like being stripped of their democratic rights."

Max Moss, who made aliya from Cape Town in the 1960s, says that people from

all walks of life attended. "The organisers handed out hundreds of Israeli flags, which created a feeling of unity. The atmosphere was peaceful."

He attended because "I feel that my country is being swept from under my feet. Israel is home to all Jews, but this government is sowing divisions to achieve its objectives. With this government, there is no hope of South Africa and Israel finding any common ground. If we go down this path, Israel will become a different country."

Schwartz attended because "Israel's new government seeks to destroy any checks and balances on the power of government. It's a coalition of radical interest – the haredi parties want to prevent the Supreme Court from being able to enforce things like an equitable draft system; the Shmotrich-Ben

Gvir factions want to stop the High Court from applying international law to the West Bank; and Netanyahu seeks to stay out of jail.

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## Excluding Israel renders Dirco visit 'irrelevant'

TALI FEINBERG

A senior South African government official is in "Palestine" on a working visit for the second time in six months, but has totally ignored Israel. In fact when the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) announced that Director-General Zane Dangor was heading to the Middle East, the word "Israel" wasn't mentioned.

Dirco said that Dangor would "co-chair the second round of the South Africa-Palestine political consultations at director-general level, scheduled for 22 to 25 January 2023 in Ramallah. The visit will afford the two sides an opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations and exchange views on the most recent developments in Africa and the Middle East in order to identify areas of further co-operation."

This is the second time in recent months that Dirco has sent a high-level official to the region and ignored the Jewish state. Dirco Deputy Minister Candith Mashego-Dlamini visited the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria in August 2021, but left Israel off the itinerary.

That trip was made soon after Dirco Minister Dr Naledi Pandor told visiting American Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "We must use the proven tools of diplomacy, peace-building, dialogue, and mediation to resolve conflict. South Africa is keen to be a partner in this endeavour." And two months ago, Pandor said, "We'll continue to support the achievement of a two-state solution, with a viable, contiguous Palestinian state existing side-by-side in peace with Israel."

Regarding Dangor's trip, local political analyst Daniel Silke says, "South Africa doesn't try anymore to have any even-handedness on the Middle East situation. It seems that it has decided that its relationship is going to be with the Palestinians, and further



Photo: Facebook

Department of International Relations and Cooperation Director-General Zane Dangor

agreements, close ties, and bilaterals are going to ignore Israel. I think it has made a clear decision. One should accept that that is the current position."

While Pandor has paid lip service to a two-state solution and a mediating role, "In practice they don't want to give legitimacy to the state of Israel by engaging with it, and it does make their support for a two-state solution ring hollow," says local political

analyst Steven Gruz. "You can see the fight that they've mounted to get Israel's observer status at the African Union rescinded."

Gruz says this has an historical context. "There's been an unofficial barring of senior South African government officials from travelling to Israel over probably the past decade or so, as the peace process ground to a halt. The South African support for the Palestinian struggle is well-documented. It's quite clear that there's a freeze on high-level contact with Israel, and I don't see that changing anytime soon unless there's a major breakthrough in

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## Darkness and blindness

Torah Thought



Rabbi Pini Pink  
- Chabad Greenstone

In this week's parshah, *Bo*, we read of the plague of darkness, the ninth plague to strike the ancient Egyptians. The rich description in the Torah makes the darkness feel almost tangible.

"A man couldn't see his fellow, and was not able to rise from his place for three days." The plague lasted for six days. During the first three, "a man could not see his fellow", during the last three, one who was "sitting was unable to stand, and one who was standing was unable to sit". The darkness was so thick, it weighed down the Egyptians and even prevented them from moving. That's even worse than load shedding!

The Torah isn't a poetry book, but a book of teaching. What's the purpose of informing us that "a man couldn't see his fellow"?

In the early twentieth century, many Russian Jews escaped the pogroms to seek their fortunes on the shores of America. Often, one or two members of a family would arrive to be followed later by the rest of the family when finances permitted.

Berel was one such greenhorn, arriving almost penniless in Ellis Island. His business enterprises were blessed with success, and he became very wealthy. Several years later, his brother, Yankel, arrived in America, and found his way to the successful brother's house. Berel had already managed to buy himself a veritable mansion serviced by a vast staff. When Yankel presented himself at Berel's house, the doorman told him to wait, and soon returned with a message that Berel – now Bobby – had told him that the "stranger" shouldn't be admitted as he had no brother.

Yankel was astounded, but in spite of sending several signals to his brother, he was rebuffed again. He soon

realised that the successful Bobby had no wish to be reminded of his poorer relations.

As Yankel turned to leave, he asked the doorman to impart one last message to his brother. "Please tell him that I advise him to make a will immediately because he doesn't have much time left to live," Yankel said.

Alarmed, Berel soon appeared at the door. "How dare you say such a thing?" he thundered. "I could have you arrested."

"It's quite simple," Yankel replied. "When I was growing up, I took an interest in the work of the village doctor and often accompanied him on his

rounds. Unfortunately, I was often with him as people were in their last moments. From my experience, I learned that when a patient could no longer 'recognise' his own brother, their situation was extremely serious, and they had little time left to live."

There's no greater darkness than one in which "a man cannot see his fellow" – in which a person becomes oblivious to the needs of their fellow. When that happens, a person becomes hindered in their own personal development. They become unable to "rise from his place". It's a powerful lesson we can all take to heart.

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G-d commands the first mitzvah to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. They are also commanded to wear tefillin on the arm and head as a reminder of the Exodus and their resultant commitment to G-d.



# SA warmly hosts Russia’s Lavrov, Holocaust analogies and all

STEVEN GRUZD

In spite of repeated claims that it’s neutral on the war in Ukraine, South Africa continues cozying up to Russia. The visit of Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to South Africa on Monday, 23 January, and his warm reception has angered many. He’s the voice of the Kremlin in its devastating war on its neighbour, and he’s prone to make blatantly antisemitic, odious Holocaust comparisons. Critics and citizens alike aren’t impressed. Lavrov was in South Africa at the start of a four-state southern African tour that will include Angola, Botswana, and eSwatini. He was hosted in Tshwane at the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) by his South African counterpart, Dr Naledi Pandor. The body language between the two at their press conference was congenial, even familial, underlining ever-closer bilateral relations. They were all smiles as they shook hands. Both ministers vigorously defended next month’s planned naval exercises between South Africa, China, and Russia off the coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Not a negative word about Russia’s almost-year-long invasion of Ukraine was uttered by Pandor. Lavrov repeated Russia’s justification for what he called its “special military operation in Ukraine”, fulminated against the West, and blamed Kyiv for not seeking peace.

Last week in Moscow, Lavrov said, “Like Napoleon, who mobilised nearly all of Europe against the Russian Empire, and Hitler, who occupied the majority of European countries and hurled them at the Soviet Union, the United States has created a coalition of nearly all European member states of NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] and the EU [European Union], and is using Ukraine to wage a proxy war against Russia with the old aim of finally solving the Russian question, like Hitler, who sought a final solution to the Jewish question.” This isn’t Lavrov’s first Holocaust analogy. Milton Shain, emeritus professor of historical studies at the University of Cape Town, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Lavrov seems to think that playing the Holocaust card is politically astute. He did this tangentially once before when he contended that the Ukrainians were Nazis

and that the fact that [President Volodymyr] Zelenskyy is Jewish doesn’t obviate this because Hitler had ‘Jewish blood’. I don’t know enough about the veteran Russian foreign minister to judge whether he has a ‘Jewish problem’, but it does seem to me that he underestimates his audience, including South Africans who in a recent survey overwhelmingly opposed Russia’s actions. “Of course, the African National Congress has a different view. Strikingly, Naledi Pandor initially condemned Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine [in a Dirco statement on 24 February 2022], but she soon changed her mind, no doubt under pressure from her party. South Africa’s government shouldn’t be hosting Lavrov, nor any Russian dignitary at a time like this. Nelson Mandela spoke of the need for an ethical foreign policy. I’m afraid this isn’t on display.”



Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research, and associate professor of history at the University of Cape Town said, “This sounds like the expansion of a theme that Russia advanced earlier in the war, i.e. the war as denazification. Initially the claim was that Russia’s invasion was justified as necessary to root out fascism in Ukraine; now Russia is presented as the object of a genocidal conspiracy akin to the Final Solution. What does this tell us? Presumably such statements are intended for domestic consumption within Russia. But they may also play to those inclined to see Western conspiracy everywhere. In truth, it’s pathetic, a demonstration of how low Russia’s standing [and justifications] have sunk. Shame on South Africa for any association with Putin’s regime!” David Saks, the associate director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said,

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“Even allowing for the post-rationalist, fake-news culture in which international politics so often plays out, Lavrov’s cynical inversion of historical fact and current-day realities is genuinely shocking. It’s outrageous enough for Russia, currently engaging in the worst act of predatory aggression against another European country in more than 80 years, to assume the role of victim, but to draw comparisons with so extreme a crime as the genocide of European Jewry takes Holocaust distortion to almost surreal new levels. Such wild rhetoric may expose even more the futility of Lavrov’s attempts to defend the indefensible, but they also have the effect both of diminishing the true extent of Nazi atrocities and tarnishing the memory of millions of its victims.” The Ukrainian Association of South Africa held a small but colourful protest outside Dirco’s headquarters on Monday. Honorary President Dzvinka Kachur said, “Lavrov has represented the Kremlin’s authorities for almost 20 years. It’s [Vladimir] Putin’s geopolitical strategy

to manipulate information and share lies via diplomatic channels and mass media.” She said the Kremlin avoided discussion of the non-aggression agreement made between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Nazi Germany in 1939 (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), and “instead, it paints the victims of Russia’s aggression – whether Chechnya, Georgia, or Ukraine – as aggressors, terrorists, or Nazis. It’s obvious that the Kremlin and Lavrov are aiming to distort history and abuse the tragedy of the Holocaust to defend their violence and avoid prosecution for more than 58 000 documented war crimes since February 2022.” Next month’s joint naval exercises have been dubbed “Exercise Mosi II” (*mosi* means “smoke” in Setswana). The first joint war games between the three countries were held in 2019. But then, the Russians weren’t in the middle of a vicious war. One would think that the optics aren’t ideal for South Africa. The exercises will coincide with the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and thus draw more international and local ire and attention than they otherwise might. But, perhaps, this is precisely what South Africa wants. What better demonstration could there be of it pursuing an independent foreign policy and not giving two hoots about what the West thinks? It’ll be giant thumbs in the eyes of Washington, London, and Brussels. Dirco was approached for comment, but had not responded by the time of going to press.

Chabad rescued with court case win

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lightening creams lead to much controversy. Since then, the brothers were involved in several pharmaceutical ventures followed by the purchase of Summer Place and other entertainment venues such as Gold Reef City. They built the Apartheid Museum, and along the way, started a number of charity initiatives. To date, Solly Krok continues his philanthropic ventures, most recently campaigning to combat hunger and poverty in the country exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a vision of creating food security initiatives locally with international support.

Ian Levitt, the attorney for the Lubavitch Foundation, said, “I’m grateful to my entire legal team who assisted me in bringing a successful result to this matter. A loss would have been devastating, not only to the Lubavitch Foundation but to the community at large for whom the foundation does such good work. I, together with many members of the community, are ecstatic about the result, the court having found that there was no reason to reject the evidence of Rabbi Lipskar or Solly Krok.” Lipskar and Krok declined to comment.

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# My film *J'Accuse!* includes several lists

OPINION

There's the 80-name list of the Lithuanian murderers of my family in Birzai (50 were neighbours); there's the epic, disputed, and mysteriously buried Melamad List of the more than 21 000 Lithuanian murderers who mercilessly destroyed the great Jewish civilisation of Yiddish Lithuania; there's the list of the glorious 918 Lithuanian rescuers, people of unimaginable moral courage who will forever be honoured in Jewish memory; and finally there's the list of Litvak Jews who almost pleased their mothers and changed the world.

You know, there were so many world famous Litvak writers, doctors, scientists, intellectuals, humourists, Nobel winners, activists, artists, and Torah geniuses that it takes about three minutes to roll the names in the film, and then at some speed. And these were only what Wikipedia yielded. Just last week, I learned that the late great Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the man who changed my own life, was Litvak through his mother.

Any other people or nation on earth would boast about this until the cows came home. But not us, not the Jews. We *kvel* furtively, privately, fearfully. Indeed, I know my "list of brilliant Litvaks" induces a significant wave of ethnic buttock clenching – "Okay, already! Very nice. But do you have to be so... public?! So boastful! Especially these days!" (See what the glorious Jackie Mason has to say about this.)

I had no choice. My film *J'Accuse!* is perhaps above all a demand for Jewish honour. So the list is in, and proudly so. And from what I gather, the *Yidden* are loving it. Good. We should be proud, we should stand tall, especially when confronted by deliberate insult.

The Noreika insult beggars belief. Let me summarise: the Lithuanian government, via its Orwellian Genocide Centre, has manufactured a crude mythology based on lies in order to hero worship a notorious mass murderer, petty thief, and polemical antisemite. Jonas Noreika murdered as many as 14 500 Jews in conditions of unimaginable cruelty, and his guilt has been known for



The children of the Plunge kindergarten

decades. Most recently Noreika's own extraordinary granddaughter, Silvia Foti, has axiomatically blown apart the pathetic denialists in Vilnius. Her book, *Storm in the Land of Rain* and her devastating testimony in the film, *J'Accuse!*, has left them looking naked, nasty, and ridiculous.

That's their problem. I'm more concerned by the Jewish response to this demand for honour. Why does honour matter so much? It matters, primarily, because Torah matters. It matters because Jewish ethics and concepts of justice matter. It matters because Jewish Lithuania – that phenomenal, extraordinary civilisation – matters. It matters because every human life matters. It matters because Jews, Jewish civilisation, and Jewish survival matter. And it matters because of the deranged cruelty with which we were annihilated.

These are some of the Jews Jonas Noreika dehumanised then murdered.

The rabbis and old men tied to horses by their beards and dragged to death for public entertainment;

The young girls of Plunge dragged from their homes and raped to death in drunken parties in the woods, then dismembered;

The 74 high school girls from Plunge tricked into a Christian conversion then mockingly executed along with everyone else and thrown into a pit;

The old, frail men burned or beaten

to death in the Demon Dance drinking game;

The men, women, and children of Plunge starved for three weeks in their

favours, and G-d knows what even as they carry on brazenly Holocaust-lying to our faces. Do these important Jews bring up the subject of Noreika and Foti

own synagogue amid the stench of rotting bodies and human waste, then massacred;

Please imagine that these victims were black. Or Irish. Or American. Or Muslim. Or anyone who has pride in their identity. No other nation on earth would accept such an insult.

But we Jews accept this Lithuanian insult with barely a murmur of protest. Worse still, important players in our community gobble up their trinkets, gongs,

at all? Do they feel it's unimportant? And precisely on whose behalf do they talk?

Honestly, many of us simply cannot understand it. Perhaps someone with close ties to Lithuania can explain, and of course we'll listen respectfully. But patrician silence is no longer an option: the devastating testimony of Foti in her forensic book, *Storm in the Land of Rain*, and in *J'Accuse!* make this an urgent discussion.

It comes to this: do the Jewish people support the Holocaust truth-teller or the Holocaust liar?

In my view, there really is no choice. If we don't honour ourselves, no one will. And who could possibly blame them?

• *Michael Kretzmer is a United Kingdom-based filmmaker and former journalist who is determined to fight for justice in Lithuania.*



MICHAEL KRETZMER

## Why commemorate the Holocaust in 2023?

OPINION

TALI NATES



On 18 January 1945, the Nazis took tens of thousands of prisoners on a notorious death march towards Germany. Less than 8 000 remained behind in Auschwitz, and were liberated on 27 January 1945 by the Soviet army. This year, we commemorate the 78th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

In 2005, the United Nations declared this day the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust. Why was it chosen?

Auschwitz wasn't just one single camp but a vast complex of forced labour and murder. It comprised more than 40 sub-camps and three main camps: Auschwitz I, a concentration camp; Auschwitz II – Birkenau, a concentration and killing centre; and Auschwitz III – Buna-Monowitz, a forced labour camp. By the spring of 1943, the Nazis had built four gas chambers with crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau. When trains arrived, SS doctors selected a small number – perhaps 15% – of deportees for forced labour. They were clothed in prisoner uniform, their hair was shaved, and only in that camp, prisoner numbers were tattooed on their arms. All the other deportees – mostly women, children, and the elderly – were ordered to undress and surrender their personal belongings. They were then driven into the gas chambers, where the Nazis murdered them with Zyklon B poison gas. The Sonderkommando, Jewish prisoners who were forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria, removed the bodies, extracted gold teeth, and shaved the women's hair before burning the corpses. At Auschwitz, the Nazis murdered about one million Jews, 75 000 Polish prisoners, 21 000 Sinti and Roma, 15 000 Soviet prisoners of war, and 10 000 prisoners of other nationalities.

After the war, Auschwitz became the symbol of the Holocaust. However, we must remember that the Nazis and their collaborators murdered Jews in five other killing centres: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Majdanek as well as hundreds of other killing sites such as Babi Yar near Kyiv in today's Ukraine, and Ponar, near Vilnius, Lithuania. Jews were murdered everywhere, in ghettos, camps, shot by the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) or gassed in gas vans or killing centres in occupied Poland. Our challenge today is to remember them all. On this day, I remember my father's mother, my grandmother, Leah Turner, and his two young sisters, Hela and Cela who were murdered in August 1942 in Belzec.

Why should we remember the Holocaust in Africa? World War II was a global war that included the African continent. The Nazis occupied much of North Africa, and targeted more than 400 000 Jews living there, implementing anti-Jewish policies and setting up internment and slave labour camps. Their plan was to murder the Jews there using the Einsatzgruppen attached to Rommel's Afrika Korps. The plan was never implemented as the Allies began

liberating North Africa in November 1942.

However, internment and forced labour camps were established in North and West Africa under Nazi Germany, Vichy France's government, and Mussolini's Italy. In Libya for example, 2 600 Jews were deported to the Giado camp, 240km south of Tripoli, and many died there. Several camps were also established for Jews and other perceived local dissidents in Senegal, Mali, and Guinea.

Africa also became a place of detention for Jewish refugees. In December 1940, 1 581 Jewish refugees who had tried to escape Nazi-occupied Europe to safety in British Mandated Palestine, were deported to the British colony of Mauritius. Between December 1940 and August 1945, the British authorities detained them in the Beau Bassin prison camp. A total of 126 Jewish refugees died there, mainly from typhoid and malaria. They were buried in the St Martin Jewish Cemetery near Port Louis.

South Africa joined the Allies on 4 September 1939 and fought in North Africa, Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Italy, suffering 11 023 fatalities. The South African Air Force's 60 Squadron, one of the leading aerial photographic units operating in Europe during the war, flew 17 sorties to photograph the rubber refinery situated next to Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, only in 1978, it became clear that the photographs included lines of Jewish deportees walking towards the crematoria and their death. The excellent world-acclaimed exhibition, *Seeing Auschwitz*, at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre until the end of March, tells these and many impactful stories about the victims of Auschwitz and its perpetrators.

Many other countries in Africa sent soldiers to fight alongside the Allies, and were part of the victory over Nazi Germany. Some African countries also became a place of safety for refugees, such as Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa, and survivors settled around the continent, including in South Africa, after the war.

So, why do we remember? The commemoration is a day for reflection, remembering the victims of the Holocaust – men, women, and children who were targeted not because of something they had done but just for being born Jewish. It's also a day to honour and cherish the Holocaust survivors who courageously continue to share their painful testimonies, hoping that the world will learn from their experiences and that such acts won't be repeated. We should all stand together with them to remember and learn from their traumatic past.

All are invited for the commemoration at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre on Thursday, 26 January, at 19:00.

• *Tali Nates is the founder and director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.*

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# Man vs machine – how ChatGPT is changing the face of learning

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Everyone is talking about it, using it, feeling excited about its potential, or worrying about the impact that ChatGPT is going to have on our world.

This text-based artificial intelligence (AI) tool can answer questions and write essays, poems, or even film scripts. It's a chatbot designed to interact with humans in a conversational way. Significantly more advanced and creative than its predecessors, ChatGPT has rapidly gone viral, igniting ethical debates, especially for educational institutions and the working world.

Having only been available since late November, ChatGPT has fast demonstrated just how powerful AI can be. Capable of generating text in a wide range of styles, ChatGPT was developed by OpenAI, an American-based AI research and deployment company headed by Jewish tech entrepreneur Sam Altman. Currently freely available, it opens a world of possibilities, but also raises concerns about educational integrity and AI replacing humans in the working world.

ChatGPT works on large language models, computer programmes that promote text understanding and generation in software systems. Having been trained on masses of text, it has in a way developed an understanding of text, and how to identify important points, says Professor Benjamin Rosman. It can therefore generally give you a coherent answer to a question. Rosman is a professor in the School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), where he runs the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence, and Learning (Rail) Laboratory.

If you input a block of text, you could also ask ChatGPT to improve on it or write it in a different style, he says. "It's very flexible, and what's quite remarkable is what can be achieved by understanding language. This isn't a robot, it doesn't have any connection to motors or to images or sound, it's purely working on text and as such, is able to communicate with people in many different and interesting ways. I think it's transformative in what it's capable of doing."

Tech giant Microsoft views its potential as unlimited, and is to lay off 10 000 employees, redeploying billions of dollars into OpenAI, excited by the possibilities of ChatGPT and future chatbots.

Yet, as Mike Abel, the founding partner and chief executive of M&C Saatchi Abel, argued on social media this week, AI like ChatGPT will potentially demolish jobs faster than alternative sources of employment can be found.

"There are going to be some huge ethical questions and humanitarian, employment challenges being asked of us soon," he wrote. "It's going to be a real people-over-profits conundrum. I'm all for progress, but I'm more for people."



It's also raising questions around plagiarism and cheating in universities and educational institutions, especially with the rise of take-home exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. "ChatGPT can do pretty well on take-home exams on a lot of different topics and a lot of academics are freaking out about this," says Rosman.

Yet, he argues, academics have faced similar issues for years, whether it be in the realm of exams or in academic essays. "There have long been different platforms online where students can do things like upload questions and other people online can answer them," he says. However, that's not to minimise the risk such AI poses.

"People are using ChatGPT to help refine their language which is a great use of the technology, but there's certainly the potential for cheating or plagiarism," says Rosman. Yet it also opens the door to new forms of education, especially when it comes to critical thinking around whether we accept everything we read. "I think that's a culture that we've been moving towards anyway, but this perhaps accelerates that," he says. "Perhaps being in invigilated settings is a better idea for certain projects, or we can set

questions that might be harder for ChatGPT to answer."

Though there's been talk about building models that can determine whether text is AI generated, teachers would usually be familiar with a student's style of writing, educators argue, even if these tools do add a dose of complexity. "Teachers know what their students are capable of," says Rob Long, the director of academics at Yeshiva College. "It's not difficult for staff to recognise that this is not this child's essay, for example."

Yet, Long argues, such tools can also be used positively, by for example, asking students to analyse and engage with AI-generated essays. "We have to get used to this fast-paced, changing world of technology," he says. "We want to encourage kids to use their own thoughts, and it's just about finding ways in which we can try and do that better in this context."

Andries van Renssen, the executive director of United Herzlia Schools, agrees. "We're investigating the dangers and the possibility of misuse of this new technology, but we're approaching this with positivity because this is a gamechanger both for schools and individuals," he says. "Our approach is not to control but harness this to our advantage."

Professor Diane Grayson, the senior director of academic affairs at Wits, points out that ChatGPT has strengths and limitations. "There's definitely a place for such technology, but as a tool, not as a substitute for people doing their own thinking and writing. Preventing misuse is directly related to taking a whole-institution approach to promoting academic integrity, including in the design of assessments."

Could ChatGPT replace us all? "It is

capable of being creative," Rosman says, "which is something that many laypeople didn't think that machines would be able to be. That's quite scary for some people."

However, human input is still central to ChatGPT's efficacy. "You often need to do what's known as prompt engineering," says Rosman, "which means you have to put a lot of effort into what is the prompt or input that you give to the system to produce the desired output." You need to tell it to write the essay in the style of Ernest Hemingway, for example, and if you're not happy, you need to direct it where to expand on a concept.

"You can't use its outputs blindly, you should know something about what it's talking about to see if it's garbage," he says. "At some level, because it has learnt from texts online, these are likely to agree with one another, so it might not be paying attention to the right points." This also raises concern about reinforcing biases. "Ultimately, it isn't human, and while it can give a lot of insights into what humans are interested in, it's not perfect."

This is just the beginning, though, as the technology ChatGPT uses is only in its infancy. "People are going to innovate, it's going to be easier to build products, start companies, and build productivity and entertainment tools," says Rosman. "Before, someone might have a crazy idea but they didn't have the resources to make it happen. Now we're starting to get to the point where these tools are available, and if you've some sort of exciting idea, you can actually try and build it."

"We've just got to be careful to use it in the right way, as is the case with any powerful technology."

## Executive Director: Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC)



The CTHGC is the first Holocaust centre in Africa and works in association with Holocaust and Genocide Centres in Durban and Johannesburg. It houses a permanent exhibition and archive, hosts temporary exhibitions, organizes a rich array of public programmes and conducts educational visits and workshops for schools, educators and diverse adult groups.

They are looking to recruit an Executive Director to oversee the educational, public and outreach programmes of the Centre as well as its day to-day operations. This includes the management of its professional staff and oversight of the Centre's finances.

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## Pitfalls of matric panic

As an adult, have you ever been asked how many distinctions you got for matric and what your marks were? I certainly haven’t, not since I got into university many moons ago. It’s not something that really matters after you start working or studying.

But we place so much emphasis on these exams and their results. We put huge pressure on our children to excel in that year more than any other, and we – the parents – also get super stressed about their performance that year.

Parents’ stress is sometimes even worse than their children’s and worse than it was when they themselves were in matric. You would think they were doing the exams themselves. Having said that, as a parent in matric this year, I actually think I would be less stressed if I was doing matric myself. Oy vey!

Is the hype really necessary? Isn’t there some other way of going through this? We asked some experts. Read what King David High School Linksfield Principal Lorraine Srage wrote.

And how do we best parent a teenager through matric? This we asked former Herzlia High School Principal Marc Falconer to consider.

How important is it for our children to know exactly what they want to do after matric? King David Victory Park High School Headmaster Andrew Baker gives us his thoughts.

And how much do cultural activities during and before matric contribute to our matriculants? Redhill Head of School Joseph Gerassi gives us his insights.

You got it, this edition, after the posting of matric results last week, is steeped full of insights and stories relating to matric and school in general.

But back to why we make such a big deal of this particular year.

The truth is, there are so many who don’t perform to their optimum in matric and go on to become very successful. There are also those who get 10 distinctions don’t land up happy in their chosen careers. That’s life!

I’m one of the few who studied exactly what fitted me and fell into a career that I loved and continue to love.

So many change careers two or three times in their lives. That isn’t to say they weren’t happy in their first and second iterations, but they changed because the time was right for it.

Why do we put so much pressure on our kids in matric? To get into university? That’s true, and as Jewish parents, it’s also about wanting to give our children the best basis for life. We somehow believe that the better they do in the matric, the easier life will be for them. I’m of this opinion, but I’m not sure it’s necessarily true. Just look around us. Is this the case?

I know I was always told by my parents that education is the one thing that nobody can take from you. This is true, but this is about education in general, not just matric.

I may not always live this out, but I do believe we put way too much emphasis on matric and much too much pressure on our children. Some aren’t quadruple-A kids. Some aren’t able to swot. Some are going to do something that won’t require a matric with multiple As.

We parents live with the “what if” our children don’t get those many distinctions and will be forever disappointed if they didn’t get into medicine or chemical engineering. Will they live with regrets? Perhaps they will, or maybe they will decide down the line to go back to school to get the marks they need. In fact, they may well go to university as a mature student and not need all those distinctions. The truth is, we don’t know and, more important, it’s not our path, it’s our children’s.

We need to learn to accept that the huge pressure we’re putting on them isn’t helping them in any way. It’s only making their lives more stressful and unpleasant.

It would be interesting to compare those matriculants whose parents didn’t pressurise them and those who did, and their results. Who got the distinctions? Which children were happier?

Being a parent is the toughest job, and I’m constantly reminded that it’s one in which I don’t believe I’ll ever be awarded distinctions. I’m also always reminded that I cannot control things the way I would like to. To be a good parent, we need to listen to our children who have so much pressure and stress in their lives anyway, they certainly don’t need more. It’s easier said than done, especially because I lost the damn rule book to parenting. And nobody seems to have one to lend me.

We need to remember that the world we know isn’t the world in which they are living, and their careers will take place in a world where AI (artificial intelligence) rules apply. Their careers will be ones we don’t understand, nor will we be able to guide them. We need to accept that things are different today and are fast becoming more and more different. On the career front, things are changing so quickly. See story on ChatGPT on page 5, which won’t be the last on such issues.

If matric is tough in general, the class of 2022 had the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and were then hit with the double whammy of severe load shedding just before and during their finals.

And yet their results were phenomenal! And every parent, no matter how tough they were on their kids, has reason to celebrate. These are amazing young adults who will go on to make us proud.

The point is, through the difficulties they faced in senior high school, they learnt to adapt and be flexible, which are traits that will stand them in good stead through life.

*Kol hakavod* to the 2022 matriculants! You did us proud!

And to those who have just gone into matric and other grades this year, we wish you the best of luck! You are our future, and you too will do us proud!

Shabbat Shalom!  
Peta Krost  
Editor



## Judicial independence critical for democracy – in SA and Israel

OPINION

JUDGE DENNIS DAVIS



The Israeli Supreme Court has built up a formidable reputation over many years as a fierce and independent custodian of the rule of law and the rights of all those who live within the state of Israel. Constitutional lawyers like myself were particularly in awe of former president of the Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, who served in that role between 1995 and 2006.

Though Israel doesn’t have a written Bill of Rights, under Justice Barak’s leadership, the idea of fundamental human rights in Israel was founded upon a recognition of the value of the human being, the sanctity of human life, and the principle that all persons are free. In this endeavour, Justice Barak relied on the Basic Law, which was designed to protect human dignity and liberty in order to promote the values of the state as both Jewish and democratic.

It’s beyond the scope of this column to traverse the judgments written in particular by Justice Barak which vindicated these principles. Suffice to say that the Israeli Supreme Court became an important buttress against the unfettered authority of the executive and a defender of basic human rights.

To a considerable extent, the Israeli courts have continued in this tradition. Last week, the Israeli High Court announced that it had disqualified Shas Chairperson Aryeh Deri from serving in a ministerial position following the latter’s criminal conviction last year and subsequent suspended sentence.

In spite of this conviction, Deri had been appointed health minister and interior minister in the new Netanyahu government. Even Netanyahu buckled under the court’s ruling, and dismissed Deri from his cabinet.

This reflects the court’s much deserved reputation as a protector of human rights in particular, the rights of minorities including Arab citizens, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) citizens, as well as reform and conservative Jews who desire the same freedom and rights of religious practices as Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews.

The Netanyahu government now intends to pass legislation which will grant the government total control over the appointment of judges, including to the High Court, laws to limit the High Court’s ability to strike down legislation, and to enable the Knesset to relegislate laws that have been struck down by the court.

For anyone who believes in the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, these are events which extend way beyond the description of “disturbing”.

An independent judiciary is a vital component of any democracy. Focusing not on Israel but on our own South Africa, it should be evident to all readers that the South African judiciary after 1994 has become the central custodian of human rights, in particular its constitutional governance in general, and it has ensured that the government is held accountable for arbitrary decisions it has made.

Though under apartheid there were a number of judges, including from our own community (I think particularly of Judges Gerald Friedman and Richard Goldstone) who sought to preserve the substance of the rule of law within the context of a racist authoritarian government, the judicial institution after 1994 as a whole has emerged as fundamental

to ensuring that South Africa remains on a democratic path.

The essence of the jurisprudence that has been developed, particularly by the Constitutional Court, is that all public power should be subjected to legal scrutiny.

Neither the legislature not the executive can simply be permitted to exercise their vast powers without any concern for operating within the contours of legality. Judicial review of executive decisions and legislation that entrenches the constitutional rights of the citizens of this country is a powerful mechanism for ensuring that the foundational rights upon which the society was supposed to be based continues to operate. These rights are in terms of the Constitution, and thus in an open and democratic society based on principles of freedom, equality, and dignity.

South Africa has a sorry past when during apartheid, the legislature sought to override judicial decisions.

That was the case, for example, in the so-called High Court of Parliament case in which the National Party sought to make Parliament the highest court in the land and therefore be capacitated to overrule the then highest court being the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The drafters of our democratic



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with Interior and Health Minister Aryeh Deri

Photo: Ronen Zevulun.Pool

Constitution crafted a Bill of Rights for South Africa to ensure that the past should never be repeated, and the inextricable link between democracy and the value of the rule of law be protected.

It would be foolhardy to ignore the levels of corruption and other forms of criminal activity which have engulfed South Africa, particularly over the past 15 years. All of these acts are a cancer on the constitutional body of the country. But take away an independent judiciary and the ability of citizens to approach courts to hold the government accountable for unlawful acts, South Africa wouldn’t just be in a far worse position than it is today, it wouldn’t be able to lay claim to be a democracy in substance.

The lesson, therefore, is that changes to the legal structure which destroy the capacity of a judiciary to act in an independent fashion and hold public power to account result in a long and torturous road towards an authoritarian regime.

• Judge Dennis Davis is the retired judge president of the Competition Appeal Court who teaches law at the University of the Witwatersrand, University of the Western Cape, and University of Cape Town.



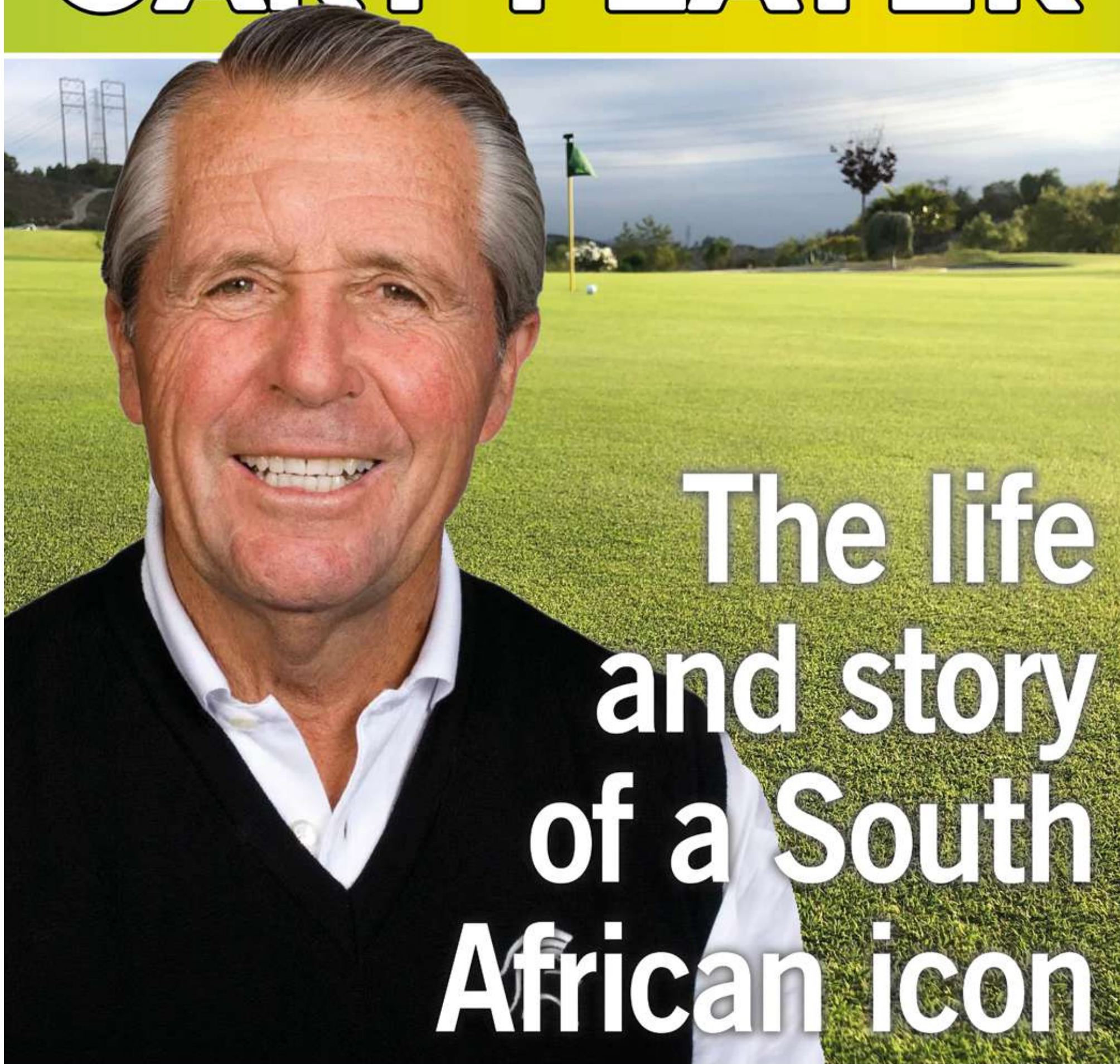
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# Deri threats reveal Israel’s legal house of cards

OPINION

GAVIN ROME

“Close the doors, they’re coming through the windows,  
Close the windows, they’re coming through the doors,  
Close the doors, they’re coming through the windows,  
Oh my gosh, they’re coming through the floors!”

These lines are familiar to generations of South African youth who have enjoyed the experience of pre-meal songs at Habonim camp. It's not controversial for me to write that Habonim isn't aligned to any of the parties comprising Israel's new rightist coalition government. How strange then was it to read that, in response to the Israel Supreme Court's recent judgment that as a convicted felon he cannot hold ministerial office, Aryeh Deri, the leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, responded with words seemingly lifted straight out of the “close-the-doors” song.

In his defiant reaction to the judgment, Deri said, “When they close the door on us, we'll get in through the window. When they close the window, we'll break through the ceiling.”

These are strange words, uttered in fraught times for the rule of law in Israel. The context in which Deri expressed an intention to re-enter the house of executive power by clambering in through the widows and ceilings is the following:

Deri is a twice convicted criminal, who in the early 2000s, served a two-year custodial sentence (apparently the sentence was reduced for good behaviour). In 2021, Deri was once again before the criminal court, this time on tax charges. To avoid a second stint in jail, he tendered a plea of guilty and entered into a plea-bargain arrangement. A condition of Deri's plea bargain, as presented to the court, was that he would never again

seek to hold public office. That solemn undertaking was then forgotten by Deri as quickly as it took the paroled Schabir Shaik to recover from a terminal medical condition to appear on the golfing greens of KwaZulu-Natal.

Shas Party members outside the house of Israeli Interior and Health Minister and Shas Party leader Aryeh Deri



Photo: Mostafa Alkharouf/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Deri's Shas party is a substantial partner in Netanyahu's rightist coalition. In return for assisting Netanyahu's return to power, Deri was rewarded with the offer of two cabinet posts. In blatant contravention of the terms of his plea bargain, during December last year, Deri accepted the offer, and joined Netanyahu's cabinet.

To allow Deri to be sworn in, the Knesset was required to amend legislation that had barred any politician convicted of a crime and sentenced to prison from taking up a ministerial role for seven years after their release. Under the legislative amendment, the seven-year prohibition would apply only if actual jail time was served. Deri, through his plea bargain and his above undertaking, had, of course, been able to evade precisely

such a custodial sentence.

An Israeli civil society organisation petitioned the Supreme Court to set aside Deri's appointment. The petition was successful. Ten of the 11 Supreme Court justices ruled that Deri's ministerial appointment was invalid.

Supreme Court President Esther Hayut wrote in the decision that Deri had in the plea bargain stated that he would no longer seek to hold public office or deal with public money. The court, therefore, found that “under these circumstances, his appointment was stained by a flaw of extreme unreasonableness, and it seriously contradicts the basic principles that should guide the prime minister when he appoints ministers”.

Although Netanyahu has grudgingly accepted the ruling, with sad predictability, he and his allies have assailed the court's decision. In doing so, they have presented the Deri case as one pitting unelected judges against the will of the majority of the electorate.

They have accused the court of judicial overreach, and have gone so far as to claim that it has trampled on the will of the people. Indeed, the so called judicial-reform agenda of the Netanyahu government is directed at hobbling the court's ability to continue to hold the legislature and executive to account. One of the changes the government is working rapidly to push through would denude the top court of the ability to review legislation, appointments, and other government decisions.

Anyone familiar with South Africa's history will recall that local politicians, likewise, have a long history of

using the argument of judicial overreach to attack the judiciary. The populist contention both here and in Israel is that democracy requires that judges dare not venture into political terrain, and when they do, they become a threat to the democratic order.

Buttressed by a written Constitution and an entrenched Bill of Rights, the South African judiciary has, in the democratic era, been protected by a constitutional order in which the role and purpose of judicial review is legally embedded.

The Israeli judiciary lacks similar protection. This is because Israel has no written Constitution. Over the decades, several attempts to draft a formal Constitution have fallen through. Instead, Israel has evolved a system of basic laws and rights which enjoy semi-constitutional status

This is a perilous halfway position. Majority rule untrammelled by judicial checks and balances can result in what 19th century writer De Tocqueville referred to as “the tyranny of the majority”. The danger that De Tocqueville foresaw was that public opinion could become an all-powerful force, and that the majority could then tyrannise unpopular minorities and individuals. Democracy should, after all, be something more than a system that would allow two wolves and a lamb to vote on the lunch menu.

In spite of the lack of a written Constitution, the Israeli judiciary appears resolute in its determination to uphold the rule of law. As was stated by Justice Alex Stein in the Deri case, “We all bow our heads to the law, but the law bows to no one.” The entrance to high-government office should be through the front door, and not via upstairs windows and ceilings that have opened as a result of cynical political manoeuvring. The rule of law requires nothing less than that judicial rulings, even when they prove unpopular, be respected and not overturned by majoritarian decree.

• Gavin Rome is a senior counsel at the Johannesburg Bar. He has acted as a judge of the high court on several occasions.

## SA olim join throngs in Tel Aviv protest

>>Continued from page 1

“To that end, Netanyahu is giving a free hand to Yariv Levin, his ‘justice minister’ to ‘reform’ the legal system,” he says. “The government claims to have a popular mandate for these reforms, but the coalition parties received about 48.4% of the popular vote. They owe their technical majority in the Knesset to the failure of leadership in the pro-democracy block.” Daniel Hasson, who made aliya in the 1990s and is the executive director of the Jerusalem Intercultural Center, says, “These protests are significant in the challenges facing Israeli society, and anyone – left or right – who cares about our shared future should join.

“Democracy isn't just about the will of the majority, it's also about check-and-balance mechanisms such as a free and open media and the neutrality of the courts – both of which are under direct attack – and about protecting the rights of minorities,” he says.

“Many agree that the power of the High Court needs to be addressed,” says Hasson. “The motive for such a move will be to ensure that the so-called will of the people is taken into account. The problem in the Israeli case is the timing. It's seen by many, left and right, as a move by Netanyahu to interfere with the court cases against him. If the process was to happen more slowly and in a more inclusive way, I'm sure that the public would be open to weighing the options.”

Stanley Barkan, who made aliya in 1970, attended a smaller protest in Haifa. “Politicians like Gidon Saar and Shasha Biton spoke, and it encouraged me to believe that there are also Likud politicians who are unhappy with the legal proposals.” He hopes they will “speak up from within”.

Paul Mirbach, who made aliya in 1982, says, “As much as I was fired up to live in Israel and build my kibbutz, I was relieved to leave behind an unjust society. Now, all that I have worked for is being wrested from me by an extremist government using a small majority of four votes to transform this country into something it was

never meant to be.”

Jonathan Zausmer made aliya in the 1970s. Along with the wide-ranging judicial changes allowing the government to dominate the legal system, he says there are other things at stake. For example, the new government would consider annexation of a large part of the West Bank, which could result in a minority ruling over a majority. Then, there are fears about the economy and disinvestment, as well as homophobia and the freedom of minorities.


“One part of the population is supporting the other [both with army service and economically],” which “drives people crazy, across the spectrum,” says Zausmer. With the new government talking about adding measures to increase this, the schism between sectors will grow.

He asks that diaspora communities “take a closer look. A strong statement from the diaspora would make an impact. Even Israel advocates like Alan Dershowitz are saying that things have gone too far.”

But Rob Davis, who made aliya in 1996, specifically chose not to attend the protests. “It seems as if when the left wins, it's democratic, but when it's the right, democracy is threatened,” he says. “Judicial activism has gone too far. A small coterie of intellectuals takes it upon themselves to decide and interpret our laws according to their own criteria. While I understand that minorities must be protected, there still comes a point where the majority have spoken. That's democracy.”

Says Hyde, “We all want to live as one unified Jewish nation and not acknowledge divisions. But if we neglect the issues, we allow them to fester, and Israel will no longer be the progressive and prosperous space it's been for 75 years.”

“I cannot sit idly by and allow this government to trample everything dear to me,” says Mirbach. “I had to go [to the protests]. My conscience wouldn't allow otherwise. Cry, my beloved country that we have come to this.”



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# From the pen of the principals

The 2022 matriculants had the worst of COVID-19 and they experienced extensive load shedding during their exams, but still they came up trumps. This is what the heads of school have to say:

## KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD



Lorraine Srage, principal, King David High School Linksfield

We're incredibly proud of the achievements of the 2022 matric group, but our culture at this remarkable school is more inclusive than measuring only results.

We aspire to recognise the diverse strengths of our students. And equally important – if not even more so – is that every student feels responsible to serve our school community and honour the ethos of our school. We're dedicated to placing worth on kindness, respect, discipline, and generosity of spirit. All of these facets allow our students to take their place in a world where they can change everything.

How do you measure a year, or to quote the song *Seasons of Love* from the Broadway musical *Rent*, how do you measure five hundred, twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes? In daylight? In sunsets? In cups of coffee? In laughter? In strife? At King David High School, we can proudly say that we measure the year in success.

Our success is, without doubt, reflected in the outstanding matric results that we received in the Independent Examinations Board exams.

And we measure success in the students who didn't believe that they could pass matric and did; the students who didn't believe that they could obtain a university entrance and did; and the students who didn't even believe that matric was a vague possibility for them, but who did it.

Success is ultimately the realisation of personal potential. It's triumph over hardship and battles. Therefore, both the setting of goals and the measure of success is personal and specific, and relates to each student's ability to work hard and be the best that he or she can be.

My wish is that our students will make their mark in the world as well as make a difference.

## HERZLIA HIGH SCHOOL



Andries van Renssen, executive director, United Herzlia Schools

The release of matric results is always a significant event in the Herzlia calendar because a top matric is the ultimate reason why parents send their children to a school.

But Herzlia is about a lot more than matric results. We want to empower every child with the values to become *menschen* in society, raising up the Jewish community through their success.

A great matric result is one type of success – important, but not the only one. When Herzlia promises “to involve itself in any way it can to empower its pupils to reach their dreams” it speaks about every staff member from nursery school through to matric.

In past years, Herzlia has consistently been ranked in the top-10 performing schools in South Africa according to independent ranking by “gradesmatch.co.za” in terms of distinctions per candidate. We don't know the 2022 ranking yet, but last year – with 3.6 distinctions per candidate – Herzlia was ranked ninth in South African and seventh in the Western Cape.

This year, Herzlia's distinctions per candidate increased to 3.7. No matter what the ranking is, it's an amazing result and our pupils and parents have reason to be proud.

It's also important to mention that, while across schools nationally the percentage of learners achieving a Bachelor's degree pass stayed consistently between 43% and 48% over the past five years, Herzlia achieved a 99% Bachelor's degree pass!

*Mazaltov* to our class of 2022 in making its matric dream a reality.

## KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK



Andrew Baker, headmaster, King David High School Victory Park

Once again, I'm proud and delighted with the achievement of our class of 2022.

This group overcame some tough challenges along its journey to completing matric, and I salute each one of them for their perseverance and dedication. The fact that more than one third of the grade achieved averages of over 80% (A-aggregates) and 90% of the grade achieved above 60% in all subjects is no mean feat, and speaks to the tenacity and determination of these students.

It was a year filled with extreme highs and some difficult challenges, loss, and tragedy but the group maintained a determined outlook and weathered the worst of the storms as a united force. This group is significant in that they face a global landscape filled with increased uncertainty and a leadership deficit and these are the children who entered their first year of senior high school only to be shut down by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This cohort effectively lost out on most of their Grade 10 and Grade 11 school years. Tenacity and resilience are key attributes of this group, which worked tirelessly to overcome the enormous challenges that they encountered along the way. So much more than just a wonderful set of academic scores, these individuals excelled in many other facets of their school life whether on the sports field or the stage, regional and national competitions, or outreach opportunities.

I wish them much success and happiness for the future.

## TORAH ACADEMY BOYS HIGH SCHOOL



Rabbi Motti Hadar, principal, Torah Academy Boys High School

I'm exceedingly proud of every matriculant at Torah Academy Boys High and their outstanding

achievements, not just for their 100% Independent Examinations Board matric Bachelor's degree pass rate and every student achieving distinctions. I'm proud of how they set their goals, challenged themselves, worked hard to reach and surpass those goals, and laid the foundation for the future of their dreams.

They did it while continuing a rigorous *kodesh* curriculum for more than three hours each day, and being an active member of the school and the broader community, each one making a meaningful difference to the world around them.

This is a Torah Academy education. It's holistic and well-rounded.

It's enhanced by our sports programme and our informal education department, led by a dynamic duo of overseas Yeshiva students, who motivate each student to grow through programmes which inspire, teach, and connect.

Together, this creates an education that prepares every student to go out into the world, knowing who they are and where they come from.

Matrics of Torah Academy 2022, you have received the strongest foundation from your parents, educators, community and friends. Now it's up to you to build on it, create the future of your dreams, and make a positive impact on the world.

## TORAH ACADEMY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL



Rebecca Sarchi, principal, Torah Academy Girls High School

At Torah Academy Girls High School, we believe it's important to treat each student as an individual.

While we firmly believe that marks don't define a student, we're elated with our students' achievements. These results are their tickets to the next phase of life, they are what opens doors to the future.

As they take leave of our school, our students are holistically prepared for what comes next. If they are going to study at a seminary, they have been equipped with a broad *kodesh* knowledge, their skills are strong, and they have a thirst for more Torah knowledge. As a result of all the informal programmes we have offered them, the students have a strong Jewish identity and are ready to share that with the wider Jewish community. For those moving onto tertiary education, they feel excited and prepared for the next phase of their lives. Whether they become a doctor, IT specialist, lawyer, or beauty therapist, they know they will be the best they can be.

To my outgoing matrics, never compare your journey with someone else's. Go out and embrace every day, every experience, every milestone, and every accomplishment. We're so proud of you!

## YESHIVA COLLEGE



Rob Long, principal, Yeshiva College

Quite phenomenally, the matrics of 2022 all achieved their best results in their final matric exams. In comparison with a group of athletes, the matrics of Yeshiva College peaked at exactly the right time. Theirs was a record

performance, of which we as educators, administrators, and parents are very proud.

And of course, the outcome of all this was the community's celebration that this was all about the exciting development of young minds, personalities, and characters.

We're proud of our students' academic achievements, but we're even more proud of the *menschen* they have become.

To achieve an average of four distinctions per student, a grade average across all subjects of above 77%, and a 100% university entrance, shows the academic perseverance of the 2022 cohort. From public speaking to the sports field and the various charity organisations around Johannesburg, this matric year also showed its talent and care for the community.

The class of 2022 certainly showed us that as a generation of the future, they are creative, resilient, and engaged in the world around them. They are a grade that persisted through two years of COVID-19 and emerged stronger in the collective belief that they could achieve and make a difference to the world while caring for this planet, its resources, and people. Their outreach projects, mentoring of younger grades in the school, and involvement in our community, while showing their love of Torah, is a testimony to the above.

We salute the matrics of 2022, and wish them every success.

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# Tragedy and triumph – Jamie picks up pieces to graduate

NICOLA MILTZ

Eighteen-year-old Jamie Treger had “the perfect life” until unfathomable tragedy struck twice during her matric year last year causing her to lose both her parents within a few weeks of each other.

The King David High School Victory Park matriculant said the world “came crashing down” for her and her sister, Demi, 16, describing it as the “darkest year of their lives”.

“One minute, the four of us had the best life, the next minute, Demi and I were utterly devastated,” said Jamie.

Her father, Robbie, 50, unexpectedly passed away in March last year, followed by the sudden passing of her mother Julie, 48, a mere 13 weeks later. Both deaths sent shock waves through the community.

But no one was more shocked and surprised than Jamie when she found out that not only had she passed matric, she had passed with a Bachelor’s Degree Pass.

“My gut told me that I had failed,” said Jamie, who was convinced that her chances of passing the year, considering what she had endured, were slim if not impossible.

“Honestly, I was just aiming to pass. I was so shocked when I got my results and saw that I passed everything,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* this week. “I’m so happy.

“The biggest reward is seeing the impact this has had on my sister. If I could do this during the worst year of our lives, anything is possible. It’s shown her that if you put your mind to something, you can achieve anything, no matter

what,” said Jamie, “It was important to do this for her, for me, and for our parents, who would have been so proud.”

When Jamie’s results came through at midnight on 18 January, she was surrounded by loved ones and close family friends who have unwaveringly supported her and her sister.

“Within minutes of hearing my results, the house lights mysteriously dimmed then flashed on and off a few times, which I know was a sign from my parents. I know they were there, and that they were proud of me,” she said.

On 20 March last year, Robbie, a

mother was grief-stricken. It was hard seeing her so sad, they were soul mates,” said Jamie. She described her mother, who worked at Investec Bank for 25 years, as “the greatest angel on earth”, who was charitable and did many random acts of kindness. “She would secretly hide money in the plants at work for the cleaners to find so as not to embarrass them, that kind of thing.

“I knew my mother was determined to be strong for us girls and made sure to do her best every day for us. I found this inspiring,” she said.

said.

The school granted her a concession to write preliminary and final examinations in a separate room at school.

“The thought of writing for three hours in a hall in complete silence was terrifying, I was petrified that my mind would drift, and I’d have horrible thoughts,” she said.

During those first months after her parents were gone, she said, “I kept myself busy and still do. My parents are always in the back of my mind, and always will be. It helps to keep busy.”

A couple of weeks after her father passed away, she turned 18. A few weeks after her mother passed away, she insisted on taking her driver’s license test so that she could drive her sister to school. The love and support that surrounded her enabled her to stay focused and study.

“When I lost my father, my life changed forever. He was my everything. I wanted to be strong for my mother, I willed myself to get up in the morning to go to school. The first day I walked in, it was so hard, I turned around and walked out.

“Every day, I tried going for longer, it was tough, but I knew I had to do it for my mom and my sister,” she said.

As the family began picking up the pieces, three months later, tragedy struck again when Julie accidentally passed away at the family home on 13 June.

“Everything just crumbled again. I was done. It’s all a blur,” Jamie said.

Somehow, through the fog of despair, the teenager managed to summon the courage to face each day and remain strong for her sister, saying they were “inseparable”. She drew strength from the example her mother set for them in her time of mourning for their father.

“There was no option. I had to get up in the morning, go to school, and face each day,” she



Robbie and Julie Treger with Jamie and Demi

businessman, passed away after a flight home to Johannesburg following a skiing trip abroad.

“I was expecting him to call me to say he had just landed,” said Jamie, “Instead, my mom called and said she was rushing to the airport. She wouldn’t say what was wrong, but I knew something bad had happened.”

His untimely death shattered the close-knit family of four. “We were heartbroken. My



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# Matric is over, now what?

OPINION

ANDREW BAKER

As we share in the euphoria of the matrics of 2022 who have just received their results, the question of the next step begins to appear, and a million new questions emerge.

One of my matric girls told me while chatting on the lawn outside the school on 18 January, that last year, when she was in the midst of her matric year, she felt she wanted to become a foundation-phase teacher and had applied to the South African Board of Jewish Education for consideration for its internship programme. She was accepted.

Now that she has her results, she has started to have second thoughts, and wants to change to law. For many students, it may only dawn on them halfway through their first year of study – or even later – that they wish to change direction. In my opinion, this isn't a bad thing.

I recall my own journey through the University of Cape Town some years ago. Leaving school, I really thought that I wanted to be a doctor and then the reality of dealing with pain and suffering as well as my aversion to blood made me realise that this wouldn't be the future for me. I decided to register for a BSc, with a double major in botany and zoology because of my love for biology (now called life sciences). It became apparent during my undergraduate degree that botany was my preferred direction, and I continued with a botany honours degree after graduating. By now, my eyes were set firmly on a research career and my honours course led directly into a Masters programme with the research project having grown out of work I had done in my honours year. I was now moving decidedly in the direction of a career in botanical research.

During the three years of my Masters, I started lecturing on an ad hoc basis to undergraduate students and found myself becoming increasingly engaged in my lecturing work, so much so that I was spending more time preparing my sessions with the students than writing up my research findings. It wasn't until my supervisor came to me to say that he had been watching me work with students and asked if I had considered a future in education that I gave teaching any thought as a career. In my eleventh year at UCT, I completed a postgraduate diploma in education, and went off to become a teacher.

It's clear that I could have completed my qualifications in four

years as opposed to 11, with a three-year degree and a teaching diploma in my fourth year. I don't, however, doubt for a minute the value of my 11 years of tertiary study in my growth and development. I have used so many aspects of my years of study in my career as a teacher and then headmaster, and I believe nothing went to waste.

Many students who have just completed their matric year are agonising over these decisions. My advice is to go with what you feel is right. It's okay to change your mind later in the journey and change course or direction of study at a later stage. For those who aren't sure, I would strongly urge them to consider a gap year. Consider one of the many fantastic programmes that are offered in Israel, or take off with a couple of friends and travel. Go and work in a foreign destination as an au pair, barman, or waitress. It's really tough to get into certain faculties at some of the South African universities, and it may be wise to defer acceptance for study by a year just to keep your foot in the door.

For students who have their hearts set on a particular degree course and maybe don't have the required points scores, I suggest looking at other tertiary institutions that may have an easier way in.

Also, be on the lookout for the various "back-door" routes into your chosen course of study. For those who haven't made it into medicine or veterinary science, consider starting a BSc with chemistry, physics, mathematics, and zoology as first-year courses. Keep re-applying each year as you complete the year, and you may get in. I know some students who have completed a BSc and then go on to start first-year medicine, and others who loved their course of study so much, they abandoned the idea of medicine and ended up going into microbiology, biochemistry, and genetics.

I don't believe that any year of study at tertiary level can be considered a waste. It's fine to change direction as you continue to grow and mature to find your true calling. One of my closest friends at university was a retired professor of endocrinology who studies undergraduate botany with me. After a long and successful career as a doctor, he decided to come back to university to study fynbos biology which had always been his first love.

• Andrew Baker is the headmaster of King David High School Victory Park.



# Pandemic and load shedding make achievements even greater

SHELLEY GLASER

The class of 2022 faced the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown, online learning, and Eskom's load shedding, but it has triumphed, making students more resilient.

Though matrics had no choice but to adapt and become resilient – valuable life skills making some students arguably more focused – there were other less favourable effects. In 2022, power cuts increased 200%. November, according to Eskom, was the worst month for electricity outages that year. Matric examinations started on 31 October 2022.

COVID-19 influenced matrics' learning and social and developmental lives from as far back as two years' prior. These years are considered to be the building blocks and senior foundation phase of the matric year. Dr Elizabeth Leaver, the head of the English department and further studies at King David High School Victory Park (KDVP), said students were more anxious than previous years as "they were aware that the interruptions created in their Grade 10 and

11 years would pejoratively impact their matric year".

Hayley Kobrin, the head of mathematical literacy at KDVP, said that when students were online in 2020, they missed a lot of work "as they didn't take this time as seriously as if they were learning in-person".

She believes the students of 2022 – in Grade 10 at the time – weren't mature enough to take the lessons online seriously. As a result, they lost focus and those with learning barriers were even more susceptible to the pressure created by the pandemic. The basic education department says the class of 2022 has been most negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Clinical psychologist Ruth Ancer says the COVID-19 pandemic increased the mental-health issues related to depressive disorders as well as stress and anxiety levels. Kobrin concurs, saying anxiety levels "seemed to be worse than usual". According to Ancer, social interaction was compromised during the pandemic and has resulted in a developmental gap in some students in the matrics of 2022.

Though Kobrin also maintains that students have been socially compromised, Leaver doesn't see any evidence of it.

Caryn Horowitz, Yeshiva Girls High School psychologist, who also runs a private practice for adolescents and adults, says that "given the fact that matric is as stressful as it is, the predictable unpredictability of load shedding just added to it". Leaver also

Continued on page 22>>



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# So much for hype – slow and steady wins the race



OPINION LORRAINE SRAGE

In a world where people seem to publish the ins and outs of their entire lives on social media, the question has been raised as to whether in this day and age it’s still appropriate to have the ending of one’s schooling resting on one single exam with a subject portfolio. We seem to know what people ate for dinner, where they are on holiday, that they are stuck in traffic, that they are feeling unwell, that they got a raise, promotion, or got fired, and whether they have a particular song stuck in their head.

So, too, with matric, the hype around this year seems to be on everyone’s minds. Though it’s a year like any other, with the same demands and expectations, it’s a year that opens doors and therefore has the energy of a transitional phase where doors seem to be slowly closing on their childhood and doors creeping open into the adult world of responsibility, driving, and legal capacity.

The hype is necessary as there’s a place for excellence and the opportunities that emerge when results are exceptional. Today, students need to compete for places at university, particularly if they have dreams of studying abroad. However, this doesn’t detract from other students who are reaching their potential and fulfilling their dreams in possible non-academic spheres.

The key is consistency. Slow and steady wins the race. Living a balanced lifestyle, sticking to deadlines, and making the most of all opportunities offered leads to a fulfilling year that’s not solely academically focused. If work is done consistently and one’s lifestyle is one of health and balance, then it seems that the hype will fall away in favour of realistic dreams and attainable outcomes.

The choice in approach would be whether to throw oneself solely into academic pursuits or to have a well-rounded end-of-school year where there is involvement in academics, sport, and cultural activities while maintaining a social life and religious and spiritual balance.

If one sacrifices all of these things to focus on academics, the dangers are that one will emerge from the matric year as one dimensional, possibly with an outstanding set of marks, but at what cost? Would it take years after school to regain one’s footing socially, physically, and spiritually.

In a world where mental health issues have emerged particularly in the adolescent age group in a population of

those already searching for identity, the threat of anxiety about the year ahead or depression about feeling a failure is very real.

We want our pupils to be healthy on every level during the year, and if that involves sacrificing 30 minutes of algebraic equations to go to gym for a natural endorphin high, this isn’t just okay, but encouraged. The cost of mental health isn’t the price we should be paying for a National Senior Certificate qualification. We understand the need to feel a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and belonging in order to be a functional human being.

In encouraging wellness, the hype around matric also gives the school an opportunity to motivate the younger grades for academic excellence and a balanced approach to school where the matrices are leaders not only in their age and educational standing but also as role models in teams, clubs, and committees.

We advocate the reaching of potential. Potential is nothing without the hard work, commitment, and dedication needed to fulfil all that you are destined for.

So, too, while we may see Ronaldo’s new car on social media or Taylor Swift’s exotic holiday destination, the hype around matric will show those who shine with 10 distinctions as well as those who get a university exemption with one distinction. All are as precious.

If role models are sports stars or rock stars, so too should it be our pupils who, through everyday stress, anxiety, busy schedules, and the general craziness of life, reach their potential and shoot the lights out.

Excellence doesn’t mean perfection.



Excellence is the confident pursuit of reaching goals and being able to celebrate individual achievements. And those achievements are the opening of doors and the entry into the world with a bright future as proud South Africans and proud Jews.

• Lorraine Srage is the principal of King David High School Linksfield.

# Writing matric – a rite of passage for parents



OPINION MARC FALCONER

For Fay Weldon, the “Greatest advantage of not having children is that one can go on believing that you are a nice person. Once you do have children, you realise how wars start.” I would argue that this is just as true for parents going through the trials of the matric year. Most families seem well adjusted and functional until the stress of the matric year comes along, the hitherto unnoticed fault lines are opened, and the very foundations of the world quiver.

I’m almost sure it was the mothers of the matric dance committee who, in a meeting to plan various fundraising events, were unanimous when a date, three days before prelims, was proposed, chorusing, “No, we’re writing exams that week.”

Matric exams may well be an ordeal and a rite of passage for school-leaving teenagers, but it’s also an ordeal for the whole family to a greater or lesser extent. Holiday arrangements, family gatherings, even weddings, Bar/Batmitzvahs are planned around them, and the exam timetable becomes a tyrannical voice, out-shouting the rest of the family, sometimes even louder than their illnesses, financial ruin, or potential psychological collapse.

The narrative of the pre-eminent importance of the matric exams is one to which we all contribute: that success depends on good matric results, even though the proof of this not being the case is overwhelmingly clear and parents, themselves, may sometimes embody evidence of it not being the case. More to the point, if ever matriculants needed a fixed point in the ever-widening gyre and the swirling maelstrom of chaos, it’s during their matric year. Matriculants don’t need more hysteria, they need calm, sane, adult parents to keep things in perspective and to keep things from falling apart.

To add some insult to the examination injury, the South African matriculation system, like almost all high-

stakes examinations, is a deeply flawed system for measuring learning and an even worse system for predicting tertiary – or any future – success. But, like the obviously flawed democracy, it’s the least flawed system we have available. We have known this forever. Even in the 1830s, Charles Cotton pointed out that exams can be formidable, even to be best prepared. Even the greatest fool can ask questions that the wisest man may not be able to answer (although this may be overrating the sophistication of the matric exam questions). Like the 11+ exams and the GCSEs in the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent, the more core skills testing exams such as the SATS or the Israeli psychometric tests, these can be stressful periods in a family’s life, however one slices it.

Matric is, however, not just a broken system that needs to be wisely and maturely mediated, it’s a system which has the potential to break people. School halls boast boards with increasingly long lists of gilded names of matriculation triumph. But in some alternative universe, there are hidden boards of matric casualties written in crimson – those who have been crushed and wounded by the matriculation machinery. Most families come out with, perhaps, a slightly squashed digit, but some get entirely

sucked into the workings and are properly mauled. And it’s not necessary.

Extra lessons, teachers, educational consultants, facilitators, readers, scribes, planners, prompters, and community invigilators, not to mention the battalions of psychometrists, psychologists, and suppliers of exam-accommodation material have created an entire para-educational industry off the back of desperate pupils and parents. This applies just as much to the purveyors of chemical calming medication (for parents and their children), anti-depression, concentration, anti-anxiety, sleeping, or energy tonics. It’s no exaggeration to say that considerably more than half of any privileged school’s cohort of pupils use all, some or one of these artificial supports to deal with the challenge.

The sobering truth is that many of these supports aren’t really necessary. Almost every head of any academically high achieving school would confirm that the most successful pupils are those who remain balanced in their matric year – the pupils who remain involved in extracurricular school programmes such as sport, community outreach, debating, plays, musical performances, and also have a healthy sporting and social life.

The matric year, like making progress on a bicycle, calls for balance. To mix metaphors somewhat, pupils who relentlessly and unrelievedly hack away at their tasks without taking time to sharpen their tools aren’t just being ineffective, they are exhausting themselves and making their mothers fret at the sight of their

febrile, drawn, pale, and anxious faces.

To somewhat adapt what Mark Twain had to say: “Adam and Eve had many advantages, but the principal one was that they escaped teething ... and matric.” All this turbulence and anxiety can sometimes turn nasty. Many well-adjusted, functional, and even congenial families suddenly realise how tenuous their family agreeableness is when the matric exams come along and the universe explodes.

To come back to Fay Weldon’s idea: there’s an advantage – as a

parent – of having a matriculant. With the benefit of age, wisdom, and balance we can do better for our children (and ourselves) than we might have done in years past. We have the perfect vision of hindsight. This time, the mothers of the matric dance committee have the opportunity not just to write matric – a dull and futile undertaking – but to rewrite it and give their children the benefits of their experience; they are in a position to provide adult guidance, sane support, and balanced advice for their fantod children, to draw them back from the precipice of the Malebolge on which they teeter, and with humour and an adult sense of perspective, guide them to make this a proper learning experience. David Brown may well have been talking about matric specifically when he said that matric “can age an adult faster than ten years in prison. Parents can have the same effect on their children.” Thankfully, the opposite is just as true.

• Marc Falconer is a previous headmaster of King David Linksfield and more lately, Herzlia High School in Cape Town. He is on sabbatical undertaking a PhD on the importance of literacy in education.





THE HERZLIA HIGH SCHOOL HALL



INVOLVED.  
INSPIRING.  
EMPOWERING.

## MAZALTOV TO THE CLASS OF 2022

83

HERZLIA MATRIC  
CLASS OF 2022 PUPILS

305

INDIVIDUAL SUBJECT  
DISTINCTIONS

3.7

AVERAGE SUBJECT  
DISTINCTIONS PER PUPIL

[www.herzlia.com](http://www.herzlia.com)





# HERZLIA HIGH SCHOOL



Jamie Abrahams



Sophia Abrahamson



Liam Amsdorf



Benjamin Anstey



Nicholas Arelisky



Adi Ayache



Tatum Benatar



Sabrina Brivik



Rachel Castle



Aidan Cohen



Jacob Cohen



Caitlin Cohn



Jared Daitsh



Laila Dave



Joshua Davies



Sebastian Dean-Wales



Olivia Diamond



Gabriella Donninger



Gabriel Dubb



Ella Fanaroff



Alexia Feurig



Athlene Finck



Rio Fisher



Lilla Fleischmann



Elle Franck



Benjamin Franco



Katya Golan



Jayden Goronovsky



Darren Greenspan



Tayla Harcombe



Hannah Jantjies



Sabina Kerton



Ethan Kirstein



Jesse Klaff



Lauren Klein



Stella-Dee Kousouros



Shelly Kramarz



Ruby Kurgan



Yonatan Kuti-Alexander



Talia L'etang



Jacob Levitan



Aaron Levy





Adam Marcow



Jamie McNally



Ilan Meltz



Ella Miller



Timothy Moore



Sinomhlobo Nomkonwana



Danny Olyn



Michaela Perkel



Yael Robins Kallmann



Ethan Sack



Aaron Schwartz



Jonah Schwartz



Jake Segal



Adam Selikowitz



Jaimi Shmaryahu



Jenna Shorkend



Alexandra Showell



Nechama Shulman



Brett Shulman



Mila Smith



Lily Stein



Liam Stewart



Micah Tanchel



Talia Varkel



Ben Vogelman



Gideon Weiss



Luca Williams



# CLASS OF 2022

## TOP ACHIEVERS

### FAST FACTS:

- 83 Herzlia 2022 Matric Class
- 3.7 Average Subject Distinctions per Candidate
- 305 Individual Subject distinctions
- 99% Bachelor Degree Pass Rate
- 100% Pass for Educational Support Candidates
- 77% Matric Class Aggregate
- 13 Pupils with 7 distinctions
- 16 Pupils with 6 distinctions
- 8 Pupils with 5 distinctions
- 9 Pupils with 4 distinctions

### QUICK STATS:

- 4/5 Accounting & Music Pupils Achieved Distinctions
- 14/17 Economics Pupils Achieved Distinctions with 83% Average
- 21/30 Dramatic Arts Pupils Achieved Distinctions with 81% Average
- 29/38 History Pupils Achieved Distinctions with 83% Average

### 7 DISTINCTIONS

Castle, Rachel  
Dave, Laila  
Diamond, Olivia  
Donninger, Gabriella  
Fanaroff, Ella  
Fleischmann, Lilla  
Franck, Elle  
Kurgan, Ruby  
Perkel, Michaela  
Selikowitz, Adam  
Varkel, Talia  
Weiss, Gideon

### 6 DISTINCTIONS

Abrahamson, Sophia  
Anstey, Benjamin  
Ayache, Adi  
Brivik, Sabrina  
Cohen, Jacob  
Cohn, Caitlin  
Daitsh, Jared

### 6 DISTINCTIONS cont.

Davies, Joshua  
Feurig, Alexia  
Franco, Benjamin  
Golan, Katya  
Kerton, Sabina  
Kramarz, Shelly  
Robins Kallmann, Yael  
Smith, Mila  
Vogelman, Ben

### 5 DISTINCTIONS

Dubb, Gabriel  
Kirstein, Ethan  
Marcow, Adam  
McNally, Jamie  
Shulman, Brett  
Stein, Lily  
Tanchel, Micah

*\* Herzlia respects pupils' choice whether to be featured.  
Distinctions are listed in alphabetic surname order.*



# Is there a benefit to online learning?

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Online educational platforms and resources have made teaching and learning no longer purely classroom based. But just how are students and schools navigating the opportunities this brings? Though online innovation has long offered an extension to traditional teaching and learning, there's no doubt that the move to blended learning was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, classroom learning is complemented by rapidly evolving online tools, inevitably changing the face of education. Rabbi Ricky Seeff, the general director of the South African Board of Jewish Education, believes that the potential this shift offers is one schools should maximise. "Post the pandemic, King David gave serious thought to how we could leverage the now pervasive online world to improve our students' learning," he says. "We created our online platform, KDX, to assist students who needed help and extend those who needed

extension through what we called "Learning Beyond the Classroom". KDX has resources for online clinics, masterclasses, past papers, and video tutorials." In a pilot phase, this platform is for high school students only but there are plans to include the primary schools and to offer a parent platform, providing information and guidance, says Seeff. Yet, no matter how much they may embrace a blended learning approach, for King David schools, face-to-face learning remains the

extension online." Some students respond better to an online learning environment. While they may attend traditional schools, they're using the internet to find ways to understand concepts they may not grasp in class. This is the case for David Hurwitz\*, currently a matric student at King David High School Victory Park, who last year used YouTube to supplement his exam preparation. "I'd been a little irresponsible with focusing and taking notes in maths class," he admits. "I was quite far behind where I needed to be." He acknowledges that he could have asked his teacher for more input, but Hurwitz is shy, and preferred to turn to YouTube, where he searched for videos on the sections he missed. "I found a really good YouTube channel which had videos from gold standard when it comes to education. "This isn't just from an information-transfer perspective, but from a holistic emotional and social perspective," says Seeff. "Online should always be supplementary and not primary. KDX is the balance: face-to-face learning supplemented by support and maths teachers who helped me a lot," he says. Though he says you can never be 100% sure that you have found something reputable on the internet, he'd learned enough in class to know that the channel had the right information. "A lot of what I learned

there encapsulated even more than I needed to know for the syllabus. They explained it very well. I also find it very easy to learn through videos, it's all just there, and you can rewind if you need to." Hurwitz, a high achiever, particularly excelled in the sections he'd learned online. "If I was at school before the age of YouTube and all this information online, I honestly don't know what I would have done," he says. "It's great to have this option as well." Like King David, Yeshiva College is working to incorporate online resources into its teaching methodologies, says Rob Long, the school's director of academics. "Teachers give students websites to consult just as in the past we used to give the kids readings so we would encourage that extra work," Long says. "We also use Google Classroom, where teachers post links and resources. We need to embrace the technology and teach children how to use it responsibly." There may be different opinions espoused online on a particular subject like history, for example, and here students are taught to think critically. "The whole idea of reliability is taught in class," says Long. How do you find reliable sources and how do you determine if a source is credible or not? That's a critical skill for our children right now." Further embracing technology, Yeshiva has this year teamed up with Evolve Online School to offer registered students additional subjects online. "We've become what we call a mixed-provider school," Long says. "Children

come to school and do face-to-face learning with their teachers but during certain periods they're potentially on this online learning platform doing different subjects. For example, when most of the class goes into the history classroom, a few will do geography online from our computers with external Evolve teachers." Another issue when it comes to using online resources, is the risk that kids will use tools like Thug Notes – an American educational web series that summarises and analyses various literary works in a funny way – to avoid actually reading the networks. It's all about instilling a culture of self-discipline, says Long in response to such challenges, something the school encourages as much as possible. These risks aren't new, says Mark Helfrich, the head of curriculum at United Herzlia Schools. "More than 40 years ago, even when I was in matric, pupils were avoiding reading novels like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by watching the movie instead, so already technology was being used!" "Technology needs to be incorporated cleverly by teachers," he says. "One needs to combine class reading with homework reading, and set tasks which require pupils to use their newfound knowledge to create something rather than merely regurgitate information. "The use of online resources and tools is key to this approach to supplement what's learned in class. The teacher is the designer of learning materials, but in the classroom becomes a mediator of learning and no longer a 'sage on the stage.'" \*Name has been changed



## My IB journey has made an indelible mark on my life

This is an excerpt of Hanna Resnick's International Baccalaureate (IB) Valedictory Speech, December 2022:

“I moved to Redhill in the middle of Grade 9, feeling as if I had a pretty good grasp on the world. Three and a half years later, as I'm about to graduate, I can safely say that I know absolutely nothing. Now, that might not be what parents want to hear after their children have just received 12 years of expensive education, but allow me a minute to explain. Before I came to Redhill, I had never questioned the way I was taught and the things I was told to believe. However, my learning experience over the past few years has progressed past the point of just learning facts. I have learned how to think and discover things for myself. And the more I have learned, the more my world has expanded. And as it expands, I realise just how much there is that I don't know. As Plato once said, "I'm the wisest man alive for I know one thing, and that's that I know nothing." Redhill is one of only three schools in the country that offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, and the only school that offers students the option



Hanna Resnick

of graduating with either an IEB (Independent Examination Board) or IB qualification. It's not lost on me what a privilege it is to be given the opportunity to choose between these two options. Not only has my journey through the IB programme made an indelible mark on my life and helped shape who I am, but our IB class of 2022 has also become a tightly woven cohort over the past two years. You know that feeling when you go to the theatre and watch a show, you leave feeling as if some part of you has been changed irrevocably, and then you realise that that unique experience was shared with the rest of the house? That's how I feel about these past two years. Wherever our IB class ends up, we'll always have that shared experience tying us together. I'd like to thank all our teachers for their dedication in getting us through this rigorous, internationally recognised programme. Your strength and kindness together with your ability help us challenge ourselves even further is appreciated more than you know. To my fellow matrics of 2022 around the country, embrace the fact that you have so much left to learn and so much space and time to grow. To quote Taylor Swift: "Scary news is: you're on your own now. Cool news is: you're on your own now."

## A space to realise individual potential

Elchonon always stood out for his kindness, empathy, tolerance, and looking for the best in others. At high school, he wanted a diverse, accepting environment in which he would be supported academically and learn about himself and the world. His focus has never been on marks, but on learning, and his love of learning has always been apparent. Redhill's teachers' professionalism, excellence, and continued innovation in education was a major factor in his choice of school and resulting success. • Elchonon found a safe space at Redhill where he was able to reach his full potential in his own time; • He has always been an enthusiastic, industrious student. He identified personal academic goals, and made these clear to his teachers. This facilitated a healthy collaboration that paved the way for success in achieving many of his targets; • In addition, Elchonon pursued his studies with quiet and steadfast resolution. He worked steadily at identifying and addressing areas of personal difficulty. In this regard, he incrementally produced noticeable improvements; and • Elchonon is to be commended on his resilience. Each assessment presented an

opportunity to advance, to fail forward, and to take each challenge in his stride. Elchonon has always said that Redhill, a secular co-ed school, is a respectful environment where every person is appreciated for who they are with no pressure to conform to a specific group or way of life. He has confidently worn a yarmulke and tzitzis every day of his high school career, kept Shabbat and kosher, and has always felt accepted and appreciated for who he is and what he can contribute. Elchonon matriculated from Redhill with his love of learning intact, innate confidence in himself, the skills and a thirst to develop himself and the community further, and the ability to pursue any career of his dreams.



Elchonon Gerson





# Congratulations



## Class of 2022



» **100%**  
university entrance  
(Bachelor Degree pass)

» **42%**  
of students  
received  
an A average

» **83%**  
of students  
received a B average  
or above

» **17%**  
of students received  
a full house  
(7 or more distinctions)

» **84%**  
of students  
received at least  
one distinction

» **61%**  
of students received  
a distinction  
in Mathematics

» **83%**  
of students received  
a distinction in  
Information Technology

### International Baccalaureate (IB) Results

The group achieved a 100% Diploma pass. Over a third of our students scored 36 points out of a possible 45 which is above the world average and the benchmark result for access to some of the most prestigious universities.

## Mazel Tov

to the following Jewish students on their outstanding results.



**HANNA  
RESNICK**  
International  
Baccalaureate  
Diploma



**Yael  
BLASS**  
8 Distinctions  
Top 1% English  
Home Language,  
Life Orientation  
& Life Sciences



**LILY  
SEGAL**  
7 Distinctions



**JOSHUA  
ORELOWITZ**  
6 Distinctions



**LIORA  
CAPLAN**  
5 Distinctions



**CANEN  
RAIZ**  
5 Distinctions



**MIKAH  
SMITH**  
5 Distinctions



**NATHAN  
WILLIAMS**  
5 Distinctions



**ASHLEY  
HENEGAN**  
4 Distinctions



**ELCHONON  
GERSON**  
2 Distinctions



**JARED  
ABRAHAMS**  
1 Distinction



**JONATHAN  
LITHGOW**

**OPEN DAY**

for **Grade 8** » **4**  
STUDENTS OF **2024!**

SATURDAY

**4**

FEBRUARY

09:00 – 13:00

» 20 Summit Rd | Morningside | Sandton » admissions@redhill.co.za | www.redhill.co.za



# “He who laughs last” – the outsiders who aced it

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Gina Shankman was always afraid she would never matriculate, and Ilan Hodes was ridiculed at school, but they both overcame these setbacks at King David High School Linksfield (KDHSL) to matriculate last year.

“King David does have a high standard, a 100% pass rate, and I wasn’t the strongest kid academically,” Shankman says, describing her fears. “I would have to work a lot harder than others.”

Going into matric, Shankman felt as if there was no escape. “It was the last push. I literally gave those last few months of school my all. I gave all my free time to extra lessons, past papers, and so on.” She was motivated to prove wrong everyone who had ever doubted her.

Shankman struggled with maths in particular in primary school. “I constantly heard, ‘When are you going to get this right, yada yada.’ It stuck with me until matric, so not only was I struggling to keep on top of my grades, I also had to keep fighting those voices in the background. That was a whole other battle on its own.

“Primary school is a tough time because that’s when things start to sink in. As I grew up, I started to push aside the comments, and would stand up for myself.”

During his primary school days, Hodes was ridiculed before moving to Bellavista ahead of Grade 6. “There were some students who called me ‘retarded and stupid’, and there was constant judgement for going to a remedial school,” he recalls. “If only they knew the wonders that Bellavista has done, as it served as my platform for the rest of my high school career.”

He says moving to KDHSL ahead of Grade 9 “was the best move I could have made”. Not only did he matriculate last year with

four distinctions, “At Linksfield, I played soccer and basketball, did debating for a little while, and was awarded two trophies at the valedictory ceremony last year.”

The first trophy was for an “exemplary improvement in attitude towards school life”.

Hodes says his attitude towards school improved in Grade 10 when he had time to reflect during the COVID-19 pandemic. “I realised that there needed to be a change

matriculate,” Shankman says, adding that Mrs Helene Parfett was always there for her.

Shankman says matric challenged her academically, mentally, and socially.

“I missed out on the social part. It was a year of big milestones such as 18th birthday parties.” Shankman says, pointing out that she was one of the handful of matrics in her grade not invited to these parties because she didn’t conform to the typical King Davidian.

“I was different, and I’m okay with that. That’s why I took a gap year – to find people like me. A lot of people didn’t get my humour. They didn’t really understand my style. It resulted in them not wanting to get to know me better. King David is cliquey, but it’s made me who I am today. You must go with people who

[understand] your vibe.

“I used the time to work harder. I built a mindset that matric was the last stretch and then I would be free to meet people more like myself,” she says, pointing out that it helped to make her more strong willed.

Shankman says having her family by her side was the best support system she could have asked for, while horse riding allowed her to disconnect from reality. “It calmed me down,” says this competitive horse rider who represented KDHSL in the South African National Equestrian Schools Association and placed second in a national competition.

This year, Shankman is taking a gap year in Tel Aviv, and doing an internship with a Magen David Adom ambulance service, while Hodes will either be going to the University of Cape Town or Reichman University in Herzliya.

Hodes’ advice to students who struggle or don’t enjoy school is, “You can do anything if you set your mind to it. Even if you are ridiculed along the way, as I was, remember, ‘He who laughs last, laughs longest.’”



Gina Shankman



Ilan Hodes

in my attitude and that I needed to take school seriously if I wanted to be successful in life. I was lucky enough to have a great support system which unconditionally supported and believed in me – my parents, my siblings, and most importantly, my tutor, Simone Judin. I could never have done it without them.”

The other trophy he bagged was for “exceptional progress in English”. His average in the subject improved from 28% at the end of Grade 8 to 70% in prelims last year.

He puts it down to his parents “pushing me to work on it regularly. Mr [Craig] Adamson, my Grade 9 English teacher, instantaneously had a positive impact on me and became one of my role models. Additionally, I was privileged to have one of the best English teachers, Mrs [Justine] Sandler. She built on the foundation that Mr Adamson had put in place.”

Hodes and Shankman thank KDHSL Principal Lorraine Srage for her support. “Mrs Srage always knew I was going to

# It’s tough, so don’t forget take some time off

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Torah Academy Girls High School matriculant Rachaeli Hurwitz, who got five distinctions in matric last year, says COVID-19 made being a student leader difficult, especially at the beginning of her Grade 11 year in 2021.

“We didn’t have physical school at all,” she says. “We were still on Zoom, but we managed to organise programmes. For Shavuot, we made cheesecake on Zoom.” In another Zoom programme, a makeup artist taught everyone how to apply makeup correctly.

“Then, we had the issue of Shabbaton. We were so sad about missing Shabbaton in 2020, we had to do something about it! Within a week, we had a three-day programme. We just kept it open-air and COVID-19 safe. We had a hike on the first day and a seudah shlishit and concert on the Shabbos. On the Sunday, we had a motivational speaker, a colour run, and a braai. It was amazing.”



Rachaeli Hurwitz

Hurwitz got As for most of her subjects since Grade 6, even getting a badge for an overall mark of 80%, and going through to the second round of every maths Olympiad she participated in.

“It turns out they weren’t lying when they said matric is hard,” she says. “But I tried to maintain my marks. For one assignment in CAT [computer applications technology], I got 99% for the practical assessment task. I was proud. I spent hours of work on it.”

She also enjoyed the other two subjects

she chose – business studies and physical science.

Hurwitz says that in spite of the huge workload, she tried to take part in as many of the school’s programmes as possible. “What’s been amazing is having rabbis and rebbetzins come talk to a small group of girls every Wednesday night.”

People strike the right note when they call Torah Academy “the school of unity”, Hurwitz says. “In matric, I formed close connections with a lot of those in the younger grades. It’s quite sad because I didn’t realise I wanted to be friends with the younger grades until matric, when it was too late.”

Hurwitz says high school has always been a rollercoaster of emotions – “understanding new, vast amounts of information, discovering passions, and finding ways to cope with immense pressure. This was only heightened with the threat of COVID-19. There were undoubtedly educational downfalls to the e-learning era we went through, but the greatest loss was time spent with friends.

“In spite of the increased workload, matric was a lot more bearable because I was surrounded by friends and the entire school. Once again, I was able to meet a friend for coffee, I could join a gathering of girls from school without worry, and I could see my teachers face to face, without masks and with a smile. It’s funny how much I missed the teachers saying, ‘Please stop talking’, after so long hearing them repeatedly asking us to interact with them on Zoom.”

Hurwitz advises this year’s matrics to relax from time to time. “As a self-diagnosed OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder] overachiever, I can say that after writing four sets of exams in a year, you’ll undoubtedly experience burnout. The only way around it is to have some biological relation to Superman, or to choose to take some time off and enjoy it guilt-free.”

Hurwitz plans to go to seminary in Israel this year. “The programme starts only in September, in accordance with the northern hemisphere. To fill the time, I hope to work with a school to create informal activities and permeate Judaism into the environment.”

# Double effort, double support – the joy of being a twin

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Being a twin is like being born with your number one fan. So say King David High School Victory Park’s two pairs of twins who collected a combined total of 15 distinctions in matric last year.

Sarah Lustig says having Jesse as her twin made studying more bearable and even a little bit fun at times, while Liora Scoop and her twin, Ariella, would bounce ideas off one another on the way to exams and quiz each other in the car.

“Liora is my confidante and source of support,” Ariella says. “She’s able to add humour and light to situations which seem bleak, and she motivated me during the year. I’m so grateful to have her as my twin sister. We complement each other in many ways: I like being outdoors and Liora is more of a homebody.”

Jesse, on the other hand, says he and Sarah have different personalities, but they have a solid relationship and are good friends. “Overall, I had a great school experience having a twin,” he says. “The only subject we both chose was history, and obviously, because we’re a boy-girl twin, our interests are different.”

They did study together, with Sarah mainly helping Jesse with Afrikaans. “I can definitely give myself credit for helping him pass the subject,” says Sarah, who achieved academic full colours.

Ariella, who excelled in academics and public speaking and served as chief whip in the executive of the Student Representative Council (SRC) from 2021 to 2022, says studying was probably the most daunting part of matric for her. “Though I preferred to

study on my own, Liora was there to share notes with me and discuss topics when I needed support. I was so lucky to have someone who knew what I was going through and who was there to assist me when it all felt too much. We would sit together while pulling all-nighters in order to finish tasks. When I felt stuck or unmotivated, I would walk the six steps to Liora’s room, and she would help me to regain perspective. We would sit together in the Sukkah during Sukkot and learn quotes for essays and biology diagrams.”



Jesse and Sarah Lustig

Liora and Ariella took similar subjects for matric, but they enjoyed different aspects of the same subject. “For example, I loved learning about global and South African history, while Liora preferred investigating the role of historical events in modern life,” Ariella says. “During exams, our kitchen was filled with a variety of baked goods. Liora doesn’t enjoy baking or cooking and instead prefers the hobby of testing my creations.”

Says Liora, “Having Ariella with me definitely eased the workload. Often I would ask Ariella for help in remembering history topics and/or English essay structure.

“In terms of motivation, Ariella was a pillar of strength for me during matric. She would walk past my room and encourage me to start studying. She sometimes even made smoothies and reminded me to eat and drink when I was immersed in my books.

“Yet, when push came to shove, we had someone to confess our anxieties to. We had a person who would be completely honest and listen to the small things while being able to understand that it was urgent.”

Sarah and Liora agree that having a twin reduced the sense of loneliness in matric. “Being a twin makes us very close and we’re truly such great friends, so it was nice not having to go through matric without Jesse,” Sarah says.

“If I was struggling with the isolation of being in my room for extended periods of time, Ariella would be a breath of fresh air floating around the house, playing music and often asking if I would like to swim or go on walks,” Liora says. “She grounded me, and we found beauty in being together when we could.”

Liora once had a teacher who without fail would put Ariella’s mark on her report.

“However, teachers are human, and I have respect for the those who admit they’re having a hard time telling us apart,” Liora says.

Sarah felt that the teachers accepted her and Jesse for who they were. “Importantly, Jesse and I have never placed ourselves in competition with each other. We understand that we’re good at different things, and we’re entirely different individuals with our own identity.”

Liora has been recognised for her poetry in international publications and respected journals, and she participated in the Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition.

In Grade 11 and matric, she was captain of the Poetry Slam and Writing Club, organising sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, and conducting a workshop at the 2021 Arts and Culture Festival. She also served as a co-head of Judaica on the SRC, and performed at the Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts (FEDA) and the Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

“Being a twin has so many advantages, even extending to experiences of telepathic communication [a story on its own]. Matric pushed me to embrace the fact that I had someone who knew me as an individual,” she says. “I took for granted the privilege of being a twin until I needed to have a twin. When I was completely isolated from others, I had someone to explain to me that I had the ability to overcome what was really blocking my thought processes.

“I have a sister and a friend, but it goes beyond identical DNA. Ariella is my person.”



Ariella Scoop



Liora Scoop



# Why high school students should participate in the arts



OPINION

JOSEPH GERASSI

When talking about the importance of the arts in schools, there's very little argument as to its value. The majority of teachers and parents will readily support the documented benefits of improved creativity, confidence, problem-solving, social skills, thinking outside the box, and engaging with their world in a different way.

Countless studies have shown that when students routinely participate in the arts as part of their school day, they are twice as likely to graduate, and three times more likely to win attendance and academic awards. Playing a musical instrument has been directly linked to higher academic results in numeracy; and visual arts has been shown to have significant impact on literacy. Why? Because research into brain development demonstrates how the arts develop neural systems that produce untold benefits, ranging from improvements in maths, science, and languages to increased emotional stability, resilience, and collaborative skills.

The question is, with the overwhelming research in support of the arts, why then do music, drama, and visual arts often have a comparatively poor rap at high school, often being seen as a "nice-to-have", the poor cousin of sport, and mostly aimed at non-academic or non-sporty students.

Where's the drop-off? Do the benefits of the arts reach capacity in junior school, with very little additional value being added in older grades? Is the research not as clear as to the benefits in high school? Is there any value whatsoever in Grade 12 students participating in art, drama, or music in a year

that's already filled with anxiety?

In my opinion, these critical high school years are the ideal opportunity for students to embrace all the arts have to offer as a powerful tool to help them navigate the many challenges they face on a daily basis. Over and above the expected hormonal shifts, peer pressure, struggles to develop a strong sense of self, self-esteem, and body issues, social anxiety, and academic stress, our students often experience a compulsive reliance on (and sometimes even addiction to) technology and social media.

There's no doubt that our teenagers are facing levels of anxiety and depression on an unprecedented scale, made even more severe by their experience of the recent global pandemic. Coupled with parents' high expectations of their children's achievement – though almost always with the very best intentions – the result is increased numbers of highly strung, anxious children or those burning out and displaying symptoms of depression.

It's for this reason that I believe the arts to be the unsung hero – a soft place to land, a powerful creative outlet, a unique opportunity to be challenged in a different manner, and a vehicle for self-expression

providing an emotional outlet for any pent-up or suppressed emotions. Many teenagers also lack the skills to communicate their feelings effectively while also fearing judgement from others, which is where the arts can step in to provide a subtle yet powerful platform for self-exploration and expression.

For example, imagine a Grade 12 student who is seething with anger, frustration, and resentment. Were they to stand in the middle of the school quad and scream in rage or punch a wall, they would most likely be judged as having "issues" and, in some cases, even be disciplined for it. Now imagine that same student spending an hour playing the drums, creating an art piece in which they pour all their anger into their painting, or choosing a drama monologue that aligns with their anger and provides an outlet for it. Two very different outcomes, with the latter being a far more positive one.

One might argue that the same student could also play sport or head to the gym to achieve the same result. I'm in full agreement – any form of positive outlet is highly encouraged, particularly in this age group. My point is that it's the silent, internalised anxiety, depression, and unexpressed rage that's concerning, and the arts is often an under-utilised vehicle for students who could benefit from learning to process their emotions and develop deeper resilience.

At Redhill School, we have just witnessed the important role that the arts has played in our Class of 2022 results. Some of our top achievers were also involved in the arts in their Grade 11 and 12 year – playing lead roles in major productions, directing house plays, being an integral part of our school orchestra, working in our student arts and culture committee, joining the Redhill Arts Festival, and so much more. In fact, our Dux scholar, Charlotte Snyckers who achieved a 93% average and eight distinctions, played the lead role in the school's production of *Agamemnon* in 2022, and was nominated for Best Actor in a Female Lead Role in the FEDA (Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts) finals.

It doesn't stop there. In this technological age, when information and content is the domain of computers, society places more importance on people with human abilities that cannot be mechanised. A growing number of workplaces are now looking for graduates who understand problems, make

plausible arguments, have strong people skills, demonstrate creativity, and who are problem solvers who think outside the box. These are all skills that participation in the arts provides.

I would be remiss in not pointing out the value that students offer their local and greater community when producing an artwork or performing a drama or musical piece, and the fulfilment and satisfaction that comes from the resulting enjoyment.

At the end of the day, it's also about the enjoyment and fulfilment that comes from taking part in drama, music, and visual arts. If your child finds something they love doing, emerges from that lesson, rehearsal, or session as a better person, manages to de-stress and feel a sense of freedom that comes from that wonderful creative space, then why not let them do it? It's not just about how it benefits their brain development or job prospects, but also about having a much-needed timeout that gives them the space to recharge their batteries.

Perhaps Tom Horne, the state superintendent of public instruction in Arizona, says it best. "When you think about the purposes of education, there are three. We're preparing kids for jobs. We're preparing them to be citizens. And we're teaching them to be human beings who can enjoy deeper forms of beauty." The arts tick all three boxes.

• *Joseph Gerassi is the executive head of Redhill School and the Absa Jewish Achiever Professional Excellence Award 2019 winner.*



A scene from the production of *Cabaret* which was directed by Joseph Gerassi in April 2022

## Mazel Tov Matrics 2022

Where Academia and Neghama Unite



Batsheva Chalmers



Kayla Kay



Keren Lurie



Rachel Zagnoev



Ner-Elle Netzer



Hadassah Brill



Nathan Rosen



Shoham Korzia



Chaya Shamo



Davida Gerber



Michal Kruger



Rachel Hurwitz



Shayna Selbst



Noa Bome



Ariyeh Zetisky



Yitzi Glixman

2

Students received a full-house of 7 distinctions

80%

of all students received at least one distinction

25%

of students achieved an A average

72%

overall class average

94%

of students achieved C average or above



Our excellent Matric results and uncompromised commitment to Torah study and its values give a broader perspective of Excellence in Education.



# KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD

<div>TEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Demi Laffer: Accounting, Afrikaans, English*, Hebrew, IT, LO*, Maths, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Extended, Further Studies English. IEB Outstanding Achievements List.</div>	<div>TEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Yitzhak Waner: Accounting*, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew*, History*, IT*, LO, Maths*, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Extended. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>	<div>NINE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Eli Gerschlowitz: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences*, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>NINE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Joseph Joffe: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, IT, LO, Maths*, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>NINE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Damon Kavonic: Afrikaans, English, History*, IT, LO, Life Sciences, Maths*, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Extended. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>	<div>NINE DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Aiden Sack: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Liah Abrams: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew*, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Tenielle Israelsohn: Afrikaans*, English*, Hebrew*, LO, Life Sciences*, Maths, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>
<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Zara Jacobson: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Shiri Kaplan: Dramatic Arts, English*, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences, Visual Arts, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Alexa Katz: Afrikaans*, English*, Hebrew*, LO, Life Sciences*, Maths, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Extended. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Amy Lurie: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Standard. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Mordechai Lurie: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>EIGHT DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Zak Rachelson: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ryan Baleta: Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, Geography, History, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Jonathan Borowitz: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>
<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ben Cohen: Accounting, English, History, LO, Maths*, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Micaela Frame: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Anja Gluch: Afrikaans, English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Hannah Gnesin: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ben Goss: Accounting, English, IT, LO, Maths*, Physical Sciences*, Further Studies Maths Extended. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Erin Heilbrunn: Afrikaans, Dramatic Arts, English, Hebrew, History*, LO, Maths.</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Tyla Heilbrunn: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths. IEB Commendable Achievements List</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Dylan Heller: Accounting, Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>
<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Amy Hirsch: Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Kelli Hollander: Accounting*, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences*. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Michaela Kretzmer: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO*, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences. IEB Outstanding Achievements List</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Leora Melnick: Afrikaans, English*, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Daniel Morris: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Danielle Novick: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO*, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ariel Oudmayer: Afrikaans, English, IT, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Mia Peretz: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>
<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Michaela Rosen: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO*, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Rachel Sacks: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Judd Sandler: Accounting, Afrikaans, English, History, LO*, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Gabriella Sassen: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO*, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SEVEN DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Dylan Walt: Afrikaans, English, IT, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Daniel Appleton: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Caleigh Blumenow: Afrikaans, English, History, LO, Life Sciences, Maths Lit</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Josh Cohen: Accounting, Business Studies, English, Geography, LO, Maths</div>
<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Stella Gamsu: Accounting, English, Hebrew, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ilana Glazer: English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Yakira Hammerschlag: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Jessie Herring: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Jayden Herson: CAT, English, History*, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Raphael Hirschowitz: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Sofia Hirschowitz: Afrikaans, Business Studies, English, Hebrew, History, LO</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Maya Izaki: English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>
<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Ryan Jammy: English, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Standard</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Chiara Miller: Consumer Studies, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Shaine Pearlman: Accounting, Business Studies, English, Geography, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Tali Pimstein: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, LO, Life Sciences, Music</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Rory Rosenberg: Accounting, Business Studies, Dramatic Arts, English, LO, Maths</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Michael Schwartz: English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences</div>	<div>SIX DISTINCTIONS</div> <div></div> <div>Adam Shainfeld: Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths</div>	<div></div>



## FIVE DISTINCTIONS



**Orel Jean:** Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, History, Maths Lit



**Judd Lobel:** Accounting,  
Business Studies, LO, Maths



**Leo Mayers:** English, Hebrew, Maths



**Jayden Wulfsohn:** Business Studies, English, LO



### Leigh Appleton: Visual Arts



**Tyra Simpson:** English



1

**11 students achieved above 90% average.**



# Best in class – Torah Academy boys find work-life balance

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Torah Academy Boys High School matriculant Ariyeh Zetisky commuted from Pretoria to the school in Johannesburg and then back every day during high school, including matric last year, but he considers finishing school a major success for two other reasons.

“Since I was a little kid, I never really enjoyed school,” he says. “School isn’t my thing. I’m happy it’s over. Another reason was that everyone told me before matric, ‘It’s so difficult.’ It wasn’t easy, but I didn’t find it so challenging and difficult. It was manageable.”

Zetisky went to school in Pretoria, where he lives, before coming to Torah Academy to get a Jewish education at the



Ariyeh Zetisky

beginning of high school. He says travelling between the two cities was okay. “I used to leave home at about 06:20. Depending on what time I finished on the day, I could get home 12 hours later, at around 17:00 or 18:00, so it was difficult but manageable.”



Shoham Korzia

Zetisky loves soccer, but while growing up in Pretoria, he could never join a club there as all the teams played matches on Shabbos. “It was also a bit tricky to join a club in Joburg because

it would mean travelling even more than I usually do, but in Grade 9 or 10, I was scouted to play for Mamelodi Sundowns. Again, I had to turn it down because they play matches on Shabbos.”

Zetisky’s fellow 2022 Torah Academy Boys High School matriculant, Shoham Korzia, found matric challenging physically and mentally. “The build-up of stress combined with pressure from people around you to do your best is the most challenging part, but after managing to get past that, my matric year was fairly decent,” Korzia says.

He got through it by taking regular breaks from his studies, not working for too long or too late, and making sure he had time to do things he enjoyed or going out with friends.

Similarly, Zetisky found a balance by doing his quota of school work, “and then as soon as I had a break, not just sitting around and wasting my break, but organising a game of football, going out for

a run, or doing anything productive in that time.”

Zetisky hated the COVID-19 pandemic because he likes being with people. “It wasn’t great sitting around looking at everyone on a screen. This year was much better because I enjoy in-class interactions with friends like the quick comments that you bounce off each other, which doesn’t really happen much online.”

Korzia says his most memorable moments in his final school year were “getting closer to my classmates and messing around with them in the very little free time we had. Also, becoming friends with the younger grades and being able to help them with things they were struggling with.”

Korzia will be taking part in Aardvark, a gap-year programme in Israel this year. “I’ll be touring Israel, attending a coding course, interning, as well as working on a summer camp in America.”

Zetisky, meanwhile, hopes to go to Israel this year and study in a yeshiva.

## Actively coaching success out of a busy year

TALI FEINBERG

Herzlia matriculant Nicholas Arelisky may have had an intense matric year, but it didn’t stop him from committing himself to sport including voluntarily coaching the school’s U14 water polo team. On top of this, he did water polo, swimming, soccer, and futsal during the year. And if that wasn’t enough, he also played futsal for South Africa at the Maccabi Games in Israel.

“I love to be involved in all aspects of school sport. I got to play and coach polo, and managed to do my school work as well,” he says. “I was also honoured to win the Service to Sport Award.”



Nicholas Arelisky

games. They had to work hard.” In addition, he would wake up at 05:30 to coach, and the weather often didn’t co-operate. “But every Friday when we won a game and I saw how happy they were, it was worth it, for me and for them.” They landed up winning all nine of their games.

He says being close in age meant that the team could identify with him, and they formed a close bond. He believes Herzlia has an excellent future in water polo, especially now that it’s building a new indoor aquatics centre, meaning that the weather will no longer interfere with training.

His biggest challenge in matric was “finding a good balance between school work, sport, coaching and making time to have fun”, but he “never got stressed out”. He enjoyed learning, especially his favourite subjects of accounting and IT.

His advice to future matrices is to “stay focused on all lessons, have fun, but keep up with homework and assignments that are due. And take it easy, find time for things you like.”

He says what makes Herzlia unique is that “it’s a Jewish community school where we’re nurtured by excellent staff members. They are always willing to help

Arelisky thought changes could be made to the coaching of the U14 water polo team, and approached the school to help. Herzlia agreed, and Arelisky was inspired to teach what he himself had been taught.

“I trained the U14 team as a first team. We first focused on fitness, then structure and set

## A matric that was music to the ears

TALI FEINBERG

Mila Smith may have already established a successful career as a singer and songwriter, but that didn’t stop her from enjoying everything that her matric year at Herzlia had to offer. She also achieved six distinctions out of seven subjects.

“I’m passionate about singing and composing original music,” says Smith. “In spite of it being a very busy matric year, I was still able to write and collaborate with different producers as well as release my third single, Nice Guy, towards the end of 2022 in the midst of exams.”

“Throughout my matric year, my teachers were supportive and understanding of my music career, and I always felt comfortable telling them if I was feeling overwhelmed.”



Mila Smith

additional one-on-one tutorials, which I made use of before finals. On top of that, there seems to be a culture of understanding amongst teachers as they know matric is a tough year. It allows us to be transparent and say if we’re feeling stressed.”

In 2023, Smith is going to study a Bachelor of Arts in media, writing and history with credits in politics and gender studies at the University of Cape Town.

She also hopes to continue her music career, do more live shows, and compose music for a film or series.

“My debut EP will be released in the first quarter of 2023, which is another thing I’m looking forward to.

Watch this space!”

## Pandemic and load shedding make achievements even greater

>>>Continued from page 11

says load shedding is an undeniable added pressure. Horowitz points out that not every student has a generator or solar panels at home, and this raises anxiety-provoking questions such as when a learner will be able to download information and access the internet. Kobrin, however, believes that most students at KDVP “were privileged, and had some source of power during load shedding” and were lucky enough to have a generator at school. The impact is, therefore, partially an economic one.

Horowitz says that maintaining routine is among the tips for success usually given to students, making for a structured and organised environment. However, this was compromised by load shedding.

It also affected memory, and how students managed their exams. The electrical outages have had many “questioning their future in the country, and this put added pressure on students to do well”.

Ancer says the relentless load shedding made it difficult for students to concentrate and study. Making a cup of tea or coffee in a study break sometimes became a challenge. The stress levels were such that even the irregularity of traffic lights and resultant traffic during exams added another layer of tension.

Insight into the psychological effect of the difficulties the matric class of 2022 faced give us greater appreciation of its massive achievements. Leaver celebrates the courage and tenacity of the students of 2022 who have, “bounced back”. Though the psychological bruises they suffered may continue to have an impact, the added resilience, single-mindedness, and flexibility will perhaps enable them to meet the many challenges that future study and life may present.



# The art of surviving and thriving

TALI FEINBERG

Catching COVID-19 and falling behind with work is something no one wants in their matric year, but Hannah Jantjies overcame this challenge in her final year at Herzlia. Not only that, her art was exhibited in two exhibitions during the year.

“I joined Herzlia in the start of middle school, and it’s been an amazing five years filled with lots of opportunities,” she says. One of the highlights was being a part of the first cohort of a matric exhibition at the Zeitz MOCAA (Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa) in Cape Town.

“In March, a four-day workshop for matrics was hosted by the Zeitz MOCAA,” she says. “Between March and May, the group worked with museum staff to exhibit our work. The exhibition opened in July, and ended at the end of August. We enjoyed our time together, and it was a great way to network with matrics from other schools.” Jantjies was also part of a matric exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum for her final art mark.

But it was straight after the initial Zeitz MOCAA workshop that she contracted COVID-19. “My biggest challenge was catching up in term two. I took biology as one of my subjects. I began falling behind as I got overwhelmed and thought I could handle the stress by myself. However, asking for help is okay! That’s something I learnt the hard way.”

On top of it all, she began a committee called “Kids on the Block” to provide a safe space for



Hannah Jantjies

students of colour at the school. “As a person of colour [POC], it was important for me for current and future POC students at Herzlia to have a community at our school.”

In her free time, she was a maddie at Netzer South Africa. “I learnt a lot about myself and the values of the movement. Netzer has given me learning tools for the outside world.”

Her favourite subject is art. “It’s been a part of my identity since I was young. I would love to have a career in the arts, whether it be photography, videography, music, visual art, or film.

“I also enjoyed biology in spite of my unfortunate low marks. I’ve always been interested in the body and the earth – specifically the human body. It improves self-appreciation because you learn about its potential to multitask. It’s absolutely brilliant.”

Her biggest matric achievement, she says, is “not giving up. Of course, matric isn’t easy. There were bumps along the way, and you fall behind, you lose momentum, and so on. You just have to get back up and believe in yourself. Have fun with the work. Search interesting videos on YouTube – there are a lot! Listen to podcasts or music, but try not to be on your device outside of school and studying. Limit your screen time, and enjoy the fresh air outside of assignments and studying.”

At Herzlia, “We have an amazing team of therapists that are willing to help when needed. Be kind to yourself and others, you never know what they are going through in that moment.”

In 2023, she will be going on Netzer’s Shnat gap-year programme in Israel, Poland, and the United States. “At the end of the year, I will be at my first summer machaneh as a maddie, which is exciting and an honour,” Jantjies says.

She envisions “doing something I really love while travelling and meeting people from around the world. Giving back to the community and people in need is also something I’ve been taught by my parents.”

# From a learning challenge to the cutting edge

TALI FEINBERG

Samuel Gawronsky didn’t allow being dyslexic to get in his way of finishing matric earlier than he was meant to. And he did it as well as completing an apprenticeship in shechita (kosher slaughter) that his school, Cape Town Torah High (CTTH), created for him.

“CTTH is a wonderful school,” Gawronsky says, at the school from Grade 8 to matric. “The students are more of a family than classmates. As the classes are small, you get individual attention. The school allows you to study at your own pace in subjects that interest you. It follows an American curriculum, and you write SATs which give you the option to study overseas if you so wish.

He enjoyed all the kodesh classes, and his favourite “secular” subject was maths. “As an extra mural, I participated in an enjoyable weekly game of futsal, which took place every Wednesday, rain or shine. The main challenge during my years at CTTH was dyslexia, but I got the necessary concessions, such as extra time in exams and a reader in major exams, which made it lot less of a challenge. The fact that I was doing courses that I enjoyed also helped.

“In my matric year, I was given the opportunity to work shadow Rabbi Yochanan Ziegler, a shochet (ritual slaughterer). We went every Monday to the abattoir, and I studied shechita. I learned a lot. I’m now going to yeshiva in Israel to study more. Hopefully, when I return to Cape Town, I’ll get some more practical experience and be able to become a shochet. I’m grateful to CTTH for this opportunity as well as Rabbi Ziegler for teaching me.”

He says his biggest matric achievement was to “complete my work and an extra one-year Boston College course in app development, which I completed in less than six months. I’m thankful to CTTH for being able to incorporate this course into my matric curriculum.”



Samuel Gawronsky

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Ariel Anuchin



Tyra Berman



Adam Bertoldi



Cassidy Beuster



Benjamin Black



Jessica Blem



Natalie Cohen



Nathan Cohen



Henry Crawford



Adam Dakes



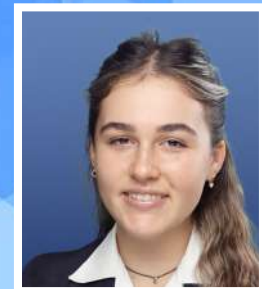
Eliezer Enfield



Joelle Ermann



Ashton Flax



Gia Friedman



Megan Gruzd



Jonathan Hyman



Jarrod Kapeluschnik



Tallin Kaplan



Gemma Katz



Isabella Katz



Keren Katzew

## KING DAVID VICTORY PARK HIGH SCHOOL

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## MAZAL TOV MATRIC CLASS OF 2022

98% BD (UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE) PASS RATE

49 Candidates wrote the NSC matriculation examinations

35% of all candidates achieved above 80% in all subjects (A Aggregate)

90% of all candidates achieved above 60% in all subjects (C Aggregate)

7 students placed in the Top 1% of all IEB candidates for certain subjects

2 students placed on the IEB Commendable Lists

3 students achieved above 90% average

4 students achieved a Full House

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2023



KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK

 Ami Klug	 Liron Krawitz	 Daniel Kupowitz	 Zachary Levin	 Ethan Lewis	 Roxanne Lewis	 Amy Lissoos
 Michael Lombard	 Jesse Lustig	 Sarah Lustig	 Leah Meyerowitz	 Joshua Milner	 Jamie Nowitz	 Elle Ochayon
 Daniel Rismani	 Li Rosen	 Sarah Rosenthal	 Jessica Sachs	 Ariella Scop	 Liora Scop	 Daniel Scott
 Nadav Sundy	 Jamie Treger	 Alessi Trinchero	 Luchia Turtledove	 Rael Van Vuuren	 Shira Woolf	 Zara Woolfson

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King David High School  
Victory Park OPEN DAY  
Tuesday 30 May 2023 | 13:00 – 19:00



# Tears, veggies and victory – KDVP winners’ biggest moments

SAUL KAMIONSKY

King David High School Victory Park (KDVP) matriculant, Tallin Kaplan, was profoundly affected by his dad’s passing on 22 January last year, but he still managed to end the year by matriculating with four distinctions and engaging in his passion for music.

“I was mainly involved in the cultural side of the school with the jazz and marimba band and the school production, but I did take cricket to the end of matric, which was something, because there were only four of us left by then,” says Kaplan. He received half colours in academics, the Klawansky Family Music Award, the Most Outstanding Music Composition Award, and the Cooperman Family Arts Achievement Award.

“The worst part is that there were three of us in the senior marimba band by the end of the year. We performed at basically every school event and even for the Israeli embassy. We even won an international competition, but the



Jessica Blem

grades below weren’t interested in the Friday afternoon activity, so it felt like marimbas died with us.”

The first month and a half following his dad’s passing wasn’t pleasant, Kaplan says. “It’s the feeling of ‘something is missing here’ that gets to you. I would see something that would make me randomly think, ‘Oh, dad would love this!’ and realise, ‘Oh wait, I can’t show it to him.’ Because of this, I developed the unhealthy coping mechanism of avoidance. I didn’t think about it. I didn’t bring it up.

“I just distracted myself by watching anime, making music, and learning for matric. Of course, it would lead to me breaking down in tears at random occasions, but it was better than being miserable all the time. There were people who wanted to console me, but I wanted to be alone. It led to them wondering if I was just lonely, which I would respond to by saying, ‘I’m not alone because I’m friends with the voices in my head.’”

Kaplan says humour is the best coping mechanism. “When someone brings up trauma, turn it into a joke, and move on. No one gets sad. No one gets hurt. No one wants to remember that day.”

He says his dad was very much a stereotypical “work dad”. “He left early while I was still asleep to his nice chief operating officer business position, and would come back home at 17:00. He would then pour a glass

of 20-year-old Scotch and watch TV. Because of this, we would really chat properly only on weekends or holidays, so our relationship was the non-prying type. He would be overprotective of me, but he wouldn’t pry into everything I did.”

Jessica Blem, the head of the environment committee on the school’s students representative council, wanted to make a difference and leave a legacy. “I used the opportunity to create a community vegetable garden which would feed the ground staff and their families.”

She’s grateful to the King David Schools’ Foundation, which helped her acquire the funding necessary to turn her vegetable garden into a permanent structure.

“The garden’s structure is comprised of a number of timber gum posts supporting a shade net roof as well as shade net sides, an irrigation system, and an entrance gate,” she says. “The vegetables grown are determined by the season and the needs of the ground staff. When it first began, we planted carrots, tomatoes, beetroots, spinach, and cucumbers because that’s what the ground staff requested.”

While Blem was bagging half colours in academics, the Jewish National Fund Teva Award for Environmental Awareness, and the Ari Brest – Live Your Best Life Award, fellow KDVP matriculant, Shira Woolf, collected full colours in academics, the trophy for Further Studies English, the Anne Bronte Trophy, the Gareth Jankelow Trophy, and was named top student in Visual Arts Painting.

Woolf also won the Esther Israelstam Trophy for the most outstanding art project, which intertwined all the important aspects of her life.

“I focused on the relationships I have with the people who have had an impact on my life. I focused on my passions, and my love of reading. My artwork, which I have titled Interwoven Wisdom, looks at the impact reading has had on my past, present, and will have on my future. I have painted an oil image of myself imparting knowledge by reading to my younger sisters, Eliana and Maya. The image of the three of us is painted onto pages of six very specific books. I have used two childhood novels that I read in my younger years, two Roald Dahl novels I read in my ‘tween’ years, and two of the texts I studied in my Further Studies English class.”

When her school’s art class was tasked with drawing a pencil sketch of KDVP, many of her peers drew physical aspects of the school. In



Tallin Kaplan

contrast, Woolf believed a special part of KDVP wasn’t a what, but a whom.

“I drew a portrait of Methuselem because of the huge part he plays in

ensuring that everything runs smoothly during the school day,” she says. “Methus makes sure students get to class on time, no one is bunking, and has an answer for every question.”

In addition to her artistic pursuits, she was KDVP’s head of outreach. Seeing it as her duty to give back to the community, she organised and ran the “Get To Know My Ground Staff” campaign, casual day, hair cutting for cancer, multiple blood drives for the South African National Blood Service, collecting pads for sanitary pad collection drive The Pad Princess, and many more initiatives.

“My favourite activities were visiting The Orlando Children’s Home in Soweto, where we gave out toys and sweets and spent the day with the children. I enjoyed the regular outings to Casa Do Sol, a school for children with disabilities, where my peers and I would read, play, and spend time with the children.”

Woolf won’t be studying for an art degree but will continue to create pencil drawings and oil paintings and learn about art theory in her own time, and keep in contact with her art teacher, Miss Fiona Couldridge.

Blem, for whom the highlight of her final school year was her matric dance, says, “My plans for this year are dependent on my matric results. If I’m accepted into my desired course, I’ll go to university. If not, I’ll take a gap year and complete a few short courses.”

Kaplan is taking a gap year to focus on music, even though he successfully applied to study law and business. “I know I’m not going to make it in the music industry, but you never know if you don’t try, right? I’m using this year to try and then fail so that I can say that I did try. I’m doing voice acting on the side, but I wouldn’t have got to that point without trying.”

## Sandwiching academics and community, the students who did it all

SAUL KAMIONSKY

During his matric year at King David High School Linksfield (KDHL) last year, Joseph Joffe was part of a committee that organised a sandwich initiative called “Matric is back”, in which students from Grades 4 to 12 broke the Guinness World Record for the most sandwiches made in an hour. They made 65 595 sandwiches in that time.

On top of this, he bagged nine distinctions, and is going to study at the Ivy League Brown University on Rhode Island in the United States.

“A South African getting into an Ivy League university is almost unheard of,” says, Jodi Starkowitz, the school’s head of marketing. “KDHL has had students studying at Ivy League universities, but Joseph may be one of the first to be pre-accepted.”

Joffe’s fellow 2022 KDHL matriculant, deputy head student leader Shiri Kaplan, was involved in the outreach committee and organised and took part in many different community service initiatives at high school. In addition to this, she took nine subjects in matric.

“What’s so unusual about Shiri is her subject choice,” Starkowitz says. “She did physical science, art, drama, and Hebrew. These subjects prove how she flexes both sides of her brain, using the logical and creative sides as well as Hebrew, which goes backwards.”

Kaplan says she took so many subjects not only because she loves a challenge, but also, “I have many diverse interests, and I couldn’t choose which subjects to take. I have always loved drama and art and enjoyed drawing, painting, and performing, but at the same time, I adore the simplicity of numbers, and I love maths and science. I also love English literature and poetry.”

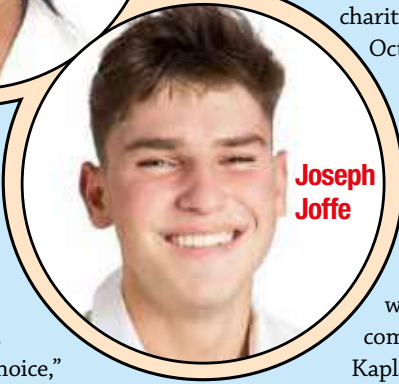
She says she managed to juggle studying with all her activities by being “as disciplined and organised as I possibly could. I tried to keep on top of all assignments for each subject as they were given. I often woke up early before school to study.”

Joffe, meanwhile, had to balance studying with eight months of planning for the ‘Matric is back’ initiative. “I had to speak to sponsors for bread, cheese, lettuce, and mayonnaise, and did a lot of logistical planning. The biggest challenge was having to manage all these logistics and the massive amount of tasks to do during prelims in August and September last year. I was working on the initiative during prelims.”

Planning started at the beginning of 2022. “I did a little bit throughout the year. Final planning happened during prelims. So, with the massive amount of logistics,



Shiri Kaplan



Joseph Joffe

I would work in the morning. In the evening, when I felt my work would be less productive, or I had done enough for the day, I would work on my sandwich initiative, emailing relevant people, replying to emails, and doing research, but when there was an important deadline or important people who I needed to speak to, I emailed them first thing in the morning to get it out of the way for the day.”

Joffe says another big part of his high school experience was being a student leader for the awareness and advocacy committee, which spearheads campaigns to combat racism, sexism, and homophobia, and promotes mental health. “My biggest role in that committee was spearheading a campaign called the Hollard Daredevil Run, which I brought to the school. Boys wore purple Speedos, and girls wore purple skirts and white or purple tops – just purple all around. This was done to raise awareness around men suffering from prostate cancer and raise money, which we donated to Hollard and various cancer charities. It all happened in October 2021, during Grade 11.

“Finally, in my Grade 11 year, I was elected by my school to be on the Johannesburg Junior Council. I was chairperson of the outreach committee and we did projects that would have an impact on the community around us.”

Kaplan tried to get involved in as many projects and activities as she could at school. “I realised that the more I give to the school, the greater my rewards would be.”

Some of her highlights include winning the South African National Bible Quiz in 2020, being involved in all the school’s public speaking competitions, taking part in debating and the performing arts, and winning a trip to Los Angeles courtesy of having her poem chosen by Chapman University after she entered its Holocaust creative writing competition.

“In Grade 11, I loved being involved in the Helen Diller Foundation and although COVID-19 prevented us from going on the international trip, the experience was life-changing,” she says.

Kaplan, who is planning to go on Bnei Akiva’s Limmud programme for her gap year, says, “Finishing high school has been bittersweet. I’m sad that I can no longer be involved in all King David has to offer, but I’m excited to see what my future holds.”

Joffe will start studying at Brown in September. “I’m considering studying maths and economics and taking the open curriculum, which allows students to design their own curriculum for four years. I’ll be taking subjects such as maths and economics, but I could also even take a language or drama, for example, and just explore what interests me. I specifically chose Brown because it allows you to explore so many passions simultaneously.”



YESHIVA COLLEGE BOYS & GIRLS HIGH SCHOOLS

# MATRIC RESULTS

Class of



100% PASS RATE • 100% UNIVERSITY EXEMPTION • 4 DISTINCTIONS PER LEARNER  
OUR MATRIC GRADE AVERAGE ACROSS ALL SUBJECTS WAS ABOVE 77%

YESHIVA COLLEGE  
CLASS OF 2022

בִּי בְשִׂמְחָה יֵצְאוּ וּבְשָׁלוֹם תּוּבְלוּ  
*You shall go out with joy and be led forward with peace*  
(ישעיהו נה יב)



*It is a remarkable achievement that our Matric classes have achieved over 3.5 distinctions per candidate for the last 10 years*

**51 Learners • 22 girls and 29 boys**

**THE CLASS OF 2022 AMASSED AN INCREDIBLE 206 DISTINCTIONS IN TOTAL**

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF 'DISTINCTION'

- 2 learners attained 9 distinctions each
- 2 learners attained 8 distinctions each
- 7 learners attained 7 distinctions each
- 5 learners attained 6 distinctions each
- 4 learners attained 5 distinctions each
- 8 learners attained 4 distinctions each
- 7 learners attained 3 distinctions each
- 7 learners attained 2 distinctions each
- 5 learners attained 1 distinction each

206 distinctions across the grade from 51 learners = 4 distinctions per learner.

## SUBJECTS WITH DISTINCTION AVERAGE

English  
Life Orientation  
F.S Maths  
Life Science  
Information Technology

8 subjects with an average above 70%

## LEADING FROM THE TOP

### Top 1% of students per subject

English Home Language	Ariella Feinblum, Ariel Richard, Ariella Friedland and Asher Levenstein
Information Technology	Raphael Alsfine
Life Orientation	Talya Shlesinger, Ariella Feinblum, Asher Levenstein, Joseph Levin and Raphael Alsfine
Life Science	Ariella Feinblum, Devora Meyerowitz and Liat Lew
Mathematics	Shayna Unterslak

### Commendable Achievement:

Ariel Richard

### Other Achievements include:

Five subject with distinction averages.  
77 percent average across 16 subjects.

REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN ACADEMIC, EXTRA MURAL AND TORAH GROWTH FOR ALL LEARNERS

YESHIVA COLLEGE  
The Torah School of Excellence





# From silence to success, a story of overcoming the odds

PERSONAL STORY

YAKIRA HAMMERSCHLAG



Nineteen years ago, a healthy baby girl was born to parents Stephen and Pam Hammerschlag. Everything seemed perfect and blissful, but little did they know that their little princess wasn’t the baby they had dreamed of and their lives were soon going to change drastically.

At one year old, my parents found out that I was profoundly deaf in both ears, meaning I wasn’t able to hear the beautiful sounds and voices in the world. They had only two options: to accept my deafness, communicate with me in sign language, and get on with life as best as they could, or do everything in their power to make sure that I lived the life of any other normal child with the help of medical technology, which is the option they took.

We were fortunate to be able to afford cochlear implant surgery, enabling me to hear electronically. I underwent two implants on either side of my brain in order to insert electrodes which would stimulate my auditory nerve, thus enabling me to learn to hear. This would necessitate intense speech and hearing therapy to train my brain to co-operate with this new technology and manner of hearing and speaking. I feel immense gratitude towards my parents every single day for giving me this gift of hearing and the possibility of a bright future.

I started off in a special-needs school specifically for children with speech and hearing delay and/or impairment. In Grade R, I was given the opportunity

to navigate and, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the time I felt the most challenged. Grade 11 was an intense year academically, and I had to deal with the heartbreaking death of my grandmother who was my biggest supporter. As a result, I didn’t get amazing results at the end of that year.

My dream is to become a doctor and get into medical school. However, based on Grade 11, I thought that dream had been snatched away from me, and there was much disappointment from certain close relatives.

However, I was fortunate to be accepted into a Bachelor of Health Sciences (a back route into medicine) at the University of the Witwatersrand, which encouraged me to be optimistic in spite of everyone else’s scepticism. I experienced further challenges in my matric year such as fracturing my finger badly, contracting COVID-19, and not performing my best in both sets of prelims, to the extent that I received no recognition at all in the valedictory ceremony.

I was beyond disappointed, and felt ready to give up, because what was the point in continuing to try when there was only one month left to finals. However, I chose to persevere and revive my goal to do well in the finals, the result of which brings us to a week ago.

I would be lying if I said that my family and I believed I was going to achieve more than four distinctions out of seven subjects to the point where I thought achieving

any higher than five was unrealistic.

It was with shock and disbelief when on the night of the release of results, I saw that I had far exceeded expectations and obtained six distinctions in spite of not having applied for any exam concessions including extra time (which almost half my grade had acquired).

In spite of a disability and delayed start, I became the first cochlear implant student at KDL to achieve distinctions. I couldn’t feel more blessed that Hashem gave me a second chance. Having said that, I still believe success in life isn’t really about distinctions, but about overcoming life challenges and evolving into the person you’re destined to become.

I look forward to accomplishing my goals and dreams and hopefully becoming a doctor one day. My message to all challenged and special-needs kids out there, whatever your age, is that just because you’re different or looked down upon by others, don’t allow it to define who you are and what your capabilities are. Believe in yourself no matter what, because anything is possible if you set your mind to it.

I would like to end off with a quote from Wonder by RJ Palacio that encapsulates what I’m trying to convey: “Everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their life because we all overcometh the world.”

• *Yakira Hammerschlag matriculated at King David Linksfield in 2022.*

# Catch-22 of a post-COVID matric

PERSONAL STORY

HANNA RESNICK



Last Wednesday, I said goodbye to many people for probably the last time. The realisation that after our matric breakfast, I would never again see some of the faces whose presence had become as familiar as the cobblestone pathways leading to my classes, affected me more than I had anticipated.

Within our hall stood those who had become my closest friends and those I had never exchanged more than a few words with, yet we all shared an indelible bond.

The matric class of 2020 experienced its final year of school online, the class of 2021 went back to school wearing

masks and socialising in small groups, but, in 2022, COVID-19 restrictions were eased, and it felt as though our matric experience could be somewhat “normal”.

However, the implications of the global health crisis weren’t so easily erased. Loss was all around us during the pandemic, but eventually the world had to continue moving.

Schools went back in full force, social gatherings resumed, and those of us who were grieving all that was lost had to continue like nothing had happened.

In 2021, after spending the first year and a half of the pandemic in complete isolation in order to protect my family, I (along with my parents and my brother) contracted the Delta variant of COVID-19. The only consolation at this point was that we had avoided spreading the virus to my grandparents.

However, a few weeks later, my grandfather was diagnosed with cancer, and was admitted to hospital where he contracted COVID-19. In a matter of weeks, my worst nightmare had come true. My grandfather died alone in a hospital bed and my family unit would never be the same. Just two weeks later, I was back at school, filling my hours with school work instead of dealing with the loss and debilitating long-COVID-19 symptoms. This pattern only became worse as I entered matric.

I, like many others, tried to compartmentalise and push away the suffering of the past two years in order to try and erase the trauma that we had endured. Moreover, our grade had just regained the opportunity to participate in regular school activities and, in just a year, it would all be over.

In late 2021, I was elected house captain, was to direct and act in a school play in the new year, and had signed up for other extra-curricular activities. And so, in addition to the academic pressure of the second year of the IB (International

Baccalaureate) Diploma Programme, I set myself up for a very busy year.

There’s so much pressure to begin one’s matric year on the right foot. Unfortunately for me, my right foot happened to be in a full cast after breaking my ankle just a couple of weeks prior. I hobbled through the gates on my “last-first day” of school with such high expectations, I started crying as soon as I entered the grounds.

Nonetheless, I was determined to experience all the activities that I had set out to do, and it came to a point where I was often at school from 07:30 in the

morning until 19:30 in the evening. I would find ways to fit any interhouse practices into my breaks, then attend public speaking practice immediately after school, and then it was straight into play rehearsal for two to three hours.

A few months into the year, however, I found myself struggling to balance it all with academics. I was completely burnt out, and managed to catch COVID-19 for the second time. Looking

back, my last few months of school were very isolated. The very experiences I had so eagerly looked forward to, such as our matric “silly season” and other end-of-year events, flew past as I sat in the library through breaks and free periods trying to perfect final drafts of assignments that I had worked on for months, and trying to leave enough time to study for prelims.

It was also at this time that we were nearing about 12 hours a day without electricity. Though there’s something quite charming about studying by the light of a single lamp, the inability to work online or access power for one’s laptop became a significant burden for students around the country.

I was privileged to attend a school that had generators powering just about everything, but it’s hard to imagine how many matric students in our country were affected by some of the worst load shedding we have ever experienced.

Our matric year may not have felt like those we had seen in movies, but it was definitely one for the books (even if those books felt vaguely absurdist and dystopic at times). This past week might have revolved around marks and distinctions for many, but they are a fraction of what the class of 2022 has to show for this past year. We made it, we’re here to tell the tale, and we’re ready to start the next chapter of our lives.

• *Hanna Resnick matriculated at Redhill High School in 2022 and is now interning at the SA Jewish Report.*



Hanna Resnick at the Redhill valedictory assembly



Yakira Hammerschlag

to try mainstream school at King David Linksfield (KDL). I knew I was different from the other kids and they did too, but I feel an immense sense of gratitude towards my grade as they didn’t shame or bully me for being the girl with “weird things on her ears”. I was treated as one of them.

Everyone expected me to be average, if not below average, in academics throughout my school career, which was the case until Grade 7, the year my true colours started to show and I began to soar. I went from a C student in primary school to a B student, to an A student in high school. I thrived at KDL, but also experienced many challenges.

There were times I felt unworthy or incapable of achieving my goals. Grade 11 and matric were the hardest for me



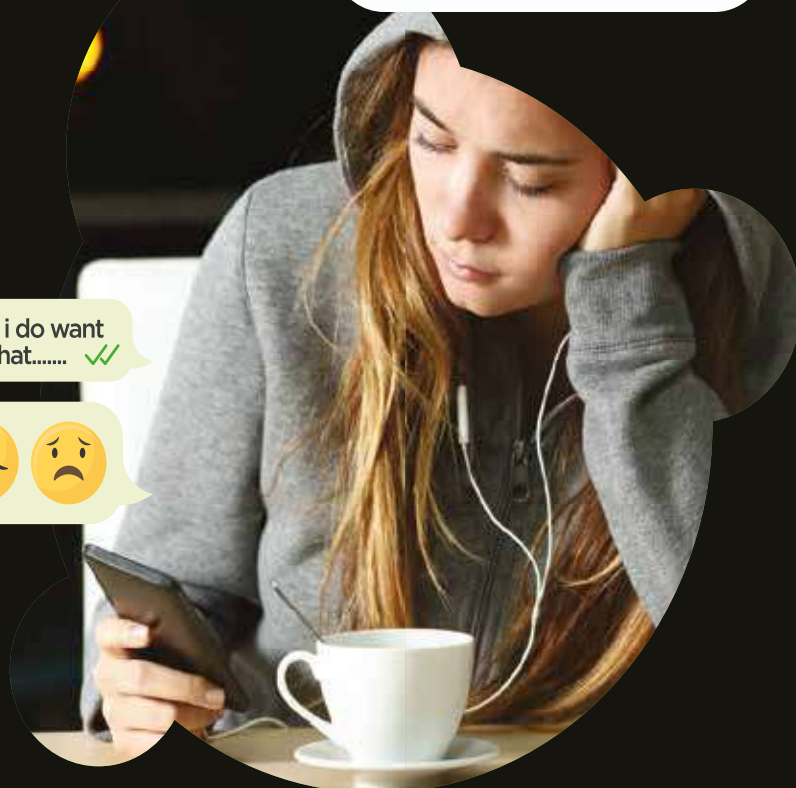
**SAUL KAMIONSKY**

Low says her team shared a passion for infusing Yeshiva College with pride, spirit, and unity. As head girl, she led Yeshiva College's six committees, and was responsible for being a role model to students in the younger grades in terms of morals, modesty, and respect. "The head girl must be a leader, inspirer, visionary, and motivator," she says.

"Our teachers used the skills they learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic to go over and above to prepare

South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Rowan Polovin notes that "South Africa has diplomatic relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority,

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Dirco for comment, but did not receive a response by the time of going to print.



**HATZOLAH**  
**CRISISRESPONSE**  
**UNIT**





# Being a success isn't dependent on matric results

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Success in life isn't dependent on how well you did in matric. In fact, for some, it has nothing whatsoever to do with it. South African entrepreneurs Adi Kaimowitz, Larry Nussbaum, and Allan Hirsch are testimony to this.

Kaimovitz, who matriculated from King David Linksfield in 1996, says he was a disruptive student who preferred playing TV games as opposed to studying hard. He went on to found Virtual Actuary, which is now seen as an equal to "the big four" consulting firms in South Africa.

Nussbaum, who matriculated from King David Victory Park in 2000, battled at school. "I struggled to maintain focus and was easily distracted," he says. "It was put down to the fact that I was lazy."

Not only would he get a huge confidence boost when he was diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) as an adult, but he also founded YouView, which helped the Chevrah Kadisha to livestream its funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic. "In so doing, we were able to help get closure for people who weren't physically able to attend a funeral of their loved ones," Nussbaum says.

Walt Disney, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Hirsch didn't finish school. However, the latter went on to start Hirsch's, a multibillion-rand organisation with 750 employees.

In spite of struggling academically at school, Hirsch, Kaimovitz, and Nussbaum all say it did have an impact on what they went on to achieve.

As an adult, Hirsch was diagnosed as dyslexic, but during his school days, he thought he was stupid, and his teachers said he would never make anything of his life. "In Grade 2, I was actually held back. After I failed Grade 4, it was decided that I should perhaps go to a boarding school with fewer children in a class, so off I went to boarding school, and passed my year there. But during that year, my father became ill and they suggested we move from Johannesburg to the coast."

Hirsch subsequently failed Grades 5 and 6 in the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast. "But then I had quite a good run, passing Grades 7 and 8. Then I went to a technical school in Pietermaritzburg because I needed to learn to use my hands as I couldn't read and write properly. I passed Grade 9, but failed Grade 10. I took my report card to my father with all these little red rings on it. I thought he was going to tear me apart, but he just said, 'Son, you must realise you are never going to get a matric. What you should do is pick a trade. Maybe one day you can buy your own little bakkie and perhaps start your own business.'"

Hirsch got a job as an apprentice

appliance mechanic at Fuchsware. "At the start of my final year there, I met a girl called Margaret, and we married



Adi Kaimovitz

"amazing gift. I realised only after school that if I had to write an essay or exam, I had to start with the end in mind. How was I going to get there? What words could I spell? How could I say something without using words that I couldn't spell? Lateral thinking came quite easily to me. Even today, when there's a problem at work, I think, 'What's the solution?'"

Eventually, he started Hirsch's. "I found a property. For the business to have a bit of integrity, I wanted a



Larry Nussbaum

11 months later. Margaret told someone, 'Allan believes he's stupid.'"

He was advised to see a professor who specialised in child learning problems.

"You're dyslexic," the professor told Hirsch. "You've got this handicap, but you need to learn to overcome it."

Hirsch says his life changed in that moment. "I believed I could do anything. I realised this garbage around me the whole time was actually a gift. All I had to do was unwrap it. The rest is history."

He says he's blessed to have an

phone number, an invoice book, and a sign on the building. People who worked at another company walked up the road and said they wanted to work for me. These guys ended up doing a phenomenal job."

Kaimovitz, meanwhile, spent his

20s working in different companies, hoping he would latch on to something he could make a success out of.



Allan Hirsch

"Eventually, I was introduced to the actuarial world, initially as a recruiter, and then once I found this industry, I eventually found something that I could be quite proud of."

When he conceived the idea of Virtual Actuary, a consortium of consulting actuaries, he held on to it for dear life. "We're now bigger than a lot of the big four consulting firms," Kaimovitz says.

Nussbaum scraped through matric. "I got an F for Afrikaans and accounting, and lower marks for the

rest of my subjects."

He spent his time at school with the school photographer and during breaks, he repaired all the audiovisual equipment.

So, he went into the IT and photographic industry, working with his father as a photographer. The idea for YouView came about when his father was approached about 18 years ago by a couple who were getting married and their mother couldn't attend the wedding. "I started experimenting with livestreaming back then and put together a system to livestream the wedding," Nussbaum says.

Today, YouView continues to livestream the Chev's funerals. "It comes down to hard work and perseverance," Nussbaum says of the secret behind YouView's success. "After all, this a service I tried to sell for years and nobody saw the value."

One of Hirsch's secrets, Hirsch says, is, "The more effort we put into educating and training our team members, the better they make us."

"One of our greatest secrets is that we've been able to attract some of the best actuaries in the country by paying them way above the market norm for a consulting business," Kaimovitz says. "It leads to a business having one of the strongest teams in the country because people feel well-remunerated and appreciated. Then the clients get a fantastic service because the team works well."

## Game, set, match for Yeshiva's high achievers

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Jonathan Hazi won a silver medal for Gauteng in the U19 National Volleyball Games during matric last year, while his fellow 2022 Yeshiva College Boys High School matriculant, Ariel Richards, gained invaluable speaking skills on the school's public speaking team.

Hazi says matric was his best school year. Richards says, "Not only did the school nurture me in the younger grades, it also strengthened my values, enhanced my knowledge, and inspired me to be the very best version of myself."

"Our team hadn't lost a game until it came to the finals where we lost to KwaZulu-Natal three sets to one," Hazi says of the National Volleyball Games, held in Limpopo.

At the games, a committee selected players to play for the South African team. At the award ceremony following the games, Hazi was selected for the South African U19 team for a tournament which took place just two weeks before his preliminary examinations. "This made it extremely stressful for me when I returned from the tournament as I only had two weeks to study," he says.

Nevertheless, "My matric year was amazing, to say the least. It was fun and exciting. Trying to create a balance of schoolwork, time with friends, and volleyball was extremely difficult, but there isn't one thing I would change."

Says Richards, "Yeshiva isn't just a Torah-focused school, but a multidimensional and interdisciplinary institution that has afforded me many varied opportunities and enabled me to reach my potential. I will treasure the precepts and values that Yeshiva has imparted – *chesed*, a love of Israel, a devotion to Torah, and a dedication to academics – and I know that these will inform my future decisions and motivate me to succeed."

He says being part of Yeshiva College's public speaking team "gave me the

skills to speak with confidence and assert my ideas".

Hazi got into volleyball through the school. "We would often play at break, and found I had a real talent and love for the sport. I decided I wanted to continue playing out of school."

In terms of academics, Yeshiva College gave Richards the resources to achieve in general studies, the term used to describe secular academic work at the school. "It's the curriculum set by the IEB [Independent Examinations Board]," he says. "Due to Yeshiva's multifaceted learning structure, the Jewish work is split from the secular into general studies and *kodesh*."

Richards says every one of his teachers went beyond the call of duty to assist him in achieving his goals. "During matric and Grade 11, I completed as many past papers as possible, and this helped me to achieve. Throughout my matric year, I set a strict routine, woke up early each morning to study, and varied the emphasis of my learning so I didn't lose focus. These techniques helped me to achieve targets that I would never have thought possible."

Hazi, who has attended Yeshiva College since the age of three, says, "Matric was the first year where we were given freedom and respect from our teachers. We started to become independent and have responsibility for doing what was best for ourselves, which allowed us to grow. We were also given the space to do the things that we had to do, which gave us time to have fun, all contributing to matric being the best year."

Richards, who has been at Yeshiva College since nursery school, says, "I'm extremely grateful for everything that Yeshiva has taught me – both in *Limudei Kodesh* and in the secular realm. I attribute my calm, focused state of mind to the school's guidance, support, and excellence."

This year, Richards will be studying accounting science at the University of the Witwatersrand, while Hazi hopes to study electrical engineering at the same institution and play a lot more volleyball.



Jonathan Hazi



Ariel Richards





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# Small business takes big hit with load shedding

TALI FEINBERG

Small business may be the backbone of the South African economy, but it’s bearing the brunt of the energy crisis. Paying for generators, fuel, and inverters, employing extra staff to work in less time, and having to turn away work are some of the difficult steps this sector has had to take to survive.

“The situation has gone from bad to worse,” says labour lawyer Michael Bagraim. “Normally at this time of year, my firm receives instructions to draft letters of appointment and contracts of employment. All we’ve been doing is retrenchments. Both in small and big business, retrenchment has been at an all-time high. This is purely because of load shedding. Retrenchment is now greater than it was at the height of the pandemic.”

Lessa Gordon Mauerberger’s laundrette, Wash World, and Supa Clean, the factory she runs with her daughter-in-law, Lauren Gordon, would have thrived in the holiday season if she hadn’t had to turn down customers due to load shedding. Located in the heart of Sea Point, the businesses service hotels, guest houses, day spas, airlines, and individual customers, including tourists.

“It’s been an absolute nightmare,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*. “We have lost a fortune of work. We usually operate throughout the night, but power is often out for four hours every night. In addition, night staff get paid extra, but they spend most of it waiting for power. All this has a huge knock-on effect.”

She says she cannot invest in a generator, and a business like hers requires a huge amount of power.

“I’ve had to employ extra staff to do more work in less time. We’ve had a fantastic season, but have had to turn down so many customers, such as kids returning from camp.”

She says small business owners often bear the brunt of angry and impatient customers,

Retrenchment is now greater than it was at the height of the pandemic.

and asks people to be understanding and accommodating when it comes to load shedding, for example, by packing extra clothes for the holidays.

“You can either be bitter, or get on with it. We’ve chosen to get on with it. We would be flying if we had the water and power to do it.” She notes that when Cape Town faced its infamous drought a few years ago, it also affected the business, yet she survived. “We lived through it all, and we’re still standing.”

Her daughter-in-law had to join the business when her late husband, Ronen Gordon, passed away suddenly eight months ago. She has had to steer the ship in the midst of the energy crisis, all while grieving her loss and learning the ropes.

“We deal on a daily basis with firms who have less than 50 employees,” Bagraim says. “They can’t afford alternative power sources and invariably if they are involved in service or manufacturing, they cannot afford to keep open. It becomes too expensive to ask staff to come in for two or three hours a day, and it becomes impossible for staff to pay for



Lessa Gordon Mauerberger and Lauren Gordon

transport to earn only for those two or three hours a day. The only alternative has been to undergo retrenchments. Normally, we would advise to put people on layoff during load shedding like we did in the past but now, unfortunately, this is a daily occurrence and layoffs aren’t an option.”

A bakery owner, speaking on condition of anonymity, says, “Our big ovens take 1.5 hours to warm up, and then just as we put the cakes in, the electricity goes off. There’s a huge waste of paid working time and ingredients. My cold rooms get warm and iced cakes don’t cool enough to travel. It would cost half a million rand for a generator to run our ovens, and it would be so big, it would take up most of our parking area. That’s before you buy the diesel, which would

push the prices so high, no one would buy the cakes.”

Even with a generator, entrepreneurs are struggling. Shelene Shaer, the co-owner of Tanaz Hair, says “Our generator pulls a huge amount of power because of the hairdryers. It’s the cost of diesel that’s prohibitive. Sometimes the diesel cost equals our electricity bill. Our electronic equipment is affected because of power surges.”

Architect Michelle Maltz Shevelew from M2S Architects says, “I have had to purchase an inverter which is now struggling to recharge its batteries. The batteries don’t last and I will need to layout another few thousand rand to replace them with lithium batteries.”

Her large-format plans need to be printed at a copy shop. “They turn off their machines prior to load shedding, and they take a while to warm up afterwards. So If I need prints done, I need to check the schedules and prepare accordingly.

“For a project on site, the contractor requires electricity for many operations. This causes delays which then have a potential cost implication for the client. If a generator is hired, it’s a cost for the client. There’s

monthly sales. I worry about the damage to my reputation as a result of my inability to deliver on time. I’m still waiting for packaging to be made that was supposed to go out as a complete order in November. I’ve always supported local suppliers and will continue to do so, but it’s becoming more and more tempting to import supplies.”

Jewish entrepreneurs are incredibly resilient in the face of all this. ORT JET Johannesburg’s Helene Silberman Itzkin, says that of the 152 businesses on its books, none have shut down because of load shedding. The organisation supports small businesses by offering mentoring, training, and networking opportunities.

“These small businesses often don’t have the revenue to get off the grid,” she says. “And yet load shedding affects every aspect of their businesses. What we do is help them to retain a strong mindset and be strategic, for example, helping them decide if it’s worth getting an inverter or solar panels or making use of a shared office space with green energy.”

Lisa Sandler of ORT JET Cape Town says that providing space for entrepreneurs to share their experiences also helps them navigate challenges.

“It’s been one battle after the next for them, from the pandemic to load shedding,” says Silberman Itzkin. “But entrepreneurs have grit and perseverance. We provide mentors and life coaches for them to talk to, and to help them not give up. Our aim is to give people the skills and tools so that they can support their families so that welfare is a last resort. Our work is critical to the continuation of the community.”

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# Untold story of Jan Smuts and the founding of Israel

TALI FEINBERG

In Israel’s fertile north, near the city of Haifa, lies a kibbutz that has an integral link to a South African statesman. But few know about this connection, and the incredible story of why Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, meaning “Jan Heights”, was named after South African prime minister, statesman, and wartime leader, Field Marshall Jan Christian Smuts. Smuts served as prime minister of the Union of South Africa from 1919 to 1924, and 1939 to 1948.

“Established in 1931, the kibbutz was name after General Smuts in recognition of his contribution to the establishment of the state of Israel,” says the Jewish National Fund’s (JNF’s) Bev Schneider. “He was a Calvinist and a very strong Zionist who believed in a Jewish homeland. It was thanks to him that South Africa voted in favour of

the creation of the state of Israel at the United Nations (UN). He was also a ghost writer for the Balfour Declaration, first adopted in 1917 and reaffirmed in 1922, which was the declaration the British made about their intention to create a Jewish state. In addition, he was close friends with Chaim Weizmann.”

“There is a moving story that Weizmann invited Smuts to Israel to celebrate his 70th birthday,” says Michael Kransdorff, the chairperson of the JNF in South Africa. “He was very ill at the time, and his doctor told him not to travel as it would put his life at risk. But he didn’t listen to this advice, and wanted to show how important Israel and Weizmann were to him by making the trip. He travelled to Israel and celebrated with him. He died quite soon after returning to South Africa.”

Jan Smuts and Israel’s founding

is an untold story, says the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF’s) Benji Shulman. Smuts “was a great friend of the South African Jewish community, which engaged with him on Zionism, and he essentially became an advocate for the Jewish people,” Shulman says. “He especially engaged the British on the merits of a Jewish homeland. Smuts also personally fundraised for multiple Zionist organisations, and spoke out against antisemitism.”

Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan was established to “honour him and cement this friendship”, says Kransdorff. The South African Jewish community helped to raise money for the establishment of the kibbutz. In addition, there are a number of streets in Israel named after Smuts, including “Rehov Smuts” in Jerusalem’s German Colony. “He’s only one of a

handful of non-Jewish, non-Israelis to have places in Israel named after them,” says Kransdorff.

South Africa, but there is renewed interest in him in some circles. Katz’s doctoral thesis explored how Smuts was “one of the founding fathers of South Africa’s ‘way of war’.” His book, based on the thesis, is titled *General Jan Smuts and his First World War in Africa*.

Schneider visited the kibbutz in December and met its senior members, who gave her a tour. “It’s one of the biggest and most profitable kibbutzim, and is still run very traditionally. There’s a communal dining room for breakfast and lunch, a huge dairy farm, and a big plastics factory that has branches around the world. They also farm avocades, litchis, and some citrus.”



The plaque paying tribute to Jan Smuts and kibbutz Ramat Yochanan

Incredibly, the JNF has a letter in Smuts’ own handwriting, describing his feelings about Zionism and the kibbutz being named for him. “I feel deeply honoured by the suggestion of the South African Zionist organisation that a tract of land in Palestine should be called after my name,” he wrote. “To be thus associated with the Zionist cause and to have my name placed on the map of the Holy Land is indeed a rare distinction, and I’m deeply moved.

“My work for Zionism has from the first been a labour of love and gratitude,” Smuts wrote. “The services of the small Jewish people to humanity have been incomparably great. That such a people should continue [to be] exiled from their ancient homeland throughout the ages was an historic anomaly and injustice which called for reparation. Hence, my original connection with the shaping of the policy of the national home and my deep interest in its execution ever since.”

“They say that it was ‘small men’ who ensured that UN Resolution 181 was passed by the UN General Assembly in 1947, which called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states and indeed, it wasn’t the big powers,” says Shulman. “Smuts played a vital role. It wouldn’t have gone through without him. The last thing he did before he resigned as prime minister in 1948 was to recognise Israel from a South African perspective.”

Author and historian Major David Brock Katz, who has just written a thesis and book about Smuts, agrees with these sentiments. “He was a big player on the world stage. He was highly influential during and after World War II. That was the zenith of his political influence on the British Empire. I’m sure he was fundamental in Israel’s formation.”

He points out that Smuts is generally not a popular figure in

The kibbutz was also the location of the Battle of Ramat Yohanan during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, and in 1940, Yitzhak Rabin joined the kibbutz’s *noar ha’oved* (working youth) training programme.

There’s a small museum on the kibbutz telling its history, including a plaque paying tribute to Smuts. However, this hasn’t been updated, and the JNF, supported by the SAZF, has a project to update the museum and “bring it into the 21st century”, according to Kransdorff. They are envisioning an interactive video and other updates to the museum. Importantly, they want to highlight the vital role that Smuts played in the creation of the Jewish state, and how much it meant to him.

“We’re working closely with Smuts’ descendants to do this,” says Schneider.

Smuts great-grandchildren, Lynda and Gareth Shackleford, say they found out about the kibbutz only recently, even though the Smuts family was hosted by the kibbutz on a visit to Israel in 1975.

“I never knew he was a rock star in Israel,” quips Gareth. However he has always had many Jewish friends, and some have told him about the streets named after Smuts in Israel after attending the Maccabi Games. He feels that he and his Jewish friends are continuing the close bond established by his great-grandfather.

“We’re exceptionally proud of this connection to Israel and the Jewish community,” says Lynda. “He always agreed that all people should have a place to call home. Now, we hope to bring this history back to life and back to the kibbutz with a new interactive display there.”

In addition, Schneider says the South African Jewish community contributed to a community centre on the kibbutz, which has now been turned into a theatre, with indoor and outdoor stages. The kibbutz also has a beautiful heritage trail. She hopes community members will visit it and enjoy all that it has to offer, especially because of the strong connection to South Africa and its Jewish community.

## Antisemitism lower around world, but still startlingly high

HANNA RESNICK

Antisemitic incidents around the world are lower for the first time in a decade, but the sheer number is still startlingly high, according to the latest World Zionist Organization (WZO) annual antisemitism report.

“The constant increase in antisemitic trends in the past decade is a matter of concern, while the significant reduction in the number of incidents this year isn’t a sigh of relief either,” said Raheli Baratz Rix, the head of WZO’s department for combatting antisemitism following the release of her report on 24 January.

Though the WZO called on many countries around the world for information for this report, it left out South African Jewry.

David Saks, the deputy director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), confirmed this. “The SAJBD as a matter of course provides information on antisemitism in South Africa to various international bodies [such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Kantor Centre, Tel Aviv University] whose purpose is to monitor and combat antisemitism,” he said. “The WZO isn’t one of these bodies. However, we would have been quite happy to share our information with the WZO had we been approached to do so.”

Baratz Rix, who released the report in the lead-up to International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January, said, “Antisemitism is everywhere, at any point in time and space, and we must not be silent and indifferent about this phenomenon. I call for a joint integration of efforts to deal with areas of awareness and information in order to provide a broad response to this disturbing trend.”

The most prominent form of antisemitism is propaganda, according to the report. These cases represent 39% of all reported incidents, showing a 15% increase from 2021. Other expressions of antisemitism are “vandalism (28%); physical violence (14%); verbal (11%); and delegitimacy (7%),” with demonstrations accounting for 1% of events.

The report showed that, in 2022, a majority of reported antisemitic incidents took place in Europe and the United States, occupying 46% and 39% of cases respectively.

The US has experienced an “alarming increase” in antisemitism from both white supremacist organisations and from the progressive left. In recent years, “there has been a jump [of] 61% in the number of cases of violence or planning of violence against Jewish institutions” and “a 125% increase in the number of hate crimes against Jews in New York state” as well as an increase of approximately 20% in major cities such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles in the first half of 2022.

Latin America, on the other hand, experienced some positive change in 2022 “in light of positive legislation in the countries of the region”, however, there’s still concern that economic decline may be “fertile ground for antisemitism in the future”.

Furthermore, the report stated, “the strengthening of Iranian ties with anti-American elements in Latin America” have strengthened Iran’s nuclear capabilities, posing a threat to the South American Jewish community “in terms of terrorism in the classical sense rather than a risk of antisemitism”.



Great Britain experienced a 43% decrease in antisemitic incidents in the beginning of 2022 from 2021 (at which point the number of cases in the first half of the year was at “an all-time record high” of 1 371). However, there appears to be an increase in antisemitism in the British education system, namely a “173% increase in the number of antisemitic incidents in schools” over the past five years.

Likewise, Italy reported a notable presence of antisemitism within its schools as well as its government, particularly its most recent election campaign. The country also experienced an increase in antisemitic incidents overall.

Although German police reported an average of five cases of antisemitism per day in 2022, these numbers were significantly lower than those of the past two years, during which the outbreak of the pandemic, as well as operation “Guardian of the Walls” both seemed to have caused an increase in antisemitism.

Statistics in France show a decrease from 2021, however they also reveal “a grim picture that about 74% of French Jews were victims of antisemitic acts during their life”, prompting many of them to avoid displaying religious symbols or clothing. And, while “the election of President Emmanuel Macron for a second term is a vote to maintain the moderate character of the country”, the election system “caused a storm in the form of the rise of extreme factions that encourage antisemitism”.

In Russia, there has been a decrease in antisemitic incidents in the past decade, although studies show that “antisemitism is still rooted in the country”. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has incited “antisemitic statements towards the Jewish communities in both countries, alongside conspiracies regarding Israel’s involvement in the war”. These antisemitic conspiracy theories of Jews aiming to take over the world and profit from the war have also spread to nearby countries such as Poland.

Additionally, while Ukraine’s number of reports has decreased since the outbreak of the war, it’s assumed that these numbers are inaccurate. It’s evident that “the Jewish community of Ukraine continues to publish reports on antisemitic incidents, but under the sounds of war, it’s not possible to see the full picture of the state of antisemitism in the country”.

Though Australia has been “characterised as an inclusive and pluralistic country, active in the war against antisemitism”, there has been an increase in antisemitism in the country in recent years, including spreading of false information about the Holocaust as well as vandalism and physical and verbal attacks.

Moving forward, one of the most problematic areas seems to be antisemitic attacks online. “Antisemitism on social media is increasing at an alarming rate and unfortunately, as history has taught us, it will also lead to physical acts,” said Ya’akov Hagoel, the chairperson of the WZO. Hagoel submitted a proposal to former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett “to recognise victims of antisemitism in the world as victims of hostilities”. The World Zionist Organization “raise[s] a clear black flag in view of the increase in incitement on the networks, and call[s] on heads of state to raise the fight against antisemitism to the top of the list of priorities”.



# SA's green-energy transition obscured by potholes

OPINION

ERIN BERMAN-LEVY



Global warming and climate change have become a conversation staple, especially over the past decade. We have already experienced first-hand the effects in South Africa and around the world. Over the past few years, South Africans have witnessed extreme heat waves, devastating floods, even mild earthquakes.

The number of natural disasters in the world increased 71% in the past 20 years, and a staggering 950% since the 1960s, with experts predicting exponential increases in the future. There's absolutely no doubt that if we're to have any hope of curbing these alarming disasters, more needs to be done, and with a real sense of urgency.

Though South Africa is by no means a primary culprit in global greenhouse gas emissions, we're a country

something that needs to be at the foreground of this discussion.

In addition to energy generation, South Africa plays host to some of the world's greatest polluting companies, particularly in the mining space.

With all this in mind, the most obvious questions are: what are we doing to stem the flow of greenhouse gases emitted in South Africa? And what more can be done?

This complex debate can be broken down into two main areas: actions taken by the government, and actions taken by the private sector.

For a bit of context, "net-zero" refers to a global target – set in the Paris Climate Accords – for the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere to be equal to the amount being absorbed or removed. According to global benchmarking,

South Africa is rated as having an "insufficient" approach toward net-zero targets. This rating is attributed to the combination of our government's internationally supported targets, and policies being implemented to achieve these targets.

The good news is that recently, we have witnessed a far more urgent push towards a renewable energy transition.

Regardless of the fact that this is mostly coming from a desperate need to supplement our frail energy grid, it's still encouraging to see the government removing red

tape in the development of green energy projects and offering tax incentives for companies to pursue these projects.

Another shining light is that our president recently identified the enormous opportunities which lie in developing a green hydrogen sector in South Africa. Hydrogen is an extremely effective fuel source which produces water as its only emission. It's crazy, I know.

Up until recently, it has been relatively expensive to produce cleanly, and has had a limited market, but that's changing rapidly. With improving technology and costs starting to come down significantly, more and more countries have identified hydrogen as their chosen fuel of the future.

Geographically, South Africa is regarded as one of the three best countries in the world to generate and export green hydrogen, so it's exciting to see that the government is taking steps towards exploiting this potential.

Unfortunately, there are still a couple of major areas of concern. Transport is another major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and with South Africa's rail infrastructure close to non-existent, the transport of people, materials, livestock, and freight is largely carried out by trucks and buses – notorious for being heavy pollutants.

Another is that recently, the department of mineral resources and energy has been making statements which allude to the fact that it would like to put more of its focus on maintaining and developing coal power stations rather than the shift towards renewables.

Now onto the private sector. The shift we're seeing towards a greener private sector is quite an interesting one. I already mentioned government incentives for companies to pursue renewable energy projects, however these are fairly insignificant in comparison to global standards. That being said, there has recently been an explosion of renewable energy projects among some of the biggest entities in South Africa.

Our fragile electrical grid means that companies are at a point where they don't really have any option but to produce at least a portion of their own power just to stay operational. Solar energy combined with battery backup systems has traditionally been an expensive alternative to consider. However, when you factor in the cost of running diesel generators for a third of the day as well as losses due to downtime, exploration of these solutions isn't just cost effective, it's almost imperative. This is the primary reason for such an uptick in these green energy projects.

Large international companies have major operations in South Africa, particularly in the mining and automotive sectors. And though South Africa may have relatively slack emission standards and policies, these companies don't. Most of their global headquarters are pushing them to reduce their carbon footprint around the world. Notably, one of the largest mining companies in the world has developed a 300-ton truck powered solely by hydrogen which is in operation in Limpopo.

To wrap up, though elements of the South African government's strategy and roadmap provide excitement about the country's decarbonisation and renewable energy transition, I would like to see a lot more. In order for us to be in line with global net-zero targets, we need to have a more robust commitment to shift energy generation, transportation, agriculture – as well as many other key sectors – towards a greener future.

With shifts in policy within state-owned enterprises, a focus on exciting green opportunities, as well as incentives and penalties in the private sector, South Africa has the potential to be a key player in a greener future on a global scale.

• Erin Berman-Levy is an industrial engineer and chief executive of Blue Echo Energy, a company that specialises in providing innovative renewable energy solutions.



South Africa has a heavy reliance on coal for energy generation

that has a heavy reliance on coal for energy generation. Considering the fact that generation of energy accounts for more than 70% of global greenhouse gases, this is



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# Holocaust ‘Book of Names’ reveals identity of 4.8 million victims

RENEE GHERT-ZAND – JTA

When Yad Vashem was created in 1953 on the slopes of Jerusalem’s Mount of Remembrance to commemorate the Holocaust, its founders understood that one of the central functions of the institution would be to document the names of the six million Jewish victims. It was seen as a moral imperative, to demonstrate that behind the almost inconceivable number were real individuals whose lives were cut short by the Nazis.

Now, to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January, Yad Vashem is inaugurating its Book of Names – a monumental installation containing the names of 4 800 000 victims of the Shoah – at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York. Among those participating in the Book of Names’ opening ceremony on 26 January will be UN Secretary General António Guterres, Israel’s permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Gilad Erdan, and Yad Vashem’s chairperson, Dani Dayan, a former consul general of Israel in New York. “The Shoah was the murder of six million individual Jews. Each one who died deserves to be remembered as an individual, and not only as part of a nameless collective,” Dayan said. The Book of Names will be on display at the UN for a month. Afterward, it will be transferred to its permanent location at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, in Jerusalem, where it will be open to public viewing in time for Yom HaShoah, the Israeli and Jewish Holocaust remembrance day, in April.

The installation is an updated version of the Yad Vashem Book of Names that has been on permanent display at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland since 2017. The new version, which contains 500 000 additional names, stands 6.5 feet high (1.98m) and approximately 3.3 feet wide. Its total length is 26.5 feet. The massive volume lists the names of the victims in alphabetical order and, where the information is known, includes their birth dates, home towns, and places of death. The book has blank pages at the end symbolising the approximately one million victims whose names aren’t yet recorded. The names in the book are

sourced from Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. “We have been collecting the names of individual Holocaust victims since 1954, mainly through Pages of Testimony,” said Alexander Avram, the director of Yad Vashem’s Hall of Names and the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. The Pages of Testimony are one-page forms that survivors and remaining family and friends complete with the names and biographical information of the victims. “Starting about 20 years ago, we have been able to go beyond these pages and look to thousands of other sources for names,” Avram said. “These include lists of victims produced by federal archives or organisations in different countries, deportation lists

compiled by researchers and museums, and names gathered by memorial sites and institutions. We’ve also sourced hundreds of thousands of names from our own collections.”

The special team that finds the names and archives them in Yad Vashem’s names database is challenged by the fact that the Nazis either tried to eliminate traces of their crimes against humanity by destroying records, or never registered Jews’ names in the first place – especially in Eastern Europe. “Few ghettos had censuses or name registrations,” noted Avram. “Hungarian transport lists had numbers, but not names, and they were all taken to extermination sites. Similarly, there were only numerical reports of the Jews killed by the Einsatzgruppen [the mobile paramilitary killing squads organised by the Nazis]. At Auschwitz, 900 000, men, women and children were sent straight to their deaths. Only the names of those sent to slave labour there were registered on cards, and the Nazis destroyed most of these records.” The Book of Names is one component of Yad Vashem’s new strategic plan to increase Holocaust remembrance in Israel and the world at a time when the number of survivors is dwindling and Holocaust denial and antisemitism are on the rise, Dayan said. In addition to the permanent installations at Auschwitz and Yad Vashem, there are plans for a third version of the book to be created as a travelling exhibition.

“Our mission will be much more challenging, but also much more important and vital,” Dayan said of the coming era when no survivors remain. “We have to find innovative ways to reflect on and educate about what happened. I believe you cannot remain indifferent to such a huge display when you see it.” Dayan said he first experienced the power of the installation when he travelled to Auschwitz to see its initial version and found the names of his father’s uncles who were murdered in Poland. New Yorker Bronia Brandman, a child survivor of Auschwitz originally from Jaworzno, Poland, was similarly moved when she embarked on a “roots trip” with her grandson, Sruli Klaristenfeld, in April 2017.

Brandman’s large immediate and extended families were almost entirely wiped out by the Nazis. Klaristenfeld navigated through the massive Book of Names at Auschwitz-Birkenau and found the names of his grandmother’s parents and other relatives. “It was a physical and permanent manifestation of their memory,” Klaristenfeld said. Brandman said the impact of the monumental installation cannot be underestimated. “People are indifferent. Many have no concept of the Holocaust ever happening and how it could be that six million innocent people were murdered in cold blood, including 1.5 million children,” she said. “The importance of the Book of Names is that the victims are immortalised for the future, and the past is never forgotten.” Dayan said he looked forward to the Book of Names’ arrival at Yad Vashem after its display at the UN.

“Yad Vashem is the natural permanent home for the Book of Names,” he said. “The public will be able to come and browse and find relatives, people with the same name as theirs or from the same locations as their families, or even to just pay respect to the victims.” Avram said he expected the pages of the new book to be as worn from touch by visitors seeking the names of their family members as the pages of the Book of Names exhibited at Auschwitz. “Many families need a tangible, tactile way to reunite with the memory of the victims,” he said. “It’s the closest we can get to providing a gravestone.” Meanwhile, the work of recovering the unknown victims’ names will continue apace, as it has for the past seven decades. “It’s a debt we have toward the victims,” Dayan said. “We cannot let them be consigned to lost pages of history. That’s our promise to them – and to future generations.”

• *This article is sponsored by and produced in collaboration with Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre. This story was produced by JTA’s native content team.*

## Dutch youth show ignorance of Holocaust in Netherlands

DAVID I. KLEIN – JTA

A recent study of the Dutch population conducted by the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany showed an alarming lack of education about the Holocaust in the Netherlands.



For one, a majority of Dutch respondents across all age groups didn’t cite their own country as a place where the Holocaust took place, in spite of the fact that the Netherlands was the setting of the world’s most widely-read Holocaust memoirs – Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl* – which has been translated into more than 70 languages. About 75% of the country’s Jews were killed during the Holocaust, one of the highest rates in Europe. The study, for which Schoen Cooperman Research surveyed 2 000 people across the country of over 17 million, also found that a majority of respondents (54%) and a slightly larger share of those in the millennial and “Gen Z” generations (59%) didn’t know that the number of Jews murdered by the Nazis totalled six million. Many said the total was as little as two million or fewer. “Survey after survey, we continue to witness a decline in Holocaust knowledge and awareness. Equally disturbing is the trend towards Holocaust denial and distortion,” said Claims Conference President Gideon

Taylor in a statement about the study released on 25 January. “To address this trend, we must put greater focus on Holocaust education in our schools globally.” The Netherlands isn’t in a category of its own in such numbers. A study published on 24 January by the American Jewish Committee found that a similar proportion of Americans – 47% compared to 54% in the Netherlands – didn’t know that six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. However, researchers also found that the percentage of Dutch people who thought the Holocaust was a myth or greatly exaggerated (12%) was higher than in any other nation previously surveyed by the Claims Conference, an organisation that advocates for and distributes restitution funds to Nazi victims and their descendants. Nearly a quarter of those in the younger generations believed it acceptable to hold

neo-Nazi views. “One of the more troubling trends we continue to see in these surveys is the rise in numbers of people who believe the Holocaust was a myth or that the number of Jews murdered is exaggerated,” said Greg Schneider, Claims Conference executive vice-president. In spite of those findings, a majority of Dutch respondents (77%) said that they felt that Holocaust education was increasingly necessary in the country. “While many of the historical facts related to the Holocaust in the Netherlands aren’t known, I’m encouraged by the number of respondents to this survey that believe Holocaust education is important,” said Emile Schrijver, the general director of Amsterdam’s Jewish Cultural Quarter, and one of the people who conducted the survey. “We know that we can work together with educators to ensure the trends we see in Holocaust denial and distortion and the rise in antisemitism are countered by a robust curriculum of Holocaust education.”

## Tennis legend Kloss honoured

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Former South African number-one tennis player Ilana Kloss says it was a dream come true to win Junior Wimbledon in 1972 as a teenager, and now, this Jewish legend of South African sport is honoured that an international women’s tennis tournament is going to be named after her. Rising South African stars will compete against international competitors in The Ilana Kloss International, an upcoming International Tennis Federation (ITF) tournament in Pretoria that starts on 5 March. This World Tennis Tour \$25 000 (R430 000) ITF prize-money event starts at TuksTennis, the University of Pretoria’s tennis centre. Organisers chose to name it after the Johannesburg-born Kloss, whom they describe as “a living legend” in this country. “I wish all the participants the best of luck, and I know this tournament will give rising South African stars a chance to display their immense potential,” Kloss said ahead of the tournament, which will be taking place for the fourth time. Local women’s tennis has been further boosted by yet another women’s international tournament in Pretoria at the same venue on 12 March. These tournaments don’t just further TSA’s pledge to host more women’s events, they “offer South African players an opportunity to earn valuable international ranking points on their home turf without incurring the high costs and associated stresses of international travel”, says Kloss, a two-time Grand Slam doubles champion. Kloss, an inductee in the United States National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and

International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, told the *SA Jewish Report* that one of the highlights of her tennis career was winning the singles, doubles, and mixed titles at the Maccabi Games in 1973 and then being chosen to carry the South African flag in the 1977 Maccabiah. “I led the country’s delegation into the stadium in Israel with my hero, the country’s prime minister Golda Meir, in attendance,” she said. Kloss is a winner of Junior Wimbledon, which the likes of Martina Hingis, Amelie Mauresmo, Caroline Wozniacki, Ivan Lendl, Pat Cash, and Roger Federer went on to win. “I wasn’t seeded, and it was a big upset,” Kloss said. “Also, Tennis South Africa didn’t want me to go. In those days, they only sent boys, not girls, so my parents and my coach, Sheila Summers, helped to make the trip possible.” Kloss clearly remembers winning the United States Open Junior title in 1974, two Grand Slam doubles titles, the United States Open Women’s Doubles in 1976 with South African Linky Boshoff, and the French Open Mixed Doubles with Australian Kim Warrick in 1976. She grew up in a traditional Jewish family. “Fortunately, my parents were open-minded and encouraged my sister, Merle, and me to be independent and follow our dreams. Both my parents were members of Jeppe Lawn Tennis Club and loved tennis. Every weekend was spent at the tennis club. I loved tennis from the very beginning, and would hit tennis balls against the wall until I could get an adult to play with me. “We were also fortunate to have the South African Open Tennis Championships at Ellis Park annually, where the best players in the world participated. I was a ball girl for the tournament. Seeing how good the best were, I became obsessed with becoming good enough to



# Spielberg’s *Fabelmans* gets seven Oscar nods

ANDREW LAPIN – JTA

The *Fabelmans*, Steven Spielberg’s autobiographical drama about his Jewish upbringing, had an expected strong haul of Oscar nominations, picking up seven nods on Tuesday, 24 January.

A remake of a movie once targeted by the Nazis, a blockbuster embroiled in a lawsuit with an Israeli family, and a documentary by the programme director of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival were also recognised in a list jam-packed with Jewish characters, stories, and artists.

Spielberg’s movie overcame an anaemic box-office showing to score nominations in the major categories of best picture, director, and screenplay, for Spielberg and celebrated Jewish playwright and screenwriter Tony Kushner. The directing nomination brings Spielberg’s total nominations in the category to nine, tying him with Martin Scorsese for the second-most directing nominations in Oscar history.

The film also scored acting nods for Judd Hirsch, who is Jewish, and Michelle Williams, who recently said she was planning to raise her two children with Judaism.

The *Fabelmans* was the best-picture nominee with the strongest Jewish themes, but it wasn’t the only one. The psychological drama *Tár*, starring Cate Blanchett as a problematic conductor, picked up six nominations, including for picture, actress, and director. The film weaves Jewish mysticism into its storytelling.

*All Quiet On The Western Front*, Netflix’s new German-language adaptation of the classic 1929 novel about the horrors experienced by German soldiers during World War I, was also nominated for nine Oscars, including best picture, international feature, and adapted screenplay. The film’s source material was once banned and burned by the ascending Nazi Party, which believed its anti-war stance made the German military look weak and constituted a threat to its plans for world domination.

When the book’s initial 1930 film adaptation, directed by Jewish filmmaker Lewis Milestone, was released in Germany, Nazis led by Joseph Goebbels set off stink bombs, released mice into the theatres, and called the movie a “*Judenfilm*” (Jewish film). Germany and Austria banned the film from being shown in their countries,

and the public-censorship campaign led the novel’s author, Erich Maria Remarque, to renounce his German citizenship (Nazis were erroneously labelling him a Jew).

In response, Jewish studio head Carl Laemmle agreed to edit the movie heavily and remove material deemed objectionable to the Nazis in order to improve its commercial prospects in Germany. One possible silver lining for the remake’s producers was that the 1930 film went on to win best picture that year.

Back to this year’s Oscars. *Top Gun: Maverick*, the action blockbuster sequel, picked up four nominations, including for best picture. The film’s distributor, Paramount, is embroiled in a copyright lawsuit with the family of Israeli journalist, Ehud Yonay, whose magazine article about a navy fighter pilot school was the basis for the original *Top Gun* in 1986. In November, a judge dismissed Paramount’s attempts to throw out the suit and ruled the Yonay family could proceed with their claims.

The writer, director, and actress, Sarah Polley, also scored a nomination for best adapted screenplay for her drama *Women Talking*, about a group of abused women in an isolated Mennonite community, which was also nominated for best picture. Polley has a Jewish biological father, whose secret parentage she explored in her 2013 documentary *Stories We Tell*.

The Jewish film producer Gail Berman also scored her first Oscar nomination for producing best picture nominee *Elvis*, while Jewish producing partners Darren Aronofsky and Ari Handel scored their own best picture nomination for *The Whale*. The movie, which Aronofsky directed, stars Brendan Fraser (also nominated) as a morbidly obese English professor.

In the performing categories, one actor was nominated for playing a real-life Jewish convert: Ana de Armas received a best actress nomination for her portrayal of Marilyn Monroe in Netflix’s *Blonde*. Monroe converted to Judaism in the 1950s, and remained devoted to the religion even after divorcing her husband, Jewish playwright Arthur Miller.

Also, veteran actress Jamie Lee Curtis – whose father, Golden Age Hollywood actor Tony Curtis, was Jewish – picked up her first-ever Oscar nomination for her supporting role as a sinister tax officer in the multiverse sci-fi comedy *Everything Everywhere All At Once*.



Steven Spielberg on the set of *The Fabelmans*

Photo: Merie Weismiller Wallace Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment

Curtis is nominated in the category alongside her co-star, Stephanie Hsu, who is also known to fans of the very Jewish TV series *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* as Mei Lin, a Chinese restaurant owner who gets together with co-lead Joel Maisel. Early buzz on the upcoming fifth season of *Maisel* says that Hsu’s character will convert to Judaism.

Another *Everything Everywhere* co-star, Jewish actress Jenny Slate, helped a different film score an Oscar nomination in the best animated feature category: the stop-motion mockumentary *Marcel The Shell With Shoes On*. Slate co-wrote the feature with her ex-husband, Dean Fleischer-Camp, who directs. Slate also voices the lead role of Marcel. However, she’s not one of the nominated producers on the film.

*All The Beauty And The Bloodshed*, a portrait of the outsider artist, Nan Goldin, and her years-long activism campaign against opioid manufacturers the Sackler family, was nominated in the best documentary feature category and is favoured to win. The film documents how Goldin was born to Jewish parents but had an emotionally abusive family life and left home in her teens. The Sacklers are also Jewish.

The documentary short category resulted in the second nomination in a row for Jewish filmmaker Jay Rosenblatt, whose documentary *How Do You Measure A Year* chronicles many years of his daughter Ella’s birthdays. Rosenblatt is programme director of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival.

Veteran Polish filmmaker Jerzy Skolimowski was also nominated in the international feature category for his drama *EO*, told from the perspective of a donkey. Skolimowski’s father was a member of the Polish resistance and his mother hid a Jewish family in their house during World War II.

Jewish composer Justin Hurwitz, who won an Oscar for his work on *La La Land*, was nominated again for the score for *Babylon*, a follow-up production with that film’s director, Damien Chazelle.

And in the original song category, Jewish songwriter Diane Warren extended her nomination streak to 14 for the number *Applause*, from the feminist documentary *Tell It Like A Woman*. Warren has never won a competitive Oscar but did receive an honorary Academy Award last year.

**SLAVA SLEVIN, 99, BELOVED WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, GREAT-GRANDMOTHER, SISTER, AUNT, COUSIN AND FRIEND, PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY AT HOME IN CINCINNATI OHIO ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 2023.**

Slava was born in Russia on 7 June 1923, to Rosa and Osher Altshuler. She moved to South Africa at age two. Slava married Benjamin Slevin in 1946 and together they had two daughters Melanie and Jillian.

Slava’s father Osher was the first Rabbi, Chazzan, teacher at Sydenham Highlands North Synagogue. From a young child, Slava led a life devoted to Jewish traditions and values and has been described as being the essence of a Jewish soul. She was deeply involved in leading charitable events as well as creating a Jewish community while living in Kempton Park. Sending her daughters to King David School was a priority and was achieved by spending many hours transporting them from Kempton Park to Linksfield Johannesburg on a daily basis!

Slava was an accomplished pianist. She played in a youth orchestra and later became a concert pianist. She also worked tirelessly for Magen David Adom, raising funds for medical supplies, equipment, and ambulances for Israel.

At age 70, Slava moved to the United States to be closer to her children, grandchildren and, later, great grandchildren, all of whom were the loves of her life. She had a lovely sense of humour, and when interacting with them chatter and laughter filled the house. Slava was also an incredible friend and knew how to make everyone feel loved and special.

Slava lived with grace and gratitude. When asked how she wanted to be remembered, she said as a decent human being. She achieved that in spades. She has left an indelible imprint on the lives of her family and friends who were very blessed to have her for so many years.

Slava is survived by her two daughters, Melanie (Colin) Zadikoff and Jillian (David) Kantor; her four grandchildren, Cindy (Ilan) Rodzynek, Nikki (Steven) Sacks, Ryan (Alycia) Kantor and Roben (Gregory) Smolar; and her 10 great-grandchildren, Ben, Mia, and Eden Rodzynek, Dylan and Ian Sacks, Sam and Jacob Kantor, and Jocey, Joshua, and Gabriel Smolar.

Funeral services were held on Monday, 9 January at Weil Kahn Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Magen David Adom.

The family can be contacted at [jilliankantor@me.com](mailto:jilliankantor@me.com)



## to clinch tournament

be a pro and travel the world.”

Kloss has the following advice for South African tennis players who hope to follow in her footsteps: “Work hard, be sure to compete in tournaments, and surround yourself with great coaches on and off the court.”

Kloss said she had met all the top tennis players over the years. “From Rod Laver, Billie Jean King, and Arthur Ashe, to every top player from each generation.”

She said her parents helped to shape her Jewish identity.

“My parents instilled wonderful values about respecting others who aren’t like us and always helping those who might be less fortunate. When you give, you tend to receive.”

After she hung up her tennis racket, Kloss was chief executive and commissioner of World TeamTennis, managing both the professional sports league and nationwide grassroots recreational programmes from 2001 to 2018.

Today, Kloss is the chief executive of Billie Jean King Enterprises, where she leads business development and oversees strategic partnerships. “We focus on three areas: representation of Billie Jean and overseeing her marketing, branding, and legacy; representation of other athletes and media sports personalities; and consulting in sports and business,” she

says. “We also focus on investment in various sports-related teams and business or technology mostly focused on helping women.”

Kloss is also actively involved in the Women’s



Ilana Kloss

Sports Foundation as a member of the executive board. She was named Sports Businesswoman of the Year by the Warsaw Sports Marketing Centre in 2007. She’s a part owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Sparks, and Angel City Football Club. She serves on the board of the Elton John AIDS Foundation and Billie Jean King

Leadership Initiative, and is a senior advisor to the Professional Women’s Hockey Players Association.

Kloss is a member of both the National and International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, sitting alongside the likes of Ali Bacher and Syd Nomis as one of the 11 South Africans in the latter hall. She’s well-known for her work with her long-time partner, the legendary Billie Jean King, as an advocate for gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity, in sport as well as in wider society.

Tennis is “big business now”, Kloss said, compared to her playing days. “The equipment, training, and technology have added a lot,” she said.



# The top-eight Jewish sports moments of 2022

JACOB GURVIS – JTA

For Jewish sports fans, 2022 was a year of very high highs and particularly low lows. Autumn was dominated by an antisemitism scandal involving Brooklyn Nets star Kyrie Irving, who shared a link to an antisemitic film on Twitter and initially refused to apologise. Irving was suspended for eight games and brought increased attention to antisemitism, black-Jewish relations, and the Black Hebrew Israelite movement. Off-court controversy aside, Jewish athletes enjoyed an All-Star calibre year in 2022. Jews across sports shined on the international stage at the Maccabiah Games, the Beijing Olympics, and the World Cup. And as the sports world honoured some of the best to ever do it – we’re looking at you, Sandy Koufax and Sue Bird – we also got a glimpse of the next generation of Jewish sports stars.

We also bid farewell to some familiar faces who retired, such as Jewish Super Bowl champions Ali Marpet and Mitchell Schwartz and the duo behind the *Jewish Sports Review* magazine. And, we shared memories of those who died this year, including Jewish Olympic gold medallist “Ike” Berger, and Vin Scully and Franco Harris – two sports legends who aren’t Jewish but whose careers are cherished by Jewish fans. But in the end, here are the *Jewish Sport Report’s* top Jewish sports moments of the year, plus one to look forward to in 2023.

**8. Jason Brown performed to *Schindler’s List* at the 2022 Beijing Olympics**  
The 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing kicked off the year in Jewish sports with flair. More than a dozen Jewish athletes from around the world

competed in hockey, skating, snowboarding, and more. Perhaps the best known Jewish Olympian was Jason Brown, a figure skater who won a bronze medal at the 2014 Games in Sochi. Brown didn’t medal in 2022 (he finished sixth), but he did nab a personal best score, while skating to the theme from *Schindler’s List*. Emery Lehman also represented the United States on the ice, winning a bronze team medal in speed skating.

**7. Max Fried continued his MLB dominance**  
With four full seasons in Major League Baseball now under his belt, Atlanta Braves ace Max Fried has solidified himself as one of the sport’s best pitchers. In 2022, Fried earned his first All-Star selection while winning his third straight Gold Glove award as the National League’s best defensive pitcher. He finished as the runner-up for NL Cy Young Award, given to the league’s best pitcher, and was named to the Second All-MLB team for the second straight year, by posting a 14-7 record in 2022 (identical to his 2021 output) with an MLB-seventh-best 2.48 earned run average and 170 strikeouts.

The 28-year-old left-hander is a Los Angeles native, and his childhood hero was Dodger legend and fellow lefty, Sandy Koufax, who had his own highlight this year – more below.

**6. Greg Joseph made multiple historic game-winning field goals**  
The Minnesota Vikings owe much of their success this season to the right foot of Greg Joseph. The Jewish kicker, who has engaged with Jewish communities in every city he has played



in, has five game-winning field goals this season, including two in a row that each made history. In Week 15, Joseph put a 40-yarder (36.5m) through the uprights to secure a 39-36 Vikings win over the Indianapolis Colts, capping off the largest comeback in NFL history. The Colts had led 33-0. Then in Week 16, Joseph blasted a 61-yarder (55.8m) just as time expired to beat the New York Giants, 27-24. The kick was the longest of Joseph’s career, the longest in Vikings franchise history and likely the longest ever by a Jewish player.

**5. Sue Bird brought her remarkable career to an end**  
From her earliest college days to her final professional game in the WNBA, Sue Bird has been among the best of the best in any sport: she is a two-time NCAA champion, a four-time WNBA champion, a five-time Olympic gold medallist, and a four-time FIBA World Champion. She’s the all-time WNBA leader in assists, games played, minutes played, All-Star appearances, and seasons played. Bird announced in June that she would retire after the season, and her Seattle Storm lost in the playoff semifinals to the Las Vegas Aces, ending her 19-year career in the WNBA. Bird, who obtained Israeli citizenship in 2006 in part so she could play for European teams, became a respected entrepreneur, activist, and basketball executive even before her playing career ended, setting her up for a successful next chapter.

**4. The sports world marked the 50th anniversary of the Munich massacre**  
This year was the 50th anniversary of the Munich Olympics massacre, the terrorist attack at the 1972 Games that took the lives of 11 Israelis after an hours-long hostage standoff. After a tense negotiation process, the Israeli families of the victims reached a compensation deal with Germany in time for the official 50th anniversary ceremony. Meanwhile, the Israeli marathon team won gold at the European Championships in Munich, and ESPN produced a documentary about Shaul Ladany, an Olympic racewalker who survived both the Holocaust and the Munich attack. The episode, reported and narrated by Jewish Emmy winner Jeremy Schaap, told the story of the massacre to a mainstream audience on the network’s *E:60* series.

**3. Sandy Koufax immortalised at Dodger Stadium**  
Sandy Koufax’s legacy as the greatest Jewish athlete ever has never been in question. But earlier in 2022, almost 60 years after the Hall of Fame pitcher sat out a World Series game to observe Yom Kippur, Koufax, now 86, was given one of his most meaningful tributes yet: a permanent statue at Dodger Stadium.

The Dodgers unveiled the Koufax statue, next to one of his former teammates, Jackie Robinson, with a pregame ceremony on 18 June, three years after the statue was originally announced. The unveiling had been postponed due to the pandemic. Koufax’s Jewish identity – and his famous Yom Kippur sit-out – were highlighted at the ceremony alongside his many career accolades, which include three Cy Young Awards and three seasons each with more than 300 strikeouts and an earned run average below two.

**2. Ryan Turell began his professional basketball career with a kippah**  
Ryan Turell, the former Yeshiva University basketball phenomenon, took a big step toward his goal of becoming the NBA’s first-ever Orthodox player. Turell was selected by the Motor City Cruise in October’s G League draft, joining the minor-league affiliate of the Detroit Pistons. He became the first known Orthodox player in the league. For Jewish fans in Detroit, Turell’s ascension has provided a boost of excitement and enthusiasm. And for the NBA organisation, it created an opportunity to engage with the local Jewish community. The Pistons are offering kosher concessions at the Cruise arena and celebrated Jewish Heritage Night and Hanukkah this month. In the Cruise’s regular season opener on 27 December, Turell dropped 21 points in only 17 minutes.

**1. The Maccabiah Games returned to Israel – with a special guest**  
The 21st Maccabiah Games, also known as the “Jewish Olympics”, took centre stage in Israel in July. Originally scheduled for 2021, the quadrennial international Jewish sports competition kicked off at Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem with an opening ceremony on 14 July, and US President Joe Biden made an appearance, becoming the first American president to do so. With 10 000 Jewish athletes from around the world convening for two weeks, there were plenty of stories to follow. Here are a few highlights:

At the “Jewish Olympics”, Argentine athletes made a splash playing for their country – and for many others. Footwear designer Stuart Weitzman is a Maccabiah ping pong medallist. How the Maccabiah Games supported a Jewish family in the face of tragedy. Lastly, as the calendar has turned to a new year, there is (at least) one major Jewish sports storyline on deck: the 2023 World Baseball Classic, which will take place in Miami in March. After its Cinderella run in 2017 and an Olympic appearance in 2021, Team Israel returns to the international stage with more major league talent than ever, including All-Star outfielder Joc Pederson and pitchers Dean Kremer and Eli Morgan.

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# Solar is the new black

It's a sad situation. Years ago, when you saw a group of men gathered excitedly around a shared cell phone, the likelihood was they were up to no good. Today, there's a great chance that they are comparing electricity consumption and production based on the information from their solar app.

Whereas in the past, if men were to compare the size of their storage, the options were vast, today it's the size of their inverter that gets them most excited.

The debate about preferred back-up power will continue to consume us. With the African National Congress's Eskom becoming more unstable and less reliable, South Africans have accepted that their power is in their own hands (see what I did there).

The problem is that solar owners are like vegans. No sooner have you met them, they will let you know that they have moved over, when they did, how they did it, and what percentage off the grid they are. This varies from user to user, with one vegan telling me that they are 167% independent of Eskom – and that's on a rainy day. At night. With one panel tied behind their back.

Solar, it seems, is the new black. Which makes generators very last season.

Whereas generators are far from quiet, generator owners are. They seldom brag about the fact that they are producing enough kilowatts in their driveway to power a small city or that they don't need to keep checking the sky for clouds when their inverter is only at 60%. They simply get on with it, continue to buy diesel (because Eskom can't) and relentlessly annoy the neighbours.

I saw a complaint on a street WhatsApp group recently. Apparently, the writer was concerned about the sound of the motors running and the smell of diesel in the air. The group

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



responded with love and patience, commiserated with her, but continued to feed the beasts.

I happen to enjoy the sound of things working. Solar, to some extent, is unnaturally silent (like electric cars). For me, the smell of burning diesel, the magnificence of the motor turning over, fills me with joy.

The difference between solar and generator is that little etiquette is demanded from panel producers. Whereas solar users might be annoying personality-wise, generator owners let their equipment do the talking. Which has resulted in more than one neighbourly dispute. And is likely to result in many more.

Some years ago, when we installed a generator in a home we no longer live in, I sent our neighbours flowers and a note saying, "Please don't hate us, hate Eskom." Next week, when the new generator is installed, there's little chance that anyone will even notice given the noise from their own backyard.

The power crisis is unacceptable. It's infuriating because it is solvable. The government needs to remove all red tape, open the production of electricity to independent producers, and allow solar generation to be sold back into the grid. As is already the case in Cape Town.

In the interim, it's important that we remember that load shedding isn't our neighbour's fault. That solar users are people too. And that deep down, all we're looking for is a little bit of light.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Transforming toxic environments

Global antisemitism has been trending steadily upwards since the turn of the century, with most diaspora countries noting a major increase in activity on virtually a year-by-year basis. A new report by the World Zionist Organization showing a slowdown in the rate of incidents in 2022 is to be welcomed, but only with caution. It's much too soon to tell whether these findings indicate a reversal of the trends of the past 20 years, and furthermore, even with the somewhat reduced figures, the situation confronting world Jewry remains deeply concerning. Direct anti-Jewish attacks may be down, but that's not true of anti-Jewish attitudes which, to a significant degree through organisations boycotting Israel, are becoming increasingly widespread.

South Africa has also witnessed a steady rise in reported attacks on the Jewish community. By way of illustration, the number of incidents jointly logged by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and Community Security Organisation in 2022 was about twice the annual average recorded in the early years of the century. That being said, compared with other major diaspora countries (Canada, France, Australia, and the United Kingdom among them) antisemitism thankfully continues to be a relatively low-level problem in South Africa. This is true not only concerning the bare numbers (even now, annual figures seldom exceed the 100-mark) but in terms of the gravity of the incidents reported. It's extremely rare, for example, for antisemitically motivated attacks to involve violent assault, and the same is true when it comes to damage and desecration of Jewish property.

University campuses have become especially difficult spaces for Jewish students. The extent of the problem in the United Kingdom is explored in a report released this week by the Community Security Trust, and similarly worrying trends are in evidence in

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



the United States and elsewhere. Irrespective of their views on Israel, many Jewish students are feeling ostracised by their peers, to the point that a growing number feel the need to hide their identity. It wasn't so long ago that our own students were being made to feel similarly uncomfortable and unwelcome on campus. Fortunately, there has since been a striking turn-around in that regard, the result of a sustained, strategic effort by the South African Union of Jewish Students. One of the encouraging lessons we can take from this is that by working together, the sensible allocation of resources, considered forward planning, and sustained effort, it's possible to transform even the most toxic of environments for the better.

### Communal diary

The SAJBD's Communal Diary, one the longest running services the Board has provided to the community, enables Jewish organisations to avoid schedule clashes in planning their functions while also publicising "what's on" for the general Jewish public. Through this facility, we recently picked up a clash between two major communal organisations who had their annual fundraisers on the same night and connected the two organisations so that they could make other arrangements well in advance. To avoid these kinds of potentially disastrous mix-ups, I urge all organisations to send relevant details of their upcoming functions to [sajbod@sajbd.co.za](mailto:sajbod@sajbd.co.za). The Communal Diary can be accessed on our website, <https://www.sajbd.org/>.

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

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

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60  
1923 to 1964 = R10  
1931 = R500 Up to R3 000  
1939 = R10 000 Up to R30 000



30  
1923 to 1964 = R5  
1931 = R10 000 Up to R50 000



### Torah Academy enrolls children in army of Hashem



#### Torah Academy Tzivos Hashem soldiers

Torah Academy launched Jewish children's organisation Tzivos Hashem in the primary school on 18 January.

Started by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1980, Tzivos Hashem is an international organisation which believes that every Jewish child is a soldier in the army of Hashem, working to fight negativity and the yetzer hara (negative inclination) by increasing in Torah study and fulfilment of mitzvot.

Each soldier begins as a private in the army, and is promoted in rank as they increase study and mitzvot.

### Chabad Nursery School appoints new principal

After 40 years at the helm of Chabad Nursery School, Principal Rebetzin Raisy Hecht is handing over the reins to the much-loved and experienced teacher, Michelle Aserman, and the vibrant Esther Hecht as the newly appointed professional development director. The school has also introduced initiatives and upgrades, particularly in the area of social-emotional learning. Each class has a "safe space" – an emotional regulation learning centre – as well as many other rituals that promote emotional safety and connection in an integrated way.



Esther Hecht, Michelle Aserman and Rebetzin Raisy Hecht

### Letters

#### THE CRYING LEFT AND OBEDIENT RIGHT

This letter speaks to what pundits have already confirmed. The left are a bunch of cry babies who get all their demands, and the right stands by to deliver concessions.

Israeli and American politics are a sham. The left imposes its will when not in power, and the right collapses out of its own ineptitude.

Take judicial reform. Regarding the exact agenda that the right came to fix, it became a laughing stock, accepting the Aryeh Deri result. The left laughs together, revelling in its unabashed behaviour.

In the United States, Jim Jordan demands answers, and is treated like a child by the justice department, which just says no. When the left jovially signed with its pens at the Trump impeachment gala, it moved with ease and sympathy to its cause. The left always wins. That's why politics is a sham.

Moral terptitude is the definition of politics, and the right and left are members. Israel isn't a religiously run state, and the greatest hope is that the collective left can be guided to return to move towards any kind of truth. – **Steven Genack – Clifton, New Jersey, United States**

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