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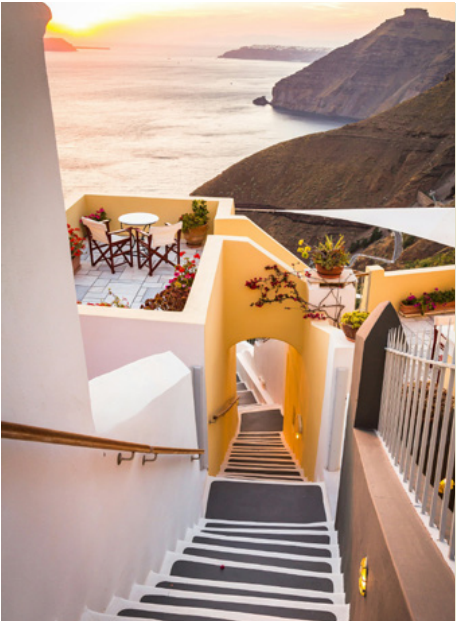
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Hudi Levin and David Lipschitz show their excitement at heading out to this year's Bnei Akiva machaneh

as Hamas's representative to Iran in Tehran, who has been sanctioned by the United States treasury department, was part of the Hamas team here.

"Qaddoumi, acting as the liaison between Hamas and the Iranian government, actively strengthens relations with Iran. This after the Iranian regime continues to proclaim its intent to annihilate the people and state of Israel, while Hamas has threatened to repeat the 7 October massacre over and over again," it said.

Daniel Bloch, the executive director of the Cape SAJBD said the Board was "dismayed" by the ANC Western Cape's hosting of Hamas representatives.

Drawing attention to the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign, he asked, "Does the ANC condone the actions of Hamas, responsible for the savage raping of countless women? These acts stand in direct contradiction to the principles and goals of the 16 Days of Activism and the United

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Henry Kissinger dies at 100

BEN HARRIS – JTA

Henry Kissinger, the first Jewish secretary of state and the controversial mastermind of American foreign policy in the 1970s, died at his home in Connecticut on Wednesday, 29 November, at 100.

Kissinger, credited with orchestrating the United States (US) opening to China; negotiating the end of the conflict in Vietnam; and helping ease tensions with the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, celebrated his 100th birthday in June with a party at the New York Public Library featuring luminaries from throughout his long career in politics and public affairs, including his current successor, Jewish Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Regarded as a brilliant diplomatic strategist, Kissinger was one of the most influential Jewish figures of the 20th century, leaving an enduring imprint on global politics as secretary of state and national security advisor to two US presidents and as an informal advisor to several others.

With his rumbling German accent, iconic black glasses, and legendary charm, he was also a socialite and an unlikely 70s-era sex symbol, dating a string of movie stars and famously quipping that power is the "ultimate aphrodisiac".

In spite of fleeing his native Germany as the Nazis



rose to power in the 1930s and losing several members of his family in the Holocaust, Kissinger evinced little sentimental attachment to Jewish interests, telling a friend in the 1970s that Judaism "has no significance for me", according to Walter Isaacson's 1992 biography.

The negation of Kissinger's Jewish identification may have been necessary for a man who rose higher in the executive branch than any Jew before him, and did so under a president, Richard Nixon, known to harbour deep anti-Jewish animus. Others saw it as emblematic of Kissinger's embrace of realpolitik.

After Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir pressed Nixon in 1973 to address the plight of Soviet Jews, Kissinger

issued a blunt dismissal.

"The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union is not an objective of American foreign policy," Kissinger said, according to Oval Office recordings. "And if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it's not an American concern. Maybe a humanitarian concern."

After the recordings were released in 2010, Kissinger apologised for the gas chamber remark in a *Washington Post* OpEd but maintained that his critics were taking it out of context. Kissinger went on to claim credit for the 100 000 Soviet Jews who emigrated thanks to Nixon's "quiet diplomacy".

Other elements of Kissinger's record similarly suggest a more nuanced verdict on his approach to Jewish concerns. At the height of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Nixon ordered an emergency airlift of resupplies to a struggling Israeli military, and memos from the period show Kissinger pushing back against the Pentagon's reluctance to carry it out.

Later, Kissinger's efforts to end the war gave birth to the term "shuttle diplomacy".

Two years later, as Kissinger grew increasingly frustrated with Israeli intransigence in withdrawing from areas of the Sinai conquered in the 1967 war, he pushed Ford to conduct a "reassessment" of relations with Israel. That precipitated a deep crisis between the White House

Continued on page 3>>

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Bringing light? Israel's future depends on it

Torah Thought



Rabbi Emma Gottlieb
Temple Israel

Usually at this time of year, we're feeling excited. As Chanukah approaches, we begin to look forward to the annual traditions. We look forward to lighting, eating, and the joyful celebration of a long ago miracle. This year feels different. We're carrying much heaviness in the wake of 7 October and the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas.

We're shell-shocked and grieving. We've been more fearful as Jews living in South Africa, and indeed in the world, than many of us have ever felt before. We're exhausted from our effort to support Israel, bring home the hostages, advocate for peace, and fight back against ignorance and antisemitism. Many of us are worrying about loved ones in Israel. It's been a difficult few months, to say the least, so we may not feel as ready for, nor as enthusiastic about Chanukah as usual. The idea of celebrating feels uncomfortable. We may not have the energy – the *koyach* – to fry up latkes and invite friends over to share a meal. Yet Chanukah may be more relevant this year than it has ever been in our lives.

In the northern hemisphere, Chanukah is a time of bringing light into darkness, falling in the darkest, coldest part of the year. Here, our days are getting shorter and brighter, but we can still relate to the metaphor of bringing light into dark times. Now, the story of Chanukah is more relatable than ever. A small band of Jews battling to overcome hatred and violence, fighting to hold onto Jewish autonomy and security, the Maccabees took back a part of our land that was desecrated and rededicated it, echoing so much of what Israel is experiencing.

On Chanukah, we celebrate Jewish strength and pride at a time of year when, especially outside of Israel, we're hyper-aware of being a minority. Yet, there's

also an important warning for us in this history. Most of us know the story of Judah Maccabee's great victory over the Assyrians. Less of us are familiar with the history of the Hasmonean dynasty, when the descendants of the Maccabees became a radical religious autocracy, ruling for only a few generations before losing hold of Jewish autonomy for the next 2 000 years. While we might proudly wish to equate modern-day Israel with the mighty Maccabees, we must also be watchful that it doesn't become a place of violence and radicalism. Security is vital. So are the human rights that the Torah demands that we protect and promote as Jews – not only for ourselves, but for

all people. When this war is over – may it be soon – we'll need to support Israel to rededicate itself, to be a land that's sacred because it lives up to its obligation to be a light to other nations – a place of peace and of hope.

Once we can turn swords again into ploughshares, we'll need to think about which values we hope to encourage Israel's leaders to embrace and prioritise. Chanukah is about victory, miracles, and light, and also about rededication – looking ahead to a better future. This year, as we pull ourselves out of sorrow into joy, out of darkness into light, may we dedicate each candle to a brighter future, for Israel and for Jews the world over.

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Teeger cleared of wrongdoing in independent inquiry

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Following weeks of vitriolic abuse, Absa Jewish Achiever Rising Star and Under-19 Proteas cricket captain, David Teeger, has been cleared of breaching provisions of the codes of conduct of Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the Central Gauteng Lions (Lions). This was the determination released by Advocate Wim Trengove SC on 5 December following the independent inquiry he was enlisted to conduct by the two cricketing bodies.

When Teeger, an 18-year-old matric pupil and head boy of King Edward VII school, dedicated his Rising Star Award to the young soldiers in Israel in his impromptu acceptance speech at the Absa Jewish Achievers Awards on 22 October to rapturous applause, he had no idea of the career-threatening backlash that would follow. After Teeger's acceptance speech was publicised, the CSA and the Lions, where he had also been selected as part of the Under-19 team, received multiple complaints amid the unrelenting media storm.

Against this backdrop, CSA and Lions appointed Trengove as an independent adjudicator. He was asked to determine what statements Teeger had made concerning Israel and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at the awards ceremony; whether these statements were in breach of certain provisions of the CSA and Lions codes of conduct; and what sanction should be imposed should Teeger be found to be in breach of any of those provisions.

In an affidavit, CSA Chief Executive Pholetsi Moseki charged that Teeger had breached the codes of conduct of both cricketing entities, and argued that Teeger's statements undermined the CSA's aim of promoting inclusivity and diversity in cricket.

Moseki stated that Teeger's remarks were made "in a context where the actions of the IDF have been widely condemned and are considered a violation of international law", presumably referring to the view of the South African government, which has referred the "situation in Palestine" to the International Criminal Court to investigate accusations of war crimes.

In his affidavit, the president of the Lions Cricket Board, Dr Mohammed Moosajee, laid out complaints received including those by a disgruntled sponsor, pro-Palestinian organisations, and cricket clubs, who called for Teeger's dismissal as captain of the South African Under-19 side.

The Palestine Solidarity Alliance was also given permission to make submissions to the inquiry. An excerpt of its letter of complaint reads, "His [Teeger's] unambiguous blind support for war demonstrates an indifference to the suffering of innocent civilians of Gaza who have lost their homes, livelihood, family members, and lives as a direct result of the actions of those soldiers that he admires."

In his response to the accusations levelled against him, Teeger argued that his comments were a personal

reflection and "an expression of appreciation for the efforts of soldiers who were mobilised to protect the citizens of Israel and to secure the release of the hostages taken by Hamas".

"I regret not giving more consideration to whether my impromptu comments would be scrutinised given my growing prominence in sport or that these comments may be repeated in the media," he said, "although I maintain that my comments cannot reasonably be interpreted to be representative of the position of CSA, the Lions, or any of the teams in which I participate, and



David Teeger

at the time, I didn't intend or foresee that anyone would interpret the comments in this way."

In his replying affidavit, Teeger also emphasised that he didn't express any support for genocide or condonation of hatred based on race, ethnicity, or religion. Acknowledging the strongly held views on both sides of the conflict, he said, "Disagreeing in a respectful manner on a contested and emotionally charged matter is a fundamental pillar of our democracy and Constitution. I respect the right of others to disagree with my view on Israel."

Laying out his "personal and honestly held view" that Israel and its soldiers haven't committed genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity, he said such a view was also held by people and democratic governments around the world, including those of the United States, United Kingdom, India, Australia, and many countries in the European Union. "Thus, my statements weren't in support of genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity because in my view, Israel is innocent of all these allegations," he argued.

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Teeger also pointed out that he was a schoolboy with no media or public relations training. "I was given no orientation, guidance, nor was there any awareness created of the types of off-field comments relating to contentious socio-political issues that CSA or the Lions would consider damaging to their reputations or the game of cricket," he said, pointing out that he would welcome such input.

In his determination, Trengove found that Teeger wasn't guilty of contravening any of the clauses under question. These firstly related to "unbecoming or detrimental conduct", which Trengove argued didn't apply as the word "conduct" refers to action and not spoken words.

Regardless, Trengove argued that Teeger's comments didn't constitute unbecoming or detrimental conduct. "Mr Teeger expressed views which are very offensive to some. But they are also views shared by others. Even if they could be said to be those of a minority, they cannot be said to be 'unbecoming or detrimental conduct'. There's nothing unbecoming or detrimental about an opinion expressed

seriously and in good faith, however offensive it might be to some."

He also found Teeger innocent of making "statements detrimental to the game of cricket". Emphasising that Teeger's comments weren't made on a cricketing platform but rather at a meeting of the Jewish community, Trengove pointed out that Teeger "was a young Jewish man speaking to his fellow Jews". It was clear that he was speaking in his personal capacity within his own community and not on behalf of cricket or cricketers. "A minority opinion, sincerely held and honestly expressed on an issue of high public interest, but entirely unrelated to cricket, isn't detrimental to the game of cricket in the eyes of those who respect Mr Teeger's right to freedom of expression," Trengove found.

He also argued that Teeger's comments weren't "detrimental to relations between the competing teams", not least because they were made completely out of the context of any tournament or match. "He spoke to the Jewish community and not the members of other cricket teams," Trengove stated. "He spoke of matters entirely unrelated to them. They might find his statements offensive because they fundamentally disagree with him. That's entirely understandable. But it's again an occasion on which the right to freedom of expression requires them to respect his right to express his opinion however offensive they might think it to be."

Henry Kissinger dies at 100

>>>Continued from page 2

and the Israeli government, but it ultimately yielded an Israeli-Egyptian agreement to resolve outstanding disputes peacefully, which in turned paved the way for the peace treaty that followed four years later.

Historian Gil Troy also records a less glowing incident about Kissinger in his 2013 book *Moynihan's Moment*. As US Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan waged a public battle against the "Zionism is racism" resolution at the United Nations, Kissinger pushed back hard, fearing it would undermine his efforts to ease tensions with the Soviet Union, at one point grumbling, "We're conducting foreign policy. This is not a synagogue."

After leaving office, Kissinger appeared to shed some of his reluctance to be perceived as Israel's champion, stating in a 1977 speech that, "The security of Israel is a moral imperative for all free peoples." In the decades that followed, he publicly defended Israeli interests, arguing that the absence of Mideast peace was the product of

Arab intransigence and expressing scepticism of efforts to conclude a nuclear deal with Iran. That helped secure his embrace by the Jewish mainstream

Kissinger's legacy remained deeply polarising decades after he left public office in 1977. In spite of winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his work ending the Vietnam War – a deeply controversial choice at the time – many regard Kissinger as a war criminal responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians in the US bombing of Cambodia and myriad other human-rights violations in Argentina, East Timor, and elsewhere. His role in directing the war in Vietnam dogged him for decades.

Kissinger tried mightily to shape the narrative of his years in office, penning multiple memoirs totalling thousands of pages. But even into his 90s, he could barely appear in public without inviting protests.

Kissinger is survived by his wife, Nancy Maginnes; two children from his first marriage to Ann Fleischer, whom he divorced in 1964; and five grandchildren.

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The rise of antisemitic incidents in SA after October massacre

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Of the 182 antisemitic incidents reported to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies

(SAJBD) in the first 11 months of 2023, 63% occurred after 7 October, and for the first time since the start of this century, about 6% of the attacks involved violence, including assault and vandalism.

The 182 incidents compares with 67 recorded in the first 11 months of 2022. The increase in the violence of these attacks is perhaps even more concerning. "You f***ing Jew, everything in the Middle East is your fault," were the words shouted by a male jogger as he attacked a community member walking to shul in Sydenham. The attacker crossed the road, ran into the man, knocked him over, kicked him on the leg, and punched him in the torso while he lay on the ground. An assault charge has since been laid at Sandringham Police Station.

In another case, a Johannesburg rabbi reported that a Muslim male tried to cut in front of him on the road. When not given right of way, the man then deliberately reversed into and damaged the front of the rabbi's car. He preceded to get out of his car and approach the rabbi, who swiftly did a U-turn onto a nearby highway. The antagonist followed him, repeatedly trying to swerve into his car. Eventually exiting the highway, the rabbi parked at a BP garage, only to be confronted again. The man got out of his car, pulled off the rabbi's windscreen wiper and started hitting his vehicle with it while screaming, "Get out, get out, I will smash you up!" and "This Jew, he smashed my car! This Jew hit me!"

These are just two of six reported incidents of antisemitic assault, according to a report compiled by the SAJBD at the end of November 2023. Meanwhile, five incidents of damage and desecration to Jewish property were also recorded. These included damage to the war memorial at the Jewish section of the Rebecca Street Cemetery in Pretoria in October, where the *sheimos* (sacred religious text) was also removed and torn up. Then in November, the words, "Stop the Gaza genocide" and "Free Palestine" were found sprayed on an outer wall of the old Jewish cemetery in Durban.

There have also been 33 cases of abusive behaviour, defined as verbal insults, threats, and offensive gestures. These include cases of derogatory language shouted at community members from passing cars as well as a confrontation in front of a shul in the heart of the Johannesburg community. Here, a Jewish man was accosted by a male who spat in his direction as he stood by the shul door.

After being asked what he'd meant by this, the male put his hand on community member's shoulder, looked into his eyes and said, "You're a murderer; you're causing genocide. You've done nothing to object to what's happening. The Muslims are gonna [sic] come and kill you."

Community members and organisations have received vitriolic messages in numerous incidents of hate mail and written threats. These include one sent to the SAJBD, which said, "I hope all you dogs that have grandkids that day must all grow up with the most horrible diseases and problems so you can ... suffer with them just as you Nazi Zionist are doing with our kids in Palestinian G--, I hate this Jewish Zionist Nazi scums [sic]."

In another incident, a group of community members watching a Hamas demonstration in Cape Town were accosted by protesters who

shouted, "Are you Jews?" after which many more stormed up and began threatening them. While the group crossed the street to take refuge in an apartment building, the protesters followed them and stood outside the security gates "baying for blood".

Well documented business boycotts against the likes of Cape Union Mart and Jewish-owned padel entities including Africa Padel and the 10by20 establishment have also been recorded. Here, there was a widespread message on a WhatsApp

appropriate action, whether criminal or civil, with the South African Human Rights Commission or in other, less formal ways," Saks says.

The SAJBD will provide support by advising them of their options. Should victims decide to take action, the SAJBD will assist as much as possible by, for example, helping to draft statements or formal complaints. "If the attack – which might include written or verbal threats, vandalism, offensive graffiti, or inflammatory

statements by public figures – isn't against an individual but the community as a whole, then we have to decide if it warrants action, if action of some kind is possible, and what action to take," says Saks.

In more serious cases this might mean instituting criminal or civil proceedings in the Equality Court, while in others, the Board may approach the institution that exercises some kind of

influence or authority over the perpetrator, "for example, a school where a pupil has made or posted an offensive comment, or a company in which the offender is employed". Mainstream and social media incidents are followed up by laying complaints with the owners or hosts to get the material removed, with an apology where appropriate."

Depending on the nature of the offence and the action taken, there could be criminal or civil court findings against perpetrators. Outcomes could also include what the SAJBD classifies as "restorative justice". "Here, the offender apologises in writing, sincerely acknowledges wrongdoing, and often also attends an education and sensitivity awareness session at the Holocaust & Genocide Centre," Saks says. "That's always been our preferred option, where possible."

• Should you experience an antisemitic incident, email sajbd.org, or if you feel you are under immediate threat, call the Community Security Organisation 24-hour number on 086 18 000 18.



Graffiti on the outer wall of the old Jewish cemetery in Durban

group announcing that new padel courts that would "be 100% Muslim owned and managed" were opening in the Orchards area in Johannesburg, and those that cancelled bookings at Jewish-owned courts would play there for free. There have also been well-publicised protests and demonstrations, with many led by the Economic Freedom Fighters and Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs), that have descended into hate speech and alarming threats.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, David Saks, the associate director of the SAJBD, says that when cases are reported, the Board first tries to determine whether there's any traceable information that will allow it to identify and locate the perpetrator/s. "If not, we simply log the details of the incident – even when perpetrator details are lacking, we urge people to nevertheless report them to us."

"If there's a reasonable prospect of finding the perpetrator/s, the approach varies. Often, it's necessary for the individual victims themselves to institute

Outcry over Hamas visit to SA

>>Continued from page 1

Nations."

In a letter to *BusinessDay*, SAZF director of public policy, Benji Shulman, said, "Sanctions imposed by the United States state department can have secondary repercussions. South African entities engaging with this Hamas delegation may be held liable for potential effects on local financial assets."

"Like our support for Russia, our alliance with Hamas puts trade relations with democracies at risk, including the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides thousands of jobs."

SAJBD National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner said Hamas

wasn't a freedom-fighting organisation, but one "dedicated to the violent destruction of Israel and which portrays Jews as being an intrinsically evil people who must be hunted down and killed wherever they might be. It says so in its charter, and its heinous attack on Israeli civilians on 7 October bears this out."

"Hamas proudly affirms its intention of perpetrating more massacres against the Jewish state. One of its political bureau members, Ghazi Hamad, confirmed that in a television interview on 24 October, when he declared that Hamas would carry out further such attacks 'again and again' until Israel was completely destroyed."

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Wits graduation photoshoot hijacked by pro-Palestinian students

CLAUDIA GROSS

Four Jewish sixth-year University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) medical students were excluded from the formal photograph of their graduating class on Tuesday, 30 November, because of pro-Palestinian activists refusing to remove their keffiyehs in Palestinian colours, which they wore in protest against Israel.

“It was very upsetting that we weren’t in our graduation photo. This was supposed to be a chance for us to celebrate becoming doctors, but instead, the photograph looks like manufactured marketing and a vehicle for the pro-Palestine cause,” Lisa Jacobsberg, one of the Jewish medical students concerned, said.

Jacobsberg said that, though the incident was in no way dangerous or aggressive, she felt that the graduation photoshoot wasn’t the time or place for this type of political demonstration.

The medical students were scheduled to have three photographs taken of their graduating class. The first was set to be a formal photograph where they were instructed to wear all-black with their stethoscopes around their necks. The second would be an informal photograph. In the third, they would be allowed to wear whatever they wanted, including religious and traditional dress. However, what might sound to an outsider like a simple photoshoot was derailed and resulted in some students having to exclude themselves from their graduation class photographs altogether.

Liat Azizollahof, another of the Jewish students, told the *SA Jewish Report* that a protest by her classmates who support Palestine caused her and three other Jewish students to leave the photoshoot. Several students arrived wearing white lab coats over their black outfits and keffiyehs in Palestinian flag colours. This went against the dress code of the first scheduled photograph, which caused the photographer to tell the class representative to inform all the students to remove all accessories and any items which didn’t adhere to the all-black outfit and stethoscope dress code for the first photograph. The students wearing lab coats and keffiyehs refused to remove these items, and stated that

uncomfortable with this situation, and decided to leave the photoshoot. They said they would rejoin when the matter had been resolved and all students were dressed according to the formal photograph’s dress code.

Unfortunately, the pro-Palestinian students continued to make a fuss, which resulted in the four Jewish students not being featured in the graduating class photograph meant to be a celebration of six years of hard work and studying.

Azizollahof said that an Instagram page has since posted the photo with a caption stating that Wits medical students stand with Palestine, which makes it look like she, Azizollahof, and the two

Jewish Board of Deputies, said, “While we understand the deep emotion that the Israel-Gaza war elicits in each one of us, it’s deeply regrettable how this is causing such rifts between fellow South Africans.

“Though advocacy and solidarity have a role to play at times like this, it’s regrettable when they are imported into work, university, and school situations, causing such dissension and division,” she said.

“A group of graduates like these have formed relationships over six years of their degree, and in one gesture, all that will be remembered is this ending. While these displays cause such hurt

and polarisation, they have absolutely no impact on the situation in the Middle East. We have been in touch with Wits to discuss our concerns, and will hopefully meet with it to discuss these issues further.”

Unfortunately, the four Jewish students won’t have a graduation class photograph to look back on when they reminisce about their studies

and becoming young doctors. Though they are grateful that the situation didn’t turn violent, they believe campuses should have spaces where all students, regardless of their political beliefs or religion, can feel safe to be themselves and experience unity with their peers.

Professor Zebulon Vilakazi, the vice-chancellor of Wits, does not dispute any of the students’ accounts of the incident and said that in terms of events resulting from the current conflict between Israel and Palestine, “I hope that things do not escalate further than this incident and that the university can end the academic year on a good note following graduation ceremonies next week.”

Wits medical school graduation picture without the four Jewish students



they were dressed this way to show their support for the doctors of Gaza. They demanded that the third scheduled photograph should be taken first, stating that they would take off these items for subsequent photographs.

The photographer didn’t want to give in to these demands and wanted to stick to the schedule that had previously been decided upon. The class representative tried to negotiate between the photographer and the students. While the photographer wanted the formal photograph to show unity, the protesting students said that they didn’t feel united with their fellow students and, in a greater sense, with anyone not supporting Palestine following the attack on 7 October and ongoing conflict.

Four of the Jewish students, including Azizollahof, felt

other Jewish students support Palestine too.

Jacobsberg said the incident was passive aggressive, as the students who refused to remove their lab coats and keffiyehs were announcing to everyone present that anyone who didn’t support their cause supported genocide instead of speaking directly to the Jewish students who were right there.

While some students have since apologised to her for what happened, Jacobsberg still feels disheartened, especially since the photograph was organised by the graduation committee, not Wits itself, and they funded the photoshoot themselves.

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African

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Editor



The 'new new antisemitism' of denial

YIGAL PALMOR



As for context, we've heard the United Nations secretary general say that the Hamas atrocities didn't happen in a vacuum, and a plethora of pundits were quick to explain that there was a context to this unbelievable horror. The context

Having said all that, let's take a lucid look at realities under the surface of daily news: the sharp rise in the number of antisemitic incidents in most countries with a significant Jewish population is, indeed, unprecedented. It's estimated at hundreds of percent, and continuing.



Queen Rania of Jordan

Photo: screenshot

This means that the pro-Palestinian and pro-Hamas rallies with their assortment of antisemitic incidents are attributable to a very noisy, extremely visible crowd, made of activists, politicians, and groups ranging from the far right to the far left, Islamists included, which are nonetheless a minority in their country. With a disproportionate nuisance capacity, certainly, but a minority all the same. Let's not forget, in our darkest hour, that we still have dear friends everywhere, and even if their voice is momentarily covered by the sound and fury of ignorants, extremists, and hypocrites, it's with their support and fraternity that we shall prevail.

- *Yigal Palmor is the head of international relations at the Jewish Agency.*

It's a perfect storm. Here's how to fight it.

OPINION

KENNETH JACOBSON



Since the massacre in Israel on 7 October, there has been a surge in antisemitic incidents without precedence for decades. The numbers are astonishing.

In the United States, incidents have increased more than 300% from last year. In Germany, the increase from last year in the first month was 320%. In the United Kingdom, for the past month and a half, there were 1 563 incidents, a 546% increase, the highest total for such a time reported.

In France, there were 1 518 incidents, while Australia reported a 591% increase. And in South Africa, there were 41 antisemitic incidents in October, a significant increase.

Many Jews are so fearful, they are hiding any symbols of their Jewish identity. Compounding the fear is the explosion of anti-Israel protests featuring the genocidal phrase, "From the river to the sea."

Even before recent events, antisemitism had been significantly on the rise for several years.

It starts with the shame that emerged following World War II when the first pictures of Auschwitz surfaced. Antisemitic attitudes that had characterised the Western world for millennia, of course, didn't disappear. But the realisation that antisemitism deeply embedded in society had led to the murder of six million Jews had an impact on the acting out of antisemitism for decades. Aside from the Soviet Union and the Middle East, antisemitic incidents as a result were somewhat inhibited.

As many years passed and new generations emerged, the impact of the Holocaust diminished and with it the shame about exhibiting Jew hatred. At the same time, other factors contributed to a rise. Political polarisation and the weakening of the political centre opened a path toward extremist ideas and conspiracy theories which inevitably fall heavily on Jews.

White supremacists on the right and anti-Zionists on

the left suddenly had new openings and supporters in a heavily charged political climate. Added to these factors was the emergence of social media and the internet as preferred forms of information and communication. Extremists and antisemites now had a perfect weapon to spread their hate.

And, of course, the ideology of antisemitism which pervaded Western societies for centuries was still there under the surface. Education about the Holocaust and

United States, but elsewhere as well, has stunned many in spite of the fact that awareness and concern about Jew hatred had already been growing significantly before that day.

A series of factors have come together since to create a perfect storm for antisemitism.

Anti-Israel forces around the world had been on the defensive in recent years because of the Abraham Accords and potential for a Saudi deal, which threatened those who sought to delegitimise Israel. Now there arose the possibility that it could all fall apart after the massacre and Israel's reaction. This was an incentive for action by antisemites.

Similarly, while we focused on the barbarism of Hamas, enemies and critics of Israel emphasised a new vulnerability of the Jewish state which catalysed their attacks on Jews and Zionists.

Thirdly, every time there was a Middle East conflict, antisemitic incidents would increase. This being by far the most significant event in the sordid history of Hamas, it multiplied that trend manifold. No distinction was made between Israel and Jews around the world.

Fourth, unlike the horrific antisemitic violence from the right, this mostly left-wing hate was taking place where Jews lived, either on campuses with many Jewish students or in neighbourhoods with significant Jewish populations. Hence it wasn't only the numbers of incidents but the proximity which heightened Jewish fears and insecurity.

Fifth was the shock of where the antisemitism was coming from – individuals and groups who were seen as allies. The sense of betrayal is profound, particularly in the

reaction of young people on campus and among minority groups.

And let's not forget that around the world, classical right-wing antisemites who have been less the focus since 7 October, haven't gone away either.

Having said all this, we must keep in mind that not everything is dark. The resilience of the Israeli people; the coming together of Jews everywhere; the support for Israel by many Western governments; public opinion in the United States; and the bravery and idealism of the Israel Defense Forces, all give us hope going forward.

So what should we do?

First, while never forgetting how serious and disturbing these developments are, we need to emphasise as well appropriate reasons for hope. We need to strengthen the political centre in democratic societies and not let the extremes predominate, which always leads to Jew hatred.

Along those lines, we should try to depoliticise the struggle against antisemitism. We need to continue to seek out allies on common issues even if we're dismayed by their lack of support. And we need to be open to those on the right who haven't always been natural allies on many social and political issues but who are largely standing with Israel and the Jewish people in this time of crisis.

At the same time, we also need to be frank in expressing our disgust for the lack of support by groups whom the Jewish community has stood with through the years in their own particular struggles.

Most of all, we need to convey the view that antisemitism isn't just a Jewish problem. The failure to address this surge will have a dramatic impact on democratic societies. Good people need to stand up.

• Kenneth Jacobson is the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL's) deputy national director and the longest serving ADL professional, having been there for 52 years. He writes extensively on ADL issues regarding antisemitism, Israel, and issues of hate and discrimination.



Pro-Palestinian protesters in Italy in October 2023

changes for the better such as the transformation of the Catholic Church from its historic attitudes toward the Jewish people played a role in the years after World War II in improving attitudes toward Jews. Still, something that was so deeply rooted historically couldn't simply disappear.

And then came 7 October. Prior to that day, there had been many discussions reflecting the polarisation in society, particularly in America, as to which was a greater threat to Jews, antisemitism from the right or from the left. More objective observers would note that there was no monopoly on antisemitism, it could come from the right, it could come from the left, it could come from majority communities, it could come from minority communities.

The shock of what has taken place, particularly in the



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South Africa’s not-so-strategic ambiguity on Israel

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



With more flip-flops than a Havaianas store, the South African government isn’t severing diplomatic relations with Israel after all – for now at least. This is in spite of a parliamentary vote to do so last month and a call by a member of parliament to shut the Israeli embassy in Pretoria as the war in Gaza rages on. Parliamentary decisions on foreign policy issues are only advisory, and it’s up to cabinet. To date, cabinet has apparently not discussed the matter, but that doesn’t mean it’s off the table.

Last month, South Africa recalled all its diplomats from Tel Aviv and seemed almost certain to cut ties, especially after the parliamentary vote. The day before that vote, with diplomatic pressure

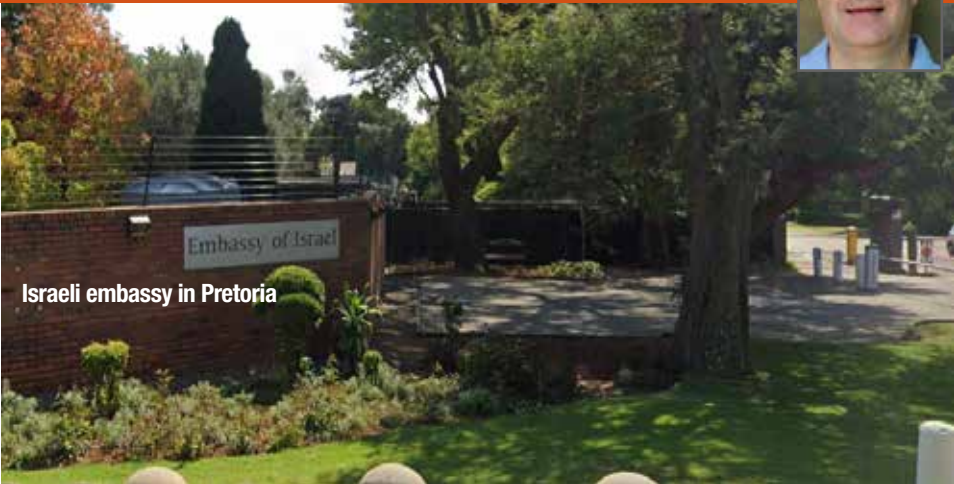
mounting, Israel recalled ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky for consultation. It’s anyone’s guess if or when he’ll return.

South Africa has also recently referred Israel to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and genocide.

“At this stage, there’s no decision to completely [cut] ties with the Israeli government, notwithstanding the level of displeasure that the South African government has expressed with respect to the actions of the Israeli government,” said Vincent Magwenya, the spokesperson for President Cyril Ramaphosa. “We have clear separation of powers within our constitutional dispensation. Therefore, it’s quite unprecedented that you’ll have parliament instructing the executive on what to do.”

Ramaphosa’s office issued an anodyne statement: “President Ramaphosa notes and appreciates parliament’s guidance on our diplomatic relations with Israel, particularly with respect to the status of the Israeli embassy in South Africa. The president and cabinet are engaged over the matter, which remains the responsibility of the national executive.”

The minister of international relations and cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, told parliament last week, “Breaking off



Israeli embassy in Pretoria

diplomatic relations with Israel will be counterproductive as it will also affect our representative office in Ramallah, Palestine, and by implication, weaken the meaningful role that South Africa can play in the Palestinian cause.”

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “Parliamentary motions are politically persuasive but not legally binding. Like the National Freedom Party’s motion in March to downgrade diplomatic relations with Israel, the recent EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters] motion to cut off diplomatic ties carries symbolic weight but would have serious practical consequences for South Africa if the executive decided to implement it.

“Of all the important reasons why South Africa shouldn’t cut off diplomatic relations with Israel, including serious impacts on trade and Pretoria’s diplomatic standing, the only argument heard by government was the consequences for South Africa’s representative office in Ramallah,” Polovin said. “It would mean the potential closing of that office and recall of South Africa’s ambassador in Ramallah, and have an impact on South Africans and Palestinians requiring consular assistance in the Palestinian territories. This was the ultimate reason why it hasn’t been implemented, notwithstanding enormous pressure by the African National Congress (ANC) and EFF to do so.

“It should be noted that the South African government seems far less concerned about the impact that its decision – which it did carry out – to recall its ambassador and diplomatic staff in Israel has had on tens of thousands of South Africans living in or travelling in Israel. This shows once again Pretoria’s blatant double-standards on the issue.”

Professor Hussein Solomon from the University of the Free State said, “It looks like South Africa is trying to play both sides, as it does, such as on Russia-Ukraine. There may be ramifications coming from countries like the United States and so on, there may be economic ramifications. So it’s interesting that the ruling party isn’t following the instruction of the ANC and EFF in parliament. I think this is classic Cyril [Ramaphosa] flip-flopping: taking us to the brink, but at the same time not following through. Even if they don’t cut ties, Israel has already pulled its ambassador out. And South Africa has already kickstarted the

process in terms of the ICC. So I’m not sure how it can walk back. I don’t think it can.”

Sara Gon at the Institute of Race Relations said, “This is an extraordinarily cack-handed way of walking the ANC government’s stance back. It’s clumsy, like so much else the government does. One can tell that something – I don’t know what – put pressure on them to offer a little fig leaf. Perhaps they want us to take our eye off the fact that three Hamas officials flew in to participate in the Fifth Global Convention of Solidarity with Palestine, which started in Johannesburg on Saturday, 2 December.

“Then to cap it all, Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni says government cannot be expected to account for the presence of Hamas in South Africa if its members are in the country on private business,” Gon said. “This isn’t a meaningful comment, and it’s certainly not to placate the Jewish population.”

This isn’t the first time South Africa has displayed not-so-strategic ambiguity when it comes to Israel policy, with the ANC making a decision only for the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) to decide something else.

In 2017, the ANC resolved to downgrade its embassy in Tel Aviv to a liaison office to express its displeasure with Israel’s policies. Dirco took no action. But then Ambassador Sisa Ngombane was recalled to South Africa after a violent flare-up on the Gaza border in May 2018. He never went back to Israel. The embassy wasn’t officially downgraded, but the effect was the same, with no ambassador present.

And when Hamas visits South Africa, it meets the ANC, not government. This is sleight of hand – the ANC is the government. This line is intentionally blurred by the party itself.

South Africa’s government has stepped back from breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel. But it faces a lot of pressure to do so from anti-Israel activists and political parties, including the ANC.

The government’s stance seems to be a ploy to win votes in the 2024 elections, particularly in the Western Cape. The ANC is clinging to the illusion that it would have any meaningful say in the Middle East. It’s totally irrelevant.

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

Hamas breaking humanitarian law, not Israel

LEE TANKLE

“Every country in the world faced with a situation [like the 7 October attacks] would have done exactly what the Israelis did, except maybe not as effectively,” said Colonel Richard Kemp in explaining Israel’s reaction to being invaded by Hamas terrorists on Black Saturday.

Kemp, former commander of the British army in Afghanistan, was speaking during a *SA Jewish Report* webinar on 30 November on the complexities of Israel’s war against Hamas. He was joined by international legal expert David Benjamin.

“For the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] in Gaza, the threat is constant,” said Kemp. The battlefield in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Gaza is complicated, he said, as you have “people dressed like civilians who are among the civilian population, so it becomes hard to identify who the bad guys are”.

He went on to say that with Gaza being such a small area, “The IDF has unrivalled intelligence on the details of Gaza. This allows it to be good at distinguishing civilians and fighters.

“Israel has developed a system whereby it can warn civilians. You’re not going to find this in every area of conflict,” said Benjamin, “It allows the military to be able to attack targets of high military value and not harm civilians.”

In his discussion, Kemp drew on years of studying and talking about Israel, and his career in fighting the kind of terrorism that Israel is facing with Hamas. He fought for the British military in operations in Ireland, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans. Following that, he worked in the British prime minister’s office in international intelligence, where he became closely associated with Israel.

“The sort of extreme care – like alerting civilians that there’s going to be an attack and that they must evacuate – which the IDF is known for by everybody who’s prepared to listen to the truth is something you can’t achieve in a country like Afghanistan,” said Kemp.

“Terrorists deliberately hide among the civilian population and use them as human shields,” he said. “Hamas wants the IDF to kill its civilians to delegitimise Israel to attract global vilification and isolation.”

Kemp said Hamas was happy to use protected locations like schools, hospitals, and mosques to store weapons and as command centres as it posed a problem for the IDF as the world didn’t see what was happening at that location, rather just a hospital.

“It’s in no way surprising that [Hamas] would behave in this way,” said Kemp. “[Its fighters] were well trained, well organised,

and well drilled. They were acting like soldiers. We saw the pure pleasure they were experiencing butchering Jewish people and non-Jews in some cases.

“Hamas [fighters] filmed [the attacks] with their cameras,” said Kemp, “This is something that the Islamic State [ISIS] excelled at. They made sure that they filmed what they were doing. They filmed it and it got out there on the internet. They wanted people to know what they had done. [Hamas] wanted to inspire other people, grotesque as it sounds to any civilised person.

“The troubling thing is that a lot of people, a lot of jihadists around the world and their supporters, have celebrated this footage. They are showing respect for Hamas for doing what it did, and Hamas knew that this would be the case, so it’s a part of its whole terror campaign,” he said.

Benjamin then explained how the laws of war differed vastly from those during peacetime and that things we find completely abhorrent during peacetime become legal during war. The most obvious was the fact that it’s legal for a military operation to kill people and destroy property in times of war.

“In Israel, international humanitarian law is written into the standing orders and *modus operandi* of the IDF. The IDF is a professional body and it works according to humanitarian law by definition,” said Benjamin. “Israel goes out of its way to protect its civilians. Any Israeli military asset that fires into Gaza is far away from any civilian so that even if there’s counterfire, that won’t endanger civilians,” Benjamin said.

Benjamin went on to explain that in war, it’s acceptable to attack a legitimate military target if you’ll achieve a military benefit from it. “The general principle is that if the harm would be excessive in relation to the military advantage, then you must refrain from attacking,” said Benjamin. “The laws of war don’t demand reciprocity.

“If you go through a list of the laws of war, you’ll find that Hamas breaks just about every single one of them,” said Benjamin. “It’s 100% clear that one of the advantages of Hamas is that it means what it says. We need to take it at its word.”

Kemp maintained that after the attacks by Hamas on 7 October, “there was no option for the Israeli government other than to launch an air campaign” as it made it easier for the IDF to go in on the ground later.

“The IDF has been extremely successful on the ground and from the air,” said Kemp, pointing out that you could see how successful the IDF had been in that Hamas was pressing for a ceasefire. “Hamas was desperate for this ceasefire. It was about getting breathing space and buying time. They knew they were on the road to disaster,” said Kemp.

“I’m certain the IDF will have spent time studying the lessons from this war, seeing how Hamas fights, operates, and communicates. Once Hamas lays down its weapons, it melts back into the civilian population so the IDF isn’t going to kill every single one,” said Kemp considering how the war will end.



Colonel Richard Kemp



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From *blitzkrieg* to *sitzkrieg* – Israel’s combat quandary

OPINION

Israel is heading towards day 60 of its protracted war in Gaza. Realpolitik temporarily halted the relentless ground and air campaign, which allowed for a trickle of released hostages Hamas has held since 7 October. Sustaining the pause in operations was never going to lead to a permanent ceasefire but was dependent on Hamas releasing hostages daily. The chances of a permanent ceasefire are remote, but one can anticipate further temporary ceasefires as a hard-pressed Hamas seeks a respite from the relentless Israeli attacks. Hostilities will always resume with a vengeance when either Hamas runs out of hostages, or Israel runs out of patience. Both sides used the opportunity of the break in fighting to regroup, rearm, and prepare for the next grinding phase of urban warfare. For now, the sounds of gunfire once again reverberate through the length and breadth of Gaza.

At the strategic level of war, Hamas has a simple game plan. Yahya Sinwar intends to widen the war to encourage an uprising in the West Bank and the inclusion of Hezbollah in a full-blown conflict in northern Israel. There are signs that Hamas is gaining ground at the expense of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the West Bank, and troubling indications of unrest are occurring daily. An ever-wily Hamas is also seeking to sway Arab-Israelis to support the cause of the ultimate destruction of Israel. International support for Israel, mainly from the West and the United States, has inevitably begun to erode. As the civilian death toll in Gaza rises, Hamas is doing its best to win the propaganda war. Israel, with no clearly defined strategic goal other than the freeing of the remaining hostages and the elimination of Hamas, is steadily losing the propaganda war. What’s urgently needed is a bold Israeli plan for Gaza showing the possibilities after the removal of Hamas and thereafter, an accommodation that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Palestinians.

Of all the armies in the world, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is the least suited to conduct a protracted urban campaign. The IDF has a manoeuvre way of warfare – *blitzkrieg* – which calls for short, sharp, decisive engagements that involve the minimum casualties possible. It will struggle with the massive commitment to boots on the ground and the slow, grinding, attritional warfare demanded in routing out Hamas from its alleyways and tunnels – *sitzkrieg*. Thus far, contrary to

Rockets being fired from Gaza towards Israel on 1 December as fighting resumed between the IDF and Hamas



Photo: Jack Guez/AFP via Getty

its manoeuvre doctrine, it seems that the IDF has been remarkably successful in surrounding Gaza City and occupying large swathes of northern Gaza, with relatively few casualties. The IDF has indeed demonstrated early signs that it’s willing to conquer and occupy Gaza and commit to the long haul – *sitzfleisch*.

However, worrying signs are beginning to emerge around the unsuitability of the IDF for the task ahead, as much of the heavy urban fighting is yet to come. Major General Yitzhak Brick sounded the alarm bells in May 2022, when he cautioned, “We lost the inter-arm combat capability and became a one-dimensional air force army that alone could not win a war.” Israel, as in 1973, has become over-dependent on the air force instead of investing in an all-arms combined force, which is essential, especially in urban warfare. Brick identifies Israel’s greater desire for casualty avoidance and over-reliance on technology as factors severely impacting its fighting spirit.

There also seemed to be a lack of a discernible plan to invade Gaza immediately in the wake of the 7 October Hamas atrocities. The IDF had to take time out to plan the operation into Gaza and train its members in urban combat. Delays cost the IDF many valuable days of operational time when Israel still enjoyed the overwhelming moral high ground with Western nations. Many weeks passed before the ground war began

on 27 October 2023, and by then, Hamas had gained ascendancy in the propaganda war.

In spite of all the reservations surrounding the inevitable casualties that the IDF will suffer in routing out Hamas from its tunnels and urban warrens, the top brass of the IDF seems determined to eliminate its presence from Gaza. The question is, have the Israeli senior and other officers created the proper environment for the ordinary soldier to have a decent chance of completing their task successfully? Does the ordinary IDF soldier fully understand the purpose and importance of the mission ahead? These aren’t easy questions to answer in a battleground shrouded in the fog of war, with the daily news short on details and long on speculation. The IDF, especially its ground forces, is well-equipped for ground warfare. The deployment of heavily armoured Merkava tanks and equally well-protected armour personnel carriers fighting in unison with debussed infantry and

tactical airstrikes signals adherence to the principles of combined arms warfare.

Another question is whether Israel will be able to continue to fight the war with the operational style devised with good effect in the past few weeks. There’s mounting pressure from the United States for the Israelis to curb civilian collateral damage. The curtailment of airstrikes and the granting of ceasefires will inevitably lead to more significant IDF casualties. With the Egyptian border crossing at Rafah closed to Gaza refugees seeking to escape the carnage, the IDF will have a near-impossible task of eliminating Hamas in the south among a swollen civilian population of 1.5 million. Unless civilians are allowed to escape to Egypt or given access to safe havens, the second stage of the war is going to witness an intolerable number of civilian casualties. Israel still faces the prospect of a wider war involving Hezbollah and the growing unease in the West Bank. In the face of these increasing challenges, the coming weeks and months will test the IDF’s endurance to the limit.

• Dr David Brock Katz is a research fellow at Stellenbosch University in the faculty of military science. He has published three books and numerous academic articles dealing with aspects of South African military history and military doctrine.



HOW TO AQUIRE LITHUANIAN CITIZENSHIP?

Are you considering obtaining Lithuanian citizenship? If you have Lithuanian ancestry, there's a pathway for you: Lithuanian citizenship by descent on dual citizenship basis. This means you're eligible to acquire Lithuanian citizenship without relinquishing your current citizenship(s).

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- Ancestral Departure: They should have left Lithuania after 1918 and before its independence on March 11, 1990.
- Geographic Considerations: Eligibility for restoring citizenship is generally straightforward if your ancestor emigrated outside the former Soviet Union. Otherwise, specific departure circumstances are crucial.

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Step 3: Application Submission Our legal team prepares and submits all necessary paperwork, ensuring accuracy and completeness.

Step 4: Application Review The Lithuanian Migration

Department conducts the review, usually within 6 to 12 months.

Step 5: Ongoing Support We track your application's progress, managing any additional requirements promptly. If denied, we evaluate and proceed with an appeal at no extra cost, covered under our All-Inclusive Success Fee.

Step 6: Citizenship Celebration Once approved, we guide you through the final steps to obtain your Lithuanian passport.

Duration Typically, the process spans 10 to 14 months, varying for complex cases.

Required Information About Your Lithuanian Ancestor

- Relationship Description: Detail your connection to your Lithuanian ancestor.
- Full Name: Provide their name in both your current country and Lithuania.
- Birth Date and Lithuanian Residence: Include these details.
- Extended Family Details: If available, share information about their parents and siblings.
- Emigration Year: Provide this if known; estimates are acceptable.

Note: It's acceptable if you don't have all this information; possessing Lithuanian documents is beneficial but not mandatory for the application.



Adv. Dainius Ambrazaitis
IN JURE Law Firm , Vilnius, Lithuania

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December 2023

Transcript of speech given by SAJBD Chairperson Professor Karen Milner at our Biennial Conference Comment.

We are not living in normal times so this will not be a normal chairperson's speech. Instead, this is a speech from the heart, taking stock of where the Jewish community finds itself, before and after the events of 7 October, which fractured our world.

This being The 16 Days of Activism of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children, I start by dedicating this speech to our sisters in Israel, who were raped and murdered while the world has again largely stood silent. Israel has not been silent and nor will we, as through our rage and grief, we bear witness to the crimes of Hamas.

When I was elected as National Chairperson, many people asked about my vision for the Board and I struggled to articulate it. But over the past two years and particularly the past two months, I can now articulate it clearly. My vision for the SAJBD is to help us live as proud Jews and as proud engaged citizens in our beautiful, complicated, broken country. It is to make the words from the Freedom Charter 'We the people' feel like it rings true for us all.

Every project, activity, press statement, and initiative under my leadership has been dedicated to that vision. When I was elected, the country and our community were reeling from the effects of COVID-19. Our community was disproportionately affected, and beyond it, starvation was again a spectre in our streets. I am proud of how we took the lead in helping the worst affected, supporting soup kitchens, food gardens, and various other projects. Proud Jews and engaged citizens don't let their fellow South Africans starve. We carried through this active citizenship, helping with relief during some of the worst disasters in this country, particularly the horrific Boksburg gas tanker explosion, KwaZulu-Natal floods, and the terrible inner city Albert Street fire.

Our positions as involved citizens and proud Jews was solidified through the marvellous *Mensches in the Trenches* book. So many have been touched and inspired by the stories of lesser-known Jewish veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle. The book is an absolute inspiration, especially now, teaching how to be a mensch in a country where some in government are very far from mensches.

Also close to my own heart is our work with the universities. We have proactively engaged with students bringing SAUJS and student representative councils together to help address critical student challenges. Our students have had a firm place on South African campuses. While this may be tested next year, we have something to build on.

We also don't forget the Jewish side of our students. Wendy Kahn has fought like a mother bear protecting her young to support students, interns, and community placements in not having to compromise their Judaism in pursuit of their careers. She is also assisting our rabbonim with challenges they are facing.

Finally, I come to the hardest part of my speech. How do we live as proud Jews and engaged citizens in light of the government's hostility post 7 October?

I am not going to detail every appalling government, ANC or DIRCO statement nor our every response - you are all too aware of them. But I will provide some chizuk (strength) through a phrase I learned from a colleague, If Israel is a start-up nation, South African Jewry are a DIY nation.

In the absence of a functional welfare system, we have the Chevrah Kadisha; when health services collapse, we have Hatzolah; and in the face of our government's shameful international relations policy, we have our own pride.

Government said nothing after 7 October, but Ponte was lit up in the colours of the Israeli flag. Our president said nothing about the victims when speaking about the Middle East just a week later, and we called him out loudly in an advert in the Sunday Times.

Our International Relations Minister had a cosy chat with Hamas and we issued a PAIA application to find out what was said. Our national broadcaster allowed Hamas to lie on our television screens, and we protested outside its offices – forcing the SABC to acknowledge the child hostages. Our government barely called for the hostages' release, but our national balloon and beach campaigns have gone viral. In the face of overwhelming media hostility, we have ensured our voices are heard – from Phala Phala Radio to 702, Newsroom Africa, Sunday Times, Citizen, Daily Maverick, BBC, Voice of America etc.

And in all of this, we haven't been alone. Despite global Jewry facing similar and even worse challenges, our friends internationally have opened their doors to us. We also have many friends in South Africa, some of whom have fought shoulder to shoulder with us.

We will continue to engage with Israel on bringing their ambassador back to Pretoria. And with South Africa on returning our ambassador to Tel Aviv.

We are in for a tough road ahead. While hoping the rise in antisemitism has plateaued, we expect next year to have to deal with more hostility against our community at a personal, professional, business, and political level.

But we aren't going anywhere. As the preamble to our Constitution declares: "South Africa belongs to all who live in it". Despite everything, communal life in South Africa is thriving – shuls are full; kosher shops and restaurants are doing brisk trade; our youth camps are back and stronger than ever; and South African Jewry is still punching way above its weight.

May we continue to support and protect one another; holding high the values that are so dear to us as a community.

Karen Milner
Chairperson,
South African Jewish Board of Deputies

End of an era, as quintessential businessman passes on

PETA KROST

Many say that everything they know about business they learned from the old-school business icon Eric Ellerine. But early on Monday morning, when for so many decades he would be heading for work, he passed away at the age of 90.

Ellerine, who won the Lifetime Achiever Award at the 2021 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, was still going into the office every day until a few months ago at the end of a 74-year business career.

And until not long ago, no big deal would go through Ellerine Bros without being run through him.

He was always the first in the office and the last out, and for many years, if his daughter Dionne Ellerine Hirschowitz – whom he eventually handed the reins of the business to – wasn't in by 07:00, he would call to find out why.

"He was the quintessential businessman, a *mensch*, and the last in his era. Eric's success in business and family life is a tribute to who and what Eric was," Colin Datnow, the group chairperson of the Chevrah Kadisha, said of him in a video at the Jewish Achievers event. "He has been gracious and magnanimous in his support for the less privileged and the aged."

Dionne, the director of Ellerine Bros and chief executive of the Ellerine Trust, said her father had an "old-world charm" and really liked to look after the next generation and instil the wisdom that he had learned over the years.

He didn't play favouritism at work. Even Dionne was expected to sign in and out every day for many years. "There was many a day I took unpaid leave because G-d forbid, I didn't sign in!" she said when her dad won Lifetime Achiever.

"My dad was tougher on me than other people. However, he was a fair boss, and treated everyone with respect and friendliness no matter who they were," she said.

Ellerine was born and raised in Johannesburg, attending Athlone Boys High. Born to emigrants from Latvia, he came from humble beginnings.

At the age of 16, he decided to start a business with his Barmitzvah money – all 100 pounds of it. Having invested it when he received, it had grown by eight pounds.



He knew his parents couldn't afford to send him to university, so when he heard of a shop that had become vacant at Germiston Station, he grabbed it, creating Eric's Furnishers in 1950.

His mother insisted that he had to finish matric, so he started his business in July, and took trams and trains to Damelin College night school and completed his matric.

He had learned the fundamentals of the furniture business working on weekends in his father's store. Ellerine believed that opening his first store was well timed because the old Germiston township was being demolished and a new one created nearby. "People needed tables, chairs, stoves, and other big items for their homes," he said. His first sale was a stove for the equivalent of R15. The buyer had the equivalent of only R10, so he took that, and the customer agreed to pay off the balance every week.

His reasoning was that with her down payment, he could buy another stove immediately, a small amount of the rest covered expenses, and then some. Many see this as the beginning of credit in the retail industry.

Ellerine's target market was the lower income black market. The formula was to offer low mark ups that undercut the competition and attracted customers, using the same logic that worked with his first customer.

"My first customer came in every week to pay, and

once her stove was paid off, she bought a table, and so it went on," Ellerine said.

He brought his younger brother, Sydney, into the business, whom he referred to as his "true partner – we shared everything and did everything together".

The business kept growing, and the Ellerines opened more shops, now under the name of "Ellerines Furnishers". When Eric and Sydney eventually retired, they had 630 retail stores around Africa, and they went from initially employing six people to 8 500.

They also opened training centres, which were particularly important to Ellerine as he believed in helping people better themselves.

As his company was growing, so was his family. In 1955, Eric met Rhona Levinstein at Cyrildene Shul. Three and a half years later, they married, and went on to have four girls together – Lana, Jodene, Nicole, and Dionne.

Ellerine's biggest regret was not spending enough time with his girls. Every morning, he would leave home, shouting out, "Bye goggies [his nickname for his daughters]!" and came home for dinner in the evening, shouting, "Hi goggies!" In spite of this, he made a point of always being home for dinner, and not bringing work home. In his time out, he would enjoy sport. "I was never a good sportsman, but I was a keen one," he said.

But much like sport, Ellerine enjoyed his career, and believed that to succeed in business, "you have to be passionate about what you're doing, and be hands on and lead from the front".

Why there won't be lighting miracles this year

HANNA RESNICK

As another year of loadshedding comes to an end, it seems we're unlikely to see another Chanukah miracle anytime soon. Unlike the drop of oil that lasted eight days, Eskom's emergency reserves can provide power for only a few days, says Chris Yelland, energy analyst, consultant, electrical engineer, public speaker, writer, and managing director at EE Business Intelligence.

"It's certainly possible that we'll have loadshedding over December," said Yelland.

According to Yelland, the electricity demand reduces in December so the loadshedding outlook appears to improve, however, "Eskom has a significantly higher level of planned outages and maintenance" in that month.

To keep the lights on for the holidays, or at least eight days, would require Eskom to use its emergency reserves to mitigate any supply shortage. "If a situation arose where there was inadequate supply because of the high levels of planned and unplanned outages, it could alleviate the situation by operating diesel-driven open cycle gas turbines, as well as pump water storage schemes," said Yelland.

"And Eskom does this on a regular basis. But these emergency reserves don't last long. They were never intended to run for continuous purposes for operational needs. They were intended to be used for short-term emergencies. If you operate the open cycle gas turbines hard for a couple of days, they run out of diesel. And the same thing applies to pumped water storage schemes. You then need to switch them off and replenish either the diesel or the water in the top dam. And that's what's been happening. That's why we have regular loadshedding."

This isn't to say that there's no light at the end of the tunnel. "If we do the right thing for a long time, we'll solve this problem," said Yelland. "We need to focus on maintenance and performance of Eskom's power stations, but that's not enough. We also need brand new generation capacity that performs well."

"When we have Stage 6 loadshedding, it means that we're 6 000MW short. So we need at least 6 000MW of new generation capacity." We also need another several thousand megawatts to give us a generation reserve margin, he said. "You need about 15% excess over and above your specific maximum needs in order to give you enough generation units that, when one switches off for whatever reason including planned maintenance, you have a spare one to switch on."

Additionally, we need to be able to cater for a growing economy. "At the moment, we need more generation just to keep pace with the growth of the economy and the population," Yelland said. We also need to replace old coal-fired power plants that have reached the end of their life.

Unless we do all these things, we'll have

loadshedding for a long time, said Yelland. "But if we do the right thing, and if we get the private sector to help bring on new generation in the form of rooftops solar PV, battery energy storage, and other renewable energy projects, small and large, it can make a big difference. Together with public-sector procurement, we can solve this problem, but we have to work together as a team."

Yelland doesn't recommend going off the grid as he says it's too expensive and an inefficient way of operating. "What's actually beneficial is putting in a system in parallel with your grid connection. If you can afford it, it gives peace of mind and security of supply, and it will also help reduce your electricity bill. Some people can get by with a gas stove, a couple of hand-operated lights and a backup battery, which is only an investment of about R10 000 maximum. It's a decision that everyone must take depending on their circumstances."

Yelland believes moving loadshedding to local government level was a "bad move".

"Financially, administratively, and management-wise, City Power Johannesburg is in dire shape. The move to take all loadshedding in Johannesburg out of Eskom's hands and put it in City Power's is like going from the frying pan into the fire. One of the reasons City Power gave was that it wanted to reduce the amount of loadshedding on business and industrial customers in the metropolitan area. But if you shed less load for your commercial and industrial customers, you must shed more load for all the other people."

That being said, Yelland believes increased efforts by the government, driven by the election next year, are making some difference. "The new electricity minister is bringing a new energy, a new sense of urgency, and a new accountability to ending loadshedding," he said.

"But you can have a good week, then a bad week, or a good month, and then a bad month." Just a few weeks ago, the loadshedding schedule seemed to be improving, followed by schedules up to Stage 6. "The trouble in South Africa is that we tend to think that when we don't have the same intensity of loadshedding, the problem has been fixed," Yelland said.

"You cannot fix this problem by waving a magic wand or doing a couple of flying visits to power stations around the country and a few media briefings," he said. "The problem needs to be fixed by fixing Eskom, having a proper maintenance regime in place, and building new generation capacity, and that takes time, costs money, and requires skills."



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Laughter inducing and life saving – farewell Uncle Harold

TRIBUTE

PHILIPPA SKLAAR



My uncle Harold (Professor Harry Seftel, who we in the family called Harold) was a force of nature. His genius never failed to blow us away. We never went to doctors because we had Harold. No matter where any of us were in the world, one call to Harold about an ailment, and he would prescribe the cure. We grew up knowing that whatever we did was measured against what Harold said. What we ate, what medications to take, and how best to heal. We did nothing without Harold.

Our family get-togethers were the best entertainment in the world. Harold held forth, and kept us in fits of laughter. He had sayings and slogans that had every South African who listened to him on Radio 702 roar with laughter. His deep voice boomed across lecture halls; radio stations transmitted his words into the homes of millions of his devoted listeners. He was in his element while he did what he loved. To teach and educate generations, delivered in his unique style with alliteration catch phrases and humour. Harold got away with saying things that no-one else would have. He swore, he used words that weren't found in medical journals, and no-one objected. It endeared him even more. Medically speaking, he was in a league of his own.

"The fatal s's: slothing, sexing, snogging, stuffing, and stressing," emphasising the s's and r's with his signature guttural growl.

"Fish, fowl, and fibre," was another favourite.

"So, in order to pass a good, normal stool you should eat grass, not smoke it," was one of his classics.

I asked my cousin, Lewis, if he had any stories he remembered that I could write about in this article. We laughed as we shared memories about growing up with this remarkable man. He reminded me of Harold's study practice growing up in Mayfair when the house was too *tumeldik* to study. He went onto the roof where he could study in silence. If the neighbours needed him, they got his attention by throwing stones onto the roof. He was so deeply engrossed in his studies, it was the only way they could communicate with him.

My bobba was called to the school one day by Harold's teacher.

"Mrs Seftel, I'm sorry to tell you this, but your son is backwards."

"Oy, *tank* you, *tank* you," my bobba replied, her English not very good at that time.

The teacher looked at her, frowning with impatience and repeated herself.

My Bobba smiled broadly. She knew Harold was a genius, and presumed the teacher called her in to tell her she knew it too.

Harold studied Latin at school, which was unusual because it wasn't a requirement. He loved it so much, that he then taught himself Greek. When he started studying medicine, it was like coming home. It was his natural environment – medical terms and anatomy were in Latin.

As much as Harold loved Latin, he loved words, and he loved the way words sounded. He believed that when he described a disease in Latin, he educated people with both a scientific lesson and a grammar lesson. His unique teaching skills taught people about the origin of language as well as about medicine.

A relative complained once that he had an itchy *tochus*. Harold said, "Ahhh you have an old friend of mine down there. *Taenia Saginata*," he pronounced in his loud deep voice, savouring each letter, his awe for Latin never diminishing. "You have tapeworm. We'll kill him, don't worry."

"How do you know I have tapeworm?" my relative asked.

"I know you're a good Jewish boy, so I know you don't eat pork. The one that comes in pork is *Taenia Solium*. You obviously ate beef in the canteen at the university, and that's where you got my old friend."

Harold's combination of theatre and language, and how he connected it with medicine made him extraordinary – the theatrical and the scientific.

Lewis related a lecture Harold gave on the importance of breastfeeding.

"Women must use their breasts for babies and not for commerce and titillation," Harold announced, punctuating the r's.

"You are using your breasts for business; your tits must not be used for titillation. They must be used for babies," he would tell an audience as they fell into the aisles laughing. "The phenomenon that we have today is a babyless lady. A babyless lady is a terrible thing. You don't want to be

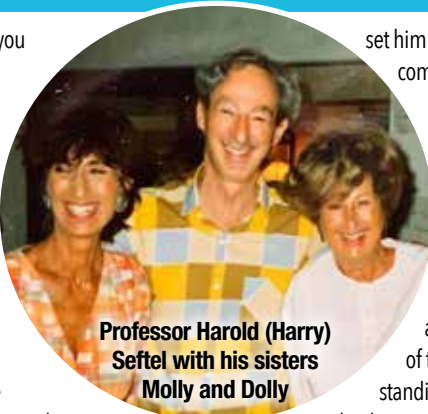
a babyless lady. That's what makes you healthy."

"How do you remember this," I asked as I couldn't stop laughing.

"Because of the way he spoke. He was so theatrical and it all had to do with language."

Harold was a national treasure and to us family, he was our hero. He was our everything, and we adored him.

Nothing gave me more pleasure than cooking for Harold. His eyes lit up when I baked him boolkas, herring and kichel had him sigh with deep pleasure, and chicken soup with bobba's kneidlach



Professor Harold (Harry) Seftel with his sisters Molly and Dolly

set him off on an endless round of compliments.

I had another reason for loving Harold as much as I did. When I gave birth to my second son, I was bleeding to death. My gynaecologist panicked and ran out of the theatre to tell my mother to call Harold. I went in and out of consciousness, and one of the times I woke up I saw Harold standing beside me. I thought it odd that he was in the theatre wearing a brown checked shirt and a pair of shorts. When I woke up later in intensive care, I was told that Harold had saved my life.

He had instructed my gynaecologist what to do.

I will share another story about how extraordinary a man he was. I did something quite awful, and I went to Harold to apologise. He took me in his arms and said, "Philippapala – only he and my bobba called me that – we have the same blood." I burst out crying, and hugged him hard.

Harold, you live on in all of us every day. We quote you regularly, and talk about you constantly. You are still our everything.

• Philippa Sklaar is the author of three books, *Hot Cuisine*, a recipe book written on men and food, and co-wrote *When Loving Him Hurts* and *The Affair*. She is working on her second recipe book.

BELLAVISTA iThemba

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Menorahs and memory: from dark to light

OPINION

An old man is walking in the dead of night, holding a lantern to help him navigate the darkness of a deserted alleyway. Observing a group of young people struggling to open a door, he approaches to shine the light in their direction. The group of thieves, who have no interest in being seen, begin to beat the man, and chase him away with insults.

The world out there is dark at the moment. Pitch dark. Darker than any time in my living memory. But I grew up on stories of dark. Our history is filled with dark episodes. From our genesis as a people in Egypt, through oppression by Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Then there was the Spanish Inquisition, persecutions, expulsions, and blood libels. And I was born in the shadow of the most unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust, among survivors who rolled up their sleeves to put on tefillin in shul in the morning, revealing their tattooed arms.



Re'im, Keren Shalom, Zikim, Sderot, Kfar Aza, Be'eri, Nahal Oz, Holit, Nirim - the places that were attacked on 7 October have been inscribed on each branch of the chanukiah

of history. But the *mitzvah* is to light the Chanukah lights after nightfall, when it's indeed dark outside.

Powerful images come to mind. First that of the Maccabees rededicating the Holy Temple and lighting the menorah with oil from a single undefiled vessel.

Then there's the iconic photograph, taken in Kiel in 1931 in the home of the town's spiritual leader, Rabbi Akiva Posner. The chanukiah is sitting on the windowsill, facing a building across the road adorned with Nazi flags. On the back of the photograph, the rabbi's wife wrote the following, "The flag says, 'Death to Judah', so the light answers, 'Judah will last forever.'" Just a year ago on the second night of Chanukah, the Posners' grandchildren lit this chanukiah in Berlin in the presence of German President Frank Walter Steinmeier.

A more recent photo, gone viral in the past few days, shows a menorah being hoisted atop

a building in Gaza, no doubt a huge morale booster for the troops who seem set to spend the holiday on the front.

Then I came across a social media post by Israeli journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir. It's a picture of a chanukiah, at first glance a typical child's holiday project. But a closer look sends shivers up my spine. For on each of the nine branches is inscribed the name of a locality that heartbreakingly became a scene of tragedy on 7 October: "Re'im, Keren Shalom, Zikim, Sderot, Kfar Aza, Be'eri, Nahal Oz, Holit, Nirim". From the darkness emerges the light.

Judah will live forever.

• *Rabbi Yossi Chaikin is the rabbi at Oxford Shul and the chairperson of the South African Rabbinical Association.*



RABBI YOSSI CHAIKIN

In darkest times, illuminate from the inside out

OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY

This week, Jews around the world will gather once again to commemorate the festival of Chanukah, where we celebrate the victory of the few over many and that little jar that brought the miracle of light in the midst of a dark and painful time. Interestingly, there are three main differences between the way the menorah was lit in the Temple and the way we light our menorahs today:

- The Temple menorah was lit during the day, no later than 1.15 hours before sunset, and it burned through the night. The Chanukah lights are kindled after nightfall;
- The original menorah in the Temple stood indoors, in the sanctuary of the Temple, never seen by an ordinary citizen. Its light, however, glowed outwards through the special windows of the sanctuary, which were small on the inside and wide on the outside, hence spreading the light of the menorah outwards. The Chanukah menorah, on the other hand, must be placed at the perimeter of one's house, facing the street. Today, with the encouragement and blessing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, we now have public menorah lightings all over the world;
- The Temple menorah burned seven wicks. Our Chanukah menorahs have eight wicks.

Why these dissimilarities? If we're commemorating the miracle that happened with the menorah in the Temple, surely we should re-enact the miracle?

There's an incredibly profound lesson taught by our Chassidic masters. And it takes us back to the time of creation. In the first chapter of Genesis, we learn about the creation of light and darkness. Light symbolises revealed good, and darkness concealed good. On the most fundamental level, our task is to harness the light of day so that it extends to illuminate the night. In other words, our mission is to preserve and develop all that's good and godly in our world, and direct these positive forces to overcome and transform the



negativity of the "dark side" of creation. Hence the menorah in the Temple was lit during the day, glowing its light outwards.

But there are times when darkness overcomes the Temple, extinguishes the menorah, and defiles the oil. Times like these demand us to turn to the night as a source of light. We must search for that hidden, single cruse of pure oil and use it to illuminate the darkness around us. And so, on Chanukah, we bring the light to the streets, filling the darkness with the illumination of godly wisdom and morality. That explains the first two differences.

The third difference is, however, the most profound. The number seven in Judaism represents the natural order of things, for example the seven days of the week. The menorah in the Temple stands for the standard operating procedure of the world – the natural way to make this world a holier place. But when darkness engulfs this planet, we need to dig deeper and go beyond nature, represented by the number eight. Eight is a level above nature, a supernatural one in which we see miracles and illumination not ordinarily seen. Our Chanukah menorah stands for the fight of a few men, whose battle cry was, "*Mi laHashem, elai!*" (Whoever is for G-d, come with me). Their bravery, commitment, and resolve to make this world a better place and to displace the darkness earned them the miracle of Chanukah, in which one single cruse of oil burned for eight days, showing how they managed to overturn what seemingly was concealed good into a burning, bright, powerful light.

This message is so timely for us. Undoubtedly 7 October enveloped this world in a deep darkness. The senseless cruelty, barbarism, and inhumanity has certainly shocked us to our core,

and in an instant, the world has been plunged into a war between good and evil, morality and immorality, light and darkness. We cannot rely on the standard operating procedure. The call of the hour is to fight this darkness by going beyond our nature, leaving our comfort zones, and illuminating every corner of this world with light – the light of Torah, *mitzvot*, acts of goodness and kindness, prayer, and especially the light of unity. Moreover, I would like to suggest taking it one notch higher and deeper. In each of our lives, we carry some profound darkness – a bad habit/addiction that we cannot shake; a tumultuous relationship that festers; a space of fear and anxiety that shuts us down; trauma that holds us imprisoned. The time is now to find the strength and resolve of our ancestral Maccabean brethren and become determined to change our reality.

How do we overcome these dark demons within us? By lighting the menorah of our souls, one candle at a time, increasing day by day, until we can reach full illumination. For "the soul of man is a lamp of G-d" (Proverbs 20:27). We're literally at the precipice of history, where we have been promised the light of redemption and that we're going to merit seeing Mashiach in our lifetimes. We all know, however, that at the same time, the darkest hours of the night are those just before dawn. We're living this reality today. Who would ever imagine the depth of the darkness today? The message of Chanukah is loud and clear. Hashem is waiting for every one of us to rise to the occasion, to dispel our personal darkness, to reach out to our fellow in extraordinary love, and to bring this world to its final redemption. A time where we'll merit the ingathering of all Jews to our Holy Land, the building of our third and final Temple in Jerusalem, where we'll all bathe in Hashem's illumination, and be blessed with ultimate peace, health, prosperity, and goodness for all mankind. Let's gird our strength and resolve, and with the cry, "*Mi laHashem, elai!*" finally conquer the evil and bring the world to redemption. Chag Sameach!

• *Rebbetzin Aidel Kazilsky is a radio and television host and an inspirational speaker who teaches the wisdom of Torah and applies it to contemporary times.*



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Why isn't Chanukah seven nights long?

OPINION

RABBI GREG ALEXANDER



Why is Chanukah eight nights long? You know the answer to this one, right? The olive oil needed to light the menorah should have lasted only one day, but in fact it lasted for eight days. We celebrate for eight nights to remember the miracle.

Except, if you think about it, they always had enough oil for the one first day. That means that the first day wasn't miraculous and the wonder really was the seven days after that as the oil continued to burn. If you want to celebrate the miracle, you need to do it for seven days, not eight!

You're not the first to ask that question. Rabbis over the centuries have tackled this, and there are more than a hundred different ways that they have answered it. That's taking two Jews, three opinions to a whole different level! Here's a small taste of some of the answers:



Answer one comes from Menachem Meiri, a famous Catalan rabbi of the 13th century. That they found any oil at all was already a miracle. The Greeks having defiled the Temple and used it for their own rituals, should have left no pure oil behind. And yet they managed to find one jug, so from the get-go, there were miracles happening.

Answer two goes back to the time of Jewish scholars Hillel and Shammai, 2 000 years ago, and reminds us

that the Hellenists didn't just defile the Temple, they also banned circumcision. Greek culture celebrated perfection of the human body, and to cut into the flesh was seen as an abomination. It was only after the Maccabees defeated the Greek army that circumcision was allowed to be performed. As we know, a bris happens on the eighth day, hence Chanukah was celebrated for eight days. (Megillat Ta'anit ch.12)

A third answer comes from Yosef Karo, who you might recognise as the author of the Shulchan Aruch, the legal code from the 16th century. He suggested that the kohanim knew that it would take another eight days to get hold of pure olive oil, and so, anticipating this problem, they divided the jug of oil, which contained enough for one day, into eight equal amounts. That way, they would be able to light an eighth of the oil for each of the eight nights, and have the menorah lit,

if not for the whole night, at least for a part of it, right through. The miracle that happened was that each night, the oil that should have lasted only one-eighth of the night, lasted for the entire night.

There's another explanation that takes a different approach. When the war with the Greek army ended, everyone had been involved in the bitter fighting and had, tragically, come into contact with death. This is technically known as "*te'umat meit*", and in order for anyone to be ritually fit for preparing the oil, they would have to undergo the process that moves them from *tamei* (unfit) to *tahor* (green light), which takes seven days. Therefore, it would be a week before anyone could

even start preparing oil to light the menorah, and another day to get the oil ready. So the miraculous oil needed to last eight days. (Beit Yosef, Orach Chayim 670)

I want to take each of these four explanations as relevant to where we are today. Beginning with Meiri, how often do we say, "Well that's just not going to happen," and give up on something without even trying. If the Maccabees had taken that approach and considered it so unlikely that the Seleucid army had left any oil untouched, they would have never experienced the miracle and we wouldn't be celebrating Chanukah. The lesson here is not to give up without at least trying.

Hillel and Shammai remind us that Jewish rituals have a power of their own. We might think we're just lighting a candle or saying a blessing, blowing a ram's horn, or putting on a fringed garment, but these actions reverberate beyond the here and now to the eternal forever and beyond. Every *mitzvah* we do has a positive consequence in the world, and if we think we cannot have an impact on the global stage, we can. Do a *mitzvah* right now and see how that changes the world.

Karo reminds us that even when the end is beyond us, doing something is better than doing nothing. A part adds up in some way to a greater whole, and contributing is always possible. Just because you can't see yourself managing all, we're told in Pirkei Avot, "You're not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it." (Avot 2:21)

Lastly, his other explanation talks to our experience today, and the war that has followed the pogrom of 7 October. Each of us has been tainted by the killing and the violence, and we hope and pray every day for the release of all hostages and an end to this war. Beyond that, to a solution that will mean that *lo yilm'du od milchama* (Isaiah 2:4) – that we, and everyone, should never have to train for war again.

• Rabbi Greg Alexander is part of the rabbinic team at the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation.



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Antidote to antisemitism is Jewish pride

OPINION

RABBI RICKY SEEFF

There are few societal ills as ancient and as virulent as antisemitism. It has been ever present, and it merely mutates as we traverse the passage of time.

We have a tradition that the first time something, a word or a concept, appears in the Torah is the paradigm that describes the essence of that item. I heard once from local scholar Cecil Steinhauer that the first time we encounter systemic antisemitism in the Torah is in the context of the slavery of Egypt. Pharaoh somehow manages to convince the Egyptian people that their successful and fully enculturated Jewish Egyptians neighbours are a threat to national security. He claims that should Egypt be attacked by foreign invaders, the Jews would join forces with the enemies and revolt against the Egyptians. Why in the world would patriotic Egyptian Jews turn on their country of birth after 200 years of naturalisation? They wouldn't. And so is born the essence of antisemitism – Illogical to the core. Rationale defying, and simply beyond any reasonability.

There's no logic. Jews have done more to advance their countries of sojourn in the diaspora than any other minority in the history of mankind. Our impact far surpasses our meagre numbers. One would assume we would be praised and thanked, not derided and reviled. Yet that remains the pattern, even today.

Some Jewish rabbis and scholars suggest that

antisemitism exists as Hashem's values-clarification mechanism. When we stray from our traditions and heritage or when we hate one another, Hashem reminds us who we are and who our real enemies are. Sometimes we fight one another over politics, religion, tradition, and even good old baseless *faribels*. Those who hate us are sent as a stark reminder about who the real enemies are.

If that's the case, then the real antidote to antisemitism is a mindful and deliberate increase in Jewish identity and pride. Our default position would be to run and hide our Jewishness, to be more like everyone else, but the opposite it true. Just as the Maccabees fought bravely against the ancient Greeks – who weren't trying to physically destroy us but to Hellenise us and disconnect us from our religious practise. They fought for Judaism. They fought for their identity, and united the people in doing so.

There has been a moving image circulating of a woman lighting her Chanukah candles before the outbreak of World War II in Germany. The Nazis had



just risen to power, and in the background to the picture, a swastika flag is draped over the new Nazi headquarters. On the photograph to her family she has inscribed the powerful words, "'Judah shall die' – thus says the flag. 'Judah shall live' – thus says the candles."

Antisemitism is a virus. It rears its head to shock us into action and sometimes with tragic results, but it never defeats us. Pretending it doesn't exist, or hiding our identity doesn't inoculate us from its effects.

The events of 7 October have shaken global Jewry to the core. A brazen attack on Jews, just because they are Jews. A modern-day pogrom. Alliances and friends of old have quickly turned, and the narrative against Israel has strengthened in disturbing ways. While civilian death is completely tragic, the rationale for this war seems lost on most and, once again, global Jewry is feeling increasingly isolated. We can be assured that the longer the war drags on, the further the events of 7 October will retreat and disappear in global consciousness.

The position taken by our government and the

openly antisemitic rhetoric is jarring for our community and our children. It's illogical, as the Torah defines it to be. Our children are seeing it all online – there are no secrets and it can be intimidating and scary. I believe our message to them should be resounding and unequivocal. You have nothing to be ashamed of, and everything to be proud of. As John Adams, the second president of the United States said, "I'll insist the Hebrews have [contributed] more to civilise men than any other nation. If I was an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilising the nations. They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this earth. The Romans and their empire were but a bubble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three-quarters of the globe, and have influenced the affairs of mankind more and more happily than any other nation, ancient or modern."

We have to hear this, and so do our kids. Be proud. Know who you are. Our unity and Jewish pride and practise is our best defence and our greatest weapon against this ancient baseless hatred.

• *Rabbi Ricky Seeff is the general director of the South African Jewish Board of Education and former principal of King David Primary School Victory Park.*



Menorah lighting canned by Joburg malls

HANNA RESNICK

For many, it's a Chanukah family tradition to attend the menorah lighting ceremonies at Sandton City and Norwood Mall. Unfortunately, both centres have cancelled these ceremonies this year.

The Gauteng malls aren't the first to call off Chanukah celebrations this year, with public menorah lighting being cancelled in Moncton, Canada; in Virginia; and the London City Council deciding to scrap the installation of a menorah outside Havering Town Hall due to fears of vandalism and "tensions", but reversing its decision after a backlash from the community.

"Cancelling Chanukah lighting events because of events in Israel is deeply problematic," said Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. "Chanukah lighting is a religious ritual, not a political statement or position. To equate it to the pro or anti-Israel marches and demonstrations is entirely incorrect. It's not acceptable to cancel

a Jewish event because of anything to do with Israel."

Both Sandton and Norwood malls reportedly "politely declined" requests to host the ceremonies this year, in spite of their co-operation in previous years. Following numerous attempts by the *SA Jewish Report* to contact them for an explanation, neither commented.

Rabbi Michael Katz and Rabbi Ari Kievman, who organise the Sandton event, as well as Rabbi Mordechai Rodal, who organises the Norwood event, believe the decision wasn't made with malicious intent, but to keep store owners and customers out of trouble.

"I don't think this was anything sinister or antisemitic," said Katz. "Their hands were tied. Unfortunately, the bullies out there have won this one as well."

Said Kievman, "Though I can understand the immense pressure and intimidation or concerns that they may have, we're sorry to see big independent shopping centres cowering to such pressure."

The annual Sandton City ceremony has been going for 25 years, the past 10 of which have been consecutive. At Norwood Mall, it has been running since 2012. Neither have been cancelled in recent memory, although Kievman said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, "we faced some challenges with getting the permits for the menorah, but we did get it, and it was a great event".

Had the malls not declined, Katz, Kievman, and Rodal said they would have gone ahead with the events. "We had the backing of the CSO [Community Security Organisation] as well," said Katz, who is determined to resume the tradition next year. "We certainly don't give up so easily."

"It's a dark time for the Jewish people, many of whom report feeling scared since the 7 October massacre in Israel and subsequent rise of antisemitism globally," said Kievman. "It's especially important now, as the menorah



Giant menorah being lit outside Sandton City in 2021

symbolises light and "a little light expels a lot of darkness".

The Sandton menorah will now be lit at the Sandton Central Shul's Chabad Goodness and Kindness Centre, and Rabbi Rodal is trying to find another location to host the Norwood event.

"Especially this year, in a world that has suddenly become so much darker, it's even more important to add light," he said. "An integral component of celebrating Chanukah is the concept of *"pirsumei nisa"* [publicising the miracle]. For this reason, many Jews light their menorahs in the window facing the front street. The Lubavitcher Rebbe encouraged taking this concept further by lighting large, noticeable menorahs in public places."

"The menorah, and indeed Chanukah itself, has a universal message of freedom of the human spirit, freedom from tyranny and oppression, and of the ultimate victory of good over evil," said Kievman.

Rodal said that public menorah lighting and Chanukah celebrations symbolise "that the Jewish – and every – community can proudly celebrate their religion in public without fear or discrimination." Rodal is showing his Jewish pride this holiday by driving around with an illuminated menorah on the roof of his car. He has also printed magnetic signs wishing "Happy Chanukah" for people to attach to the sides of their cars. "I'm hoping these will be seen all over the streets of Johannesburg, and will strengthen Jewish resolve," he said.

There will also be menorah lightings at K kosherWorld and at the Northgate Ice Rink on Monday, 11 December, at 18:15. Many shuls have installed their own giant menorahs.

"While there may be unpleasant interactions, we must stand proud instead of cowering," said Rodal. "If we let ourselves be intimidated, the antisemites win, and it'll only get worse."

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Rekindle the flame for better times to come

OPINION

MIKE ABEL



“Knishes and fishes, and traditional dishes;
Dreidels and teigels and smoked salmon
bagels;
Piled high on plates and a family that
sing;
These are a few of our favourite things.”
And so we sit down for our dinner. It’s
the first night Chanukah.

A single menorah candle flame flickers
gently on the window ledge. And we’re all
thinking one thing. It’s been a year! It’s still
a year!

A year to remember. For all the wrong
reasons. And yet, somehow, for all the
right ones too. It’s another chapter in the long
and hard history of our people.

When we have heard ourselves sometimes
described as “the chosen people” many of us,
certainly myself, have always asked, “Chosen for
what, exactly?”

A positive association or attachment to this
statement is often hard for me to fathom on so
many levels. Although the Kabbalah does say,
“Challenge is your only opportunity for growth.”

With this in mind, there are challenges aplenty
which we have been “chosen for” and yet there
are few – very few right now – happy and true
facts that I’d also like to focus on in this piece.
Because it’s ultimately about hope.

And that’s our true DNA as a people. Who we
are. We live in hope.

We’re instructed in hope, and that’s why, after
5 748 years, you can read an article in the
SA Jewish Report about vibrant Jewish life.

We’re a people who survive. Who endure. Who
bear witness.

The very first thing G-d said is, “Let there be
light.”

And with this being the Festival of Lights,
this will be the theme of the piece. Hope is light.
Hope shines a path. Because for all the darkness
we’ve faced since the morning of 7 October 2023,
there’s still light to draw on.

Every Friday night, when the candles are lit,
we usher in the Sabbath. A time of peace, beauty,
rest, thanks, gratitude, and family.

A tradition we’ve carried since the earliest days
of time. We’ve done this weekly. In most Jewish
homes, all around the world. For millennia. Our
two *neirot* which herald the Shabbos.

And for those of us in South Africa, light has
been in short supply, literally and figuratively.
Rolling blackouts in South Africa have resulted
in us battling against up to 50% power outages a
day while trying to run our lives and businesses,
schools, hospitals, and factories.

It’s been a trying time, these past 16 years
since “loadshedding” started, and instead
of improvement, we experienced the worst
year of loadshedding in 2023 since it was first
highlighted as an infrastructural and country
risk in 2006. Yet we endure. We smile. We push
on.

We invest. In solar, in inverters, in generators,
and we continue to contribute meaningfully
and disproportionately to our country and its
economy. We’re resourceful and industrious. We
try make a plan.

I think “making a plan” is just part of the
Jewish psyche. Through necessity more than
choice.

It wasn’t easy, by any means, for our great-
grandparents who arrived here in the 1800s to
make a life and a living. But they did.

Many arrived with just their shirts on their
backs, and little else. Not speaking a word of
English or Afrikaans, but Russian, Polish, and
of course, beautiful Yiddish. But the Jews,
most noteworthy for helping one another as a
community, both through necessity and through
choice, managed not only to survive but to
thrive. And we still do. In spite of the odds.

A few years ago, at a game farm in the Western
Cape, the ranger mentioned how fynbos requires
a fire every number of years to release the seeds
for it to flourish. To propagate and grow. And
in my heart, a sad thought occurred. This is the



story of the Jews.

That darn fire we don’t ever want, but which
inevitably breaks out, in one form or another,
every few decades, and difficult, unwarranted,
and heartbreaking as it may be, we hold onto
light, we cling to hope, and we somehow find a
way of muddling through.

My great-grandfather, David Hillel Kolniak,
had a bakery in Lomza, Poland. He’d light the

fires early in the morning and start
baking his bread. But on a Friday
afternoon, before the Sabbath started,
the women of the neighbourhood
would arrive with their pots of
cholent – a traditional stew – and
put them in the bakery ovens so that
even when the flames burnt out, the
warmth of the ovens would continue
to cook these meals so that after
Shabbat, the food was still warm and
ready to eat.

And perhaps that’s where we are
now. Many of our flames are out,

but the love and warmth of our community,
local and global, continues to provide comfort
and nourishment for the soul. This warmth
hasn’t just come from the Jewish community,
but millions of kind, good, generous souls and
nations across many religions, who wish to
support us through this time of great sadness
and threat, all around the world.

In mythology, when
Prometheus stole fire from the
gods and gave it to man, he was
kicked out of heaven. For the gods understood
that fire could be used for illumination and
to light a path. It could be used for warmth,
protection, and the preparation of food.

But they knew it could also be used for terrible
things and utter devastation.

This Chanukah, may we be blessed with all
the positive aspects of flame. Light. Goodness.
Kindness. Understanding. Hope. Warmth. The
ability to endure. To survive. To thrive.

And for all our global family who are no longer
with us, who have been torn away, we have a
saying, “May their memories be for a blessing.”
So, when we light our candles this year, may we
think of them too, and may their memories be
for a blessing for better times.

Chag sameach.

• Mike Abel is the founding partner and executive
chairperson of M&C Saatchi Group South Africa.

Mass casualty like nothing before, says SA doctor

>>Continued from page 8

to work, travelling from her home in Modi’in to Ashdod every day.

She said once the initial wave of casualties was over, the hospital got very quiet. The war had started, and people were afraid to leave their homes so the usual things in an emergency room, like heart attacks and car accidents, weren’t coming in.

Once the war was in full swing, the hospital shifts were extended from nine to 12 hours because of additional patients and a lack of manpower. “Six of our 17 doctors were called up as reserves,” said Nussbaum.

The fear, which was all pervasive, didn’t stop at the hospital, she said, and her journey from Modi’in to Ashdod was scary in itself. “We learned that Hamas has preferable hours to fire rockets, namely peak-hour traffic. This happened to be the same time I would be travelling to work because of our adjusted shift hours,” said Nussbaum.

In one incident, a rocket intercepted by the Iron Dome had a fragment fall on the highway, and led to a car exploding, preventing her from getting to the hospital on time. When she arrived, she discovered there had been multiple rocket attacks and two buildings in Ashdod had been hit. Because of this, many patients were coming in with a range of conditions from sheer panic and heart palpitations, to actual injuries from buildings collapsing or being hit by the rockets.

“The situation just adds to the whole feeling of unease and chaos in the emergency department. We have received many injured soldiers into our hospital. Our hospital is five minutes away from Gaza by air, so often we’re the first place they consider.

“We’re not considered a level-one trauma facility because of the fact that we don’t have neurosurgical capabilities and we don’t have on-site cardiothoracic capabilities. So, preference for the army is to take injured soldiers to a level-one facility, but the closest one is in Ramat Gan and that can take an additional eight or nine minutes from Ashdod.

“When a soldier deteriorates in the air and they don’t have those extra eight minutes to go to Ramat Gan, they come to us. In situations like this, we’re given only four minutes notice that we’re getting the patient. This means that we’re getting the most critically injured and most ill of the soldiers”.

“Anywhere between four to five helicopters, each carrying six soldiers, land a day,” Nussbaum said.

Nussbaum’s involvement in emergency medicine training isn’t limited to her hospital as she has been providing training in life-saving procedures and mass casualty incidents at various branches, beginning with older hospitals, especially ones in Nahariah and Tzfat in the north, whose emergency protocols haven’t been updated in 20-30 years. There, she’ll run mass casualty event exercises to make sure they are prepared.

Nussbaum also trains in life-saving field procedures, saying “most people talk about the golden hour when it comes to injuries, but there’s a golden minute in emergency medicine that’s almost more important”. She’s also involved in first-call groups, who are the first to respond to any emergencies and mass casualty events in a certain area.

“I would have never anticipated that our little hospital would have to deal with something like this. But I’ve learned that though you can never be ready, you can always be prepared. We were never ready, but we were very prepared,” Nussbaum said.

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All-rounder Nurock wins top ad-industry award

HANNA RESNICK

Ann Nurock, the winner of the Financial Mail Adfocus Lifetime Achievement Award, described it as “an affirmation of close to 40 years of work within the advertising and marketing industry”. Nurock said the award, given to someone whose impact on the industry has been profoundly positive, was “completely unexpected” and therefore “pretty overwhelming and I’m humbled by it”.

The FM Adfocus Awards recognise agencies and individuals, not just for creative and marketing skills, but for all-round business acumen.

Nurock worked her way up the ranks in the advertising industry until she became first managing director of Grey Advertising in 2000, and then chief executive and head of the Africa region in 2003. “I went into advertising because I love creativity and I love the interaction with diverse clients and doing the creative work that sells brands and makes an impact,” she said. Together with her team, she managed to double the size of the agency, which then became one of the top three agencies, not only in South Africa, but in the Grey global network as a whole.

In 2008, she was transferred to Toronto, where she became president and chief executive of Grey Canada. “I was offered this global position, and I felt I had reached a plateau at Grey South Africa. I’d achieved what I wanted us to achieve in terms of our revenue and standing in the South African market. And I felt like I needed a new challenge.” Nurock stayed in Canada for three years,



a period that she doesn’t consider to be a high point in her career. “They weren’t the best three years of my life,” she said. “I didn’t really understand the Canadian culture, they didn’t understand me, and it was a defining moment of time in my life because for the first time, I really didn’t succeed. I experienced failure, which was life changing for me, because it brought me back to South Africa.”

Nurock was also offered a position in New York, but decided that she wanted to come home. Not only had she previously experienced great success in South Africa, but she was also feeling increasingly homesick. “I’ve been back now for 12 years. And even with all the problems here, I haven’t ever regretted the move back. Not for a second.”

Nurock believes her perceived failure at Grey Canada made her a better person. “It made me a lot more humble,” she said. “I’d moved from being a very big fish in a small pond in South Africa to being a very tiny fish in a big sea in Canada. And I made mistakes because I needed to adapt.”

After returning to Cape Town, she took a sabbatical for a year, and was then approached by Relationship Audits and Management (RAM) to open the Africa office. “I analyse and optimise strategic business-to-business relationships with specific emphasis on clients and agencies because of my background in advertising,” Nurock said.

Eleven years later, Nurock is contracted by more than 25 corporate clients around the world and interacts with more than 100 advertising agencies. “My objective is to optimise the relationships between corporates and advertising agencies,” she said. She does this using RADAR, a proprietary online tool of relationship audits which “measures the health of business-to-business relationships. It has about 10 quantitative key performance indicators [KPIs] and three qualitative KPIs,” she said.

These RADAR surveys “help clients and agencies to improve their relationships and provide them with key trends in terms of advertising and marketing”, Nurock said. “My purpose is to have an impact on advertising and marketing as well as to make a difference to their lives. I feel that I have achieved that.

“Coming back from Canada to live in Cape Town and starting this business, getting out of a traditional corporate role and going into something that was more entrepreneurial, albeit representing a global company, I’ve really been able to make a difference,” she said. “I have global clients as well as local clients across Africa. I represent clients such as South African Breweries, MTN, Tiger Brands, Pernod Ricard, and most banks in South Africa.”

While Nurock considers RAM to

be her “day job”, her “sideline job” is representing the South African Creative Circle and Bizcommunity at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, the largest festival of creativity in the world. “It’s like the Oscars of advertising,” she said. “I’ve been doing that for the past eight years. I gather the trends and bring them back and present them to all sectors of business. Not just in South Africa, but around the world.”

Along with this Lifetime Achievement Award and being inducted into the Hall of

Fame, another career highlight for Nurock was winning the Absa Jewish Achiever Award for Business in 2004. She was also the first female recipient of this award.

Nurock said her goal is to continue growing the business. “I’ve spent nearly 12 years building this business and it keeps growing,” she said. “People ask me, ‘When are you going to retire?’ Well, I’m going to retire only when I’m not able to work anymore because my work fuels me. It’s my purpose. I want to keep making a difference.”

Segal uses power of Rhodes Scholarship to pursue AI

LEE TANKLE

Dr Brad Segal isn’t just one of the few Jewish people ever to be awarded a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship, but he’s off to Oxford University next year to use it to complete a PhD in AI (artificial intelligence) in healthcare.

“Getting this scholarship means a big career transition for me,” said Segal, who is qualified as both a medical doctor and an engineer. “I’ve been doing my internship while researching on the side. I’m doing my community service for nine months next year, and then heading off to Oxford to complete a PhD in AI,” he said. “This scholarship allows me to take what I was almost doing for fun, and makes it my main thing.”

In terms of his PhD, this King David Victory Park alumnus said he would be “working on tools to make sure that the healthcare process is easier for doctors and patients alike. We’re trying to build a chatbot for healthcare, which is where I think I will be spending most of my time, but that can all change when I get there.”

He said he believed one of the main reasons for being awarded the scholarship was “the fact that I was simultaneously doing an MBBCh [Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery] and a Master’s in Biomedical Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand, where I graduated *cum laude*”.

He’s believed to be the first Jewish person in about 10 years to have attained a Rhodes Scholarship. The last Jewish Rhodes Scholar was Raphael Chaskalson in 2015. To date, only 17 South African Jews have been awarded a Rhodes Scholarship.

Achieving a Rhodes Scholarship is a life-changing opportunity for outstanding young people from around the world to study at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. It’s the world’s oldest and most prestigious graduate fellowship since 1903. In the 120 years since the start of the fellowship, about 1 000 graduates from Southern Africa have been awarded this amazing opportunity to study in Oxford’s hallowed halls. Every year, 10 Rhodes Scholarships are awarded

overall to graduates in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, and Eswatini.

“We look forward to welcoming Bradley into the Rhodes Scholar community,” Beverley Johnson, the regional manager of Rhodes Trust in South Africa told the *SA Jewish Report*. “Brad is an outstanding young medical doctor and leader who fulfilled all the selection criteria for the Rhodes Scholarship and interviewed well at both the regional and national selection sessions.”

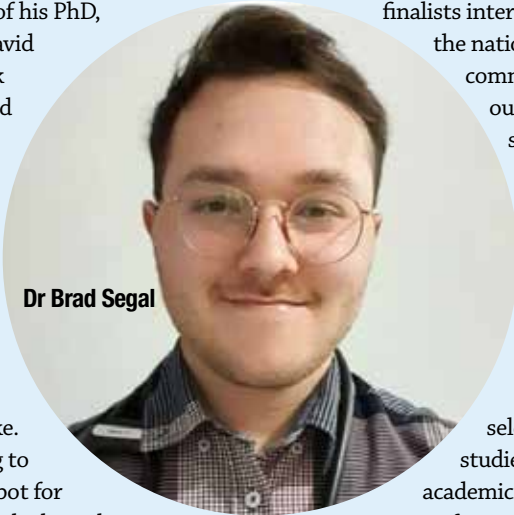
“Our selection committees were spoilt for choice and had exceptionally strong pools from which to shortlist for regional interviews,” said Ndumiso Luthuli, the national secretary of Rhodes Scholarships in Southern Africa. “The finalists interviewed by

the national selection committee were all outstanding, and some tough choices had to be made last Sunday by the South Africa-at-large selectors. “The scholars

selected have studied diverse academic disciplines, ranging from astrophysics to applied mathematics, commerce, to computer science, from law to medicine, from international relations and leadership to neuroscience and biomedical engineering. All are academically gifted and socially committed.

“We’re confident that the 2024 Rhodes Scholars all have the potential to become catalysts for good, young changemakers, who will inspire solutions to the many challenges faced by our post-pandemic society. All have the energy and courage to lead, and are committed to making a positive impact in Southern Africa and beyond. We don’t doubt that they will continue to fight the world’s fight in the 120-year-old tradition of the Rhodes Scholarship.”

The criteria which determined the first Rhodes Scholars are still in use in the selection process today, namely academic excellence; the energy to use talent to the full, such as mastery in areas such as sport, debate, music, dance, theatre, and artistic pursuits; truth; courage; devotion to duty; sympathy for and protection of those who are less fortunate; kindness; unselfishness; fellowship; moral character; and instincts to lead and take interest in fellow human beings.



Dr Brad Segal

Man called Israel wins hearts in Africa

STAFF REPORTER

Israel Gatora doesn’t believe his meeting with Rabbi Ramon Widmonte, the dean of the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning, in an Uber from OR Tambo International Airport earlier this year was a fluke. “I don’t believe it was an accident,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Being named ‘Israel’ had led him to a life-long focus and interest in the Jewish homeland and its people. Since he was a child, growing up in Harare, Zimbabwe, people would mockingly call Israel Gatora names like “Palestine” or “Egypt”. This made him curious about the history and origins of his birth name.

“I ended up going to a library, a school, and studying more and more about Israel,” he said, “and I kept reading the Bible, where they talk about the children of Israel. I studied Jewish and Israeli history, such as the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and the War of Independence. I went through the encyclopaedia, and read more and more and suddenly, I began to know so much about Israel.”

He decided he wanted to visit Israel one day. “I tried to raise money to go to Israel and people would ask me why I wanted to go, whether it was for a course or university or something, and I would say, ‘No, I just want to be there.”

“There’s something special about that place,” said Gatora. When his father passed away, he used the money he had inherited to organise a trip to Israel. He travelled to Israel for the first time in 1996, and continued to go there every year from 1996 until the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When I was there, I said to myself, “This place looks so beautiful. It’s got so much biblical history. I wonder why many more of us aren’t coming here?”, Gatora said. He began to promote trips to Israel and when the Israeli embassy opened in Zimbabwe, he became one of the friends of the embassy.

To date, he has organised 126 trips to Israel and given several interviews on radio, TV, and in newspapers about Israel.

About 10 years ago, Gatora began learning Hebrew. “We got involved with a Jewish school in Harare,” he said. “We began to learn Hebrew, which started becoming useful on my trips to Israel. I then became a tour guide in Israel.”

He began organising tours from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Swaziland, before trying to organise

tours from South Africa. Gatora then met a woman from El Al who suggested that he get involved with Uber as a “side hustle”. He would regularly transport people from the airport, meeting people from around the world, including those who had flown in from Israel.

After learning about the Jewish faith, one of the practices that became ingrained in him was to bless any Jewish person he came across. “When I saw anybody who spoke with a Hebrew

accent or looked Jewish, I would just say something like, ‘G-d bless you, and all the Jewish people’ in Hebrew.”

On one of his Uber trips from OR Tambo he met Widmonte, who was returning from a symposium for Jewish and Hebrew in

education in Cape Town.

Gatora blessed Widmonte in Hebrew. The rabbi was so impressed by the encounter, he recorded some of the conversations and posted it on Facebook, with the caption, “What an astounding encounter.”

This year, Gatora started an organisation called “Israel’s Friends in Africa” which aims to keep members updated with accurate information on current events in Israel and the Jewish community. “We’re happy to be in South Africa where we have a vibrant Jewish community. We want the Jewish community to feel blessed and know that they have a lot of friends here in Africa. It’s not just me here. It’s a whole lot of us,” he said.

In light of recent events in Israel, Gatora said, “On behalf of Israel’s Friends in Africa, I would like to give a message of solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people all over the world to say that G-d is a G-d of covenant who keeps his promises. Israel is here to stay. The world will marvel at what Israel will achieve at the end of this war as they marvelled after Israel’s War of Independence, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and all the wars after that.”



Israel Gatora

New book helps us hitchhike the AI highway

Arthur Goldstuck, a South African author, journalist, speaker, media analyst, and information and communications technology specialist has launched his latest book called *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to AI*. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with him.

What made you decide to tackle this guide to Artificial Intelligence (AI)?
I’ve been deeply fascinated by AI for the past decade, and have been writing and giving talks about it intensively since I began coming across fascinating usages, case studies, and examples about five years ago. Already in 2020, I began giving a regular talk titled “AI for All”. So, when generative AI burst on the scene at the end of last year, I began receiving almost daily requests for interviews on the topic on radio, TV, online, and in print. My daughter, Zianda, was listening to one of these and said afterwards, “Why don’t you write a book?” The penny dropped and literally three minutes later, I had emailed Terry Morris at Pan Macmillan with the suggestion.

What research did you do for this book?
Mostly the history and uses of AI beyond what I had been directly exposed to or had experienced.

The book is touted for techies and those of us know very little about AI. How did you manage to cover the extremes and those in the middle?
I drew on my experience many years ago, when I helped start *PC Review* in the *Weekly Mail*, now *Mail & Guardian*. It was the brainchild of *Weekly Mail* co-founder Irwin Manoim, who came up with a three-icon guide to the level of technical expertise needed to appreciate each article. I expanded that concept to five icons for the

book, covering technical and subject matter interest, and that made it possible to mix and match content aimed at all levels.

Why do you believe it’s important for those of us who know nothing to understand AI?
It’s already changing the world subtly, and will do so radically in the years to come. You can certainly ignore it and carry on as usual, but then you’ll be left behind in the world of enterprise, innovation, and career relevance.

Do you believe AI will be our downfall or our saviour – if so, why?
AI is a highway. Like the literal highway, the better it’s planned, built, and maintained, the easier, faster, and more cost-effectively it will get us to our destination. The highway can, of course, be our downfall if we ignore safety rules or fall victim to an accident or crime. It’s not the highway that caused it, although it made it possible. Shall we shut down all highways because of dangerous drivers or criminals? Of course not. But they won’t save us or doom us, only make the means of those outcomes more accessible.

What are the dangers of AI?
There are many dangers mentioned throughout the book. Almost any media article on AI deals breathlessly with these, so I don’t want to bore you by repeating the clichés. But they range from impersonation to cybersecurity to plagiarism to reinforcing institutional bias.

What are its benefits?
Someone wrote an entire book on that topic. Oh wait, that was me. And yes, it takes books and more books to spell out all the benefits. Ultimately, every individual will have a personal expert at their disposal for almost any purpose one can imagine. From a school kid’s tutor to a doctor’s assistant, from a life coach to a dating coach, it’s all within reach. And that’s before mentioning the myriad business benefits.

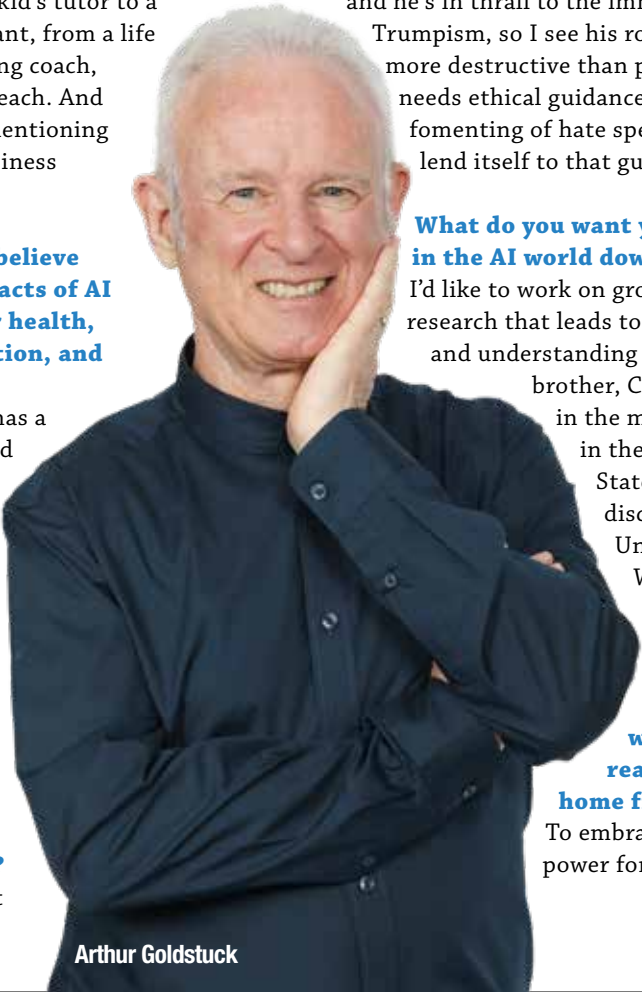
What do you believe the main impacts of AI will be on our health, travel, education, and business?
Each of those has a chapter devoted to it in the book, and I was only scratching the surface.

What impact will ChatGPT and the equivalents of that have on our world?
Pass – it’s what the book is about.

What do you believe Elon Musk’s role has been in AI so far, and what will it be in the future?
He helped start OpenAI, but didn’t guide it. He started Grok partly to leverage his Twitter acquisition and partly to take on the baby – OpenAI – he had abandoned, and he’s in thrall to the immorality of Trumpism, so I see his role as probably more destructive than positive. AI needs ethical guidance, and his fomenting of hate speech doesn’t lend itself to that guidance.

What do you want your role to be in the AI world down the line?
I’d like to work on groundbreaking research that leads to new knowledge and understanding of AI. My twin brother, Charles, a pioneer in the music industry in the United States, and I are in discussions with University of the Witwatersrand on just such a project.

What do you want your readers to take home from this book?
To embrace AI for its power for good.



Arthur Goldstuck

IN MEMORY OF ————— ERIC ELLERINE ע"ה



10 November 1933 - 4 December 2023

THANK YOU
ERIC & RONA
FOR ENSURING
THAT NO JEW
GETS LEFT
BEHIND



Finding solace in the South African summer

OPINION

As the war in Israel persists, our hearts ache for our beloved Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, the hostages who continue to be held in captivity, and families torn apart by the brutality of conflict that began with the horrific events of 7 October.

Even for those of us miles away, the pain is palpable. With family and friends residing in Israel, and many bravely serving in the IDF, the struggle for the survival of our only Jewish homeland is deeply personal.

Amid this turmoil, antisemitism rears its ugly head globally, casting a shadow reminiscent of the darkest chapters of our history. The Israeli government has issued travel warnings to Israeli travellers, urging them to hide their Israeli passports and Jewish identities while travelling abroad. As Jews, we grapple with vulnerability, exposure, and fear that echoes through our communities worldwide.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, a paradox unfolds. We stand on the brink of our annual work shutdown, basking in the sweltering summer sun that signals the end of a challenging school and work year. The “festive season” approaches, ushering in a time usually of celebration, relaxation, and fun.

Yet, a conflict arises within us. How can we revel in our summer vacation while our Israeli family faces the constant threat of bombing, terrorist attacks, and blaring sirens? The discussion prompts contemplation of survivor guilt. This is an experience in which individuals grapple with guilt for surviving a traumatic or life-threatening event when others didn’t or when they are suffering and we aren’t. It’s a guilt that’s felt when one feels an identification or a connection with a bigger group. Holocaust survivors felt this, and many of us living in the diaspora feel this guilt too.

Survivor guilt often intertwines with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition that many of us inadvertently might be navigating due to the harrowing images and stories emerging from Israel as we hear the accounts of unfolding war. We cannot remove ourselves from the blatant antisemitism we’re witnessing around the world and on our own doorstep.

The trauma inflicted upon our people leaves an indelible mark, manifesting in a spectrum of symptoms: nightmares; flashbacks; sleep disturbances; appetite changes; anxiety; hyper vigilance; startled responses; agitation; aggression; depression; concentration and memory problems; and an overarching fear for the safety of our loved ones. Also common are feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and despair; and feelings of being out of control.

If you find yourself grappling with these symptoms, seeking help isn’t just a choice but a crucial step toward healing. Consulting a psychologist or speaking to your doctor can guide you in navigating the complex terrain of survivor guilt and PTSD. Take the time to talk to someone who can help you to unpack and normalise your feelings.

Finding stability within through self-care simply through eating, sleeping, exercise, reading, and relaxation helps us to find strength.

Amid the turmoil and emotional conflict, it’s essential to acknowledge



the unique context in South Africa. As we approach the summer break, it becomes crucial to grant ourselves permission to

find joy amid the chaos.

Enjoying ourselves when we feel so connected to the suffering may feel wrong,

of peace within us.

In our pursuit of solace, we must hold onto the profound truth embedded in the

DR ROBYN ROSIN SACK

phrase, “*Am Yisrael Chai*” (The people of Israel live). It’s a declaration that life endures, even in the face of adversity. As we embark on our summer vacation, let’s honour the resilience of our people, find strength in unity, and remember that life is for the living. We’re a nation of survivors.

In a people that values life, we navigate the delicate balance of acknowledging the pain in our hearts while allowing ourselves the space to breathe, to celebrate, and to find solace, healing, and connection under the warm embrace of the South African sun.

• Dr Robyn Rosin Sack is a counselling psychologist in Johannesburg.



Music and biltong uplifts the boys on the frontline

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

From ballads to biltong, *olim* are working to uplift soldiers fighting to protect Israel. Not only are they giving soldiers a spiritual and physical boost, they’re also buoyed by the knowledge that they’re contributing to the war effort in their own unique way.

“As *olim* we don’t have weapons – instruments of war – so we picked up our instruments of music to uplift, inspire, and contribute,” says Rabbi Leron Bernstein, the lead vocalist of *Hafakot Shniyot*, a band that performs at Israeli army bases.

Singing everything from Oasis and Coldplay hits to contemporary and classic Hebrew songs, the band also encourages soldiers to sing and dance as they experience “simple and unburdened moments of joy” amid terror, heartbreak, and danger. A South African *oleh* and the director of innovation at Koren Jerusalem, Bernstein has always had a love of music, something he shares with his Tel Mond community through the monthly *tischim* (festive Shabbat gatherings) he conducts with friends.

So, when guitarist Yair Lehrer, an *oleh* from England who started the *tischim*, approached Bernstein a few days into the war to become lead vocalist in a band formed to perform for soldiers, he grabbed the opportunity. Lehrer initially formed the band to accompany a friend who was running barbecues for soldiers in the south, and also enlisted English drummer and cajonist Avi Wiesenberg and Australian roadie and videographer Shmuli Kraus.

As their gigs multiplied, Bernstein approached South African *oleh*, Darren Platzky, the president of his shul in Tel Mond, who

came up to us and said that our singing and dancing with the soldiers that night were the fulfilment of the *Hakafot Shniyot* they lost this year,” Bernstein recalls. “Yair turned to me and said, ‘That’s our name’.”

Bernstein says uplifting soldiers in this way has been a life-changing opportunity. “The war starts and you’re not a soldier, so you ask what impact you can have. Through the band, we can take our talents and backgrounds and create something unique. It’s tremendously meaningful to be able to do this, the privilege of a lifetime.”



Also South African born, Rael Kahn made aliya with his family just days before his eighth birthday. Though he’s spent the subsequent 47 years in Israel, there’s one part of his South African heritage that continues to play a significant role in his life – biltong. “The flavour of biltong is a link to my past in South Africa, part of my identity,” he says. “To this day, I remember gnawing on a strip of biltong during a trip to the Kruger National Park while looking out for the Big Five.”

After they emigrated, Kahn’s parents found it hard to let go of their craving for the quintessential South African snack, so

they taught their son how to make biltong and droewors, which they sold to friends and family. Continuing this tradition, Kahn makes and sells biltong and droewors as a home-based side hustle.

His biltong also has a history of sustaining Israeli soldiers through periods of war. Called up for duty in the second Lebanon War together with his paratroop brigade unit, Kahn came equipped with dried fruit, nuts, as well as 4kgs of biltong – all he had at the time. He distributed the food among his unit.

“The biltong was a hit for all the obvious reasons – it was lightweight, tasty, and filled

with loads of protein,” he recalls. Based on this experience, when the current war broke out, Kahn decided to launch what he calls “Biltong for the Boys”. To date, he’s distributed about 50kgs of biltong through this initiative – about 500 packets – to various frontline army units and has received glowing reviews.

“One of the units I’ve been delivering to is the elite Yahalom unit,” he says. “After a few deliveries, the sergeant major called me to say that biltong has replaced the cans of food the soldiers were carrying into the Gaza Strip. As a result, they’re lighter on their feet as there’s

no preparation, can openers, or forks required, they just rip open the bag and eat. It’s become an integral part of their kits.”

Other units have shared similar experiences, saying that sometimes their biltong stash is all they have to eat. Though Israelis are generally more familiar with the American beef jerky, those with South African connections are especially enthusiastic about the biltong. Regardless, most agree that when it comes to biltong and jerky, biltong is the clear winner.

Speaking of his motivation, Kahn says he had to do something to stay sane. “I was in a haze for a couple of weeks after Black Saturday. After years of being in active reserve service, I was feeling useless and frustrated. Making biltong helps keep me busy and to a degree distances me from the post-traumatic stress disorder I’ve been dealing with since 2006.”

Yet, he says, that’s not what this story is about. “It’s about friends of ours in Zur Hadassa where we live, who have three sons serving in combat roles in the Gaza Strip. It’s about the mother frantic with worry about her son in the 101 Paratroop Brigade who hasn’t seen him in more than two months. It’s about the kid serving in the Shaldag unit who lost four of his buddies on 7 October. It’s about the Kaminka family who lost their son, Yanai, on 7 October; and Elia Cohen, also from Zur Hadassa, who was abducted to Gaza.”

Jewish sporting achievers pull their weight in 2023

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Johannesburg civil engineer Gregg Bernstein went into the 2023 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships in India earlier this year with a lot of pressure on himself and a point to prove. "I wanted to show that I could perform under the spotlight," he says.

His international debut turned out to be a massive success. He came seventh in the senior men's 89kg category, achieving a personal record in the snatch by lifting 123kg. His clean and jerk of 150kg nearly beat his personal best.

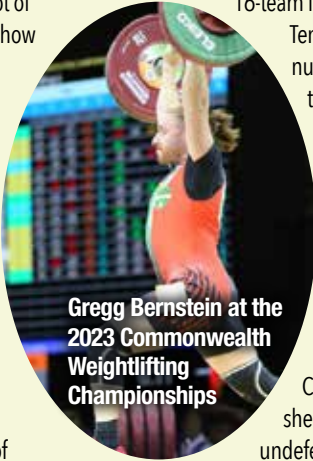
Bernstein says travelling to India was "super exciting, having not travelled to a lot of places in my life. Meeting many of the other athletes, some of whom I have watched compete at some of the highest levels of the sport, was also an amazing and humbling experience. More importantly, this experience has motivated me to train even harder. I want to see more of the world and there's no better way to do that than through weightlifting."

Bernstein's fellow King David Linksfield alumni, lawyer Gabrielle Berkowitz, also lifted the bar high this year. Berkowitz won the women's 87kg category at the Gauteng Weightlifting Championships and the South African Weightlifting Championships.

Having won gold at the South African National Weightlifting Championships last year, Berkowitz says the secrets behind her continuous success include "pushing through the days I don't want to be there, and having a good group of training partners to help me through the long training sessions".

Footballer Erin Herz, who appears to be the first Jewish woman to play for Banyana Banyana, signed her first professional contract when she put pen to paper with TS Galaxy this year. The Mpumalanga-based club competes in the Hollywoodbets Super League, the top division of women's soccer in South Africa.

"TS Galaxy started a new team to join the national league, and they scouted players from a few clubs," she says. "I was one of the players they selected and asked to be a part of this new project." The club is currently third on the 16-team log.



Gregg Bernstein at the 2023 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships

Tennis star Jacqui Boyd, the number-one ranked player in the 40+ women's division in South Africa, has her sights set on next year's World Masters Tennis Championships in Tokyo.

"The first step towards that was two weeks ago, when I won the Western Province Masters Tennis Championships in Cape Town," she says. "With this win, I remain undefeated in all the Masters Tennis Tournaments that I have played in South Africa over the past 11 years."

One of the keys to this impressive run is Boyd's understanding of her strengths and weaknesses, having played tennis for more than three decades. "In the latter years of my career, I've focused on my strengths both mentally and physically. One of my biggest strengths has always been my mental toughness and ability to compete under pressure."

Colin Nathan became the first trainer in South African boxing history to be nominated as Trainer of the Year by the Boxing Writers Association of America.

He also brought South African Boxing the only three credible world title fights in South Africa thanks to his working relationships with major power brokers and promoters globally. He says these fights, which included a world title eliminator and the first credible world title contest in East London, were well received.

Continued on page 24>>

Levitan chess prodigies blaze trail in Serbia

SAUL KAMIONSKY

When chess twins Judah and Caleb Levitan stepped into a restaurant in Serbia last month, the 13-year-olds were startled by the smoke. "There's no such thing as a smoking or non-smoking section in that country," their dad, Shaun, says, reflecting on the adventures of these chess stars, who have travelled the world before starting high school.

Nevertheless, Judah blazed his way past 2000 FIDE Elo rating points at a chess tournament in the country. As a result, he was awarded his Candidate Master title by the International Chess Federation (FIDE) on 30 November. The 51st Candidate Master in South Africa, Judah is the third person to earn the title by achieving a rating of 2000. Historically, no minimum rating was required.

"It has been a great year for him," says Shaun. "He started the year about 1700 as a rating, and he finished above 2050. It was just a slow and steady progression."

Taking his rating to 2000 has been Judah's quest since he received a provisional title for placing joint-first with Caleb at the 2018 African Junior Chess Championships in Kenya.



Caleb and Judah Levitan davening at a shul in Novi Sad, Serbia

achievements, who continue to be ranked first and second in their respective age groups in South Africa. "Judah and Caleb spend hours playing and analysing games. They travel to tournaments in remote parts of the world, and have to catch up on their school work.

"It's their passion, it's not just work. They love

Having improved his rating by more than 350 points this year, Judah is now ranked as the 20th-best chess player in South Africa, and is only 338 points behind the top South African, Henry Steel.

Caleb also had a successful year. He received his first International Master Norm, following wins against two international masters and drawing against as many grandmasters. He was also named Amayanga-Yanga Junior Athlete of the Year, and bagged his FIDE Master title. He's one of the top five chess players in South Africa as measured by his Elo rating.

Shaun says there's no magic formula to the twins'

the game and the adventures it brings. Perhaps the greatest part is that they have each other. They play chess every day, sometimes for up to 10 hours. They're like professional sportsmen."

The Levitans' globetrotting continued this year. They played in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Serbia. "There's a huge chess culture in all these countries," Shaun says.

Judah's next target is to follow in Caleb's footsteps by receiving a FIDE Master title due to having a rating of 2300. Caleb's rating of 2317 means he's the fourth-best player in South Africa.

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What’s in store for 2024

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD

In our last edition of the year, I look back at how my predictions for 2023 panned out, and what 2024 may hold.

Last year, I wagered that ZANU-PF would win the Zimbabwean elections, which it did in spite of the opposition crying foul again. I picked the wrong candidate for Nigerian president though.

On sport predictions, I wrote, “2023 will see the Cricket World Cup in India ... sigh. We’re likely to see another spectacular choke by the Proteas. I’d love to eat my words if I’m wrong.” Though I hoped the Springboks would defend their Rugby World Cup title, I plumped for Ireland or France on home soil.

No-one foresaw the protests over judicial reform that rocked Israel for months or the horrific massacre on 7 October and ensuing war on Hamas in Gaza. I believe this terrible war will continue for several months into 2024 as Israel attempts to decimate Hamas. It’s anyone’s guess as to what the day after the war will bring. Optimists may draw comfort from the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which ultimately led to Israel’s peace treaty with Egypt.

There are more than 40 elections scheduled for 2024, with eight of the world’s 10 most populous countries going to the

polls. The two vital elections for us will be in South Africa and the United States (US). Israel’s national unity government may well fall after the war on Hamas is concluded. The electorate may punish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the 7 October attacks.

With mounting loadshedding, soaring unemployment, and crumbling service delivery, the African National Congress may slip below 50% support, ushering in the country’s first national coalition government. If so, it’s likely to join forces with smaller parties. Gauteng and the Western Cape look like they will be won by the opposition. South Africa celebrates 30 years of democratic rule next year – a chance for introspection and reflection. Expect South Africa’s withering criticism of Israel to continue, especially if Pretoria pursues a case against Israel in the International Criminal Court.

There’s still a long way to go until the US elections on 5 November 2024. It may be a repeat of the 2020 poll, with incumbent octogenarian Joe Biden up against septuagenarian Donald Trump. Without being ageist, are these really the best that the US can offer the electorate? Trump, in spite of facing multiple court cases, has a big lead

ending soon. I fully expect it to rumble on throughout 2024. Both sides still believe they can win this war on the battlefield. The seven-president African Peace Initiative, driven by South Africa, has little to show for itself so far. A key factor in this war will be whether Western support for Ukraine can be sustained. I believe Russian President Vladimir Putin is banking on it dissipating, a scenario more likely if Trump wins and if the Republicans dominate Congress.

The BRICS grouping – originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – will double in size as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are scheduled to join on 1 January. Argentina’s newly elected President Javier Milei may turn down the invitation to join the club. South Africa will also use the year to prepare for its presidency of the G20 group, which commences in 2025.

The United Nations is set to host The Summit of the Future in September 2024, at the halfway point of the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These are meant to be universally achieved by 2030, but the COVID-19 pandemic has put these in jeopardy in many parts of the

world.

The year 2024 is the 50th anniversary of the resignation by US President Richard Nixon after the Watergate scandal. It also marks 50 years since Turkey invaded northern Cyprus, and the 1974 “Rumble in the Jungle” when Muhammad Ali fought and beat George Foreman in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

It’s 25 years since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombed Yugoslavia in 1999, the year Ehud Barak became prime minister of Israel, and Thabo Mbeki became president of South Africa. So much history has passed since then.

The biggest sporting event next year will be the Paris Olympics in July and August. It will be interesting to see how arch-rivals the US and China stack up on the medal count. China, as an aspiring superpower, has invested heavily in elite sports programmes. Paris also hosted the games a century ago, in 1924, immortalised in the film *Chariots of Fire*. Next year will also feature football’s Euro 2024, hosted by Germany.

Happy new year, everyone!
• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.



US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

against Republican party hopefuls like Nikki Haley and Ron DeSantis. There has never been a run-up to an American election quite like this one.

The war in Ukraine also shows no sign of

Sea, sun, stadiums – what to do on holiday

Johannesburg Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens

One of the city’s hidden gems, the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens is an ideal picnic spot and one of the best botanical gardens in South Africa. Make sure to get some Instagram worthy snaps by the waterfall and be on the lookout for the elusive eagles that inhabit the area. Contact: 086 100 1278 or sisulugarden@sanbi.org.za

Hartbeespoort Aerial Cableway

It’s like going up Table Mountain in Cape Town, but in Hartbeespoort. Get your camera ready and drive through to the Hartbeespoort Aerial Cableway and take in the breath-taking views of the Hartbeespoort Dam, Magaliesberg, and the surrounding area. Take a picnic or enjoy a meal on top of the mountain at altitude. Contact: www.hartiescableway.co.za or 012 253 9910

James Hall Museum of Transport

The revolution of transportation has changed our world, so why not see how it all unfolded at the James Hall Museum of Transport in Rosettenville. Contact: www.jhmt.org.za or 011 435 9485

Bird & Wildlife Park at Montecasino

Bring out your inner ornithophile (love for birds), and visit the more than 60 species of birds and other animals at the Bird & Wildlife Park at Montecasino. Contact: 011 511 1864 or www.montecasino.co.za

Rosebank Rooftop Market

From food, art, crafts, and antiques to live music, entertainment, and activities for children, there’s something for everyone at The Rosebank Rooftop Market. Open on Sundays. Contact: 072 243 8582 or www.rosebanksundaymarket.co.za

Cape Town Robben Island

Take a trip to one of the world’s most famous – or infamous – islands, and see first-hand the history that resides there. From the ferry ride to Nelson Mandela’s prison cell, it will be a day that will never be forgotten. Contact: 021 413 4200 or www.robben-island.org.za

The Sea Point promenade

Cruise along the iconic Sea Point promenade by bike, eScooter, tandem bicycle, or even kayak and enjoy the best views of the Atlantic Seaboard. If you prefer to be on your own two feet, make sure to grab a coffee or ice-cream on route.

Visit: www.insideguide.co.za/cape-town/to-do

The Two Oceans Aquarium

Get up close and personal with the best under-water wildlife. This is great educational indoor fun and perfect for a rainy day. Contact: 021 418 3823 or visit www.aquarium.co.za

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden

Pack your cooler bag, and head to the historic and picturesque Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden situated on the slopes of Table Mountain. Take a stroll along the Boomslang canopy walk and get an aerial view of the flora and fauna that called the botanical gardens home. Contact: 021 799 8783 or www.sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch/

The Gardens Community Centre

If history is your thing, then pay the Gardens Community Centre a visit, tour the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and then pop across to the South African Jewish Museum. Don’t forget to visit the Jacob Gitlin Library to get your hands on a wide variety of Jewish literature. Contact: 021 465 1546

Go on a hike

Not only is hiking a great form of exercise, it’s also a great way to see Cape Town from different angles. Hike up Lion’s Head, Table Mountain, or one of the several trials at the Cape Point Nature Reserve. Contact: 021 712 7471

KwaZulu-Natal The Golden Mile

From uShaka Marine World to the Suncoast Casino, walk alongside the sandy beaches of Durban and see some of the famous landmarks that Durban is renowned for such as the Moses Mabhida Stadium and the Blue Lagoon.

uShaka Marine World

Regarded as one of the world’s best marine theme parks, uShaka Marine World boasts a massive aquarium and a water park among other attractions which will keep the whole family entertained. Contact: 031 328 8000 or www.ushakamarine.com

Big Rush Big Swing at the Moses Mabhida Stadium

If you’re an adrenaline junkie and brave enough to free fall 80m into the stadium bowl, then this is for you. Get a bird’s eye view of the world-renowned Moses Mabhida Stadium, and see Durban like you’ve never seen it before. Contact: 031 322 9955 or mmstadium.com

Gateway Theatre of Shopping

Perfect for rainy days or to escape the heat, Gateway Theatre of Shopping in Umhlanga offers something for everyone. Be on the lookout for the Festive Play Park inspired by Disney. Visit: www.gatewayworld.co.za

The Valley of a Thousand Hills

Just outside Durban, the Valley of a Thousand Hills is a picturesque retreat with restaurants, shops, local arts and crafts, outdoor activities, and more. Take in the panoramic views of the entire valley, from the green mountains to the flowing Umgeni River. See parts of the Comrades Marathon route and connect with the Zulu culture.

Mad Hatter show brings magic to Ponte

Eighty excited children sat on the edge of their seats at the Xmas party hosted by WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) on 3 December at the Dlala Nje community centre in Ponte, Berea.

In the beautifully-decorated teen centre, the children were entertained by Matt the Magician’s Mad Hatter show. They laughed, shouted, and roared for more when it was over. After tucking into pizza and juice, each child received a knitted blanket made from squares knitted by dedicated women all over the world, a beanie, and a soft toy, kindly donated by Knit A Square SA.

Just in case that wasn’t enough, everyone got delicious goodies to take home with them, including cake, cookies, chocolates, and sweets.



One Torah brings community together en masse

A unity event encompassing all spectrums of the South African Jewish community – more than 100 different schools, shuls, and community organisations – came together in Torah and prayer on 26 November 2023 at Linksfield Shul.

More than 1 000 men and boys joined in unity and solidarity for Israel and the safety of its soldiers.

One Torah is a newly established foundation with a team of volunteers with the goal of bringing the Jewish people together through Torah, *mitzvot*, and prayer.

Rabbi Shmuel Solomon, one of the directors of One Torah, opened the event, explaining the incredible power that Torah, unity, and prayer have in the spiritual realm.

Though South Africa has always been known for unity among the various spectrums of Jewry, the One Torah Unity event took it to another level.

The event proceeded with source-based *chavrusa* learning and *shiur* groups by a number of leading rabbonim, followed by special prayers for the soldiers and those held captive, and tehillim. It closed with the powerful Acheinu prayer sung in unison.

Jewish sporting achievers pull their weight in 2023

>>Continued from page 23

Nineteen-year-old Dean Levy, the 395th ranked senior table tennis player in the world, played in the World Table Tennis Championship Finals in Durban. The top 128 players in the world competed in it. He also came second in the Under-19 South African nationals.

Wealth manager Gavin Mofsowitz placed third in his category of males aged 40 to 44 at the Ironman Hamburg European Championship in June. It took him less than nine hours to complete the 3.9km swim, 180.2km bicycle ride, and 42.2km marathon at the championship.

Dr Vic Boston, 63, completed his 45th consecutive Comrades Marathon, meaning he’s still on track eventually to surpass Barry Holland, 71, who completed his 49th consecutive Comrades this year.

Toni Hesp, the owner of Toni Hesp Physiotherapy in Johannesburg, completed her 31st Comrades,

and now needs four more to become the female with the most Comrades medals.

Rising cricket star David Teeger won the Absa Jewish Achievers’ inaugural Rising Star Award after shining as the captain of the Proteas Under-19 team against Bangladesh in his first international cricket tour while being head boy of King Edward VII School in his matric year.

Israel had an unforgettable year in soccer. Israel took the bronze medal at this year’s Under-20 World Cup and reached the semi-finals of the UEFA European Under-21 Championship. The holy land had previously appeared in only two championships out of a possible 16, never making it out of the group stages.

English Premier League giants Tottenham Hotspur signed Israeli Manor Solomon in July after he impressed for Fulham in the 2022/2023 season.

A turning point for Jacob – and us

World famous philosopher Dolly Parton got it right when she said, “Find out who you are, and then do it on purpose.” She might well have been talking to Jews and Israel supporters because somewhere along the way, we might have forgotten who we are.

The conflict between our forefathers Jacob and Esau is a well-documented one. Born as twins, Jacob gets his name from the word “Ekev” because at birth, he was holding on to the heel of his brother. From day one – and even before – there was competition, as they wrestled for dominance and identity.

The “battle” continues throughout most of their lives, and is exacerbated by the fact that Jacob “steals” the blessing from Isaac. In doing so, Jacob seems to indicate that his aspiration is to be like his brother instead of recognising that his domain isn’t in the physical world but in the spiritual one.

Their conflict culminates in what looks to be a fierce battle between the brothers. They are set to meet, and Jacob is aware that Esau is out for vengeance. He’s aware that he’s outgunned, and so he divides his family to try and at least save some of them. The scene is set, and we’re prepared for what’s to come.

Before this confrontation, however, a strange event takes place. Jacob is accosted by an angel whom he is said to fight. The two of them wrestle until dawn, when ultimately a wounded Jacob triumphs. If the interlude wasn’t strange enough, the angel then gives Jacob a new name by calling him “Israel”.

The late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks suggests that Jacob has been in an internal battle. The fight with the angel was a struggle for his own identity and to try and understand himself. At the end of the night, he emerges, no longer the guy holding on to his brother’s ankle and who is trying to lay claim to his brother’s domain, but as “Israel”. He understands that he’s not his brother, and that his identity and task in the world are very different.

This is why when he finally meets Esau, he greets him with an acknowledgement of Esau’s superiority in the

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



physical world.

The struggle that has followed 7 October has left us in no doubt that although we might have thought that world of Esau is our world, it’s not. Like Jacob, we have struggled and have emerged as Israel.

In many ways, we seemed to be trying hard to be everything to everyone while forgetting who we are meant to be. We perhaps took our guidance, for example, from the academic feminist movement instead of looking at our own compass to guide us. We seemed to get caught up with definitions of decency and morality as dictated by a hypocritical world that would soon abandon us in our hour of need. And which would turn on us in support of terror and annihilation because its system is built on popularism and values that simply aren’t ours.

Because, to some extent, like Jacob, we have clung desperately to their heels, only for them to shake us loose.

When dawn broke and Jacob had become Israel, we’re told that the fight had left him with damage and pain that would endure. But the battle was a pivotal one and a turning point for him and future generations. Sometime in the night, during the darkest time, Jacob had been reminded who he was and what his mission was. More so, he knew who he wasn’t.

This is my last column in the *SA Jewish Report* for 2023. The past few months have left us winded, hurt, and heartbroken. But they have also taught us resilience and reminded us that as Jews, we don’t need permission to thrive. It has been painful, but it has awakened in us a power and fortitude that is Israel.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Here to stay and still thriving



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Had we been living in normal times, our 2023 national biennial conference would have taken the form of a celebratory gala dinner marking the South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) 120th anniversary. Instead, as much by choice as necessity, we held a low-key, online-only event where we reported back on the Board’s activities over the previous two years.

The conference took place on Sunday, 3 December, and was followed by a brief meeting of the SAJBD national executive committee to elect the office bearers for the next two years. I’m honoured to have been elected to serve a second term as national chairperson, and congratulate all our other office bearers: Zev Krengel (president); Mary Kluk (vice-president); David Kuming (treasurer); and Vice-Chairpersons Izvi Brivik; Danny Mofsowitz; and Susan Abro. We pay tribute to outgoing President Shaun Zagnoev, who as my predecessor, devoted his invaluable set of skills to righting the ship at a troubled time and successfully managing the rationalisation and restructuring process thereafter.

As national chairperson, my vision for the SAJBD is to enable us all to live authentically as proud Jews and as proud engaged citizens in our beautiful, complicated, broken country. It was gratifying to report how every single project, activity, press statement, and initiative under my leadership had been dedicated to that vision. I recounted what we had done during the COVID-19 crisis, both on behalf of our own community, which was disproportionately affected, and in the multiple ways we were involved in helping alleviate the crisis beyond our community, when starvation was again a spectre in our streets. We carried through this active citizenship by helping with some of the worst disasters in the country, particularly the Boksburg gas tanker explosion; floods in KwaZulu-Natal; and the terrible fire in the Johannesburg inner city. Another area very close to my heart was the work done with universities, where we proactively

engaged with students to bring the South African Union of Jewish Students and student representative councils together and raised enormous funds to address student debt. I related how we had further solidified our position as involved citizens and proud Jews through the marvellous *Mensches in the Trenches* book, telling the stories of the lesser-known Jewish stalwarts of the anti-apartheid struggle.

For the hardest part of my speech – how to live as a proud Jew and engaged citizen in light of our government’s hostility after the 7 October atrocities – I provided some *chizuk* through a phrase I learned from a colleague: “If Israel is a start-up nation, South African Jewry are a DIY nation.” I mentioned the wonderful communal institutions we have established that in an increasingly dysfunctional society, provide critical services in such areas as welfare, healthcare, and education. In the face of our government’s shameful international relations policy, we had been proud and forthright in our response. I mentioned some of the public stands we had taken, including demonstrating for the release of the hostages on Nelson Mandela Bridge and Durban beach, our full-page *Sunday Times* advertorial criticising our president for his shameful response to the 7 October atrocities, and how in the face of overwhelming press hostility, we made sure our voices were heard. In all of this, moreover, we weren’t alone. Our friends in the World Jewish Congress and other global Jewish organisations have opened their doors to us, and we also have many friends in South Africa, some of whom have fought shoulder to shoulder with us.

“We’re not going anywhere,” I concluded. South Africa belongs to all who live in it, and in spite of everything, communal life is thriving and the Jews of South Africa are still punching way above their weight.

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

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





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5.30pm - 7pm

Candle lighting at 6.30pm

Motse Shabbos - 9 December

Candle lighting at 8.30pm

Sunday 10 Dec - 6.30pm

Monday 11 Dec - 6.30pm

Tuesday 12 Dec - 6.30pm

Wednesday 13 Dec - 6.30pm

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64⁹⁹

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242⁹⁹

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