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Jewish Report

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Hate crimes darken mood in Melbourne

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Ashul door is set alight as 20 community members sit eating Shabbat dinner inside. Just minutes later, Miznon, a partially Israeli-owned restaurant is stormed by pro-Palestinian supporters chanting “death to the IDF”, throwing chairs and tables, smashing a glass door, and causing chaos. These are just two of multiple antisemitic incidents that rocked Melbourne this past weekend, 4 to 6 July.

In another incident, five hooded vandals set cars alight and spray-painted graffiti at Lovitt Technologies Australia, a weapons company with links to Israel, early on Saturday morning. Early on Sunday morning, antisemitic graffiti was spray-painted on a vegetarian restaurant and a nearby wall opposite the Melbourne Holocaust Museum. No link has yet been found between the perpetrators of these various incidents.

“For those born after the Holocaust, the anti-Jewish racism that has swept Australia since 7 October 2023 has been the most all-pervasive and frightening in our lifetime,” says South African expat, Vic Alhadeff. Alhadeff is the former chief executive of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in Sydney, and the former editor of the *Australian Jewish News*. “It has been the most sustained epidemic of antisemitism in the history of this community and this country.”

Alhadeff describes the mood in the Jewish community following the latest spate of incidents in Melbourne as “a combination of angst, concern, and frustration”. These feelings, he says, haven’t been evoked only by the incidents themselves. They have arisen because the attacks are seen as “further evidence of the erosion of the respect for difference, which has long been a hallmark of this country’s multicultural ethos”.

The East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, whose congregants escaped

through a back entrance when the front door went up in flames just after 20:00 on Friday, 4 July, represents this open-minded ethos. South African expat, writer, actress, comedienne, and director, Gilda Blacher, who regularly attends the Chabad-affiliated shul, says it is welcoming to everyone. The shul, originally established in 1857, has been in its current premises since 1877. It is near the inner city, which has a largely artsy and hipster community and is across the river from more predominantly Jewish suburbs, she says.

“We have extreme ‘lefties’ who may very well be on the anti-Zionist marches,” she says. “We have conservative Jews, many gay couples, hipsters, and lots of visiting students at universities in Melbourne. It’s the kind of shul where the doors are always open, and it is completely apolitical. The rabbi, Dovid Gutnick, and his wife, Rachel, are non-judgemental and open to the most diverse range of people you can imagine.”

The nature of the shul makes the shock about its targeting that much more profound, says Blacher. “The biggest shock for me isn’t only the desecration of a building with such a long history, but that this person knowingly tried to burn down the shul with people inside. He had no idea that there was a back entrance offering an escape. The fact that you could do that is horrifying.”

The conflation of anti-Zionism and antisemitism is becoming increasingly apparent and alarming, Blacher says. “We’re clearly not a Zionist building. We’re a Jewish building. The predominant feeling among Jews is increasing

Gone but never forgotten

South African *olim* and other residents take to the streets of Beit Shemesh on Wednesday in a memorial procession for Staff Sergeant Moshe Shmuel Noll, who died this week in Gaza



Photo: Screenshot

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marginalisation.” She says the attack, coupled with the other antisemitic incidents over the weekend, have changed the mood in Melbourne. This is especially true of community members living outside of traditional Jewish areas whom, she says, had never truly felt fear of antisemitism.

The attack on Miznon, a trendy, Middle Eastern fusion restaurant attracting multicultural clientele in Melbourne’s city centre, compounded the shock, Blacher says. “You would not, in a million years, expect people to go up this busy laneway and march into a restaurant and terrify people, Jews and non-Jews.” Yet as proof of the inherent multicultural spirit of Australia, those working at a Lebanese-owned restaurant opposite immediately came to the aid of the staff at Miznon. They blocked the entrance, and protected the staff as tomatoes – used as table decorations – were thrown at them.

Nonetheless, Blacher says the discourse in Australia is toxic. “It’s divisive, it’s binary, and you reach that point where you think, ‘Do I hide the *chai* I wear? Do I tell my daughter not to tell anybody at university that she’s Jewish? Do we shuffle quietly into shul, and hope that no-one notices us? Do we retreat into ghettos? What’s the response to this level of absolute hatred?’ Something has shifted for me. I feel vulnerable in a way that I never had before.”

Angelo Loras, a 34-year-old man from Sydney, has since been charged with the arson attack on the shul, and is in police custody. Three perpetrators of the attack at Miznon have also been arrested.

Sarah Newstead, a Joburg-born clinical psychologist who moved to Melbourne six years ago, volunteers with J-United,

a grassroots organisation that arranges events supporting Jewish people in Australia and promoting social cohesion. On 5 July, the day following the attack at the shul, she and her family attended the shul for the first time as a show of solidarity.

She is committed to using her voice for the rights of all people to live without fear of discrimination. “I want to show my kids that being Jewish isn’t just a religion, but a way of being in the world,” she says. “Part of that is creating awareness of the need to preserve humanity and hold grey spaces without extremist ideology.”

She says that despite the antisemitic incidents, South African Jewish expats are primarily continuing as normal. Nonetheless, they are frustrated with the government, and are no longer complacent. Having recently worked to educate her community about how members of Parliament in the recent elections were tackling antisemitism, she observes that people are increasingly using their voice. “It’s all about action and moving forward

rather than fear,” Newstead says.

Despite the upheaval, Alhadeff says Australia’s Jewish community members are still proud Australians who feel fortunate to be citizens. “A miniscule minority with loud voices is responsible for the malaise,” he said.

Yet, damage has been done. “There’s an urgent

imperative for leaders right across civil society to demonstrate courage, principle, and leadership, and call out anti-Jewish racism before it becomes entrenched,” Alhadeff says.

The state of Victoria announced on Monday, 7 July, plans to establish an anti-hate task force, which will meet Jewish community representatives this week.

In an email to congregants following the attack on his shul, Rabbi Gutnick reaffirmed the need to counter darkness with light. “We’re resolved to respond to this attempt to diminish us with redoubled efforts to flourish and expand our positive impact on the community,” he wrote.



The East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation before the incident on 4 July

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Chevrakadisha

The remaining 20 Israeli hostages presumed to be alive in Gaza

PHILISSA CRAMER – JTA

The last time Israel and Hamas struck a ceasefire in their war in early 2025, 38 hostages were released, almost all of them living.

Since then, Israel has retrieved the bodies of nine other hostages taken during Hamas's 7 October 2023 attack on Israel, while United States President Donald Trump negotiated the release of Edan Alexander, a soldier who had been the last living American-Israeli in Gaza. And officials conveyed that another two hostages who hadn't

been confirmed dead were in fact no longer living.

That leaves 20 living hostages – all young men – and 30 deceased ones on the verge of what could be another ceasefire during which half would be released. All of the living hostages are in poor condition after 21 months of captivity, Israeli legislators were reportedly told during a briefing on Sunday, 6 July.

These are the remaining hostages presumed to be alive, and what we know about them:

Matan Angrest: Angrest, 22, was serving as a soldier on 7 October, and was seized from his burning tank at Kibbutz Nahal Oz. Released hostages disclosed that he was chained and beaten in captivity and suffered severe injuries. He appeared in one video released by Hamas in July 2024, and another in July 2025, as momentum was building toward a potential deal.

Gali Berman: Berman, 27, was kidnapped from his home on Kibbutz Kfar Aza. A relative said they had received a sign of life for both brothers – the only remaining living hostages from their ravaged kibbutz – during the ceasefire in early 2025.

Ziv Berman: like his twin brother, Gali, Ziv, 27, was kidnapped from his home on Kibbutz Kfar Aza. A sign of life

was also received for him in February 2025, but officials indicated that the two brothers were being held separately.

Elkana Bohbot: abducted from the Nova festival, Bohbot, 36, was filmed being beaten before he was taken to Gaza. His family, which includes a young son, received the first sign of life for Bohbot

during the ceasefire earlier this year. His parents said he expressed hope, through a freed hostage, that they would continue to hold a market stall where he planned to open an ice cream shop. They are.

Rom Braslavski: Braslavski, 21, was abducted while working as a security guard at the Nova festival during a break in his army service. His family had received no sign of life until March 2025, when a released hostage said he had formed a friendship with Braslavski in Gaza. Hamas released a video featuring Braslavski in April 2025.

Nimrod Cohen: Cohen, 20, was captured from a tank on his base near the Gaza border. His family received both a message from Nimrod through a released hostage – "I'm OK, don't worry, I love you," they said he said – as well as visual evidence of his state. Though his face was obscured in a video Hamas released showing hostages bidding farewell to Yair Horn, who was freed in the first phase of the ceasefire, his parents recognised Nimrod's tattoo.

Ariel Cunio: taken hostage with his girlfriend from Kibbutz Nir Oz, Cunio, 28, is half of one of multiple sibling pairs who remain in Gaza. His mother said in August 2024 that she had received a sign of life from him and his brother. His partner, Arbel Yehud, was released in January after being held without any contact with other Israelis for nearly 500 days.

David Cunio: Cunio, the brother of Ariel Cunio, 35, was taken hostage from his home along with his wife, their twin daughters, his sister-in-law and her daughter. All were released in November 2023 except for him. After the August 2024 sign of life, his wife said the family received another in February 2025. "David is alive," Sharon Aloni Cunio told Channel 12 news. "And that gives us so much strength and so much air to breathe." His daughters turned five in July 2025.

Evyatar David: David, 24, was taken hostage at the

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South African
Jewish Report

Operation Rising Lion

The great sages of Israel wanted to insert an additional verse into the *Shema* prayer. The verse comes from our Torah portion in which the prophet Bilaam blesses Israel saying, "Behold, like a lion he crouches and lies down – and like a lioness, who dares rouse him?"

Only a few verses earlier, the Torah cites a verse using a similar metaphor comparing Israel to a lion from whence the military campaign, Operation Rising Lion, was named.

The question arises why our sages deemed this verse so significant so as to be added to the *Shema*, one of the holiest of all our prayers?

Our sages offer that in the *Shema*, it says, "You shall speak these words [Torah] when you lie down and when you rise up," which has a direct wording connection to our verse that uses the terms "crouching" and "rising".

The answer, of course, is much deeper, as is true of the entire Torah.

The Talmud explains that a lion can never be truly tamed. Even when it appears to be docile, when it is

"crouching" and passive, even when one thinks one has domesticated him or tamed him, he is still considered a *muad*, essentially, an untamed animal that can attack in an instant. The lion therefore doesn't – cannot – have a master.

While other wild animals can be tamed or trained to be obedient and docile, not so a lion. When a lion crouches and appears to be submissive, it's only because he chooses to behave that way.

The *Shema* is the essence of the Jewish nation. It's the ageless declaration of faith – simply yet profoundly stating that the Jew has no master on earth. His master is only G-d Almighty.

The Jew cannot be subjugated by any force in creation. Even in exile, in other words, when in a state of "crouching", the Jew is a moment away from springing up and unleashing his latent, ferocious power.

Throughout history, despite efforts by so many nations to annihilate the Jew; to intimidate him; to seduce him with riches, honour, or glory to adopt their ways, the Jew has defied them all. We are a people unable to remain

Torah Thought

Rav Ilan Herrmann
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docile or restrained if our faith is challenged, when our existence is threatened. The Jew is a lion – born free to remain free to serve with love and obedience only G-d, our Father.

Thus the sages wanted to place this verse in the *Shema*, as it cuts to the very core of who the Jew is. The *Shema* defines the Jew, whose yoke is under only that of the one true G-d.

Operation Rising Lion demonstrated this once again. When the Jew asserts his power, there's no force in nature nor in creation that can stop him.

May we embrace this teaching so that we may rise as lions to accept our unique calling, our G-dly mission, to arise and prevail over our enemies, without and within. May the light of *Am Yisrael* forever shine bright with beauty, pride, and strength.

The remaining 20 Israeli hostages presumed to be alive in Gaza

>>>Continued from 2a

Nova festival along with his best friend, Guy Gilboa-Dalal. A sign of life came for him in February 2025 when Hamas brought him to view other hostages being released.

Guy Gilboa-Dalal: Gilboa-Dalal, 24, was taken hostage at the Nova festival along with his best friend, Evyatar David. He appeared alongside David in the video released by Hamas of the pair watching other hostages be released and realising that they wouldn't be.

Maxim Herkin: abducted from the Nova festival, Herkin, 37, had returned from visiting his native Ukraine a week before 7 October. He was born in the war-torn Donbas region, which is part of Ukraine but claimed by Russia, and has a daughter who lives in Russia, so Russia has advocated for his release. Hamas released a video of Herkin in May 2025, saying that he had been injured when Israeli troops bombed the tunnel where he was being held.

Eitan Horn: Horn, 38, was abducted while visiting his older brother, who was released in the first phase of the deal. Hamas released a video showing Horn pleading for an end to the war as his brother, Yair, was taken from him to be released in February 2025.

Segev Kalfon: Kalfon, 27, was taken hostage from the Nova festival. A first sign of life came from released hostages in February 2025.

Bar Kupershtein: Kupershtein, 23, was abducted from the Nova festival, where he was working. A report from a released hostage in February, followed by a hostage video published by Hamas in April, offered the first signs of life for him since 7 October.

Omri Miran: Miran, 48, was taken hostage in his own car in front of his wife and young children. He appeared alive in a video released by Hamas in April 2024, and a new sign of life was received in February 2025. Hamas then released a video of him in April 2025.

Eitan Mor: taken hostage while working as a security guard at the Nova festival, Mor is 25 years old. A friend with whom he was abducted was found dead in Gaza, but a sign of life was received for him during

the ceasefire in early 2025.

Yosef-Chaim Ohana: Taken hostage from the Nova festival, Ohana, 24, reportedly aided festival-goers before being abducted. His family said in February 2025 that it had received a "clear indication" that Ohana was alive.

Alon Ohel: Ohel, 24, was one of four Nova festival-goers to emerge alive from a shelter where 16 others were killed. The first sign of his life came after other hostages were released in February. His mother said she had been told that he was being chained, starved, and beaten in captivity.

Avinatan Or: the boyfriend of Noa Argamani, who was rescued from Hamas captivity in June 2024, Or, 32, was one of the first Israelis to be seen in footage of an abduction. A released hostage said in March 2025 that he had recently encountered Or in captivity, marking the first definitive sign of life for him.

Matan Zangauker: abducted with his partner from their Nir Oz home, Zangauker, 25, has maintained prominence because of the aggressive advocacy of his mother, Einav, who was briefly banned from the Knesset because of her demonstrations. His partner was released in November 2023. When Yair Horn was released, Hamas forced him to hold an hourglass attached to a base with a picture of Zangauker and his mother, with the message, "Time is running out." Hamas released a new picture of him in June, and said he would be executed if troops tried to rescue him.

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Slain ultra-Orthodox soldier had strong SA links

NICOLA MILTZ

An ultra-Orthodox Israeli soldier with strong South African ties followed a path few in his world choose to walk by enlisting in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), a decision that ultimately cost him his life.

Moshe Shmuel Noll, 21, was raised in a religious community choosing to enlist for national service, and this week fell in battle in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza together with four other soldiers.

Moshe's father, Rabbi David Noll, 82, is a part of the Chabad community of Beit Shemesh. Originally from Cape Town, he grew up on Beach Road in Sea Point, and followed in his father's footsteps becoming a pharmacist, later taking over the Mimosa Pharmacy from his dad. He was an integral part of Chabad Sea Point, and helped establish the first and only Cape Town *mikveh*, Mikveh Aharon, situated behind the Morasha Shul in Arthur's Road, Sea Point.

Rabbi Mendel Popack of Chabad Centre Sea Point spoke this week of David being a cherished lifelong friend. Popack and his wife, Rosie, were going to visit him during his shiva week.

"This is a wound that really hurts the entire family and extended family and friends," said Popack. "I have had many calls from people he went to school with and others he was friends with in Cape Town, all expressing their sorrow. David was a staunch supporter of the Cape Town Chabad community from day one in 1976, when we first came to Cape Town. He was instrumental in building the *mikveh*. He turned his life around, became observant, went to Israel, married Miriam, and remains a lifelong friend of ours. He married later and lived for his six children. He said his son, Moshe, was the glue who kept the family together."

David's first cousin who lives in Johannesburg, Cecily Melnick, 91, spoke to him this week. "David told me how blessed he was to have had such an exceptional son whom he described as an amazing human who was loved and adored by everybody."

In a show of shared grief, South African *olim* and residents of Beit Shemesh lined the streets with Israeli flags, offering cold water in the sweltering heat and silent prayers as the Noll family made their

way to bury their son and brother on Wednesday afternoon, 8 July, at the military cemetery on Har Herzl in Jerusalem.

"Moshe chose a less travelled path – bravely going against the flow," said Dorron Kline, Telfed chief executive, who lives in Beit Shemesh. "He paid the supreme price for his courage, and will be sorely missed."

Moshe served in the Netzach Yehuda Battalion, Kfir brigade. He

was the 19th soldier from Beit Shemesh to fall since the start of Operation Iron Swords, but for many, especially among the city's tight-knit South African *olim* community, his death has struck a particularly raw and



Staff Sergeant
Moshe Shmuel Noll

painful chord.

There are more than 250 South African families living in Beit Shemesh, the majority religious, many of them based in Ramat Beit Shemesh, where Moshe was raised.

David and his wife, Miriam, who is from the United States, made aliya in the 1990s and settled in Beit Shemesh, where they raised six children.

Within much of the ultra-Orthodox world, military service remains controversial – rooted in decades of ideological, religious, and practical concerns. However, Netzach Yehuda is made up mostly of ultra-Orthodox soldiers, and was set up in 1999 to accommodate the religious lifestyle of haredim and other national-religious recruits in the army.

According to the IDF, Moshe was killed in a deadly ambush in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, just 1.5km from the Israeli border. Three explosive devices were remotely detonated in succession, with the first two striking soldiers directly, and the third going off as

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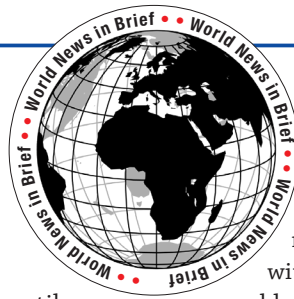


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Netanyahu leaves White House without any fanfare or announcements

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has left the White House after two days of meetings with the Trump administration, but without the breakthrough announcements of his previous trips.

Instead, Netanyahu released multiple statements emphasising his commitment to continuing the Gaza war until Hamas poses no threat to Israel, a sign that he remains less eager than United States President Donald Trump to reach an agreement with Hamas over ending the war.



He also said he had spoken again with Trump about their “great victory” against Iran.

Israeli media is reporting that officials there believe as much as 90% of the issues that separated Israel and Hamas over a ceasefire deal have been resolved. And Steve Witkoff, whom Trump has charged with negotiating peace, said on Tuesday, 8 July, a deal could come this week. But a plan for postwar governance, and whether Hamas could continue to play a role in any form, reportedly remains an obstacle.

The deal would allow for about half of the 50 Israeli hostages in Gaza, of whom 20 are thought to be living, to be released within 60 days.



Photo: Screenshot from GPO footage

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presents U.S. President Donald Trump with a mezuzah in the shape of a B-2 bomber at the White House, July 7, 2025

IRS says religious institutions may endorse candidates, undoing longstanding ban

Rabbis and other clergy members in the United States may endorse candidates from the pulpit without jeopardising their house of worship’s tax-exempt status, the Internal Revenue Service has decreed.

The policy change reverses a ban on endorsing or opposing candidates by religious organisations, known as the Johnson Amendment, enacted in the 1950s. The IRS made the change in the course of settling a lawsuit brought by two churches and a Christian broadcasting network in Texas that sought to undo the ban for all non-profit entities.

Many Jewish leaders have sought to comply with the prohibition. In the recent New York City mayoral primary, for example, some rabbis and synagogues emphasised to congregants that they couldn’t endorse a candidate, even as they urged voting. Now, they will be allowed to make an endorsement in the general election.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Slain ultra-Orthodox soldier had strong SA links

>> Continued from 3a

others rushed to help. Hamas gunmen then opened fire with light weapons, wounding many. The military believes the bombs were planted by the Hamas cell during the previous 24 hours.

Dozens of Hamas operatives are believed to still be hiding in Beit Hanoun’s underground tunnel networks, and the military’s operation there continues.

At Wednesday’s funeral, Moshe’s sister Esta described him as an “angel” having had “such a big personality but an even bigger heart”.

Beit Shemesh Mayor Shmulik Greenberg visited the Noll family, and described Moshe as “a model of dedication and heroism, a true fighter who fell with great self-sacrifice in his mission for *am Yisrael*”.

Friends described Moshe as kind, humble, and deeply committed to both his faith and his mission.

This tragedy comes in the shadow of a deep connection between Beit Shemesh and the South African Jewish community. Through the Partnership2Gether (P2G) initiative, Beit Shemesh and the Mateh Yehuda region have been twinning with South African Jewry for more than 30 years. Operated through the Jewish Agency for Israel, the programme fosters relationships between South Africans and Israelis.

The partnership has become a lifeline of mutual support between

Beit Shemesh and South Africans, making this loss not just personal, but communal.

The rabbi of the central Chabad synagogue in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Rabbi Shraga Natan Dahan, who knew Moshe personally, told the Beit Shemesh news network that Moshe was a “smiling young man, full of joy and life”.

“In recent years, he rose spiritually, finding the strength to grow continuously. He was always helping his friends, a truly joyful soul who radiated light to those around him, and he possessed genuinely noble character traits,” it said.

“He was also a spiritual guide to his brothers and sisters, a role model whom they looked up to and saw as a truly special person,” the Beit Shemesh rabbi said. “The family was proud of his path, and he too was proud and joyful in the life he chose and the work he did,” he said.

Israel’s toll in the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in military operations along the border with the Gaza Strip stands at 449.

The slain soldiers killed with Moshe on Monday include Staff Sergeant Meir Shimon Amar, 20; Sergeant Moshe Nissim Frech, 20; Staff Sergeant Noam Aharon Musgadian, 20; and Sergeant First Class (res) Benyamin Asulin, 28.



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Is it too late to stop Australian antisemitism?

OPINION

VIC ALHADEFF



French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann was best known for his epic documentary *Shoah*, a viscerally confronting nine-hour magnum opus in which he interviewed Holocaust survivors, witnesses, and even perpetrators, the faces of his subjects filling the entire screen.

Why the need to make the film, asked a perceptive journalist. Wasn't everything already known about the Holocaust that there was to know? Why the need to create yet another documentary, let alone one that ran for nine hours and took 11 years to produce?

Responded Lanzmann, there was a burning question which hadn't been asked: when was it too late? When had anti-Jewish racism reached such a crescendo as to be overwhelming? When was it too late for the Jews of Europe to avoid being caught up in the extraordinary killing machine which was Nazi Germany?

Was it too late when the Nuremberg Laws were enacted in 1935, isolating Jews politically and socially; curtailing their civil rights; forbidding marriage between Jews and "bearers of German blood"; and banning them from holding government office? Was it too late when those laws were tightened in 1938, rendering Jews subjects rather than citizens, with an incriminating "J" printed on their identity documents?

Or when *The Eternal Jew* was produced in 1940, a scurrilous film initiated by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, characterising Jews as parasites squabbling over food and money, and depicting rats scurrying through sewers with the voiceover intoning, "Where rats turn up, they spread diseases and carry extermination. They are cunning, cowardly, and cruel, they travel in packs – exactly the way Jews infect the races of the world."

Or when *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a publication which falsely claimed to be a record of meetings of Jewish leaders plotting to take over the world, became compulsory reading in German schools?

Each measure demonstrates in turn that the Holocaust was the end-point of a gradation of steps from discrimination to dehumanisation to violence. It was clearly too late when Jews were marshalled into the ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, and Vilna; when they were at the mercy of the Einsatzgruppen killing squads; and when they were herded onto cattle-cars which transported them to the death camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek.

Forty years have elapsed since Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and his penetrating question presents itself once again. Australia 2025 is definitively not Germany 1935. This is another time and another place. Yet anti-Jewish racism has swept Australia and indeed, manifested globally with an alarming momentum which is both all-pervasive and unprecedented, corroding the social fabric and peaceful diversity that, until recently, characterised multicultural Australia.

400-strong audience that the real problem our society faces is "the tentacles" of "the Jewish lobby". Allegations that there is a nefarious Jewish lobby are tired and hackneyed; what sent a shiver through many members of that audience was the reprehensible trope that Jewish Australians unduly bend society to their will, tossed out casually and unashamedly as an apparent matter-of-fact in a seemingly educated public forum. Normalised.



Screenshot from the movie *Shoah*

So that an Australian university's report into racism found that of 33 complaints against its staff, only two were investigated. So that far-right agitators who disrupted a military memorial service are reportedly forming a political party as part of a plan to exploit legal loopholes and contest the next federal election.

Australian Human Rights Commissioner Lorraine Finlay recently drew attention to "quieter forms of antisemitism:

The issue isn't a conflict thousands of kilometres away, even though some mask the anti-Jewish racism as mere political opinion about that topic. The issue is who Australians are as a nation: acceptance of difference or denigration and mistreatment of minority groups, conduct that each of us is willing – or refuses – to accept.

A student of crowd psychology, Gustave Le Bon, ascribed certain characteristics to crowd behaviour: absence of judgement; exaggeration of sentiment; individuals becoming submerged in the group.

So, when is it too late to criticise conduct that threatens minority groups? When does damage to civil liberties and the assault on human rights become normalised? And so normalised as to be irreversible? Where are the voices of civil society separating themselves from the crowd and demonstrating courage and leadership?

So that a woman felt comfortable standing up at the recent Sydney Writers Festival and brazenly informing the

Jewish university students who no longer feel safe on campus; Jewish parents who have told their children not to say they are Jewish if asked in public; and Jewish school students who have been advised not to wear their uniforms on public transport. How could this be happening in Australia? It's easy for these examples to go unnoticed. Yet for the Jewish community, it has an impact on every aspect of their lives. This isn't something the Jewish community should be left to face alone."

So, back to Lanzmann's question: when does such a situation become normalised? When is it too late?

• South African-born Vic Alhadeff, Medal of the Order of Australia, is the former chief executive of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in Sydney, Australia. He is also the former editor of the Australian Jewish News and former chief sub editor of the Cape Times. He has written two books on South African history.

Lost chapter: A personal look at mythical anti-apartheid figure

OPINION

BENJI SHULMAN



In 1996, author Immanuel Suttner produced a book titled *Cutting Through the Mountain*, a compilation of interviews with Jewish anti-apartheid activists about their lives, views, and contributions to the struggle. The book became a key text in the ongoing debate about the role Jews and the broader Jewish community played in South Africa during the apartheid era.

The book has a wide scope featuring everyone from lawyers to trade unionists and educators to revolutionaries.

But one name is conspicuously absent: Arthur Goldreich, an architect and artist who played a role in the founding of uMkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC).

Goldreich holds a near-unique place in the pantheon of anti-apartheid activists. Born in Johannesburg on 25 December 1929, he grew up in what was then known as Pietersburg, now Polokwane, and died in Israel on 24 May 2011. He was active in his local Zionist youth movement, and eventually moved to Israel, where he joined the elite underground Palmach unit, a forerunner of the Israel Defense Forces. Returning to South Africa in 1954, he won the national Best Young Painter award the following year for his striking black-and-white figure work. In the late 1950s, he designed the sets for *King Kong*, the celebrated South African musical tracing the tragic story of a real-life boxer.

Behind his flamboyant public persona lay a dangerous, clandestine life as a member of the South African Communist Party. Using party funds, he purchased Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, which became a secret meeting place for the underground ANC leadership. Goldreich lived on the property with his family and hired a gardener, one "David Motsamayi", the alias of Nelson Mandela used while evading the police. Discussions between Mandela and Goldreich at the farm contributed to the creation of uMkhonto we Sizwe.

Goldreich was arrested as a result of the infamous Rivonia raid on 11 July 1963, along with 18 other anti-apartheid operatives, and charged with sabotage. After a dramatic escape, he eventually resettled in Israel and went on to found the department of environmental design at Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy.

Although Goldreich was interviewed for *Cutting Through the Mountain*, he later requested that his contribution be excluded from the book. As a result, the interview disappeared publicly for nearly 30 years until it was recently unearthed by Israeli researchers. It has been cited by Asher Lubotsky from the University of Houston in his PhD thesis, *The Other Radicals: Zionist-Socialist Youth in Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1970*.

The recovered interview transcript, 31 pages in length and not complete, offers a deeply personal look into Goldreich's life, beliefs, and version of key historical events. He reflects on growing up in a rural, Afrikaans-dominated environment in which he had to contend with the challenges of antisemitism but gained acceptance by becoming fluent in Afrikaans and excelling at rugby. He speaks warmly of his rabbi, praising his kindness, intelligence, and service as an army chaplain, even though Goldreich later identified as a communist and atheist.

As part of that journey, he recounts that at about 15 years old, he told his father that he was a socialist, to which his father replied, "Well I suggest that

if you want to be a socialist, you should be a socialist with your own money." Goldreich admits that at the time, he was too young to grasp fully what this response truly meant.

He also discusses his close friendship with fellow Jew and communist, Joe Slovo, and other comrades from his time at the University of the Witwatersrand. Notably, Slovo entrusted him with designing his home in

Northcliff, one of Goldreich's first architectural commissions, which he says helped deepen their relationship.

The interview delves into his experience in the Palmach, noting that his entire recruitment process consisted of a test of whether he could shoot. Having grown up in the northern Transvaal, that wasn't a problem. He participated in the 1948 independence war, though seemingly not in major combat. It was then that he learned skills and gained confidence that would later prove invaluable in establishing uMkhonto we Sizwe.

Following the Israeli War of Independence, Goldreich found himself at odds with the nationalist culture of his kibbutz Mayan Baruch, and returned to South Africa to join the anti-apartheid struggle.

His arrest and subsequent dramatic escape were publicised internationally. After escaping and getting safely to Tanzania, he was invited to attend the British Labour Party conference and give talks to supporters of the anti-apartheid movement in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden. However, the weather and what he called the life of the "professional refugee class" didn't appeal to him.

So, when he was invited to join the team designing the Israel Museum, he chose to move back to Israel in 1963, drawn by the dramatic transformation the country was undergoing and with the hope of a better life for his family.

In Israel, he established the Israelis Against Apartheid group, and his activism helped obtain a letter of support for the Rivonia trialists from Zionist philosopher Martin Buber, a letter that was read aloud in the Knesset.

Other sources also show that Goldreich was in contact with the Mossad to organise training for ANC members outside of the country. This was a time when Israel maintained a strongly anti-apartheid politic. Goldreich was also involved in internal Israeli politics, and was a critic of Israel's occupation of the territories and vocal against racism toward Arabs.

Despite asking permission to go to Israel from the ANC, and receiving it, the organisation didn't seem to have been particularly happy with his decision to move. Over time, his relationship with the ANC grew increasingly strained. He recalls a sharp exchange with Oliver Tambo after the 1967 Six-Day War, and a moment at an anti-apartheid conference when a fellow speaker challenged him, saying, "What are you doing in that shit country?"

Over time, his contacts with the ANC decreased. Denis Goldberg, a Rivonia trialist, said that he had to intervene personally with the ANC, upon his own release in 1985, to get it to renew engagement with Goldreich, since by then he had been completely frozen out of the movement.

Much of the public legacy of Arthur Goldreich has been focused on his role in some of the most consequential moments in the histories of both South Africa and Israel. This newly recovered interview helps add depth, complexity, and humanity to his personal life, and offers a rare glimpse into the life and times of one of the most remarkable figures of the anti-apartheid struggle.

• Benji Shulman is director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute.

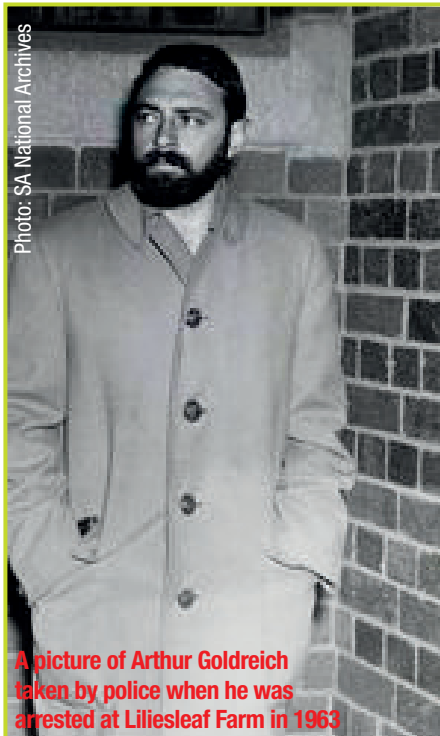


Photo: SA National Archives

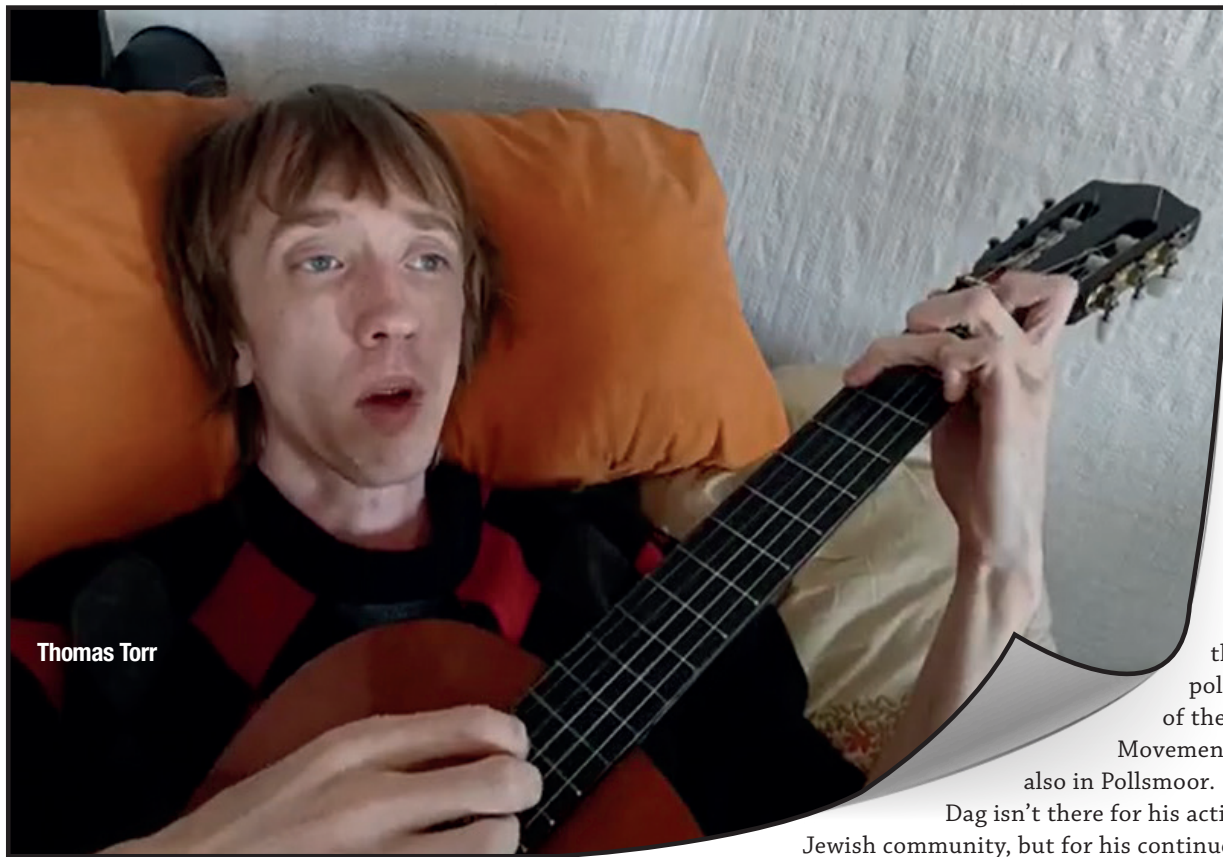
A picture of Arthur Goldreich taken by police when he was arrested at Liliesleaf Farm in 1963

Torr and Dag in prison – but not for antisemitism

LEE TANKLE

Thomas Torr, found guilty by the Equality Court of antisemitism and hate speech in May 2025 and ordered to apologise to the Jewish community and pay R50 000 to the Holocaust & Genocide Centre, is in Pollsmoor Prison, Cape Town.

Torr had ignored this judgement and order, leaving him in contempt of court and facing prison time. However, that isn't why he has been in prison for the past three weeks.



Thomas Torr

Nevertheless, just before being incarcerated, Torr publicly asserted that he would rather be in prison than in a world with Jews.

"I didn't know I had to lawyer up in life just to survive the onslaught of litigious Jews," he said in a YouTube video on 24 May. "They are the worst people on earth. And if there are none of them in prison, then prison is a better place. I would rather be in prison than be around you f*cking psychopathic c*nts."

The SA Jewish Report contacted the South African Police Service to find out why Torr was in prison, and couldn't get a clear response. However, there are a few possible reasons for his arrest and subsequent imprisonment.

Said Daniel Bloch, the executive director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), which initiated the case against Torr, "While official details remain unconfirmed, it [his arrest] could be linked to

vandalism against our community centre about a year ago, and threats made to court officials."

After the SAJBD's victory at the Equality Court, Torr attacked the judge, Judge Andre Le Grange, and threatened him. Torr called Le Grange a "f*cking retarded c*nt" and "an Uncle Tom", and said that if he were to walk down the street, he wouldn't survive as people would come and attack him. This was clearly contempt of court, and could have made Torr liable for arrest and prosecution.

The SA Jewish Report contacted another Jewish person, who

asked to remain anonymous for his safety, who had taken out a protective order against Torr for harassment. When he heard that Torr was in prison, it made his day, he said, as he knew that he wouldn't be harassed anymore. "It's great news that he has been arrested, whatever it's for," he said.

As it turns out, Torr is one of two alleged antisemites in South Africa in prison for something unrelated to the SAJBD cases. Cape politician and the president of the Truth & Solidarity Movement, Mehmet Vefa Dag, is also in Pollsmoor.

Dag isn't there for his actions against the Jewish community, but for his continued harassment of Curro Schools. Dag was taken to court by Curro Holdings, an independent private school company, after he claimed that there were links between Curro and Jaco Pieterse, a school principal falsely accused of rape, as well as Darren Wilken, an accused child pornographer. Dag called on his social media supporters to "take action and close down all Curro institutions nationwide immediately".

The Cape SAJBD has taken Dag to court for the many antisemitic remarks he has made. On 2 August 2024, he said on X, "Jews, your ancestors came to this country [South Africa] as refugees and robbed the whole country. Now take your bags and go to Israel. Don't let me lose my coolers."

Dag's social media also demands that "Jewish people and their businesses should



**TORR AND MEHMET VEFA DAG
REPRESENT A DANGEROUS ESCALATION
IN HATE SPEECH AND EXTREMIST
BEHAVIOUR IN OUR COUNTRY**

>> Continued from 5a

be boycotted or otherwise made to suffer reprisals”, and spreads beliefs that “the Holocaust never occurred; Jewish people weren’t victims of genocide during the Holocaust; and Jewish people fabricated the Holocaust to pursue their own interests”.

In April, the Western Cape High Court ordered Dag to stop posting defamatory content about Curro Schools and to remove the offending posts from his social media, which he did. However, he didn’t stop making defamatory posts, thus putting him in contempt of the court order.

According to the ruling, Dag’s actions show a “wilful and deliberate contempt of the court’s authority” as he continued to publish damaging posts about Curro after the initial ruling in April. So, Dag was ordered to surrender himself within five days, and was arrested on 5 June. Upon his arrest, he went on a Twitter rampage in which he called himself a political prisoner and the “new Mandela”.

In a video taken at the police station, Dag said that after his 90-day sentence, he would come after President Cyril Ramaphosa because “this is the one supposed to be in custody, not me. I didn’t create a problem for 20 million South Africans being unemployed”.

“We are coming to save South Africa from injustice,” Dag said. “I’m a politician, a fighter against crime and injustice in South Africa. I’m the voice of the voiceless, and the voice of South Africa. I’m here under unlawful arrest.”

Said Bloch, “We’re pleased that parties beyond our organisation have initiated legal action against Mehmet Dag following his plethora of hate speech, lies, and misinformation. He has been in Pollsmoor Prison for more than a month and still faces Equality Court charges for antisemitism and hate speech brought by the Cape SAJBD.”



Mehmet Vefa Dag

“Two individuals who have been taken to court by the Board for hate speech and antisemitism are now sitting in jail,” Bloch said.

Commentator Tim Flack was also a victim of Torr’s harassment when Torr called him a “retarded Nazi faggot”. He told the SA *Jewish Report* this week that the arrests of Torr and Dag were a “welcome development”.

“Torr and Mehmet Vefa Dag represent a dangerous escalation in hate speech and extremist behaviour in our country,” Flack said. “They hide behind the guise of political engagement, but their actions and words reveal a deep-seated hatred directed toward Jews, Zionists, and anyone who challenges their extreme views. It’s encouraging that the justice system has taken steps in both cases. Their arrests confirm that hate isn’t tolerated here. However, arrests alone aren’t enough. Silence fuels the growth of this intimidation. We must speak out, whether we are directly targeted or not.”

Bloch agreed. “Let this serve as a clear warning: hate speech and incitement carry serious consequences. Such actions won’t be tolerated,” he said.

“The only way to stop this is to fight back,” Flack said. “Use your voice. Follow the legal processes. Expose hate wherever it is found. Those who rely on fear and silence will eventually be held accountable if we refuse to stand idly by.”

“This is not only about protecting the Jewish community. It’s about defending public decency and ensuring that every South African can live without fear of ideological violence,” he said.

BRITISH CITIZENSHIP OR PASSPORT, DO I QUALIFY?

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south african Jewish Report

What starts with words doesn't end there

Antisemitism cannot be tolerated – not on social media, at music concerts, at protest marches, or anywhere. Verbal or social media-driven antisemitism is just one step away from torching shuls and ransacking restaurants. It's reprehensible on every level.

I say that, but every day, we see a steady increase in antisemitic behaviour on social media. It's astonishing how many people have become almost immune to it and don't call it out for what it is. Having said that, I know how tough it is to call out people about antisemitism on social media because no sooner than you make your point, you are lambasted by hordes of hate-filled people.

Even though they may not make sense or are throwing fake information at us, being attacked by many indignant and rude people who believe they are righteous and that we are bad and blind, isn't easy.

It is tough to withstand the mass pressure, especially when our haters maintain they aren't attacking Jews, only Israel, and appear to be able to cite many instances of Israel soldiers' genocidal tendencies. So, all too often, we witness antisemitism and just let it go. However, we need to be clear that we cannot do this anymore.

You see, being called a supporter of a "genocidal regime" is easily translated into being a supporter of a state that those who hate us believe should disappear "from the river to the sea". Simply put, they want no country in which Jews can be powerful and self-sufficient. Imagine if we didn't have Israel? G-d help us if they got their way!

The answer isn't to be like our enemies and physically attack them. That wouldn't work. It's simply to outsmart them and prove the truth.

When I say verbal antisemitism is one step away from torching shuls, this past week is proof of that. In last week's edition, we brought you the story of Bob Vylan calling for "Death to the IDF!" (Israel Defense Forces) on stage at the Glastonbury Festival, and this week, another five Israeli soldiers were murdered and 12 injured in Gaza. This time around, one of the soldiers, who was all of 21, had South African heritage. He also lived among many former South Africans, bringing home the devastation and loss of this war.

While the war in Gaza is based on antisemitism, Vylan's exploits weren't a precursor to what happened to the soldiers.

However, the type of behaviour shown by Vylan and his ilk on stage, on social media, and in protest marches is directly linked to the upsurge of violent antisemitism that we are witnessing in Australia and other parts of the Western world.

People on the side of our haters are denying this upswing, but what other reason do you think a person has for setting fire to the oldest shul in Melbourne on a Friday night? The arsonist was aware that there were families inside, and still went ahead, dousing the building with petrol and igniting it to raze it to the ground with 20 people inside it.

This is a pure and utter hate crime against Jews. "Detectives will continue to examine the intent and ideology of the person charged to determine if the incident is in fact terrorism," an initial police statement read.

The fact that the authorities in Australia didn't initially seem to be 100% sure that it was terrorism or that the intent was pure antisemitism speaks volumes. What other reason would someone have to set fire to a shul? I get that there are pyromaniacs out there who set fire to anything, but it would be easier to set fire to a forest or something more flammable than a shul in the middle of the city.

Then about half an hour later, about 20 people stormed a partly Israeli-owned restaurant with an Israeli name, *Miznon* – directly translated from Hebrew as "cafeteria" – vandalising the premises and shouting, "Death to the IDF!" as they did so. Attackers, mostly wearing masks, had the self-same chant as Vylan. Surprise surprise!

In the same area that night, Jewish-owned vehicles were torched and spray-painted with antisemitic slogans, according to local reports.

While the Australian government clearly sees what this is and has condemned it,

what exactly is it doing to stop it? These attacks, in which people run rampant attacking one racial group, are all too familiar. And I'm not thinking of apartheid, but rather *Kristallnacht*, which happened

in 1938. It was a clear precursor to World War II, which began the following year. And the authorities looked on and did nothing as Jews and Jewish businesses were attacked. Neither did the Germans. We cannot allow this to happen. Not in Australia, not anywhere.

I say that, but I rue the day that such incidents occur here. Will our government even recognise them for what they are? And if it does, will it do anything

about them?

Our government has gone all out to attack the Jewish state, claiming it is doing the most heinous things. The African National Congress cannot seem to separate Israel, the country, and people, from its mission to demonise the Jewish state.

Have we heard much about the failed bomb attack on the building housing Jewish communal organisations in Cape Town at the end of last year? I certainly haven't. I know the Hawks got involved, but I'm not sure no news is good news in this instance.

We're fortunate in South Africa to date. Though we've been attacked on social media, we haven't had to deal with the kind of antisemitic violence that Australian Jews have experienced. I'm not sure I would call it luck because we have our own issues here. However, what's happening in Australia is horrific, and the world cannot stand by and do nothing. We dare not!

We need to recognise that it starts with words, but it doesn't end there.

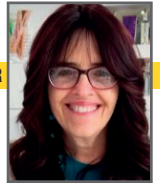


Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
 Editor

Justice coming to Hamas perpetrators of sexual violence

OPINION

WENDY HENDLER



A shocking new report has revealed the atrocities committed by Hamas against women during the 7 October 2023 rampage against Israel. This report, compiled by the Dinah Project, a collaborative initiative led by Israeli legal and gender experts, seeks to document, analyse, and secure justice for the widespread sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas militants during the 7 October attacks.

The name "Dinah Project" draws from the biblical Dinah, symbolising victims whose voices are silenced, and aims to act as a voice for those who cannot speak. It is led by legal scholar and women's rights activist Professor Ruth Halperin-Kaddari.

The Dinah Report, partly funded by the British government, aims "to counter denial, misinformation and global silence" about the massacre, and seeks to "set the historical record straight: Hamas used sexual violence as a tactical weapon of war". The report compiles testimonies from 15 returned hostages; a survivor of the Nova festival; 17 people who witnessed or heard assaults; and 27 emergency response teams. The team also analysed forensic evidence from photos and videos.

The investigation shows that Hamas terrorists raped and then murdered the women, some of whom were assaulted even after death. Dozens of victims from at least three different sites were found stripped naked and tied to poles. The findings describe a consistent pattern of systematic sexual violence, rape, gang rape, genital mutilation, forced nudity, and torture, across multiple locations and often followed by execution.

In October 2024, former hostage Amit Soussana became the first to speak up about the sexual violence she endured at the hands of her captors. Since this time, the Jewish world has been waiting with trepidation to hear from the returned hostages of their treatment while in captivity. Now 14 other brave female hostages have come forward in the report to detail their horrors of abuse endured in captivity, including forced nudity, verbal and physical assaults, including "unwanted physical contact in private parts", and threats of forced marriage.

Until this point, the naïve hope existed that the other female hostages would have been spared from the sexual torture suffered by Soussana. This hope has now been shattered. Our one remaining hope is for the perpetrators of these atrocities to be held accountable legally and to be punished to the fullest extent of the law. However for this to happen, the law needs to be amended in order to be made applicable to these acts of mass violence and sexual torture.

The members of the Dinah Project propose a legal platform where responsibility is attributed based on the principle of collective responsibility, where acts were executed under cover of the masses. There was no individual moral compass, inhibition, or restraint.

This brutal and barbaric behaviour was carried out

devoid of moral compass, inhibition, or restraint and made possible by perpetrators adopting the norm of "the absence of any norm". The project's lawyers write that "when the plan is to rampage under the cover of the masses, when it's a ruthless, lawless, and reckless plan, every act is done to fulfil it and doesn't deviate from it, every atrocious act indeed received approval, and thus everything is within the realm of expectations".

They hold that from a legal point of view, these sexual assaults were clearly a joint criminal operation. Everyone who participated in the mob behaviour is accountable. Using this principle, they aim to attribute responsibility to the perpetrators without the need to link a victim and a specific

severely traumatised, they are unable to talk about what they endured or witnessed.

At the time of the attack, various factors combined to complicate the gathering of evidence, including the fog of war; the ongoing chaos of battle; the desperate attempts to find those missing or deceased; the immense scale of the victims that had to be identified; as well as the urgency of bringing the deceased to burial, as dictated by Jewish law.

These limitations necessitate finding additional and novel ways to prosecute these perpetrators. The authors of the Dinah Report detail other types of evidence, such as "silent witnesses", in other

words bodies whose condition speaks volumes, revealing sexual torture. Eyewitness reports as well as hearsay evidence of sexual violence can be included. Camera evidence taken by the terrorists and shared by the perpetrators on the victims' own phones establish – even without the direct testimony of the victims – a factual basis for sexual-violence offences.

Despite the claims by detractors of a lack of forensic evidence of sexual violence and a consequent inability to prosecute alleged perpetrators, the members of the Dinah Project assert that the law can

be amended to allow for successful prosecution. They aim to map the legal challenges and the necessary amendments for managing the criminal proceedings in a way that leads to accountability. The project's organisers have already briefed the United Nations Security Council; United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights; and White House senior staff.

Despite our worst fears being confirmed by the report, we remain hopeful that a new day has dawned when it comes to prosecuting Hamas and its collaborators. We're optimistic that through initiatives such as the Dinah Project, great strides will be made in holding to account those who give the order to commit such atrocities, as well as the individuals who carry them out with impunity. We are ever grateful to these brave change makers who are making it possible to see justice served in the most daunting of circumstances.

• Wendy Hendler is co-founder of Koleinu SA, a helpline and advocacy group for victims of gender-based violence and child abuse in the Jewish and wider community.



A sculpture of a person tells of the death and destruction on Kibbutz Kfar Aza

perpetrator directly, and without relying on the testimony of a living survivor.

The report makes it clear that these acts of sexually motivated torture fall squarely within the definition of conflict-related sexual violence or CRSV. The aim of CRSV is to degrade, demoralise, and humiliate both the victims and the society as a whole. By committing these brutal rapes and sexual assaults in public and filming and sharing them in real-time on victims' social media, the terrorists aimed to degrade the community as a whole and assert their control over the enemy, namely Israel.

The report confirms that these acts were systematically carried out across many different sites indicating premeditation, instructions, and intention to use sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Prosecuting cases of CRSV has particular challenges, as is evident in this case. In general, rape cases are prosecuted with the victim present to give their testimony in court. In the case of the Hamas terrorists' attacks, however, most of the victims are no longer alive, having been murdered during or after the sexual assaults were committed. Many of the victims who remain alive are so

Social media 'echo chambers' amplify antisemitism

LULA PENCHARZ

Social media algorithms are leaving Jews "defenceless" against antisemitism, and right now, there's probably the best distribution methodology for spreading antisemitic ideology in history, said Steven Sidley, professor of practice at Johannesburg Business School and expert in artificial intelligence (AI).

"Previously antisemitism arose in countries – the most obvious being Nazi Germany – where they took control of the entire

media-distribution platform and held German citizens captive with antisemitic messages. Through this practice, the Nazi regime was able to get people to believe that the Jews were vermin," Sidley said.

However, today with social media, anyone has the ability to reach billions of people with incredibly effective negative messaging, Sidley said.

"Take for example short TikTok videos, none of them have to be



factual, and there's no authority checking the factuality of antisemitic content," he said. "Some companies, such as Facebook, used to have internal fact-checking departments to put a lid on the amount of misinformation sprouting. However, under Trump, they have stepped back, rid their companies of fact-checking departments, and claimed free speech on an open platform."

Sidley said there was absolutely no filter anymore, and AI has supercharged the algorithms. "AI not only can spot what you like easily, but it also catches you just by analysing the time you spend on a certain post," he said. With all this information and analysis, AI can decide whether a consumer will be vulnerable to certain messaging and misinformation. "The targeting of messaging has become incredibly powerful," Sidley said.

Benjamin Rosman, professor of AI and robotics at the University of the Witwatersrand, agreed, saying, "The techniques used in social media are recommendation systems. Their internal objective is to maximise engagement."

"Social media companies figured out they can draw users in to spend more time on their platforms by changing the content the user is seeing," Rosman said. In the early days of Facebook, users were viewing only what their friends posted. By implementing algorithms, the recommendation systems, the social media companies can choose what content to show the user to control how much time the user spends on their platform, Rosman said.

The algorithms aren't trying to learn what the user likes, rather they focus on figuring out what will capture the user to keep them engaged longer, Rosman said. He said the recommendation systems are looking at the time a user spends looking at a particular post or if the user clicks on certain posts. The system then finds similar content to post on the user's feed based on how the user has engaged with previous content.

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Continued on 7b>>

>> Continued from 7a

Sidley said algorithms monitor where the consumer is spending their time, and where their attention is focused. In turn, the algorithm will then amplify other content that's likely to keep the consumer engaged. "There are two big attention grabbers on social media at the moment, the amplification of outrage, and content that's funny," he said.

Social media is an attention grabbing and addictive mechanism, Sidley said. Various studies have determined that it works on dopamine. When a consumer views content catered to them, not only do they feel a kick of neurochemicals responding as their outrage or amusement peaks, they get to feel part of a community along with the others that share their interests in content," Sidley said.

Rosman said, "Users are playing to their confirmation biases. Users get outraged and infuriated, and share the content they're viewing with family groups and friends. The system's perspective is that the user clearly engages with this type of content and will in turn bombard the user's feed with even more outrageous content because the human brain tends to react strongly to content that outrages a person." Rosman said that what ends up happening is that like-minded people start creating spiralling groups together, playing into users' confirmation biases. If a user thinks there's a problem with the world, the platform will keep reinforcing it to hold the user's attention.

"The problem is, the more outrageous the content, the more it slips into the realm of conspiracy theories. Often the further one deep dives into conspiracy theories, they tend to include some sort of antisemitic tropes," said Rosman.

Sidley agreed, saying, "We're in a situation where non-antisemites, particularly Jews, are quite defenceless against this, more so than ever.

"The only thing one could theoretically do is to have diametrically opposed messaging go out. But Jews are a small population with limited resources. They can't possibly put out as much content as the other side is producing. Even if [Jews] are putting a counter position out, if the consumer isn't liking any of their content, the algorithm will no longer expose them to it. The algorithm builds the echo chamber because it knows what keeps your attention.

"The algorithm homes in on what makes a person tick to keep them engaged. The only way to change the content one is viewing is by overriding one's primal instincts of anger. The user must consciously redirect their attention if they want to be shown different content,"

said Rosman.

Rosman cites an example. "If a user engages with a pro-Israel post, the algorithm won't show the user any anti-Israel content because it would rather feed into the pro-Israel sentiment as it has learnt that this type of content engages the user.

"It won't show both sides because it isn't designed to be nuanced. It's designed to give the user more intense versions of a previous post that caught their attention. The algorithm tries to anticipate what would hold one's focus to keep them on the platform for as long as

possible by showing closely related content."

Said Rosman, "More time spent means more money for the social media company. Their incentive is to keep you engaged rather than the user engaging with nuanced and unbiased conversations because nuanced conversations don't tend to support their goal."

Neither Rosman nor Sidley have any clear plan for how to turn this dangerous freight train around. They suggest that Jews actively start mass producing their own content, and that users wake up to the biased, misinformed content on their feeds, and seek out facts.

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Sweet memories of a Beacon of a business

LEE TANKLE

It might seem strange that picking up a packet of Jelly Tots is akin to picking up a major part of South African Jewish history, but Beacon Sweets and Chocolates is steeped in

South African Jewish heritage.

It all started in 1931, when a Jewish Lithuanian immigrant named Hymie Zulman and his wife, Mary, bought a business

called the Durban Confectionery and Spice Works for £500 after scrambling to get enough money together. They started off by producing handmade boiled sweets, toffees, cordials, and coffee with a team of only six people.

“From there, he grew the business from its original site in central Durban on Commercial Road, to be able to sell not only to individuals but local wholesalers and retailers,” said David Zulman, one of Hymie’s grandsons.

The Durban Confectionery and Spice Works was renamed Beacon Sweets and Chocolates in 1936.

By 1938, Beacon had expanded to the point where it began producing chocolates and had more than 60 staff members. It was at that point that the business caught the eye of a British confectionery manufacturer, Mr Douglas Maynard.

“My grandfather and a man called Douglas Maynard struck up a friendship, and then exchanged shares in one another’s companies,” said David.

By 1949, Maynards had acquired a shareholding in Beacon, and the first Maynards Wine Gums made their way to South Africa.

Arnold Zulman, born only a year after his father acquired Durban Confectionery and Spice Works, who passed away at the age of 93 on 1 June in North Carolina, was brought up in the business and ensured that his children were also involved as they recognised that the business was a family legacy.

“It was my grandfather and in turn, my father, who made their mark in South Africa, and along with many in the Jewish community, played their part in the community and business,” said David.

In the 1950s, Hymie and Arnold bought a six-acre site at Mobeni, where they built

new factory buildings, storerooms, and offices. Said David, “that site in Mobeni grew through multiple acquisitions of neighbours to bring it to be the site it is today, which houses a substantial amount of Beacon’s sugar confectionery manufacturing. An

adjacent site was bought in the early 1980s, which then housed a new chocolate factory.”

David said making some of the sweets kosher was important

chocolate. I left to start my own business in the United Kingdom (UK) in the late 1980s, and came back to run the business in 1997.”

Eventually, the business was growing at such a rapid pace that in 1989, the family decided to share 50% of its shares with Tiger Brands.

“The business had grown substantially, and had quite a large market share of the South African market. And as with any company going through growth phases at a certain time, it can be better financed by a big corporation. Tiger Brands was keen to get involved.

Simultaneously, my father had a triple bypass, and three of his four children were living and



The original home of Beacon Sweets

to his father and grandfather as doing so showed their commitment to the Jewish community.

“It was an obligation to the community. Not all production was kosher, but there were times of the year when special kosher runs were managed,” he said.

Over the years, Hymie and Maynard’s friendship began to break down. So, Arnold took it upon himself to buy all the shares that Maynards had in Beacon Sweets, making it a completely family-owned business once again.

“It was a great part of our lives,” said Tamar Cohen, one of Arnold’s children. “It was where my father worked, and where all of us kids started working.”

Cohen said it was important to all those in the family that they had some sort of involvement in the business as it was their legacy, even though most of the family didn’t live in South Africa anymore.

“I used to go to the business every Saturday morning with my father or grandfather. I used to ride my bicycle up and down the corridors, and I used to play hide and seek in the cocoa sacks,” said David.

“That’s where I learned about the business. I learned about the industry. I learned it from the ground floor up,” said David, “I did all sorts of things when I was a student, learning about different aspects of the business, from boiling sugar to making toffees, to driving trucks, to making



Photo: Kim Hatchuel

working abroad.”

Then, not even 10 years later, the entirety of Beacon Sweets was sold to Tiger Brands by the Zulman family. “None of the people in my generation were living in the country at the time, so it was hard to maintain the level of family involvement that we would have liked and which was important to us,” said Cohen. “It seemed like an appropriate offer that happened at the right time.”

For David, his favourite Beacon sweet changes depending on the day. “People always ask me what my favourite product is, and it’s a difficult question. I often say it’s like choosing your favourite child. It depends on the day of the week, and what you feel like. I mean, there were some very famous products like marshmallow eggs, hens eggs, Fizz Pops, Sparkles, and Liquorice All Sorts.”

Though he can’t choose a favourite product, when he’s at home in the UK and walks past a shop selling a Beacon product, he has to go in and purchase some, he said. “Fizz Pops and Fizzers are the most common in the UK at the moment. For old times’ sake, I always buy something that’s Beacon when I see it in the UK.”

Yiddish humour makes light of Soviet Jewish travails

LEE TANKLE

Despite all the trauma that Jews went through during World War II, they were still able to joke and create humour.

Professor Anna Shternshis from the University of Toronto told the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre recently that during the years 1941 to 1945, Jews living within the Soviet Union used humorous songs and jokes as a weapon to live through the darkest period of modern Jewish history in Europe.

“Humour doesn’t age or travel well. It’s not universal, yet it gives us a slice of what people were going through,” Shternshis said.

Twenty-seven years ago, a group of librarians at the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine found a load of boxes deep in their archive filled with documents written in Yiddish. It turned out they were the work of Moshe Beregovsky and Ruvim Lerner, who preserved Yiddish music, stories, and jokes from Jews in the Soviet Union during the Holocaust, when 2.5 million Jews were killed within Soviet borders, usually within a few kilometres from their homes.

Said Shternshis, “We had Jews who were creating poetry, music, and art that made sense of these experiences. So, when they were collecting these materials, they were hoping to publish them in a book. They collected about 300 original texts, and they wanted to publish them in a volume called *Soviet Jewish Creativity during World War II*.”

However, before they could get the book published, Beregovsky and his colleague were arrested by Stalin’s government because of the project, and they died thinking that their work had been lost forever.

Shternshis said that many of these documents were recorded with the help of children. This is because at the time when Beregovsky was looking for survivors to speak to, they were still under the rule of Stalin, and survivors were scared to share their stories. Instead, Beregovsky interviewed children, because children “cannot lie”. “A lot of documents are written on children’s schoolbooks, and by children themselves,” she said.

Shternshis showed a song written by Shifra Perlina, titled *The Execution of Hitler: The Brown Haman*. Perlina fled Lithuania when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. She was

welcomed as a refugee in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where she wrote this song in 1943, describing her fantasy about the death of Hitler and his inner circle. According to the lyrics of the song, “On the right side will hang Goring, Goebbels, Himmler, Frick. From the left side will lull Rosenberg and Ribbentrop. Flying right with the head down

into the soil. And we will bury you so deep in the soil, from your corpse, the ugly one there will be no stink.” Said Shternshis, “It honestly reads and sounds like commentary in Soviet publications.”

One of the problems many Jews in the Soviet Union faced, particularly in the ghettos, was the infectious disease typhus. Relly Blei,

a teacher living in a ghetto, created a song titled *I am a Typhus Louse* in 1942 to make things less scary for the children she taught. The song is written from the perspective of a louse which carries typhus, and the louse is happy because there’s a lot to do in the ghetto. Set to an upbeat tune, the song explains that though typhus is seen as the enemy within the ghettos, the real enemy is the Germans, and the typhus louse wants to target them. The lyrics, “But to tell you the truth, I’m afraid of the Germans. Oy the Germans, Oy the murderers and the Cossacks,” show that even the typhus louse, which has killed many, has its sights set on something bigger.

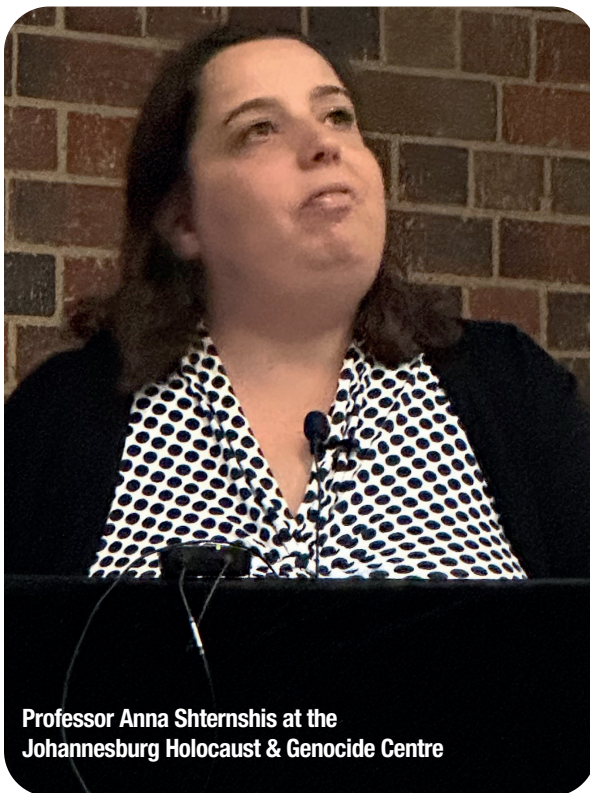
Shternshis said that one such songwriter, Yakov Sternshis, “was in jail when the war started. And by 1945, he was a very sick man. He had tuberculosis. He had lost all his teeth. He had a few months to live, so they let him out on compassionate grounds and sent him to Almaty, Kazakhstan. And kids, probably the kids of Polish Jewish refugees or maybe other kids, were making fun of him, throwing rocks at him. And at some point, he started yelling back in Hebrew.”

The children reported the incident to their parents, saying that there was a beggar who had yelled at them in Hebrew. Some of the parents went to investigate who the yellor was, found out that he was a teacher, and hired him to teach those kids how to read in Hebrew.

“And as he was teaching the kids, he had a notebook where he wrote every song and joke he heard from those children. Now, he didn’t know who was scarier – Stalin, who put him in jail, or Hitler, who was very far away,” she said. This is where the song *Purim Gifts for Hitler (From a Simple Jew)* came from. Said Shternshis, “The words say that Hitler tried to kill us, but others tried before him. Haman; Tomás de Torquemada, the head of the Spanish Inquisition; or the Krushtevan, who wrote *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. They all tried, but nobody succeeded, and Hitler won’t succeed either.”

The original lyrics of this song ended with the saying, “*Am Yisrael Chai*,” but it was crossed out by Russian censors because it went against Soviet ideology,” Shternshis said.

Humour doesn’t age or travel well. It’s not universal, yet it gives us a slice of what people were going through.



Professor Anna Shternshis at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre

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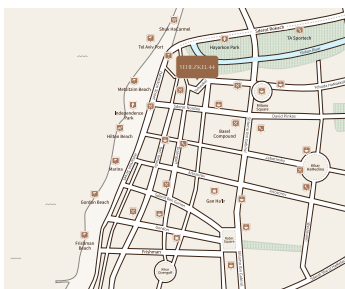
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Going undercover a spiritual journey, but hairy for some

GILLIAN KLAWSANSKY

From sheitels to hats to head scarves, there are endless options when it comes to hair coverings. Yet, though some observant women find that covering their hair after marriage is a *mitzvah* they can't wait to embrace, for others, it's fraught with challenges.

She may be a *baal teshuva* who only became religious a few years ago, but for Nikita Nevies, covering one's hair after marriage was a practice that always appealed to her. "It just spoke to me," she says. "It looks put together and dignified." But it wasn't a seamless transition.

"The week after my wedding, we went on honeymoon, and I was crying to my husband, I felt so ugly. I didn't feel like I was dressed up nicely enough, especially with the *mitpachat* [headscarf]. I didn't wear my sheitel. I was discovering how to wear the scarves, and exploring different materials, shapes, and patterns. It was quite hard, but once I found a way of tying it that I like, it became much easier."

Nevies became so adept at tying headscarves that it's become something people associate her with. She even has a women only Instagram account, @coveredinstyle_, tracking her *tzniut* journey.

Nevies generally feels more comfortable in headscarves than in a sheitel, as she feels that she draws less unwanted attention to herself when she's out without her husband. "People know that I'm a married, religious woman, and they treat me completely differently," she says.

For Nevies, allowing only her husband to see her real hair adds a special element to their marriage. "I'll get a haircut and I'll be excited to come home and show

my husband. That's what I like most – that only he gets to enjoy that with me."

She advises those covering their hair to do it in the most comfortable way, whether it be with a headscarf, cap, or sheitel – whatever they identify with most strongly. "Find something that feels like you when you look in the mirror," she says.

“

“THE GENERAL HALACHIC POSITION IS THAT THERE'S A MITZVAH FROM THE TORAH TO COVER AT LEAST PART OF YOUR HAIR AND AN ADDITIONAL RABBINIC MITZVAH TO COVER MORE HAIR WHILE IN PUBLIC SETTINGS.”

Conversely, Roslyn Lavi, now married for 11 years, felt like she was losing a part of herself by covering her hair. Having come from a reform background in South Africa, she met and married her

husband, who is Sephardi Modern Orthodox, after moving to London. "I became more observant in a relatively short time, so I took on a lot quite quickly," she recalls.

"In the community where we first got married, it was the done thing to cover your hair, and there was pressure to live up to its Orthodox standards. Especially as newlyweds, you feel that everyone is judging you all the time. Of course they aren't, but we were self-conscious about fitting in. It was covering for the wrong reasons."

Often walking her rowdy dog in the rain, she battled to keep her sheitel or headscarf on, Lavi says. She had also always felt a strong attachment to her long, thick hair, "her best asset", which in fact made her feel connected to Judaism. "I have one non-Jewish side of my family, and I loved that I had 'Jewish' hair," she says.

Lavi says for her, covering her hair took something away. "I felt I was losing myself and it was having an impact on my mental health. Stopping

Nikita Nevies wearing one of her distinctive headscarves



Continued on 9b>>

Stop fighting antisemitism with facts – start telling our story

OPINION

RABBI DR AHARON ARIEL LAVI



As we witness the surge of antisemitism the world over, we're also reminded of something darker: more than 3 000 years of antisemitism that began with Pharaoh and continues – albeit in new forms – to this day.

Despite noble efforts and millions in funding, our strategies to combat this ancient hatred are falling short. Why? Because we're using facts to fight a phenomenon that's not grounded in facts at all.

Flooding social media with infographics about 7 October 2023, or commercials highlighting Jewish victimhood, may feel righteous, but they're often ineffective or even counterproductive. Those who harbour antisemitic views aren't persuaded by historical accuracy or data. Many are influenced by ideological narratives that cast Jews as powerful oppressors, not

vulnerable minorities. And for some in other marginalised communities, seeing wealthy Jewish figures purchase Super Bowl airtime to raise awareness about hate can come across as tone-deaf or disconnected from their own struggle.

So, what can we do instead?

We need to stop reacting, and start reframing. Rather than defending ourselves in hostile environments, we must tell a stronger, more compelling story, one that affirms Jewish identity, values, and purpose. That's what Moses did. He didn't argue with Pharaoh about the facts. He projected a vision: a universal message of freedom, dignity, and divine purpose. That narrative changed the course of history.

It's time we do the same. Instead of

Let's stop focusing only on fighting hate and start building bridges based on shared purpose.

begging for understanding from those who won't give it, let's invest our energy in those who already see us as partners. Across the world, from South Korea to Nigeria, India, to South America, and even in South Africa, there are communities that admire Jewish resilience, values, and culture. Many already feel spiritually or historically connected to us. Yet we know very little about them.

What we need now is a bold strategy: map our global allies, understand their motivations, and build meaningful partnerships. Let's stop focusing only on fighting hate and start building bridges based on shared purpose. Let's move from defence to vision.

After millennia in exile, we've grown used to surviving alone. But the modern Jewish people are no longer isolated. We have allies, and we have a story worth telling. Let's tell it with strength, clarity, and pride.

• Rabbi Dr Aharon Ariel Lavi is managing director of the Ohr Torah Interfaith Centre. He will be presenting these ideas in depth at Limmud South Africa, which will be in Johannesburg from 15-17 August; Durban on 20 August; and in Cape Town from 23-24 August.

Going undercover a spiritual journey, but hairy for some

>> Continued from 9a

was absolutely the right decision for me," she says. She still wore a sheitel on Shabbat, and though the community accepted her decision, she and her husband later found another community to which they related more strongly.

"We have wonderful gifts for our children and the world regardless of whether we cover our hair or not," she says. "Don't stop growing and learning regardless of whether you decide to take your sheitel off or keep it on."

Temmi Hadar, the rebbetzin of Pine Street Shul, says that though there are diverse opinions in Jewish law about how much hair to cover and how to do it, all are valid. "The general *halachic* position is that there's a *mitzvah* from the Torah to cover at least part of your hair and an additional rabbinic *mitzvah* to cover more hair while in public settings," she says.

"I urge people to find their path – one that resonates with them," she says. "The truth is, with *halacha*, every one of us is on a journey. From a Kabbalistic perspective, hair covering is one of many *mitzvot* that allows us to bring G-dly energy into the most mundane aspects of our lives. Even a woman's hair is holy as it's part of her innate spiritual energy which needs to be protected and nurtured."

Hadar believes there's a misconception about the difficulty of

fulfilling the *mitzvah*, although she understands the struggle it sometimes brings. "It can bring a huge loss of identity because as women, for better or possibly for worse, our identity is often wrapped up in how we look," she says.

Hadar herself, always known as the curly haired girl, initially chose a sheitel with long straight hair of a different colour to her own after she got married. "It was about being able to move beyond that, understanding that my identity isn't about my appearance. Adapting to stepping away from that can be a huge challenge."

Hadar encourages those struggling to embrace the *mitzvah* to learn more about it and find which means of hair covering is comfortable and works best for them. "If you're not there yet, don't not do it at all, cover your hair some of the time, like when going to shul or when performing a *mitzvah* like lighting Shabbat candles," she says. "Alternatively, cover only part of your hair. Start small, and look at it as an opportunity to grow in a relationship with Hashem."

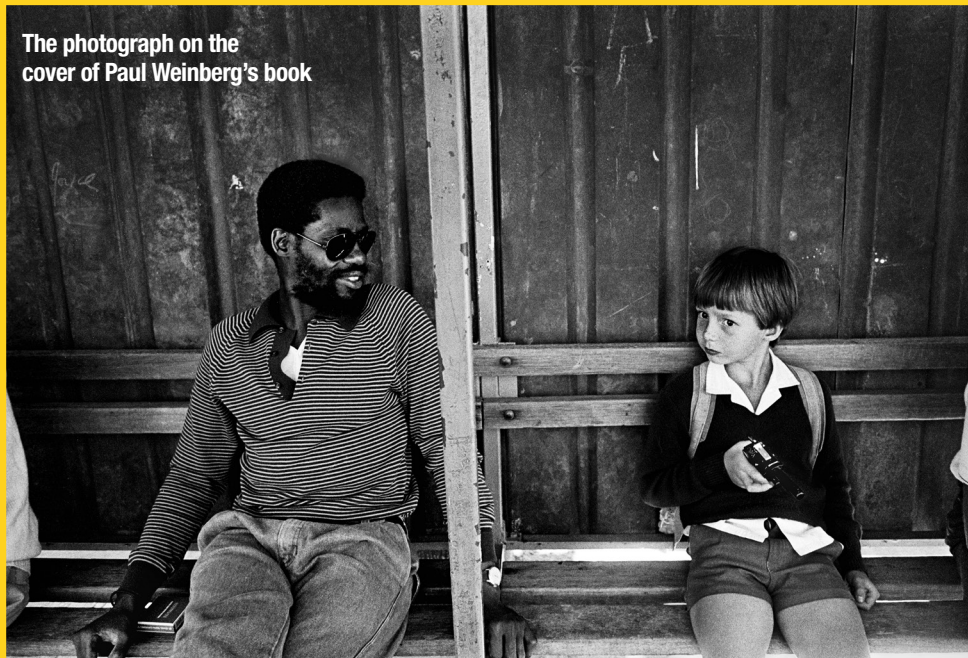
"In the world we live in, life is chaotic, and relationships can be challenging," she says. "To find ways to bring Hashem into those relationships is a beautiful journey."

Paul Weinberg's *Between the Cracks*: a quiet revolution

GILANA LAB

"The camera was a way to understand my country and learn about the world around me," veteran South African photojournalist Paul Weinberg told radio journalist John Perlman on Sunday, 6 July, at Tova Café at Beit Emanuel in Parktown.

The photograph on the cover of Paul Weinberg's book



They were discussing the launch of Weinberg's latest book, *Between the Cracks*, which portrays his life documenting southern Africa's overlooked communities, forgotten landscapes, and moments of quiet humanity.

Weinberg, a filmmaker, writer, archivist, and photographer, has spent more than four decades capturing South Africa's social and environmental realities. A founding member of the influential Afrapix collective – a progressive photographers' collective and photographic agency – in the 1980s, Weinberg has always aligned his lens with the marginalised. His work defies traditional news photography by dwelling on the subtle, the spiritual, and the soulful.

"Photography became an integral part of how I saw the world," he said. "It gave me a passport to travel across the divides. I embarked on all sorts of journeys off the beaten track."

Between the Cracks is a retrospective collection that spans Weinberg's work from the 1970s to the present. The book brings together black-and-white and colour photographs, organised thematically. Weinberg said this reflected his ongoing dialogue between past and present, as a poetic conversation where memory and reflection take precedence over linear storytelling.

Weinberg said he chose the book's title from his belief in documenting lives and places that exist outside of dominant narratives. "Between the cracks, life continues with its pain and joy," he said. "During the 'dark days', apartheid shadowed me on all these journeys. But it was the people I was looking at – watching how they reflected themselves and how I absorbed their reflections; how they danced with reality; how they made light in a dark space; how they embraced each other at great risk."

This insight reveals the dual role that Weinberg sees himself playing in his photography in being both witness and participant. He told how he was conscripted into the apartheid army, yet turned his camera against the system. "We were unashamedly partisan and saw the camera as a weapon against the system," he said. He focused on capturing what the government and mainstream media either ignored or suppressed. His work with Afrapix was deliberately political because he believed "to photograph was to resist".

Reflecting on his career to date, Weinberg described himself as a "reluctant war photographer". Frontline conflict photography was never his default approach, he said, and he wouldn't necessarily have joined the Bang Bang Club, a group of photojournalists who made their names by photographing political violence. But, like many South Africans drawn to activism, he felt the pull to document the country's unrest because of the political climate, not as a result of a desire for dramatic imagery.

With Perlman, Weinberg recounted the funeral of Chief Ampie Mayisa after his assassination by vigilantes in 1986. Weinberg said he arrived at the funeral after a man suspected of being one of the vigilantes involved was attacked and killed. Weinberg, who took the photograph that was then published on the front page of the *Mail & Guardian*, previously known as the *Weekly Mail*, advised against its publication, saying that he feared that it might lead to arrests and executions by the security police. The situation underscored the ethical complexity and dilemmas of his work, he said, in which capturing a moment could have life-or-death consequences.

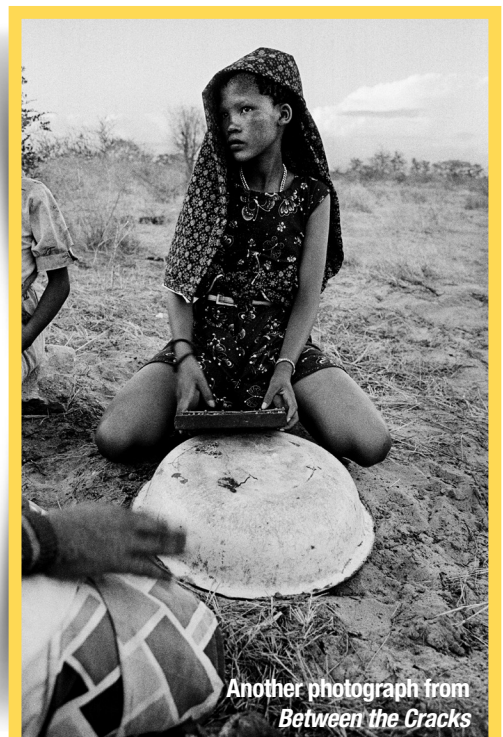
Ultimately, Weinberg said he didn't want the photograph to be used because he saw it as exploiting violence for imagery. He noted that photography, like writing, always involves more

than just the main event. "There are often backstories and side narratives that are even more compelling."

Yet, Weinberg said, *Between the Cracks* is far more than a catalogue of protest. It's a study in persistence, intimacy, and everyday life. "He wanted to tell the story that wasn't being told," Perlman said. This, Perlman said, was clear in the images of funeral processions, spiritual gatherings, quiet commutes, and rural rituals images that don't scream, but whisper with humanity.

Weinberg described arriving in Johannesburg as a young man as an "incredible experience". He spoke of a project called *Going Home* that he worked on with fellow photographer Santu Mofokeng, a close friend and fellow Afrapix member. "We were exactly the same age," Weinberg recalled, "and we became very close."

Going Home for them was born out of their routine on Friday afternoons – Mofokeng going back to Soweto, and Weinberg initially to



Another photograph from *Between the Cracks*

Continued on 10b>>

Pilot with a PhD – Joburg rabbi does it all

GILANA LAB

Johannesburg Rabbi Gavin Michal recently fulfilled a life-long ambition of academic study by getting his PhD. He is the first South African rabbi to receive a PhD without a secular degree.

Michal has never been afraid of pushing the boundaries. Not many rabbis are also helicopter pilots; build drones for anti-poaching efforts; and restore vintage aircraft to flying condition.

The rabbi of the Baal Shem Tov Shul in Orange Grove has been a community rabbi for about 30 years, first serving at Linkfield Shul. "I was always fascinated by the didactics and preciseness of academic writing as a means to attempt a fuller understanding of the interesting questions that confront us when we dare to think," he said.

Michal is a research associate at the University of Pretoria's faculty of theology and religion, specifically within the department of Old Testament and Hebrew scriptures. His PhD focused on Sabbateanism and its influence on the Chassidic and Mitnagdim movements.

He was accepted to the university on the basis of his *semicha* (rabbinic ordination), which he received from Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung of Montreal. However, he had to start with an Honours degree within the faculty of theology and religion.

Michal was overwhelmed once he saw the course outline, and thought he wasn't up for the challenge. "I had never delved into academic studies before, and the requirements for this thesis was daunting," he said. At the last moment, he dived in, and eventually graduated cum laude and made the Dean's List.

His research was followed by his Master's degree based on Jewish messianism from 500 BCE up to the 17th century false-messiah, Shabbatai Tzvi. Once again, Michal graduated cum laude, and made the Dean's List.

Pretoria University offers no courses in Jewish Studies, leading to Michal collaborating with a network of respected overseas professors from Israel, Prague, and America, as his area of interest didn't have a prescribed course structure, and wasn't available worldwide.

He managed to gain access to an unbelievable array of source material, including archives, unpublished, and censored manuscripts from all over Israel and Europe, helping him to learn about aspects of Jewish history not readily available. "I delved into historical records, writings, and ideas I could never have imagined," he said. "I learned how to think critically and interrogate source material thoroughly, whichever way the argument takes one."

Michal's PhD, the highest level of academic achievement, was on the influence of Shabbatai Tzvi on the Chassidic and Mitnagdim movements. Michal explained that the Sabbateans had a most sophisticated form of Kabbalah that grew out of the Lurianic Kabbalah of the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria).

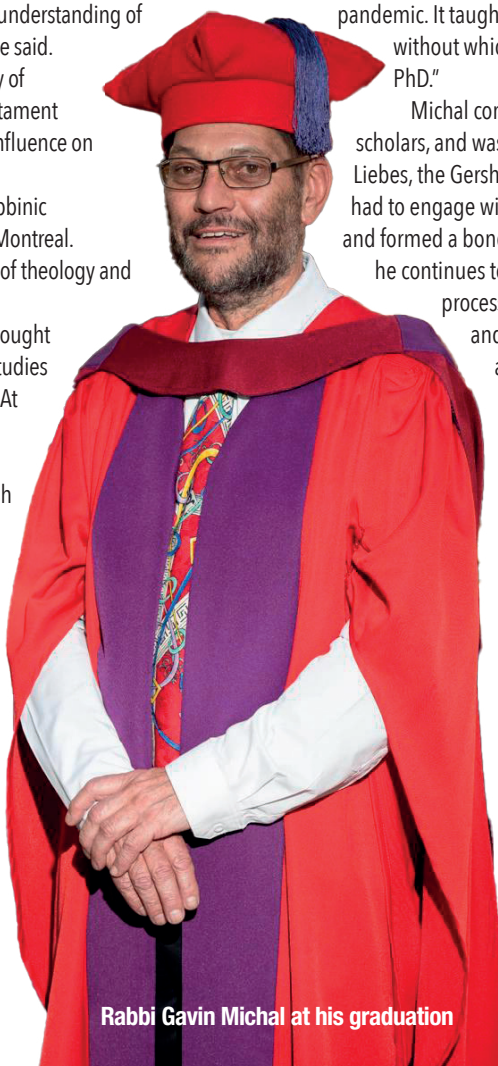
"The Masters flowed into the PhD, and both became facets of a unified research project on Jewish messianism," Michal said. "I managed to get manuscript evidence and original readings of some popular texts that had somehow been changed over time. This was the highlight of my academic journey."

"Yet I'm grateful that I first had to sit with younger students throughout my Honours degree, which was made easier since it was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It taught me discipline and gave me a solid grounding without which I wouldn't have had the tools for the Master's and PhD."

Michal communicated with many internationally recognised scholars, and was shown texts by outstanding academics like Yehuda Liebes, the Gershom Scholem professor of Jewish mysticism. He had to engage with complicated modern Hebrew academic papers, and formed a bond with a fascinating group of scholars with whom he continues to collaborate on research projects. Part of the initial process was learning how to write academic articles, and to date, he has four published journal articles and has presented numerous papers and made presentations at international conferences.

"The rigorous process of having one's work peer reviewed in a double-blind manner is daunting, and it's only by having gone through the procedure that I can fully appreciate the value of academic publications," he said. "There's a protracted to-and-fro process, and it can take up to a year, often requiring extensive rewriting and solid source-based argument." Now that the PhD is completed, Michal plans to make it available to a wider audience by converting it into a book based on his years of research into such a fascinating and disputed period of Jewish theological history.

Michal is known for his writings, particularly the *Kotzk Blog*, in which he explores themes inspired by the teachings of the Kotzker Rebbe, emphasising uncompromising truth and intellectual independence. His blog has garnered international attention, and was ranked among the top 50 Torah blogs in 2024.



Rabbi Gavin Michal at his graduation

Paul Weinberg's *Between the Cracks*: a quiet revolution

>> Continued from 10a

Yeoville, where he was staying, although his real home was Pietermaritzburg. They documented what "home" meant to them. From 1986 to 1989, Mofokeng photographed Soweto, producing some of his most iconic work, while Weinberg returned to Pietermaritzburg to explore his roots through the lens.

The cover of *Between the Cracks* is a photo from that series taken on Church Street in the city centre of Pietermaritzburg. Weinberg said the image represented a "liminal space" – a feeling of being caught in between – during a time when apartheid was at its most brutal. "We were just trying to find

ourselves and work it all out," he said, reflecting on the uncertain but transformative nature of that period.

He said he preferred spontaneous photography to staged images to document events. He came from the tradition of catching moments as they happened quickly, really, and full of unplanned meaning. "The trick was to get that spontaneous picture that had an explosion, something with impact," he said. "[The cover of his book] was one of those moments." It was, as he put it, a real, unscripted moment that speaks volumes, and was the kind of photograph Weinberg spent his lifetime

pursuing.

Weinberg said that due to the era and the pre-digital equipment he was using, he often didn't know whether he had captured the moment until much later. This uncertainty, paired with intention and trust, is part of what gives the book its meditative quality. "I was just very conscious, every time I took a photograph, I had to make it work. Every picture had to count. I had to get the decisive moment. I had to try and do my best."

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

From abuse to attack: why words matter



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Once again, we find ourselves reeling from horrendous antisemitic attacks last weekend in Melbourne, with three separate incidents. The East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation synagogue was firebombed with about 20 Jews praying inside. Mercifully, no-one was physically harmed. That same evening, on 4 July, a mob of about 20 masked extremists stormed Miznon, an Israeli-owned restaurant, chanting, "Death to the IDF!", hurling chairs and glassware, and sowing terror among diners who fled for safety. Within the same 24-hour period, Jewish-owned cars were torched and defaced with vile antisemitic graffiti, including hateful slogans that cut to the core of our community's dignity.

The chant of "Death to the IDF", first amplified at the Glastonbury Festival, has echoed across the world including here in South Africa. It's an example of the speed with which this type of discourse spreads and becomes acceptable sloganeering. We have seen the same "From the river to the sea"; "Resistance by any means necessary"; and "Globalise the intifada." In fact, even the term "intifada", synonymous with terror, bombs, and missiles, has been whitewashed through casual use, stripping it of its violent reality. As Jews, we know all too well the power of words to incite and the peril of allowing such hatred to fester unchecked. The tongue, as scripture reminds us, holds the power of life and death, and tacit acceptance of these messages paves the way for acts of violence.

The scene at Glastonbury resonates deeply with our struggle as a community, not only to be heard but to be safe and welcome in public spaces, at concerts, at races, at sports events, and even at medical conferences. It's about the battle to ensure that we don't accept sloganeering and statements that we once thought reprehensible becoming accepted forms of antagonism. It's a fight to protect our right to exist, unapologetically, as Jews in a world that too often seeks to silence us.

Over the past two years, our community's expressions of grief, personal and collective, haven't been met with empathy, but with hostility, intimidation, and antagonism. I recall the event we hosted at Great Park Synagogue last year to mark solemnly a year since 7 October 2023, at which an aggressive and destructive mob attempted, unsuccessfully, to disrupt our commemoration. Time and again, our community's events are disrupted and marred by those who seek to deny us our right to mourn, to celebrate, or simply exist in the public space as Jews.

The scenes in Melbourne resonate for a different reason. They are the physical manifestation of the sanitised slogans we hear far too frequently. This is what "Globalise the intifada" means, what "Death to the IDF" means, what "Intifada by any means necessary" means. These aren't abstract political phrases, they are a direct threat to our safety and existence. As we have learned all too painfully over the past two years, when such threats are made, we must take them at their word.

As past United Kingdom chief rabbi, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, said, "The real test of a society isn't the absence of crises, but whether we come out of them cynical and disillusioned or strengthened by our re-dedication to high ideals." In this time of crisis, we must remain dedicated to our highest ideals and never accept infringement on our identity, our space, or our belief in the power of the tongue.

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

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



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Dog days in a fastidious female household

This isn't a cry for help. Rather, it's recognition that abuse can creep up on even the most vigilant of us. Perhaps it's because no-one thinks it can happen to them. Perhaps it's unwillingness to face the hard truth, or because the escalation is so subtle, so insidious, that it slips by unnoticed. In my case, it took 34 years of marriage to realise that I had become what I feared most: the default suspect.

It may have something to do with the fact that, aside from our noble Swiss Shepherd, Gatsby, I'm the last remaining male in the house. Our four sons have flown the coop, married off and thriving, leaving me and Gatsby alone, holding the line for

masculinity in a household now thoroughly reclaimed by the oestrogen army.

The consequences have been ... dire. The lamb disappearing off the kitchen counter? Clearly my fault.

Tennis balls strategically positioned for someone to trip over? Obviously Gatsby, or me, by extension.

Doors left open during a cold snap? If you guessed Howard, you'd be correct.

Missing Tupperware lids? That one's still under investigation, but I'm currently out on bail.

The situation became so absurd, that this past Sunday morning, I decided to implement a star chart. A simple system: every time I'm unfairly blamed or

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



subjected to a tone that would make a prison warden flinch, I give myself a star. Five stars earns me a gift, perhaps a chocolate, a short nap, or the sheer thrill of closing a cupboard without comment.

By lunchtime, I had amassed 13 stars. And no-one had even been home. I was being blamed by WhatsApp, by post-it notes, and by the ghost of accusations yet to come. At this rate, I'd need to dip into retirement savings just to keep up with the gifts.

Continued on 12b>>

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>> Continued from 12a

Clearly, the system needed recalibrating or I needed to move, along with Gatsby, into a kennel for some peace.

Now, I should be clear: I'm not without fault. I've left the milk and Butro out. I've neglected to pick wet towels off the floor. I've adjusted the air conditioner settings without written consent. But surely a man must be able to age with dignity?

This isn't the home I envisioned. I thought I'd be spending my empty-nest years tweeting

aggressive things in quiet contemplation, occasionally offering sage advice to my children over Sunday lunch. Instead, I'm apologising to house plants, hiding in the laundry with a Toblerone, and negotiating a peace treaty with the dog over shared blame for



muddy pawprints.

Still, hope remains in what has to be a triumph of optimism over experience.

I've recently applied for minority status within the household, and am lobbying for male representation in household decisions. Gatsby has been nominated as my running mate. We're campaigning on a platform of "Not Always Our Fault" and "Let the Dog Speak".

If you see me wandering your neighbourhood, clutching a star chart and muttering about oven mittens, don't worry, I'm fine. Just know that abuse wears many faces, and sometimes, one of them is holding a wooden spoon and asking, "Who left this on the counter?"




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