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**Trump says only 21 hostages remain alive in Gaza**

President Donald Trump said that the number of living hostages in Gaza has fallen from 24 to 21, meaning that three more hostages have been killed since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended in March.

Trump didn't identify which hostages had been killed, but appeared to say that three hostages had died in the past week during a period when Israel is ramping up its offensive in Gaza. He made the remarks on Tuesday, 6 May, at a swearing-in ceremony for his Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who in January brokered the ceasefire during which Hamas released dozens of Israeli hostages.

Trump's statement also aligns with comments by Sara Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister's wife, who said in an exchange caught on video last week that "fewer" than 24 hostages were alive.

Her husband corrected her at the time, and on Tuesday, Israeli officials reiterated that the official number of living hostages remains 24. Hamas is also holding the bodies of 35 hostages.

At the time the ceasefire ended in mid-March, when Israel resumed

airstrikes on Hamas, the terror group held 59 hostages in Gaza, 24 of whom were thought to be alive. New signs of life for many of them came from hostages released at the time.

**US reaches truce with Houthis hours after Israel bombs their airport in Yemen**

Israel and the United States often emphasise their close alliance, and for nearly two months, both countries were simultaneously attacking Yemen's Houthi terror group, which has been bombing Israel as well as US ships.

But that alignment ended abruptly on Tuesday, 6 May, shortly after Israeli jets bombed a Houthi airport in Yemen's capital in retaliation for a successful missile strike on Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday, 4 May. Hours later, President Donald Trump announced in the Oval Office that the US and the Houthis had reached a truce.

That truce, mediated by Oman, didn't include Israel, which reportedly hadn't even been given advance warning of the deal.

The agreement comes at a tense time for Israel, which is reeling from



**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance in February 2025**

the disruption wrought by Sunday's strike and from months of intermittent attacks from the Houthis. Several airlines have cancelled flights to the country.

On Tuesday, Israel retaliated with a strike that, its military said, "disabled" the airport in Sanaa, which is controlled by the Houthis.

The Houthis have been shooting bombs and drones at Israel since Hamas's 7 October 2023 invasion, which launched the war in Gaza. The Houthis have also bombed US and other ships in the Red Sea, disrupting global shipping lanes.

Israeli defences have intercepted most of the group's attacks, though some, like Sunday's, evaded Israel's protection.

That fight looks likely to continue, and will now proceed without US involvement. Trump didn't reference Israel in his remarks, but both the Houthis and the US State Department made it clear that the agreement doesn't commit the terror group to stop attacking Israel.

*• All briefs supplied by JTA*

## It's about time

**A** local shul advertises a time management course for the community. On the given day, the rabbi gets a call enquiring what time the course on time management will be held. "Six-ish" says the rabbi ...

You may have heard of "Jewish mean time". It's not a compliment. Yet Judaism is actually quite preoccupied with time.

Consider that a family in mourning observes what is prosaically called "*shiva*", literally translated as, "seven", for the seven-day period of intense mourning. This period is followed by "thirty", and then a "year's time". Couldn't we come up with more profound names for this searing experience? Because in Judaism, what one needs to know, is not how much am I spending on this thing, but how much time am I giving for it?

Significantly, the Torah refers to Yom Kippur in this week's parsha as "*achat bashanah*", the one day of the year. We're given 24 hours to focus on our relationship with G-d, ask forgiveness, and celebrate the intimacy that the Jew has with their creator. Twenty-four hours to tap into the deepest

recesses of our soul and discover the Jewish child within. Twenty-four hours to tip the scales in our favour. Not just any day, the one day.

And here lies the mystery of the *mitzvah* to count the Omer, when we count the days from Pesach to Shavuot. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe points out, one normally counts things which fluctuate, like money, so you can determine how much you have. But no matter how many times you count time, you can never get more of it, so what's the point of counting time?

I vividly recall the first time I entered the Rebbe's holy study after his passing. From this room, for more than 50 years, the Rebbe guided, inspired, taught Torah, and expanded the Chabad movement into today's vanguard of Jewish consciousness. Yet, the first thing I noticed wasn't the books that lined every bit of wall space, rather I noticed the clocks. A small room, measuring about 5m<sup>2</sup>, had four or five clocks. Does a Rebbe even need a clock to tell time?

Time management expert Laura Vanderkam of TED Talks fame makes

### Torah Thought

**Rabbi Dovid Wineberg Hamakom (The Space) Cape Town**



the point that truly successful people "stretch time". The more one is aware of time, the more one masters time. And a master of time gets more done. Her research shows that when we say, "I don't have time," what we really mean is, "It's not a priority." There's always time. It's just a question of what you want to do with it.

Similarly, the Rebbe teaches that the bridge from the physical freedom of Pesach to the spiritual liberation of Shavuot is built by valuing time. By actively noticing each day, we utilise each day fully. Perhaps that's why the Rebbe had a clock in each direction. By knowing at any given moment what time it was, he was then in a position to choose how to fill that time.

So, whether it's the 24 transformative hours of Yom Kippur, the seven days of mourning – G-d forbid, or just noticing the gift of today, be a master of time. You have enough time. What do you want to do with it?

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\*Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead



# From mourning to fleeing from fire in Israel’s worst blaze

NICOLA MILTZ

Flames tore through forests, vineyards, fields, and homes in the Jerusalem Hills in central Israel with terrifying speed on Wednesday, 30 April, bringing traffic to a standstill for hours and forcing drivers to abandon their vehicles. For many, Yom Hazikaron, the national day of mourning, was interrupted not only by the haunting siren for fallen soldiers, but also urgent calls to evacuate.

Johannesburg-raised Dalya Sacks, a resident of Mevo Horon, a moshav located near Latrun and the city of Modi’in, said it was a day of sorrow and frantic escape as flames chased residents through smoke.

“We knew there were fires but by 13:50, we were told to prepare to evacuate. Twenty minutes later, we were ordered to leave immediately,” she said. “I told the kids to pack for one night. Within 10 minutes, all seven of us, plus our dog and two lasagnes still warm from the oven, were in the car. As we drove out, we saw the smoke and flames coming from Park Canada. It was so strange leaving the house not knowing if and when we would be coming back,” she said.

“All I could tell my children was that nothing material matters, what’s important is that we’re together. My husband grabbed his tefillin and our passports, and some clothes. We left almost everything else.”

The fires broke out on the eve of Israel’s Independence Day, with more than 3 000 acres burning across five different locations, fanned by hot desert winds and dry brush. Israel’s Fire and Rescue Service described it as one of the largest wildfires in national history.

The blaze led to the unprecedented cancellation and postponement of Yom Ha’atzmaut festivities that evening. While reminiscent in scale to the devastating 2010 Carmel fire, which claimed 44 lives, this inferno caused no serious injuries.

Royna Friedlander and her husband, Ze’ev, both olim from South Africa, had just returned from a family memorial ceremony in Nahshon when the alert to leave that area was issued. Waze struggled to keep up with sudden road closures, and what should have been a 15-minute drive back home took more than 90 minutes as fires driven by heat and strong winds left drivers scrambling for safe routes.

“Eventually, we got home to Mevo Horon, only to be told that we had to evacuate immediately. My husband took our laptops, jewellery, tefillin, passports, toothbrushes, and whatever else we could think of in that moment and left. We could see the fires as we drove to a friend in Modi’in. Calls came pouring in from concerned friends and family offering shelter. Some people were stuck on the road, others were holed up in school classrooms.”

The annual Yom Hazikaron Machal memorial ceremony, held at the Shaar Hagai site to commemorate the fallen, was abandoned at the last minute as flames closed in. Hundreds of people including Machal veterans were forced to leave the area fast.

“We were just about to begin the ceremony when the fire brigade arrived and told us to evacuate,” said Dave Bloom, the chairperson of World Machal, which honours overseas volunteers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). “At that point we didn’t realise the extent of the danger. We did a quick wreath laying ceremony and within minutes, left the memorial site. Ten minutes later, we were standing outside our cars on the highway, listening to the siren in smoke and fire. That’s when the imminent danger began to sink in.”



According to Michael Kransdorff, the chairperson of the Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNF), more than 500 workers were deployed in the effort.

“KKL [Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael]-JNF teams worked around the clock in extreme, dangerous conditions to contain the flames,” Kransdorff said. “They used specialised sophisticated firefighting equipment, and workers stood

shoulder to shoulder with Israel’s Fire and Rescue Services, police, and the IDF.”

After more than 30 hours of unrelenting effort, the fires were finally brought under control. But the damage is staggering.

According to the KKL-JNF, more than 21 000 dunams (2 100 hectares) were destroyed in a single day, on top of 10 000 dunams lost the week before. Anyone driving along Route 1 can see the damage.

Where green forests once stood, there are now

blackened hills. It will take a long time to restore, Kransdorff said.

The cause of the fires remains under investigation. While dry conditions and high winds exacerbated the disaster, Kransdorff warned of a darker threat.

“Climate change plays a major role, but arson is also increasingly being used as a form of terror, intended to

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sow chaos, fear, and destruction. We need to be more prepared to combat this kind of attack. JNF is raising funds for fireproof vests for our teams and for mobile firefighting units that can be deployed quickly by local communities.”

Telfed Chairperson Maish Isaacson said for new olim, emergency situations could be overwhelming, “Especially with the language barrier.”

“We’ve learned how to deal with sirens, but this was a different kind of crisis. Since the war began, we have made sure that fire safety instructions are shared in English and only from official sources to avoid misinformation and panic,” he said.

“Telfed oversees the welfare of more than 20 000 olim across the country, many of them in fire-affected areas like Beit Shemesh and Modi’in. The shutdown of Route 1, the main artery between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, cut off access and created logistical nightmares for thousands trying to flee or check on loved ones,” Isaacson said.

Environmentalists say the damage will scar the land for years. Forests nurtured over decades were reduced to ash in hours. Replanting efforts will begin as soon as it is safe to do so, but the scale of the task is large.

As the country begins to rebuild, officials stress the need for vigilance, with calls for more proactive fire prevention and response measures.

## SA’s repair of US relations starts with Israel

OPINION

DR GREG MILLS AND RAY HARTLEY



If President Cyril Ramaphosa is serious about resetting South Africa’s relationship with the United States, he needs to move quickly to demonstrate that the country is taking a less radical position on Palestine and reopen diplomatic relations with Israel.

His recent meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Pretoria showed that South Africa is intent on rebuilding its image as a more neutral player in international relations.

This change in posture has come about following months of fumbling the relationship with a defiant stance that was best illustrated by the ill-considered comments of our former ambassador to Washington, Ebrahim Rasool, and other senior African National Congress leaders who appeared willing to sacrifice the US-SA relationship on the altar of populist rhetoric.

But, if South Africa wants to restore its relations with Washington, it needs to go far deeper and address the substance at the root of the bilateral US-SA problem. A big part of that is stepping back from its pro-Hamas and pro-Iran stance in the Middle East.

Ramaphosa has already signalled that he wants to do this. He recently asked the Mayor of Johannesburg,

Dada Morero, to reverse the council’s decision to rename Sandton Drive after Leila Khaled, the radical Palestinian hijacker.

And, in replacing the aggressively pro-Hamas and Iran international relations minister, Dr Naledi Pandor, with the more moderate Ronald Lamola, he earlier suggested a shift in direction.

The trouble with Ramaphosa’s approach, however, is that he remains in awe of the party’s populists and seems unable to bring himself to take a more direct approach.

The Johannesburg mayor is yet to respond to his suggested dropping of the renaming of Sandton Drive. Rather than asking, Ramaphosa should be acting like he is in charge, and issue an instruction.

Similarly, he appears to be waiting for Lamola to find a way to parse a shift in approach to Israel with the party’s populism when he should be asking him to send some strong signals.

The opportunity for a reset to a more neutral stance has presented itself with the International Court of Justice’s recent ruling to pause the genocide action against Israel. It has opened the door for a reframe. Which is not to say that

South Africa should drop all criticism of the conduct of the war in Gaza. But its determination to label the war “genocide” is out of step with how most democracies – including many in Africa – view the conflict.

A review of this approach and a more even application of its claimed human rights policy to all conflicts where civilians are threatened – for example in Sudan and Ethiopia – would defuse a lot of the anger against South Africa while strengthening its claim to be a global human rights guardian.

If Ramaphosa wants to send a strong signal that the country is taking a more neutral position he could, as a first step, re-engage with Israel with a view to reinstating ambassadors in both Israel and South Africa.

And, South Africa needs to think seriously about who it will appoint as ambassador to Washington. Sending another ideologue or sectarian player will ensure South Africa’s continued isolation from the US.

• Dr Greg Mills and Ray Hartley are with [www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org](http://www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org)

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# Israel draws line in sand over Druze atrocities

OPINION PAULA SLIER



In the past few days, senior Israeli officials have issued some of their strongest warnings yet to Syria’s government, as reports mount of atrocities being carried out against the Druze community in southern Syria. Israeli airstrikes hit near Damascus, including close to the presidential palace, as Defence Minister Yoav Gallant declared that Israel “will not stand by while our Druze brothers are targeted”.



A member of the Druze community in Syria

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reinforced the message, saying, “Israel views attacks on the Druze with utmost seriousness. Our red lines are clear.” This unusually forceful stance reflects more than regional strategy, it’s deeply personal. The Druze aren’t just a minority group under threat across the border. In Israel, they are an integral part of the national fabric. Druze men serve in the Israel Defense Forces, many in elite units. Their fallen are buried in military cemeteries. Their officers command Jewish soldiers. In Israel, the Druze are family, and that family is under siege.

Mansoor Ashkahr, a former member of Israel’s elite special forces now living in Germany, has close ties to the Druze communities in Syria. He described the unfolding horror to me.

“By the end of last week, at least 500 Druze had been killed,” he said. “Thirty sheikhs have been kidnapped. This is an October 7th happening for the Druze, and nobody is paying attention. We are being wiped out.”

Ashkahr said many Druze would desperately like to escape Syria and seek refuge in Israel. “They have nowhere to run. They would love to come to Israel. They appreciate the airstrikes, but if Israel could send boots on the ground, it would mean everything.”

The latest round of violence erupted in the Suwayda region, located about 100km south of Damascus. The immediate cause appears to have been a manipulated audio recording falsely attributed to a Druze religious leader that insulted Islamic figures, igniting a wave of sectarian backlash. But many analysts believe this incident was merely a pretext for a crackdown on a minority group that has long insisted on a degree of autonomy and refused to pledge blind loyalty to the Assad regime or, more recently, to his successor,

Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Ashkahr was unequivocal: “This is a massacre. The new regime is conducting a systematic campaign against us, and the world is silent.”

The silence is deafening for many in Israel, too. While the Jewish state has long operated humanitarian corridors for wounded Syrians, including Druze, this moment feels different. It’s not just about humanitarian aid, it’s about drawing a clear line in defence of a people who have stood shoulder to shoulder with Israel since the state’s founding.

The Druze of Israel number about 150 000. They vote, serve, lead, and die in defence of the state. But many also have relatives in Syria, and the pain of that separation – first caused by the 1967 Six-Day War – has never healed. Families remain divided across a hostile border. Now, with the Syrian regime unleashing violence on its own citizens, the divide has become a matter of life and death.

For Israel, the strategic implications are also stark. If Syria’s Islamist-leaning regime continues its campaign against minorities, including Christians and Druze, the instability could spill across the Golan. Iran-backed militias could fill the power vacuum. Already, Hezbollah has indicated that it sees the Israeli strikes as justification for retaliation, even as it aligns more closely with the Syrian government.

Still, many in Israel believe this is the time to act decisively. The defence establishment’s language has shifted from cautious to clear. Though officials have not confirmed the possibility of a cross-border operation, the message to Damascus has been unmistakable: the Druze aren’t alone.

And for those like Ashkahr, that message matters. “We’re not asking for politics. We’re asking for help,” he said. “The Druze in Syria have been forgotten. If Israel can show it stands with us – not just from the sky, but on the ground – it could save lives.”

What happens in coming days will be critical. The Israeli military has made it clear it’s monitoring the situation closely. But whether international pressure follows, or the world continues to look away, remains uncertain.

The Druze’s fate is intertwined with Israel’s moral and strategic values. To defend the Druze isn’t just a gesture, it’s a statement about what kind of state Israel is.

• Paula Slir is the founder and chief executive of Newshound Media International, and hosts the afternoon Home Run on ChaiFM.

IN ISRAEL, THE DRUZE ARE FAMILY, AND THAT FAMILY IS UNDER SIEGE.

# World in flux as US veers towards isolation

OPINION BARUCH THE BALANCED



We are witnessing the biggest change in the world order since 1945.

Post 1945, the world relied on the United States (US) for its stability and more particularly, the US ensuring the following: **Security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East**

The US has kept the peace in Europe. There were no major wars in Europe prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The one war that broke out in the old Yugoslavia in the 1990s was more a civil war than a state war, and even that was eventually brought to an end through North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO’s) intervention, of course backed by the US.

The US also ensured that Southeast Asia stayed quiet for the past 50 years by having treaties with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. While the US did fail spectacularly in intervening in the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, it has since kept things relatively quiet in that region.

In the Middle East, though not being able to prevent numerous wars, the US is still the only power in town able to bring any peace deals to the warring sides. For example, all the peace treaties Israel has signed with Its Arab neighbours have come to fruition only through US mediation, guarantees, and involvement.

**Dollar as the world’s reserve currency**

Everything including oil, gold, diamonds, and smaller-value items such as coffee and sugar is priced in dollars. This has brought stability and predictability to world markets.

**US pushed hard for – and guaranteed – free trade**

It ensured that trade routes and sea lanes remained open, and actively pushed for globalisation, which ensured that the world prospered. Countries like China and India have experienced the biggest reduction in poverty in world history.

With Trump being elected on a US-first policy and not wanting to be the world’s sheriff anymore, the world order that has prevailed since 1945 is changing. To an extent, Trump has a point, as many Americans feel that Europe has been freeloading off the US. Members of NATO pledged to spend at least 2% of their gross domestic product on defence per year by 2024. Twenty-three of the 32 members are expected to have achieved that, but big economies like Italy, Spain, Belgium, and Canada are spending 1.5% or less. Americans are unhappy that they have to cover the costs for Europe’s defence, while Europeans spend their money on healthcare and pensions and don’t do enough to secure themselves.

However, Europe cannot survive militarily at the moment without the US, and Trump’s actions with Ukraine have caused alarm in Europe as no-one is sure what his attitude is towards NATO. If he is posturing to get Europe to spend more on its own defence, then it’s understandable. However, it’s feared that he isn’t prepared to defend Europe at all, or even to stay in NATO. Trump’s refusal to provide a backstop for United Kingdom and French troops if they ultimately act as peacekeepers in Ukraine is a case in point. No-one is sure how far he will push this disengagement from Europe, and recent press reports state that at least a few members of his Cabinet – although it seems a minority at this stage – don’t want to stay in NATO at all.

Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines are also worried. If the US isn’t prepared to defend them any longer or stay involved in the region, there’s a good chance that Japan and South Korea will go nuclear. It’s already being discussed



openly in think tanks in the two countries. Also in Asia, things are hotting up between India and Pakistan. The question being asked is where is the US leadership to bring quiet and prevent these two nuclear powers from escalating things? On previous occasions, like the 2019 flare-up, the US actively intervened to prevent any major escalation.

The problem is that no-one is sure if Trump is just posturing or really aiming for a full US-first policy. Historians are all starting to quote the 1930s, when the US withdrew from any involvement in Europe, which gave the Nazis free rein to conquer almost the entire continent. That was clearly an error, and the US was then forced to intervene at great cost from 1941 onwards to defeat the aggressors. Europeans are openly asking if they are going back to the 1930s, and for the first time since World War II, European governments are calling for massive rearmament, even in pacifist countries like Germany.

**Free trade**

Just like the 1930s, the US has started bringing in tariffs to protect its industry. Economists are talking about the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which started a tariff war and had several detrimental effects including deepening the Great Depression domestically and internationally, and harming international trade relations. Again, no-one is sure if Trump is serious about his tariffs or just posturing. If he is serious, then the danger is that the errors of the 1930s are potentially being repeated. He

has also made it clear that he wants to weaken the dollar, which has now started taking place, with the dollar weakening against the other major currencies like the euro and pound.

The result has been a massive increase in the gold price, which is a clear indication of the fear factor in world markets and international finance. As a quote from a well-known billionaire investor put it: “Bitcoin and gold are report cards on financial stewardship ... and what they’re telling you is something that’s not great.”

The world is resetting as it seems to do every 80 years or so. For example, the 1940s and World War II brought great change to the world, as did the American Civil War 80 years before in the 1860s – with major changes in Europe like German and Italian unification in 1871 and the French Revolution of 1789 before that.

What’s happening now is probably not a case of small systemic changes, but something much larger. The positive news is that by 2030, things should start improving. New technology like self-driving cars, artificial intelligence, and healthcare advances will be much more widely used and will have progressed, and in general, long-term change has always been positive for the world. However, the 2020s are going to be bumpy!

• Baruch The Balanced is an attorney who can’t be named for professional reasons, but who studied both politics and international relations at university.



# Israeli couple declares love on Table Mountain

TALI FEINBERG

When a young man from Israel bent down on his prosthetic knee to propose to his girlfriend on top of Table Mountain in March, it was the highest point of a gruelling journey that began when he was severely injured fighting Hamas in Gaza.

It was the culmination of a romance that had its foundation when Moshe Adams\*, 28, made aliya with his family from Ukraine when he was 12. It blossomed into a relationship when Ora Levin\* visited him in hospital after he was injured in the Gaza war. His army unit was hit by an explosion at the entrance of one of Hamas’s terror tunnels on 10 November 2023, just more than a month into the war.

“Four of my friends and my commander were killed instantly,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* from Israel. “Four of us were severely injured.” His leg was amputated above the knee.

One year and four months after being injured, he proposed to Levin on top of Table Mountain. “Being in hospital was the lowest point in my life,” he said. “I had wires everywhere, I had 19 surgeries, I lost 25kg. Then Ora started visiting me every week and we fell in love. I knew that this was the woman I wanted to marry, to be the mother of my children.”

After war, amputation, and rehabilitation, he wanted to find a place as high as the clouds to propose to Levin. He therefore planned a trip to Cape Town, all so that he could ask for Levin’s hand in marriage on the top of Table Mountain. “I love mountains, and I wanted to propose on one of the wonders of the world,” he said.

Adams has travelled to 45 countries – some before his injury, some after. In Australia, he met many South African Jews who advised him that Table Mountain was the perfect spot to propose. They also recommended local photographer Russel Smith, who captured the moment for posterity.

But Adams almost missed his perfectly planned



The proposal on Table Mountain

Photo: Russel Smith Photography

proposal thanks to that perpetual Cape Town villain – the wind. The first time they tried to go up in the cable car, they were told it was too windy. Time was ticking towards the end of their trip and they had a full schedule exploring everything Cape Town had to offer, including shark-cage diving.

Finally, on a beautiful mid-March evening, they made it up to the top, and as the sun set over the Atlantic Ocean, Adams asked Levin to marry him. Of course, she said yes. Around them, fellow tourists and South Africans cheered, echoing the warmth they encountered every step of their South Africa trip.

“We were always treated with kindness and respect, from our arrival at the airport to all the places we visited,” Adams said. “South Africa is one of the most beautiful places in the world – the scenery, the views, the nature, and the wonderful people.”

Adams’ uncle is a close friend of Levin’s family, so when his family arrived in Israel, Levin’s family welcomed them. They stayed in touch, but it was only when Adams was injured that they reconnected properly and love bloomed.

Adams is originally from Mariupol, the city where Russia killed 87 000 people. He still has family there, enduring Russia’s relentless attacks day and night, yet he said the world remains silent about Russian aggression.

In contrast, he was horrified to see murals praising Hamas leaders in the Bo-Kaap area of Cape Town. “Don’t they realise that Hamas is like ISIS, murdering Jews and Arabs, kidnapping innocent people?” he asked. “We went into Gaza to rescue our brothers and sisters and to destroy a terrorist organisation. Meanwhile, they don’t protest [against] Egypt, whose border with Gaza is much stronger and more fortified than Israel’s border with Gaza.”

On 7 October 2023, Adams was travelling in Japan but decided to return to Israel immediately to fight. On 11 October, he landed in Israel, put on his uniform, and joined his team at war. Five days later he was hit by shrapnel in the neck. “Despite the injury, I chose not to evacuate to hospital. Every day, I dressed the wound myself, and continued fighting,” he said.

He was then injured in the explosion at the entrance to a tunnel shaft inside a civilian building when terrorists

detonated 13kg of explosives. The building almost collapsed on them. Today, Adams still experiences phantom pain from his amputated limb, but he moves through it with perseverance and hope.

This wasn’t Adams’ first foray onto an African mountain. Just two months earlier, in January 2025, he became the first Israeli above-the-knee amputee to summit Kilimanjaro. “After I got injured, it was one of my goals. I trained for it for about three months. It was a huge challenge. Even for people with two legs, it’s a challenge! There was so much rain, mud, and snow. People looked at my prosthetic and thought I was mad. It’s the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. But I hope it will inspire other people who are going through challenges.”

Adams did the climb with two Israeli friends. One had been gravely injured when a Hamas grenade exploded beside him. When they reached the summit, they held up a flag with the faces of Adams’ brothers-in-arms who didn’t survive the explosion that took his leg.

In Tanzania, everyone from the porters on the mountain to the people on the street knew the story of Joshua Mollel, the young Tanzanian student who was brutally murdered by Hamas on 7 October and whose body is still being held hostage in Gaza. Everywhere they went, Tanzanians expressed support for the war, knowing the cruelty of the enemy that Israel is fighting.

Adams said being in Gaza was “like being in World War II. There are planes, artillery, tanks, everything. Before you go into Gaza, you prepare yourself. You know you could get injured or die. You’re ready for that sacrifice, for your country.”

For now, he’s grateful to be alive, and looks forward to his wedding in July. An information systems student, he plans to continue studying and travelling. His next major goal is to do a triathlon, and from there, the world is at his feet, especially with his love by his side.

*\*Their names have been changed for security reasons.*



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# Jewish Report

## Fear not, we have each other!

Our imagination or fears are often much worse and possibly less manageable than reality. In the past week, one of our favourite radio hosts and columnists got caught at Ben Gurion Airport when a missile hit the airport grounds. Never in a million years would Howard Feldman have dreamt that he would find himself in such a situation. He’s not that kind of media hound! And even when he was in the situation, he was having to pinch himself to believe it was happening. He survived to tell the story, thank G-d! And what a story it is on page 1!

Just how many times have you asked someone the age-old question of what they would take if their home was on fire and they had to evacuate urgently? I’ve been asked that so many times throughout my life, I know my answer by rote. It would be my and my family’s vital documents, my cellphone/laptop, and our photographs. There but for the grace of G-d, I’ve never had to make that choice in real life, and I hope that neither I nor anyone I love ever has to. In Israel last week, many Israelis had to make that decision when they were forced to evacuate their homes because of the biggest fire Israel has ever experienced. Some had to leave their cars on the road to run for safety among other death-defying actions. (See page 3.)

The point is, when you think about something like this happening, you can’t really imagine what it would be like. You can imagine the terror, you can imagine the horror, and you can feel the fear. But for most people caught in the moment, it’s simply a matter of not thinking too deeply, putting one foot in front of the other, and doing what you need to do to get to safety. Once you escape alive, you have the opportunity to collapse in a heap in tears or even scream and shout.

Somehow, these situations that seem so devastating are events that people can and do live through. Our tolerance for pain and our desperate inborn need to survive carries us through a great deal.

How many times since 7 October 2023 have you wondered how the hostages, some of whom are still in captivity more than 19 months later, get through each day incarcerated by terrorists? I think about it often, and am amazed that even now, 21 hostages are alive in Gaza. Each day must be hell, but somehow, they get through it to the next day. Clearly, not all of them.

I remember when Almog Meir Jan, rescued by the Israeli army, was in South Africa before Pesach. He spoke about how he survived each day. He described how he and those in captivity with him would wake up every morning and first, he would talk about the dreams he had during the night, and then they would each name 10 things they were thankful for. Meir Jan said that the latter was what kept him sane and called it their “exercise”. As time went on, those 10 things become more difficult to come up with, but they never reneged on doing this “exercise”.

During his captivity, Meir Jan created an 80-square calendar, crossing out one square a day, having convinced himself that on the 80th day, he would be free. I hate to think what would have happened if they hadn’t been rescued on day 76.

As humans, we find incredible ways of surviving. I’ve heard of political prisoners confined for years during apartheid who would exercise for an hour every day in a tiny prison cell, and that would keep them sane. Some would learn the Bible.

It is our intrinsic humanity that keeps us going. But the unknown is extraordinarily frightening. When a long-term relationship ends, one you imagined would be a lifelong one, so often the devastation is more about the fear of how you will survive without them than them not being in your life.

And for those evacuating, fear of losing their home and not knowing where they would be thereafter is more frightening than the fact that they are in a death-defying situation.

For the released hostages, life now apparently isn’t easier to deal with than it was in captivity.

Can you remember what it was like to be forced to stay in our homes during the COVID-19 pandemic and not knowing if life would ever get back to normal? I remember snippets, but exactly what it was like, my mind doesn’t allow me to go there. Can you recall the fear we had of a loved one being taken by this illness? That was the most difficult part. Fear of the unknown.

When I see the ugly statements against Jews on social media, I feel fearful. I can imagine the worst, but really, I’m not imagining it, I’m fearing it. I don’t really know what the worst feels like. I worry about what can happen. I guess we all do.

But we don’t know what will happen. However, standing together against all odds and not allowing fear to get the better of us is the best way forward.

We can depend on each other. We are exceptional at looking out for one another and helping and guiding each other. As a community, as a Jewish world, we’re having a tough time. We’re not in a fire. We’re mostly not surviving missiles, but we need to band together to ensure our future in this country and this world.

Our innate resilience and wisdom will carry us, but it is essential to help one another through the morass and remember that we’re not alone.

I have no doubt that the experience of being at Ben Gurion Airport when the missile hit was horrific and will stay forever with those who were there. However, thank G-d, they survived to tell the story. The same goes for those who were evacuated in the fires.

Being at the Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration last week and seeing the community gelling and just being at home with one another was a beautiful thing to witness. If we can hold each other up during tough and good times, we won’t just survive, we will continue to thrive.

Shabbat shalom!  
Peta Krost  
Editor



# Words that echo across 3 000 years

OPINION

ROWAN POLOVIN

The history of the Jewish people can be summarised in four words: we are still here. Four words that echo across 3 000 years. Four words that defy empires, pogroms, and gas chambers. Four words that resonated powerfully last week as Israel marked her 77th modern anniversary while still at war.

From Johannesburg to Jerusalem, we face a time of trial and triumph. For 18 months, Israel has faced the latest assault on her right to exist. And even now, we have brothers and sisters captive in Gaza, their freedom denied but not forgotten.

Last week, many thousands of Jews across Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban gathered in solidarity and celebration, tangible proof of the unbreakable connection between South African Jewry and Israel. When we speak of unity, our community demonstrates it through action.

We have buried too many. We have wept too often. Yet we stand.

The days of remembrance and renewal that just passed – Yom Hazikaron flowing seamlessly into Yom Ha’atzmaut – embody the Jewish experience. This profound juxtaposition speaks volumes: our joy is forever tempered by sacrifice; our triumph forever mindful of its cost. As the flags transition from half-mast to full, so too does our collective spirit rise from solemnity to resolute affirmation of life.

Some question whether festivity is appropriate at times like these. I respond with a question of my own: when in our history have we ever celebrated in perfect peace?

We celebrate not because the moment is convenient, but because it’s necessary. Not in denial of pain, but in defiance of those who cause it.

This duality has always defined us. The siren that brought the nation to a standstill on Yom Hazikaron gave way to celebration 24 hours later. The same people who stood in silent reverence at military cemeteries soon danced in city squares. This isn’t contradiction, it’s the essence of Jewish resilience, a people who have learnt that to honour the fallen, we must cherish the nation they died defending.

This is the Jewish people’s message to the world: we are here. We have never confused survival with surrender. For 77 years, Israel has shown that the Jewish people

will no longer outsource our security or apologise for our existence. The independence we honour goes deeper than borders. It lives in our refusal to be defined by others.

Our enemies count rockets. They measure destruction. But they cannot count memory. They cannot measure identity. They cannot comprehend resilience.

While they build tunnels, we build hospitals. While they invest in rockets, we invest in research. While they teach hatred, we teach healing. While they embrace death, we sanctify life.

That is the difference. And no weapon can destroy it. No propaganda can erase it.

And that’s cause for celebration.



The Kotel in Jerusalem is a symbol that shows the world that *we are still here*



We don’t just endure history. We write it. From Jerusalem to Johannesburg, from Cape Town to Durban, we stand not at the edge of an abyss, but at the threshold of renewal. For 77 years is but a moment in the long arc of Jewish history, a heartbeat for a people who count their story in millennia.

In these days after Yom Ha’atzmaut, as we hold in our hearts those still in captivity, those who guard our people, and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, remember what Israel has always been – proof that a people can face the harshest chapters of history, and still author their own future.

Four words brought us here. Four words sustain us. Four words carry us forward into whatever challenges and victories lie ahead: we are still here.

• *Rowan Polovin is the South African Zionist Federation national chairperson.*

# Traumatised Israelis sacrificing for us all

PERSONAL STORY

SIMON ANSTEY

The Ethiopian Airlines flight path unusually approached Ben Gurion Airport from the east – a sign of the times perhaps to avoid Houthi missiles? As the plane descended, so the anticipation increased, as it does only on a flight to Israel.

For some reason, the clapping which accompanied the landing seemed a quirky remnant from a time gone by and strangely inappropriate, a vestige of a bygone era. Hasn’t Israel moved on? It’s the start-up nation for goodness sake, not some pioneer kumbaya state. The swamps have been drained, and the smallest “*hok*” in Tel Aviv will set you back R25 million! Happy clappy Zionists no longer required.

The reason for the visit – Pesach. Why pass up on the opportunity to have a seder with best friends, Sarit and Guy, and their incredible kids? Maybe selflessly a need to show support for Israelis, to spend some money in the war-battered economy. Maybe selfishly, a need to feel part of the consensus, to no longer feel “othered”. To feel normal in the most abnormal of places.

It’s a society so deeply traumatised by the ongoing war. Faces and names of hostages and victims of 7 October are inescapably everywhere. The hostage issue is ubiquitous and a deep wound, incapable of being healed until the last one returns home. But the resilience of the society is self-evident each and every day. You see it in the number of prams; you see it in the way mothers embrace their sons. The bars and restaurants are packed to capacity despite the eye watering prices. These remarkable people continue to live their lives.

Sarit and Guy’s son, Ilan, whom we have known since he was six years old, is now a 22-year-old on-duty tank

commander and wanted to show us where he fought on 7 October. And so a day was spent travelling with him and his family from Sderot to Kfar Aza, to Nir Oz, to Be’eri, with a final stop at the Nova massacre site.

I’ve been to Theresienstadt. I’ve witnessed the special cruelty reserved for Jews, but even the Nazis had the good sense to try and hide their actions. The frenzied murderous mob of butchering Islamists, fitted with GoPros so they could livestream the massacre, took evil to a new level. They will be paying the price for their actions for many, many years to come. They failed to understand that since 1948, Jewish lives are no longer cheap.

The walk through the field of the slaughtered initially evokes shock, shock at the endlessness of the memorials and the sheer number of the dead, which soon turns to guilt because it’s just not possible to read each and every tribute. My eyes welled up with tears, and my body began to shake. My partner’s well timed and necessary embrace was permission to sob. Visting Nova is a

shocking and awful experience, and yet one that I’m grateful to have had. It will define my political views and my relationship to Israel for years to come.

Exiting the site on the right-hand side, there’s a makeshift tent which doubles as a prayer space. I noticed Sarit quietly lighting a memorial candle and praying. I have a fairly good idea what she was praying for. On the left-hand side, I saw Ilan, in his uniform with his machine slung over his shoulder. It then hit me hard just how much Israelis are sacrificing for all of us, and it struck me that with resilience and bravery like that, we will win, we will triumph, because we always do.

• *Simon Anstey, who has a penchant for radio and podcasts, is on sabbatical from the insurance world.*



The Dizengoff Square Fountain in Tel Aviv



# Who opened the doors, and who slammed them shut



It's hard to stomach the hypocrisy. The very nations and institutions that let Jews burn in industrial ovens now line up to instruct us on morality, restraint, and proportionality. They want to teach Jews how to feel, how to grieve, how to respond to antisemitism, as if they've ever lifted a finger to stop it.

From the placards of self-righteous protesters and even a smattering of self-loathing Jews waving Palestinian flags down the avenues of London and Brussels to the graffiti-smearred walls of Ivy League campuses where Jewish students are treated as walking provocations, one thing is clear: the West has once again found a way to make Jews the villain.

No Israeli flags in sight; no nuance; no empathy. Just a screeching demand that we apologise for surviving.

And if we dare to push back, we're told we're overreacting. That we're inflaming tensions. That we must understand "context", even when it's a genocidal death cult calling for our extermination.

Forgive us for not taking moral instruction from a world that stood by as our families were turned to ash.

Let's dispense with the fairytales about Allied heroism. By the early 1940s, the leaders of the "free world": Roosevelt, Churchill, and their contemporaries, knew exactly what was happening to Europe's Jews.

And they did nothing.

Worse, they actively ensured our destruction. The United States maintained immigration quotas so tight that Jews couldn't get in, even when their lives depended on it.

The MS St Louis, filled with nearly 1 000 Jewish refugees, was turned away from American shores. A quarter of those people were murdered in camps.

The United Kingdom sealed off entry to Palestine, the one place Jews might have reached, by enforcing the 1939 White Paper. Even Holocaust survivors were imprisoned in Cyprus.

They had intelligence. They had proof. They had means, but they didn't act. Not because they didn't know, but because they didn't care.

**Evian: where Western conscience was buried**

In 1938, the West's leaders gathered in Evian, France, to address the growing refugee crisis.

They dressed it up as humanitarian concern. In reality, it was a diplomatic shrug wrapped in ceremony.

One by one, each country said some version of, "We're sympathetic, but sorry. No room. No visas. No Jews."

Only the Dominican Republic, of all places, offered anything tangible. The rest applauded themselves for showing up, and left the Jews to rot.

Hitler was watching. He understood the message: "The Jews are alone. No-one wants them. Do your worst." And he did.

Churchill, Roosevelt, and the rest of the West, we don't

forget that when you toasted liberty, we were being herded into ghettos; when you convened political-strategy briefings, our children were suffocating in cattle cars; and when you bombed oil fields and bridges, you never touched the single train track to Auschwitz.

Even after the war, when the world saw what was done to us, your sympathy didn't extend to action.

British soldiers imprisoned Holocaust survivors – people weighing 40kg, tattooed, orphaned – for trying to reach the land that might finally offer them safety.

This isn't ancient history, this is our living grandparents. This is the ashes still in European soil. This is the smoke still clinging to the rafters of human memory.

So no, we don't take lessons from you. Because your record isn't one of courage, it's one of shame.

**We were your surgeons, your teachers, your scientists**

Before the gas chambers, we were the people who healed you, who educated your children, who pioneered your medicine, who filled your concert halls, and staffed your universities.

And you thanked us by looking the other way.

Now, once again, Jews are being hunted, this time on sidewalks, subways, and social media. This time in Sydney and San Francisco, not Warsaw.

And what do we hear? "Restraint"; "equivalence"; "both sides"; "We condemn all violence"; and "Don't conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism."

Go f-ck yourselves!

You showed us exactly what you would do when Jews were in mortal danger: nothing. You have shown us, time and again, exactly where you stand. Not with us. Never with us.

**No reason to trust**

Your protests aren't about justice, they're about performance.

You wave Palestinian flags; chant revolutionary slogans; cry for "liberation"; and remain silent as gay people are thrown off rooftops in Gaza, as children are turned into suicide bombers, as Israeli civilians are raped and butchered.

You have no problem with brutality, just as long as it's against Jews.

And then you tell us to be quiet. To be better. To play nice. That we mustn't "fuel division".

You don't get to ask that of us. You lost that right. You never earned our trust, and you've spent decades proving we were right to withhold it.

**This isn't about "never again", it's about right now**

We're not invoking history as a metaphor, we're invoking it as a warning. Because it's not just that the world let us die before, it's that you are letting it happen again.

When you excuse Hamas; when you platform hate; when you tell Jewish kids to take off their kippahs "for their own safety"; when you say "context matters" after civilians are slaughtered in their homes.

No. Context is this: we know who stood by before; we know who's standing by now; and we see you.

**Save your breath**

We don't need your concern. We don't want your tolerance. We reject your gaslighting.

You betrayed us at Evian; you betrayed us in 1942;

you betrayed us in 1973; and you're betraying us again.

And we will not forget. We don't trust you. We will not trust you. And we would be fools if we did.

So take your hollow lectures, your pious resolutions, your fake moral superiority, and shove them.

The world may have forgotten who it is, but we haven't forgotten who we are.

*Am Yisrael Chai.*

• Ezra Stone was born in Natal, South Africa, and now writes from Buenos Aires. His work explores history, resilience, and identity, tracing the unbreakable threads between past and present.



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# DJ Raphi’s dance videos talk kids’ language

LULA PENCHARZ

Raphi Nathan, a young South African-born Israeli, is dominating YouTube with funky dancing and singing videos that have taken young children, particularly those wanting to learn English, by storm. Nathan, known as DJ Raphi to the world, is the first Israeli content creator to reach one million subscribers on YouTube, and his channel now has more than 600 million views.

“Though we’re probably the most viewed channel in Israel, about 50% of the views are from the United States, then Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Africa with regards to non-Jewish viewership,” Nathan said. “The videos are used in schools all around the world. After the English-speaking countries, most of our views are from Muslim countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. It’s educational.”

The focus of his YouTube channel and brand is, he says, to empower kids through music and dance and bring people together to make a better world. Nathan is also an acclaimed music producer, DJ, beatboxer, and runs his own entertainment business.

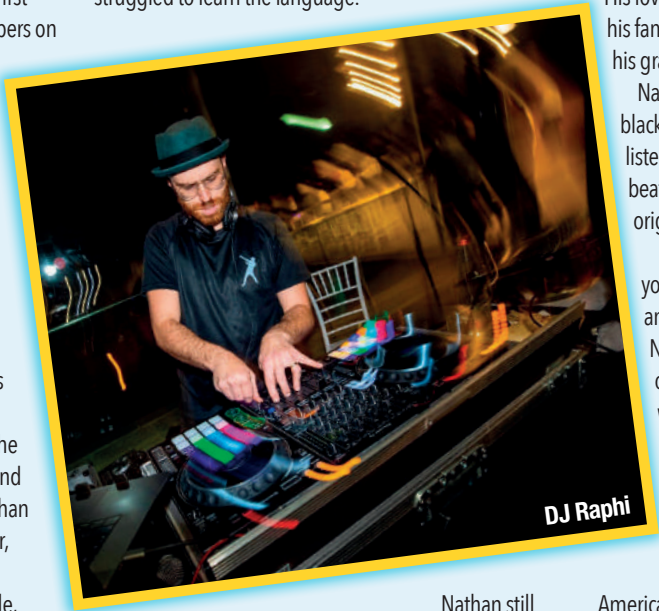
“The first video I uploaded was the Cha Cha Slide, just me dancing to it. Suddenly I started getting videos of kids at home, because it was during the COVID-19 pandemic, dancing to these videos. It started spreading like wildfire,” he said. “People were stuck at home and sad, and I gave them something to get them up and moving. That video has 80 million views.”

His YouTube content-creation career started in 2020 at the peak of COVID-19, when Nathan made the risky move to become a content creator when the pandemic put an abrupt halt to his DJ-ing gigs. In December 2019, DJ Raphi performed at Bnei Akiva Machaneh, only to return to Israel in March to have to shut his business down. His late mother, Naomi Nathan, and his wife encouraged him to start posting his dances and music on YouTube in support of his message of “just wanting to make people happy”.

Nathan attributes his thriving YouTube career to the support of his family, friends, the Jewish community, and previous clients from his DJ-ing days. “Throughout my career, it hasn’t been about me, it’s been about the people that are around me who believe in what I do,” the

Israeli YouTube sensation said. “When I started creating the YouTube videos, I had already exposed myself to the world as DJ Raphi.”

Though his career has taken off, his childhood was anything but easy. Nathan’s family made aliya from Johannesburg when he was eight years old, and he struggled to learn the language.



Nathan still visits South Africa as often as possible to visit his grandmother in Sandringham Gardens. “I’m connected to the country, to the culture, to the Jewish community, and to my family in South Africa. As much as I am Israeli today, I’m always proud to say that I’m a South African Jew,” he said.

Nathan’s late mother was a teacher at King David Linksfield before they moved. Nathan said his mother taught her children, as well as her students, that “values come first”. In Israel, Naomi worked as a cleaner and organiser in a community shul. “We were in private education from the day we started in Israel. We were able to do that because she sacrificed having a cleaner in South Africa to become a cleaner in Israel.”

Naomi was tragically killed in a bus accident in Israel in 2022. Nathan still lives by his mother’s teachings. “She inspired me to be a better person, a better parent, and to have the right values. I’ve seen a lot of big pop stars send messages about money and other negative stuff to kids. My job is to send a different message, one of wanting to make the world a happier and better place,” he said.

Nathan said he struggled as an “outcast” at school, but found comfort in his passion for music. His parents couldn’t afford drumming lessons for him anymore, but he remained dedicated to music.

“I started beatboxing to remember all the beats, and I ended up winning a beatboxing competition,” he said. His love for music was passed through generations in his family. His father was a musician and a singer, and his grandfather was a stage performer.

Nathan, who is an observant Jew, wears a signature black hat when performing as DJ Raphi. Tired of listening to average, dull children’s music, he added beats “designed for Tomorrowland” to go with the original songs.

“Parents don’t mind putting on Spotify [where you can also find Nathan’s videos] while they drive, and even teens think it’s cool,” he said. Before Nathan puts any videos up, he shares it with his own young children to understand what they would find catchy.

Nathan explained why he believes his content appeals to such a large market. “Music is an international language that people connect to, and dancing connects people even more.

The perfect example is if you travel to South America, and you don’t know the language, when you talk to someone to get directions, you are actually creating choreography with your hands to explain yourself and people immediately understand the universal language of movement,” he said.

On top of creating YouTube content, Nathan’s Premium Entertainment business provides DJs and dancers for weddings, Batmitzvahs, and Barmitzvahs in Israel and internationally. Nathan’s next step in the world of entertainment is to do “big shows and community events around the globe”.

He has also inadvertently stepped into the advocacy spotlight. He receives hateful comments on social media for being Jewish and Israeli, and says, “I have a team around me whose job is to fight back. We don’t delete comments because we believe in talking to people.”

As a South African Jew and Israeli, Nathan uses his unique background and perspective to shed a different light on Israel. “Coming from a country where there was apartheid and then living in Israel, you understand that it’s a place of light, peace, and freedom,” he said.

# ‘Still here, celebrating – this is the ultimate victory’

LEE TANKLE

“Young Jewish children running around and celebrating 77 years of Israeli independence is the ultimate victory against those who wish its destruction,” said Adi Cohen Hazanov, chargé d’affaires of the Israeli embassy in South Africa. Cohen Hazanov was responding to the massive Johannesburg Jewish crowd celebrating Yom Ha’atzmaut at Yeshiva College campus on 1 May.

“Our independence today isn’t up for debate. It’s a living fact, earned through sacrifice and sustained by the strength of our people,” she said at the event hosted by the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF). “We’re not a passing chapter. We’re the oldest living nation on earth, and we’ll continue to thrive thanks to our resilience, values, and unwavering spirit. Our independence isn’t only about survival, it’s about vision, about values, and vitality. It’s about choosing life, even in the face of terror.”

The community came together in its thousands under blue skies to celebrate 77 years of Israel’s independence. The importance of the day was demonstrated by the installation of sunflowers and empty yellow chairs signifying the 59 hostages still being held in captivity by Hamas in Gaza.

“The history of the Jewish people can be summed up in four words: we are still here,” said Rowan Polovin, the chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation. “Four words that echo across 3 000 years. Four words that defy empires, pogroms, and gas chambers. Four words that today, on Israel’s 77th anniversary, ring with renewed meaning.”

Though the Jewish world has been shattered since the war started with Hamas’s invasion on 7 October 2023, as Jews, we have no other choice but to celebrate the state of Israel, Polovin said. “We celebrate not because the moment is convenient, but because it’s necessary. Not in denial of pain, but in defiance of those who cause it.”

South Africa’s chief rabbi, Dr Warren Goldstein, said it was a massive privilege that the Jewish community could gather at the Yeshiva College campus to celebrate Yom Ha’atzmaut as it was the place where the community had come together many times before, not only to celebrate Israel, but also to gather in moments of crisis.

“Most of the people on the lawns here today will have no memory of a world without the Jewish state. Most of the people on the lawns today will have no memory of growing up without it,” he said.

Under the blue sky, members of the Johannesburg Jewish community were able to enjoy kosher food ranging from sushi and burgers to coffee and slush. All the while watching phenomenal performances by Jewish school children and other talented musicians.

A big hit for many of the younger members of the community – and their parents running after them – was the wide array of inflatable rides that they enjoyed throughout the day.

Said Polovin, “For 77 years, Israel has shown that the Jewish people will no longer outsource our security or apologise for our existence. The independence we honour today goes beyond borders. It lives in our refusal to be defined by others.”

Polovin cited many of Israel’s triumphs in 77 years that have turned it from a state cobbled together in 1948 after the War of Independence to the global powerhouse it is today.



“We celebrate a people who didn’t just return to their homeland but reimagined it. We don’t just endure history, we write it,” he said, “Scientists don’t just heal, they cure the incurable. Engineers don’t just solve problems, they reshape identities. Farmers don’t just grow food, they make deserts bloom and share their knowledge with those ready to learn. Israel is a modern miracle, a vibrant democracy pulsing with purpose and promise.”

In contrast, “our enemies count rockets with measured destruction, but they cannot count memory, they cannot measure identity, they cannot comprehend resilience. While they build tunnels, we build hospitals. They invest in rockets. We invest in research. They teach hatred. We teach healing. They embrace death. We sanctify life. That’s the difference.”

The day concluded with a performance from a South African musician who has chosen to remain anonymous for his safety. The mood was infectious as everyone joined in singing the lyrics to the songs.

“We will dance, we will build, and we believe, not despite the pain, but because of our purpose,” said Cohen Hazanov.

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# In praise of the ‘other mother’ who raised us

ELKA COHEN

In South Africa, where family structures reflect the nation's complex history, the term “mother” extends far beyond biological ties. For many, Mother's Day isn't just about honouring the women who gave birth to us, but celebrating those who have nurtured us along the way – the nannies, domestic workers, and caregivers who stepped into our homes to help raise our children, often staying for decades.

In many Jewish households across South Africa, where dual-income parents navigate demanding schedules, domestic workers often play roles that extend far beyond basic employment. They become co-parents, trusted caregivers who bridge cultural divides and form lasting emotional bonds with the families they support. It's a uniquely South African dynamic, where the lines between work and family blur, leaving a lasting legacy in many adult lives.

Professor Yael Kadish, the head of psychology at Tara Moross Academic Hospital, says, “The role of domestic workers in South Africa is complex. These women typically become part of the family and by extension, the parental system.”

For 32-year-old Benjamin Schaimberg, the impact was foundational. After losing his father at the age of nine, Schaimberg reflects, “I was so lucky to be raised by two mothers. My biological mother taught me compassion, while my Tswana mother taught me consequences. She was strict; she took no nonsense.”

Connie Moguase, known to the Schaimberg family as “Mama Connie”, was a Tswana woman from Rustenburg who spent more than 20 years working in their home, helping to raise Benjamin and his two siblings. “She was part of my family before I even was,” he recalls. “She bathed me, fed me, did everything a mother would do. As a child, I didn't realise she was employed by my parents. That understanding only came later.”

Her presence was woven into the fabric of his daily life and formed some of the best of his childhood memories. “No birthday of mine was complete without her singing ‘Ugele gule’ in Tswana, which was every year until my 18th birthday!”

Mama Connie also helped him develop cultural fluency. “She taught me Tswana, and today, my understanding of the language has opened doors for me both in my studies and my career, especially in a multicultural city like Johannesburg. It also offered me a secret insight into some hilarious conversations,” he says.

Julie Leibowitz shares a similar experience with the woman who helped raise her. “I was raised by a wonderful woman, Elsie Setsedi. My mother had a busy

life as a political activist and intellectual. That's where Elsie came in – she was a master organiser and creative caregiver. My mother often said that if Elsie hadn't grown up during apartheid's darkest days, she would have been running a corporation.”



Abigail with Leo Berkowitz

Elsie was an irreplaceable part of the Gordon (Leibowitz's maiden name) family from the early 1970s until her retirement in 2001. “I remember her cheerful, booming ‘Tsogal’ as she shook our duvets in the morning to wake us up for school, her toasted cheese sandwiches, and the radio playing in the kitchen. She made our house a home, and I'm forever grateful to her,” Leibowitz says.

While these stories reflect privilege, they also shed light on the sacrifices many of these women have had to make. For many in this line of work, the journey is one of hardship and hope.

Forty-year-old “Abigail”, who asked to remain anonymous, said that leaving Zimbabwe in 2013 to find work in Johannesburg also meant leaving behind her then three-year-old son, who has a heart condition. “Leaving him was the hardest thing I've ever had to do,” she said.

Today, her sacrifice is paying off with her teenage son thriving at boarding school in Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, Abigail has poured her heart into raising two boys

alongside her second son, born in the home where she works. “I love my job. Raising these kids feels like therapy for me. It reminds me that if I do good, good things will come to me,” she says.

“In South Africa it's comparatively affordable to have a live-in daily domestic worker, so the children have almost uninterrupted access to these women, bolstering a child's sense of security and healthy attachment,” Kadish says.

“For these women, however, the job may exact a heavy toll. In giving of themselves emotionally and psychologically to a family that isn't in fact their own, they are completely personally invested in their jobs. Termination of their employment, which may be sudden or acrimonious, will be a tremendous loss for them, not only financially but in every part of their lives. This isn't always acknowledged sufficiently by employers or handled in the most compassionate way.”

Priscilla Mahloana from Limpopo, describes the bond she shares with the children she raises as “a blessing”. Now 48, Priscilla has spent the past eight years caring for two children, including a little girl she has raised from birth. “I have two adult sons of my own, but raising this daughter is special. She's like my own child. I carried her on my back when she was a baby, and now she comes to me when she's sad to seek comfort in my arms,” she says.

Priscilla and the young girl share a rhythm in their days, from doing homework together, to singing songs and learning to count in Pedi. “We may come from different cultures, but love doesn't care about that. Love makes a mother,” she says.

We honour and celebrate women like Mama Connie, Elsie, Priscilla, and Abigail, women who remind us that motherhood is defined by love, presence, and care. They provide more than just comfort, routine, and support in homes where parents are stretched; they are central figures in family life, who anchor our children, shape their values, and nurture their growth. Their contribution deserves recognition and the deepest respect.



Priscilla Mahloana with Gabriel and Noa Cohen

# The activist who created a kibbutz in Kliptown

KIM HATCHUEL

Sowetan community leader and social activist Bob Nameng, who passed away at 54 on 19 April, was so influenced by a visit he had to Israel that he created a kibbutz in Soweto and began observing Shabbat.

Having dedicated his life to empowering local youth through education, arts, and community development initiatives, he used his home in Kliptown for communal living, in which young locals live, share a library, and a vegetable garden.

Nameng went to Israel in 2003 on an informal education programme, which he said was transformative for him. “I knew little about Jews or Israel beyond what I learned from the Bible,” he told people afterwards. “But when I experienced Israel and what it offered, I encountered another level,” he said.

“The Jewish people have overcome their trials and pain. We, as Africans, are still healing, and have yet to come to terms with our troubled past. If there's anyone we can draw lessons and inspiration from in our process of healing, it's the Jewish people. Their spirit is what we need here.”

Nameng would tell people that he believed Shabbat should be a global occurrence. And that he believed that the kibbutz communal living system emphasised shared responsibility and equality.

He created a sanctuary where children



Bob Nameng at the Kotel

by his friendship with Ilan Ossendryver, a South African photojournalist known for documenting pivotal moments in South African and Israeli history and for being a tour guide to Soweto. “Bob was an incredible friend, a brother. He inspired me in so many ways,” said

Ossendryver.

As a tour guide, Ossendryver brought many international guests, including some of the 7 October survivors and hostages to Kliptown, and Nameng would always share his inspiration with them.

In early 2018, Nameng's vision of intercultural engagement came to life through the “Your Neighbour/Makwelwane” project. Jewish youth movements such as Habonim and Bnei Akiva, along with students from Johannesburg's Jewish schools, initiated monthly visits to Kliptown.

Nameng was more than just a community leader, he was a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change within his community. His unwavering commitment to uplifting the youth of Kliptown transformed countless lives.



Bob Nameng with Almog Meir Jan and a Kliptown resident

could feel heard, seen, and empowered to believe in their potential. He encouraged young people to dream boldly and to have confidence in their ability to shape their own future, regardless of their circumstances.

His connection to Israel was strengthened



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# Caleb Levitan SA’s youngest chess master

GILANA LAB

Fourteen-year-old South African chess prodigy Caleb Levitan this week achieved a rating that will make him the newest International Master and the youngest in South Africa to attain this title within the accepted world norms-based system.

What’s more, since January, Caleb has officially been ranked the best active chess player in South Africa.

Although he has the rating of an International Master, he’s not formally recognised as such until the International Chess Federation, FIDE, meets at its annual congress at the end of June, when it will formally ratify his title.

Caleb accomplished this massive achievement during the 18 rounds he played in the Kup Vojvodine 2025 Finale held in Serbia over the last month (April-May). It took attaining a rating of more than 2 400 after his 16th match to become International Master Elect, which means he simply awaits FIDE to recognise his rank officially. He is the youngest South African to reach this position by following through FIDE-acknowledged international chess requirements.

“In the past, the majority of South Africans were able to earn the title of

International Master by performing exceptionally well in a chess competition with other talented African players,” says his father, Shaun Levitan.

there are rigorous guidelines as to what qualifies as one of those performances, known as “IM norms”, Caleb had already met the requirements to become an

rating while playing against highly skilled opponents,” he said. At the beginning of the Kup Vojvodine 2025 Finale, Caleb had a rating of 2 327, and he exceeded 2 400 during

In 2023, when Caleb was 12 years old, he earned the FIDE Master title from the World Chess Federation when his rating surpassed 2 100. Even then, he was one of the youngest South Africans ever to hold this honour.

In September 2024, he became the youngest champion to represent South Africa at the Chess Olympiad, which is regarded as the “World Cup of chess”. As the top active player, Caleb also holds second place in both the Top 10 Open and Junior Open South African chess ratings.

Caleb and his twin brother, Judah, started playing chess at the age of six, after being taught by their father, and though Judah has gone on to achieve his own success, Caleb is making waves at international level. Judah holds the fourth highest rating in the South African Junior Chess player category for players under the age of 20.

The chess journeys of both boys are far from over. Caleb’s next big goal is to become a Grandmaster. The only other South African to hold this title is Kenny Solomon, who took this title when he was 35 years old in 2014. To become a Grandmaster, a player has to obtain three Grandmaster norms, proving a high degree of chess proficiency and reaching a minimum FIDE rating



The route that Caleb took to his international masters title has been described by many as the more challenging and difficult route.

To become an International Master according to FIDE requirements, a player must have three outstanding chess performances. Though

International Master before this tournament, but just needed his live rating to surpass 2 400.

Shaun told the *SA Jewish Report* that Caleb was shocked at achieving this goal. “We didn’t expect that he would achieve it on this trip because it’s quite a big jump in

the tournament.

Shaun says Caleb is the youngest South African to cross a 2 400 rating in a live tournament. The highest rating by a South African is 2 413, held by International Master Henry Steel. Steel received this title when he was 25 years old in 2014.

## Europe Netball cancellation takes ball from Israeli court

LEE TANKLE

The Europe Netball Open Challenge was cancelled over security threats to the tournament because it included an Israeli team. But, instead of excluding the Israeli team as demanded by protesters, the organisers decided to cancel the tournament.

Though Israeli team members, led by South African-born captain Keren Gordon, were upset that they couldn’t play, they were relieved that Europe Netball didn’t succumb to the demands.

“No players were directly targeted, but we heard that protesters were planning to disrupt the games or target those who were participating in the tournament to try and get them not to play against Israel,” said Gordon.



The manager of Israeli netball, Rebecca Cox, confirmed that though the Israeli team didn’t receive any backlash or threats, Europe Netball “certainly received a lot of negative social media attention and was condemned for hosting us as a country”.

Gordon said the continental tournament was a massive deal because they had spent two years training and fundraising for it, and were ready to go to Cardiff in Wales when suddenly, they were informed about the cancellation.

Scheduled to take place from 7 to 11 May, the tournament was cancelled by Europe Netball on 29 April citing security concerns for its players, coaches, officials, volunteers, and fans.

“The safety and well-being of everyone involved in our events – players, coaches, officials, volunteers, and fans – is

always our top priority,” the organisation said. “It is with regret that we announce the cancellation of our open tournament at Cardiff next week. This decision hasn’t been made lightly but reflects our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our netball family and ensuring a positive experience for all.”

The cancellation followed an intensive campaign led by anti-Israel activists to exclude Israel from the tournament.

The House of Sport, the Cardiff venue of the tournament, received threats that anti-Israel protesters would protest outside the venue and disrupt entry.

Cox said that at no point did Europe Netball suggest that the Israeli team not participate. “They just wanted us to play.”

The decision stands in contrast to the decision by the South African Rugby Union (SARU) in February 2023 to

disinvite Tel Aviv Heat, an Israeli rugby team, from the Mzansi Challenge tournament after members of SARU were allegedly sent death threats by anti-Israel lobbyists who threatened to disrupt the tournament.

Shan Berman, the Israeli squad coach, said, “We’ve played with these teams for years, so we know them and never had any hostility. We played against girls in hijabs, and we only had good experiences of Europe Netball and all the other teams. We weren’t concerned about hostility on the court.”

However, like the organisers, she was worried about “a minority of very loud people who were trying to stir up trouble and trying to get people to come out to protest and demonstrate, and they were going all out on social media.”

Gordon said the Israeli team had been competing in Europe Netball tournaments for more than a decade as it was their only opportunity to compete on the international stage.

“Europe Netball backed us all the way. They made sure we had the security we needed. They never let anything come against us, which was comforting,” she said, “They

accommodated us all the way. They organised things so that we could join the competition without playing games on Shabbat. They stood behind us the whole time.”

So it was disheartening for the team, which consists of a few South African *olim* as well as Gordon, to be told after they missed the tournament last year because of the war that this tournament would be cancelled.

Gordon said participation in these tournaments was privately funded as netball isn’t yet recognised by the Israeli government, but players were willing to do whatever they could to get to play.

“We did two years’ worth of training for this tournament, which meant a lot of time on court, fitness work, and commitment from players physically and financially,” she said, “We held a fundraising campaign to raise money for the private security we would need while in Cardiff. We reached our goal in about four days and were able to raise a significant amount of money”

The private security was over and above the security organised by Europe Netball.

Gordon said it was devastating to have the tournament cancelled. “We just want a place for the love of netball. We want to keep politics out of it. We’ve been training for so long, everyone put in so much effort, and we were so proud to be able to represent our country, especially in these tough times. It was disappointing, and I’m sure for all the other countries involved as well.”

Gordon said that on 2 May, when the team met for training for the first time after the announcement, they came together to work through the disappointment of not being able to compete.

Said Berman, “It’s crazy how the world is accepting the lies and untruths being told and the bullying. We wouldn’t accept it in our classrooms, so why do we accept it in sport? Don’t we teach our kids to accept others? That’s the point of sport.”

“We won’t give up,” Gordon said. “We’ll keep pushing. We’ll keep training at national level, for all our junior teams, and keep working hard towards whatever the next goal is, whether it’s the Maccabiah in July or next year’s tournament. Hopefully, that will go ahead with no problems, taking into account all the logistics needed to be in place beforehand, even if it includes setting up our own tournaments with countries we have connections with, constantly working to improve and keep being able to play at that level, while continuously improving our level here, starting at junior level.”

of 2 500. Alternatively, you can challenge and beat Grandmasters with a 2 600 or higher rating.

“That last 100 is way harder than anything that came before it,” Shaun says. “You must beat incredibly strong people. You can’t lose to anyone lower rated. It’s difficult to find tournaments that will get you that rating gain.

“So it’s a big mountain to climb for the last 100. It’s not as simple as saying that if he works hard, he can do it this year. Our goal would be to go for it in the next two or three years.” Once this goal has been realised in the projected timeframe, not only will Caleb be the second South African Grandmaster, but he will be the youngest South African Grandmaster to date.

Judah also had an extremely successful week, being given a board prize for incredible performance for his team. “He was undefeated, he won all his games, he only drew one. It was just a great tournament overall. They both did well,” Shaun says.

“They both got big rating gains. Caleb got the title, and Judah hopefully less than 40 points short of his new title of FIDE Master,” said Shaun. Judah is hoping to realise this goal by the end of 2025.

While becoming world chess champions, the two still have to keep up to date with school work. That’s the compromise, you know, school and chess,” Shaun says. “If they could take off school full-time and dedicate themselves to chess, which their peers around the world largely do, they would, but they haven’t.” Since the academic standard in South Africa is higher than in other parts of the world, the boys remain enrolled in school and are constantly working on both chess and their academic careers.



# Losses and gains of intermittent fasting

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Bidding farewell to *chametz*, fasting for 12 or 24 hours, and eating up a storm when it's all over. While, as Jews, we're used to overhauling our diets and observing fast days, practising intermittent fasting takes a different kind of commitment.

"Intermittent fasting is based on the concept not of what you're eating, but when you're eating," says dietitian Elise Barron. It looks at weight loss in a different way and ultimately helps to promote fat loss, control appetite and preserve muscle mass.

Arguably, the best-known version of intermittent fasting is time-restricted eating (TRE). "Time-restricted eating limits the eating window to a specified number of hours each day, typically four to eight hours," says Dr Charlene Wolberg, a medical doctor and nutritionist. "The remaining hours of the day are fasting, with water or zero-calorie drinks."

"It's important to start slowly and ease one's way into the diet," Wolberg cautions. "There may be an adjustment period of one to three weeks. Headaches are often experienced initially, but subside when water intake is increased."

"Intermittent fasting is a lifestyle, it's not a diet," argues general practitioner Dr Lana Marcus, who has been practising TRE for five years. She has an eight-hour eating window, followed by 16 hours of fasting. "It can be used as a tool for weight loss, as anything that restricts the number of calories you eat will lead to weight reduction," she says.

However, many who follow intermittent fasting choose to do so as a health measure as opposed to a weight-loss strategy, Marcus says. Intermittent fasting was recommended to her when she was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome, a hormone imbalance



linked to insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome.

Marcus felt the effects relatively quickly and observed dramatic results in her bloodwork. "I managed to reduce my triglyceride [a type of fat in the blood called lipid] levels by 20% and I felt more energised," she says.

Marcus explains how intermittent fasting can boost one's metabolism. "When we eat, particularly if we're having a carb-dense meal or refined carbs, we release a lot of glucose into our bloodstream," she says. "Rather than having that glucose float around in the bloodstream, the body wants to pack it away into the tissues for energy utilisation and storage. This is where insulin comes in."

Insulin encourages lipogenesis, so it converts more carbohydrates into fat, explains Barron. "Insulin also inhibits lipolysis, where the body blocks the use of stored fats. So with intermittent fasting, there's typically a decrease in insulin and, as a result, the body can then use glucose and fat for fuel. Less insulin also helps to balance hunger."

Other benefits include increased production of brain-derived neurotrophic factors important for brain health and cognition, says Barron. People therefore often report an increase in focus. While it can sometimes therefore decrease anxiety and depression, conversely intermittent fasting can increase cortisol levels, boosting feelings of stress. "To mitigate cortisol impact, exercising, good quality sleep, and stress management are important," Barron says.

"As a mild stressor, fasting is beneficial in moderation, but harmful if the body is already under significant physical or emotional stress, including hormonal issues," adds Leigh-Anne Silber, a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant.

"It's particularly important not to binge at the end of the fasting period," Marcus says, discussing the correct approach to food intake. "Rather, break your fast with high fibre, high-protein foods because having too many carbs straight off the fasting period will spike blood sugar and possibly make you feel unwell. Meal planning is therefore

important, regardless of whether you're trying to lose weight or not."

In Barron's experience, intermittent fasting doesn't work for everyone. Possible downfalls include the fact that it's difficult to maintain in social situations, especially when eating out at certain times. "For some people, it also creates hunger and irritability," she says.

"People also sometimes make poor food choices, because they know they're eating only two meals a day or within a smaller space of time. Some land up overeating in the afternoon or after dinner because their sugar levels are dropping. Typically, it's a form of eating that isn't sustainable in the long term," she says.

Silber says for most healthy individuals, intermittent fasting – especially TRE eating like 16:8 or even 12:12 – can be a safe and effective approach to support weight management, improve insulin sensitivity, and promote cellular repair.

But it isn't safe or beneficial for everyone "It should be personalised and guided by a professional to avoid any negative effects and to ensure it's beneficial. Like any eating pattern, it isn't one-size-fits-all. There are some potential downsides particularly with more extreme fasting windows like 20:4 or one meal a day."

Eating a large amount in a short window like four hours, Silber adds, can overwhelm the digestive system, leading to bloating, nausea, or indigestion. "This may make it harder to meet daily nutritional needs, especially if meals aren't well-balanced. Prolonged or aggressive fasting can also affect the menstrual cycle or thyroid function in some women, particularly if calorie intake is chronically low."

Intermittent fasting is not recommended for children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, those with a history of eating disorders, or for individuals with low blood pressure, diabetes or low blood sugar issues.

"Those with high-energy needs like teenagers, athletes, and individuals with physically demanding jobs may struggle to meet their nutritional needs in a restricted time window," Silber says.

Those who attempt intermittent fasting will know within three to five days if it works, Barron says. "If your appetite is controlled, your focus is good, your energy levels are optimal throughout the day and two meals a day are enough, it's probably beneficial. If it doesn't work for you, you'd be tired, grumpy, irritable, overeating, and thinking of food all day."

# NIK RABINOWITZ



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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Daylight celebration draws record crowd

Last week, our community paused to observe Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, a poignant transition from profound grief to resilient joy that always underscores the deep connection between these emotions in our shared history. This year, however, Yom Ha'atzmaut in Israel was muted by devastating fires raging across the country, an emergency echoed by the significant fires here in the Western Cape. We are immensely relieved to hear that both the Israeli and Cape fires have now been brought under control and no longer pose a threat.

Yom Hazikaron remains a deeply moving occasion, and I extend heartfelt praise to the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) for its outstanding organisation of the event. This year's keynote speaker, Liora Ben Tsur, delivered an address that was both heart-wrenching and uplifting. Ben Tsur was in hospital on 7 October, having given birth just two days earlier. Her mother, South African immigrant Marcelle Talia, was at Liora's home on Kibbutz Ein Hashlosa, caring for her two older children when she was brutally murdered by Hamas gunmen, still holding the sweets she

had brought for her grandchildren. Despite this unimaginable tragedy, Ben Tsur's message was one of unwavering resolve and hope, that Israel and its people will rebuild, stronger and more united. Her South African roots resonated deeply with our community, rendering her story not only devastating but also profoundly relatable and stirring.

Yom Ha'atzmaut drew a record crowd, with an estimated 5 000 adults joining the celebration. Again, our gratitude goes to the SAZF for orchestrating this event, which has cemented itself as a cornerstone of our communal calendar. It was a joy to gather for Yom Ha'atzmaut in the daylight, perfectly suited to a midweek public holiday. The overwhelming turnout, encompassing families, students, older community members, and even some from beyond our community, speaks to the unity and strength that has come to define us. I'm equally proud to share that vibrant, well-attended events took place in the Cape and Durban,

reflecting the enduring spirit and proud resolve of our community across South Africa.

We were heartened to witness the compelling address by Patriotic Alliance Member of Parliament (MP) Ashley Sauls in Parliament, where he spoke with profound conviction about Daniel Perez, a South African-born Israeli



King David Linksfield students at the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations at Yeshiva College

soldier whose body remains tragically held captive in Gaza. The MP then also mentioned Uday Rabie, the 22-year-old Palestinian who was tortured and killed by Hamas after he

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



publicly criticised the group and took part in an anti-Hamas protest in Gaza.

Sauls leveraged his platform to urge our government to reconsider its approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict, advocating for a role in facilitating the safe return of hostages and an end to hostilities. His words resonate deeply with our longstanding appeals to the South African government, which has the potential to serve as a principled mediator yet has adopted a persistently biased and alienating posture. We commend Sauls for his courageous and principled stand, and we earnestly hope his call for a balanced and humane policy will inspire others to join us in pressing for a shift in our nation's approach to this devastating conflict.

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

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