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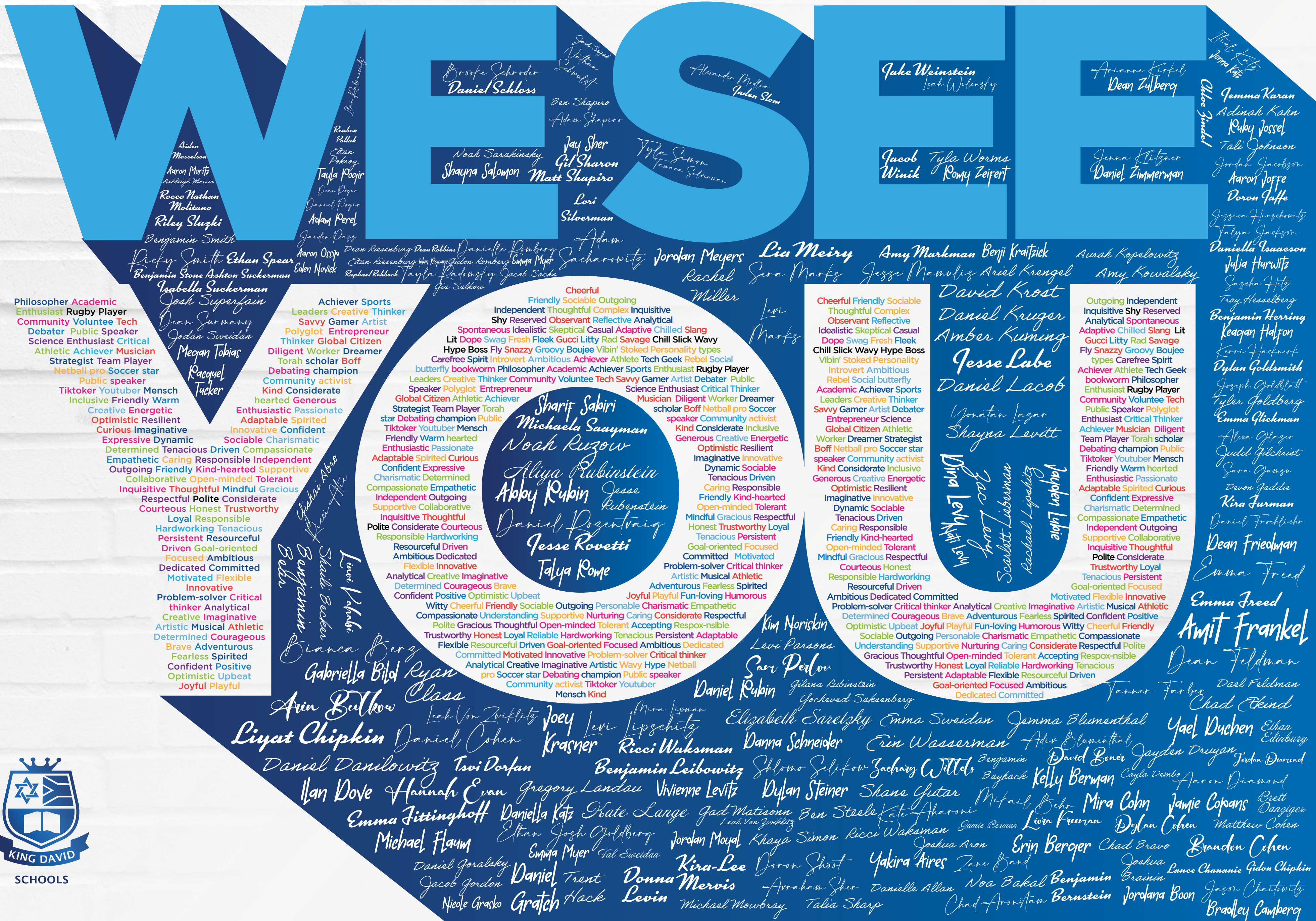
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# South African Jewish Report

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**Continued on page 6>**



South African Jewish Board of Deputies Chairperson Karen Milner addressed hundreds of people outside Cricket South Africa's offices in Johannesburg on 18 January in protest against the stripping of the captaincy from David Teeger, formerly captain of the South African Under-19 cricket team.



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Death of 24 soldiers spurs debate about war

DEBORAH DANAN – JTA

Twenty-four Israeli soldiers were killed in the Gaza Strip in two separate incidents on Monday, 22 January, marking the deadliest day for Israel since the Hamas attacks on 7 October.

In one incident, 19 reservists were killed when Hamas gunmen fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at two buildings, resulting in their collapse. Another RPG hit a tank guarding the site, killing two soldiers. The buildings, located within half a mile (0.8km) from the border, were laden with mines by Israeli troops as part of a strategy to demolish Hamas sites and establish a buffer zone.

"An RPG launched by Hamas hit a residential complex where dozens of our soldiers were operating. Initial estimates suggest that the RPG triggered the explosives inside, causing a catastrophic collapse," the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said in a statement.

The IDF announced plans to form a special investigative team to probe the incident thoroughly, with the aim of preventing similar occurrences.

In a separate incident that occurred earlier on Monday, three officers in the Paratroopers Brigade were killed and another seriously injured during a battle in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

As rescue operations at the site of the RPG attack extended for hours on Monday, a wave of rumours and unverified reports, including conjectures about missing and potentially abducted soldiers, swept across Israel.

IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari has since appealed for restraint and sensitivity. "Behind the rumours are families experiencing their worst hour," he said on 23 January.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described Monday as "one of the most difficult days" since the outbreak of the war. He said he was grieving with the families of the soldiers, "whose lives will change forever".

The dead were all reservists, ranging from 22 to 40 and coming from all over the country, including major cities and small towns, and from both religious and secular backgrounds. One was from the Bedouin Arab city of Rahat.

News of the latest deaths has fuelled an ongoing debate among Israeli citizens over the objectives of the military's ground offensive. Three months into the ground invasion, 219 soldiers have been killed while the army has rescued only one living hostage during combat operations and hasn't dismantled Hamas, Israel's two stated goals. More than 100 hostages were released late last year as part of a temporary ceasefire deal. Israeli troops mistakenly killed three hostages in another incident.

This week, a member of Netanyahu's war cabinet, Gadi Eisenkot, whose own son and nephew are among the dead soldiers, said he believed the objectives couldn't be achieved.

The funeral of Israeli soldier Hadar Nissim Kapluck on 23 January 2024

Photo: Yonatan Sindel - Flash90

Monday's incident marked the second major occurrence of mines being laid out by the IDF exploding prematurely. Earlier this month, six reservists from the engineering corps were killed when a tunnel rigged with mines detonated in Gaza in an incident that the IDF said appeared not to have involved an attack by Hamas.

"These events are a major heartbreak. We love our soldiers. Each one here has his own family that now doesn't have a father," Gil Lewinsky, from central Israel, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA). "I hope for the sake of the families and also for society at large that there's some accountability."

The families of the 136 hostages still held by Hamas have become increasingly critical of the IDF's approach, saying it endangers their loved ones, and have urged Israel's government instead to work on securing a deal for their release via protests and a broad public campaign. On Monday, family members of several hostages interrupted a parliament meeting to demand action from legislators and were forcibly removed.

For the first time within Israel since the war's start, social media and news show pundits are abuzz with people questioning the wisdom of the IDF's strategy. Some worry that a shift to more surgical military activity, announced amid pressure from the United States to stem civilian casualties, carries increased risk for soldiers.

"The soldiers are abandoned in the field, targets are loaded with explosives and booby-trapped, all because the Air Force won't attack if there's the possibility of Gazan civilians in the area," Oryan Levy told JTA.

According to an analysis by *The New York Times*, the pace of casualties in Gaza has slowed from more than 300 per day in late October to roughly 150 per day this week. Overall, more than 25 000 people have been killed in Gaza, a mix of combatants and civilians, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. Hamas's 7 October invasion of Israel killed about 1 200 people and took about 250 hostages.

Continued on page 33>>

Joseph's bounty



Rav Ilan Herrmann –  
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As the people were busying themselves gathering the spoils of the Egyptian cavalry who had drowned in the Sea of Reeds and washed ashore, Moses, we're told, was busy with Joseph's casket. Joseph had requested and received an oath by the Jewish people that they would take his body for burial in Israel when they were redeemed and led to the promised land. Moses thus was busy ensuring that this task was carried out. The words are, "Moshe took Joseph's bones with him."

It raises the question, why the juxtaposition of bounty collection alongside mention of Joseph's bones being taken? We're told that, in fact, the bodies of all Joseph's brothers were taken out of Egypt. Why then is only Joseph's name singled out and not the others?

The hidden answer lies in the word for "bones" which in Hebrew – "atzmot" – shares the same root as the word for "essence".

Joseph was viceroy of Egypt, and had all the wealth of the world at his reach. In spite of this, he didn't fall prey to the potential pitfalls that bountiful wealth can bring. Pitfalls that might lead to, among other things, insensitivity, impatience, self-indulgence, egocentrism, haughtiness, stinginess, and hedonism. Rather, Yosef rose above the physical, and retained the values he had grown up with in his father, Jacob's, house, namely the spiritual truths of generosity, sensitivity, humility, and using material possessions for a higher, G-dly, purpose.

This is the reason the Torah places the mention of Joseph's bones next to the wealth collection of the Israelites – to remind them that although they were pursuing wealth, it should lead to a holy purpose like

it did in the case of Joseph.

It's also the reason the word for "bones" shares a root with the word for "essence". In maintaining his life as a Jew in the decadence of Egyptian society, and by withstanding the temptations of his environment and rather keeping strong to his Jewish values, Joseph demonstrated his essence. He was showing the inner strength of the soul to rise above. This is a lesson to all who face a challenging world at odds with the timeless true values of the Torah – the true values of a Jew. When the world claims that its prime focus is on a physical lifestyle and the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself,

not to be used for a G-dly purpose, we must realise – bring out – our essence, and let our inner strength prevail to assert the proper, true, G-dly way.

Finally, this is the reason why Joseph is mentioned rather than his brothers in spite of the fact that they were also brought back for burial in Israel. It's because Joseph demonstrates this all important ability to rise up to the challenges of the world. Even in Egypt and amidst all the wealth of the world, he didn't lose sight of what the right values were.

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# Boycotting SA products damaging and pointless, say olim

TALI FEINBERG

While there are renewed calls in South Africa to boycott so-called “Zionist-linked products”, former South Africans living in Israel say that a call to boycott South African goods would hurt the South African people, not the government.

The United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA), whose members include the Muslim Judicial Council and other similar bodies, have made a “community appeal” written by UUCSA Secretary General Yusuf Patel, who wrote, “From an Islamic perspective, the boycotting of products and entities supporting the killing and murder of fellow Muslims is consistent with the spirit of global solidarity and a financial jihad against injustice.”

The notice calls on followers to boycott Cape Union Mart, Dis-Chem, Clover, and Teva Pharmaceuticals. Though the first two are Jewish-owned, they have no Israeli ties. The second two have Israeli links but have made no contribution to Israel’s war against Hamas. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism states that “holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel” is antisemitic.

“UUCSA commends all those who have taken their own initiative of boycotting certain projects with Zionist links,” wrote Patel. “While the focus is on the cited companies, consumers are encouraged to continue or start – based on personal research and convictions – to make ethical choices in boycotting Zionist-linked products and services.”

Philip Krawitz, the executive chairperson of the Cape Union Mart Group, said, “I’ve read with concern the flyer by the United Ulama Council of South Africa, as well as the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions calling for boycotts against companies within the Cape Union Mart Group. I’m a great believer in the democratic right to protest within the boundaries of the law. I also believe that consumers have a right to decide from whom they will make their purchases and who they may wish to boycott.

However, in calling on consumers to protest or boycott, it’s important that decisions should be based on well-researched facts. Consideration should also be given to the wider impact on the South African economy. “I reiterate that neither Cape Union Mart nor any of the companies within our group have ever contributed to any causes outside South Africa,” he said. “Furthermore, we have never made donations to any armies – local or international. We abhor war, and believe that disputes should be settled

companies and in so doing, damage will be caused to the greater economy, potentially resulting in job losses. “As already stated, our company and I have absolutely no links whatsoever to the Israeli army. This leaves me with the inescapable conclusion that we are being targeted simply for being Jewish. If that’s the case, it would be a sad day for a country which holds itself up as an icon of tolerance.” Antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, Milton Shain, said, “The



through negotiations between willing partners aiming for constructive outcomes. “In my personal capacity, I’ve supported worthy causes both in South Africa and in Israel,” said Krawitz. “I do that in terms of my constitutional rights. Many of the causes and projects I have supported in Israel have focused on building better multicultural relationships. “In a country with an unemployment rate of 31.9% and youth unemployment in the 15 to 20 age group of 60.7%, I sincerely believe that companies in South Africa have a duty to create as many jobs as possible. This has always been our mantra, and we’re proud of the fact that about 3 600 people are employed throughout our group. This number includes several hundred Muslim team members, many of whom have been with us for decades and occupy senior positions. The boycotts and protests are aimed at damaging our

fact that, to my knowledge, boycotts were never called by this organisation against China’s persecution of the Uighurs, the carnage in Yemen, or [Bashar al] Assad’s massacre of his Syrian countrymen must leave one wondering if a special hatred and measure is reserved for the Jewish state only.” Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said, “Religious bodies have the potential to be unifiers and to bring communities together in dialogue. It’s regrettable that the UUCSA has chosen rather a path of division and antagonism. To import the tragic conflict in Israel and Gaza to threaten the businesses of fellow South Africans citizens is deeply unfortunate. “Calling for boycotts of Jewish businesses does nothing to address the suffering in the region, and only causes hate between our own citizens. Holding South African Jews

accountable for a conflict on another continent is ludicrous. “For decades, these businesses have created jobs in our country and contributed to building our economy. Destructive calls like this show the Ulama Council putting its hate-filled

Zionists show they have little interest in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but simply in fostering hate.” Meanwhile, a few South Africans in Israel have called for the boycott of South African products over South Africa taking Israel to the International Court of Justice. It was reported on 22 January that two major supermarkets in Israel, Shufersal and Rami Levi, had stopped ordering grapes from South Africa out of concern about a consumer boycott. However, many South African olim told the SA Jewish Report that they felt boycotting South African products was problematic. “I actually just bought grapes in Israel from South Africa,” said Leah Goldberg. “I don’t believe in boycotting South African products. Hate doesn’t heal hate, so why do what anti-Israelis do?”

Martine Alperstein pointed out that such a boycott could also hurt South Africans who import South African goods to Israel. “These people have spent hundreds if not thousands of shekels getting the products approved. They’ve paid taxes, they’ve spent years working on the best routes, systems, postal services, etcetera, building up their clientele. Boycotting South African products as an ex-South African living in Israel is pointless, shallow, and a waste of time.” “If you boycott South Africa, you’re going to hurt businesses,” said Lawrence Berzen. “South Africa, with or without our support, couldn’t give a damn. It has shown this by supporting Hamas. We should carry on supporting those who stand with Israel. “It’s silly to boycott South African goods,” said Juan-Paul Paysach Burke. “It’s hurting the people of South Africa, not the government. The government is the problem. I don’t think we should encourage a spiral of boycotts. There must be a better response.”

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# ‘Vote, or kiss SA goodbye’, ex-South Africans told

NICOLA MILTZ

South Africans are calling on their countrymen abroad to register to vote in the national elections this year so they can help create meaningful change for those living here. Registration for South Africans around the world is open this weekend.

Kim Kur, the founder and lead volunteer of Community Circle SA, a 25 000-strong organisation of South Africans and dual nationals abroad living in more than 100 countries, said it was vital South Africans living abroad registered to vote this weekend. She insisted they should register regardless of how they felt about the current situation in the country and in spite of how they felt about the government's views and the way things stood. They also shouldn't worry about how they will cast their votes on elections day due to a lack of voting stations.

"Just register, and the rest will hopefully be ironed out later," she said, on the lack of availability of voting centres abroad.

"South Africans abroad should be just as invested in this election, especially because the Electoral Commission of South Africa [IEC] has made it easier for them to register, because they may want to return home one day and hopefully see meaningful change," she said.

"Every single vote counts if you want to see change for your friends and family back home. Don't take your choice away by not voting, you may want to return one day, and this is your chance to make a difference."

Kur said that for those feeling disillusioned with the government, it was especially important to register. "People cannot criticise our government or the way things are being run here if they don't exercise their right to vote. Just because they may be *gatvol* with certain things, doesn't mean they should forsake the country while their family and friends still reside here.

"Also, there are many South Africans returning to our shores. They shouldn't lose this opportunity to register to vote. It's so easy to make your mark," she said.

"There are many in our community here and abroad who say they are embarrassed to be South African. I say to them, it's okay to be embarrassed about the ruling party and government, but they aren't South Africa. Remain proud, and vote for change."

For the first time, voters can register to vote online, making voting as a South African far less complicated. The 2024 national and political elections are expected to take place between May and August, and the IEC is calling on South Africans at home and overseas to register.

South Africans abroad can vote at 125 voting centres, which include embassies, high commissions, and consulates. The IEC launched an online registration portal for expats who want to vote abroad. According to it, 10 000 South Africans have successfully registered since the portal went live in December.

It's important to note that even if you're registered to vote in South Africa, you're still required to register to vote abroad.

Concerns have been raised by the Democratic Alliance (DA) over the number of temporary foreign missions available for expats to vote abroad, and calls have been made to increase the number of these facilities.

The DA this week threatened court action if the government and the IEC didn't increase voting centres for expats.

The party said the status quo potentially excluded thousands of voters who didn't live in nearby capital cities or close to foreign missions, with many having to travel vast distances to cast their votes.

For example, there are more than 200 000 South Africans in Australia, and voting is available only in Canberra, which makes it difficult if not impossible for those who don't live nearby.

The DA has called on the government and the IEC to open voting centres in about 14 new locations abroad.

It's hoped, however, that the more people register to vote, the more voting stations will become available, and the more consular services will be provided, as there's a duty to provide these services to South Africans abroad.

Gayton McKenzie, the leader of the Patriotic Alliance, said citizens abroad must register to vote to exercise their civic duty. "There's no country in the world that can compare to South Africa in terms of weather, there's no place like home, no place better than amongst family. South Africans living abroad miss these things every day. Money can't buy these things. The Patriotic Alliance is fighting hard to create job opportunities, bring down crime levels, and make South Africa investor friendly. Go and register to help us help you to come back home."

To those who criticise the government but don't turn up at polling stations he said, "You can kiss South Africa goodbye. Our vote is the only weapon we have against the decay of our beautiful country."

Voters who reside in South Africa but will be abroad on election day, or those who are abroad but intend to vote in a different country or at a different mission than where they are registered, can submit a VEC10 notification to inform the IEC of the foreign mission at which they intend to vote.

According to recent reports, London is the busiest voting centre outside of South Africa, followed by Dubai and The Hague.

South African citizens who live abroad, or will be abroad on election day, and who have a South African identity document (either a green ID book, a smartcard ID, or a valid temporary ID certificate) and a valid South African passport or a valid temporary passport, are eligible to vote abroad.

You also need to be a registered voter, and be at least 18 years and older. On 26, 27, and 28 January, you can visit any of South Africa's 120 embassies, high commissions, and consulates to register to vote and/or update your details.

If you have any doubts that you are registered to vote, you can check your voter-registration status on the IEC's website. This also allows you to find out where you're registered.

Additionally, to confirm that you're registered and to find out where you're registered, SMS your ID number to 32810; call the IEC's contact centre on 0800 11 800; or email [info@elections.org.za](mailto:info@elections.org.za).



Voting in Israel during the 2019 general elections



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# UCT fundraiser cut ties due to anti-Israel stance

TALI FEINBERG

For more than two decades, Trevor Norwitz chaired the board of the University of Cape Town Fund (UCT Fund), the American alumni and fundraising arm of the University of Cape Town (UCT). However, the UCT Council's "statement on the crisis in Gaza" published on 7 December 2023 made him decide to end that relationship.

In his official resignation statement, Norwitz said, "I can no longer in good conscience be associated with UCT. The council statement, while varnished with a thin veneer of impartiality, reflects an institution which has lost its moral bearings, even its regard for the truth, which should be sacred to any institution of higher learning.

"The suffering of innocents in Gaza is terrible and tragic, but it's the terrorist organisation Hamas and not Israel that's overwhelmingly to blame for that suffering," he wrote. "And, as I have been writing for years, that blame is shared by those – now joined by the UCT Council – who irresponsibly, even if unwittingly, give Hamas so much encouragement rather than insisting that they be held accountable for their heinous crimes."

His resignation followed months of UCT allowing flags of internationally-designated terrorist organisations Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to be displayed on its campus, and for the UCT Palestinian Solidarity Forum (UCT PSF) to invite representatives of these organisations to address students. On 7 October, the UCT PSF cheered the massacre. The same students proudly met Hamas representatives when they visited South Africa in December. All this is recorded on the UCT PSF Instagram profile.

Now, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Norwitz says, "For a long time, the criticism of Israel on campus was – or at least was purported to be – aimed at things Israel did or failed to do, and not at its very existence. Saying that Israel shouldn't exist or that the Jewish people didn't have the right to self-determination wasn't considered an appropriate position to espouse publicly. But in the past

few years – and not just in South Africa – it has become acceptable to talk about Israel as a 'settler-colonial-apartheid state' which has no right to exist. This fallacious characterisation is then used to legitimise any action against Israel, even the heinous atrocities of 7 October.

"There are elements in the UCT leadership that have this eliminationist position, but they haven't been the dominant voices up to now," Norwitz says. "Unfortunately, it seems those voices have become much more powerful. It's difficult – if not impossible – to engage constructively with someone who can be satisfied only by you ceasing to exist."

Norwitz says that through previous engagement with UCT leadership, including the members of the council, "We on the UCT Fund board had been led to believe that, while there was a small group of students at UCT who supported murderous groups like Hamas or Hezbollah, they were so radical that they turned off most students and even though they occasionally engaged with terrorist groups, this was aberrational and not a threat to Jewish students on campus.

"I hope this is and remains true. I do fear, however, that, in an environment in which the very leadership – that is, the council – shows itself to be virulently anti-Israel, those radical voices will grow and Jewish students will feel cowed into silence, if not actually unsafe."

As for how he came to the decision to resign, he says, "I was chairperson of the UCT Fund for more than 20 years, and that's much too long anyway. Truth be told, I had been asking them to find a new chairperson for years but had been willing to serve in that role until they did. However, after the outrageous council statement – which at best drew a moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas, but actually showed a strong leaning in favour of Hamas – I could simply no longer be the public face of the university in the United States.

"After 7 October, the UCT Fund board engaged with the

university leadership to make sure that Jewish students were safe and that radical anti-Israel activity didn't get out of hand. The council's statement took us by surprise. It knew how seriously we and many alumni felt about this, so the statement felt like a personal and communal betrayal."

Regarding UCT's response to his resignation, "It was unfortunate that it missed the main point. I wasn't accusing the university of antisemitism, and it's a pity that it didn't treat it as an opportunity for self-reflection.

I continue to hope that it will see the folly of its ways, and tone down the rhetoric in a manner that becomes a top university."

He believes "UCT should be a place where freedom of expression reigns and the truth is the ultimate value. There will always be radical views, and they shouldn't be shut down, although there must be policies against bullying, incitement to violence, and so on, so that students and faculty feel safe. As I understand it, the council's role is to ensure that the university adheres to these standards and not to weigh in on these debates,

and historically as far as I'm aware, it hasn't done so. Unfortunately, in this case, the council put politics before truth."

In his statement, Norwitz said, "UCT is a vital and vibrant institution and if it has lost its way, I'm confident it will find its way back."

Now, he adds, "Deep down, I believe good and truth will prevail. Sadly, this may take some time. This is especially so in an age when most young people get their 'news' from sites like TikTok and X/Twitter, which aren't only run by algorithms designed to drive people into more radical positions, but are manipulated by malicious governments and elements for political purposes. UCT is at a vital crossroads, about to choose a new leader. Who and how it chooses will make a huge difference to how long it takes it to find its way back.

"What should happen is that the UCT Council should retract its statement, or at least acknowledge that it was injudicious, inappropriate, and deeply offensive to constituencies of the university," says Norwitz. "Going forward, the council should focus on protecting the university rather than weighing in with political positions. Or, if it decides that its role is a political one – which would be a mistake – it should be consistent and not just single out Israel. In an ideal world, the UCT Council wouldn't include supporters of terrorist groups like Hamas."

When it comes to others supporting UCT, Norwitz says, "Everyone must make their own decision. I would encourage people to stay engaged to get UCT to behave in a moral and responsible manner. Jewish students should still go to UCT, but it will take great internal fortitude and intellectual courage to remain a proud Jew and supporter of Israel's right to exist in the face of the virulent anti-Zionism that has taken hold on campus, and which at least for the moment, seems to be endorsed by the university leadership itself."



Trevor Norwitz

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## Here’s to the all-round winners

Last Wednesday and Thursday night, all the issues in the world were set aside for 2023 matriculants and their parents, as they waited for that SMS with their matric results. What a great leveller!

In those hours preceding the release of the results, there are no thoughts of the government’s faults, what’s happening in Israel, or any worries, other than the future of that child or children. There’s very little more important than our families, and the fact is that our children represent our future and that of our country and people.

However, there’s a massive focus on the number of distinctions attained. To be honest, this is sad because distinctions don’t necessarily make a successful, contributing member of society.

Distinctions show how well you study and put what you have learnt down on paper succinctly. It doesn’t mean you’ll remember what you’ve learnt one year later. If it’s a language you got a distinction for, it doesn’t mean that you can speak it fluently. It means you’ve understood what it takes to do well in the subjects you took, and have gone the distance.

I don’t mean to take the *kavod* from those who got many distinctions, because achieving over 80% is tough. It takes a great deal of time and hard work. They deserve all the honour that they get for their achievements.

But for those who didn’t get a full house of distinctions or even one distinction but passed and did the best they could do, there’s no shame.

The pressure put on students by many educational institutions and parents to get those distinctions is concerning. Getting distinctions to get into medicine, engineering, or faculties like that is obviously necessary, but we aren’t all going to be doctors or engineers.

There are only a limited number of people who will follow those paths. For the rest, a good matric will suffice to get into university, college, or get an internship. The important thing is to have some kind of path forward to take you to the next step and to achieve well enough to do that.

Every year at this time, we have the privilege of telling a few of the incredible stories of matriculants who have excelled. Mostly, we aren’t looking at the number of distinctions, we’re looking at how they broke barriers or achieved against the odds. These are people who deserve honour just as much as those who got many distinctions.

There’s one matriculant whose story we didn’t cover this week, who somehow managed to achieve a full house of distinctions in spite of having been under the worst kind of pressure and in a state of shock while writing his final exams. I’m talking about David Teeger, who had his captaincy of the South African Under-19 cricket team taken from him because of antisemitism.

We would have stood behind him even had he not achieved distinctions because he has shown the mettle he is made of over the past few months.

To be honest, becoming an icon in our community cannot be easy for this 19-year-old, who just wants to play cricket. I admire his parents and friends for protecting him as much as they could from the brouhaha surrounding him.

What’s clear is that he’s not just a top sportsperson, but a leader and an all-round achiever, essentially the kind of person most countries would love to nurture. He’ll fly in cricket and in his career, but after the way he has been treated over the past few months, I wouldn’t be surprised if he upped and left to find somewhere that would appreciate what he has to offer.

This is the saddest thing about this country. It seems that our government isn’t interested in who gives the best of themselves to South Africa.

The good thing is that this government isn’t going to be in power forever. We have elections this year, and it’s not a certainty that the African National Congress (ANC) will remain in leadership. We need to make sure we and everyone we know votes because that’s the only way we can put in place a government that will care about our future in this country.

We want a government that doesn’t put Middle East issues above our own and waste taxpayers’ money to fight a battle that isn’t theirs. In the meantime, our own people are struggling as there are no jobs, the economy is battling, and crime runs rampant. We want a government that will do whatever it can to rebuild our country and make it great again. And that clearly won’t be the ANC.

It’s vital that we encourage all those South Africans who aren’t here to register to vote in the upcoming elections and find out more about the parties in the running so they can make a conscious mark for our future.

And as Rabbi Yossy Goldman (page 7) and Benjy Porter (page 8) say in their opinion pieces, we have a great future here, we just have to make it work. There’s no need to drop everything and leave because someone might have suggested that it was time. This is a personal choice, and I believe we have an amazing life and community here and can only improve on that.

It’s important that we – as do Jews all over the world – need to look at what our future holds. Antisemitism is on the rise internationally. England, the United States, Australia, France, and so many other countries that have been home to Jews for centuries are now experiencing horrific antisemitism. We have very little violent antisemitism here, while elsewhere it’s getting worse all the time.

In some of those places, it’s unsafe to wear a kippa or even a Magen David. So, packing for Perth, New York, or even London may not be the wisest idea. The grass isn’t greener on the other side.

As the late, great Rabbi Norman Bernhard used to say, “Either stay home or go home,” meaning stay in South Africa, but if you’re going to leave, there’s only one place to go, and that’s Israel.

Now, more than ever, this has become evident to us all. As long as Israel survives, we can hold our heads high. The amount of fake news and misinformation around the Gaza war and even 7 October is astonishing.

The popular narrative is that Israel is trying to decimate Gaza and its population which is why it’s continuing this long, devastating war in which so many lives are being lost.

However, anyone who understands Israel’s military might would know that if that was Israel’s intention, soldiers wouldn’t have needed to go into Gaza, they could have destroyed the small strip of land by bombing it from the outside.

But to try and destroy Hamas’s strength and capacity and safeguard the population, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had to go into Gaza and systematically go through the place building by building. The IDF soldiers clearly aren’t at home there, they don’t know the streets or people. This war is so hard for every Israeli family with sons, husbands, or fathers fighting in Gaza.

Every day, we hear of more young, beautiful, soldiers being killed in Gaza. I look at the faces in the photographs and see the hope, the light, the future, which has been destroyed. These young men had their whole lives ahead of them, futures which could have been great, but they are now gone.

If anyone really believes that Israelis want to be in this war, they just have to look at the faces of those soldiers who died, and know the truth. Israel is in this war for its own survival and the survival of the Jewish world. Am Yisrael Chai!

Shabbat shalom and chag Tu B’Svat sameach!  
Peta Krost, Editor



## ANC’s history of trading foreign policy for cash

OPINION

DR JAMES MYBURGH AND DR FRANS CRONJE

The *Citizen* recently ran a headline asking whether South Africa’s ruling African National Congress (ANC) party was being funded by Iran, and whether such funding might have influenced the country’s decision to bring a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

South African readers will be only too aware of the precedent of the 2007 to 2017 “state-capture” era in which ANC officials essentially sold government institutions to corrupt partners.

What they may be less aware of is that the practice of doing so with regard to South Africa’s foreign policy platforms pre-dates the state-capture era by almost 20 years.

In his biography, General Bantu Holomisa recalls a visit to London where Nelson Mandela asked then Prime Minister John Major “for a sum of R10 million [for the ANC]”. Holomisa writes that “when Major ignored the funding request and changed the subject, Madiba wrote me a note in isiXhosa saying, ‘We will get nothing from this man, let’s go.’ The London trip continued to Ireland where, as Holomisa tells it, the same request was put to the Irish Prime Minister who acceded “without demur”.

This was a pattern repeated across the world. But while in Western capitals such requests had mixed results given that most leaders were constrained from simply handing



over large sums of cash, it was a different matter when it came to monarchies and dictatorships in the developing world, where such leaders could more easily dip into their state treasuries.

Among the large donations that were reportedly solicited and received by the ANC in the early-to-mid-1990s included from Muammar Gadhafi of Libya (\$50 million); Sani Abacha of Nigeria (\$50m); Muhammad Suharto of Indonesia (\$60m); King Fahd of Saudi Arabia (\$50m); and Taiwan (\$10m). Many of these donations were simply handed over to the ANC in wads of cash and flown back into the country in briefcases.

Mandela and the ANC were quite open about having received many – though not all – of these donations. The party’s treasurer general acknowledged in a 1997 report that given that “our members’ contributions were and are negligible”, the ANC had “largely depended on friendly

countries and institutions for its funds. Most of these donors were in foreign lands.”

In return for such donations, the ANC offered up not just a public association with Mandela’s unrivalled moral prestige but also South Africa’s foreign policy and diplomatic initiatives. This led the new ANC government into many tawdry associations and actions, and bizarre foreign policy stands.

It pursued “quiet diplomacy” on behalf of Abacha in 1994 and 1995, and vigorously sought to prevent the imposition of sanctions against that regime, an approach that blew up in the South African government’s face after Abacha executed Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in November 1995.

In return for their role in funding the ANC, Gadhafi and Suharto were awarded South Africa’s then highest state honour, the Order of Good Hope in 1997. In both cases, too, the ANC government also interceded diplomatically on behalf of those regimes and used South Africa’s influence to shield them from criticism over their lamentable human rights records. In the case of Taiwan, the donation was credited by the Taiwanese with delaying South Africa’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) by at least two years, to 1 January 1998.

The ANC’s 1999 election was also reportedly funded by donations from an array of dictatorial foreign regimes, including now the PRC. In 2004, numerous newspapers reported that the ANC had sought and secured funding from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. *Voice of America* later reported that a United Nations inquiry suggested that “through these illicit exchanges, Iraq hoped to influence the country’s foreign policy in the run-up to the war in Iraq”. Ahead of and throughout the war, South Africa lent considerable diplomatic support to Hussein’s corrupt and criminal regime.

In 2009, the *Mail & Guardian* reported that Angola and Equatorial Guinea had been added to the roster of the ANC’s dodgy foreign donors ahead of the national elections of that year.

What the collective of these reports, which have all been in the public domain for a long time, speak to is that the ANC has historically sought election funding from foreign partners and then provided diplomatic favours in exchange, regardless of the human rights record, or indeed ideological orientation, of the partner in question.

As the net tightens around what transpired between Pretoria, Tehran, Hamas, and Qatar in the weeks after the 7 October attack, this pattern of behaviour will feature prominently.

• *Dr James Myburgh and Dr Frans Cronje are attached to the European based BRE-DE-RE initiative that identifies and counters threats to liberal democracies.*

## US antisemitism envoy: ‘Teeger decision is antisemitic’ >> Continued from page 1

Israel. Once cleared, Teeger was appointed South Africa’s U19 captain.

Political commentators haven’t minced their words in questioning CSA’s decision. On 19 January, advocate at the Johannesburg bar, Christiaan Bester, wrote in *Business Day*, “There’s little doubt that relieving Teeger of the captaincy is politically motivated. If there is indeed a security threat, the logical approach would be to improve security lest CSA allows itself to be intimidated by opportunists and thugs who have no place in our democracy.”

Bester wrote, “A form of punishment has been dished out because CSA didn’t agree with the [Trevogve] outcome. We’re left with the distinct impression that the men in suits and their political masters consider it wholly unpalatable that a Jew should be allowed to captain a South African cricket team on the world stage.”

Writing for *BizNews* on 22 January, Terence Corrigan, project manager at the South African Institute of Race Relations said, “Pre-emptively capitulating to supposed demands to forestall violence that was supposedly in store communicates a very specific message: threats work. Threaten violence, and we’ll surrender in advance. This is the case, whether any threat was made or not.”

On 19 January, Teeger’s alma mater, King Edward VII School, announced that he had passed matric with seven distinctions.

On the same day, Teeger, who was one of his school’s top five academic performers, took part in South Africa’s 31-run victory against the West Indies in Potchefstroom, and took one wicket during a two over bowling spell.

Teeger also contributed to the team’s decision-making as Juan James, the captain who replaced him, had to leave the field with an injury.

Protesters held a prayer gathering and protest during the game. That protest followed a protest by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and others outside CSA’s offices in Melrose Estate on 17 January. At that protest, the South African Zionist Federation handed over a petition with more than 50 000 signatures demanding immediate reinstatement of Teeger’s role as captain, as well as a formal apology.

Meanwhile, Ali Bacher, who oversaw South African cricket’s reintegration after apartheid, has asked CSA to disclose the security reports that influenced its decision, to provide a comprehensive explanation of the decision-making process, the specific factors that led to the removal of the captaincy, and clarification about whether any external pressure led to the decision.

“It’s the responsibility of CSA and South African law-enforcement entities to ensure safety at sporting events,” Bacher said. “The alternative is that the threat of violence dictates policy.”



# Why we're staying in South Africa

OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

Since becoming life rabbi emeritus of Sydenham Shul in 2021, my wife Rochel and I have been travelling extensively. I've been invited to speak in more than 30 different communities around the world, including North America, South America, Europe, and Israel.

We've visited communities big and small – from New York with nearly two million Jews; Los Angeles, with 700 000; Buenos Aires with more than 200 000; and little Spokane, Washington with only 700. London has 160 000; while Malmo, Sweden has only 1 500 souls.

In Los Angeles, once considered the Garden of Eden, people are moving in droves to more politically conservative states like Texas and Florida. Homelessness is a serious problem, and with California's "woke" ideology, the police are powerless to protect people's private properties, even their storefronts.



Springbok fans at the 2023 Rugby World Cup

I've lost count of how many mass shootings have taken place across the United States (US). Frighteningly, it's almost a weekly occurrence. And the scandalous discrimination against Jews at America's great Ivy League universities borders on the unbelievable.

Antisemitism has spiked across the world, whether in the streets of London, Toronto, outside the shul

in Sweden, or even in peaceful Ra'anana. Whereas, with all the African National Congress (ANC) government's anti-Israel policies, the fact is that there's still much less antisemitism here than in any other Jewish community in the world.

The South African preoccupation of sitting on our suitcases goes back 75 years from when the apartheid regime came to power. But though it's a sign of our own historic insecurity, please forgive me for suggesting that there may be a degree of fickleness here too. Consider this, after 9/11, did New York Jewry even think about leaving New York? Did Australians leave their country after runaway wildfires? Did Floridians move north after being battered by hurricanes? The answer is no. Every place has its own set of problems, but people don't necessarily pick up and move because of them.

Back in 1976, when we came to Johannesburg on *shlichut* from the US, it was just before the Soweto uprising. People told us we were mad to come here. "We're sitting on a volcano," they said. For decades, people have been saying South Africa has five years left. First, there was the fear of a bloody revolution. Then, there was a spiralling crime problem. And now, it's our current government's gross incompetence and corruption, failing infrastructure, and crippled services. And, of course, today, the cherry on top is the ANC's *chutzpah* to take Israel to The Hague and to drop our Jewish cricket captain. I fully understand the anger.

But while I don't minimise our problems for one minute, there are still many reasons to stay in South Africa.

Do you really want to be a displaced person for the rest of your life? South African emigrants still miss this place terribly. On a past visit to Melbourne, the Springboks



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were there for a rugby Test series. I asked the South Africans there if they were supporting the Wallabies or the Springboks. They looked at me like I was *meshuga*, saying, "Of course, the Springboks!" Many have settled well and done well, and many more still feel like displaced persons.

Let me try and distil some of the main reasons I oppose emigration.

### Our way of life

Even in our current situation, we're still able to enjoy a more relaxed and much less frenetic lifestyle than almost anywhere else on earth. People overseas work much harder, especially our wives. To replicate the quality of life most of us enjoy here internationally requires a fortune of money.

### Our Jewish community

Don't mistakenly think for a moment that the Jewish communal infrastructure is the same all over the world. Ours is a unique Jewish community with a plethora of shuls, schools, and kashrut facilities that aren't necessarily found elsewhere. For those who haven't had the opportunity to travel far and wide, let me assure you that, for our size, there's hardly a community like ours in the whole wide world. Just one example, in the US, there are cities with more than 100 000 Jews which have only

one or two kosher restaurants. Our own, much smaller, Johannesburg can boast 15!

Neither is your favourite shul easily replaceable. Why else would our emigrants have created South African-style shuls in Australia, Canada, America, and even Israel?

### Your grandchildren will be Jewish

So many have said that they are emigrating for their children's well-being. "*Far di kinder*." But elsewhere, we expose our children to foreign influences and cultures which threaten their very survival as Jews. Inter-marriage is rampant overseas. Ours is still a relatively sheltered community.

### Family

Keeping the family together is worth some sacrifice. And the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and mother," still applies. Thou shalt not abandon them, dump them, nor leave them bereft of support or *nachas*.

Almost every Jew in this country is familiar with the blessings and assurances given to our community by my saintly teacher and mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He sent us all his personal message which was, "Don't be afraid. It will be good in South Africa until Moshiach comes!"

What would the Rebbe say now after our

Continued on page 8>>

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# Want certainty? Remember to wear sunscreen

OPINION

In the discourse about the future of South Africa’s Jewish community, there’s a pressing need for dialogue that goes beyond the binary choice of staying or leaving. This debate, often ignited by socio-political and economic shifts, tends to oversimplify the complex issues shaping our community’s future. Addressing these in a single article is challenging, but it’s essential to consider our constitutional resilience, religious freedom, and the diverse individual journeys we undertake in seeking meaning and purpose.

My view on life in South Africa is nuanced and complex. In spite of my deep criticism of the government’s foreign policy, corruption, and inefficiency, I find that my sense of purpose and happiness isn’t solely dependent on these factors. My view of opportunities, both communal and commercial, are rooted in



experiences more profound than constantly reacting to every shift in the country’s climate. Like most parents, my wife and I think deeply

about our children’s future, hopefully a common practise irrespective of the country. Our experience shows that each child is unique, requiring different environments to thrive. We strive to instil a love of Hashem, resilience, and adaptability, encouraging them to choose paths that resonate with them, wherever that may be. This pursuit of certainty, especially for our children’s futures, resonates with Baz Luhrmann’s song, *Wear Sunscreen*, which humorously states that

the only scientifically proven advice is to wear sunscreen, underscoring life’s unpredictability. “The real troubles in your life are apt to be things

that never crossed your worried mind, the kind that blindsides you at 4pm on some idle Tuesday,” go the words to the song. They remind us that life’s most significant events often stem from personal or unforeseen circumstances, not from the fluctuating political or economic landscape.

I’m acutely aware of the significant systemic challenges facing South Africa, however, my focus is to shift the narrative, emphasising that joy, happiness, opportunities, and a sense of stability are deeply personal and often found within individual experiences. Engaging in our vibrant Jewish community, pursuing commercial and communal initiatives, and enjoying simple pleasures with friends and family contribute significantly to my fulfilment, enhancing my sense of stability, happiness, and strengthening my connection to Hashem.

Each individual must decide whether South Africa is the right place for them. The decision to stay or leave is “yes” – yes to staying if our complicated society inspires and motivates you – and it really can. If the support of family and friends, coupled with the richness of Jewish practice, gives you purpose; and if you see potential in the challenges. Conversely, it’s “yes” to leaving if another country might better suit your aspirations. Recognising that different events might shift this answer, it’s important to note that the decision isn’t fixed. Recent years have shown that certainty is elusive, and our decisions should be grounded in a realistic understanding of life’s inherent unpredictability.

Our life journey is as unique as each member of our community. Everyone navigates their path amidst the complexities of our shared existence, hopefully striving to align with the teachings and wisdom of our Jewish heritage. As we make these decisions, let’s draw inspiration for purpose and happiness from various sources, and hope and pray that Hashem continues to bless our personal and community endeavours, guiding us with wisdom and fortitude. And in embracing life’s unpredictability, it’s probably true that the only universally certain advice is to wear sunscreen. • *Benjy Porter is an entrepreneur, community, and family man. The opinions in this piece are those of the author.*



BENJY PORTER

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## Why we’re staying in South Africa

>>>Continued from page 7

government’s disgraceful shenanigans? The Rebbe was asked on a number of occasions whether he still held by his promises. And each time, he responded unequivocally that he did indeed.

So either Moshiach is around the corner, please G-d, and if G-d forbid not, then we’ll still be all right until he does come. I can tell you from experience that in all his decades of leadership, the Rebbe was never wrong on these kinds of judgement calls.

At the end of the day, please remember that G-d Almighty runs the world, not Cyril Ramaphosa. Our government is, frankly, ineffectual and irrelevant. Please G-d, things will improve here economically, politically, and on every level.

While black economic empowerment and other local political considerations have made doing business more difficult for many, the confident entrepreneur can still find huge opportunities here and throughout Africa.

In March, my wife and I will have been living in South Africa for 48 years. Thank G-d, we have no regrets. So, for those of you who really want to stay in sunny South Africa but may be struggling with peer pressure, know that you’re not alone. We’re still here, and we’re not going anywhere. I hope you’ll stick around and keep us company.

• *Rabbi Yossy Goldman is life rabbi emeritus of Sydenham Shul, Johannesburg, and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.*



# ‘We’re humbled’ – heads praise outstanding class of 2023



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Academic excellence is a journey marked by dedication, perseverance, and a thirst for knowledge. It goes beyond merely earning good grades, it reflects a commitment to intellectual growth and the pursuit of one’s highest potential.

King David High School Linksfield has been, and always will be, an institution of academic excellence and we know that with each passing year, our results outdo themselves. What’s important to the teachers of this school is that by the time every student receives their results, they do so knowing that their unique potential has been realised. We hope that our students feel proud of their accomplishments and that they can enter the next phase of life with confidence and pride.

This isn’t to say that the results don’t count. We’re so incredibly proud of every student. But there’s more to it than the number of distinctions per head. We aim for our school to measure that which cannot be plotted on a graph. We aspire to work with the parents of our school to make sure that their children, our students, are well-adjusted and happy, that they understand that Jewish education at this level is a privilege, and that they realise that the greatest possible rewards come from the opportunities we must give of ourselves to our community and our country.

We cannot chart these achievements; there are no statistics that account for the values of kindness, loyalty, Zionism, and selflessness. We know that these are the principles upon which our school stands, and we stand firmly and successfully only because we share this philosophy.

So my message to the matrics of 2023 is to stand firm in your foundations of the academic, the spiritual, the physical, and the emotional. Nurture your bodies as well as your minds. Nurture your friends and treasure your families. Because with a solid foundation, you can weather whatever storms come your way.

We have a world-class staff who have guided you from Grade 8 to where you stand today, and I cannot thank them enough.

Mazeltov to all on your incredible results! May the *naches* that you have brought to your families and to our school shine the way forward for you to grab every opportunity that comes your way with the enthusiasm of youth. I’m so proud of you. And you’re forever part of the foundations of King David High School Linksfield.



## TORAH ACADEMY

Rebecca Sarchi – principal,

Mazaltov to our matriculants of 2023! We’re so proud of your achievements.

At Torah Academy, we believe in a holistic education and individual potential. We understand the idea that a person’s worth and capabilities go beyond the marks they receive in academic settings. Achievements should be measured by one’s potential rather than just the actual marks or accomplishments. Assessing someone’s potential involves considering their skills, talents, and the ability to grow and adapt, rather than solely focusing on past achievements or grades.

It aligns with the idea that people can continue to develop and achieve great things beyond what may be evident in their track record. This perspective encourages a forward-looking approach, where individuals are supported and recognised for their capacity to learn, improve, and contribute, rather than being solely judged based on past performance. It also highlights the importance of providing opportunities for individuals to explore and reach their full potential.

Students have various talents, skills, and interests that may not always be reflected in standardised testing or traditional grading systems. Recognising and nurturing these diverse talents is crucial for a well-rounded education. Education isn’t just about acquiring knowledge; it’s also about character development,

critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to work collaboratively. These aspects aren’t always captured by grades, but are essential for personal and professional success. Important life skills such as communication, resilience, adaptability, and creativity are often not fully reflected in academic grades.

These skills are crucial for navigating the complexities of the real world. Emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills are increasingly recognised as vital components of success. These qualities may not be apparent in a grade, but play a significant role in personal and professional relationships.

Education is a lifelong journey, and the ability to learn, unlearn, and adapt is essential. A person’s growth and development extend beyond the confines of a classroom, and that’s why at Torah Academy, we ensure that in addition to our academic stream, we also make sure that every student is given the opportunity to excel, shine, and thrive in all areas of their school career.

Though we don’t believe that marks define a student, we’re ecstatic at what our students have achieved, fulfilling their potential, measuring themselves against themselves, and attaining the marks that they need to continue their studies further. We’re aware that difficult roads lead to beautiful destinations, and we’re thrilled that the learning process has been filled with inspiration, personal development, and above all, loads of fun.

As you continue on your individual life journeys, remember that life is a journey not a race. Every day gives us opportunities for new experiences. Enjoy every one of them, and may your future be filled with abundant successes and happiness.



## KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK

Andrew Baker – headmaster

The Zulu greeting “*sawubona*” literally translates to “I see you”. It recognises the worth and dignity of each person. “I see the whole of you – your experiences, your passions and pain, your strengths and weaknesses, and your future. You’re valuable to me.” While we celebrate the outstanding achievements of the class of 2023, we recognise and celebrate the unique qualities of each of our matric students.



## HERZLIA HIGH SCHOOL

Shane Brorson – principal

We’re exceptionally proud of the incredible achievements of our 2023 matric group. These results are phenomenal in light of the turbulent times that our pupils faced. They were a really tight-knit group with an incredible spirit. An immense love for and pride in Herzlia, and always embracing the values of Jewish life.

We’re thrilled that one of our pupils was awarded the “2023 NSC [National Senior Certificate] National Top Candidate in South Africa for Independent Schools”. Though we celebrate our high achievers and their academic distinctions, it’s important to remember that these achievements are part of the bigger picture.

Many pupils have faced significant challenges along their educational journey. Their success isn’t just a mark of their hard work and persistence, but also of their remarkable ability to keep going despite these challenges.

Kudos must be given to the Herzlia teachers who have supported our matric pupils on their academic journey. Their commitment and always going the extra mile have been instrumental in their success.

The work of Herzlia’s Counselling and Educational Support Department (SEED) has provided invaluable support, care, and guidance to pupils and their parents, as well as to teaching staff.

Their contribution is a significant part of what makes our school’s educational experience so powerful. The fact that Herzlia is an academically inclusive school makes our matric results even more impressive. We’re proud to offer a truly holistic education which isn’t just results-oriented but focuses on the values, skills, and relationships that pupils develop over time as part of our school community.



## HIRSCH LYONS BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

Rabbi Steven Krawitz – principal

The Hirsch Lyons matric class of 2023 has a special place in my heart. Not many principals get to teach a class for six years, but I had the privilege of that honour with both the boys’ and the girls’ classes. I taught them both social science in Grades 7, 8, and 9, through the COVID-19 pandemic, and history and chumash in the senior grades. I’ve been humbled by Hirsch Lyon students’ love of Torah, dedication to *klal* Israel, the development of their *middos*, and their pursuit of all-round excellence.

I now feel like a parent whose children have left the house to pursue their life goals. But, as hard as the departure of children and students is, this is a natural step for them to become the people they are realising their potential to become.

I’m satisfied that Hirsch Lyons and I had a share to play in each of these wonderful people’s journey. Hirsch Lyons had 25 matriculants, and achieved an average of 3.8 distinctions per student. Most of our students chose not to have their picture published in the media, so the students you see in the *SA Jewish Report* are a small sample. My blessing to all my dear students is that you continue to walk in the light of the Torah, and that each one of you becomes a light of goodness in the world to dispel the darkness.



## YESHIVA COLLEGE

Rob Long – principal

Teachers go into education because they have faith in human beings and believe that educating our youth will lead to better societies in the future.

At Yeshiva College, we have great faith in the matriculants that graduate from our campus each year. As a school, we believe that matric isn’t about what you’re going to do after school, but rather about who you’ll become. The continuation of *kodesh* studies into the matric year certainly builds on this.

Our school has consistently achieved an average of at least 3.5 distinctions for the past 10 years, but this year’s results reflect an unprecedented high, of which we’re enormously proud. At Yeshiva College, we believe that education is a partnership between parents, students, and teachers. The support of our parents allowed our matric students and teachers to work exceptionally hard, and I’m humbled by their commitment, diligence, and all-round effort.

This year, each student achieved at least one distinction, with our class of 33 pupils achieving a total of 154 distinctions between them. All matric students achieved a university entrance pass, and the class of 2023 achieved a remarkable average distinction rate of 4.67 across the grade. Also impressive is the fact that the grade average across all subjects was 79.6%, and that the class achieved an A-aggregate in 10 of the subjects offered at our school. Eleven students received recognition from the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), achieving positions in the top 1% of candidates in one or more subjects, and several of our students received special mention from the IEB.

What we at Yeshiva College are most proud of is that each student achieved their personal best results in the context of their struggles and triumphs, a dual curriculum, and a full extra mural offering. We wish our graduating class of 2023 much success for their future. We know that they will continue to fulfil our faith in the human spirit.



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# Multiple distinctions aside, matric is harder than ever

OPINION

RABBI RICKY SEEFF



It has become commonplace, especially at this time of year in “results season”, to hear the following declaration and many others like it: “When I was at school, no-one got these results. Is matric easier nowadays?”

The question, although cynical, is a good one. There has undoubtedly been a sharp increase in the amount of distinctions matric students have received over the past decade. In the 1990s and early 2000s, getting six distinctions set you apart and today, it appears to be far more achievable. There are only three possible conclusions to be drawn from this observation – kids today are smarter; matric is far easier; or children just work harder. Although all of us Jewish parents would like to believe our children are geni, I don’t think this is the case. I would like to argue that matric is in fact more challenging than it has ever been, and our students achieve incredible results because their work ethic has increased in proportion to the difficulty of the National Senior Certificate requirements.

In the late 1990s, the government rolled out Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in order to democratise education and introduce a progressive, student-led system of education for the masses with a focus on critical thinking. This system would attempt to minimise the amount of rote learning and prepare students for the rapidly changing new world. Sadly, this very noble curriculum reform failed largely due to poor implementation – poorly resourced schools, lack of teacher

The slow introduction and implementation of these higher standards coincided with a far more competitive tertiary environment. Limited spaces, quotas, and a trend of seeking to study abroad – for prestige

these young people. It’s the primary driver behind the heightened anxiety and the infuriating – and exorbitant – curse of extra lessons which has become so prevalent. Even the top academic students go for extra

mental health issues, which is perhaps one of the greatest challenges our youngsters face and does have an impact on their ability to perform at their peak in a high-stakes examination. Mental well-being is directly linked to the stress society is placing on our young people to perform, to get top results, and secure spots in top tertiary institutions. The competition is huge, and this is a global issue not unique to the South African context.”

There are many layers to this topic, and the incredible success and superb results do have some negative by-products.

However, when all is said and done, the matrices of this era are shooting the lights out, and not because matric is easier. It’s because they are driven to succeed and work so hard to achieve that success. They are strong, resilient, and tenacious – so many wonderful attributes that weren’t demanded of previous generations.

They have earned their accolades. Each and every one of those manifold distinctions.

Let’s put this question to bed.

Mazeltov matrics! We’re so proud of you all.

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



## A soulistic, holistic matric hits the mark

OPINION

RABBI RAMON WIDMONTE



Is matric a beginning or an end? Or a middle?

It’s all of the above, and most of all, a set of opportunities for immense self-development if it’s approached correctly.

For so many students, matric seems like the end, a culmination of an entire school career hinging upon a final set of marks in a pre-set examination system. There’s so much pressure exerted by parents, peers, teachers, and schools, and a society which seems to claim that academic success in the matric exam space is everything.

Matric is an opportunity to showcase certain academic achievements, and that can be a worthy goal. But there are many other goals and it’s crucial for students as well as educators, parents, and teachers to explore these, and more importantly, that the student decides what the goals are.

Empirical research into education at all ages demonstrates that when students set their own goals and go through a process of reflection on their achievements, they achieve far more in many ways. Academic performance, motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement all improve significantly.

A study by Macmillan Learning conducted on 7 225 students demonstrated these significantly measurable impacts by setting initial goals and reviewing them about three times throughout the year. Not rocket science.

A second major benefit of goal setting is that it empowers students to chop up the elephant of matric into bite-sized chunks. Initially, it all seems overwhelming, but a good goal-setting process can reduce so much of the stress.

But the last major benefit of goal setting is to widen the frame of discussion. A student can ask themself, “What do I really want to achieve in multiple areas? Is it just marks? Is it more than that?”

One of the most famous lines in Pixar’s *Kung Fu Panda* is delivered at the moment when the hero, Po, is at his lowest ebb, and he has a marvellous realisation, dripping with diabolical American fantasy, that all the years of blood, sweat, and toil of Kung Fu masters can simply be attained by believing you can do it. This is dangerous stuff.

But on the other hand, there’s a significant moment of reflection here – that Po has more to him than all the other trainees who have been working hard for decades –

and that he’s more than just Kung Fu.

Herein lies the true value of a wider goal-setting process, and parents and teachers can help with this. Matric can be about more than just marks.

The truth is that just getting good marks is never going to be enough. Those who truly succeed in life are those who are able to succeed on multiple fronts, especially in areas where school does little explicit training or teaching: emotional quotient (EQ) and people skills. That’s why chief executives often aren’t the ones with the best marks, but a more rounded set of abilities, and these are goals really worth pursuing and at the very least discussing at the outset of a matric year because they’ll be as meaningful to future success – if not more – than matric marks.

Some clear examples: developing grit, handling pressure, time management, and communication skills.

Moreover, there’s tremendous long-term value in students understanding that life is never about handling such a simplistic set of goals in a year – passing some exams. Real life includes passing those exams, holding down a job, maintaining relationships, and a host of other demands.

One of the really neglected areas in matric is the soul.

Matric is a year of pressure, unprecedented in the lives of most students until that point. Yet there’s so little spiritual input into this process. Judaism and Torah offer a wealth of engagement opportunities for students, which can help the year to be so much more successful in terms of achieving the goals above.

The value of Shabbat as a time to step back, reflect on goal achievement, and simply to be is inestimable, just as one example.

Students who achieve even a small portion of what we have described above will gain a sense of true mastery during the matric year, an achievement that will accompany them for the rest of their lives. Building on such a basis can enable them to develop into more rounded, profound, content human beings.

• *Rabbi Ramon Widmonte is the co-founder and dean of the Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning and the founder of the National Education Development programme.*

## Small schools ideal for overcoming learning challenges

OPINION

GITA LIPSCHITZ



It’s vital to dispel the misconception that learning challenges hinder academic success. In reality, with the use of effective strategies and support systems, students can excel in spite of these obstacles.

A thorough assessment of each student’s unique set of strengths and weaknesses is crucial. In this way, specific learning needs can be identified and addressed, and tailored learning approaches employed.

breaking down large tasks into smaller chunks. At exam time, study skills and exam preparation groups greatly enhance students’ comprehension and learning.

The meticulous process of applying to the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) for accommodations is pivotal. Extra time, the use of a computer, scribes, reader, spelling, handwriting accommodations, prompting, rest breaks, and practical assistance are some of the concessions that students with specific learning barriers can benefit from in tests and exams.

A comprehensive subject-choice assessment process in Grade 9 and exposing students to a wide variety of careers and job shadowing experiences in Grade 11 prepares students well for the constantly evolving world of work.

Moreover, it’s important that the learning environment is supportive and inclusive so that students are held emotionally and socially. Adolescents’ lives are suddenly filled with choices and responsibilities as they move towards greater independence: making and keeping friends; resolving conflict; dealing with bullying, social media and body image; learning about substances and their effects; and handling loss and trauma.

Supporting students’ mental health is vital at a time in which the future is scary and uncertain for all of us.

Regular communication between students, teachers, and parents, as well as counselling helps students with learning challenges feel empowered and capable of achieving their academic goals.

The class of 2023 at King David High School Victory Park had a particularly large cohort of students with learning barriers. Through the commitment of the teaching and support staff, the vast majority of these students are poised to achieve excellent matric results, giving them access to degree courses at universities locally and abroad.

Diverse teaching methods in the form of assisting students with organisation and time management skills helps them to manage the workload by

• *Gita Lipschitz is senior social worker at the educational support department at King David High School Victory Park.*





# Disability units break learning barriers at university

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Students facing learning, visual, or hearing challenges once felt ill-equipped to meet university requirements, but this is no longer the case because of the disability services offered by South African tertiary institutions.

Born profoundly hearing impaired, Dr Carolyn Fedler, didn't have any learning support when she completed her BSc degree cum laude majoring in genetics and microbiology, or when she was later accepted to medical school. As a child, she was under the care of a speech therapist, who taught her to speak over many years of intensive therapy after school.

"She didn't want hearing-impaired children to depend only on sign language as she felt it would prevent them from having the same opportunities as any other hearing person," Fedler says. As such, she encouraged Fedler's parents to enrol her in mainstream schooling, which she received at King David Linksfield, then the only school allowing the integration of hearing-impaired children with normal hearing children. With hard work, minimal play, and extra lessons, Fedler matriculated with two distinctions.

On applying for a medical degree after matric, Fedler was told first to prove her ability to cope with university studies in general, so she began her BSc degree in 1983. After graduating and working in medical research for two years, she reapplied for medicine, and was immediately accepted. She graduated in 1994.

"There was absolutely no support available for students with disabilities, so I had to become resourceful," she says. "I got help from my fellow students. I'd copy their notes and ask them to explain what the lecturer was saying if I couldn't understand it. I made it work, but I had to work much harder than most people, and I did a lot of extra reading to catch up."

Encountering a professor who constantly questioned her abilities, she proved him wrong by picking up a clinical sign in a patient that more senior doctors had

missed. Her impairment in fact heightened her deductive thinking skills, setting her apart.

"Looking back, I can't believe how I put up with such resistance," says Fedler. "I don't know where that perseverance came from, I just knew I wanted to do medicine, and there was no reason why I couldn't." Today a senior pathologist at Ampath, Fedler says that had there been more support for students like her, her journey would probably have been a lot easier. Yet perhaps she wouldn't have learned to be so resourceful.

Today, South Africa's university landscape has changed. In meeting transformation goals, tertiary institutions have a fairly uniform offering when it comes to disability services. Such services not only cater to students with physical disabilities but also to those with hearing and visual disabilities, learning disorders, and mental health conditions.

"Many universities tend to specialise in the disabilities their surrounding feeder schools focus on," says Juan Erwee, senior disability officer and acting head of the University of Pretoria's (UP's) Disability Unit. For example, in Pretoria there are many schools for students with visual disabilities.

"Across universities, there's an even spread of students with learning or neurodevelopmental disabilities," he says. "This constitutes more than half of the students that we support. We take every student on a case-by-case basis, and offer tailored support."

Criteria for disability support include a report from the therapist treating the student, fairly standard across institutions. With learning impairments, a battery of tests are also required. "If the student is taking medication or has any other treatment that mitigates the impact of the disability, they wouldn't necessarily qualify because that would offer them an unfair advantage," Erwee says.

"Students shouldn't think of a disability as something that defines them," says Erwee, who is blind himself. "You might need to do things a bit more creatively or find



Dr Carolyn Fedler

a slightly different path to reaching your goals, but it's by no means impossible."

Third year Bachelor of Arts in Psychology student Tamir Lipschitz, who heads up the South African Union of Jewish Students at UP, benefits from the university's Disability Unit. "I have Tourette's Syndrome, which means I can't really write properly because of certain tics in my hands that cause twitches every few seconds," he says. "Interestingly, typing

isn't affected as much."

"I also sometimes struggle to compute words when I'm reading them. The Disability Unit has accommodated me by giving me a typing concession and granting me 10 minutes of extra time per hour in tests and exams – double what they granted me in school under the Independent Examinations Board."

Lipschitz was called in by teachers at school to read out his tests, something universities won't do, and he says lecturers cannot read his writing. "I don't think I would have even made it through first year without this typing concession," he says. "Maybe it's a bit hyperbolic, but in a way, my future depends on it."

Through its Disability Service, the University of Cape Town (UCT), also offers well-rounded support. This includes real-time text transcription; sign language interpretation; material for visually-impaired students; audio transcripts; scribes; practical laboratory assistants; and exam and test writing support.

"UCT is committed to working towards the creation of a discrimination free and inclusive environment which encourages disabled students' full, independent, and effective participation in the mainstream of university life," says UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola. "Support for

students with a wide variety of disabilities has continued to increase."

Any student with any disability can approach the Disability Service for support, he says. "Disability encompasses persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

At the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the Disability Rights Unit (DRU) aims to provide such students with the best learning experience possible by offering services such as sign language interpreting; real-time captioning; conversion of course material into accessible formats; IT training in various assistive technology; as well as access to dedicated computer centres. "The DRU also offers support with regards to neurodiversity and specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia," says Duncan Yates, neurodiversity and mental health co-ordinator at the DRU.

"DRU's focus is to help integrate students with disabilities into the academic sector, ultimately giving them the necessary skills to be successful in the working world. Each year brings a new intake of students with varying needs which are assessed on an individual basis."

At Stellenbosch University, the Disability Unit forms part of the Centre for Student Counselling and Development, which offers a range of services such as counselling for personal challenges, and academic support workshops in time management, stress management, and study skills.

The Disability Unit has been in place since 2007. With inclusive education in South Africa, and more and more students furthering their studies post matric, the need for disability support services has grown. Students need to be underperforming in order to access academic assistance. Ultimately, the unit aims to create an enabling environment that empowers students with disabilities to achieve their full potential by creating awareness and enabling effective integration into campus life and the student community.

ב"ה

## MAZEL TOV MATRIC 2023

Where Academia and Neshama Unite



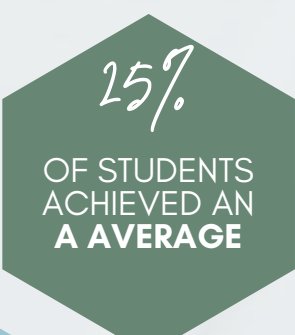
Naama Gralnik



Ella Levin



Sheva Ash



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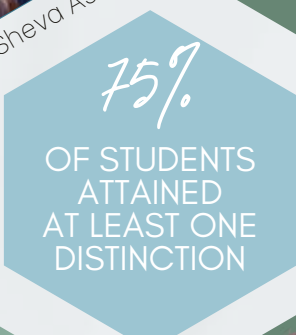
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Hodaya Shamoq



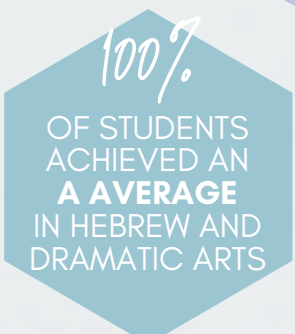
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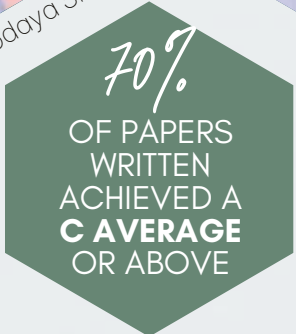
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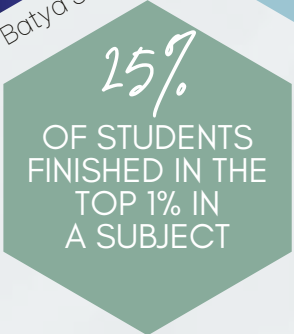
Boaz Britz



100%  
OF STUDENTS  
ACHIEVED AN  
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IN HEBREW AND  
DRAMATIC ARTS



70%  
OF PAPERS  
WRITTEN  
ACHIEVED A  
C AVERAGE  
OR ABOVE



25%  
OF STUDENTS  
FINISHED IN THE  
TOP 1% IN  
A SUBJECT



Aviel Shenker



Our excellent Matric results were achieved in addition to our high standards and full curriculum in Torah study. This highlights our broader perspective of Excellence in Education.



# KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD



**Yakira Aires**  
9 Distinctions, IEB Outstanding List,  
Top 1% English, Life Orientation



**Dina Levy**  
9 Distinctions



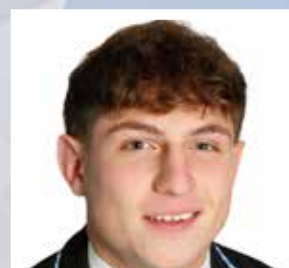
**David Boner**  
8 Distinctions



**Gidon Chipkin**  
8 Distinctions



**Dylan Cohen**  
8 Distinctions



**Matthew Cohen**  
8 Distinctions



**Chad Etkind**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Commendable List,  
Top 1% Maths, Physical Sciences



**Tyler Goldberg**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Commendable List,  
Top 1% Life Orientation



**Julia Hurwitz**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Commendable List,  
Top 1% Life Orientation, Life Sciences



**Ruby Jossel**  
8 Distinctions, Top 1% English



**Eden Novick**  
8 Distinctions, Top 1% Geography, Life  
Orientation, Life Sciences



**Shayna Salomon**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Commendable List,  
Top 1% English, Life Orientation



**Daniel Schloss**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Outstanding List,  
Top 1% History, Life Orientation,  
Mathematics, Physical Sciences



**Gil Sharon**  
8 Distinctions, Top 1% Physical  
Sciences



**Ricci Waksman**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Outstanding List,  
Top 1% English, Life Orientation,  
Mathematics, Physical Sciences



**Jake Weinstein**  
8 Distinctions, IEB Commendable List,  
Top 1% Life Orientation, Mathematics,  
Physical Sciences, Further Studies  
Mathematics



**Chloe Zindel**  
8 Distinctions



**Danielle Allan**  
7 Distinctions



**Kelly Berman**  
7 Distinctions



**Benjamin Bernstein**  
7 Distinctions



**Adiv Blumenthal**  
7 Distinctions



**Jordana Boon**  
7 Distinctions, IEB Outstanding List



**Tanner Farber**  
7 Distinctions



**Emma Freed**  
7 Distinctions



**Doron Jaffe**  
7 Distinctions, Top 1% Life Orientation



**Arianne Kinkel**  
7 Distinctions



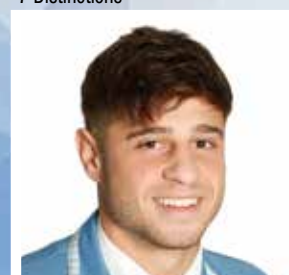
**Tayla Radomsky**  
7 Distinctions



**Jesse Rovetti**  
7 Distinctions, IEB Commendable  
List, Top 1% Business Studies



**Ethan Spear**  
7 Distinctions



**Dean Surmany**  
7 Distinctions



**Noa Bakal**  
6 Distinctions, Top 1% Hebrew



**Erin Berger**  
6 Distinctions



**Chad Bravo**  
6 Distinctions



**Bradley Camberg**  
6 Distinctions, Top 1% Maths



**Lance Chananie**  
6 Distinctions



**Kira Furman**  
6 Distinctions



**Kerri Hackner**  
6 Distinctions



**Benjamin Herring**  
6 Distinctions, Top 1% Geography,  
Tourism



**Sascha Hetz**  
6 Distinctions



**Jordan Jacobson**  
6 Distinctions, Top 1% Mathematics,  
Physical Sciences



**Benjamin Kraitzick**  
6 Distinctions



**Ariel Kregel**  
6 distinctions



**Amber Kuming**  
6 Distinctions



**Alexander Modlin**  
6 Distinctions, Top 1% Accounting,  
Computer Applications Technology



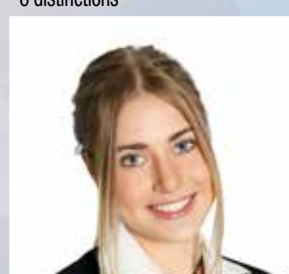
**Gidon Romberg**  
6 Distinctions



**Noah Sarakinsky**  
6 Distinctions



**Nathan Schwulst**  
6 Distinctions



**Tamara Silverman**  
6 Distinctions



# KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL LINKSFIELD



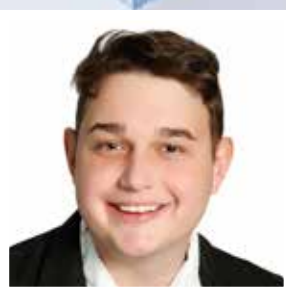
**Benjamin Stone**  
6 Distinctions



**Megan Tobias**  
6 Distinctions



**Joshua Aron**  
5 Distinctions



**Chad Aronstam**  
5 Distinctions



**Amy Kowalsky**  
5 distinctions



**Lia Meiry**  
5 Distinctions



**Adam Sacharowitz**  
5 Distinctions



**Adam Shapiro**  
5 Distinctions



**Mira Cohn**  
4 Distinctions, Top 1% Tourism



**Jordan Diamond**  
4 Distinctions



**Yael Duchon**  
4 Distinctions



**Scarlett Lieberman**  
4 Distinctions



**Jordan Meyers**  
4 Distinctions



**Aiden Mosselson**  
4 Distinctions



**Kate Aharoni**  
3 Distinctions



**Cayla Dembo**  
3 Distinctions



**Ethan Edinburg**  
3 Distinctions, Top 1% Mathematics Literacy



**Dean Feldman**  
3 Distinctions



**Sara Gamsu**  
3 Distinctions



**Judd Gilchrist**  
3 Distinctions



**Jenna Klitzner**  
3 Distinctions



**Rachel Miller**  
3 Distinctions



**Daniel Pogir**  
3 Distinctions



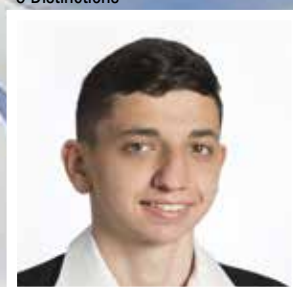
**Dean Riesenburg**  
3 Distinctions



**Jacob Sacks**  
3 Distinctions



**Leah von Zwiklitz**  
3 Distinctions



**Jayden Druyan**  
2 Distinctions



**Dael Feldman**  
2 Distinctions



**Daniella Isaacson**  
2 Distinctions



**Jayden Lubie**  
2 Distinctions



**Dean Pogir**  
2 Distinctions



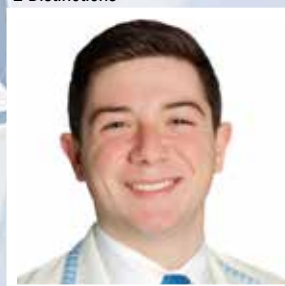
**Talya Rome**  
2 Distinctions



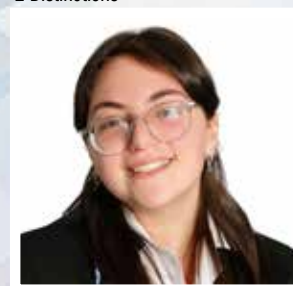
**Jesse Rubenstein**  
2 Distinctions



**Ricky Smith**  
2 Distinctions



**Jodan Sweidan**  
2 Distinctions



**Linoi Vahabi**  
2 Distinctions



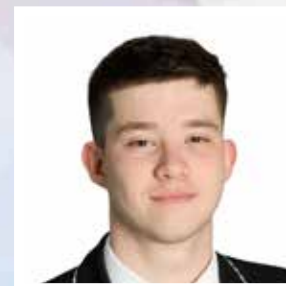
**Leah Wilensky**  
2 Distinctions



**Jacob Winik**  
2 Distinctions



**Joshua Brainin**  
1 Distinction



**Brett Danziger**  
1 Distinction



**Zac Levy**  
1 Distinction



**Adam Perel**  
1 Distinction



**Noah Ruzow**  
1 Distinction



**Benjamin Shapiro**  
1 Distinction



**Matthew Shapiro**  
1 Distinction



**Josh Superfain**  
1 Distinction



**Dean Zulberg**  
1 Distinction



# KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK



Yishai Abro



Mischa Atie



Benjamin Bear



Shaili Becker



Gabriella Bild



Arin Butkow



Liyat Chipkin



Ryan Class



Daniel Cohen



Daniel Danilowitz



Tsvi Dorfman



Ilan Dove



Hannah Evan



Emma Fittinghoff



Michael Flaum



Ethan Goldberg



Daniel Goralsky



Nicole Grasko



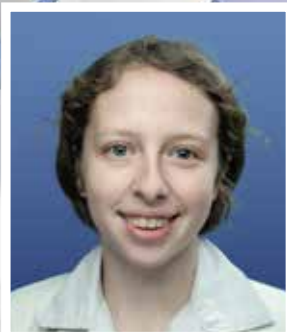
Trent Hack



Daniella Katz



Gregory Landau



Kate Lange



Benjamin Leibowitz



Donna Levin



Vivienne Levitz



Joey Krasner



Mira Lipman



Levi Lipschitz



Gad Matisson



Kira-Lee Mervis



Michael Mowbray



Jordan Moyal



Kim Noriskin



Levi Parsons



Sam Perlov



Daniel Rubin



# KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL VICTORY PARK



Gilana Rubinstein



Yocheved Saksenberg



Elizabeth Saretzky



Danna Schneider



Shlomo Selikow



Talia Sharp



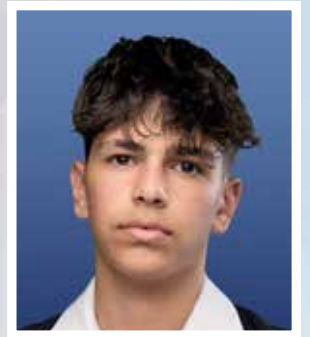
Avraham Sher



Doron Shoot



Khaya Simon



Ben Steele



Dylan Steiner



Emma Sweidan



Erin Wasserman



Zachary Wittels



Shane Yutar



# MAZAL TOV

## KING DAVID VICTORY PARK MATRIC CLASS 2023

**100% BD (University Entrance) Pass Rate**

**51** Students wrote the NSC matriculation examinations

**46%** Of all subjects written achieved results of **80%** or higher

**74%** Of all subjects written achieved results of **70%** or higher

**90%** Of all subjects written achieved results of **60%** or higher

**6** Students achieved a **Full House**

**3.45%** distinctions per student

**77%** Group Average

**100% PASS RATE FOR THE  
40TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR!**





# IEB top achiever a class act

SAUL KAMIONSKY

King David High School Linksfield matriculant Ricci Waksman got eight distinctions and made it onto the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) outstanding achievements list by placing within the top 5% in six or more subjects and achieving a level of 7 in Life Orientation.

Waksman will begin her studies in Biomedical Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand this year. She hopes to study further in the United States. Her end goal is to be a neuro engineer.

Waksman said she “hibernated” leading up to the final exams. “I never left my desk. It was hours and hours – probably almost 10 hours a day – of just sitting studying, doing past papers, and then going through everything.”

That said, listening in class is the

biggest secret to her good marks.

“Listening, especially in the younger grades, and then developing the habit of staying focused in the lesson. A lot of the time when you don’t listen in class, you think you’re going to catch the work up at home, and it never happens. I’ve found 80% of learning for tests or exams is done in class, not when you’re swotting at home.”

Waksman was co-mayor of the Johannesburg Junior Council for a year from March 2022. She was also the leader of her school’s arts and culture committee.

“My fondest memories come from my year on the council. It taught me such invaluable lessons in time management and leadership, which carried over to the roles I had at school and my studies. I’ll use [my time-management skills] going into university and to balance work and life.”

As co-mayor, Waksman ran different projects such as a 16 June march focusing on equal rights and education. “We had a blood drive, and we had a couple of fundraisers going towards different organisations, like one for the empowerment for women and others that were already making a difference to the issues that we were passionate about.”

Waksman also participated in public speaking, dancing, the interact club, and many arts and culture initiatives.

As the head of the first aid team at the school, she attended sports practices and events. She volunteered

on an ambulance-response team, which she says was “eye-opening”, with 12-hour shifts.

Successfully juggling all these activities with studying once again required good time management.

“I quickly had to learn how to manage my time, whether it was a whiteboard on the wall where I write everything for the week, or Google Calendar on my phone and my laptop, but just staying on top of everything. As soon as I have stuff to do, I write it down, put it into a calendar, and make sure that I manage

everything without overwhelming myself.”

Waksman destressed with activities like shopping and watching movies.

She’s always been attracted to the medical field. “I’ve never quite known which route in the field I would take, but through first aid and studying, I’ve just seen how much I really want to make a difference,” she says.

“In biomedical engineering, I’ll use problem-solving skills to contribute to new developments and machinery. I’m particularly interested in neuro engineering because there are so many mental illnesses and brain disorders that we’re not very far along in finding cures and treatments for. There are such interesting ways of treating them. To be able to contribute to that would be a life dream.”



Ricci Waksman

## Yeshiva heads close circle of three generations

LEE TANKLE

When the late Mike Krost and his best friend, Harry Sack, embarked on a six-month European trip together almost 70 years ago, the idea that their grandchildren would stand side by side as head boy and head girl of Yeshiva College in 2022-2023 was unimaginable.

Krost and Sack were lifelong friends, and their families maintained a close relationship long after their patriarchs’ passing. The significance of the fulfilment of this family bond when their grandchildren, Rafi Midzuk and Jayda Sack, assumed leadership roles at their school, wasn’t lost on their families.

such as the Zionist Youth Council outside of school,” said Sack. “I tried to make sure that it wouldn’t stress me out, so I tried to do all of my work as soon as I got it so that it wouldn’t pile up. I kept saying to myself that even though I was at school and had the pressures and stresses of that, I was learning skills that would help me when I was out of school,” Sack said.

Midzuk told the *SA Jewish Report* that it was “difficult to be known as ‘head boy’ instead of just myself. I feel like school almost became my identity”. He said he had learned a lot of lessons in his role, beyond the interpersonal connections he made.

“Everyone has the normal challenges of matric, the three sets of exams amount to a lot of work,” Sack said. “My dad had a stroke a few years back, and has been in and out of the hospital. I remember studying for my first set of prelims while sitting in the hospital room with him.”

Combined with her father’s health problems, Sack said that a week before her second prelims, her grandmother passed away. “These hardships gave me motivation because you have a challenge, but you want to carry on and make



Jayda Sack and Rafi Midzuk

“It was really special and beautiful when Rafi and I got chosen to be the head students for our year,” said Sack, “Both families were obviously very excited as we grew up together.”

“Our parents would always tell us that our grandfathers would have been very excited and would have had so much nachas that we were chosen as head students together, so it’s really special,” Sack said.

“We were always close, and our sisters were friends, so we have always had a good relationship,” said Midzuk, “I was excited to be able to get to work with her because we had this friendship. We were able to have conversations to discuss each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and work out how they could work together so we could make the year amazing and achieve the goals that we wanted. The only real reason we were able to have these conversations is because we know each other so well.”

“It was a unique experience being head girl, and I am grateful for the opportunity. I tried to enjoy every aspect as much as I could, and it opened many doors for me, like being a part of different committees

them proud. In my class in particular, we were unified. We were all going through [matric] together, so it was nice to know that we had each other’s backs. I felt very supported by everyone,” Sack said.

Sack plans to go on the MTA Bnei Akiva gap year programme starting in February, where she’ll be spending the year in Midrasha Harova studying, touring, and volunteering in Israel. “I’m excited to go, learn, and grow, but leaving my family for such a long time is hard,” she said.

Sack believes “everyone in Israel will keep us safe”, and said that in spite of the war, there’s an amazing opportunity to volunteer and be hands-on in the country. “It has been tough being in South Africa, seeing everything going on in Israel, and not being able to do anything to help,” she says.

Midzuk also plans to go on the MTA Bnei Akiva gap year, where he will be spending the year at Gush. “In all honesty, I’m not thinking about fear of the war right now. I’m excited to go and spend the year in Israel, where I’ll have the time and independence to grow, learn, spend time with my friends, and connect more to my Judaism.”

## Blazing a trail from newbie to head girl

HANNA RESNICK

“A defining moment of my high school experience was the first day of Grade 8, walking into the hall to put on our blazers for the first time,” said King David Victory Park head girl for 2022/23, Hannah Evan.

“That’s quite a big Victory Park tradition, and it’s the first time you really feel amalgamated into the school. From that moment to being named head girl, it just felt that I had come full circle from becoming part of this community to eventually being selected to represent it.”

One of her highlights as head girl was organising a Heritage Day market with sustainable South African brands. “It was such a lovely, happy day, but it also gave local brands a bit of an opportunity to get their names out there,” she said. She also loved celebrating Jewish holidays and festivals as a school, such as Purim and Tu B’Shevat.

Evan won the Best All-Rounder Award, as well as Best Sportsperson. “I always did a bit of everything,” she said. Along with being head girl, she was on the public speaking



Hannah Evan

team and played touch rugby and netball.

Though the role of head girl did add stress to her matric year, she said, “It was a growth experience. There was a lot to take on and learn from.” As for balancing academics and extracurricular activities, Evan said, “My time management has always been pretty good. For me, those activities were also a relief from everything that was so busy academically. It meant that I didn’t have to sit

at a desk the whole time.

“It was also a way to improve on myself, which felt fulfilling,” she said. “It was always just such a stress relief to be social, to be with people, to work towards a different goal aside from exams.”

Evan said that the COVID-19 pandemic had a noticeable, prolonged impact on her and her peers. “I’m a firm believer that COVID-19 almost warped our social perspective,” she said. “We grow up learning that we need to be friendly and make lots of friends, and then COVID-19 made us scared of our friends and family.

The post-COVID-19 dip in mental health was something you could see in work and school life throughout the grades.”

Evan’s accolades include awards for Jewish Awareness and Service; Best Student in Humanities; the WIZO Outreach Award, the Commitment & Dedication Award; as well as top student in English, further studies English, Hebrew, and history. Evan received nine distinctions.

## Helping others is important for this high achiever

LEE TANKLE

Hirsch Lyons matriculant Sara Fine almost spent more of her matric year ensuring that less-fortunate scholars achieved academic success than she did her own. Fine was involved in a programme with other Hirsch Lyons girls to tutor underprivileged high school students from Alexandra.

It all began when Fine participated in a school *chesed* day at the end of her Grade 11 year, when she helped a student with maths. She exchanged numbers with the student, and when matric started in 2023, he asked her if she could tutor him in his Grade 11 year.

“I had to think about [tutoring him] because I knew that matric would be a lot of work and a big commitment as I wanted to get eight distinctions, but I enjoyed helping him, and I could see that he wanted to learn,” Fine said.

Fine, with the help of her Life Orientation teacher, put together a programme in which a group of girls would go to the Union of Jewish Women every Thursday afternoon to help this group of students.

“I would make sure that everyone had lifts to get there as we didn’t have transport,” Fine said. “We tried to make sure that every student had the same girl tutor them every week, but

sometimes that couldn’t happen and we would be understaffed so we would have to split time between different groups.”

Fine dedicated herself to the success of this programme in spite of her academic commitments.

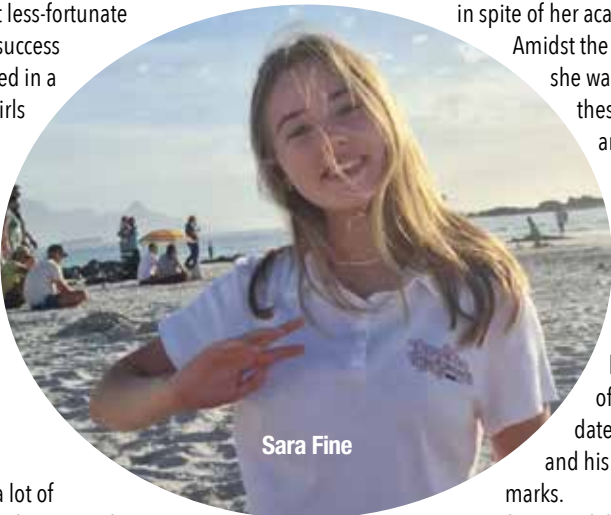
Amidst the stress of her matric studies, she was inspired by how keen these students were to learn and listen to their peers helping them. “Most of the kids there tried their best, and I saw so much good come out of it,” Fine said.

Even when Fine stopped going on a weekly basis because of the stress of prelims, she kept up to date with her student’s progress and his constantly improving marks.

“I’m honoured that I could be a part of their academic journey, and I learnt that though academic success is important, it’s not the be all and end all, and that it’s extraordinary to be able to help people,” Fine said.

She achieved her eight distinctions, saying, “I enjoyed the results I witnessed, and wanted to go into something similar while contributing to Israeli society.”

So, she’s participating in an Aardvark Israel gap year programme this year, in which she’ll be a volunteer teacher in a school in Israel helping students to learn English.



Sara Fine



# Community, camaraderie, connections: leading the way

HANNA RESNICK

Samuel Hertz says being on the leadership teams at Redhill High School helped him to get involved in the community and facilitate things that he wanted implemented.

Hertz was a member of the Student Representative Council and went on to become chairperson of the arts and culture committee in Grade 11, and finally, student vice-president on the student council.

He said that though the role of student vice-president was more of a behind-the-scenes job, it was a lot of work. Responsibilities included planning assemblies alongside the student president, events, administering matric portfolio committees such as the yearbook and academic committees, and correspondence between the committees and the executive team. "The goal is to make things run smoothly and communicate effectively to the student body," he said.

In addition to his leadership duties and academic commitments, Hertz was involved in the school's cultural activities. "I had a successful high school career because of the opportunities that I was given, but also by making opportunities for myself," he said. He was a member and conductor of the school chamber ensemble, which was named the Best High School Ensemble in South Africa. He was the musical director for the middle school's production of *Into The Woods Jr* in 2022, and directed, conducted, and arranged the music for a play that advanced to the finals of Festival of Excellence in Dramatic Arts and was performed at the Redhill Arts Festival in 2023.

He also played lead roles in many of the school's major productions. He was a member of the public speaking team for many years, and a finalist for Best Individual Speaker in his matric year.

Hertz took an unusual approach to balancing his numerous commitments, saying he believed that "people overestimate the idea of scheduling". Instead of rigid planning, he said, "You need to try and find moments within your day in which you feel motivated to do things. Because if you aren't motivated, it becomes a chore and unlikable. I would know that at some point in my day, I had to, for example, do this thing for leadership, practice something on the piano, and finish this assignment. But it was never scheduled to the hour."

"I also think people are way more productive when

they're busy because you tend to utilise your time a lot better. I often found that when we were going through really hectic patches in terms of big leadership events along with a lot of school work, I would get more done in the little time I had." But he admits to feeling overworked in matric at times, and occasionally falling victim to the mindset of "measuring your success in terms of how productive you are, which could have been slightly toxic for me".

Hertz's motivation to get involved in school activities always came from a sense of community and camaraderie, which made the COVID-19 lockdown period a challenging time for him. "Being busy, doing a lot of things, and being involved is fun only because you're doing it with people and making important connections," he said. "So for me, being in lockdown with people expecting you to have the same motivation to do things

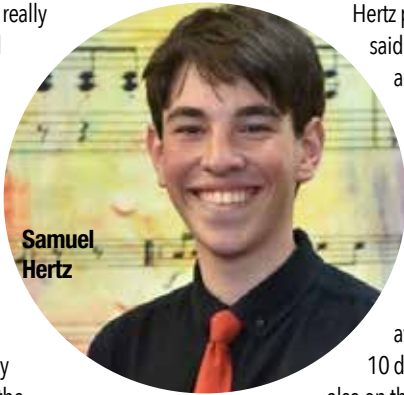
but completely online, was challenging.

"Although high school can be really difficult because of the workload and other issues, it becomes manageable because you're surrounded by your community," said Hertz, "especially at our school, where we have such a wide variety of different people and spaces and opportunities where you can fit in." Though he felt demotivated and didn't enjoy school as much as usual during the first few months of the pandemic, he eventually realised that there were ways to build community online. That being said, he was happy that things went "back to

normal" before matric.

Hertz plans to study Business Science, but said he wanted the arts to remain an active part of his life. "I never want to give up playing music, reading, and things like that. I plan to continue to pursue those hobbies and find communities and societies outside of the career path I choose."

Hertz was named Redhill's Dux Scholar for 2023, achieving a 96% average with 11 distinctions, of which 10 distinctions were 90% or above. He was also on the Independent Examinations Board outstanding achievements list for students who were within the top 5% in six or more subjects and achieved a rating level of 7 in Life Orientation.



Samuel Hertz

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## Mental health critical, says graduate with bipolar disorder

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Amit Frankel overcame a battle with mental health in his latter years at King David High School Linksfield to be admitted to studying psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) this year.

Through seeking help and being honest with himself about his state of mind, he's now in a much better headspace.

Over the past few years, Frankel has had to deal with overdosing on his medication, being hospitalised four times, drifting away from his friends, and getting low marks in some subjects. He was hospitalised twice due to attempted overdoses, and twice due to his mental state, making him feel unsafe.

"My matric year was challenging in terms of academics, friend groups, and mental health, but my mental health was much better than the year before," Frankel says. "During my matric year, I found it



Amit Frankel

Continued on page 31>>



# 'Read my lips: believe in yourself'

SAUL KAMIONSKY

King David High School Linksfield matriculant Rachel Miller refused to let her hearing impairment be an obstacle to achieving goals that even she sometimes saw as unreachable.

These included doing well in matric, seeing her hard work bearing fruit, and making her family proud. "Being able to achieve what I wanted made me really proud," she says. "I never expected to get this far because my hearing impairment is a barrier to an extent. I doubted myself a lot, especially when I was younger. I spent hours in speech therapy, trying to learn to teach myself how to operate in a social environment, in a classroom, and being able to learn as a normal kid."

Miller says most of her challenges at school arose from her impairment and having to wear hearing aids. "These challenges included struggling to focus in class due to listening fatigue and environmental disturbances. It hindered my ability to complete school work to the best of my ability.

"The school environment is a social area, which left me feeling somewhat overwhelmed," Miller says. As a result, she had to give herself time to recover before studying at home.

"In spite of my impairment, I managed to overcome these obstacles and achieve beyond my expectations. For example, I struggled a lot in maths, but with hard work and the help of my dedicated teachers, I managed to achieve more than I believed myself capable of."

Miller says she overcame her challenges through the support of her parents and brothers, including her twin brother at Yeshiva College. "They helped me to relax when I needed to. My twin brother and I relied on each other. It was good to be able to relate to someone about the challenges and all the work we were given.

"My mom helped me with my studies.



Rachel Miller

I would repeat back to her what I had learned. She would help me to create a learning system. My dad and older brother were silent supporters. My brothers would also help me with maths because I struggled with it."

Miller says her family sacrificed a lot of time to support her. "My brothers took me to speech therapy, the audiologist, wherever I needed to go to be able to do what I've done."

The COVID-19 pandemic was an especially difficult time for Miller as she couldn't read lips because of the masks. "Lip reading is like a backup for me. I had to put a lot more focus into listening to what the teachers were saying and a lot of the time, I would come home with terrible headaches and feel exhausted. In Grade 10, I used an FM [frequency modulation] system. The teacher would wear a microphone that would direct their voices directly into my ears."

Miller is grateful for her "amazing" teachers, who "really wanted me to do well", and for the time she spent with her friends learning and bonding over school work.

She advises students to find people they can rely on to help them push through matric. "Show you can get through it even though it seems difficult with the challenges in your way. Believe in yourself, and don't be afraid to get help when you need it."

Miller obtained three distinctions and will be studying for a Bachelor of Commerce in Information Management this year or a general Bachelor of Arts.

## Dancing through matric in spite of injury

LEE TANKLE

When Ayala Cohen, a top academic student at Hirsch Lyons and a dedicated ballet dancer, tore a ligament in her foot in mid-April of matric in 2023, she thought she wouldn't be able to do her favourite thing – ballet.

Ballet is a passion for Cohen, who has been doing it for 13 years. Going into matric, she knew the way to deal with stress of the year was by dancing her way through it.

"Ballet was a priority because I enjoy it so much and exercise was a priority for me. Having done it for so long, it was never even an option that I would put it on hold for school," Cohen told the SA Jewish Report.

Ballet lessons motivated her to study. "I studied better if I had done ballet that day. I knew I could stop studying and go to ballet and when I got back, I would work even harder," said Cohen.

Cohen took the lessons about discipline and commitment she learnt in ballet to her academic work, and excelled in that arena as well, being named one of Hirsch Lyons's top achievers. "You're committed to ballet and the lessons, and you show up and do your best every time. You show that same commitment to school," she says.

After her injury, Cohen spent much of the year working on healing her torn

ligament. In spite of this, Cohen wanted to do her Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) Advanced Level Two final ballet exam with all the girls in her class. "The nice thing about ballet is that the girls you dance with are your friends for life, so even though my foot wasn't completely healed, I still managed to cross this hurdle with them," said Cohen.



Ayala Cohen

The best part of her matric year was when her class took a trip to Hartbeespoort for a Shabbat in July. "It was really good to get away and have that independent time together to chill out before prelims and finals," said Cohen.

Cohen plans to go on MTA with Bnei Akiva in Israel this year. She wants to continue dancing, but recognises that this will be difficult because she'll be in Israel. Cohen will redo her RAD Advanced Level Two ballet exam as her foot has now completely healed, and will work towards doing her ballet teacher's exam with the Royal Academy of Dance.

## Vigorous challenges and great rewards

HANNA RESNICK

When Redhill matriculant Joshua Brooking chose to take the rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme route to matriculation, he did it because he wanted to challenge himself academically and believed it would give him a better chance at getting into an overseas university.

"I wanted to extend myself," he said. "Before IB, classes felt like just ticking off a list, and I found academic extension only outside of school." And though Brooking received 42 out of a possible 45 points for his IB Diploma, the top mark of his IB cohort, he says, "There was a greater workload than I had ever previously had to deal with or expect, and for the first time, I really had to work hard at academics."

"There were times when deadlines came up and I just wasn't able to meet them, which isn't something I had ever dealt with before. The first time that happened, I got stressed. You start to panic about whether you can achieve everything you wanted to achieve if you can't complete these deadlines within the year."

He said of the two-year international programme, "I had to acknowledge that there are difficult patches, and you can always grow from them. And eventually, these experiences helped me to plan more efficiently and prepared me to handle the stress of finals, and hopefully for university as well."

Brooking enjoyed the more independent approach the IB takes to learning, such as the internal assessments, which are research tasks for each subject. "I started doing research on my own for large essays, which was a new and slightly daunting experience. Having to write a research paper with very little guidance and set structure taught me to think more creatively and be more methodical in my processes. And this also prepares you for projects you must complete for university."

"On top of that, I found the Theory of Knowledge links in the rest of my subjects really interesting," he said. "You're sort of forced to connect the subject content to ways of thinking and ways of learning. I found



Joshua Brooking

that having to understand the philosophy of how you're learning the information while trying to learn all the content itself made me appreciate and understand the information better than when I was just memorising things. The act of thinking about the processes, how you're receiving the information, and how it's conveyed to you opened a new way of thinking for me and helped me to connect all the things I had learnt in a meaningful way."

Brooking also excelled in the arts, sports, and student leadership, having been elected head of judiciary on the student council for 2022/2023. In this role, he had to handle conflicts either between students or between students and teachers, usually dealing with issues concerning discrimination or unfairness.

"Our job was to meet students either to mediate and help them solve the conflict together, or to meet separately and help educate those who may be making offensive comments or raise these issues with teachers or the board, if necessary," said Brooking.

"Our goal was to solve these conflicts and ensure that everyone felt safe and that they learnt from the incidents."

He played guitar in Redhill's rock band, performing a lead role in the school's major production in his Grade 11 year, and playing hockey throughout high school.

"Hockey was something I didn't excel in at first. I was a very weak player at the beginning of Grade 8, but I really enjoyed it, so I put a lot of time into it," Brooking said. By the end of high school, he was vice-captain of the hockey team in addition to playing for a club.

"Becoming vice-captain was a big achievement for me, and it made all the work feel worthwhile. It was a defining moment of my school career because it illustrated the value of hard work. It also provided a different area to academics, which has always been my strong suit and where I've thrived. It showed me that I wasn't just confined to academics, which was good for me."

Brooking plans to study engineering, however he has yet to decide whether he will be studying at a local or overseas university.

## Connection and care for others a powerful combination

HANNA RESNICK

Saul Fox, a Yeshiva College matriculant, fondly remembers his introduction to high school life – his Grade 6 camp – when they were joined by the Grade 11 students who would be in matric when they joined high school.

"It was really powerful because it not only helped us integrate into high school, but those boys also ended up coming to our Barmitzvahs and becoming role models who we could interact with and ask for guidance," Fox says. This experience came full circle when Fox became one of the mentors to a group of Grade 6s years later. "It gave me a feeling of being a part of something bigger and helping a new generation," he says.

In his Grade 8 year, Fox's sister contracted Tuberculosis. "She became quite sick and even today, isn't fully

recovered," he says. "It was difficult. It changed a lot of my views about the world, what I could do, what I could achieve in it, and how I could be a part of it."

During that trying time, Fox said, "I made some amazing friends and saw the beauty and power of friendship. But I also realised how friends can drift away in difficult times. Seeing those friends drift away wasn't easy, but I feel all the stronger for it."

Since his sister was immunocompromised, the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly challenging for Fox, who couldn't return to school for almost an additional year after everyone else had done so. "I went back properly only at the beginning of Grade 11 (2022) when everyone else had been there for most of Grade 10 (2021)," he said.

"It was difficult being the only person still on Zoom and trying to keep up while not being able to see the board through the camera," Fox said. "In addition, I felt like the

only person in my class because I was no longer in an environment where everyone felt together.

"I was a bit isolated, but it wasn't to the fault of any of my peers. I also learned the value of being there for someone, be it physically, in a message, or by helping them by holding a camera throughout a lesson. It taught me that sometimes what may seem a little thing can mean quite a lot to another person."

Other highlights of Fox's school career included planning a meaningful assembly at school about empathy as part of the environment and advocacy committee, as well as winning best individual speaker at the public speaking competition of the Speech and Drama College South Africa.

Fox is taking a gap year to study at a Yeshiva. Next



Saul Fox

year, he plans to study either biomedical engineering or astronomy and astrophysics. Throughout his studies, he plans to continue with his charitable initiative, HandPrintSA, which makes upper limb prosthetics for those in need, and for which he was nominated for the Rising Star category of the 2023 Jewish Achiever Awards.

He also plans to continue to be an integral part of the community. "I plan to keep in contact with my classmates and the students I befriended on their Grade 6 tour, and give back to others who have done so much for me," he says.



# OUR SCHOOL BADGE TELLS A STORY.



## THE LAMP

To be Jewish means to learn and to teach, even by lamp light. As the Shema says, "Veshinantum levanecha – You will teach your children".



## THE ANCHOR

Our school and Jewish traditions are an anchor that holds us steady, as we live our lives in this beautiful port city, Cape Town.



## THE MAGEN DAVID

No matter what, we are never alone. Not only do we have each other and our community, we belong to a people with a long and proud history.

## אם תרצו

## THE MOTTO

"Im tirtzu, ein zo aggadah – If you will it, it is no dream", said Theodor Herzl. A reminder that we always strive for more and a promise to support every pupil's dream.

## MAZALTOV TO THE CLASS OF 2023!

72

HERZLIA MATRIC  
CLASS OF 2023 PUPILS

100%

MATRIC PASS RATE IN  
AN ACADEMICALLY  
INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

252

INDIVIDUAL SUBJECT  
DISTINCTIONS

3.5

AVERAGE SUBJECT  
DISTINCTIONS  
PER PUPIL

1

TOP LEARNER IN  
SOUTH AFRICA (NSC)  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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



# HERZLIA HIGH SCHOOL



Ryan Aaron



Taya Allardice



Leo Bachmann



Erin Baruch



Thomas Bax



Leah Benjamin



Jada Berman



Grace Berrill



Sheena Borzsony



Matthew Carrol



Zachary Castro



Layla Chait



Gemma Cohn



Sarah Conne



Joshua Daniel



Ashlea Deats



Noa Durbach



Chiara Franco



Indya Fuchs



Daniel Gad



Talia Garvin



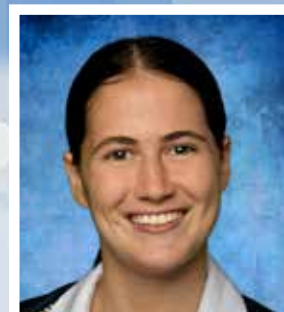
Jade Gershowitz



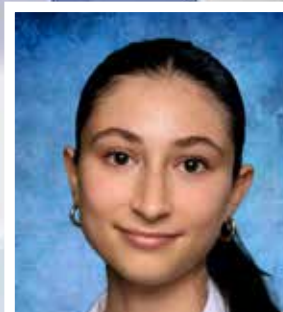
Shay-Lee Geva



Zack Gilbert-Shapiro



Amy Gluckman



Ella Gluckman



Tristan Goldstein



Jason Gradner



Darryn Halfon



Julia Hasson



Benjamin Jantjies



Geena Joffe



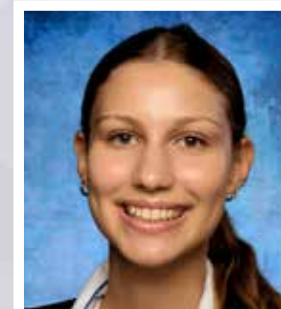
Jake Katzen



Kiara Kawalsky



Rubi Koff



Talya Leeman



Jayda Leve



Adi Levin



Aaron Levin



Meg Levy



Ella Maguire



Kayla Mandel





Jared Mandelstam



Jared Marcow



Olivia Marcus



Leah Marks



Luke Mauerberger



Joel May



Shane Meknassi



Gemma Mendelson



Layla Musikanth



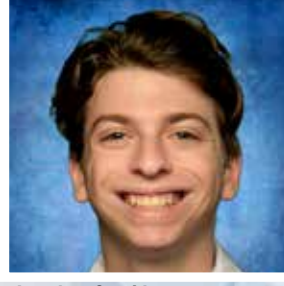
Ethan Myers



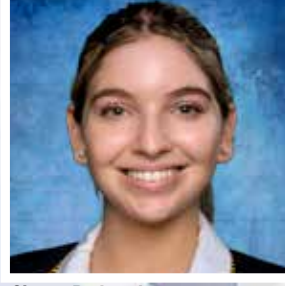
Jordan Osrin



Cameron Phillips



Jonathan Querido



Sienna Radowsky



Isabella Robinson



Dylan Schaffer



Keren Schiff



Isabella Sherman



Isaac Showell



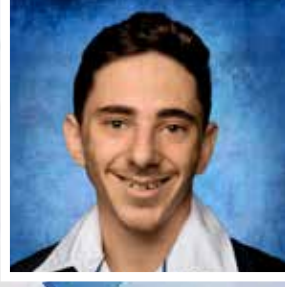
David Sola



Samuel Sossen



Aviya Walker



Daniel Woolfson



Jonathan Woolfson



Jake Young



Elijah Zar



Jenna Zetler



# CLASS OF 2023

## TOP ACHIEVERS

Herzlia’s incredible 2023 Matric Class results are phenomenal in light of the turbulent times with which pupils were faced. This is a tight-knit group with an incredible spirit and love for Herzlia, especially Herzlia pride and embracing the values of Jewish life.

**Mazaltov to Ethan Myers, for being the “2023 NSC National Top Candidate in South Africa for Independent Schools” with 9 distinctions out of 9 subjects, including Further Studies English and Mathematics.**

QUICK STATS:

- 72 Matric candidates
- 100% Matric pass rate in an academically inclusive school
- 252 Individual subject distinctions, with 9 of these distinctions being achieved in Further Studies Mathematics and English
- 3.5 average distinctions per candidate, including Further Studies Mathematics and English.
- 2023 Top National NSC Candidate in South Africa (Independent Schools) Award

9 Distinctions

Ethan Myers

8 Distinctions

Taya Allardice  
Gemma Cohn  
Ashlee Deats  
Talía Garvin

7 Distinctions

Leo Bachmann  
Erin Baruch  
Leah Benjamin  
Zachary Castro  
Layla Chait  
Daniel Gad  
Julia Hasson  
Isabella Sherman  
Jenna Zetler

6 Distinctions

Matthew Carrol  
Jade Gershowitz  
Shay-Lee Geva  
Amy Gluckman  
Geena Joffe  
Meg Levy  
Jonathan Querido

5 Distinctions

Jordan Osrin  
Sienna Radowsky  
Keren Schiff  
Isaac Showell

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



Zoe Zimmermann



# Hebrew – it’s not a subject, it’s a love story

OPINION

I’ve just finished examining another set of matric Hebrew papers and wow, the results get better every year! Maybe because for both students and teachers, Hebrew is more than just another subject. It’s a key that unlocks thousands of years of history, it switches on the *neshama*.

I admit it wasn’t always this way. In previous years, we had a crisis in teaching, the curriculum was uninspired, and Hebrew had a reputation of being a difficult subject requiring a lot of rote learning. But over the past few years, things have changed. Students graduate with a love for and deep connection to the language and the ability to communicate in Hebrew, something they will cherish, especially if they visit or live in Israel.

Recently, there have been new initiatives to recruit and train people with a passion for the language who have the ability to



inspire young people. Teachers now really connect with their students. They need to have a vision for what students can achieve, to see what’s possible with hard work and commitment, and they need to ignite that spark of self-confidence and motivation within. Teaching Hebrew isn’t a job, it’s a calling.

Is Hebrew easy? No, It’s supposed to challenge you. But not to the point of giving up. Challenging ourselves is the only way we learn and gain anything. Hebrew has a

logic to it that becomes intuitive with practice. The fact that it’s challenging is precisely what makes it so valuable as a matric subject. It demonstrates the ability to be proficient in another language, one that uses a script read from right to left and that has male and female rules for grammar.

On one of my educational trips to America, I heard first hand from a former dean of Harvard that if he had one place left for his course, he would give it to a student who took

Arabic, Mandarin, or Hebrew as a high school subject. I believe this is also true when it comes to applying to do medicine in South Africa. They look for something that sets a student apart.

Hebrew is more than a language, it’s an entire culture. It’s the flag, the land, the anthem. It’s the story of the most resilient nation in history. The curriculum tells that story. Although we cover the Holocaust and Israel’s wars, it’s not a story of victimhood but of pride and strength. We explore the Entebbe Raid, Israeli inventions such as Waze and drip irrigation, and we learn magnificent modern poetry. We learn Pirkei Avot, the wisdom and life lessons of the Mishnaic sages, and we explore *tehillim*, which can be unpacked only in the original language of King David. Isn’t it incredible to be able to speak the language of King David?

Hebrew is a divine language – the root letters describe the essence of

each word because they are the code with which it was created. It’s the language of the Jewish soul. It’s part of the story of every Jew. It’s there during a *brit milah* ceremony, under the chuppah with the words, “*Harei at mekudesh li*”, it’s there to articulate our trust in Hashem even in times of terrible loss with the timeless words of the kaddish, which is in Aramaic but very easy to understand if you know Hebrew. Can you get this in any other subject?

That’s why I say, again and again, Hebrew isn’t a subject. It’s a love story.

• Mazal Sacks is deputy principal at King David High School Linksfield and head of Hebrew at King David Schools. She’s the Independent Examinations Board examiner for Hebrew, and the course co-ordinator for Ivrit – Ze Hazman!, a programme to improve Hebrew teaching in many Jewish schools.



MAZAL SACKS

## SAUJS made life easier and better at varsity

OPINION

BETHIA MILNER



As a Jewish student in South Africa, my university experience has been largely positive, filled with enriching moments and a sense of community. The academic year concluded around 7 October, so my university experience reflects a pre-7 October world with regards to antisemitism.

The vibrant atmosphere fostered by the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) on campus contributed significantly to my positive experience. Its dedication to organising engaging events not only strengthened the sense of community among Jewish students but also allowed for meaningful interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds. These initiatives created an inclusive environment, promoting understanding and unity.

Fortunately, my time at university was marked by very little antisemitism. Though there were occasional moments that hinted at potential challenges, such as a protest hosted by the Palestinian Solidarity Committee shortly after 7 October, the overall atmosphere has remained welcoming. It’s heartening to see that, for the most part, differences are celebrated rather than criticised.

Looking ahead, there’s concern about the potential escalation of antisemitism in the academic year. Though my encounters have been minimal, awareness of global events and shifting dynamics prompts a certain level of apprehension and continued vigilance.

Though SAUJS has been a cornerstone of support, it’s important to acknowledge the obligation of the university itself to cultivate a tolerant and diverse campus. The university’s commitment to protecting its Jewish students and creating an inclusive atmosphere is crucial. We’re aware that universities can be hotspots for antisemitism, as we have seen with the controversies at Harvard, Stanford, and other international universities, but my experience at the University of the Witwatersrand has made me optimistic that its leadership will rise to the challenge of protecting its Jewish students.

I hope that the university, in collaboration with student organisations like SAUJS, will continue to foster an environment that celebrates our Judaism, ensuring that every Jewish student feels welcome and valued on campus. I strongly encourage matriculants to join SAUJS to be part of a vibrant Jewish life on campus.

• Bethia Milner has completed her third year of a BSc in Economics and Maths and Wits University and will start her honours in economics at Wits this year. She is the president of SAUJS and involved with Habonim Dror.

## Two-year matric helps students meet unique challenges

OPINION

JOLENE MACINTOSH



As students embark on their high school journey, we envision them moving up in the grades in a seemingly straightforward path from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Yet, life is unpredictable, and often interferes with our well-laid plans. As the saying goes, “Life is what happens when you’re making other plans.”

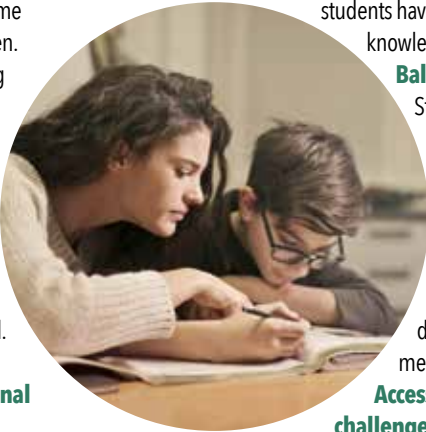
Students face a myriad challenges, some anticipated and others entirely unforeseen. Physical health and emotional well-being can hinder them from completing matric in a single year. An alternative approach, completing matric over a two-year period, may need to be explored to cater to the unique needs and challenges faced by students.

There are various advantages to completing matric over a two-year period. These include:

**The opportunity to focus on emotional and physical well-being**

We live in uncertain times, which can have an impact on students’ mental health. Students often grapple with stress and anxiety. Extending matric gives them the opportunity to receive the necessary intervention to develop coping strategies to face challenges better, thus fostering emotional growth.

The same rings true for physical well-being. Students may face some unexpected challenges with their health, and extending matric gives them the opportunity to access treatment during the course of the academic year.



**Focusing on challenging areas**

A two-year matric gives students the opportunity to dedicate additional time to subjects that they find more challenging. With a more relaxed pace, students can thoroughly grasp the content, resulting in a better understanding of the material. A better understanding of academic content often translates into improved academic performance as students have the time to revisit and reinforce their knowledge.

**Balance between work and play**

Students are social beings. A student battling emotionally or physically would have to put in extra work to pass matric, but spreading the subjects over the course of two years would allow them to work hard and be a part of many of the milestones of that year such as 18th birthday parties, the matric dance, valediction ceremony, creating lasting memories with their peers.

**Access to further studies in spite of challenges**

A two-year matric can be a lifeline for some students that may otherwise have dropped out of school due to challenging circumstances. Students can focus on their well-being and still achieve marks that give them access to pursue further studies.

Although the two-year matric can be a vital strategy for students navigating various complexities, it’s not without its challenges.

**School resources**

Implementing a two-year matric system requires additional resources, time, and specialised support staff. Not all schools have the capacity to accommodate this programme, thus limiting its feasibility on a broader scale.

**Social and emotional impact**

Extending the matriculation period may disrupt social dynamics, and students could potentially feel isolated and disconnected from their peers once they move into their second year of matric. Students may feel that they aren’t good enough as they couldn’t complete matric in the traditional way.

Although the extended matric in essence should reduce academic pressure, it could inadvertently lead to burnout if not managed carefully. Some students may find the intensity of extended studies emotionally draining.

The two-year matriculation proposal comes with advantages and challenges. Careful consideration must thus be given to its broader implications on social dynamics, individual development, and institutional capacity. The bottom line is that if a child is a candidate for a two-year matric, he/she needs to be at a smaller, more inclusive school that can cater to individual needs. The school, the student, and the parents need to understand that accommodating the diverse needs of certain students isn’t a deviation from their educational plan, but an essential part of their educational journey.

• Jolene MacIntosh is an educational psychologist and head of educational support who oversees students at King David Victory Park doing matric over two years.

## ‘I know my dad was rooting for me’

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Michaela Saayman went into her matric year at King David High School Linksfield with an overwhelming sense of stress and anxiety. “I had no idea what lay ahead for me,” she said. Adding to this challenge, she also had to cope without her dad, Steyn, who tragically passed away in October 2021.

“The thing I found most difficult about matric was not having my dad with me to share all these milestones and achievements,” she says. “I know my dad was rooting for me and watching over me all the time.”

Saayman’s goal for matric was to achieve good results in prelims and finals regardless of what she needed to do to achieve it. “The year was extremely demanding, with many hours being spent doing assignments, homework, past exam papers, and studying,” she says.

“As the valedictory awards came around, I was certain I wasn’t going to receive any awards,”

Saayman says. To her delight, she ended up receiving the Milner Trophy for the consumer studies practical, an award for sustained commitment and improvement in tourism, and the Renee Freedman Trophy for genuine interest in biological science. “I was absolutely thrilled, as was my family,” she says.

“The last hurdle was finals,” Saayman says. “Weeks, days, hours, and minutes were spent studying and ensuring I had all the information I needed to achieve my goals.”

Having found prelims more difficult than she anticipated, Saayman was caught by surprise when she found that finals were easier than prelims. “I walked out the exams feeling confident and relieved that finally the year of hard work and dedication had come to an end.”

Saayman is thankful for all the support she



Michaela Saayman

received from her family, the school, the community, and friends. “The person who really got me through the hard time and is still helping me through it is my boyfriend,” she says.

Saayman describes her late dad as “a kind-hearted, friendly man who always put others before himself”. She describes him as someone who “was always willing to help others in need and was a great believer in charity work”. He was a bodyguard by profession, and had first-aid training. “He would put those skills to use in order to benefit others, and did it without expecting any acknowledgement or reward.

My dad would go to the ends of the earth to ensure my brother and I had everything we needed and wanted,” she says.

Saayman plans to take a gap year and complete a few courses before starting her studies in remedial teaching next year. “I thank King David Linksfield for paving my path to my future,” she says.





Rachel Behr



Sarah Cohen



Miera Crouse



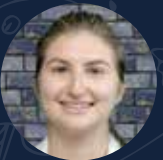
Leya Davidoff



Rafaella Felsher



Este'e Finkelstein



Rachael Grayman



Amira Greenstein



Shmuel Zukerman



Asher Urison



Aharon Smith



Yoni Schneider



Brennan Richter



Daniel Miller



Raphael Midzuk



Gadiel Janet



Eitan Henen



Saul Fox



Nadav Dredzen



Chanan Benjamin



Mikaela Weinstein



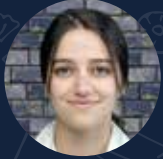
Mia Veffor



Eva Trope



Gabriella Swartz



Jayda Sack



Deena Joselowsky



Rachel Kahn



Sara Lapiner



Neshama Mandelberg



Ayelet Milstein



Sara Ress



Avigal Rogoff



Kira Rothbart

YESHIVA COLLEGE GIRLS & BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

# MAZELTOV MATRICS

## Class of 2023



100% PASS RATE • 100% UNIVERSITY EXEMPTION • 4.67 DISTINCTIONS PER LEARNER  
OUR MATRIC GRADE AVERAGE ACROSS ALL SUBJECTS WAS ABOVE 79.6%

### 4.67 AVG DISTINCTIONS PER LEARNER



### 154 DISTINCTIONS AMASSED BY CLASS

ACROSS 250 PAPERS WRITTEN, THE  
MATRICS ACHIEVED AN AVERAGE OF

### 79%

### 10 SUBJECTS WITH AN A-AGGREGATE

"OUR MATRIC CLASSES HAVE ACHIEVED OVER 3.5 DISTINCTIONS PER  
CANDIDATE FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS"

#### TOP 1% OF STUDENTS PER SUBJECT

##### ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

RACHEL GRAYMAN, GADIEL JANET, AYELET MILSTEIN, SARA RESS, EVA TROPE  
BRENNAN RICHTER, AVIGAL ROGOFF, JAYDA SACK, AHARON SMITH

##### LIFE ORIENTATION

RAFAELLA FELSHER, RACHEL GRAYMAN, GADIEL JANET, SARA RESS  
BRENNAN RICHTER, JAYDA SACK, AHARON SMITH, EVA TROPE

##### LIFE SCIENCE MATHEMATICS LITERACY

BRENNAN RICHTER  
CHANAN BENJAMIN

##### MATHEMATICS

EVA TROPE

##### PHYSICAL SCIENCES

EVA TROPE

#### OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

ACHIEVED WITHIN THE TOP 5% IN THE COUNTRY IN 6 OR MORE  
SUBJECTS AND A LEVEL 7 IN LIFE ORIENTATION.

BRENNAN RICHTER, EVA TROPE

#### COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT

ACHIEVED WITHIN TOP 5% IN THE COUNTRY IN 5 OR  
MORE SUBJECTS AND A LEVEL 7 IN LIFE ORIENTATION.

SARA RESS

REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN ACADEMIC, EXTRA MURAL AND TORAH  
GROWTH FOR ALL LEARNERS. TORAH, GENERAL STUDIES, SPORT &  
CULTURAL CURRICULUM RUN GR. 7-12



YESHIVA  
COLLEGE  
The Torah School of Excellence

כִּי בְשִׂמְחָה תֵּצְאוּ וּבְשָׁלוֹם תּוּבְלוּ

( ישעיהו נה יב ) - You shall go out with joy and be led forward with peace



# Discipline, dedication, diabetes – meeting the challenges

STAFF REPORTER

Crawford College (Sandton) matriculant Dina Tchelet was serious about academics, but that didn't stop her from focusing on playing for Maccabi and interprovincial tennis, as well as becoming a member of the Johannesburg Junior Council and the student executive at her school. All this, while managing Type 1 diabetes. Dina moved to Crawford in Grade 8, and has been a passionate tennis player since then. "I had to learn to manage my six-day week of tennis while maintaining the best marks possible," she said.

She was selected to play tennis for Maccabi South Africa in 2019 and 2022, and represented Gauteng at interprovincial level throughout her high school career.

"I developed a structured routine to balance my academics, tennis, and personal life," she said. "It included making countless timetables, managing my time wisely, and being disciplined. I've maintained a position in the top 20 academically every year from the beginning of Grade 8 until the end of matric. As soon as I was given an assignment, I'd complete it to stay steady and calm while still being able to play tennis as often as I did," she said.

"As much as I've managed to navigate the complexities of high school, it hasn't been a smooth ride. At times, I felt overwhelmed and stressed about meeting deadlines, but the unwavering support of my teachers, family, and friends made my high school journey that much

easier. The development of a strong work ethic was the key factor to me being able to achieve the goals I set for myself."

In Grade 11, she was elected to the Johannesburg Junior Council, occupying a management role. She was also selected to be part of the Interact Board at Crawford. "I developed a passion for community service and helping the broader community," she said. "I learnt the importance of gratitude and empathy. It was the most incredible opportunity."

Instead of slowing down to focus on her studies during her matric year, it became the busiest and most challenging of all her years. She was elected house captain, helping to organise sports days and inspire school spirit in sport. She was also elected onto the student executive body by her peers and the judiciary by the student executive body. "It was one of my proudest moments as I had achieved everything I had worked for," Tchelet said.

On top of it all, she had to manage diabetes. "I was diagnosed at 16 months old, so it's all I've ever known. I've never let diabetes define me or stand in the way of any of the goals I have set for myself. However, behind closed doors, there were moments when I struggled and times I wanted to give up, yet I reminded myself of the future and how blessed I was to have support."

Looking back, she reiterates that her proudest achievements weren't the accolades she received, but the resilience built as a result of navigating each obstacle.



Dina Tchelet

## MERRIFIELD PREPARATORY SCHOOL & COLLEGE, EAST LONDON



Ethan Epstein-Kay  
4 Distinctions  
LO, Geography, History, Business Studies (over 90%)

## ST MARY'S SCHOOL WAVERLEY



Bianca Kritzman  
4 Distinctions  
Accounting, English, IT, LO

## REDDAM HOUSE BEDFORDVIEW



Joshua Kahn  
9 Distinctions  
Afrikaans, Design, English, IT, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences, Further Studies Maths Elective (Statistics), Further Studies Maths Standard (Calculus and Algebra)



Alexander Cole  
1 Distinction  
Maths Lit



Shayna Benjamin  
1 Distinction  
Maths Lit

## HIRSCH LYONS SCHOOL



Sara Fine  
Afrikaans, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, FS Maths, Physical Sciences



Yonatan Goldfein  
Hebrew, IT, LO



Lior Marks  
English, History, IT, LO, Life Sciences



Yonatan Rabson  
Business Studies, English, Hebrew, IT, LO, Maths, FS Maths



Shimon Stein  
Business Studies, English, Hebrew, History, LO, Maths, Physical Sciences

advertorial



## JEWISH STUDENTS TERTIARY EDUCATION FUND

### Jewish students education fund expands its services

Students should never be denied the opportunity to fulfil their career dreams because they're disadvantaged by financial limitations. The Chev's Jewish Students Education Fund (JSEF) has assisted many thousands of Jewish students in the Johannesburg area with tertiary education interest-free, soft loans for over 65 years.

Once they graduate and start working, students can repay the loan at reasonable and manageable rates. This allows them to launch their careers without the enormous pressure of crushing student debt.

The good news is that since 2023, the Fund has extended its reach beyond Johannesburg to include Jewish students across the country. The national expansion and growth of the JSEF is enabled by the generosity of the Donald Gordon Foundation. JSEF is seeing great interest from the Cape and Natal regions and expects the number of students they assist to increase significantly.

The Chev is proud of this commitment to education, which has far-reaching benefits. Funding education is an investment into the future of our Jewish community because today's graduates are tomorrow's leaders. In our highly specialised world, a sound education is often the key to success and independence for young people.

Apply for an interest-free loan for a tertiary education.

Open to Jewish students countrywide.

studentloans@jhbchev.co.za | 011 532 9652





**JEWISH STUDENTS  
TERTIARY EDUCATION FUND**

# OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR FUTURE

Open for applications to Jewish Students across the country.  
Apply for an interest free loan for studies at a South African tertiary institution.

[studentloans@jhbchev.co.za](mailto:studentloans@jhbchev.co.za) | 011 532 9652





# The long shadow of COVID-19 on education

OPINION

ARIELLE BERGER



There’s much we can be thankful for in the transformation to a democratic South Africa, but key aspects of our country are still impacted by the legacy of apartheid. Subsequent government failure has further entrenched inequality, including significant gaps in education between the public and private sector. Much has already been said about this, but beyond the obvious difficulties, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the disparity between public and private education as students were unable to be on campus.

The prolonged closure of government schools and the need to shift to remote learning has emphasised the importance of adaptability and the fact that technological literacy needs to be a key part of school curricula. While the government did nothing to help students through the pandemic, the supposed ingenuity and adaptability of private schools to embrace online learning wasn’t a saving grace for all students.

Even within the 2023 cohort of private school students, of which I am one, there are two distinct groups. Both were given the same opportunities during lockdown, sent the same materials and meeting invitations, yet the one group thrived and the other floundered. Perhaps it’s best to see this as a continuum rather than a binary divide, nevertheless as I reflect on my own class, it’s evident that even in private schooling, remote learning didn’t benefit everyone equally.

With the release of matric results each year, there’s inevitable discussion about whether the current cohort had a worse time than the previous year. This is amplified by the impact of the pandemic. At times, the comparison seems shallow or even futile as it neglects to look at its long-term impact.

To put it simply, all students were impacted but to differing degrees. Younger grades missed out on basic social skills or learning to read, whereas middle school and younger high school students missed out on basic concepts – and these are no less important. The lack of these building blocks continues to have an impact on certain students. This shouldn’t come as a surprise. If one can’t build a solid foundation, then how can one expect stability, consistency, and results?

This phenomenon isn’t exclusive to South Africa. A study done by the Israeli education ministry reported that in the equivalent of the 2023 cohort, 47% of students’ studies were negatively impacted by the pandemic; 38% of students’ mental health and emotions declined; and 28% of students’ social lives were negatively impacted. These statistics are concerning. Not only do they indicate how schooling during COVID-19 affected students, they paint an alarming picture of how ill-equipped schools were to support students emotionally and educationally.

Additionally, in the United States, the average primary school student fell six months behind in mathematics and three months behind in reading. Harvard researchers compared data with that from the early 2010s to understand how students rebounded after the disruption caused by COVID-19. In the first year, students recovered 20% to 30% of lost work, but in the subsequent three years, there was no recovery. If one were to apply this to the 2023 South African cohort, it could be deduced that the group of students who were inept at adapting and learning online finished school with a significantly depleted understanding of the basic foundations taught in Grades 9 and 10.

Within the private school environment, the 2023 cohort spent much of their Grade 9 and some of their Grade 10 year in a mix of online and blended learning. These years were supposed to be my introduction to high school, and had I dreamt of having a modicum of freedom.

My classmates varied according to subject, and I looked forward to being able to interact with a wider range of peers. The reality was that I was limited to WhatsApp group chats and my dining room table.

**The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the stark disparities of the South African education system, further perpetuating inequality across the socio-economic divide.**

Not being at school, we weren’t exposed to the so-called “silent curriculum”. Instead, we formed our own “COVID-19 silent curriculum”, with skills and attitudes that were necessary to cope with the dysfunctional and unknown learning environment. These included flexibility, fluidity, and adaptability.

Unfortunately, it seems that the floundering group of students missed out on this silent curriculum. Many struggled to readapt to in-person learning and formed an almost addictive dependence on technology, resulting in a limited attention span and quite frankly, causing distraction to other students.

However, the adept students took the COVID-19 silent curriculum in their stride as they mastered self-study and formed groups with other students so they could make up for lost work. In addition to these two types of students are those who rarely attended class and pursued their own interests, which included video games, online chat forums, and small businesses.

But as the 2023 cohort heads off to university or to join the working world, will it add another layer of diversity that needs to be managed? The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the stark disparities of the South African education system, further perpetuating inequality across the socio-

economic divide. The fork in the experiences of students, particularly between private and government schools, has been widened and will continue to have an impact on students as they head off into life and to university.

It’s imperative that educators relook at the impact of COVID-19, as many seem to act as if it’s long forgotten. We must question how we address these issues.

Thankfully, South African Jewish schools among other private schools have been able to deal with the severe difficulties much more effectively than government schools, but COVID-19 continues to cast a long shadow over those whose education was disrupted.

Here’s to the success of my fellow matriculants of 2023 in the next step of their journey.

*• Arielle Berger is a 2023 matriculant at Redhill and will be studying medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand this year.*

## In residence, but far from the Jewish bubble

LEE TANKLE

For many students, university is the first time that they have a true sense of independence. But for some, this freedom is a culture shock, especially for Jewish students who grow up in a predominantly Jewish environment and now find themselves living in university residence.

For these students, there are so few Jews around, they are likely to find that they are the first Jews their residence mates have ever met.

When Jared Daitsh, a Herzlia class of 2022 alumnus left his school, he knew that going into residence at Stellenbosch would be a good way to leave the “bubble” that he found himself in.

“I’ve had a computer in my house for as long as I can remember, so when I met a guy in my residence who said he had never seen a computer before coming to university and that’s why he was studying computer science, it hit me how far from home I was,” Daitsh told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“I felt a sense of culture shock as I realised how privileged I was. At Herzlia, we were protected from the poverty and realities that many people in South Africa face.

“At first, I tried to keep the fact that I was Jewish under wraps, but the more I spoke to people, the more I started making it pretty clear that I was Jewish. There was no backlash, but probably more fascination as I was the first Jewish person they had met,” said Daitsh.

He described an incident which occurred while brushing his teeth, when he was approached and asked about his stance on Israel, but that conversation never occurred again. “Since the start of the war, there was a bit of hostility and in my residence, it started to feel like they were taking a side – the side of the pro-Palestinian movement – so I went to the head of my residence and said that this was what was happening and it was making me uncomfortable. My residence then released a statement saying that it was taking a neutral stance, which I appreciate,” said Daitsh.

Although Danya Hanan didn’t attend a Jewish school for most of her high school career, opting to go to Kingsmead College where she was one of the only practising Jewish students, she still felt a big shift in the way that she saw the world after spending some time at her residence at the University of Pretoria last year.

“Even though I was already exposed to the diversity of South Africa at Kingsmead, I was more exposed to this diversity at university. This was because there was more freedom, and it wasn’t confined only to the educational system,” said Hanan.

She was the only Jewish girl in her residence of about 640 students. “All of the people I told I was Jewish were interested in Judaism and wanted to know more about it. My roommates kept asking me to bring kitkas to residence because they loved it. It was nice to see that,” Hanan said.

“It was slightly weird at the beginning of the year with everything going on in Israel,” Hanan said. “There were protests in Hatfield, so I decided not to go to university those days as I wear a Star of David and a Hebrew necklace, so it’s quite evident that I’m Jewish. For the sake of safety, I stayed in residence those days. I was asked why I wasn’t going to class, and they all understood to an extent, but not fully.”

Hanan, who keeps kosher, had to bring her kosher food to



her residence and keep it separate from the other food in the communal fridge. She bought an air fryer so that she didn’t have to use the oven that the other girls had cooked unkosher food in. “They didn’t understand what kosher was,” she says, “and I tried to explain it, but it’s tough to explain it to someone who maybe hasn’t heard much about Judaism and the laws of keeping kosher. The more I tried to explain it and told them to do some research, the more they got confused,” said Hanan.

“I knew going into residence that I would be a minority as there aren’t a lot of Jewish girls who stay in residence, but my mom told me about how it was a great way to meet people and so many different types of people that it drew me to that environment,” Hanan said.

“This is complicated for our kids,” said psychologist Judith Ancer. “The important thing for these kids is to go in aware that they are going from something familiar – like a bubble – to something completely different. You must go in with an attitude of open-mindedness and curiosity to tolerate and be open to learn about people and their unique experiences and not make assumptions,” she said.

“The Jewish community is anxious currently, and young people can be defensive. This isn’t going to stand anybody in good stead,” Ancer said. “You’re going to be a minority, you’re going to meet a lot of people with different views, and recognise that everyone has a right to have these views. You’re going to be confronted with these views, and must know how to pick your battles. A negative opinion on Israel isn’t an attack on you,” she said.

Ancer said that if you go into university acknowledging these facts, you won’t be shocked when confronted with these situations, and said students should try to get involved in student life so that this difference diminishes throughout the academic year.



# Tragedy and triumph for dux scholar Josh Kahn

LEE TANKLE

When Josh Kahn, a Reddam House Bedfordview 2023 matriculant, was ranked tenth academically at the end of his first term of Grade 8, he told himself that by the end of his high school career, he would try his best to get that number-one spot.

Not only has Kahn achieved that goal, he was also awarded the Dux Scholar Award for 2023, achieving nine distinctions.

“When I was at the bottom of the ranking in that first term in Grade 8, it motivated me to keep working so that I could try to get to that top spot,” said Kahn. “I was never extremely academic, but I kept on working to meet my goals every year. My goal this year was to get the Dux Scholar Award. I worked harder than any other year to achieve this goal”.

This achievement didn’t come without some challenges as it seemed to Kahn that at every important moment in his matric year, tragedy seemed to follow. At the end



Josh Kahn

of his Grade 11 year, Kahn’s grandmother passed away. This was followed by the death of his grandfather at the start of matric during a week of intense testing. A close family friend then died during Kahn’s June examinations, and at the start of his final exams, Kahn fell ill. “All of this made it hard to stay on track,” Kahn told the *SA Jewish Report*.

When Kahn wasn’t studying, he spent his time doing Taekwondo, where he became a national champion through Andre’s Ultimate Taekwondo Academy in his Grade 11 year, and achieved Gauteng colours. Kahn also dedicated himself to serving his community throughout high school. He completed more than 1 600 hours through river clean ups, street clean ups, and spending time at Bunnyhop Haven and old age homes. Kahn also won the Concours D’Arts for animation and design overall for his age group in Grade 11 and 12 for animations he made during the year.

Kahn intends to study actuarial science at the University of the Witwatersrand this year.

# Pain management, planning, and poetry win the day

HANNA RESNICK

After a series of misdiagnoses of chronic pain, King David Victory Park matriculant Yocheved Saksenberg was diagnosed in Grade 10 with fibromyalgia, a nerve condition which causes hypersensitivity to pain. “It’s hard for me to sit for long periods of time when I need to study. The pain is often bad, and becomes distracting,” she said.

In addition to the pain itself, Saksenberg had to undergo two procedures during matric, causing her to miss important school work. “I tried to organise how I would go about my school work. I would get the date of the procedure, and then study harder or plan what I would want to study in advance of the procedure, and factor in how long it would take to recover,” she said.



Yocheved Saksenberg

“Unfortunately, with the first procedure scheduled during mini prelims, I seriously miscalculated and didn’t manage to maintain a good balance between it and my academics, with the procedure getting most of my attention,” said Saksenberg. “It was disheartening when I got my results back and saw that I hadn’t done as well as I could have.”

For her next procedure, which was after prelims, she made sure to plan accordingly, and was much happier with her results. “I always tell myself in these situations, ‘It happened, there’s nothing I can do

to change it, but I can work and maybe plan better for next time’, which is what I did.” Saksenberg was awarded the Rosin Trophy for Diligence and Determination for perseverance throughout her matric year.

Another challenge for Saksenberg was “just keeping my head on straight”. “There were so many assignments all at once, and I’m a huge procrastinator. I actually only get work in when it feels like a life-or-death situation, or rather fail-or-pass,” she said.

She gets motivation and energy from “being with my friends and hanging out and having fun together”. This made exam periods, during which she wasn’t in class with her peers, particularly difficult. “It was difficult to get through the days because usually we would see each other in class and we have our jokes and fun, and that gives us the energy to carry on.”

She described the defining moments of her high school career as “any moment I was in class. I loved all my teachers. I love my fellow students and my friends. They would make the classes engaging and just so enjoyable. It felt like a huge family.”

She was able to complete the year with the support of her friends and teachers in spite of the challenges. One of the teachers who inspired her was her English teacher, who encouraged her to submit her poetry into the SACEE (South African Council for English Education) creative writing competition, for which she received a bronze award. “I write poetry in my spare time as a release or as a grounding moment in all the stress,” she said.

Saksenberg said she’s looking forward to her future although she’s still deciding her exact path. “Aside from that, I’m focused on having fun, spending time with my friends and family, and mostly just going with the flow.”

Saksenberg scored within the top 1% for English in the Independent Examinations Board matric results.

# Setting the pace with an unconventional syllabus

LEE TANKLE

“Hardly anyone can say that they weren’t impacted by missing the first month of matric, and were able to slot right back,” Brocha Lewis, a Cape Town Torah High School matriculant told the *SA Jewish Report*.

However, Lewis managed to do so because her school follows the flexible curriculum of the University of Nebraska High School, where schooling is done completely online.

So, when Lewis travelled to Israel in December 2022 to help her sister prepare for the birth of her child, and landed up staying for almost three months, she was able to begin her matric studies in Israel and continue when she returned to Cape Town without missing a beat.

“My favourite thing about my schooling is that I was able to work at my own pace,” said Lewis. Lewis moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town in 2020, and through attending Cape Town Torah High, realised that the more conventional Independent Examinations Board (IEB) or government syllabus didn’t work for her.

“Maths is my favourite subject, and I was stifled by the way that maths is taught in those schools. In a more conventional school, a teacher would teach a concept and then spend two weeks on that concept. It felt like that held me back. I would spend maths lessons colouring in instead of learning because I had understood the concept,” said Lewis. “The way our school works, I was able to work at my own pace enabling me to work on

college-level maths in my matric year,” she said. “Our teachers are more like ‘guides on the side’ rather than ‘a sage on the stage.’”

The highlight of her year was spending time volunteering with the Community Security Organisation (CSO) as part of a project in which the student had to spend 12 hours job shadowing or doing service in the



Brocha Lewis

Jewish community. “I’ve always been fascinated by medicine and am considering what route to take in the future. I was able to get more insight into the medical world,” said Lewis.

“During my 12 hours on call, I travelled in the response car and saw the amazing work that CSO does and it serves us as a community. It was an incredible opportunity,” Lewis said. “To be able to see the workings of something you are interested in is something that not many people get to do in their matric year. This is

because at other schools, there’s nothing but studying in matric. We also had many other opportunities to round out the year so that it wasn’t academically focused all the time.

“It’s stressful for everyone to determine what they are going to do after school, and there’s pressure. I’m still trying to figure out exactly what that is,” Lewis said. She plans to attend Seminary in Israel, and would like to pursue a career in the medical field.



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Dramatic Arts,  
English,  
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SYMANOWITZ**

8 Distinctions



**BENJAMIN  
WEISZ**

7 Distinctions



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SISSISON**

7 Distinctions



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BEIRA**

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# From matric dance to marriage – soulmates look back

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

High school sweethearts may not always stay together, but when they do, having a shared history can add a different dimension to their relationship. Three couples whose teen love stories took them to the *chuppah* share their stories.

Just 14 and 13 respectively, Jonathan and Michal Zinman started dating in October 1997 during their first year of high school. “We met on the first day of Form One [Grade 8] at King David Linksfield,” Jonathan recalls. Part of the same social circle, the two were initially very good friends and that evolved into a relationship.

“We used to speak a lot on the phone on those old landlines,” Jonathan recalls. Laughing, Michal says, “where you had to speak awkwardly to the parents before you could speak to each other”. It was on one of those phone calls that Jonathan told her he liked her. From school tours to the matric dance to the general day-to-day challenges of growing up, they stayed by each other’s side. Ulpan was a definite high school highlight, they say. “To be in Israel together for three months was amazing,” says Jonathan.

“We both knew instantly that we’d get married,” says Michal. “We always used to say that we knew this was going to end up in a marriage – we were too young to feel so in love with one another.” Both 29 when they got married, Jonathan jokes that he doesn’t know why it took so long.

Having been together for so long eased any anxiety about fitting into one another’s families, says Michal. “We grew up in one another’s homes, we were a part of each other’s families from such a young age.” The enduring shared friendships that they established in high school are also a benefit of having such an



Marli and Jonathan Goldberg

extensive history together, they say.

Though the two had breaks when Jonathan studied in Cape Town and Michal temporarily lived in Israel, they always knew their future lay with one another. Speaking of how their relationship has grown, Jonathan says what began as infatuation has grown into a mature, pure love where they support one another completely. “We have three beautiful kids, and it’s amazing how it’s evolved to really knowing what we want. We’ve both become religious, and it has enhanced our relationship and family life.”

“We’re on the same path,” Michal says. “We’re behind one another, supporting each other and growing together all the time. We have the same goals, not only for ourselves as individuals but also for our kids and our family.” Their relationship has stood the test of time, says Jonathan because of their deep love for one another and desire to make each other happy every day.

“We can be very vulnerable, open and honest with one another,” says Michal. “There’s a lot of love and kindness. We put each other before ourselves.”

When Lisa Sher\* moved from a government school to King David Victory Park in Grade 11, she jokes that she had never seen so many Jewish boys in one place. But it was matric pupil Daniel Sher\* that quickly stood out. Lisa’s friend, who knew Daniel from camp, helped facilitate their first date, and the rest is history.

Together, they’ve marked countless milestones, including being one another’s matric dance partners.



“That was sweet because we were able to do his one year and mine the following year,” says Lisa. They were also a big support for one another during the socially fraught years of high school.

“Once, when I was on holiday in Umhlanga, my friends were awful to me, and I just left Umhlanga with Daniel and his friends,” Lisa recalls. “There were also cute things like the fact that he taught me to drive. I had a car and no license, and he had his license and no car. So, we would go out, I would be the learner driver, and he would be the licensed driver next to me.”

In spite of one brief breakup – they reunited after Lisa’s mother told her she was making a big mistake – the couple dated for several years before getting married. Now they’re approaching 30 years of marriage. “We’ve literally been together more than we’ve been apart,” says Lisa. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Though Lisa acknowledges that no marriage is easy in the face of life’s challenges, she says their relationship has always just worked. “We’ve got three kids, and there are stressful points but that’s the case in any marriage. We’re different, but we complement each other, we know each other’s strengths and weaknesses. We also think very similarly, and we’ve been fortunate that we’ve grown in the same way. It was just *bashert*.” Not only did Lisa find true love at high school, her younger sister also married her high school sweetheart whom she met when she moved to King David alongside her sister.

Marli Goldberg was in Grade 10 when she met her future husband, Jonathan Goldberg, who was in matric



Michal and Jonathan Zinman

at the time. They had similar friends, one of whom introduced them. “We were really good friends for about six months until he was adamant that he wanted to be my boyfriend,” she recalls. “Although he made the first move, I thought he had the sweetest smile, beautiful eyes, and an amazing personality.”

Jonathan encouraged Marli to concentrate on her studies at school and provided emotional support during the challenges. Though Marli’s school didn’t have a co-ed matric dance, Jonathan still took her out for dinner and dancing the weekend of the dance so they could have fun together. “He knew he was going to marry me from the second date,” Marli recalls. “He even told my parents that at the first *Shabbos* we had as a family. I knew that I wanted a man like him – someone compassionate, entrepreneurial, who would make an incredible dad and an even better life partner.”

Speaking of marrying her best friend at 20, Marli says that being together so long has helped them grow as a couple. “I always say that arguing or disagreeing is vital in a relationship as it shows that you have something to fight for. But, when we do argue, we work it out quicker than most other couples.

“We’ve been through a ton, and I feel that which would have broken us has really brought us together. We’re a stronger and closer force to be reckoned with. We just complement each other. Marriage is never 50/50 – someone is always going to give or take more, and you need to learn to compromise by giving or taking what’s needed at that moment.”

*\*Names have been changed.*

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# The Israel-Hezbollah dance – how does it end?

OPINION

HARRY JOFFE



To understand the security situation and strategic issues on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, one must understand three preliminary issues that frame this potential conflict:

The 7 October attacks changed Israel fundamentally. The exact nature of how it has changed will become apparent only after the war ends, and this will be reflected in the elections which will have to be held, but in the meantime, it’s clear that the situation in the north cannot remain as is. More than 100 000 Israelis have been displaced for security reasons, and the Israeli public won’t allow that situation to endure indefinitely. In addition, having seen what transpired on the southern border, no-one will be willing

it opted for a “pro-forma” response, shooting a few rockets very close to the border, and never too deep inside Israel. Israel, of course, responded in kind, and there was almost a tacit “rule of engagement” between the two, where the rockets and responses weren’t too deep inside each other’s territory and Israel didn’t respond too forcibly.

However, things have changed rapidly in the past few weeks, and there has been a noticeable escalation. There’s a strong school of thought in Israeli military circles that given that things on the northern border must change, now is the time to bring that change about. Of course, no-one wants a full-scale war, but given that the US still has a warship in the region, which it would

envoy, Amos Hochstein, now leading the diplomatic track to try reach a deal on the Israeli-Lebanese border. The Lebanese prime minister, Najib Mikati, was quoted by Reuters on Friday as saying that Beirut was “ready for talks on long-term border security”, and Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy was quoted in the same article as saying there was “still a diplomatic window of opportunity to push Hezbollah from the border”.

The outlines of a deal are there, and enshrined in United Nations Resolution 1701 that ended the Second Lebanon War. Hezbollah should move north of the Litani River, which would mean that its forces

would be 29km from the Israeli border. That would allow the population in the north to return to their homes with some degree of safety. At this stage, according to the Reuter’s report, a proposal has been communicated by the US envoy/Lebanese authorities to Hezbollah that its forces move 7km from the border, a proposal currently not acceptable to Israel or Hezbollah. That will probably mean that further escalation is likely before the situation de-escalates.

However, some form of deal is still likely. Both sides ultimately understand how ruinous a major war would be to all parties. Hochstein has also achieved a rare successful mediated agreement between Lebanon and Israel before. In 2022, he successfully brought a deal to a successful conclusion delineating the two countries’ disputed maritime boundary, a deal that Hezbollah would have had to agree to even if only quietly and behind the scenes. That means there’s hope, even if it was a far easier deal to bring to fruition as it involved delineating a maritime border which allows money to start to flow to both countries because it allows for the gas in the area to be extracted. Moving forces back behind a river – and ensuring its compliance – is a far harder act to achieve.

There’s a good chance a deal will eventually be reached, as war is in neither side’s interest, but given how far apart the two sides are, this will be an extremely bumpy ride. The situation is likely to escalate quite intensely before it eventually de-escalates. The danger is always present that although neither side wants a major war, there is a miscalculation or error on one side which crosses a red line and brings everyone into a war no-one wanted.

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.



Hezbollah flag on show at the University of Cape Town at an event held in March 2023 by the Palestine Solidarity Forum

to go back to their homes in the north with all the security risks on that border. Israel therefore cannot allow the risks on the northern border to remain unchecked.

The failure of Netanyahu’s Hamas strategy was shown up in brutal detail with the 7 October attacks. The strategy involved some form of accommodation with Hamas, allowing it to receive monthly payments from Qatar to keep the Gaza Strip running, with a bombing campaign whenever the attacks from Gaza became too intense. Generally, it involved looking the other way when rockets came over, assuming that the security fence would give Israel all the security it needed and Hamas would never dare to escalate to a full-scale war. The 7 October attacks have made it clear to all that a well-armed group which calls for Israel’s destruction cannot be left alone nor accommodated. The problem must be sorted out without delay, and the can cannot just be kicked down the road.

Hezbollah seems to have signalled that it doesn’t want a major escalation. When Israel was at its weakest on 7 October, Hezbollah decided not to join the war. This was probably because it knew Israel would respond with great force, given the existential risk it would then face, and would very likely have been very supported by the United States (US), which initially had two aircraft carriers sent to the region. Instead,

most likely use to support Israel if Hezbollah initiated a major war, and as discussed above, Hezbollah has signalled its desire to avoid a full-scale escalation, the time seems ripe to push for major change. A paper has been released on the Begin Sadat website and a few articles published by academics calling for an “escalation to de-escalate” strategy. That involves escalating the situation in the north gradually, not enough to force Hezbollah into a war for which Israel would be blamed and would probably lose US support, but escalate enough so that Hezbollah begins to feel some pain. Then it would have to decide what to do to de-escalate a war it wants to avoid and in which it would likely face the US as well, or start to talk about a deal. In addition, all sides know that the Lebanese government definitely wants to avoid a war that will devastate Lebanon.

That’s what we’re seeing. Israel has been upping the ante in assassinating some Hezbollah and Hamas leaders in Lebanon, and bombing more forcibly. The ball is now in Hezbollah’s court, and the question is how it will respond. Although neither the US nor Israel talks directly to Hezbollah, and Israel doesn’t deal directly with the Lebanese government, the US does have relations with Lebanon. It’s thus able to negotiate on behalf of Israel with Lebanon and thereby indirectly with Hezbollah, with the US



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## Mental health critical, says graduate with bipolar disorder

>> Continued from page 17

increasingly difficult to connect with the friends I had made throughout my high school career, which took a mental toll on me.

“I have bipolar 2 [disorder], so I get into a manic state sometimes. Before my medication was right, I would get into the sub-manic state and that’s when I felt most accepted by my friends, but once I was put on the right medication and was more stable, I found myself drifting from my friend group. It was a case of me realising who I was and my friends not connecting to that version of me.”

Frankel is grateful for the support he received from his “amazing family, understanding teachers, and incredible close friends”.

Frankel’s marks in maths and Afrikaans constantly decreased. “I had to drop out of science because I failed my Grade 11 exam, but I maintained a high level in subjects like English, Hebrew, and history.”

He was given opportunities to help other people with challenges. “I’ve gained a lot of tools from my support system and my therapist. Getting the right therapist was life-changing for me. I’m grateful for what I went through so that I could help people when

they needed it. If I manage to affect the life of one person, then I’ve succeeded.”

Frankel describes himself as a giver who likes to help people in need. “I homed in on this major feature of my personality and can confidently say that I’m the most myself that I’ve ever been,” he says.

He advises students struggling with their mental health to reach out even though it can be terrifying. “My parents had to force it out of me. I’m so glad that they did, because once I acknowledged my mental health issues, things couldn’t have worked out better for me in the long term.

“People think because you’re in an older grade, you don’t have time to be mentally ill. Yet I passed matric and I have a mental illness, so there’s always time. You must make time for yourself, give yourself the space to relax, and get in tune with your senses.”

Frankel is going to study psychology at the Wits and might join his brother by getting involved with the South African Union of Jewish Students.



# History not repeating itself, but offering us guidance

OPINION

JAKUB NOWAKOWSKI



During 1944 and 1945, when Russian, American, and British soldiers began liberating Nazi death and concentration camps, the sheer horror they encountered left them in shock. In spite of five years of war and prior reports about German atrocities, witnessing the extent of the mass killings, particularly targeting European Jews, was incomprehensible. A world confronted with photos and footage sent by these soldiers from Auschwitz, Dachau, Mauthausen, and other notorious camps, found it hard to believe it too. Although some had reported and raised alarms about Nazi crimes as early as in 1942 and 1943, the stark reality surpassed what many were willing to accept.

The aftermath of liberation revealed haunting scenes. Rows and rows of skeletal figures, still clinging to life, bearing the scorches of total destruction. They hadn't succumbed to death, yet the annihilation they witnessed had left an indelible mark, a perpetual stigma.

But what also was discovered were halls filled with shoes and clothes, boxes containing personal items like eyeglasses, dentures, teeth – crates of teeth – made of gold or other precious metals, watches, shoes, combs, keys, coins, musical instruments, and toys. These artifacts represented the microcosm of the life stories of the six million people that were no more, the grim result of the systematic murder of Europe's Jews, which only later was named the Holocaust.

This was the final chapter of destruction. But where was its origin? Was it in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II? Or perhaps 1938 and the Night of the Broken Glass, the first violent pogrom orchestrated by the Nazi state against its own citizens, German Jews? Or maybe the year 1933, and the elections that paved the way to power for Adolf Hitler?

Yet, antisemitism, the deep-seated hatred towards Jews, didn't originate with the Germans. It existed much earlier, taking various forms over the centuries.

In the ancient world, Jews were predominantly hated for their religion, specifically their belief in one G-d. Unlike antisemitism, a later development encompassing broader prejudice, anti-Judaism specifically targeted the religious aspects of Judaism. This manifested in discriminatory laws, persecution, and violence. Anti-Judaism played a pivotal role in shaping societal attitudes towards Jews, contributing to the broader spectrum of prejudice faced by Jewish communities over time.

The situation changed in the 19th century, which witnessed the rise of a new concept – the nation – in most cases grounded in blood ties and exclusivity which often bred hostility toward groups deemed incompatible with the narrowly defined national identity. As societies around the world embraced nationalist fervour, the call for assimilation among Jews gained traction. The concept was for Jews to adopt the cultural and social norms of their respective nations, becoming German Jews, French Jews, and so on. The ironic paradox, however, was that the more Jews tried to assimilate and shed the distinctive signs of their identity, the more suspicion and hostility they encountered. As the challenge of persecuting them on the basis of their religious beliefs grew, a sinister shift occurred, and they were now targeted on the basis of their blood.

Anti-Judaism evolved into antisemitism. After the end of World War II, some believed that the lessons of Auschwitz would serve as a definitive cure for antisemitism, but these expectations quickly proved unrealistic. Antisemitism, akin to a persistent virus, can lie dormant, silently infecting new hosts over extended



periods and occasionally revealing itself disguised as stereotypes, misconceptions, or fake news, offering easy solutions and pointing to those responsible for all our misfortunes and failures.

Until it violently erupts, fuelled by fear and hatred, causing pain and suffering. What makes the virus of antisemitism extremely difficult to eradicate is the fact that it perpetually transforms, continuously evolving to offer responses to our current fears. Though it remains deeply anchored in ancient lies spanning centuries, it ingeniously discovers ways to stay relevant, influencing our future.

However, the simple fact that it draws from the same old narratives doesn't necessarily imply that it stays the same. More crucially, it doesn't indicate that our circumstances mirror those of the past.

It was Svetlana Boym, the Russian American novelist and professor at Harvard University, who once remarked, "Fantasies of the past determined by the needs of the present have a direct impact on the realities of the future." As we're aware of the past, it's tempting to believe that history just repeats itself before our eyes. That it all happened before.

However, that's never the case. The situation of the Jewish diaspora differs significantly across historical eras. Whether in the Middle Ages, when they experienced a fluctuation between mere tolerance, persecution, and expulsion; the 19th-century Eastern Europe marked by violent pogroms or forced assimilation; or the United States in the 1920s, which drastically limited immigration from Eastern Europe, deeming Ashkenazi Jews, among others, *undesirable*.

It's important to remember that the menace of antisemitism in Nazi Germany wasn't predominantly fuelled by fervour and passion; it derived its terror from cold, calculated reasoning.

Each act of humiliation, every blow, and each bullet had the imprimatur of the law, shrouded in proper legislation that rendered them legal. The German antisemitism of the 1930s was particularly ominous because it was state-sponsored, and few countries globally stood against it. On the contrary, they opted to seal their borders, attempting to isolate themselves from what they perceived as the "Jewish problem".

We need to be cognisant of these

differences to comprehend the current reality. In spite of the global surge in anti-Israeli sentiment or the massive rallies organised in some countries in support of Hamas and following the heinous attacks on Israel by this terrorist organisation on 7 October and the subsequent conflict, it's imperative not to lose sight of the fact that many governments around the world are endorsing Israel's right to self-defence.

## Proof of 'thousand ways' Jews resisted Nazis

STEVEN GRUZD

It's a pernicious myth that Jews went "like sheep to the slaughter" in the Holocaust. This is the central message of a new documentary film, titled *Resistance: They Fought Back*. In advance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January – the day Auschwitz was liberated in 1945 – the *SA Jewish Report* spoke to pre-eminent Holocaust scholar Dr Michael Berenbaum in Los Angeles. Berenbaum was intimately involved in developing this documentary, which examines the myriad ways Jews resisted the Nazis and their collaborators who sought to exterminate them, in the ghettos, camps, and forests of Eastern Europe.

Among his many accolades, Berenbaum oversaw the creation of the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and worked intimately with moviemaker Steven Spielberg to document the stories of Shoah survivors. He's director of the Sigi Ziering Institute: Exploring the Ethical and Religious Implications of the Holocaust at the American Jewish University, where he's also a professor of Jewish Studies. Berenbaum has driven the development of museums in Europe, Mexico, and the United States. He has also been a historical advisor on more than 40 films. "I'm like the rabbi," he quipped, "telling them if the movie material is kosher or *treyf*."

### The Holocaust is a story worth telling and retelling.

*Resistance: They Fought Back* is a significant film, Berenbaum said, because it calls attention to the use of children of Holocaust survivors as narrators of their parents' stories. "They do it in a manner that essentially extends the life of survivors for another generation, for another 20 to 25 years. This may be the film's most important contribution," Berenbaum said. "The Holocaust is a story worth telling and retelling. The story of the Exodus from Egypt has been told and retold for 3 200 years."

Berenbaum said the exhortation to Jews not to go "like sheep to the slaughter" was first made by resistance fighter Abba Kovner in the Vilna Ghetto in 1942. "You should die as free men," Kovner said.

He added that in the Holocaust, there was often a disproportionate response by the Nazis to physical resistance by Jews, where hundreds would be killed or punished for the rebellious actions of a few. Berenbaum also noted that the new state of Israel was looking for useable history to come out of the tragedy, designating *Yom Hashoah ve'Hagvura* (Holocaust and Heroism Day).

"Just because Jews were powerless doesn't mean they were passive. They did a thousand things to act against the Nazis," Berenbaum said. "Don't blame the victims for their

The rise in antisemitism and the escalating number of violent attacks on Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, or individuals, tragic as they are, shouldn't overshadow the reality that these acts are illegal and subject to legal persecution, not the other way around.

None of this means that there is no reason for alarm.

The rising tide of antisemitism or Holocaust denial as well as the ongoing conflict in Israel are issues of profound concern. The fact that Hamas members aren't modern-day Nazis doesn't mean that it's any less dangerous.

But fortunately, it's precisely the past that gave us tools so we could shape a better future. This is where the past matters: it illuminates all the wrong decisions we humans have made. Let's keep that in mind when in coming days we'll be contemplating the significance of Auschwitz and the memory of its victims. Let's not make the mistake of oversimplifying history. Let the traumatic experiences of the victims of the Holocaust serve as a warning, not a prophecy. We're not prisoners of the past; we can shape it through the power of our choices.

Perhaps therein lies all our hope. • *Jakub Nowakowski is the new director at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre.*

victimhood." He noted how negative attitudes in Israel towards survivors changed after the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961.

Berenbaum described three types of non-armed resistance to German occupation. The first was symbolic resistance, which included acts like educating children in the ghettos, prayer, and washing clothes. The second was polemical resistance – the production of underground newspapers, publications, songs, poems, and keeping diaries to bear witness. It included humour to disparage the enemy. The third was self-help, like running soup kitchens and looking after the less fortunate. Armed resistance took place only after Jews were sure they were destined to die at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. But armed resistance did take place in many ghettos and camps, including the blowing up of a crematorium in Auschwitz and a daring escape from Treblinka.

The documentary also highlights how Jewish women played a key role as couriers of information, blending more easily into the gentile world than their circumcised brothers. Jewish women also spoke Polish without a heavy Yiddish accent due to their secular education, unlike their brothers in *yeshivot*.

When asked how he felt as International Holocaust Remembrance Day approached, Berenbaum said that the Jewish people took three decisions in the aftermath of the

Shoah that were pivotal to what has transpired in the past 78 years, namely, to remain Jewish – although not everyone chose this; that the future of the Jewish people would be in a Jewish state that would protect Jewish life; and that Jewish life would be secured in societies like democracies where freedoms were guaranteed and respected.

"At this moment, the last two aren't secure. It's unclear after 7 October whether Israel can protect Jewish life – I say this with tears in my eyes. And I'm not confident that liberal democracies will survive in this age of fascination with autocratic rule. There's an existential challenge to these basic decisions," Berenbaum said.

"I'm interested to see how the aftermath of 7 October will appear in the Israeli national narrative. How will this pogrom be remembered in five or ten years?"

Berenbaum said that different generations ask different questions. The grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, for example, are asking about the period from 1918 to 1933, and how Germany as a democracy full of promise degenerated into authoritarian rule.

"The Shoah has lessons to teach everyone about the fragility of democracy and the dangers of polarisation today."

• *A discussion on the film will be held on 25 January at 22:00. It's a collaboration between the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Classrooms without Borders, and Ghetto Fighters' House.*



Eighty-one African emissaries create jolt of electricity

PERSONAL STORY

RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN

I stumbled upon the map of Africa while walking to shul one morning a couple of weeks ago. I was in the United States visiting my family, and was making my way to the Chabad headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. There it was, on the pavement of Kingston Avenue, Crown Heights’ main drag. It had been placed there about six weeks earlier, when thousands of Chabad emissaries had converged on the suburb for the Kinus, the annual convention of *shluchim* (emissaries). Inside the outline of the continent, the words, “Welcome 81 *shluchim*” had been etched. Somehow, it had survived thousands of pairs of feet trampling over it and weeks of inclement weather. Africa is like that, hardy and able to withstand all forms of challenges.

On the way back from shacharit, I returned to photograph the illustration. It seems I got there in the nick of time, as a crew from Con Edison were about to start ripping open the paving. I had to engage the foreman in conversation to get his permission to move some of his barriers over for the photo session. After a jovial, typical New York style, “Sure, but this will cost you,” he sought to understand my interest in the large sticker on the ground. It was easy to explain. He pointed out that there were similar maps on other corners of the same intersection, albeit not nearly in such good condition, which wouldn’t necessitate moving poles. I insisted that Africa alone held a fascination for me, as I came from there. “No way, you’re from Africa!” was the incredulous reaction. Eventually, he accepted that perhaps people like me lived in South Africa.

I didn’t think electrical utility workers could appreciate my emotional investment in the number 81 in relation to our continent. It’s a long story, which begins back in 1951, in the nascent days of the Rebbe’s leadership of Chabad, when he appointed his first emissary to Africa. This came in the form of a letter, posted from the Eastern Parkway headquarters. It was addressed to a recent refugee who had fled with his family from Soviet Russia to post-war Paris. The missive was dated 20 Shevat, a mere 10 days after the passing of his predecessor, and the Rebbe referred to conversations the two of them had about expanding activities to

Africa. The previous Rebbe had suggested the letter’s recipient as a potential candidate, and he was now asking him if he was willing to accept the challenge.

This is how Rabbi Michael Lipsker, my maternal grandfather, ended up living in the city of Meknes in Morocco, then known as “Little Jerusalem”, and launching the movement in that country. He was later joined by more Chabad representatives across North Africa. The movement became entrenched in Tunisia and Algeria as well. One of those was my own father, Rabbi Azriel

Chaikin, who crossed the ocean from New York in 1956 to open a Yeshiva in Agadir, a resort town in Morocco’s southwest. He and my mother were married that same year.

The next phase of Chabad in Africa came in 1971 with the arrival of Rabbi Mendel Lipskar to South Africa. He’s Rabbi Michael Lipsker’s nephew – blame the different surname spellings on Ellis Island. Under his leadership, Chabad-Lubavitch grew across the subcontinent to a veritable army of dozens of emissaries, in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and later Durban. When I was invited to join the “team” shortly after my marriage to South Africa-born Rivka (née Bacher) in 1985, I accepted with a great sense of history and responsibility.

In 1991, Rabbi Shlomo Bentolila landed on the continent to establish Chabad in Kinshasa, in what was then known as Zaire. Over the next three decades, Chabad of Central Africa established a further 11 centres, first in Nigeria, and subsequently in Angola, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. Only a couple of years ago, Zambia became the latest African country to be added to the list.

It was thus with powerful emotions, and a heavy sense of history and destiny that I stood on the corner of Kingston and President, staring at the number 81 inscribed on the pavement in the outline of the African continent. Zaida on high is surely very proud. But the Con Ed men would never have understood.

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



Death of 24 soldiers spurs debate about war

>>Continued from page 2

Marina Bibi, a friend of one of the fallen soldiers, Sergeant Major (reserve) Mark Kononovich, 35, told JTA that though the soldiers were in “imminent danger” at any given time in Gaza, she wasn’t sure there was another way to fight. Bibi described Kononovich as an “amazing man and father, salt of the earth”. Kononovich, from the central Israeli city of Herzliya, left behind a wife and three children.

A note written by Master Sergeant (reserve) Elkana Vizel, 35, a squad commander from Bnei Dekalim in southern Israel who was killed on Monday, also made the rounds on social media.

“If you’re reading this, it means something happened to me. First of all, if I was kidnapped by Hamas I’m asking that you refrain from any deal releasing terrorists in exchange for my release,” Vizel, who is a rabbi, began his letter.

“Maybe I fell in battle. When a soldier falls in battle, it’s sad. But I ask you to be happy. We’re a generation of

redemption!”

He concluded his letter by noting that an injury from the 2014 war in Gaza had exempted him from participating in this war. “I don’t for a second regret coming back to fight,” he wrote. “On the contrary, it was the best decision I’ve ever made.”

Another viral post came from someone who had volunteered to make meals for the troops, as part of a sweeping support effort, and had been assigned to the unit that suffered heavy losses on Monday.

“Not simple to organise for a unit over a long period of time and wake up one morning to realise that half of them are no longer here. From 50 soldiers, 21 were killed yesterday, and it just tears my heart to pieces,” the post said. “It reminds me how important our work is. To know that these soldiers ate well, that they knew we cared about them and felt spoiled by some home-cooked comfort food with the taste of love.”

Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship



There’s a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn’t necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we’re looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn’t exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.



Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn’t exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one’s ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendents of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won’t be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I’m well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

With only a four-hour flight to Warsaw and Vilnius, I’m able to arrive quickly and safely to Poland and Lithuania, where I collaborate closely with local professionals in tracing the required documents for your successful application for reinstatement as a European citizen.

Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws.

I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

I will be in Johannesburg 8, 9 and 15 February and in Cape Town 10 to 14 February.



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# Living in awe – Ruth Rabinowitz’s life legacy

LEE TANKLE

Ruth Rabinowitz is described as a testament to the power of dedication and hard work. As an academic, a doctor, and then a politician, and ultimately as a mother and grandmother, Rabinowitz pursued perfection not just as a goal, but as a way of life.

Rabinowitz passed away on 15 January surrounded by her three children at her home in Menlo Park, California.

“

SHE ALWAYS PRIORITISED MOTHERING, AND THEREFORE NEVER WORKED FULL TIME WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP

Margot Eiran, Rabinowitz’s daughter, said at the funeral, “Though your physical presence is no longer with us, there’s so much of you in us and around us, deeply ingrained. You awakened in us a wonder about the world, an appreciation of music, poetry, art, cosmology, philosophy, ecology, spirituality – all the ‘mommologies’ – and generally in living with awe.”

Rabinowitz trained as a medical doctor and ran a

successful practice from home. She then turned her attention to homoeopathic medicine. Zelda Isaacson, Rabinowitz’s long-time friend, told the *SA Jewish Report*, “She saw the harmful effect of ordinary medicine, so she did both [homoeopathy and traditional medicine].”

As well as running her own medical practice and taking care of three young children, Rabinowitz taught speech and drama lessons and held a creativity group from her house.

“There was no difference to her work versus home personality. She always prioritised mothering, and therefore never worked full time

when we were growing up,” Eiran told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Rabinowitz left her medical practice after her children became adults, becoming a member of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), where she was the party’s parliamentary spokesperson for health from 1997 to 2009.

In this role, Rabinowitz developed a close relationship with the late Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi. “There was something

about her Jewish sense of community and her perception of a Zulu sense of community that overlapped. [Buthelezi] called her a “Jew-lu” – half Jewish, half Zulu,” said Peter Smith, a colleague of Rabinowitz. “She

policy surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Said Smith, “She was ferociously opposed to the nonsense that Mbeki and his health ministers were peddling. She took a consistently strong principled stand against the



Matt Rabinowitz, Dr Ruth Rabinowitz, Margot Eiran, and Daniel Rabinowitz

needed a home that would work with her principles, and she found that also in the IFP. Her relationship with Buthelezi was powerful, and was a key part of what drew her to the party. But the party itself also had positives for her that she could work with,” Smith said.

Rabinowitz served three terms in parliament and in that time, was one of the biggest critics of former President Thabo Mbeki’s

mumbo jumbo that they were sprouting and the lack of positive interventions.” Rabinowitz was part of the IFP’s preparation to take Mbeki’s government to court, insisting on the distribution of antiretroviral drugs.

Isaacson describes Rabinowitz

as a woman who had a great curiosity for good, and did everything with integrity.

Rabinowitz started a nongovernmental organisation for women in Alexandra, where she would empower participants through beading and other activities and Isaacson would teach English.

Rabinowitz also published a book about education titled, *Working with Wonder, a handbook for holistic education in natural sciences*. In this book, there were lessons and projects on subjects from the ancient Greek myths

of Apollo and Daphne to how the body works. “I remember many things about her, but one of the greatest is her curiosity in search of the truth,” said Isaacson.

Rabinowitz was a devoted mother to her children, Margot, Matthew, and

Daniel. Through them, they say, the lessons she taught live on: to question the status quo; to stand by one’s convictions; and to be strong individuals in their own right.

The time they spent with her wasn’t just a period of familial bonding but also a time of learning and growth, shaped by Ruth’s indomitable spirit and wisdom. Said Eiran, “My mom overflowed with selfless love and support for us. She gave us a Renaissance childhood, surrounded by all imaginable inspiration through her vast library of books, every craft material under the sun, family adventures, and unconventionality. Our family meals around our round wooden dining table were characterised by open, honest, questioning, controversial discussion, and debate, and lots of great humour.

“My parents created around that dining table an unbreakable bond of love and loyalty between us all. That same dining room table now sits in our new house in Israel, and carries its ingrained values, memories, and energy into the next generation. It’s fundamental to who we are.

“There was something so special about Ruth. She had a whimsical quality about her because she was quite out of the box, but she also had great strength. She was so thin, sort of elfin and ethereal looking, but she had the strength of a lion.”

Rabinowitz’s parents were active in the Jewish community in Springs. “My grandfather was a founding member of the synagogue, and later bought a Torah scroll for the shul. She went to shul with her parents, but didn’t enjoy it. She became interested in Judaism only later in her life,” Eiran said.



Dr Ruth Rabinowitz

## Misstep no longer – ANC’s troubling terror trajectory

OPINION

DANIEL SCHAY



Recent events have exposed a disconcerting pattern in the African National Congress’s (ANC’s) international stance, evolving from celebrating terrorism, to aligning with terrorists and, most disturbingly, endorsing a group implicated in heinous acts. As we examine these developments, it’s imperative to question the party’s commitment to ethical diplomacy.

**First: 11 September 2001: celebration of terrorism** Amidst the chaos and grief following the 9/11 attacks, the ANC’s response exhibited a disturbing lack of condemnation and empathy. Troubling statements emerged, casting doubt on whether Al-Qaeda should be labelled terrorists. The scepticism surrounding such a fundamental truth – that a group responsible for mass murder should be deemed terrorists – set a disconcerting tone.

Particularly alarming was the conduct of Eastern Cape Premier Makhenkesi Stofile, a prominent ANC figure. His insinuations, questioning whether the attacks constituted legitimate resistance, added fuel to the fire of moral ambiguity. Such statements not only failed to condemn the perpetrators but implied a perverse sense of justification for an act that resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives.

Moreover, reports surfaced detailing the unsettling behaviour of ANC representatives who openly celebrated the tragic events. This celebration in the face of immense human suffering painted a grim picture of the party’s moral compass. The sight of individuals affiliated with the ANC expressing joy or support for an act that caused widespread devastation not only defied common decency but also raised serious questions about the ethical foundations of the party.

These actions, collectively, showcased a concerning deviation from the expected norms of condemnation, empathy, and moral clarity. The ANC’s response to 9/11 highlighted a disturbing trend within the party, one that suggested a willingness to entertain narratives that sought to justify or downplay acts of terrorism rather than unequivocally standing against them. Such behaviour, especially from political representatives, underscored a concerning lapse in moral judgement and ethical responsibility.

**Second: 7 October 2023: aligning with terrorists**

Fast forward to October 2023, and the insensitivity continued as Cyril Ramaphosa and his cabinet displayed a striking alignment with the Palestinian cause, raising serious concerns about the impartiality and ethical stance of the ANC. Their press conference, conducted with an unmistakable show of solidarity, occurred when wounds from one of the worst and most savage terrorist atrocities in history were still raw.

The ANC’s overt support, before Israel initiated its ground operation in response to the aforementioned tragedy, underscored a startling lack of sympathy for the victims and their families. Palestinian symbols proudly adorned by members of the cabinet during the press conference spoke volumes about the party’s stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Instead of adopting a measured and impartial approach, the ANC exhibited a worrying trend of political bias that undermined the principles of fairness and objectivity expected in international affairs.

The cabinet’s symbolic support for the Palestinian cause also raised questions about the ANC’s commitment to understanding the complexities of the Middle East conflict. Such a display of alignment, devoid of a nuanced appreciation for the historical context and the intricate dynamics of the region, fuelled concerns about the party’s role as a fair and unbiased actor on the global stage.

In essence, the ANC’s premature and unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian cause demonstrated a disconcerting willingness to take sides without a comprehensive understanding of the situation. This overt display of political bias, especially before Israel initiated its response, revealed a party more interested in grand gestures than careful examination of the facts on the ground. Such actions not only undermined the impartiality expected in international relations but also showed a lack of diplomatic finesse and empathy for the victims of the tragic events.

**Third: 11 January 2024: supporting terrorist atrocities**

The climax of this troubling evolution occurred on 11 January 2024, when the South African government

chose to act as the legal arm of Hamas. Using blatant lies and deception, it sought to tarnish Israel’s reputation before the international community. In doing so, it not only denied Israel’s right to exist but also neglected the well-documented acts of terrorism perpetrated by Hamas, including torture, kidnapping, rape, and murder against individuals, spanning from unborn babies to the elderly and everyone in between. Falsely accusing Israel of genocide further exacerbated a narrative that distorts the reality of a conflict in which Israel has consistently aimed to minimise civilian casualties.

To underscore the gravity of the ANC’s actions, one can draw a parallel with Zapiro’s infamous cartoon of Jacob Zuma. Just as the cartoon depicted Zuma violating Lady Justice while his cronies held her down, the ANC’s support for a group implicated in atrocities can be seen as asking the international community to hold real Israeli women down while Hamas terrorists rape them again and again.

In the face of these distressing events, it’s crucial for citizens to take a stand. The ANC’s actions are no longer diplomatic missteps, they are in support of terrorism and atrocities. As South Africans, we must voice our concerns and call for accountability.

**Vote them out**

The upcoming elections provide an opportunity for citizens to express their discontent and demand change. Our votes can serve as a resounding rejection of a party that has strayed far from the values we hold dear. It’s time to restore integrity, empathy, and justice to our nation’s diplomatic endeavours.

In the face of the ANC’s troubling alignment and support for actions that shock our conscience, let our ballot speak loudly. We must choose leaders who prioritise human rights, justice, and ethical diplomacy. The future of our nation depends on it.

• *Daniel Schay is a member of the City Council of Johannesburg, and he is on the committee of Jewish National Fund SA. The views expressed are the views of the author alone, and don’t represent the views of any organisation or political party.*



# A bit of hora with your kneidlach, anyone?

NICOLA MILTZ

There’s something entertaining about asking your first-time dinner guests to pronounce “kneidlach” especially when they’ve never heard of it or partaken of the traditional fare.

Skye Mac Arthur, 32, who unabashedly describes herself as a “Joburg Jewish girl born and bred” is a recent winner of the popular BBC reality television show *Come Dine with Me South Africa* on BBC Lifestyle channel 174.

From the get-go she set out to entertain and enthrall with a Jewish-themed vegetarian menu coupled with her seemingly exaggerated – but not – Joburg Jewish accent, and her vivacious and infectious energy.

“I’m proudly Jewish, and I wanted to share my culture and traditional food with my guests and television viewers,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* after winning.

The animated Grade 2 primary school teacher is the real deal, embodying Joburg Jewish vibes more authentically than any imagined version ever could. She’s not the spoilt, materialistic, entitled type, more a single city girl looking for Mr Right cum Yiddishe mama in the making. All this with a healthy dose of bubbly charm, warmth, and exuberance packaged with flair and straight, jet black hair.

“I can be a bit much,” she says, but “I am who I am, you get what you get, and this is me.”

Describing herself further, she says, “I don’t drink, I’m a vegetarian, and I’m an animal lover.”

Mac Arthur is Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, The Nanny, and Tali Babes rolled into one fizzy ball of energy, except she’s the genuine article, delivering line after line of hilarity without even realising it.

“I don’t eat shrimp because I’m Jewish,” she explains to the camera, with dramatic hand movements telling a story all their own.

*Come Dine with Me* is a British reality series that has aired on Channel 4 for many years and is narrated by Dave Lamb. It has many international versions including in South Africa. Amateur chefs who live in the same town each host a three-course dinner party for the other contestants at their own homes. Each competitor then rates the hosts’ food and hosting skills, with the highest scoring chef winning R10 000.

Mac Arthur decided at the last minute to enter the show because she loves cooking and has been told that “she’s made for television”.

“I applied online at the very last minute when applications were closing,” she says, persuaded by her family, who said she would be a

perfect contestant.

“I *ummed* and *ahhed* about whether to go for it, and in the end, decided I had nothing to lose, never for a

Before serving wine to her three guests upon arrival, she taught them to clink their glasses and say, “*le chaim*” which she explained was a



Warren Hickenbotham, Sasha-Lee Findlay, Tinashe Zwambila, and Skye Mac Arthur

minute thinking I’d actually win.” She was amazed to receive an email two days later saying that she’d made it to the next round of auditions which involved filming herself saying why she’d make a good contestant.

“I said, ‘I’m a Joburg Jewish girl, I love meeting new people and getting to know them, and of course, cooking my type of food.’”

Her starter received mixed reviews,

with one guest intimating it was “nice but not for me”, saying it was an “interesting experience” for which he was grateful, and another saying she wasn’t a “big fan” describing the taste as “sour”.

Next, she served melanzane, calling it “aubergine schnitzel”, served with a green salad on the side.

Mac Arthur rounded off her meal with a traditional crustless Jewish baked cheesecake, which was well received.

One guest seemed confused when he read what was on the desert menu, saying, “I’m trying to figure out if the cheesecake is Jewish because it was baked in a Jewish house or is the cheese cake Jewish because the cheese is Jewish? I mean what kind of cake is Jewish?”

While being filmed during the

making of her meal, Mac Arthur wore a white t-shirt with the words “Oi vey” written across the front.

Dramatic and exuberant, Mac Arthur told her guests, “As a teacher, I use my classroom as a stage. I feel like I’m a performer.”

Her guests were agog as she regaled them with stories from Jewish speed dating sessions; taught them how to do the hora to the upbeat sound of *Hava Nagilah*; and sent them off with a hearty “*Mazel tov* guys – you’ve got this!”

And there were lots of *mazeltovs* when her name was drawn as the winning contestant.

“I was so excited, I wanted to dance the hora. I had the best time,” she says.

Season 9, episode 8, featuring contestants Skye Mac Arthur, Tinashe Zwambila, Warren Hickenbotham, and Sasha-Lee Findlay was aired a few weeks ago, and can be viewed on DSTV catchup.

• *Come Dine with Me South Africa* airs on Wednesdays at 20:00 on BBC Lifestyle, DSTV Channel 174, repeated every Thursday at 17:00.

## Award winning *Lunch with Hitler* hard to digest

LEE TANKLE

The SAFTA (South African Film and Television Awards) award for best online content 2023 was given to director Christopher Grant Harvey for his short film titled *Lunch with Hitler* about the women forced to taste test food for Adolf Hitler.

The film enacts the story of the 15 women who were compelled to taste food at the heavily guarded Wolf’s Lair headquarters during World War II because there were rumours the Allies planned to poison Hitler. Their role was to taste his food to confirm it wouldn’t kill him, according to Harvey’s website.

“It’s amazing that this story can rise above the noise and stand out,” Harvey told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Harvey said he got wind of the story of Margot Woelk, the only one left of the 15 tasters, in 2014. “The story stood out because it felt like this was part of history that was not particularly spoken about,” he said. “It also stood out because [Margot Woelk] was the last of these women still alive at the time.” He was inspired to create a short film on the story, as he believed “the human spirit in times of living in paranoia and fear would resonate with a wide audience”.

The story came to light when the then 95-year-old Woelk revealed to *Der Spiegel* newspaper that she was one of Hitler’s taste testers for two and a half years. At the time, she was a 24-year-old secretary living in Berlin who had fled to her mother-in-law’s house in the East Prussian village of GrossPartsch, now Parcz, Poland.

Woelk didn’t know that less than 3km away from her safe haven was the Wolf’s Lair. She told *Der Spiegel*, “I’d hardly arrived when the SS showed up at the door and demanded, ‘Come

with us.’” Woelk was taken to the Wolf’s Lair to become a taste tester for Hitler.

As a young girl, Woelk had refused to join the League of German Girls, the female version of the Hitler Youth, but landed up becoming part of the operation to keep Hitler alive, according to *Der Spiegel*.

Woelk described the atrocities that she experienced at the Wolf’s Lair, including an incident when an SS officer used a ladder to get into the room where she slept and raped her.



Deborah Lettner as Maria

Woelk told *Der Spiegel* that when the Soviet army was near the Wolf’s Lair, a lieutenant took her aside and put her on a train to Berlin, which ultimately saved her life. When the war was over, she met the lieutenant and he told her that all the other food tasters were shot by the Soviets.

Harvey said he believed her story emphasised “that life doesn’t always have these happy endings that are seen in the movies”.

The film took about nine years to make, from conception to release. “I wanted to get the facts of the situation across but not necessarily make it a history lesson,” he said. He decided to portray only three women instead of the 15 that had actually been there. “It was an easy choice. The film just wouldn’t work the same way if there were more or less.

“The actresses cast were also perfect for the project,” Harvey said. “Deborah Lettner, who plays Maria, was already able to speak German, and the bond of the cast on screen is extremely powerful to me.”

“It’s important to note that the women in the Wolf’s Lair were German. They weren’t Jewish or part of any other group. The process of taste-testing Hitler’s food was seen as a way for these women to contribute to the war effort since women couldn’t fight in the war. It didn’t make sense for these women to be anything other than German.”

After the film was shot at Pretoria Boys High in 2018, Harvey stepped away from the project because of other things in his work life. But, he resumed during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. “It was the pandemic that inspired me to finish the film,” he said.

“I just wanted to tell this story, and a short film seemed like the perfect medium as the story can seem more digestible to the audience. I was also able to ensure that I had full creative control as not as much funding is needed for a short film compared to a feature film,” Harvey said.

“As a South African filmmaker, I don’t feel restricted to having to tell certain stories. Even though I’m far removed from this story, I just wanted to tell it at a time that it felt like no-one was telling it,” Harvey said.

The ultimate message of the film, Harvey said, is that “You have to look the devil in the eyes and say, ‘Not today.’”

“This story is one of resilience. Even though life may be bad today, we have to push through because you never know what’s on the other side. This is a universal message,” he said.



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# Taking Israel to court could be SA's worst decision

OPINION

IVOR ICHIKOWITZ



South Africa made history on 11 and 12 January when it took Israel to the United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of waging genocide against Palestinians and asking the court to order an immediate ceasefire.

It might turn out to be the worst decision the country has ever made.

At one stage, South Africa, especially the post-apartheid beacon envisaged and fashioned by Nelson Mandela, would have had every right and indeed obligation to criticise oppression and champion the vulnerable, but it has been a long time since we lived up to Mandela's expectations.

its heels to condemn the 7 October crime against human rights, but responded with alacrity and positively to Hamas, and its funder, Iran, a sovereign state with an avowed intent to end the existence of the state of Israel.

Now, South Africa has taken Israel to the ICJ over Israel's response to the attack, ignoring the catalytic role the 7 October attack played.

No-one can say that Israel shouldn't be judged. No country – South Africa least of all – can ever claim a free pass from actions based on a legacy of past injustice. To suggest otherwise would be to create

response was to threaten to withdraw from the ICC in spite of the Mandela administration being one of the original signatories to the Rome Statute which created this independent global body in 1998.

Last April, South Africa threatened to leave the ICC once again, this time to avoid the responsibility of arresting Russian President Vladimir Putin if he set foot in South Africa to take part in the BRICS (now Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates) summit in Johannesburg last August. The arrest warrant had been issued

own failings. Almost 23 000 people have died in Gaza since 7 October last year. In comparison, 27 494 South Africans died because of violent crime in a single calendar year. The rate of sexual violence is a global disgrace: between July and September last year, police recorded 10 516 rapes, 1 514 cases of attempted murder, and 14 401 assaults against female victims.

I'm a proud South African. I've also been a member, a supporter, and a fundraiser of the African National Congress (ANC) for more than three decades, but I'm also a Jew. I believe that the ANC has much to be proud of in terms of what it has achieved for South Africa as a whole. I believe, too, in the power of the ANC and its leadership to be a force for good on the international stage.

However, its actions since 7 October have wounded me in a way I never thought possible. I feel betrayed. Jewish South Africans have been rendered second-class citizens in the land of their own birth. The government did nothing to commiserate with the South Africans slain on 7 October, and as little to try to repatriate those caught in the conflict thereafter.

Most of all, I'm disappointed that the party of Mandela and Oliver Tambo and yes, even Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma once upon a time, has failed on the world stage to make a difference instead of just trying to make a statement. What was once the ANC's greatest strength, being a broad church where all who shared its ideals were once most welcome, irrespective of race, colour, class, or creed, has become its greatest weakness. The party of today has become hijacked by minority interests wholly at odds with its traditional credo.

I have immense respect for President Cyril Ramaphosa, and a profound sympathy too, because as a loyal, lifelong member of the party that he now leads, he has to reflect its consensus by honouring it even if this might run contrary to his own beliefs.

When Mandela and his comrades shepherded South Africa's peaceful transition from an intolerable regime of repression to the promise of the Rainbow Nation, they did so with humility, empathy, and an unshakeable belief in doing what was right – for everyone.

Mandela knew that the only way to solve problems was to encourage all the people to sit around the same table to find solutions, not for some to be press ganged into the same room on pain of subpoena in a criminal court and probable sanction in the court of public opinion. Sometimes, he had to take a position that was contrary to the party consensus to do so.

My country's decision to take Israel to court could be the final unmasking of the South African miracle in the eyes of the world, ironically in the very year that we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Nelson Mandela and millions of other previously disenfranchised South Africans casting their vote for freedom and a better life.

What a truly tragic epitaph for the promise we once held so dear.

• Ivor Ichikowitz is an industrialist and a philanthropist. He chairs the Ichikowitz Family Foundation, a leading African-based foundation supporting the development of the African continent and its people. The foundation promotes dialogue to facilitate conflict resolution, and Ichikowitz was involved in a supportive role with the African Peace Initiative to Ukraine and Russia.

• This article was previously published in the Chicago Tribune.



Madiba saw human rights as the guiding light for South Africa's foreign policy when he became president 30 years ago. But the South African government's actions over the past 10 years have belied this. Human rights have become a convenient beard, not for any "national interest" but rather for one based on narrow sectarian interests.

The 7 October attack – the massacre of several hundred unarmed and innocent civilians and the deliberate – and filmed – sexual violation and mutilation of women was a deliberate terrorist outrage by Hamas. The organisation's founding charter is an unequivocal injunction for the destruction of Israel and the eradication of Jews. It's a clarion call for genocide.

The South African government dragged

an untenable precedent, forever removing fairness, logic, and accountability.

This is South Africa's fatal flaw. If Israel is to be judged, so too must Hamas stand in the same dock. Equally, those who accuse must be prepared to withstand the same scrutiny. South Africa has opened a Pandora's box by accusing another country. There will be many who will be astounded that a country would seek to use a global instrument such as the ICJ, when only seven years ago, the International Criminal Court (ICC) ruled against it. The world won't forget South Africa for its failure in 2015 to execute an arrest warrant issued by the ICC against the then president of Sudan, Omar al Bashir. No-one will forget how the South African government's

after Russia was taken to the ICJ for its invasion of Ukraine. Now, South Africa has chosen to take Israel to court over Gaza – albeit to a different global court.

When the world met at the United Nations General Assembly to condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the well documented war crimes its troops have committed there, South Africa abstained from the motion. It would do so twice more.

Far from being non-aligned as the government continues to claim, South Africa has proven to be one of Russia's most strident allies, as it's increasingly proving to be for Iran and now, its proxy, Hamas.

In its rank hypocrisy, quick to call out the injustice in some parts of the world but not others, South Africa is blindest to its

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# State’s application to unpack genocide significant for SA



OPINION

KERSTIN BREE CARLSON AND LINE ENGBO GISSEL

In November 2023, six Western states filed a joint application before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) arguing for an ample and expansive understanding of genocide. This intervention, as it’s legally termed, was made by Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom in relation to the genocide case The Gambia filed against Myanmar in 2019. The still ongoing case revolves around the violent expulsion of Rohingya people from Myanmar into Bangladesh.

Our research focus is on international law and transitional justice. Our view is that the intervention is interesting and significant, both because of how it interprets past genocide cases, and in terms of what this could mean for the ICJ’s future determinations regarding states’ commission of genocide.

## Consolidating genocide law

Genocide concerns the destruction of a people. It’s called “the crime of crimes” because of its collective significance; it diminishes our humanity. The Genocide Convention, which grew out of the horrors of the Holocaust, was introduced in 1948 and has since been joined by 153 states. Its definition of genocide requires the demonstration of an intent to destroy a group in whole or in part. The Genocide Convention addresses states, which can either carry out or refrain from genocidal policies. It was designed to prevent genocide, and should be forward-looking.

The ICJ, which hears claims between states, has decided only two genocide cases to date, and has never held a state responsible for genocide. This has contributed to discussions about the failure of the Genocide Convention.

Though the ICJ’s record is sparse, there are many genocide findings produced by international criminal courts in cases against individuals. For example, the Akayesu case before the International Tribunal for Rwanda found a Rwandan major guilty of genocide in relation to sexual violence. And the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia found several individuals guilty of genocide in relation to the 1995 massacre of 8 000 Bosnian men and boys at Srebrenica.

This law is developed not under the Genocide Convention but rather through international criminal law. International criminal courts have produced far-reaching and inclusive definitions of the kinds of violent crime that can constitute genocide. This is the jurisprudence that the joint intervention consolidates to argue for a more expansive construction of genocide than the ICJ has so far employed.

The joint intervention makes three key interpretive points. First, genocide concerns “destruction”, which need not be death. Indeed, the Genocide Convention itself recognises that killing

isn’t a necessary aspect of genocide and that other forms of violence may also be genocidal.

Second, the joint intervention examines how sexual and gender-based crime can contribute to a finding of genocide. It connects these crimes both to the intent standard in the crime of genocide, as well as to the group-destruction standard.

## THE ICJ, WHICH HEARS CLAIMS BETWEEN STATES, HAS DECIDED ONLY TWO GENOCIDE CASES TO DATE, AND HAS NEVER HELD A STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR GENOCIDE

Finally, the joint intervention argues that the threshold for how genocide is constituted should be lowered when considering crimes against children. These crimes affect an individual for the rest of their life, defining entire generations. It also matters that children are more vulnerable than adults,

and therefore easier to harm or to kill. The joint intervention reasons:

Given the significance of children to the survival of all groups, evidence of harm to children may contribute to an inference that the perpetrators intended to destroy a substantial part of the protected group.

In legal terms, the joint intervention is progressive because it draws from existing case law to show patterns in how genocide can be established. These legal conversations are part of how jurisprudence develops, and can be integral to judicial decision making. In political terms, the joint intervention is enterprising because it may lock the six states into a more ample understanding of genocide. This is because one of the characteristics that distinguish law from politics is its relative stability of meaning.

Therefore the joint intervention suggests ways the ICJ can apply genocide jurisprudence to better realise the Genocide Convention’s forward-looking mandate.

**Significance beyond The Gambia v Myanmar**

The Genocide Convention makes all states that are parties to it responsible for the prevention of genocide anywhere in the world. Before The Gambia’s

2019 case against Myanmar, however, this “*erga omnes*” jurisdictional mandate had never been realised. The Gambia’s case against Myanmar is the first time that the Genocide Convention has been raised not by states in conflict with each other, but rather between two unrelated states. The alleged genocide doesn’t target The Gambia or its citizens.

The collective responsibility signalled by the *erga omnes* jurisdiction is why the six states were allowed to intervene in The Gambia v Myanmar. This is also why South Africa, in its recent case against Israel alleging genocide in Gaza, characterised its actions as “seeking interim measures against itself as well as against Israel”.

So far, the six states who submitted the joint intervention in The Gambia case haven’t expressed support for South Africa in its case against Israel. Regardless of what they do or don’t say regarding South Africa’s case, however, their November 2023 intervention in The Gambia v Myanmar speaks for them.

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# Untold story of Eswatini’s German Jewish connection

TALI FEINBERG

Growing up in South Africa and Australia, “Swaziland (now Eswatini) was often mentioned in passing among family. It was a holiday spot for my parents that has always held a sense of familiarity and nostalgia for me although I only recently discovered why,” says Janine Schloss, whose research has uncovered a “hidden pocket of history” about German Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution and landing up trapped but surviving in Swaziland for the entirety of the war.

“A number of years ago, when my aunt decided to record our family’s background and how we came to live in South Africa, I learnt that my two great aunts, who I’d never met, had lived in Swaziland throughout World War II as German Jewish refugees,” says Schloss. “I was intrigued by their story, especially why they didn’t come to South Africa when so many family members were there already. I decided to look for more details but couldn’t find any. I eventually shaped my thoughts into a research project focused on stories in the margins of the *Shoah* – the peripheries of war.”

Once these Jews were given sanctuary in Swaziland, “The outbreak of the war meant they were unable to go anywhere else until the war was over,” says Schloss. “For the first two years at least, many faced extreme hardships, poverty, and sickness, living in shanties and rondavels, without sources of income. A handful of extremely lucky Jews were sent money by relatives overseas, but most had no immediate source of income. Sickness and disease were also rampant such as malaria and smallpox. It was thanks to the support of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) that the refugees eventually managed to find their feet.”

Schloss lives in Melbourne, where she’s completing a PhD in Jewish cultural practice through the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University. Her family emigrated to Australia when she was eight. “I spent the first eight years of my life in Brakpan, which had a vibrant Jewish community at the time,” she says.

“The research process was incredibly slow for months simply because of the fact that there’s hardly anything in scholarship about this particular pocket of Jewish refugees,” says Schloss. “It took an incredible amount of digging and sleuthing to make headway. It wasn’t long until I realised that making a trip to South Africa and Eswatini would be the only way forward. I knew there had to be information boxed up in archives in both countries that would shed some light and close the many gaps I was faced with.

“I’ve been most fortunate to have been able to realise that path on a recent trip to the region, thanks to support from my university,” she says. “While there, I was also able to conduct oral interviews with as many people connected to this community as I could find. Unfortunately, many are no longer alive. Some are quite elderly, which added a



Janine Schloss and Eric Mathobo at the SAJBD archives

sense of urgency to the completion of this project.”

In conducting her research, “I’ve not only learnt how fortunate this tiny pocket of Jews received permission to remain in the British Protectorate of Swaziland through the course of the war and beyond, I’ve also gained deeper insight to the plight of German Jews of South Africa and the perils this marginal group faced as a result of the Aliens Act, which was in place in South Africa from 1937 until the end of the war.

“I’ve discovered a few key people who were instrumental in helping these refugees in Swaziland,” she says. “So many countries had shut their doors tightly to Jews by the eve of the war in 1939, which is when this group arrived in Swaziland. I’ve also discovered that over time, the Jews of Swaziland contributed significantly, memorably, and positively to this tiny country.

“Though a large group of refugees left as soon as they were able to, this didn’t occur until the late 1940s and early 1950s,” she says. “Nevertheless, a proportion of Jews decided to make Swaziland their home for good, and remained there until their twilight years, many returning to Johannesburg only towards the end of their lives.”

Schloss says this history hasn’t yet been recorded “beyond my aunt’s account of her memories of Swaziland Jews. I hope to change that. I’ve spoken to African Jewish Congress spiritual leader and chief executive, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, as well as Yael Uzan-Tidhar, the head of the Jewish community in Eswatini, about what can be done to memorialise the Swaziland Jews of World War II.”

The reason this history is so unknown, Schloss says, is “because it’s a story set in the margins of the *Shoah*, and many of these stories have remained in the shadows. Yet they have so much to reveal about resistance, resilience, hope, and courage in the face of abject adversity. In this way, these stories shed light on the beating heart of the Jewish community.”

As for what she’ll do with her discoveries, she says, “There are two components of my research, which inform each other. I plan to write a collection of short stories based on the Swaziland Jews, using the facts I have gathered as well as the observational research and fieldwork I have conducted. Ultimately, I also intend to formulate a work of sorts that can serve as a historical reference for this pocket of history that has gone relatively unnoticed for the most part in the pages of Southern African Jewish history.”

If anyone has any connection to or memory of this specific group of German Jewish refugees or has any recollection of life in Swaziland during the 1940s and 1950s, “Please get in touch with me. I’d love to speak to you,” she says.

“I would like to thank the SAJBD for its help and continued support throughout my trip,” she says. “I wouldn’t have been able to do justice to my project without the opportunity to explore its incredible archives.”

• *Contact Janine Schloss on [janine.schloss@monash.edu](mailto:janine.schloss@monash.edu)*



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# If you go down to the woods

As a lifetime sufferer of FOMO (fear of missing out), I received the invitation with some excitement. Who, after all, wouldn't want to attend a Tu B'Shvat celebration that was to take place at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg?

Unlike the Friday night Shabbat dinners hosted by the South African Jews for a Free Palestine (SAJFP) and friends, this wasn't to be a bring-your-own-vegan-potluck dinner to be held somewhere in a shelter just off Surfer's Corner in Muizenberg. (I'm not making the vegan thing up.) Nope, this festivity required that participants bring only their gloves, for reasons unexplained, as they commemorated Israel's "war crimes and genocide" together in the Nakba Memorial Forest. (I had no idea that Johannesburg even had one.)

In essence it was to be a festival of love and beauty, fuelled by communal togetherness that embodies only hatred for the Jewish state and all it represents.

The invitation, titled, "Between River and Sea: Genocide and Ecocide" required the use of a modern-day lexicon to decode. "Environmental genocide" as a concept was new to me. So too was the word "ecocide". That said, considering the mosquito infestation we've experienced this year, I was quite keen to find out where I could pick up some "ecocide" for myself. I thought perhaps the talk to be given by David Fig – not making this up either – would provide some tips on the use of chemicals to eradicate the darn pests.

Perhaps that's the reason for the gloves?

The invitation also promised time to reflect not only on Israel's "war crimes" but also undertook to relate its type of war crime to crimes against the environment.

I assumed that there would be a deep focus on tunnels, as well as Hamas's use of this environmental technique not only to preserve the ecosystem, but as a strategy to reverse the ravages of

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



global warming. A global affliction known to be caused by the egregious Israeli subterfuge to make Palestinians hotter each year. Dehydrating them degree by degree (in Celsius).

The grand finale of the jam-packed event was a Q&A session hosted by renowned jurist and international authority, Jo Bluen, on South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Not to be missed.

Apparently, all were welcome.

Of note during the current Israel conflict is the prominence of vocal non-Zionist Jews. Although small in number, someone unfamiliar with the workings of the Jewish community might mistakenly believe that they represent a meaningful percentage. The reason is obvious in that many detractors of Israel, keen to prove they are anti-Zionists and not antisemites, parade them as exhibits to make their point.

Whether it's the Neturei Karta on the one extreme or the SAJFP, both are, of course, free to have their view. As are proud Zionists. All are free to celebrate Tu B'Shvat as they see fit. Be it in the Nakba Forest in Johannesburg or Jerusalem Forest in the holy city of Jerusalem. But it's worth noting that the festival of Tu B'Shvat celebrated by the anti-Zionists has its roots in the Biblical verse, "When you enter the land of Israel and plant a tree..." which must be slightly awkward for those commemorating "genocide" and "ecocide" and actively demonising the Jewish state. All while wearing gloves. So as not to get their hands dirty.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Fighting fit and well informed

In times of stress for our community, there's an additional need for people to be kept informed about what's happening and in particular, what Jewish leadership is doing to address the challenges of the day. Much emphasis was put on this during the COVID-19 crisis, and in the wake of 7 October, the Board has similarly arranged regular report-back events. We're planning our next community webinar, at which our leadership will give a briefing on the situation and the Board's response and provide an opportunity for comments and questions. The event is scheduled to take place on the evening of Monday, 29 January, so visit our Facebook page for further information and to register.

The theme of the webinar is "Fighting Back". Our aim is to assure our community that in spite of the multiple strains and stresses of the past nearly four months, we haven't been passive nor surrendered to despondency, on the contrary, we've sought to confront every challenge head-on. Whether it's the deplorable conduct of the government, persistently biased media coverage, or threats to our community's fundamental rights to dignity, equality, and freedom of expression and association, the Board has been vociferous and unapologetic.

Our initiatives, as previously reported, have included calling out the country's president in unprecedentedly harsh terms in a full-page *Sunday Times* advertorial; demonstrations on behalf of the hostages on Nelson Mandela Bridge and Durban beach; and our 37 teddy bears protest outside the South African Broadcasting Corporation after a Hamas spokesman declared during an interview that there were no child hostages in Gaza. Since my last column, we've organised a well-attended and widely publicised demonstration outside the offices of Cricket South Africa (CSA) to protest against its disgraceful removal of David Teeger as captain of the South African Under 19 cricket team, supposedly due to "security concerns", but in reality for blatantly political reasons. The many South Africans outside our



## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

community who joined us, along with those from all backgrounds who have likewise condemned CSA's morally bankrupt and discriminatory conduct, have at least assured us that we're not alone in this fight.

Further reason for cautious optimism is that after reaching record levels in the two months following 7 October, antisemitic attacks have dropped off considerably. Since the beginning of December, the number of incidents recorded has been only a quarter of the totals logged in October and November. This is still higher than in previous years for the same period, but it's a welcome indication that things are hopefully returning to something approaching normality. As ever, it's important to stress that antisemitism levels in South Africa continue to be markedly lower than in other diaspora countries, both in terms of the number and the gravity of many of the attacks experienced, including multiple cases of violence and vandalism.

The Board was able to address a number of the incidents reported to it, such as ensuring the removal of graffiti and offensive social media posts, and is in the process of following through on some of the more serious cases, including those in which criminal charges have been laid. To ensure the accuracy of our statistics, it's important for people who experience any form of hate or threat to contact our offices so that we can support them and respond if required. If you feel there's imminent danger, please report the incident immediately to the Community Security Organisation's 24-hour helpline 086 18 000 18.

• 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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Letters

Jews should stay and vote for change

Howard Sackstein’s recent article (“Is it time to go?”, *SA Jewish Report*, 18 January 2024) offers a profound and unsettling reflection on the socio-political landscape in South Africa, especially for the Jewish community. As a former anti-apartheid activist and a notable figure in civic leadership, his words carry significant weight and urgency.

He rightly highlights the challenges and fears faced by our community. However, I believe that amidst these daunting circumstances lies a critical opportunity for change – the upcoming national election. The latest polls suggest a neck-and-neck race between the Multi Party Charter and the African National Congress, with the outcome likely to hinge on voter turnout. This underscores a vital point: every vote counts, more so now than ever.

In light of this, I would argue that the answer to the question of whether it’s time to leave is more nuanced, especially considering this political crossroads. Rather than contemplating departure, our energy should be channelled into something that can truly transform our community and our country: active political engagement.

As members of a community with a rich history and significant contribution to South Africa, we have a role to play. Encouraging our families,

friends, and community members to register and vote isn’t just a civic duty, it’s a powerful tool for change. By participating in the democratic process, we can elect a government that reflects our values and aspirations, one that ensures a future for all South Africans, including the Jewish community.

The Democratic Alliance is committed to restoring the dignity and justice that our Constitution promises every citizen. Our focus is on building a South Africa where diversity is celebrated, rights are protected, and all communities can thrive.

This election is about more than just choosing a new government, it’s about deciding the kind of country we want to live in. It’s about taking a stand against the division and hatred that have marred our society and working towards a future that’s inclusive and prosperous.

Sackstein’s article resonates with the deep concerns many of us share. But rather than looking outward for solutions, let’s look inward and mobilise our community. Let’s guide our efforts towards ensuring a brighter future for ourselves and for South Africa. The first step is to come out on 3 and 4 February and register to vote.

– Daniel Schay Ward Councillor, Ward 72, Johannesburg

SA Jewish leaders should rally around Netanyahu

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and South African Zionist Federation should communicate to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the South African Jewish community fully supports the Israeli government’s retaliation in Gaza and its commitment to continue the war until Hamas is eliminated. In addition, the community should make it clear that it doesn’t align itself to the provocative statements made by South African politicians in which they accuse Israel of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and that their statements are blatantly racist and antisemitic.

In such communication, it may be appropriate to state that the South African government’s remarks and actions show a marked contradiction to the stand it took on the declaration by Russia of war against Ukraine in which millions of innocent civilians including women and children have been displaced and many have lost their lives. In that instance, South Africa took a non-aligned, neutral stand. It’s opportunistic and disingenuous now to take the stand it has taken against Israel based on the notion that Israel is an apartheid state.

It’s clear that if not eliminated, Hamas will repeat its terrorist attacks until it achieves its objective of destroying all Jews. The taking of hostages and its use of Palestinian civilians as human shields demonstrates conclusively that it doesn’t care for its own people. The discovery by the Israel Defense Forces of sophisticated weaponry hidden in tunnels together with briefcases filled with millions of stolen Israeli shekels bears testimony to its ulterior motives. It begs the question as to the reason for it not using those stolen funds to bring much needed humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians.

These arguments should find their way into Israel’s submission to the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Finally, former South African President Jacob Zuma’s blatant disregard for the Pretoria High Court order directing South Africa to arrest former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, and masterminding his surreptitious departure from the country makes the South African government’s stance on Israel incomprehensible except for the fact that it brings out the true racist, antisemitic view of the politicians who run our country.

– Leslie Kobrin, Johannesburg

Time for fight, not flight

Howard Sackstein’s OpEd “Is it time to go?” (*SA Jewish Report*, 19 January 2024) gets the diagnosis right but the conclusion wrong on the future of South Africa and the Jewish role in it.

It’s correct to say that the African National Congress (ANC) has turned on the Jewish community, that it’s a bully, that it has no moral compass, that it’s in league with Iran and running interference for Hamas, and that Dr Naledi Pandor is a foreign policy predator. Emigration, however, isn’t the solution. If you feel you need to emigrate, that’s your decision, but don’t make the ANC your reason. The mess has been made, but leaving isn’t going to help clean it up. There are more comprehensive ways of handling this problem.

First, it’s time to make sure that we’re not part of the problem. No more assumptions that donations or meetings with the ANC will lead to moderation. The ANC is serious when it says it has an anti-Israel policy. This is a sincerely held belief across the party, not some kind of election ploy or a function of which a specific individual is in charge. We should assume it will continue to act in accordance with its

beliefs.

The rule for dealing with bullies is that you need to stand up to them. The ANC is in a weak position, it has little money and less legitimacy, it’s corrupt and inefficient, and is on the way to a historic loss in this year’s elections. Our job is to help change the ANC’s perception of the cost of its anti-Israel position. To begin with, we need to make sure people are registered to vote and are volunteering to get others to do so in the upcoming elections.

In the media, there are publications that are reporting in a highly partisan manner on the conflict, and it’s important to support media that give space to Jewish viewpoints. Becoming proficient in the use of social media tools such as X (previously Twitter) can help alert the world to the ANC’s abandonment of liberal values. Mobilising support and resources for pro-Israel and civil society organisations that are opposed to the ANC’s agenda is also crucially important.

These are just some of the ways we can help take back our country, all of which are cheaper, easier, and more effective than emigration.

– Benji Shulman, Johannesburg

Sackstein’s moribund article misplaced and irresponsible

That Jews globally and in South Africa are feeling anxious, angry, and disappointed in a broad wave of humanity is a given. The lid was ripped off Pandora’s box only to see, volcano like, a torrent of incomprehensible and irrational antisemitism spew onto public spaces, streets, and boulevards.

Social media shudders with hyperbolic, cruel statements, and at times maniacal metaphors. Few Western countries haven’t witnessed these awful, scary displays. There’s reason for all Jews to examine this existential jolt, and this punch to our unfounded sense of comfortable security is breathtaking.

South Africa – essentially the African National Congress – has pushed the envelope in a more sinister fashion. No beating of chests, no particularly fervent flag waving and marches. But a more worrisome, calm, and sinister, misplaced, unfounded, and hateful libel against Israel at the International Court of Justice. It has supported the atrocities and serial killer-like actions of Hamas, broken bread with it, and acted as the attorney for modern-day Haman. Recently, political partners have in heinous and racist fashion declared that a Jew cannot captain a South African sports team.

We collectively shudder at what could morph from this horrible act. But, I believe that the Jewish community isn’t under any more threat than the community of Sydney, Toronto, New York, and London. I fervently believe it’s irresponsible for our small community to state, debate, and contemplate in the public domain and on social media irresponsible, not thought out, and dangerous sentiments.

– Dr Terry Berelowitz, Cape Town

Me too unless you are a Jew

In spite of the availability of forensic evidence, including eyewitness accounts, bodycam videos shared by Hamas terrorists on social media, and detailed reports from medical examiners, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) has maintained its silence about the orgy of violence committed by Hamas terrorists on 7 October, thereby falling short in its commitment to all women.

In a CNN interview on 28 November – during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November to 10 December – Sarah Hendriks, the deputy director for UN Women, refrained from condemning acts of brutality against Israeli women. Michal Herzog, Israel’s First Lady, pointed out the absence of any condemnation of Hamas regarding gender-based violence, stating, “It’s not that condemnations have been weak or insufficient, there have been none at all.” Hendriks recently removed about 153 anti-Israel tweets from her social media accounts, where she had made statements promoting anti-Zionism and accusing Israel of “genocide” since 7 October.

The silence of Michelle Obama, known for her #BringBackOurGirls statement in the wake of 276 kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirls in 2014, is deafening but not surprising. The shameful and well-publicised testimonies in congress by the presidents of Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology continue to play out in the media. Linked to these elite college demands for “context” is a bizarre report from the University of Minnesota’s Sima Shakhsari, a candidate for a senior position, who has denied that Hamas-led terrorists committed rape and sexual violence. As a self-professed rape counsellor, she states, “I believe the survivors. I am yet to see Israeli rape survivors of Hamas come and speak.”

What’s astonishing is that in a letter co-signed by more than 700 “concerned South African Jews”, many of whom are women, the best expression they could muster was “dismay”. Even after 90 days, not a single woman from that group has publicly condemned the violence specifically targeting women, raising concern about indifference to gender-based violence against Israeli women. “We believe in the universal values of peace, justice, and equality, and condemn in the strongest terms any and all violence against civilians, and against children in particular.” But no mention of rape and sexual violence! Do they join the Sarah Hendriks and Sima Shakhsaris of this world in complicit silence?

– Allan Wolman, Tel Aviv, Israel

Let justice be done at the Hague

As a South African Christian, I’m deeply disturbed, dismayed, and disgusted by our government’s decision to indict Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

It’s ironic that Israel should be accused of genocide after it was the victim of such a shocking, diabolical act of genocide on 7 October last year.

This is indeed a low point in the history of South Africa. It’s tragic to see how our country has descended to these depths since the African National Congress came to power.

Like many other South Africans, my father and father-in-law both served in the South African Air Force in World War II and one of my uncles gave his life to free the world of the scourge of genocidal Nazi ideology. Our prime minister, Jan Smuts, was one of Churchill’s right-hand men and an advocate for and a player in the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. As we know, the Jewish return to their ancestral homeland is a fulfilment of numerous Biblical prophecies. The land of Israel was promised to the descendants of Jacob as an eternal inheritance in Genesis.

Now, more than ever before, is the time for us all to stand with Israel, united in prayer, against this evil plot. I pray that that justice will be done, the lies will be exposed, the truth will prevail, and the enemies of Israel will be put to shame.

My prayer for Israel, in accordance with Psalm 37:6, is, “He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.”

– Lawrie Barnes, Johannesburg



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# No bridge too far – septuagenarian wins multiple championships

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Johannesburg septuagenarian Irene Sundelson surprised herself by playing bridge for 48 hours across six days to win two South African Women’s Bridge Association Championships in October last year.

“I’m 78, and can’t believe I had the stamina to sit and play for six days full days and keep the concentration going against top bridge players from 09:30 to 17:30 each day, and win,” she says.

After convincingly winning the South African Congress Team Championship by 31 points, Sundelson ticked off an item on her bucket list by winning the even more prestigious South African Ladies National Bridge Pairs Championship. Sundelson and Di Rosslee, her bridge partner at the tournament, now hold this title for a year.

“I’m so amazed that we managed to pull this off against all the top playing ladies, many of them Springboks and South African champions. On the final day, we played 60 boards against all 15 finalists. Your average tournament is 21 to 24 boards.”

Sundelson played both of these online

tournaments from the comfort of her home.

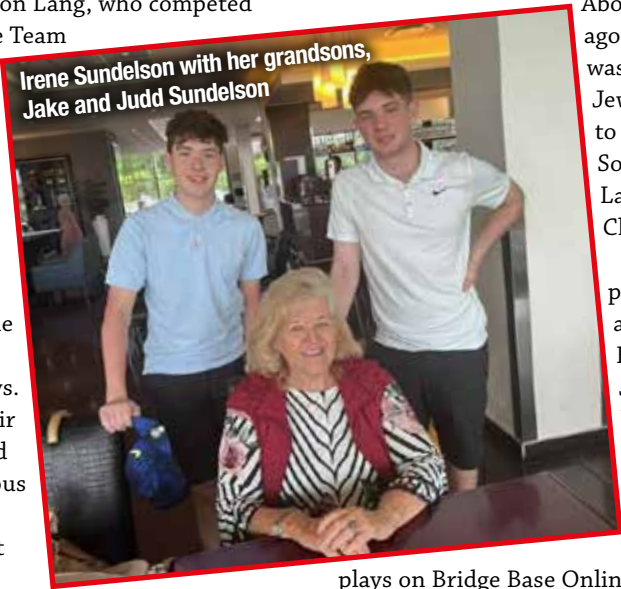
The Pairs Championship consisted of a qualifying round between 48 pairs, including seven Springbok pairs such as Roz Bernstein and Sharon Lang, who competed in the World Bridge Team Championships in Morocco last year, to get into the championship, congress, or plate sections.

“We qualified for the championship, and we played in the finals the following day,” Sundelson says. “We played each pair for four boards, and it was a long, arduous day of playing and just keeping our act together. We came through as winners. I’m proud of myself for getting there and staying there. You need that kind of temperament to be there. We just homed in, and didn’t make mistakes.”

Sundelson has been playing bridge “forever”, she says. “I’ve been fortunate. I learnt bridge from a good bridge player who was my mentor.”

About eight years ago, Sundelson was one of four Jewish players to win the South African Ladies Team Championship. Sundelson plays bridge at the Links Bridge Club in Johannesburg, but since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she often plays on Bridge Base Online. “This website is popular. People love playing online in their own home.”

She describes herself as “very competitive”, and says the same applies to her grandson, two-time Maccabi Games



Irene Sundelson with her grandsons, Jake and Judd Sundelson

golf medallist Judd Sundelson. “We both appreciate that urge to excel,” she says. “It’s in our genes. My two sons, Barry and Dean, have won many golf tournaments. We’re a sporting family. I’ve spent many wonderful hours on the golf course, urging on my sons. I’ve been to the Maccabi Games, and had other wonderful experiences with the golf.”

Bridge, however, has always been her passion. “I’ve been teaching bridge since about 2012. I teach nearly every day of the week. We play tournaments, and I try and help them to get better. This is my life, and it’s been fantastic. I’ve made friends all over the world.”

Sundelson has competed internationally for South Africa. “We twice finished first out of all the teams from South Africa and Scotland. These tournaments were like the bridge version of the Ryder Cup, with several teams from South Africa playing teams from Scotland.”

Sundelson had a 30-year career as the national marketing manager of Suzuki South Africa. “As a single mother with no money in the bank, I managed to make a very successful life for myself,” she says with pride.

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*Kol Hakavod to our matriculants of 2023 and their families who have brought credit to our school and our community and who deserve to be celebrated and applauded.*

## ANDREW BAKER

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