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**Rabbi Pini Pink
Chabad Greenstone**

I just returned from New
York for the annual Chabad
Lubavitch Shluchim

Conference. It's our annual opportunity for continued
development and growth, to hear each other's
successes, and how we can grow from our challenges.

The conference often takes place around the week
of Parshat Toldot, and Isaac – Yitzchak – is a great role
model for anyone in a communal role.

Isaac was 123 years old when he summoned his son,
Esau, and said, "I have grown old. I don't know the day
of my death." He instructed Esau to prepare a meal for
him so that he could bless him before he died.

What was suddenly concerning Isaac? The
famous commentator, Rashi, explains: "If a person
is approaching the age at which his parents died, he
should worry five years beforehand and five years
afterwards. Isaac was 123 years old. He thought,
'Perhaps I'll live to my mother's age; she died at 127.
If so, I'm within five years of her age.' He therefore
said, 'I don't know the day of my death. I may reach
my mother's age or perhaps my father's.'"

At that point, Isaac was five years younger than his
mother had been at her passing, and there was still
a good chance that he would live another 50 years
or more, as his father had. In fact, he ultimately lived
to the age of 180, five years longer than his father,
Abraham. In addition, Sarah's passing at the age of
127 had been due to unnatural causes, so it was safe
to assume that Isaac would live longer than she did.
Yet, Isaac began concerning himself with his end-
of-life affairs at the age of 123, the youngest age,
according to his calculations, that it was likely for him
to die.

As we know from the akeida, when
Abraham had been willing to sacrifice
Isaac, Isaac's personality trait was
gevurah (discipline and hardness). It
was for this reason that the akeida is
called a test for Abraham, a man of
kindness, and not for Isaac, a man of
strength. So, for Isaac to be calculating
his early passing is no surprise.

Nevertheless, in spite of Isaac's
nature of discipline and moderation, the
blessings that he bestowed upon Jacob
as he prepared for his potential passing
were the most extensive and richest
given in the Torah, from the "dew of the

heaven" to "the fat of the earth".

Isaac's paradoxical behaviour teaches
us, his descendants and spiritual heirs,
that even if a person is extremely
disciplined and hard on themselves,
this cannot have any bearing on the
way they relate to and give to others.
Their relationship with a fellow Jew
must always be one of affection and
benevolence, generously sharing "from
the dew of heaven and the fat of the
earth". This has become even more
apparent in our lives with the current
events in Israel. Please G-d, only good
news should come from our homeland.

Torah Thought

Davening outside the White House during the
pro-Israel rally in Washington, DC

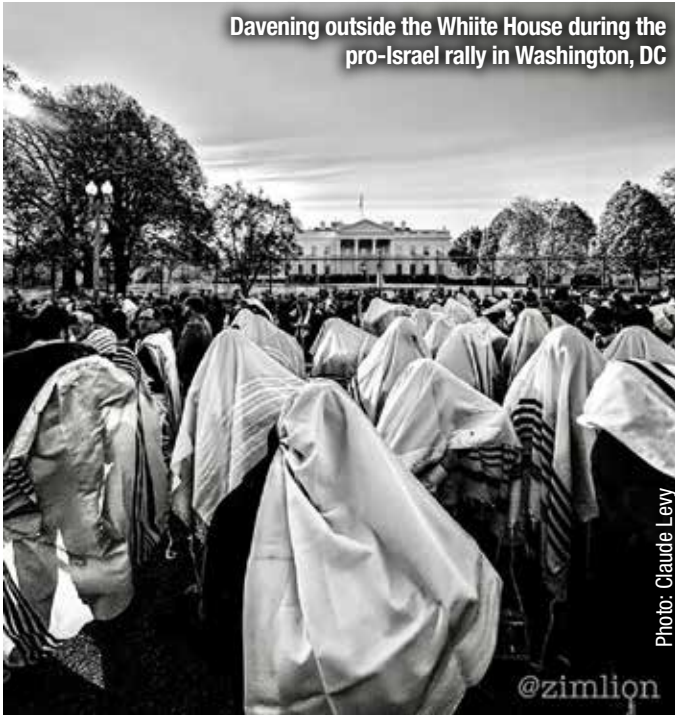


Photo: Claude Levy

and universities to cancel classes and bus
students – and in some cases their families – to
Washington, DC.

Politically, attendees seemed to reflect the
broad pro-Israel tent that the organisers had
hoped for, with right-wing demonstrators
standing in the same crowd as a "Peace Bloc"
organised by progressive Jewish groups.

as, "Go to Hell Harvard" – a reference to recent
accusations that the university hasn't done
enough to fight antisemitism, and "F-Iran" over
a picture of former President Donald Trump.

There were also a significant number of
Christians at the rally, but the vast majority
were Jews.

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‘Love and support our greatest Iron Dome’ – Perez

NICOLA MILTZ

The head of World Mizrahi, Johannesburg-born Rabbi Doron Perez, whose son, Daniel, is believed to be held hostage in Gaza, wants him, wherever he is, to know he’s not alone.

In the depths of his anguish, the rabbi told the *SA Jewish Report* that if given a chance to send a message to his son, he would tell him, “Dan, you know how much your parents and family love you and how much we care about you, but I want you to know that there’s an entire people who are praying for you, who are with you, who are giving you strength. You aren’t alone. Be strong. There’s light at the end of the tunnel. We’re praying for you.”

It has been more than 40 days since Perez and his wife, Shelley, last heard from their son, who grew up in Johannesburg before making aliya nine years ago. Perez described Daniel as physically and mentally strong, a determined and focused young man, who could do anything he put his mind to.

Daniel, a tank commander, was stationed at the Nahal Oz army base, close to Gaza, when Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and went on a depraved killing, raping, destroying, and kidnapping rampage on 7 October.

Unbeknown to him at the time, Daniel’s older brother, Yonatan, 24, was fighting nearby.

Yonatan was later ambushed by the last remaining terrorists in the area and shot in the leg after hours of intense battle. His recovery has been described as miraculous by Perez, who says emphatically things “could have gone very differently for him”.

Perez has emerged as a beacon of resilience and unwavering faith, inspiring countless others to embrace hope in the face of deep turmoil and uncertainty. People who have come to offer him strength have left feeling stronger themselves.

“We’re not alone. If we were, it would be unimaginable,” he said.

The Perez family has received much love, support, and prayer from thousands of people

near and far. The South African community, he said, feels their pain intimately, knowing both Yonatan and Daniel, who are products of the community.

“People have stepped up in extraordinary ways. One woman insists on doing our washing, and comes every day with our fresh laundry from the day before,” he said.

“If the world continued as normal while my own personal life had been turned upside down, and I was left alone to deal with such trembling and darkness, that would be unimaginable,” he said.

“It’s not a cliché to say that when people hold you up, then you can hold them up. I’m being carried by thousands all around the world who are davening for Daniel and sending messages. I don’t believe I would be



Rabbi Doron Perez – Executive Chairman of Mizrahi World Movement

Photo: Glen Kler Photography

able to do what I’m doing without this,” he said.

Describing it like being in the middle of the ocean in tempestuous waters, he feels like he is “being carried by this incredible wave of love and support”.

“I cannot imagine what Gilad Shalit’s family went through for five years while he was held hostage by terrorists before being released. We’re part of 239 other hostages, many of

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them with the most horrific, unimaginable stories. There are hundreds of other families going through what we’re going through.

“The whole of the Jewish world is coming together. It doesn’t change the fact that we must deal with it when we put our head on the pillow at night, it’s our son, but it’s different when you’re part of a catastrophe in which so many are in the same boat as you,” he said.

He also found strength in knowing that their situation could have been worse.

“I know that things could have been very different with Yonatan. If I’m honest with myself, there’s nothing good or easy about our situation, but I know it could have been worse, and we have hope for Daniel,” he said.

Recalling events on that terrible Shabbos, he told the *SA Jewish Report* that Yonatan called home later that afternoon with the news he had been shot, that he was in hospital, and that his brother’s tank was missing.

“Dad I’m okay. I’ve been shot, but I’m okay. Dad, you have no idea what’s going on here. I cannot explain to you,” is how the call went.

Reflecting on that ominous day, Perez said Yonatan had been home with the family in Yad Binyamin with his then fiancé, Galya Landau, when they rushed to the air raid shelter following multiple rocket alert sirens. Yonatan, an officer in the paratroopers, heard his phone ping incessantly. He was being summoned urgently to Sderot, which was under heavy attack.

He immediately sprang into action, even though he didn’t have his army weapon with him, only his personal handgun.

The family prayed, and waited for news.

Only once Perez heard exactly how events had unfolded from Yonatan’s commander a few days later, did he realise the full extent of the attack.

“I realised then that Hashem had done us an unbelievable *chesed* with Yonatan. Four of his friends who fought next to him were seriously injured, one shot in the back, two in the stomach. He was able to use his one friend’s gun, who was injured, and another one’s helmet, and fought for hours and hours,

seeing horrific things. The jeep in front of his was hit by a rocket propelled grenade, killing three officers. His jeep narrowly missed being hit by another one.

“Yonatan was familiar with the area, having been based there himself and having visited there many times previously,” he said.

The situation was tense and fraught. He was with a mixed group of soldiers from various units coming together for the first time in the face of extreme danger.

“They were fighting blind. Luckily, Yonatan knew that base, and over the course of a couple of hours, they managed to rescue and save many people. Unfortunately, they were ambushed by the last remaining terrorists on the base, and he was shot.”

“I don’t believe what I’m doing is heroic,” Perez said. “I’ve seen heroic people with the most monstrous stories to tell. My rabbinic colleague has buried two sons, while three others are in the army.

“When you have seen the grace of G-d with one son, and you know with absolute certainty that Hashem sent him there and took him out with a relatively light injury. It’s a blessing I cannot begin to explain. That doesn’t change what’s going on with Daniel. But you can’t have one *bracha* and *chesed* impacted by another challenge and curse. That’s not how life works. We must hold it all together.”

The family has been thrust into a vortex of extreme emotions ranging from anguish to joy and gratitude over Yonatan’s healing and subsequent marriage to Galya in a ceremony described by one guest as “the holiest, saddest and happiest, chuppah”.

At first, Daniel was declared missing. Days went by, and then the army changed this status to “in all likelihood taken hostage”.

For now, the family, clings to hope. Perez also finds strength from years of being there to support colleagues, friends, and congregants who have sought his care and support during difficult times.

“We’re not alone. We have hope. Many people don’t. The Jewish people’s unity, love, and support is our greatest Iron Dome.”

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Nasty business: Jewish companies weather boycott campaign

TALI FEINBERG

As the world marked 85 years since Kristallnacht, a pogrom in which Jewish businesses were viciously targeted by the Nazis in November 1938, anti-Israel extremists in South Africa chose to target Jewish-owned businesses in November 2023.

In an insidious, malicious, and shameless manner, they vandalised stores, threatened Jewish businesses via anonymous phone calls and social media, and attempted to create a reign of terror so that Jewish businessmen and women would hide in the shadows.

However, their campaign had the opposite effect, with Jewish business owners telling the *SA Jewish Report* that they feel prouder and stronger than ever, and are still passionate about contributing to the South African economy.

"The day after 7 October, I woke up and found I had lost 70% of my clients," says Sarah*, an entrepreneur who asked not to be named. A halaal business, she had many Muslim clients who she knew well. But that morning, they began to boycott her, simply because they knew she was Jewish. She had never made any public statement in support of Israel. As the days went on, she started getting anonymous phone calls.

A woman called to say, "You Jews are filth and scum. We need to wipe you out. We know you live in a Jewish area," recalls Sarah. She also got many threatening messages on social media. "Most of my clients are doctors and lawyers," she says. She had got to know many of them well, yet these were the same people who waged a vicious campaign against her, using their relationship with her as a weapon.

"I feel like world events are just an excuse for the antisemitism that was already there," she says. "They had done their research, and were ready to pounce."

Though being targeted was unnerving, Sarah hasn't let it get her down. "I don't want these people as clients anyway, as this has shown who they really are," she says. "While it is upsetting losing so many customers, I'll rebuild. I feel strong, and I'll rise above it."

Meanwhile, anti-Israel extremists continued their insidious campaign against Cape Union Mart and its chief executive, Philip Krawitz, spreading lies that they continue to hawk every time tensions flare in the Middle East. One TikTok user, @_gi_jess_, who has 13 000 followers, took this further, branding stores and clothing labels with stickers saying, "I have blood on my hands. Boycott Apartheid Israel. #FreePalestine." The video reached almost 82 000 people. On a separate video, she said she has "Jewish/Afrikaner blood [and is] raising Lebanese Muslim kids".

The YouthForAlQuds organisation has called for a "National Day of Action" picketing outside Cape Union Mart stores on 18 November.

"Social media pages have exploded with negative comments about me and my company," says Krawitz. "In many cases, the comments are simply a regurgitation of allegations going back to 2017 when it was claimed that I was the largest donor to the Israeli army. Needless to say, that's totally fallacious. I've never given funds to the Israeli army or, for that matter, to any army anywhere in the world. I've supported humanitarian projects in Israel, which, in virtually all cases, have benefitted both Jews and Muslims, encouraging them to find commonalities.

"I'm a proud South African who loves his country and will do everything possible to make better lives for all," says Krawitz. "Our company could easily focus expansion on international markets. However, we've chosen rather to direct our investment at creating jobs in South Africa. If we can create more jobs, we'll reduce poverty. If we reduce poverty, we'll reduce crime. If we reduce crime, we'll attract investment. If we attract investment, we'll grow our economy.

"We employ close to 400 Muslim staff, many of whom

hold senior positions and who have served us loyally for decades," he says. "Sadly, those encouraging boycotts may limit our growth and prejudice not only new jobs but existing jobs within our company. In 90 years, we've never forcibly retrenched a single employee. We hope to be able to maintain that record.

"We've experienced boycotts and protests as well as vandalism in certain of our stores," he says. "While we reserve all our legal rights, we've taken a decision to avoid conflict wherever possible in the hope that reason and sanity will prevail. I love South Africa, and will do all I can to benefit our country. Jerusalem is mentioned 660 times in our Bible, and I'll also proudly proclaim my love and affection for Jerusalem and the state of Israel."

Among many other large, medium, and small businesses, Paul's Homemade Ice Cream was also targeted. "Last year, Paul visited Israel for a wedding and posted photographs from his holiday on his personal Instagram account," says Courtney Glajchen, speaking on behalf of Paul's Homemade Ice Cream. "The photographs weren't politically charged. Their subjects were snippets of Jerusalem and the Old City. What transpired was a defamatory, anti-Israel, and antisemitic smear campaign of Paul's Homemade Ice Cream.

"With the recent Israel-Hamas war, the story has resurfaced, and there's a BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] campaign to boycott Paul's Homemade Ice Cream and other Jewish-owned businesses. This campaign is clearly a result of pure antisemitism hidden under the guise of an anti-Israel campaign."

Paul's Homemade Ice Cream was featured on numerous "boycott" lists and pages circulating on



Sticker placed on clothing labels at Cape Union Mart by pro-Palestine supporters

social media. "We were attacked on our Instagram and Facebook pages and spammed with insulting comments directed at both Paul and Paul's Homemade Ice Cream," says Glajchen. "Some of our stockists were tagged in the comments and warned to stop stocking our products. Last week, one of our stockists refused to accept delivery of ice cream 'because of what was going on in Israel'. We

engaged with him robustly on the matter.

"We've largely ignored the abuse," she says. "We've continued business as usual in our operations, and carried on posting regularly on our social media. Our sales remain good although it has caused friction with a handful of our stockists. We're thankful to loyal customers of all religions and backgrounds who continue to support us in trying times."

To other business owners being targeted, she says, "It's a precarious situation, and as much as you are targeted, defamed, and boycotted, you should never apologise for being Jewish and for believing in the state of Israel's right to exist. We'll certainly never apologise for this.

"Paul's Homemade Ice Cream is a proudly South African, multiracial company employing people of a multitude of religions, beliefs, and ethnicities. We stand by our brand, our code of conduct, our employees, and in the belief that brands shouldn't be bullied by any cancel campaign, antisemitic or otherwise.

"The South African Jewish community shares an incredible bond and has the power to come together in difficult times," she says. "We implore the Jewish community to get behind Jewish-owned businesses that are being targeted and show their support by buying products or using the services of these businesses under attack, as well as showing support on social media platforms."

Pro-Palestinian groups also called for a boycott of Africa Padel after chairperson Rob Hersov expressed support for Israel, and planned to picket outside the courts on 18 November.

*Not her real name. Name withheld to protect her.

Board condemns antisemitic threats at anti-Israel rally

TALI FEINBERG

More than 10 000 people filled the streets of Cape Town on Saturday, 11 November, seething with animosity towards Israel, the local Jewish community, and the Democratic Alliance Western Cape government.

A sea of people chanted cries calling for the end of the Jewish state, which was echoed by the event's speakers. Some of the crowd and speakers also expressed support for Hamas. The march, organised by the Al Quds Foundation and the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), began at a mosque in District Six and ended at the Western Cape Legislature.

It was to these 10 000 people that one PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) speaker yelled, "We know where the murderers come from, they come from Herzlia, here in Cape Town." This was echoed to millions of viewers watching on SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) News.

"The Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies [Cape SAJBD] is outraged by the recent antisemitic attack on our children," says Cape SAJBD Executive Director Daniel Bloch. "During the pro-Hamas rally, one of the speakers openly attacked our Jewish school.

"We deplore this baseless, malicious and inflammatory assault on a proud and highly respected local school," he says. "These mischievous and bizarre allegations and threats, concocted by the anti-Israel movement, constitute incitement against a South African school that has taught Jewish children about their religion for more than 80 years. This harassment has no place in a constitutional democracy that prides itself on upholding diversity.

"Chapter two of our Constitution contains the Bill of Rights, which is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa," Bloch says. "It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality, and freedom. The state must respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights along with the right to religious freedom. Our schools and our children should be protected, just as we are.

"We already have assurances from both the premier's office as well as the Western Cape department of education that Herzlia is in no way under threat from being



Thousands of pro-Palestine protesters fill the streets of Cape Town

de-registered or closed," he says. "We further call on the City of Cape Town, the Western Cape provincial government, the national department of education, and the office of the president, to protect our children and condemn these pure acts of antisemitism, incitement, hatred, and aggression against South African children. The right to a decent education in a safe environment is a solemn one, vouchsafed by our Constitution to every child in our country."

Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis also condemned the statement against Herzlia, saying, "We condemn any hate speech uttered by radical minorities at protests, especially when that hate speech is directed towards little children. We've received video footage of a representative purportedly of the PAC speaking at yesterday's protest and calling young Jewish children in Cape Town 'murderers'. Such hateful language should be condemned by all. Radical elements don't speak for Capetonians, and don't even speak for the protesters they claim to represent."

The MJC said ahead of the event that, "We believe that the dispossessed land of the Palestinian people should be returned to its people. We call for the right to self-determination of Palestinians on their native land from the river to the sea. The Palestinians have an inalienable right to resist settler colonialism and apartheid by all means necessary within international law. We demand the right of return of all Palestinian refugees with full reparation."

At the march, protesters made a number of demands, including that, "The Western Cape government pledges unequivocal support and solidarity with the people of Palestine, just as it stood by the people of Ukraine; that the premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde, condemns the war crimes of Benjamin Netanyahu and promises to arrest him, just as he promised to arrest Vladimir Putin; that the Western Cape government condemns the apartheid state of Israel just as it condemned the Russian Federation; and that the premier condemns the United States for its hand in the mass killing of innocent people."

Also at the march, African National Congress (ANC) Secretary General, Fikile Mbalula said South Africa was on the side of the oppressed Palestinians and supported the demarche of Israel's ambassador to South Africa.

"We're sick and tired of the apartheid state of Israel, and we must demonstrate it with our actions. As the ANC, I say here today, from Nelson Mandela to [Cyril] Ramaphosa, we stand with the people of Palestine," Mbalula said. He said the ANC

Continued on page 5>>



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SA olah grieves friend killed in Jerusalem attack

TALI FEINBERG

A South African *olah* is mourning the loss of her dear friend, Rose Lubin (20), who was stabbed outside Jerusalem's Old City while on duty as a border police officer on 6 November. Lubin made aliya from Atlanta, Georgia, in August 2021, and was drafted to the police in March 2022.

At her funeral, a member of Lubin's border police unit lauded Lubin's bravery, saying she "fought like a lioness", preventing a "bigger terror attack". Lubin also defended her home, Kibbutz Saad, on 7 October from the Hamas terrorist attack.

"Rose and I first met on a Zoom call for new *olim*," says South African *olah*, Noa*. "I remember seeing Rose and her colourful hair. It really stood out to me. I then remember hearing her speak, and she started off with 'Hey y'all' in a strong southern accent. It was a shock to hear that a small girl like Rose, with such a sweet personality and colours in her hair, was a state champion wrestler and was in fact planning on drafting to Magav [the border police] in order to protect *Yerushalayim*.

"But looking at it now, there was no doubt that that is where she would draft to, because after living with her and becoming close to her it became clear that this five-foot-tall girl was in fact one of the strongest people, mentally and physically," says Noa. "She was determined and committed to staying fit. She was always the one to motivate all of us to get up, stop being lazy, and join her in a workout. I was always in awe of her commitment." The two lived together on Kibbutz Saad until March 2023.

"Rose was also one of those people that anyone could talk to," says Noa. "You felt comfortable in her presence straight away. She always knew the right things to say. She was the best listener. You could complain to her and somehow, she would change your perspective and make you see the good. She was truly a gift to this world."

Lubin was one of the only people from their *garin* (*olim* group) of 22 to still live on a kibbutz. "She had a special bond with her host family, and a unique connection to the kibbutz," says Noa. "Rose chose to spend Simchat Torah in her home on Kibbutz Saad. On the morning of 7 October, when it was clear that terrorists had infiltrated into Israel, she didn't think twice.

"She quickly got into her uniform, took her weapon, and went straight to the gate



Photo: Ian Ossendryver



Rose Lubin

Mourners and attendees at the funeral of Rose Lubin

of the kibbutz where she fiercely defended it for hours. I spoke to her on the morning of 7 October, to check that she was safe. When she told me she had joined the security forces, my nerves calmed. Rose had a way of making everything okay. I trusted her. With her there, I knew that the kibbutz would be okay.

"After guarding the kibbutz for hours, Rose was picked up and taken back to her base in Jerusalem. She had a love for the city," says Noa. "As she said, 'generations dreamed of arriving in Jerusalem, and we have the privilege of defending her'. From the day she drafted to the Magav, she knew that she wanted to guard Jerusalem. Her service didn't come without challenges. But she never complained, no matter how emotionally and physically draining it was. She started and ended each day with a smile.

"However, last Monday, she didn't get to end her day with a smile. While Rose was standing duty in Jerusalem, a 16-year-old terrorist from East Jerusalem came up to her and stabbed her. A 16-year-old who left his house that morning with one goal – to kill a soldier. A 16-year-old whose parents are now proud of him." The 16-year-old assailant was shot dead at the scene.

An investigation has since found "serious disciplinary and operational failure" in the circumstances surrounding Lubin's death, according to Israeli media. Reports indicate an officer went to buy food while on duty, leaving Lubin exposed.

"Whenever there were terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, Rose would always send a message to our *garin* group chat telling us that she was okay and that we must stay safe. On the Monday of the attack, we didn't

receive any message. Instead, we were told to pray because the person in critical condition was our Rose.

"I quickly organised a lift to the hospital she was going to because there was no doubt in my mind or that of the whole *garin* that we were going to be by her bedside while she recovered," says Noa. "Maybe I was being naïve, but the thought of her

dying didn't cross my mind because it was Rose. If anyone was going come out of this it would be Rose because she was healthy, she was strong, and how could something so terrible happen to such a precious person? Upon receiving the news that she was no longer with us, we all dropped to the floor in disbelief. In fact, we still are [in this state]. We can't believe that this colourful and lively

person has been taken from us." She says her friend "made an impact on every person she met. She had a desire not only to protect, but also to help. When she was younger, she volunteered with kids who were sick, and although it was an hour away from her house, she made sure to be there. Rose had many talents, one of which was singing. Her voice used to echo through our house as she sang to herself. She's someone we can learn so much from: how to be patient, how to be welcoming and warm, how to be positive, and how to treat everyone with respect.

"Rose wanted so many things for Israel," she says. "She had so many dreams, one of which was living in a house on the Kinneret with kids and horses. She just wanted peace for Israel, even if that meant she had to be the one protecting it. She dreamed of being the head of fitness in the Israel Defense Forces, and had so many plans for the army to make it better."

Describing Lubin's funeral, she says, "It was a hectic day filled with tears. *Am Yisrael* really showed up – there were more than 4 000 people. It was a sad day for everyone – the whole country. It still doesn't feel real, even a week afterwards."

*Noa isn't her real name. Name changed to protect her.

Board condemns antisemitic threats at anti-Israel rally

>>Continued from page 4

wouldn't rest until the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was arrested.

"We want them to even add more pressure by closing down the embassy, that's what we want, because the events on the ground don't call for the recognition of the Zionist state of Israel – killing and bombing innocent children and people of Palestine," Mbalula said.

March convener Yunus Allie said South Africa must cut ties with Israel permanently. "If you see what they are doing to our brothers and sisters, they are desecrating churches, mosques, children, and the elders. So, we need to come out to show that against this atrocity, this genocide, we can't allow this to carry on."

Adding to the call was Mandla Mandela, the grandson of Nelson Mandela, who said, "We didn't ask for a consultation process, we asked for the embassy of Israel to be shut down now!" Only people supporting Palestine were the "true sons and daughters of our liberator [his grandfather Nelson Mandela]", he said. It wasn't enough for the department of international relations and cooperation to demarche the ambassador. "We want you to give true meaning to what Nelson Mandela expects us to do. Expel the Israeli ambassador immediately!"

Mandela also called on protesters to disrupt a Christian prayer gathering to be held in Sea Point the following day, resulting in a violent confrontation. (See page 1.) "We won't tolerate the apartheid state of Israel's flag being flown," he shouted to cheers.

Anti-apartheid cleric Dr Allan Boesak said, "That apartheid state that has been waging a war of extermination for the past

75 years against our people, shut it [the Israeli embassy] down! For every Palestinian child in a coffin, we say shut it down! Every piece of land stolen from our people in Palestine, we say shut it down! We cannot wait any longer."

Economic Freedom Fighters MP Nazier Paulsen said, "This is a fight against oppression. We must continue that fight, and we mustn't only march for Gaza when the bombs are dropping. Palestine has been occupied for 75 years and for the past couple of years, we have been voting for a Zionist political party here in the Western Cape."

National Freedom Party MP Shaik Emam said, "This isn't about Muslims, Christians, and Jews. We have our Christian brothers, our Jewish brothers, and our Muslim brothers and sisters here. What's happening in Palestine is a Holocaust; what's happening in Palestine is genocide."

The Dean of St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, Michael Weeder, delivered a message on behalf of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba. "We need to call out the shameful partisanship of Western powers in this conflict, and to commend countries which have suspended their diplomatic ties with Israel, and call on those countries to review diplomatic ties with countries which are supplying arms," he said. "If only the world leaders would invest half as much money and energy into peace making as they invest in war, we would have peace."

Jewish community member Mervyn Bennun also addressed the crowd, calling for "Palestine to be free, from the river to the sea."



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You're angry and afraid – direct it properly

OPINION

At times like this, when it feels like global sentiment has once again turned against Jews, the world can seem like a dark and frightening place.

We're faced with an ongoing barrage of images, news items, and social media posts which makes us acutely aware of our minority status in the world. Post Holocaust, a total of 15 million Jews exist globally in a world of 8.1 billion. It's unsurprising then that the reporting on Israel globally and in South Africa is experienced as something of an assault, as coverage of the Gaza war drifts from sympathy with the plight of Palestinians to denial of the horrors of 7 October and outright antisemitism. Against this background, we experience a sense of frustration as mainstream and social media take up this narrative uncritically.

But there are many, many alternatives to stewing in this mire of helplessness and frustration. I offer three suggestions below, of small and simple ways to re-engage with the world in a way that's both functional and empowering.

1. Recognise the emotions you're feeling, and direct them appropriately.

The Hamas attacks on 7 October, and the subsequent response of much of the world's population, reignited a sense of existentialist angst among Jews in the world that we thought had gone forever. Recognise the way that this has shaken us, grieved us, and angered us. The grief won't go away easily, but the fear and anger now need to be put in their correct place. You can choose to watch the monstrous people who tear down posters of kidnapped babies, or you can watch the true powers in the world, the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, and most of all Germany, stand firmly with Israel.

You can panic about your safety in South Africa, or you can assess the risks rationally, guided by communal organisations. Of course, the risks to Jews at the moment across the world are higher than they have been. This isn't "business as usual" in any country where Jews live. But terrifying our children and giving in to panic helps no-one. If you're unsure what's safe, ask; if you see something suspicious or you're concerned for your safety, call it in. The line between panic and caution is quite wide. Take the time to recognise your emotions so you can clearly differentiate between them.

Like fear, misplaced anger can do far more harm than good. The anger we feel now towards Hamas and towards a seemingly hostile world, is sometimes transferred to anger against anything that seems to frustrate or hinder us, no matter how mildly, in our daily world. When the object of our rage is so far out of our grasp, it's easy for the person standing in front of us to become the target of our frustration. Again, recognise and acknowledge the stress we're all feeling. Particularly given the huge pressure we're all under, we need to treat people within and beyond our community respectfully and kindly. Shouting at the Community Security Organisation guard, being impatient with a fellow parent, or being rude, is perhaps understandable in these difficult times, but it's not right. So, take a moment to consider the stress that you and they are under, and pull back.

2. Revisit your consumption and engagement with mainstream and social media.

It's enraging to watch/read/hear a biased, sometimes nonsensical, occasionally antisemitic news report. But there are a few things worth considering to lower your blood pressure. Every form of media has the equivalent of an off button. It's not hiding your head in the sand, nor retreating into a bubble to choose media which presents a fair representation of the conflict. That doesn't mean the media have to take your side consistently, nor that they shouldn't present alternative voices. If that's difficult for us to accept because we're still raw and broken from 7 October, honestly, just turn it off, close it, mute it, block it. There are many interesting, beautiful, entertaining



One of the SAJBD initiatives to spread truth about the war against Hamas in Israel

things to watch, read, listen to, and scroll over. Give yourself permission to let some of that light into your media habits.

If you prefer to continue to engage with the media, it can be empowering to respond to bias where appropriate. If you phone in, or write a letter or article in response to some seemingly egregious statement or position, please adhere to some basic rules of engagement. Know your facts. This is an excellent time to brush up on your Jewish history, Israeli history, and general knowledge of geo-politics. If this is a space you wish to engage in, then you do need to pop any bubbles you may find yourself in. Understand the issues at stake, understand your opponent's position, and know that slogans don't translate well into reasoned arguments, then feel free to wade in.

Keep your temper. With emotions so high over

KAREN MILNER



these issues, it can feel almost inhuman to remain calm in the face of outrageous statements in the media. But if our intent is to convince, then losing patience can equate to losing the battle. Having said that, we don't have to tolerate the threats and insults that have been made against us. I believe the South African Jewish Board of Deputies has done an excellent job of speaking truth to power beyond the echo chamber of our community. That's our job, and we'll continue to do it without fear.

3. Don't feed the trolls.

This phrase, popular within the social media space, refers to the social media algorithms designed to manufacture outrage and foster division. There are many accounts on social media created explicitly to undermine civil discourse and push the narrative to the extremes. That's where the engagement, and the numbers necessary for the survival of the social media companies come from. The exhortation not to feed the trolls works in "real life" too. Most people like you and me are decent human beings. We don't have to agree to be able to live together in a highly diverse country. We shouldn't be pushed to extremes by the radical minority screaming obscenities at rallies and marches. Always engage with empathy and compassion.

We're desolate about the massive loss of life that this war has led to, and we can mourn the innocents on both sides. The problem isn't that there's too much empathy in the world, but that there's too little.

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

October massacre changed everything – including silence about terror

OPINION

MARC KAHLBERG



The terror attacks I've witnessed in Israel since making aliya from South Africa more than 35 years ago will forever be embedded in my mind.

Serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and then in the Israel Police, my recollections aren't just personal reflections, but mirrored by so many, for so long. Reflections that fused anger, distress, depression, fear, guilt at times, and resentment, but always courage and hope for a better and more secure future.

Fulfilling a childhood dream and immigrating to Israel, I believed I knew everything I needed to about this wonderful country's establishment, its successes, innovation, people from diverse backgrounds, start-ups, technology, and indeed wars, and the terror that took place before I was even born.

I witnessed firsthand the Gulf War; the first and second Palestinian uprisings and resulting carnage; and the violence of ongoing suicide terror by Hamas and other terrorist groups for so long, who really are all under the same umbrella no matter what they call themselves.

I thought I had seen everything both while serving in the IDF and thereafter as an Israeli police officer working through the turmoil and violence of organised crime; human trafficking; and without any doubt, the most extreme and violent terror that a human being can witness throughout the 16 gruesome terror attacks of carnage and bloodshed that I witnessed personally until my retirement in early 2006.

On Friday, 6 October 2023, my dad, Ronny, was buried at West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg. He was hospitalised for several weeks prior to his passing, and on every occasion that we spoke during that time, he told me to look after myself and the family here in Israel in a manner that he never did. His message was, indeed, very different to the usual greetings he sent, subconsciously and seemingly a warning considering the turmoil Israel was going through internally.

On the morning of Saturday, 7 October 2023, even though I hadn't been in service for

more than 16 years, I started to receive calls and requests from friends asking me if I knew what was taking place in the kibbutzim and areas on the border with Gaza. I was asked to try and find information on children whose parents couldn't reach them telephonically. I was asked to try and locate their cars and any information I could. I started to hear and see chatter from active and retired police officers as to the chaos and carnage taking place.

Nothing could have prepared me for the ultimate result and sheer unimaginable scale of the terror attack carried out by packs of brutal raging murderers, rapists, and sadists called Hamas.

This terror attack and, indeed, declaration of war against the people of Israel, Jews, and other sane and understanding citizens of the world shouldn't serve as a trigger for critical conversation between generations to come, nor should it create echoes of past events that were too painful to discuss or show until now, it should be heard and seen everywhere, every day.

The terror events I witnessed, including the 2002 Passover terror attack in Netanya, have largely been forgotten by most.

On Saturday, 7 October 2023, the world witnessed a massacre carried out by Hamas baby killers, cowards, and murderers.

There were others who helped them, and there were indeed those who incited, trained, and funded them.

For our children to live their dreams, we need to have our kidnapped hostages returned, they need to be made safe first. The world needs to know and understand our history and our future, as understanding history allows us to correct our mistakes in the future. We cannot and shouldn't make the same mistakes again. Hamas must be eliminated.

This very dark period of Israel's existence must be shown and broadcast in every manner possible. The events that led up to, and indeed the mass murders of 7 October, must be taught

Continued on page 14>>

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Hate speech or free speech?

The *SA Jewish Report* asked **Advocate Mark Oppenheimer**, an expert in the boundary between hate speech and freedom of expression, to weigh in on the anti-Israel and/or antisemitic hatred in South Africa right now.

What are the legal protections for marches and expression?

The Constitution provides that everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket, and to present petitions. Our courts have held that “free assembly is a most important right for it’s generally only organised public opinion that carries weight and it’s extremely difficult to organise if there’s no right of public assembly”.

We also have extensive free speech rights, and our courts have even held that “the fact that particular expression may be hurtful of people’s feelings, or wounding, distasteful, politically inflammatory, or downright offensive, doesn’t exclude it from protection”.

However, violent protest and genuine hate speech aren’t protected. Hate speech refers to the use of words and symbols that promote hatred against people on grounds such as race, religion, and belief, that demonstrates an intention to be harmful or incite harm against them. Jews are a protected group on the grounds of religion, and Zionists are protected based on belief.

In the *Qwelane Case*, the Constitutional Court held that it’s a truth, universally acknowledged, that “[t]o be hated, despised, and alone is the ultimate fear of all human beings”. Speech is powerful – it has the ability to build, promote, and nurture, but it can also denigrate, humiliate, and destroy. Hate speech is one of the most devastating modes of subverting the dignity and self-worth of human beings. This is so because hate speech marginalises and delegitimises individuals based on their membership of a group. To promote hatred is to instil detestation, enmity, ill-will, and malevolence in another.

Pro-Palestinian protesters causing havoc at a pro-Israel prayer gathering on the Sea Point promenade on 12 November



Last week, a peaceful Christian pro-Israel vigil took place outside Parliament and was violently attacked by anti-Israel extremists. This week, a legal pro-Israel protest in Cape Town was violently brought to a halt by extremists. What does this say about freedom of speech and expression?

It shows that people’s rights to express solidarity with Israel are being trampled upon.

What should have happened to prevent this incident?

Knowing that South Africans hold different views on the current conflict, it’s important for the police to protect both sides’ ability to express their views lawfully. Waving an Israeli flag, putting up pictures of those who have been kidnapped by Hamas, and expressing condemnation for the actions of Hamas is entirely protected speech which protesters should be able to express free from violent attack.

Similarly, those who want to express solidarity with Palestinians, within the limits of the law, ought to be able to do that. However, celebrating the deaths of Jews and Israeli

citizens isn’t protected speech. In Australia protesters chanted ‘Gas the Jews!’ Outside of the American embassy in Sandton, Pagad [People Against Gangsterism and Drugs] shouted, ‘One Zionist, one bullet!’; ‘Death to Israel!’; ‘Death to America!’; and ‘Death to the Saudis!’ It has also called for the war to be decentralised and brought to South Africa. Those sorts of statements amount to hate speech, and aren’t protected.

Arguably, some symbols would also not be protected. At the Sea Point marches, people carried an ISIS (Islamic State) flag. ISIS is a terror group which has beheaded journalists and killed civilians. The Hamas flag was displayed by the Palestinian Solidarity Forum at the University of Cape Town. Showing solidarity with these terror groups may amount to hate speech. In South Africa, certain public displays of the old South African flag have been viewed by our courts as hate speech. This sets a precedent which may lead to displays of the ISIS and Hamas flags being prohibited.

We must also recognise that there is some value in allowing protests on both sides of the issue so that we can assess the appetite for anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment. We’ll know how much time and energy needs to be spent on educating people about the horrors of antisemitism.

What can we as the Jewish community do about the current situation?

We need to be cognisant of the scope of the problem, and recognise that there’s quite a large appetite for antisemitism and anti-Zionism in South Africa. The number of people who have been attending these rallies is large, and we should concentrate our efforts in protecting the community. We should continue to speak

out against those who are hostile to Jews and Israel. Unfortunately, this includes the African National Congress and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), who have both come out quite clearly in favour of Hamas. The EFF has said

that when it comes into power next year, it will arm Hamas. Julius Malema said that Hamas has nothing to be ashamed of. They see 7 October as an act of decolonisation. The EFF celebrated the massacre of innocent women, children, and babies.

As a community, we must use the full force of the law to take action against those who have committed hate speech or breached the Riotous Assemblies Act by inciting people to commit crimes against us. Calling for Jews to be murdered is itself a crime.

South Africa’s Jewish community is vastly diminishing. From a peak of about 120 000, there are now close to only 50 000 Jews left. But we’re a strong, vibrant community that has done an incredible job of protecting the Jewish people. We have forged bonds with Black Christians and it’s important that we continue to reach out to other communities.

There’s a parallel narrative between what’s happened to Afrikaans farmers and what’s happened to Jews. Farmers have been tortured and killed in the most brutal manner. We must denounce those attacks, and recognise that we walk a similar path to other minority communities in South Africa.

The company SA keeps

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



South Africa’s minister of international relations and cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, signed a memorandum of understanding with Syria this week. Last month, she was in Tehran, meeting the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran. After the 7 October attack on Israel, she was one of very few leaders to phone terrorist group Hamas, which claimed responsibility for the atrocities.

South Africa has friendly ties with countries such as Cuba, North Korea, and Venezuela. These states and terrorist organisations have appalling human rights records and pitiful rankings for the quality of their democracy. This should matter to South Africa, which prides itself on making human rights the bedrock of its foreign policy. So why is it consorting with all of Israel’s enemies?

In December 1993, a seminal article purportedly written by Nelson Mandela appeared in the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*. The piece was in fact penned by a group of left-leaning academics. Nevertheless, this article outlining the contours of foreign policy under the soon-to-be-elected African National Congress (ANC) government stated, “Human rights will be the light that guides our foreign affairs.”

Over the past 30 years, this claim has been thrown back in the government’s face by its critics, including the political opposition, academia, and journalists.

Among many other examples: human rights seemed to matter little when South Africa quietly watched election after election being stolen in Zimbabwe as political violence, or the threat of it, was unleashed on Zimbabwean

citizens. Human rights were sidelined when South Africa didn’t oppose the ruthless junta in Myanmar during South Africa’s first stint on the United Nations Security Council in 2007. Human rights wasn’t a factor when South Africa held joint military exercises with Russia and China in 2019 and 2023, the latter on the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In all these cases, pragmatism trumped principles.

According to the V-Dem Institute’s democracy indices, in 2023, out of 179 countries, China is ranked 177th; North Korea 175th; Myanmar 173rd; Syria 166th; Cuba 152nd; Iran 151st; Russia 145th; Venezuela 143rd; and Zimbabwe 127th. Ukraine is 105th. South Africa comes in at 51st; and Israel is 49th. Palestine (Gaza) is ranked 165th, by the way; and Palestine (West Bank) is 135th.

Syria has perpetrated killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearance and displacement, torture, and abuse by authorities. In the first half of 2023, there were 501 civilians killed including 42 women and 71 children, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

In its turn, Iran is also rife with unlawful or arbitrary killings by the government and its agents, harsh penalties for crimes, execution of teenage offenders, and restriction of free speech and the press. The United Nations recorded a record number of executions in Iran in 2022, as well as the arrests of thousands of children and many allegations of torture by government forces.

South Africa is a prominent country in the Global South, a loose term that covers developing countries around the world even if they lie geographically in the northern hemisphere. It’s a major state in the BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. BRICS added six more states to its ranks, including the Israel-hating Iran, during the summit meeting held in Sandton in August 2023.

Pretoria finds common ground with the aspirations and ideologies of fellow non-Western states. They are pushing for a multipolar world in which the United States isn’t the sole source of global power. South Africa loudly calls for reform of global governance institutions forged in the crucible of World War II.

But the politics of solidarity still hold considerable sway – when the ANC befriends you, you’re a friend for life. A multitude of sins will be ignored, downplayed, and forgiven. And South Africa apparently buys into the Sino-Russian argument that the West uses human rights as a stick to beat the Global South or stimulate regime change. Human rights aren’t seen as universal, to be enjoyed by everyone, but rather as a tool to be manipulated by Washington or Brussels or London to shame, embarrass, and disrespect southern governments.



And in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that sits in Geneva, South Africa has refused to vote in favour of any country-specific resolutions, shielding many despots and tyrants in Africa and further afield – with one notable exception. Item seven on the UNHRC at every single session is “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.” The very name of this item betrays its biases. South Africa consistently takes the strongest anti-Israel position possible in these discussions, and votes.

South Africa since 1994 has been one of Israel’s harshest international critics, as this current war with Hamas ably demonstrates. It’s myopically one-sided and biased, accusing Israel of a litany of crimes, and calling for the prime minister to be arrested by the International Criminal Court (ICC). It sees no irony in keeping quiet about the ICC warrant for Russian president Vladimir Putin, eventually persuading him not to attend the BRICS summit in person, where he would have risked arrest.

In another irony, South Africa vehemently opposes sanctions on Iran, Russia, and Zimbabwe. Sanctions were one of the pressures that brought down the apartheid regime in the 1990s. Of course, South Africa sees no problem in calling for sanctions against Israel.

I’ve often repeated a maxim that holds true here: “One’s enemies always commit human rights atrocities; one’s friends never do.”

• Steven Gruz is a political analyst in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

SA ‘uses Holocaust as a weapon against Jews’

LEE TANKLE

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish global human rights organisation, on 9 November released a statement criticising the South African government's decision to recall its diplomats from Israel and its "outrageous accusation that Israel was committing a Holocaust against the Palestinians in Gaza".

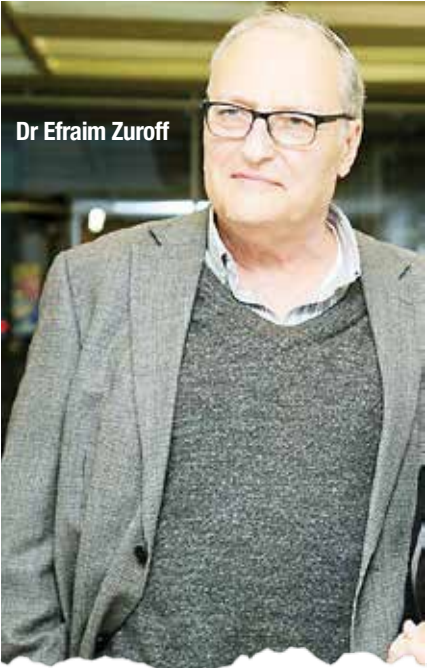
Dr Efraim Zuroff, the centre's Israel director and senior Holocaust historian, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the government's statement was distressing. "One of my jobs is to protect an accurate narrative of Holocaust history, and this isn't about the Holocaust, but this is important to the Jewish people. Like never before, we have seen that Jews have been mercilessly and barbarically murdered by terrorists.

"Before we know it, the South African government pulls all its diplomats out of Israel instead of announcing its support of Israel. This is somewhat a personal issue for me as two of my grandfather's brothers left Lithuania to come to South Africa and I still have some family members in Johannesburg," Zuroff said.

"I have fought my entire life for justice for victims of the Holocaust, to try and educate people on the Holocaust and preserve the memory of the Holocaust," Zuroff said. "When the South African government accuses Israel of committing a Holocaust, as if Israel wasn't attacked and more than 1 200 people killed, it minimises the attacks done by the murderous, barbaric Hamas terrorists.

These attacks were done with no respect for human life," Zuroff said.

To combat denial of these attacks, Zuroff said, it was important to show the impact of the mass murder in Israel. However, he conceded that some have already made



Dr Efraim Zuroff

government should be ashamed of itself, learn the accurate history of World War II and the Holocaust, and appropriately change its foreign policy.

"South Africa has people who are Holocaust educators, so the government can easily learn the facts and what the Holocaust means for us in order to understand the ignorance of its comments about Israel. [The government] doesn't seem to understand that it always starts with the Jews, but never ends with the Jews. Hamas can come for it next. Hamas doesn't want peace. It wants a world without any non-Muslims.

"If a body like the South African government accuses Israel of committing genocide and a Holocaust, I can promise you, you'll be hearing this again and again. If you don't criticise it, you don't call it out for its ignorance, then it will use [the Holocaust] again and again," Zuroff told the *SA Jewish Report*.

"The Holocaust is the ultimate weapon. So many try to claim that their cause is similar to the Holocaust. They try to use the Holocaust for causes which are nowhere near identical. We must call them out. The Holocaust was done to Jewish people, and will hopefully never be repeated.

"If someone is ignorant enough to call what happened in Israel a genocide, the facts don't matter, and that's the problem. The South African government doesn't care about what is going on in Gaza. Hamas doesn't want a Palestinian state. It wants to destroy Israel and take

over all the territory. Hamas doesn't want peace. If we want to survive and thrive in the state of Israel, we have to destroy Hamas.

"Jews have to reject these accusations," Zuroff said. "You must also question the impact on Jews living in South Africa. The government doesn't feel protective towards Jewish

people in South Africa even though Jews are important citizens. If there's no protection for Jews, Jews should reassess and analyse their situation.

"It always starts with words. These words are dangerous and hurtful to the Jews. They are turning the victims of the Holocaust into perpetrators." Zuroff said.

Hamas-supporting mob ‘an assault on human rights’

>>Continued from page 1

African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, "Hamas supporters think it's their right to threaten and harass Jews and Christians in this country. Does our government condone these infringements on South African rights and these violent protests?"

Said conflict resolution specialist Andre Vlok, "I believe we saw the poorly hidden hands of a few individuals and groups, either having common cause or working in support of their own agendas. For example, it's no secret that the city administration and local government have political enemies who would seek to benefit from any errors made by local government and law enforcement agencies."

Mark Shaw, the author of the recently released book *Breaking the Bombers: How the Hunt for Pagad Created a Crack Police Unit*, says, "While Pagad has now effectively split into two, the core group of the original Pagad, who seem to have taken the lead here, have a demonstrated history of violence including being linked to the bombings of the late 1990s and

early 2000s.

"After the bombings of civilian and state targets and the assassination of state officials [in the 1990s], they lost community support. I think they see this period as a chance to build mass support again. Taking the lead at the police station after arrests is a classic example of that.

"The rhetoric also unsurprisingly targets the state as 'Zionist protectors' – a classic Pagad sleight of hand used in the past. Though it's possible that they will resort to violence, I think they understand that the state wouldn't tolerate it. We can expect more inflammatory rhetoric."

Vlok says the presence of ISIS, Hamas, and Hezbollah flags and regalia "is clearly designed to inflame already emotional situations. Above all, we find the possibility of sheer antisemitism. It's an age-old conflict truism that people rally around flags and symbols, and if you want an enemy, you need to provide some of these symbols for your followers."

*Not his real name. Name withheld for security reasons.

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Tactical engagement – a wartime strategy for social media

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Using your voice at a time of war and devastation can be a double-edged sword, say those who have paid the emotional price for engaging in discussions on social media.

“The great tension of social media is that though it can be a medium to share at least parts of our story, it’s also a polarising battlefield used for politicking and identity bashing,” says multimedia content editor, singer-songwriter, and drama and guitar teacher Moshe Singer. This is why Singer promised himself that he wouldn’t become involved in any online fighting following the 7 October massacre, especially when the South African Jewish Board of Deputies urged the community not to engage in social media battles.

“But I also couldn’t remain silent,” he says. “In South Africa, we have the privilege of celebrating and learning about the magnificent diversity around us while reclaiming our own Jewish identity. I believe we have a role and a responsibility to find access points to engage meaningfully with those around us – especially when it involves dispelling myths about

Jewish peoplehood and Israel.”

Singer therefore devised a social media engagement strategy for sharing his experience with the intention of finding empathic engagement. “To demonstrate resilience, I took an image of myself putting on tefillin. To demonstrate support for our soldiers, I made a video singing ‘Acheinu’. To share strength for those needing it, I declared, ‘I’m a Jew, and I’m proud and will sing it out loud’.”

Though it wasn’t his intention, being vocal created conflict. “I had a fight with a friend privately,” says Singer. “This was after a few days when I was unfriended, and was unfriending others, and I felt a strong sense of loss.” He posted a status on Facebook expressing his sadness about losing so many friends, and was heartened when his words struck a chord with his Facebook community.

“I have had friends, non-Jewish and Jewish, reach out to me via various channels all wanting to express their solidarity in losing Facebook friends. It seems absurd even to say that, given the cynicism about the connections we have on our social media pages, but I believe this was where our experiences and expressions of compassion aligned – a recognition that we’re all experiencing this loss. There’s an acknowledgment that we’re still part of each other’s stories, and can still strengthen each other in these dark times.”



Yet for many, such light is hard to come by. When business owner Steph Cohen posted four Israeli flags in response to a video shared on TikTok depicting Ponte illuminated by the Israeli flag, she was horrified by the response she received from another user: “Wow. what a coincidence that the toilet paper I wipe my a** with looks like this.” [sic]

“I don’t think I have ever felt that combination of sadness, anger, and nausea at the same time,” Cohen says. “I took a screenshot, and shared it with my immediate family, and I reported it to TikTok. Judging from the response I received, it wasn’t considered hateful. I’ve also reported some other posts I feel have been very harmful, but nothing has come from it.”

Cohen is mindful of the potential backlash in engaging on social media around the Israel war and she gauges her emotional well-being before doing so. “I know that my posts or comments may be met with hate and my engagement honestly depends on my mental state on a particular day,” she says. “Sometimes I don’t want to know what would be said to me in response to my support, but as a Jew and someone who has most of her

family in Israel, I feel it’s my duty to engage where I want to have my voice heard.

“Though it’s nothing new,” she says, “I didn’t think I would see such open and blatant hatred towards us. That’s been the biggest and scariest thing for me.”

Eliana Kahn* says she’s also experienced online hatred, with one particularly fiery social media exchange ending with the woman who disagreed with her calling for trolls to attack her. She emphasises the need to practice “good social media hygiene” by boosting privacy and security settings and being mindful of the content you consume. “Social media algorithms follow your behaviour,” she says, “so the more you watch and engage with hatred, the more hatred you’ll be fed.”

As a marketing professional, Kahn spends a lot of time on various social media platforms and says reporting or blocking hateful content is often far more beneficial than engaging with those who post it.

“Sometimes with a post that riles you up, the best response is not to respond. When sitting behind a keyboard, those on both sides often forget that there’s a human on the other end of it. I’ve had a relatively good success rate in reporting comments on various platforms and having them removed. Often, you can have a better impact by having the individual blocked and preventing them from spewing that hatred further.”

Counselling psychologist, Dr Hanan Bushkin, agrees, suggesting that we invest our time and energy into things that create value. “If you think that engaging with a particular individual or topic has any form of value aside from your ego – because you should put your ego aside – and that there’s a point to the argument, then engage,” he says. “But if there’s no value, and you’d rather invest that time and energy into your kids, spouse, family, or friends, do that instead.”

Often, we find ourselves locked in a cycle of anxiety especially when social media consumes our daily lives. “The human brain hates not being able to predict and control,” Bushkin says. “So, in a chaotic world, we try to get as much information as possible in the hope that we can make sense of our world and control it. But as we absorb social media and the news with the hope of gaining more control and understanding, the opposite happens because it inevitably creates even more fear and unpredictability.”

If you find that your social media engagements, the violent content you’re consuming, or fear of the consequences of exposing your views on social media is becoming detrimental to your mental health, find a healthier alternative, he says. “Control what you can, and let go of what you can’t. The more you try to focus on what you can’t control the more out of control you will feel. So, include as many things in your day as possible that build your sense of security and control.” From living purposefully, to working to reach work, financial, and fitness goals, or spending time with loved ones, the options are endless.

*name has been changed

The day life froze for hostages’ family

LEE TANKLE

“I want you to think of her like a little child who was taken from her bed still in her pyjamas on 7 October,” said Sasha Arieiv, speaking about her younger sister, Karina Arieiv, a 19-year-old who is one of the 239 Israeli hostages who have been held in Gaza since 7 October.

She and Yuval Bar-On, the son-in-law of South African-born Adrienne and Keith Siegel, spoke on a South African Zionist Federation webinar on 13 November about loved ones who were forced across the border to Gaza and have been held for almost six weeks.

Arieiv gave a blow-by-blow account of what she knew happened to her sister. “She called me early in the morning and said rockets were being fired towards Israel, but that she was okay and in the bomb shelter,” she said.

“After a few minutes, she called and said something was wrong, and there was a terrorist raid,” Arieiv said. In the background of the call, Arieiv could hear Arabic dialect and the shooting of weapons. The last message that she received from her sister was, “If I don’t make it out alive, please be happy in your life. Take care of mom and dad. Don’t think in sorrow, please live.”

Arieiv said all she could think of at the time was that “this is my little sister who I need to protect. She’s the one telling me these harsh words from far away, and I cannot help her.”

That evening, Arieiv saw a video on a Telegram channel and immediately recognised her sister in a vehicle with some terrorists. Karina’s face was covered in blood, but the family had confirmation that she was alive,” she said.



Karina Arieiv - one of the 239 Israeli hostages who have been held in Gaza since 7 October

“All we know is that she was kidnapped to Gaza. It has been so long, and we’re in complete darkness. We’re aching every second of every day not knowing what’s going on with them. We don’t know anything, just that they were kidnapped to Gaza.”

“We don’t know if they are getting medical attention or if they are above or below ground,” said Arieiv. “We’ve lost so much since 7 October so for us as a nation to be able to bring them home is our opportunity to build ourselves and become strong again,” she said.

To the deniers of the attacks, Arieiv said, “If you want to know the truth, ask us, the people who have to live through it every day. It’s not about countries or religions anymore. It’s about pure souls who were taken and murdered.

“This is a crime against humanity. Hamas terrorists didn’t just shoot and kill people, they continued to do horrific things to the bodies of the deceased. They committed atrocious things, they put a baby in an oven while its mother watched,” she said. “It’s cruel, evil, and inhuman. Who can think about doing these things? Yet, it was done, and it was filmed for the world to see,” Arieiv said. “Please don’t forget her name. Please don’t forget that there’s a girl named Karina. I cannot be the only one to remember my sister,” she said.

Bar-On said that on the morning of 7 October, he and his wife, Shir, were also woken up by a phone call to say that rockets were being fired from Gaza. “They were updating us every 15 to 20 minutes that everything was okay and that they were in the safe room. This lasted for about two hours, and then at 10:15, we lost communication with them,” Bar-On said.

He was hopeful that they were silent because of a dead cellphone battery and/or a lack of signal, and that they were okay.

Bar-on and his wife kept hoping that the Siegels were in their safe room waiting to be rescued. Stories started coming in of neighbours and other people in the kibbutz being rescued while Bar-On and his family were waiting on tenterhooks. After pulling some strings with the military, Bar-On was able to speak to an officer, and was told that they had arrived at the house, but no-one was there, even in the safe room.

“We were told by someone that they were seen by a neighbour being taken at gunpoint. We also received a message from the Israeli authorities confirming that they had been kidnapped based on eyewitnesses and other means, including a video from Hamas’ Telegram channel.

“For a few seconds at the end of the video, you can see them being taken in a car crossing the Gaza border,” said Bar-On. “This video gave us hope. They were seen taken alive and not wounded. But this was more than five weeks ago. We’re in complete darkness. We don’t know their status, where they are being held, or if they are alive. It’s a nightmare. We thank G-d every day that they weren’t slaughtered, but at the same time, we don’t know how or where they are,” Bar-On said.

He said that more than half of the people present at the webinar could have been taken by Hamas. The state of Israel, Bar-On pointed out, was founded on the premise of “Never again” so Jewish people could be secure. “The Jewish people have nowhere else to go, nowhere to be completely safe except for Israel, but on 7 October, that trust was broken, and many people don’t feel safe in their home country. They are still there, and we can be saved. This thing is binary, either they are here, or they are not. If they are not it feels like we’re failing them. We’re doing everything we can to bring them back and to do it quickly,” Bar-On said.

While on the call, Bar-On was on his way home from visiting the Knesset, at which a group of hostages’ family members had said that their biggest fear was that Israel would go back to routine and the hostages wouldn’t be a priority. “For us and many others, life froze on 7 October. It’s our obligation to make sure that the world doesn’t go back to normal until all the hostages are back home,” he said.

'My garden is dead, but we're alive'

PETA KROST

Ralph Lewinsohn, his wife, Barbara, and their family survived their beloved home on Kfar Aza turning into hell on 7 October 2023 when it was attacked by Hamas terrorists, killing 10% of the kibbutz's inhabitants and destroying all they had. But life will never be the same for them again.

Comparing their lives to a shattered piece of pottery, he said, "We're trying to glue all the pieces together again, to make the piece of pottery whole again, but we'll succeed only partially, because some of the pieces are too shattered to glue together and there'll forever be holes and gaps in the piece of pottery that we cannot mend, but the piece of pottery will be rebuilt."

Lewinsohn, 71, was born in Windhoek, Namibia (then South West Africa), and made aliya in 1977. Barbara, also 71, made aliya from Johannesburg in 1975. He graduated in hotel management and she was a social worker dealing with traumatised women. Having been on Kfar Aza on the Gaza border for 42 years, Lewinsohn first farmed before studying to be a tour guide and working with foreign tourists in English and German since 2000.

He looks back at what he calls "Black Saturday" as having been "hell on earth", recalling how it all started at 06:30, when they heard a "not uncommon severe barrage of rockets" heading toward them from Gaza. What they didn't immediately know was that heavily armed terrorists had broken through the border and attacked the southern communities, including their own, he wrote in the first missive to family and friends around the world.

"The terrorists went door to door, and murdered and took hostages back to Gaza, including whole families with children. We saw them running outside our house, dressed in black, shooting non-stop. In my small kibbutz, there were tens of dead and abducted. Our emergency response volunteers were nearly all murdered, abducted, or wounded. Many homes were occupied and families held hostage. A good friend's daughter, husband, and baby were murdered in front of their two older children, who hid in the cupboard, and called their grandmother who was overseas.

"The only way to give support to the two kids was for a social worker to be on the line with them for many hours, as they were in the room with the bodies of their family until the army managed to get to them. No ambulances could get through. Those that tried, the paramedics were killed and the ambulances hijacked to Gaza."

Lewinsohn's daughter, Michal, lived in another part of the kibbutz, as did his son, Alon, and his family. "My daughter was without electricity for about 18 hours, her cellphone battery ran out, so we had no contact with her for about 12 hours, and we feared for her life," Lewinsohn said.

"We were in our bomb shelter all the time, surrounded by constant shooting and explosions, very bad internet connection, no phone reception, some without electricity."

Somehow, Lewinsohn and all his family were finally extracted by the Israel Defense Forces and taken to safety after "almost 24 hours of hell".

He recalled how the army broke into his house through a window. "We had a moment of great fear, not knowing whether they were soldiers or terrorists," he said.

"They collected us in small groups and under heavy guard, and led us to buses, which eventually evacuated us out of the war zone. There was constant heavy fire around us, and we had to take cover in a bunker for a while. On the way to the buses, we passed tens of burned out vehicles, bodies lying in the street, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, AK47 rifles, grenades, among other weapons."

They were taken to Eilat for a few days before being moved to Ra'anana. "My wife, son, daughter and three grandchildren all managed to get out alive, which is unbelievable. Most weren't that fortunate," he said. "There are still pockets of terrorists in the area, and the kibbutz is deserted. We can't even bury our dead."

"As African born, the wilds of Africa have taught me many things. One lesson is that an injured beast is much more dangerous than a healthy beast. Israel is now an injured beast," Lewinsohn wrote to family when he was still in Eilat.

He wrote another missive to family and friends around the world a week later, saying it was the seventh day "since our world as we know it came to an end. We're still counting our dead, missing, and abducted."

Lewinsohn said that the first burials of about "100 dead friends have started, with very few people allowed to attend".

He spoke of being one of "the lucky ones distributed to various reception centres

where we are housed, fed, and have doctors and psychologists helping us. Most of us left with only the clothes on our backs, some had no shoes, wallets, money, credit cards, glasses, medication, or much else. We're mostly clothed by donations from locals."

probably take up to two years. The idea, he said, was that they should be close enough for their children to go back to school and for people to return to their jobs in the area – "if their jobs are still there".

In spite of the horror he has experienced, he spoke about the "unprecedented wave of unity and a spirit of volunteering in a population which is normally very fragmented and sectorised.

"People volunteer to milk cows in the deserted kibbutz communities, pick the fruit, be drivers, prepare food, basically anything that's needed. In our darkest period in many decades, there's a bit of light shining through," he said.

"We spend most of our time trying to set up all the services that we need in our new environment, and going to ceremonies marking the *shloshim* [30 days after the burial] of our dead friends, which is a ceremony at the gravesite. Normally, it's at this ceremony that a tombstone is erected, but all have been buried in temporary sites as our cemetery in Kfar Aza is a closed military zone and too dangerous."

These people will be reinterred on Kfar Aza once it's possible, he said. "We have 61 dead and 18 hostages from our small community, which is about 10% of our population."

Lewinsohn said he had been back to Kfar Aza a few times with officials to enable him to retrieve some clothes, documents, laptops, medicines, and other personal items. "My beautiful garden is dead, but we're alive, which is unbelievable considering what happened," he wrote in his latest missive.



Barbara and Ralph Lewinsohn

Most of the children are traumatised, he said. "We try to prevent the kids from seeing friends they grew up with [displayed] on social media as hostages in Gaza, or dead with their families, some mutilated, burned, beheaded, and abused, or just bundled up in black body bags being loaded into refrigeration trucks," he said.

"Our kibbutz probably won't be habitable for the next few years because of the massive destruction, burning, looting, and booby traps."

Lewinsohn and his wife expect to be in their temporary apartment in Ra'anana for another six months, by which time a caravan will be set up for them in the south until the kibbutz can be rebuilt, which he said would

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Life after 7 October

SA Jewish Report photographer **Ilan Ossendryver** flew to Israel to document the war. Here is a selection of his photographs taken this week showing Israel post Black Saturday, 7 October.



'Come home safe' – a prayer for soldiers

PAUL MIRBACH

I watch your back, your purposeful stride
Your broad, strong shoulders, and I'm filled
with pride.
I wait in silence, till you're out of sight,
Then I take a deep breath, it's like a stinging
bite,
And as I can't wait to see you again,
I'll count the days, between now and then.
Keep your mind fixed on the dangers you face
Go in peace, my son, and come home safe.

I've been in the army, I've fought in a war,
That sense of mission, what we're doing it for.
You're ready for battle, for which you were
trained,
That knot in your stomach that's hard to
explain.
Be on your guard, and when you must, fight,
But knowing the danger, I sleep lighter at
night.

I imagine you out there, on patrol or on base,
And all that I'm thinking, is just come home
safe.

And while I nag you with WhatsApp, which I
always do,
And you probably think, "Enough, I really
must go".
But, you see, I have no other way,
To express my love, and fears I daren't say.
These messages thus, will always be,
Hurried, and brief, unsatisfactory.
I can only imagine the dangers you face,
Do what you must, but come home safe.

- Zimbabwean-born Paul Mirbach moved to Cape Town at 16, and matriculated at Herzlia School. In 1982, he made aliya to Kibbutz Tuval, which was then a new kibbutz he helped build. He served in the Israel Defense Forces, participating in the first Lebanon War.



No-one came

DARRYL EGNAL

No-one came when their communities were infiltrated by terrorists.
No-one came when they were desperately trying to keep the doors to the safe rooms closed; while terrorists tried to break in or smoke them out;
No-one came when they were being slaughtered in their beds.
No-one came for the twin babies who were left lying next to the bodies of their parents; screaming for hours without food or water.
No-one came when children were being tortured in front of their parents or parents in front of their children.
No-one came when a pregnant woman had her baby cut out of her, the umbilical cord still connecting them. Both were stabbed to death!
No-one came when they were being tied up and burnt alive, huddled together in their pain.
No-one came when babies were being butchered or dismembered.
No-one came when hundreds were running for their lives and were shot from all directions.
No-one came when women and girls were being brutally raped and taken hostage or left to die.
No-one came when they were being whisked away on motorbikes or in 4x4s with fear written all over their faces.
No-one came while the country's leaders sat and debated about what they should do.
No-one came as the soldiers waited for their orders, desperately wanting to rush to help.
No-one came. The three words that I hear in almost every survivor's eyewitness account.
No-one came. The three words I see in almost every article about that fateful day.
No-one came. The three words that have haunted me since that dark Black Saturday.
I wasn't there on October 7, but I will never forget

their desperate cries for help – and
NO-ONE CAME!

Then we found out that someone came.
A reservist on a kibbutz left his family in the safe room to fight the terrorists. Sadly, he didn't come home to them, but so many survived because of him.
Someone came. A grandmother saved herself and her husband, and many of their friends, when she kept five terrorists occupied for 15 hours by feeding them cookies and keeping them calm until her two police-officer sons and some Israel Defense Forces soldiers managed to gain entry and eliminate all five.
Someone came. A frail 85-year-old man left his wife, daughters, and grandchildren in the safe room and sat on the couch waiting for the terrorists. They entered, shot him, and left, assuming he was old and alone. He gave his life to save his family.
Someone came. All the members of two different communities were saved from being massacred when their security teams managed to prevent any terrorists from infiltrating their kibbutzim.
Someone came. An Arab Israeli soldier took off his uniform and disguised himself in civilian clothes. He then called the terrorists over to him in Arabic and killed them all when they revealed themselves.
Someone came. Animal rescue groups came from all over Israel to save animals that had lost their families and were hiding or running around frightened and confused.
Someone came. A father drove from the centre to save his son and his son's family. On the way, he helped some soldiers fight off terrorists and then joined other soldiers to get into the kibbutz. He

fought his way to his family and saved them and several others.
Someone came. A member of an elite special unit in the Israel Police, armed only with a handgun, took out about 12 terrorists with machine guns and rocket launchers who came into his home with the express goal of kidnapping him, his wife, and his daughter. All three survived.
Someone came. An Israeli Bedouin minibus driver risked his life by putting himself in the line of fire to pick up about 30 frightened youngsters who had been ambushed while at a music festival. He managed to drive them to safety while his minibus, which was supposed to seat only 14, collected bullet holes along the way.
Someone came. Eventually, after many long hours, the soldiers rescued those who had survived – tired, afraid, thirsty, hungry, and traumatised. They managed to kill or capture more than 2 000 terrorists.
Although the soldiers also saved hundreds, the heroes of the day were the civilians and off-duty reservists who stepped in and prevented even more civilians from being murdered or taken hostage – a terrible fate many would say is worse than death – some of them dying in the process.
Someone came ... and the people of Israel owe them everything!
These heroes, the hostages, the victims, the survivors ... They are our Stars of David, and we salute them!

- Darryl Egnal made aliya in 2009 and lives in Ramat Gan. She works as a freelance editor, journalist, content and marketing writer, and PR consultant.



‘Stop nonsense’ Schloss honoured for Wits football club

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Professor Ronnie Schloss once had to run around the canteen at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) to find players for its senior team in the 1960s. The Wits soccer team’s fortunes changed after he got involved with its administration, and his contribution was recognised when the grandstand of Wits’ football stadium was renamed in his honour at a ceremony on 7 November.

Schloss, chief operations officer of the Premier Soccer League (PSL), has dedicated more than 60 years of his life to Wits and football in South Africa. He has been a student, soccer player, student representative council member, lecturer, and chairperson of the football club at Wits.

“To my university, my alma mater, all I can say is thank you for recognising me. I thoroughly enjoyed my life here,” Schloss said of the grandstand being renamed in his honour.

After half of Wits’ senior team pulled out of a match in the 1960s due to exams, Schloss somehow assembled a team of 14 players to get on the train for the game in Bloemfontein. “We were very successful. We lost 15-nil,” he said to laughter. “As a result of that, I thought, ‘We’ve got to do something better’ and I got involved in the administration. Within a year or two, I became the chairman.”

Schloss, who grew up in Hillbrow and went to Highlands North Boys High School, said there was chaos when Wits played Rangers, the top team in the old white National Football League, in a cup competition around 1976. “There was no grandstand here, there were no fences around the field, and people came from all over. We had about five or six thousand people here.”

Afterwards, Wits vice-chancellor and principal, Professor Guerino Bozzoli, told Schloss they must do something to address this. “That’s how the grandstand came about. The rugby stand and the soccer stand were built at the same time,” Schloss recalled.

Irvin Khoza, the chairperson of the PSL and Orlando Pirates, described Schloss as “an activist and evangelist for the sport” when different race groups played in separate leagues. “Long before the historic Codesa [Convention for a Democratic South Africa], he advocated, promoted, and practised non-racial sport in defiance of the Group Areas Act and the many laws that sought to keep South Africans apart based on race,” Khoza said.



This founder member of the PSL, highly educated, brought stature and credibility to the league that would grow with his active involvement into one of the best in the world.

“The arrests he and his comrades, Raymond Hack, Derek Blanckensee, and the young Jonathan Schloss, who at that time was about 11 years old, suffered on their way into and out of Soweto didn’t deter him. After a night at Langlaagte Police Station that weekend, they would be back in Soweto the following weekend.”

Kaizer Chiefs Chairperson Kaizer Motaung dubbed Schloss the “encyclopaedia of football” in South Africa. “The PSL is benefiting immensely from your impeccable knowledge of football. I’ve benefited from the many years of collaboration with you in various aspects of the game,” he said.

Former Wits FC Chairperson Raymond Hack, who has known Schloss for 55 years, said, “There’s no-one in this country who can equal the belief that Professor Schloss had for this club, Wits University. He lived, he slept, he ate for Wits University. Let’s put it this way, our children’s educational bursaries didn’t go towards education. They went towards Wits University Football Club.”

Today, Wits has hundreds of soccer players from junior to senior level and competes in the GP ABC Motsepe League, the third division in South Africa.

The first major soccer cup Wits won was the

Mainstay Cup in 1978. “The chancellor at that stage was a Professor du Plessis,” Hack recalled. “Ronnie and I had the distinction of being kicked out of his office. The reason was because [at a time] when Wits was focused on rugby and cricket, we had the vision of professional football. We went to him to ask, ‘Can we play professional football?’”

“The university is a place of learning, not a place of sport. Therefore, you cannot do it,” Du Plessis responded before turning to Schloss and saying, “We never played football at Cambridge University.”

Hack believes this “drove Ronnie to ensure that Wits was the success that it was and, I believe, the success that it will be in the future”.

Schloss and Hack fondly remember some of the players Wits produced such as goalkeeper Gary Bailey, the top engineering student, who went on to

play for Manchester United and England, and Eric Tinkler, who went on to play in the English Premier League and for Bafana Bafana.

“We produced many great players coming through the junior ranks,” Schloss said. “By starting the junior section, we achieved something that nobody believed would

have been possible. First of all, we got kids [for example, in shacks in Soweto and kids in houses in Houghton] to mix. We developed from under-six to under 19.”

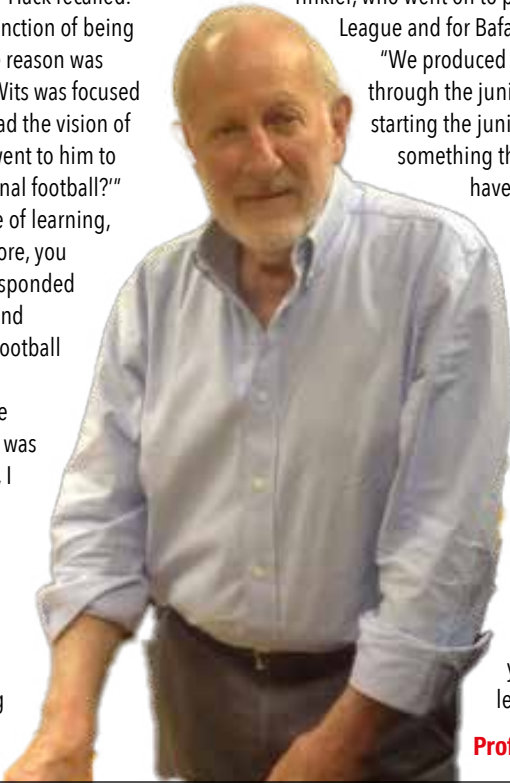
Schloss continues to put in as much as he can for the university. “I want us to have another team in the PSL,” he said in light of Wits selling its professional top division status in 2020, only three years after winning the league. “The team we had

was one of the most popular teams in the country.”

Wits Vice-Chancellor Zeblon Vilakazi said Schloss was a “living legend” whose story was intertwined with the fabric of the university. “You weren’t just a student who passed these halls, you’re a leader and a driving force behind the success of our football club. In you, we see the strength of what the next generation can carry,” he said.

Khoza said people with Schloss’s level of diligence were called “stop nonsense”. “This founder member of the PSL, highly educated, brought stature and credibility to the league that would grow with his active involvement into one of the best in the world,” Khoza said. “He traversed the length and breadth of our country, ensuring our fields of play met the standard of our compliance manual. No place was far for him, no place was unsafe for him. You can achieve this only if you have love, passion, and a calling. Your contribution to football is a heritage South Africa should and will cherish.”

In addition to his contribution to Wits and the PSL, Schloss was an integral part of South Africa’s 2010 FIFA World Cup bid team, and served as manager of South Africa’s soccer team at three Maccabi Games.



Professor Ronnie Schloss

south african

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From kidney privilege to killing fields

The Friday night before 7 October is burned into my memory. It was the start of the final few days of Sukkot, and we spent the evening having dinner with friends. We were poorly behaved, laughed a lot, said outrageous things, and collectively came up with several columns that I had to write in the coming few weeks.

One of those columns was to be about “kidney privilege”. Because back on 6 October, there seemed to be an increasing amount of selfless people who had dispensed with one kidney to help another who needed one more than they required two. Often the recipients were strangers. I was starting to foresee a time when those of us who had selfishly decided to hold on to both would be publicly shamed and possibly labelled “organ hoarders”, while those who had accepted the donation would be referred to as previously disadvantaged kidney persons (PDKP).

Having already dispensed with my appendix and my hair, I wasn’t particularly looking forward to having my other organs harvested while still alive, and didn’t particularly want to part with anything further just to qualify for government contracts under the PDKP.

I needn’t have worried. Because the events that began at 06:30 the following morning on 7 October 2023, would make my kidney shaming anxiety seem as absurd as the information that we were starting to receive.

A month into the war in Gaza, and we’re still trying to process the horror, shock, and magnitude of the Hamas attacks. As with any major global event, there’ll always be a before the seventh and after it. And we’ll always know where we were when we heard the news.

And yet there’s much that we’ve already learned, and there are hard realities that we’ve been forced to face. This is my working list in progress.

- Much like a child who comes of age when they realise that their parents aren’t all powerful, I’ve

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



- learned that as strong as Israel might be, she’s still vulnerable. Mistakes can be made, balls can be dropped, and systems can fail;
- I’ve learned, much like a young person becoming an adult who recognises that they might be required to offer support to their parents, Israel and her people require ours. Without judgement. Because sometimes just showing up, showing support, and expressing love is all we can do;
 - I’ve learned that some people who I thought were smart and balanced when it comes to Jews and Israel are just smart;
 - And I’ve realised that they won’t allow a mirror to be held too close to them. Lest it shatter the internal view of themselves;
 - I’ve learned that antisemitism is sometimes so deep that the person harbouring the prejudice would pass a lie detector test if asked if they were antisemitic;
 - I’ve learned not to cheapen ourselves by “proving” that Hamas killed babies and raped women. Because even if I did display our dead and our brutalised, they would dismiss it. Because the suffering of Jews doesn’t move them;
 - I’ve learned that intellectual and academic-speak often hides hideous hate; and
 - And I’ve learned that sleep is important. Because I miss it.

Mostly I’ve learned the value of our Jewish community. And of faith and of prayer. I’ve learned that it doesn’t pay to be silent, and that antisemitism kills.

I’ve learned to love our people. And I’ve learned that the power in each of us and in all of us will ensure that we thrive. *Yachad nenatzeach* (together we’ll win)!

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Violence and vigilance

This past week, inflammatory rhetoric by pro-Hamas factions, particularly in Cape Town, reached even greater heights of virulence. Over the weekend, there were violent attacks on both Jews and Christian supporters of Israel, resulting in a Christian prayer meeting calling for peace and the release of the hostages which was scheduled to take place in Sea Point having to be cancelled. Among those strongly coming out against these thuggish attacks on the constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly was Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis. The mayor further condemned the unacceptable threats made by certain speakers against Herzlia school, a dangerous crossing of the line into outright incitement to cause harm, which our Cape Council is following up on with its legal advisors.

Over the past several days, the Board has met the state security cluster to address these threats. We are encouraged by the seriousness with which it is approaching the matter, and the commitment it is showing towards ensuring our community’s security at this volatile time. The Board is also in the process of assisting in laying criminal charges against certain individuals for antisemitically motivated attacks against community members.

On Tuesday, 14 November, the Board, together

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



with the South African Zionist Federation, met the African National Conference (ANC) at its own request. The main purpose of the meeting from our point of view was to ask the ANC to reflect on the hurtful statements it made on the massacre of Israeli civilians carried out by Hamas on 7 October. We explained how let down our community felt by the ruling party’s failure to express any form of sympathy for the Israeli terror victims, mostly civilians, murdered by Hamas in the week following those atrocities. We further wanted to share the escalating levels of antisemitism in our country, which have increased nearly tenfold since the conflict began, and which are being fuelled by inflammatory rhetoric by certain political leaders. During the meeting, the ANC acknowledged the hurt its stance had caused, making an appeal to rebuild trust and embark on a process of dialogue and re-engagement with the community. It was an open and honest engagement.

- 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

Dancers represent SA at world championships

Gabriella Salomon (13), Hariclea Coumbias (14), and Jordan Bril (15) from the Bowring Levin School of Dance in Rivonia have been awarded their Protea colours and selected to attend the International Dance Organisation (IDO) World Jazz, Ballet, Modern and Contemporary Championships in De Panne, Belgium, at the end of November 2023.

To qualify for the world championships, the dancers had to compete in a series of provincial and one national competition during the course of 2023 and earn a place in the top three of their age group.

It’s a great honour to qualify to represent South Africa at this event, where more than 3 000 of the top dancers in the world come together to compete.

The world championships are hosted annually by IDO, a global dance and world sport federation with membership of more than 90 nations, representing

more than 250 000 dancers from six continents.

Gabriella will compete in jazz and contemporary dance in the solo and duo sections, and ballet in the solo section. Jordan will compete in the jazz solo and duo as well as contemporary solo; and Hariclea in the jazz solo and duo section in their respective age groups. These three young ladies are dedicated dancers and have pushed themselves, achieving their personal best. Their teachers and choreographers, Leanne Bowring and Adi Levin, have spent many years training, mentoring, and preparing them for competitions of this calibre.



October massacre changed everything – including silence about terror

>>Continued from page 7

to all children and future generations around the world so that it can never happen again.

The terror and carnage I witnessed as a first responder for such a long time was something that wasn’t spoken about, discussed, communicated, publicly documented, or revealed in detail. The terror that took place on 7 October 2023 and indeed continues today almost six weeks later, mustn’t be bound to a code of silence, it mustn’t be bound to political correctness.

It’s necessary to document and reveal the truth about the terror and its never-ending history, and to do it in detail.

The events of 7 October 2023 shouldn’t be lost among the mass anti-Israel propaganda war Israel is fighting.

Israel’s colourful, non-fiction story of a defiant stance in a struggle for the most basic civil right of all – the right to live – must be kept alive.

In every terror attack I witnessed, I saw blood and carnage in ways that were hard to describe. I sometimes recognised people I knew or had seen previously that were killed and physically torn apart or terribly wounded. Many of these experiences were too difficult to describe, and I’ll carry the images forever in my mind.

The massacre and carnage of the Hamas terror attack on 7 October and the resulting war on Hamas has changed everything, for me, for Israel, and indeed the world.

I can only imagine as a first responder how the police and others pushed their vehicles to get to the many different terror scenes as fast as possible. I can only imagine them loudly calling via police radio for assistance and focusing on arriving at the scene to deal

with the situation, save lives, and neutralise the threat. I can only imagine these brave Israel Police officers and other emergency responders finding a scene of chaos, carnage, death, and insanity carried out by savages called Hamas, with premeditated intent to kill.

Nothing on earth can prepare you for the type of terror event first responders witnessed. Nothing resembles the aftermath of the atrocity. This was an act of terror inspired by extreme cruelty, designed to ensure that maximum physical violence and death rate was imposed, and they, Hamas, documented it all.

The physical and mental injuries will be ever-lasting for all of us. This wasn’t just an act of terror, but a declaration of war, a war that will be won by Israel, and a war that will be won for all who cherish freedom and peace.

We support our IDF soldiers and other agency heroes who are now making sure that we’ll never have the likes of these terrorists on our borders or in our lives.

I salute my fellow police officers, my friends, brothers, and sisters who responded and reacted to a situation that wasn’t normal by any means. I salute the bravery of the male and female heroes in the Israel Police.

I salute every first responder on the streets of Israel, in effect the last line of defence for Israeli civilians. The police, comprised of all faiths and religions, are on the frontlines of an ongoing, difficult battle, not only reacting and responding to classic crime but proactively thwarting terror and saving lives at all costs.

- Marc Kahlberg is a South African-born retired police officer who is now working as a volunteer in the Israel Police international spokespersons unit.

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Beanies for the brave

Knit For Israel is a volunteer project started in partnership with South African Friends of Israel in which people from all walks of life knit and crochet beanies for all the brave, selfless members serving on the front line in Israel.



IDF soldier's wife reveals personal journey



Ilanit Liberman

Ilanit Liberman, a former journalist and the wife of a combat soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, spoke about her personal journey at the monthly Neshei Chayil event at Hirsch Lyons Primary School on 12 November. As well as giving personal insights, Liberman spoke about the general situation in Israel.

Neshei Chayil is a monthly Rosh Chodesh event at which women listen to a speaker and enjoy an activity. Liberman's talk was followed by decorating and organising care packages for families who have loved ones serving in the army.

Taking hostages the ultimate abuse, says Koleinu

Koleinu SA is putting up posters of the hostages taken by Hamas on 7 October, accompanied by red balloons, a global symbol of their plight. The anti-abuse organisation says it regards the taking of hostages as the ultimate form of abuse. The posters are intended to raise awareness of this war crime. "Regardless of anyone's political views, the ripping of babies from their mothers arms, the abduction of the elderly and the vulnerable, and the tearing apart of families can have no justification in civilised society," says Koleinu SA co-founder and director Rozanne Sack. Who knows what these captives are being put through and the level of suffering they are undergoing just for being Jewish? Each one of these hostages has hopes and dreams for the future. Bring them home now!" she said.



JWBS celebrates progress in helping less fortunate

The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society (JWBS) conducted its 127th annual general meeting (AGM) on Monday, 13 November, at the Gerald Horwitz Lounge at Golden Acres, committing itself to expanding its positive impact on the most vulnerable members of our community.

Since its last AGM in 2019, the organisation has made substantial contributions to the community, successfully forging new partnerships and reinforced existing collaborations.

Changes made to the leadership include Maureen Disler becoming honorary chair emeritus, with Doreen Zurel and Leigh Brouze co-chairing the organisation.



The 127th AGM of The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society

Thursday 23 November

- ORT SA hosts its 49th annual golf day. Venue: Killarney Country Club. Cost: R4 500 per fourball. Time: 10:30. Contact: 082 495 3871 or tracey@ortjet.org.za

Sunday 26 November

- The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society hosts its R30 book sale. Venue: Genesis Shopping Centre. Time: 09:00 to 14:00. Contact: 011 485 5232 or gloria@jwbs.co.za
- Second Innings hosts Soweto with Smiles – An African Jazz Band. Time: 10:00. Venue: Golden Acres, 85 George Avenue, Sandringham. Cost: R40 (R20 members). Contact: 082 561 3228

Monday 27 November

- Second Innings hosts a tour on Millionaires Mile. Time: 09:00. Departure: 85 George Avenue, Golden Acres. Cost: R380 per person. Contact: 082 561 3228



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