

SA faces ‘ides of September’ as US relations sour

OPINION

KENNETH MOKGATLHE



September, a month synonymous with renewal and new beginnings, will be the most challenging period in South Africa’s political and economic landscape due to actions likely to be taken by the United States (US) against the country.

The first of these is an end to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), scheduled to expire in September. However, the new 30% tariffs introduced by the US for South Africa will likely override the existing AGOA conventions when they take effect in early August 2025. The second biggest issue will be the US Senate’s decision on the US-South Africa Bilateral Relations Review Act of 2025, which requires a review of the bilateral relationship between the US and South Africa, and identifying South African government officials and African National Congress (ANC) leaders eligible for the imposition of sanctions.

The ground is fertile in the US to act against the South African government, which is believed to have acted against the US’s national interests. The US has been critical of South Africa’s foreign policy, which, on many occasions, has gone against American national interests. This has been evident in divergent voting patterns on various United Nations (UN) platforms, where South Africa and the US have often taken opposing positions. Relations between the US and South Africa didn’t sour during the Trump administration, Joe Biden raised similar concerns about South Africa.

The ANC should be told, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” It has chosen to strengthen its alliances with geopolitical rivals to the West at the expense of decades of working partnerships with Western powers. It was shortsighted of the ANC to believe that there wouldn’t be actions or reactions from the US over the way it is being undermined by Africa’s powerful regional bloc.

Tension between the US and South Africa escalated in 2022, when South Africa was alleged by the US to have loaded the ship Lady R with armaments that would be used in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The South African government dismissed this allegation. In 2023, in the aftermath of attacks on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023, South Africa continued to support Hamas, a designated terror organisation by countries such as the US and the European Union (EU).

Former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor kicked off a diplomatic storm when she agreed



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa with US President Donald Trump

that she had held a telephonic conversation with the same Hamas, and offered humanitarian support to this vicious group that invaded Israel, killing more than 1 200 innocent civilians and kidnapping more than 250 people, some of whom are still being held in the tunnels of Gaza.

Just when we thought that the ANC would tone down its anti-US message, it did the unexpected by dragging Israel to the UN’s International Court of Justice (ICJ). Its legal basis was that Israel was committing

genocidal acts in Gaza. This act by the South African government was seen as heroic by some; while others criticised it because it didn’t pose a viable solution to the longstanding Israel-Palestine conflict. It is possible that the ANC’s thinking at the time was to maximise its electoral fortunes, which subsequently dropped drastically to below 50% of the electorate. Its energy on the issue is draining because it is not yielding the political capital it planned.

If indeed, South Africa was genuine about fighting for the rights of vulnerable people around the world, it could have started with its own population, wherein 14 million people are living in dire poverty, not knowing what they will eat the following day. A country where a sizeable number of the youth is unemployed. A country that experiences 62 murders per day for the whole year, a number unmatched throughout the world, making us the murder capital. Still, the political leadership ignores what is affecting its people.

• *Kenneth Mokgatlhe is a political analyst and consultant.*

Is your mezuzah a blessing?

In this week’s Torah portion, we read the first paragraph of the Shema. One of the *mitzvot* in the Shema is the *mitzvah* of mezuzah. Mezuzah is a positive *mitzvah* in the Torah, and our sages teach us that it is also a form of protection.

The Talmud tells us a fascinating story about Onkelus the Convert. Onkelus was a well-respected Roman scholar. He studied the Torah, and converted to Judaism. The emperor sent troops to bring him back to Rome. When they arrived, Onkelus engaged the troops in conversation, and they converted as well. The emperor then sent another group of soldiers. He instructed them not to talk to Onkelus, only to arrest him and bring him back to the emperor. As they were leading him away, Onkelus said, “Normally an official holds a torch for a governor and a governor doesn’t hold a torch for a lower ranking official, but when the Jewish people left Egypt, it says that Hashem lit the way, with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night.” This group then converted as well.

The emperor sent a third group, and ordered them to bring Onkelus at once and not listen to him at all. As they were taking him out of his home, Onkelus put his hand on the mezuzah and said, “Ordinarily a king sits in his palace and the guards protect him from outside. But we sit inside, and Hashem protects us from outside. As it is stated, the Lord shall guard

Torah Thought

Rabbi Levi Silman
Rabbinical
coordinator for
Kosher SA



your going out, and your coming in, from now and forever.” (Psalms 121:8).

This group converted as well, and the emperor sent no more soldiers to Onkelus.

The Ari Zal teach us that Hashem’s name on the back of the mezuzah is an acronym for “*Shomer daltot Yisrael*” (Guardian of the doors of Israel). So, by placing a mezuzah correctly at the doorpost, we invite Hashem’s perception of us.

Obviously, in order to fulfil the *mitzvah*, the mezuzah must be handwritten on a parchment by an expert scribe. Moreover, over time, the letters can smudge or fade, especially in those that are outdoors or exposed to water and direct sunlight. This being the case, they should be checked every 3.5 years. Some suggest inspecting them more often, particularly in the month of Elul which is soon upon us.

Let’s take great care of this very special *mitzvah*, and ask that Hashem grant His security.

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Cyclist’s death prompts authorities to combat crime

TALI FEINBERG

Avid cyclist Dennis Hammar (76) appeared physically fine after he was attacked by a vagrant near Cape Town city centre while riding on Sunday 27 July, and his cellphone was stolen. But, just two days later, he died in hospital after medical staff discovered he had major injuries and needed surgery.

His senseless death has left family, friends, and the public reeling, and calling for a clampdown on crime.

Hammar, a Jewish Cape Town resident and grandfather, was the epitome of the adage “age is just a number”. With forty-one consecutive Cape Town Cycle Tours under his belt, he was fit, healthy, and living life to the fullest, regularly cycling hundreds of kilometres across the Mother City’s magnificent terrain.

Dennis met his wife, Sharon, in their later years after they were both widowed, and they lived a busy, active life, enjoying all that Cape Town had to offer. Now, Sharon says that her husband was let down by “a city and a country that he loved so much”.

The Pedal Power Association (PPA), a public-benefit organisation committed to promoting cycling and the interests of cyclists, stated that it was “devastated by this incident, which stems from ongoing attacks on cyclists originating from the squatter community living on the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa [PRASA] land.”

Hammar’s death prompted a response from Transnet, which has initiated legal proceedings to evict occupants from informal settlements along routes near Cape Town’s central business district.

The city’s mayoral committee member for safety and security, JP Smith, confirmed that the settlement near which Hammar was attacked is situated on land owned by Transnet. He stated that these areas have become “associated with violent crime, and present a daily risk to commuters and cyclists”.

According to Smith, Transnet owns 10 sites that contain 274 informal structures, housing about 424 people. Eviction notices were served by the sheriff on 7 July, but it was “too little, too late” for Hammar. However, court proceedings related to the eviction applications are expected to follow soon.

The city also increased patrols along routes used by cyclists and pedestrians, and Smith encouraged concerned organisations to submit formal

representations in support of the city’s safety efforts. He said the removal of the encampments could improve safety significantly in the area.

It was a harrowing week for the Cape cycling

community, as another cyclist died in an accident with a bus on Cape Town’s Chapman’s Peak route, a few days after Hammar’s passing.

Sharon says Dennis was a “proud, passionate, and committed Jew and South African” who treated all people equally. Seeing South Africans divided on political lines, especially when it came to the Middle East, broke both of their hearts. “I don’t want Dennis’s death to be in vain,” she says. “I want people to unify and fix this country, so that crime becomes obsolete and people have respect for life.”

She says her husband shouldn’t have cycled alone, and when she saw him after the attack, he apologised for doing so. He had been heading out for a ride to Blouberg, a route he really enjoyed. She says the good Samaritans that helped him after the attack, including members of the Muslim community, epitomised the South Africa she and Dennis believed in.

However, she says the police were slow to come to the hospital to take Dennis’s statement, and she experienced the same incompetence in November

2024, when he was injured in a hit-and-run while cycling. Now, she will continue to advocate for a better police service.

Hammar’s life-long friend, Rob Swiel, says Dennis was a “pioneer” in the cycling community. The pair were among the first cyclists to take part in a unique 200km cycle near Cape Town that began in the 1980s and continues to this day. As younger riders joined the venture, Dennis would support them as an unwavering teammate, refusing to forge ahead if other cyclists were struggling.

Swiel says he was in awe of Dennis taking part in the Cape Town Cycle Tour in March 2025 after being injured just four months earlier, and that he still finished with a time of just more than four hours.

It was Swiel who introduced Dennis to Sharon, and Dennis was thriving as an involved, dynamic husband, father, and grandfather. The impact of his death has been so great, the cycling community gathered in Cape Town and London to do memorial rides in his memory on the day of his funeral. They also placed a small model bike in his memory near to where he was attacked. Sharon says she is grateful to the city for “rallying” to take part in the event, and for committing to combatting crime.

Neil Schaffer, in his 30s, says he always looked up to Dennis as a consistent “father-figure” in the cycling community. He hopes to follow in Dennis’s footsteps, cycling into his golden years and finishing as many Cape Town Cycle Tours as he did.

It was Sharon, a physiotherapist who

rehabilitates injuries, who helped Schaffer learn to walk again after his own cycling accident, when a truck drove over him, shattering his pelvis. While Schaffer lives with the aftermath, he looked to Dennis as a role model who overcame hardships and continued to cycle for the love of the sport.

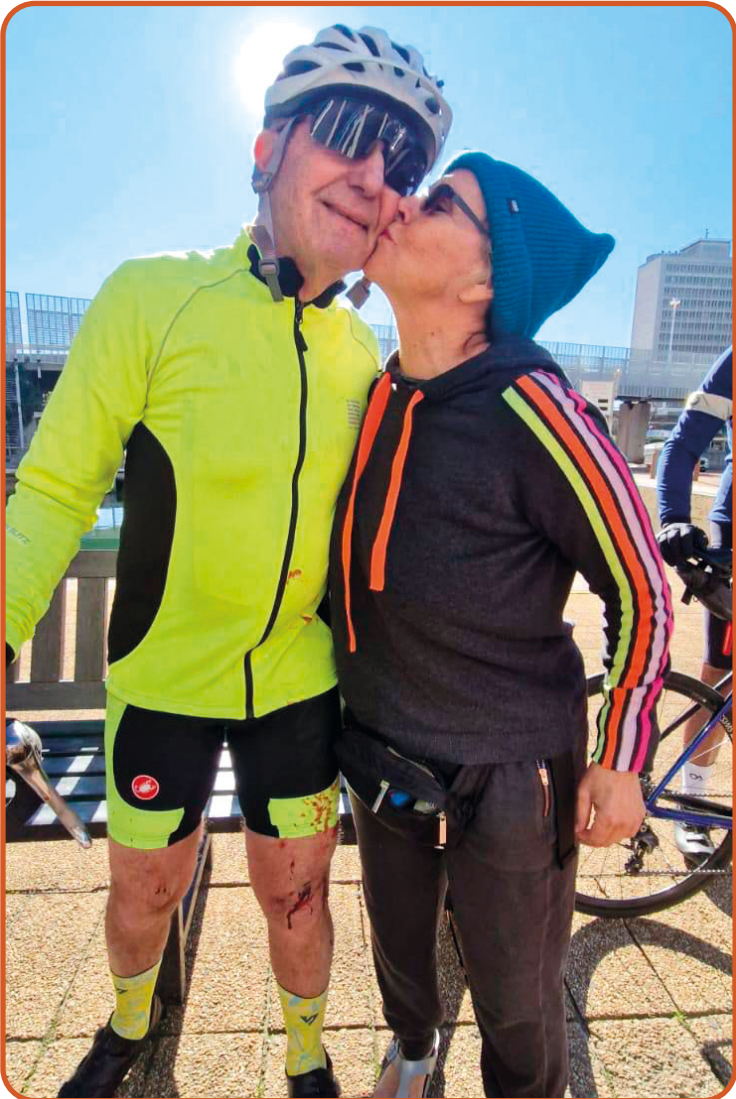
Neil Robinson, the chief executive of the PPA, told local media that his organisation had raised concern about criminal activity along cycling routes for a long time, particularly in isolated areas near PRASA land. He said the issues include broken CCTV cameras; limited patrols; and repeated vandalism.

City officials acknowledged the attack, and said plans were in place to restore damaged surveillance equipment and expand security patrols along key routes. However, the PPA is calling for a systemic, long-term approach to protecting cyclists, including consistent monitoring and safer, more accessible routes.

Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm Pojie, the commander of the provincial media centre of the South African Police Service Western Cape, told the *SA Jewish Report* that an inquest was taking place into Hammar’s attack, and no arrests had been made.

Sharon says she is “honoured, blessed, and grateful” to be Jewish, and thanks the global Jewish community for its outpouring of love and support. She says community was a vital part of the couple’s life, and they recently enjoyed a *SA Jewish Report* webinar on Artificial Intelligence (AI), where Hammar was one of the first to programme himself to “fly” using AI. Now, she hopes her husband is soaring above, as he did in that experience.

Though she knows that she and Hammar had a lot more living to do together, she’s grateful for the “second chance” they got to experience love and companionship in their later years. She says she will continue to fight for a better South Africa, in memory of Dennis.



Dennis and Sharon Hammar, just after he was attacked

Stop the unimaginable nightmare

>>Continued from page 1

face of this monstrous cruelty is complicity,” Ilay said. “I urge you, do not let them die. Do not let them spend another minute in darkness, suffering beyond imagination. Act now. Before it is too late.”

He described his youngest brother as “shy, but full of life. He has the soul of a musician”.

He said Evyatar was 22 when he was kidnapped from the Nova festival. “He went there to celebrate life, to dance and enjoy the music he loves.

“Since that day, my brother and the other hostages have endured an unimaginable nightmare. Their lives are truly hanging by a thread. We now know from medical reports that Evyatar and Guy [Gilboa Dalal] are on the brink of death. They may only have days left to live.”

Ilay recalled how in February, after 500 days in captivity, Hamas broadcast Evyatar and Guy being forced to watch their fellow captives being released and were then sent back into the dark tunnels.

“This weekend, we received a new video from hell. We

were reminded just how much more cruel and inhuman Hamas and its sick partners can be. My brother is a living skeleton. He has barely strength to move or speak. In the video my little brother was forced to speak to the world and then actively begin to dig his own grave inside a filthy dark tunnel in Gaza.”

Ilay said that he and his mother couldn’t bring themselves to watch it because they knew if they did, they would be unable to function. “These images haunt my father and sister. My father cannot sleep, and my mother has not stopped crying.”

He told the United Nations Security Council that the video also showed how well-fed the Hamas terrorist in the frame was, confirming that they have plenty of food.

“The only ones starving in the tunnels are the hostages. This is a humanitarian crisis that is not being discussed here at the Security Council or any other UN forum. We will not give up hope. We are weeping, but we are also fighting with every fibre of our being to do what we can to get them home.”

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‘Palestine’ recognition pledges signal Western exasperation with Netanyahu

STEVEN GRUZD

E motive images of malnourished, starving Gazan children – many faked, some all too real – have dominated news coverage. Cynically exploited for propaganda by Hamas, it has ratcheted up pressure on Western capitals to do something – anything – about the 22-month war in Gaza.

Partially in response, France, the United Kingdom (UK), and Canada announced that they would recognise “the state of Palestine” at the United Nations (UN) in September, barring a full ceasefire; an Israeli pledge not to annex the West Bank; and the revival of a two-state solution. These are Western countries usually supportive of Israel. It’s unlikely that Jerusalem will comply.

Recognition is a card states can play only once. Currently, more than three-quarters of UN member states recognise “Palestine”. South Africa did so in 1995. Pretoria talks about “two states, side by side”, but never acknowledges that one should be a Jewish state.

Why does recognition matter? Malte Brosig, professor of international relations at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits,) said states are social constructs. “A state becomes a state when it is recognised by others as one. In a state-based world, states tend to control tightly who belongs. Peer-recognition is important. Non-recognised statehood is no statehood. The tipping threshold is usually UN membership, but this requires UN General Assembly and UN Security Council approval. It’s a political process more than a juridical one. Taiwan is not a fully recognised member of the UN *de jure*, so it’s not a state, but *de facto*, it’s fully in charge of its territory. For Palestine, it’s the opposite – increasingly recognised but *de facto* not controlling its own business.”

Analysts are divided on the recognition issue. Larry Benjamin, a Middle East expert at Wits said that recognising a Palestinian state now is symbolic, but “nonetheless reaffirms the commitment of these countries to push for a two-state solution in Palestine, a position they have held for decades. It’s also a reflection of the abhorrence felt by many,

including political elites, at the starvation currently afflicting Gaza, creating one of the most devastating humanitarian crises in recent memory.”

“There is also, behind the scenes, little love lost for [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing extremist government,” Benjamin said, “and the latitude given to them by the Trump administration. And clearly, the international community wishes to send a signal that the war in Gaza is now being prosecuted by a government putting its own narrow interests and ideological proclivities ahead of Israel’s national interest.”

In contrast, Israeli journalist Rolene Marks said, “President Trump said the way to end this is for the hostages to be released immediately, and for Hamas to lay down its arms. France, Canada, and the UK and any other country that wants to see a just and lasting peace should have said the same thing. It’s absolutely premature to recognise a Palestinian state.”

“Brits are fuming at this decision. So are Canadians,” said Marks. “A lot of them feel



The cover image of *The New York Times* on 25 July showed a child with a genetic disorder to prove starvation in Gaza

that their prime ministers have misled them on their campaign promises and should be focused on domestic issues like migrants. [UK Prime Minister Keir] Starmer’s approach has really rubbed us the wrong way. The intervention from British hostage families, who said Starmer would reward terrorists by recognising a Palestinian state, was very unusual for them.” She said Germany had been more measured, seeking dialogue with the Israeli government.

Jonny Gould of Jonny Gould’s Jewish State podcast said, “One way or another, this signals an existential threat to Keir Starmer’s premiership. If he U-turns, which he’s done under pressure from his members of Parliament already on key issues, he’ll become a lame duck vulnerable to a leadership challenge. If he stays with it, he reduces his relationship with the White House to mere pleasantries. Furthermore, Britain will no longer have a stake in true peacemaking except through meaningless coalitions with the UN’s worst despots and the soundbites that emanate from it.”

Leftist activist Gershon Baskin, who worked for five years to free Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit from Hamas captivity, said, “Recognition of the state of Palestine by countries that have supported the two-state solution for years but only recognised one of them isn’t a reward for Hamas or for terrorism. It’s a correction of a policy of duplicity and places action where only [empty] words were uttered until now.”

He said those making this claim aren’t supportive of peace, including right wingers the world over, although Baskin acknowledges that Hamas has never supported a two-state solution. “The way to resolve the conflict and make peace is for both peoples to have the right to self-determination, and the moral and historical obligation of the international community is to recognise the national rights of both peoples” – the seven million Jews and seven million Palestinians living on the land.

The last word goes to Ittay Flescher, the author of *The Holy and the Broken: A Cry for Israeli-Palestinian Peace from a Land that Must be Shared*. He said, “While I welcome the affirmations of France, the UK, and Canada to see Hamas disarmed as a prerequisite for a two-state solution, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can’t be solved by declarations alone. What’s needed is a radical change in how both peoples see one another.

“As a resident of Jerusalem,” he said, “I was surprised to see that a bus advert reading, ‘A child is a child is a child: compassion knows no borders – Israelis mourn all sides’ was removed by Egged this week for fear that it would offend the sensitivities of the Israeli public.

“Beyond our city, I see a growing number of pro-Israel and pro-Palestine people having no place in their heart for acknowledging or caring for the suffering of the other at a time when this pain is more acute than ever. While understandable given the horror of 7 October, hostage suffering, and the subsequent devastation of Gaza in response, I find this sentiment deeply distressing. When this war ends, may it be tomorrow, both the Israeli and Palestinian people will need generations of healing to reconcile all we have done to each other. At that time, messages like the one on this bus will be at the heart of what will secure a safe future for all of us.”

‘First suspend disbelief in peace, then negotiate’

Australian journalist, educator, and peace builder **Ittay Flescher** recently wrote *The Holy and the Broken: A Cry for Israeli-Palestinian Peace from a Land that Must be Shared*, and is heading to South Africa to speak at Limmud. The *SA Jewish Report* caught up with him.

What inspired you to write *The Holy and the Broken*?

The book is my response to all the people who have lost hope that peace is possible. As someone who has worked in peace building for the past seven years in Jerusalem, I felt I had something to contribute to the conversation about how this land can be shared.

How would you describe this book?

When dehumanisation and destruction become the norm, the cycle must be broken. Following decades of dialogue facilitation between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, I believe that the enemies of today can be the partners of the future.

The Holy and the Broken challenges Palestinian and Israeli leaders, citizens, and their supporters worldwide to imagine a different reality in a book that will comfort the troubled and trouble the comfortable.

Who do you most want to read your book and why?

The intended audience is primarily Israelis and Palestinians, and the people who care about the well-being of these two countries across the world, that seek to imagine a future where we can all live in justice and equality.

As we get closer to two years of war in Gaza, what do you believe the true damage is to both sides?

By the numbers, as of this moment, 60 000 people have lost their lives in Gaza, more than 18 000 of whom were children. Two thousand Israelis have been killed since 7 October 2023, 251 kidnapped, and 50 are still being held hostage after two years. This is devastating. What an immense loss of life, and for what? Behind each of these numbers is a story. Stories of pain, grief, despair, and anguish that are barely possible to put into words. My heart breaks for all the damage and brokenness in my holy country.

Do you believe there’s the possibility of peace between Israelis and Palestinians? If so, how do you see it manifesting?

Yes. Just like the Camp David Accords were signed five years after the horrific war between Israel and Egypt that resulted in thousands of deaths in 1973, it’s possible that within five years, the Israeli and Palestinian people will reject violence and dehumanisation. This is possible only after we both make the decision that our current and future disputes about the future of this land will be resolved around a negotiating table. Since Israel and Egypt made this decision

in 1978, there hasn’t been a single war between these two countries.

What would it take for this to happen, and for peace to last?

As a first step, we need to suspend disbelief that peace is possible. Following that, both Israel and Palestine need to see significant reform in the fields of education, journalism, social media, religious instruction, and the inclusion of women in peace negotiations. In my book, there’s a chapter devoted to each of these subjects.

In the past two years, the fear, hatred, and distrust between Israelis and Palestinians has probably reached an all-time high. How do you believe this can be changed?

The first thing that needs to happen is a ceasefire deal that brings all the hostages home; ends the war; and begins the process of rebuilding Gaza, as outlined by the “Arab reconstruction plan for Gaza” that was

endorsed by a summit in Cairo on 4 March 2025. Following this, we need new elections and new leadership in Gaza, Ramallah, and Jerusalem.

Over the longer term, we need a truth and reconciliation process to ensure that we never experience the horrors of the past two years ever again.

Who are the Palestinian and Israeli leaders who can take the two sides towards peace?

There are few elected leaders at the moment that can take their nations to peace. Yet, among the people, there are thousands from Rafah to Ra’anana that are desperate for a future that isn’t filled with violence. These people protest against Hamas in Gaza, and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. They join peace movements like Standing Together and the Gaza Youth Committee. They reject dehumanisation, and embrace hope that another way is possible.

How do you see the land being shared?

I favour a confederation of two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine, with open borders and free movement for their citizens. The core principles include maintaining separate national identities and institutions, while sharing a single homeland. It would allow citizens to live and work in the other state as permanent residents, with Jerusalem serving as a shared capital.



'We don't leave anyone behind,' vows former hostage

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Tal Shoham, a former Israeli hostage who is on a trip to South Africa, was devastated when he saw the Hamas propaganda video last weekend showing a skeletal Evyatar David, whom he was held with in Gaza, digging what David fears will be his own grave in the same tunnel they had been kept in.

Shoham, who was held with David and Guy Gilboa-Dalal for most of his 505 days in captivity, fears that both men, who became like brothers, have just days to live. Shoham, his wife, Adi, and their children, Naveh and Yahel, who were all previously held by Hamas, were brought to South Africa by the Jewish National Fund and The Base as part of the organisations' Hostage Healing Project.

Kidnapped from Kibbutz Be'eri on 7 October 2023, and separated from his family, Shoham was initially held in an apartment, handcuffed and alone. He decided to keep his humanity intact to survive.

"It needed to go both ways. I had to respect my captors as humans," he told the *SA Jewish Report* last week. "It's complex because there are bursts of humanity, but in the next moment, you know they will shoot you in the head because they think the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] are coming." After 34 days in solitary captivity, Shoham's spirits lifted when he was joined by David and Gilboa-Dalal, who were kidnapped from the Nova festival.

"Really quickly, we became a family of three. We couldn't control what the terrorists would do to us or how much food we would have. Yet our bond was an important part of our inner strength."

This bond extended to include Omer Wenkert when the three men were later transferred to a tunnel where Wenkert had previously been held alone. Shoham and Wenkert were released in February, while David and Gilboa-Dalal remain hostages.

"We were four men closed in a really narrow tunnel, only 1m wide, 1.8 metres high, and 12 metres long," Shoham said. "There were four mattresses and a hole in the ground serving as a toilet. At first, I needed a lot of mental strength not to think about it, because every time I did, the walls were closing in on me."



Adi and Tal Shoham and their children Yahel and Naveh

Aside from torturous uncertainty about the fate of Adi and their two children – whom he was later informed had been released – Shoham's biggest struggle was starvation. "We stood against the

wall for a minute not to faint when we stood up. We were starved to the point that Evyatar and I developed scurvy, a disease caused by a severe, ongoing vitamin C deficiency. We were lacking vitamins for months, eating only small pita breads or a little plain rice." Potentially fatal if left untreated, scurvy hasn't been seen in Western countries for the past 200 years.

Shoham and his fellow hostages initially believed that they were given such minimal food rations because their captors had limited supplies. "But near the end, they confessed that they were doing it on purpose. Their commander said we should almost not eat at all because the IDF was still fighting them."

He said the remaining hostages are experiencing even worse starvation than he did. "I shed 27kg during my captivity, and I've gained 24kg back. I believe Evyatar and Guy, who lost a similar amount to me, have shed another 15kg or 20kg since then."

Shoham said that on 7 October 2023, he, Adi, Naveh, and Yahel – then eight and three – were visiting Adi's family on Kibbutz Be'eri. Adi was raised on the kibbutz. She and Shoham lived there until 2020, when they moved to the north to protect their children from the threat of missiles.

On 7 October, after hours of trying to protect the family in the safe room with Adi's father, Shoham decided to surrender. He feared the terrorists would throw a grenade inside if they managed to create a hole in the bulletproof window. Though Adi's father was ultimately killed, it was a decision that saved the rest of the family.

Outside, Adi saw the bodies of those executed,

and had to physically wrestle her children away from the terrorists. "I wasn't thinking, because they could have easily shot me or separated us. They did that in many cases," she said. "It was instinct." Together with her children, her mother, aunt, and young cousin, Adi was held in an apartment in Gaza. They were forced to whisper only, a habit Yahel battled to break after their release in November 2023.

"We were in extreme danger 24/7," Adi said. "I was awake every night of the 50 nights we were held, feeling it was my job to keep my children alive until we were back home." When they were released, Adi and the children's nightmare continued as Shoham remained a hostage for almost a year and a half.

"The most painful thing was the terror of uncertainty," Adi said. "The children knew where Tal was, they knew the danger he was facing every day. For all this time, they had to carry this awareness and the uncertainty of whether their father was dead or alive."

Shoham said his children, now nine and five, have grown up fast. "After everything they went through, I feel like we have two teenagers," he said. "They know how cruel life and people can be, but on the other hand, Adi managed to keep them children."

Adi, a psychologist herself, said that since 7 October, she's felt the power of the Jewish community, worldwide, the comfort of knowing they aren't alone. "The community has a DNA of morals, of not leaving brothers behind," she said.

Though she has never met David, she feels like she knows him. "Seeing him like this has broken us, and we feel like we cannot stay quiet," she said. She urged the community to speak out about the horrors David and the remaining hostages are facing. "It feels like we're sitting on the beach watching a person drown," she said.

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Jewish Report

Hypocrisy – food for thought

Last week, President Cyril Ramaphosa stood up at a Liberations Movement Summit to proclaim that he was “particularly horrified by the deliberate starvation” of Palestinians in Gaza at the hands of “apartheid Israel”. Astonishing how this week, he and his government leaders said absolutely nothing about the Hamas horror videos showing two skeletal young hostages, Evyatar David and Rom Braslavski. No comment. No showing of the videos. No declaration of horror at how people who are being held hostage can be treated like this. Nothing!

I find it astonishing how a country that claims to be proudly humanitarian can be so hypocritical when it comes to who it stands up for and who it doesn't. I totally agree that when people are being starved, it is absolutely unacceptable. It should never happen. It should not be happening in South Africa. It should not be happening in South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Mali, or Yemen. Yet it does.

Up to 20 million South Africans do not have adequate nutritious food, according to 2024 figures from SA Harvest, with millions of children going to bed hungry every night. Approximately 27% of children under the age of five in South Africa suffer from malnutrition, which leads to stunting and other developmental issues.

According to research done earlier this year by Mark Heywood, the adjunct professor at the University of Cape Town, and Busiso Moyo, a postdoctoral researcher at University of the Western Cape, at least 15 million South Africans suffer from food insecurity, meaning they don't have enough nutritious food to live healthy lives. They maintain that more than 1 000 South African children die of malnutrition every year. This they compare to the 350 child deaths from malnutrition annually in Brazil, with three times the population.

This is catastrophic, not least of all because we certainly have sufficient food in this country, and we are not living in a war zone. Food simply isn't getting to those in dire need, and tonnes and tonnes of it is being wasted. And yet the South African Bill of Rights clearly states that every person has a right to sufficient food and water.

However, our president is clearly way more concerned about Gazans than he is about his own people. When will we hear him say that he is “particularly horrified” at the number of his own people starving or dying of malnutrition? Or aren't South African lives important enough?

I have to say, again, while I find our president's sanctimonious behaviour unacceptable, I do not believe that any starvation is acceptable. I do not want any Gazans to starve, especially not children. G-d forbid! It is a fundamental human right to have food to eat, and the world needs to ensure that people don't starve.

But my anger is at how the world, and our own president and the mainstream media, is screaming and shouting about Gazans who are going hungry, but utterly ignore the Israeli hostages who are being systematically starved to death. The video images of Evyatar and Rom are horrifying. They are mere skeletons at death's door. This is so obvious.

You would imagine that their captors would be loathe for the world to see what they have done to human beings, but oh no, to the contrary. They sent these videos to Israel to gloat and show Israelis what they have done to their brethren and sons.

To me, that's the mark of a monster or a terrorist. Someone who uses other human lives simply to achieve their objectives. They cannot and do not see their humanity.

Now, I know our haters believe that Israel does that, but that isn't true. Can I explain exactly why there is hunger in Gaza? No, I cannot. I can't tell you whether, in fact, there is actual starvation either. There clearly seems to be a problem with sufficient food getting to all parts of Gaza, and it does look as if all attempts are being made to sort this out. Unfortunately, the information that is coming out of Gaza and being used in media cannot be trusted because it is being put out by Hamas. I say that, knowing full well that the media around the world is treating Hamas's information as gospel.

I do understand that international media is not allowed access into Gaza and so there is no credible journalism coming out of this war zone. Having said that, while international media is chomping at the bit to go into Gaza, Israel has been blamed for killing 200 journalists in the very same place. So, exactly who was killed and by whom? Were there really 200 trained journalists killed, or were these Hamas operatives? The information about the so-called journalists emanates from – you got it – Hamas. I wish I knew the truth!

In the way that Hamas sent out those horrific gloating videos this week of Rom and Evyatar, they did the same on 7 October, showing how they mutilated, raped, burnt alive, and terrorised Israelis. They documented the horror they perpetrated in Israel, and then the world took Hamas's side and conveniently denied the horror the terrorists wrought.

To this day, women's rights activists around the world have not stood by their Israeli sisters who were brutalised. Yet there was documented proof because the terrorists wanted the world to know what they had done.

It works in Hamas's favour for the world to believe Israel is starving Gazans. It ensures the world condemns Israel and sides with Hamas. It is just astonishing that the world cannot see that it is supporting a terrorist organisation which is blatantly using its own people to further its aim to destroy Israel and eradicate Jews.

While Hamas may be throwing out many lies, it has never denied its ultimate goal, namely to rid Israel of Jews from the river to the sea. Wake up! While Israel is far from perfect, Hamas is a terrorist organisation! Would that our president could see that.

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

Apologies
Last week gremlins got into our print edition and while we had signed off the corrected version, one page that had already been changed earlier in the day got into the newspaper. We are doing our best to ensure that never happens again.



Feeling strong: reframing masculinity and mental health

DANI SACK IN CONVERSATION WITH LEVI MARX

These days, it feels like everyone you know is running a marathon, working on their 5km pace, or joining an early-morning running club. When one of these new runners suddenly feels pain in their knee, or rolls an ankle, the first thing we say to them is, “Have you gone to physio?” It's so obvious to us that when someone is in physical pain, they should take a break and be treated for that pain. So why is it so difficult for us to apply this concept to mental health?

When a teenage boy tumbles on the rugby field and grabs his leg in pain, we gasp and call for a medic. But what if that same rugby boy came onto the field crying, upset about his performance, or recovering from a fight with a friend? When he complains about anxiety surrounding an upcoming test, or is upset over a painful rejection, can we confidently say that we'd have the same level of concern? Would we recommend that he talk about his emotions or go to therapy with the same eagerness we would insist that he visit a physio?

Mental health for men and boys is often treated like a swear word. There are myriad stereotypical tropes that perpetuate this issue, namely, “Boys don't cry”; “Be a man”; “Real men are tough, assertive, strong.” The list is endless. Each one tells boys and men that they cannot be emotional, vulnerable, or sensitive, and that any sign of this is a sign of weakness. Mental health has been positioned as something for the broken or weak, and has been made taboo for the strong, indestructible man that every boy is supposed to grow into.



But what if this wasn't the case? What if mental health was reframed as mental fitness, something that requires professional support to obtain and hone? Nobody questions why a man would want a personal trainer to work on his physical fitness goals, but they might look at you strangely if you mention going to therapy for assistance in maintaining your mental health. That needs to change, and that change starts at the beginning.

For most people, the first time we struggle with mental health is in high school. High school is daunting for all teenagers in one way or another. High school presents social anxiety about fitting in, making friends, or being popular. However, we often brush this aside in the case of boys. “They're boys,” we say, “give them a ball, and they'll make friends easily”.

If two boys get into a fight, we say, “They'll give each other a punch or a smack, and the fight will be over.” We end up undermining the struggles that teenage boys go through at school by pigeonholing them. We reduce manhood to sport and physical strength, negating the spectrum of personality, hobbies, and qualities through which so many men and boys are characterised. We allow no space for talking through their emotions; their

struggles with making friends; or not fitting into the stereotypes they've been boxed into. Many teenage boys feel that they cannot be anything other than “okay”, and don't feel that they can talk about their mental-health struggles with their peers or male friends.

When they struggle with performance in school or on the sports field, the enormous amount of pressure that these teenage boys are under is often overlooked. They are expected to be tough and just get on with it. In reality, it's not that men don't feel, it's that for so long, it's been assumed that feeling any sadness or pain meant not being strong, when in fact the opposite is true. Real strength lies in feeling pain, joy, and everything in between, in owning every emotion.

We need to reframe this. Men and boys should be able to feel comfortable to talk about their mental-health struggles openly and honestly. As a community and society, we need to take active steps to foster a culture that allows for men not to be okay, and gives them the support they need to maintain a healthy mind. There are already some platforms in place that are taking the necessary steps to destigmatise male mental health.

OurSpace is a new initiative from Hatzolah Connect. It aims to create spaces to teach and work on social-emotional learning, providing weekly sessions where students are encouraged to feel, reflect, and champion their sense of mental and emotional fitness. It's through initiatives like OurSpace that we begin fostering a

narrative around mental health characterised by the same qualities we attribute to physical fitness: strength, resilience, commitment, and consistent growth and development. This is the narrative that schools and youth movements should work to maintain and develop. Because like physical fitness, mental fitness for men and boys is something

attainable. We can't expect our boys to be the best rugby players, top of their class, a world-changing leader, and a future chief executive without giving them the necessary support, help, and love to get them there.

Talking about running marathons doesn't get you anywhere, running does. So it's not about big talk, it's about action. The mental-health assemblies and social media campaigns are powerful, but they amount to nothing if we don't commit to instilling a culture centred on destigmatising the conversation about mental health for men and boys. We are just at the beginning of the journey towards healthy masculinity, but much like a marathon, we can't expect to achieve it without dedication and hard work. Let's get to it.

- *Dani Sack holds a degree in organisational and industrial psychology from the University of the Witwatersrand, and is the programme co-ordinator for Diller Teen Fellows Johannesburg.*
- *Levi Marx is a third-year psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the mind behind OurSpace, a new Hatzolah Connect initiative.*



War, what war? Israel’s economy unscathed by conflict

OPINION

BARUCH THE BALANCED



Since 7 October 2023, Israel has been fighting multiple wars. Amazingly, its economy still looks relatively unscathed. An article in the *Financial Times*, published on 14 July, highlighted some amazing statistics:

- After the 7 October attacks, although it took an initial major knock, the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange recovered quickly in the space of four weeks and since then, is up almost 80% in dollar terms. It’s now one of the best performing major stock markets in the world – ignoring smaller markets like Vietnam. This amazing rise continued throughout the 12-day war with Iran, with the market obviously having faith that the conflict would be short, with Israel prevailing. As the *Financial Times* states, “Despite all the international criticism of Israel for its military offensives, a surge in foreign buying has fuelled the rally in its stock market”;
- Although it was an extremely poor country when it was founded in 1948 and went through multiple financial crises all the way until the early 1990s, Israel is one of the few countries to have risen from developing to developed ranks. Only 40 out of 200 countries are classified by the International Monetary Fund as developed countries, and Israel is the only country in the Middle East to have achieved this change. In addition, its \$550 billion (R9.9 trillion) economy is among the largest 30 in the world, and bigger than countries such as South Africa and European countries such as Greece and Denmark;
- Israel now spends more than 6% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development, more than any other country, and double the global average. What’s interesting is that a high share – about 50% – of that research and development funding comes from foreign multinationals, many involved in defence-related industries. Their work helped create the Iron Dome and interceptor rockets that have been so successful in defending Israel against missiles and drones in recent wars;
- Very importantly, a positive by-product of all the defence-related spending on research and practical innovation is that Israel has become a global leader in fields as diverse as air-traffic control to, most significantly, cyber security. It has more start-ups per head than any other country, and, as the *Financial Times* article states, it has 73 start-ups in the booming field of generative artificial intelligence, the third largest in the world, with half of its exports being technology products. Even most advanced economies can’t match this, and, of course, most of its neighbours in the Middle East still export mainly oil and gas, and very little of anything hi-tech;
- The shekel has been similarly strong. The US dollar/Israeli shekel exchange rate closed at 3.3988 to the US dollar on 1 August 2025, up 0.22% from the previous session. Although, over the past month, the shekel has weakened 0.94% against the dollar, as have most countries’ currencies against a stronger dollar, it’s still up by 10.15% over the past 12 months;

But possibly the most important statistic is Israel’s per capita GDP. According to recent statistics, Israel’s nominal per capita GDP was more than \$57 000 higher than that of Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. It has nearly tripled since 2000, and only Qatar in the Middle East has a higher GDP per capita. The United Arab Emirates is lower, at just less than \$50 000, with Saudi Arabia, the biggest economy in the Middle East, a lot lower at just more than \$30 000. These statistics, together with economists now projecting Israel’s growth rate at almost 4% in the next few years, are almost miraculous for a nation that has endured



– and is still enduring – so much war and destruction since 7 October. However, all of these impressive statistics come with a caveat. If the European Union and many other countries start imposing sanctions on Israel, given its strained diplomatic position, it will undoubtedly be a game changer, and put much of Israel’s impressive financial achievements over the past quarter of a century at severe risk. *Baruch The Balanced is an attorney who can’t be named for professional reasons, but who also studied both politics and international relations at university.*

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‘October 7 changed everything,’ says outgoing Israeli diplomat

PETA KROST

As Israeli Embassy *chargée d'affaires* Adi Cohen Hazanov flies home to Israel from South Africa this week, she leaves a changed person. “It’s hard to think of life before October 7. It was like nothing mattered before then,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* just days before her three-year tenure ended. She arrived in South Africa three years ago in September 2022 as deputy ambassador to work with Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky, who was then recalled to Israel in November 2023.

we love. With all that, we moved into action. Nothing else mattered. We focused on supporting the efforts of our country, including doing all we could do to bring back the hostages. “We talked to whoever we could, and with every door that was closed to us, we opened a window. And to every person who said they didn’t want to talk to us, I said, ‘Okay, so give me someone who does want to talk to us,’” she said. When people came to her to ask the truth of what they were seeing and hearing in the media, she would do what she could to reflect what was happening in Israel to

so important. “I believe there will come a time when we will have a mature conversation, however the claim of genocide at the ICJ (International Court of Justice) and comparing Israel to other dark regimes is unacceptable,” she said. “Those kinds of comparisons undermine the trauma both our nations have experienced, and it’s political abuse of the term ‘genocide’. We will not accept being accused of genocide or endure the blood libels that have been made on the backs of our soldiers.” However, Cohen Hazanov still hopes there will be a chance to balance the story or have access to the policymakers and people who have the power to influence the situation so that they can understand Israel’s perspective.

After the ambassador was recalled, Cohen Hazanov said, the embassy didn’t stop working for a minute. “Our team here worked day and night with dedication to try and reflect the real situation and open up chances for conversation where we could. Fortunately, there were people willing to listen and understand. However, they weren’t necessarily able to do it in the open.” She said her place had already been taken up by Ariel Seidman, who hit the ground running with a team that has the same values and commitment she does. “He is an excellent, experienced diplomat,” Cohen Hazanov said.

“The kind of person who sits in this chair needs to have a thick skin and lots of patience and willingness to work hard and learn a lot. The amount I learned here about Africa, the people of this country, and so much else has been a big silver lining for me,” she said. “I loved my time here, and don’t really want to leave. This is my second home and the place my youngest was born. The Jewish community has been so good to me. They are like family. It seems when we were low on power, the community would have power to support us, and vice versa. It has been an incredible give-and-take relationship.”

Cohen Hazanov said that unlike most diplomats who have come from Israel, she hasn’t been able to travel for fun. “I must be the only one who hasn’t had time to do the Garden Route. I have just been so busy.” So, going back to Israel, she’s looking forward to having time to “breathe and get my Israeli blood flowing again” before going to Jerusalem to support the jobs other diplomats are doing.

“I’ll miss the South African people so much. They are astonishingly kind, and giving, warm, patient, and full of respect and curiosity. “I leave here with so many diplomatic lessons and new tools, and have learned how to be more creative in getting things done. My husband now needs his time to get back to business, and my parents won’t be keen for me to take their grandchildren away again,” she said. “But South Africa will stay in my heart always.”



Adi Cohen Hazanov and her husband Kosta at her farewell

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

“I thought my time here would be challenging and different to what I experienced in Lithuania, but I had no idea how much,” she said of her previous assignment, where she was deputy head of the mission and consul in Vilnius. Cohen Hazanov said she loved working with Belotsercovsky. “He is the best diplomat I could work with. He is a real *mensch*. We worked well together, and we had brilliant projects and cultural events.” Despite being recalled, Belotsercovsky continued his role as ambassador to South Africa in Israel, while Cohen Hazanov held the fort from here.

Before 7 October, as she expected, relations were complicated in South Africa, and the embassy was doing whatever it could to put Israel’s side across. Fortunately, it had many wins, Cohen Hazanov said, but then came 7 October and, “besides the personal trauma that all of us experienced, it just changed everything.” “Each of us had our own baggage, with friends on the frontline and their spouses alone at home; our families in safe rooms; and us being so far away from everyone

on doing what we are doing for and with our friends in South Africa.” She admits that there have been many frustrations, not least of all trying to give journalists, politicians, and others the opportunity to see Israel for themselves and show them why it is doing what it is doing. However, because of the entrenched false narrative, those who are interested are prevented from being able to see for themselves, Cohen Hazanov said.

“The sad thing is that we know the huge potential for both countries in communicating and hearing each other,” she said. “On both sides, there are people who really believe that with better communication, there would be better co-operation. “South Africa isn’t the first country to disagree with Israel on many things, but it’s the only country that won’t try to communicate and discuss these issues. We don’t have a problem with critical relationships, we have those with most of the Arab countries, but we work within this complex situation.”

She reiterates how South Africa, as the “rainbow nation”, is a perfect example of why communication is

King David Victory Park’s future uncertain

>>>Continued from page 1

extraordinary transformation. Around the world, technology is reshaping how we learn, connect, and grow. Education is being reimagined, community life is evolving, and the old boundaries – of geography, of identity, of access – are being redrawn. In that spirit, we aren’t just proposing consolidating, we are potentially boldly re-envisioning.

“It is a proposal of courage, of clarity, and of commitment to ensuring that our children inherit a Jewish future that is not just preserved, but propelled.”

“We are asking for trust – in our leadership, our values, and in our shared commitment to Jewish education. If implemented, this will be done with and for the community, not to it,” stressed Seeff.

The warmth and uniqueness of the KDVP campus cannot be overstated. For decades, its spirit has been its strength – a deeply nurturing culture, a strong sense of belonging, and fierce loyalty from parents and students alike.

This is illustrated by the fact that Victory Park families, on average, travel further to reach their school than any other King David campus. “They choose Victory Park,” said Seeff. “That loyalty is profound, and the sense of potential loss is real.”

But the SABJE has committed to ensuring that should

the move go ahead, the heart of Victory Park – its culture, values, and its magic – will live on in the new entity. Legacy traditions, staff retention, and cultural continuity will be prioritised should the decision be implemented. Importantly, all efforts will be made to ensure that no student feels displaced, and that transitions would be as smooth and emotionally supported as possible.

There is particular sensitivity around the current Grade 11 group, which will become the matric class of 2026. Rabbi Seeff was with this group in Grade 1 during his tenure as principal of Victory Park Primary, and his connection to them runs deep.

“These are my kids,” he said, visibly moved. “I’ve watched them grow from six-year-olds to teenagers. In the event of closure, they will not be asked to leave something behind, they will be being ask to carry it forward. They’ll help shape the future.”

This proposed model, the SABJE says, will unlock scale, resources, subject diversity, sporting competitiveness, and robust Jewish identity, all while preserving the spirit that has made King David an iconic brand in South African Jewish life.

“This is not about what may be closing, it’s about what we could be opening – a new chapter, new beginning, and a new opportunity,” he said.

While the pain is undeniable in the event of closure,

so too is the resolve.

“This is the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do,” Seeff said. “But it’s also the most important. Should we decide to close, we will then lay the foundation for something extraordinary, not just for today’s students, but for the generations still to come.”

Board Chairperson Alan Joffe said, “We see this proposal as the most effective path forward to uphold the sustainability and continued excellence of the King David schools. Arriving at this proposal has been incredibly difficult, shaped by heartfelt reflection and an unwavering commitment to our community. Yet we believe, with conviction, that this proposal should ultimately serve the greater good, ensuring that future generations continue to thrive within an environment rooted in Jewish values and educational distinction.”

Echoing this sentiment, Board member and KDVP alumnus, Lesley-Anne Gatter, said that though the potential closure of the school was “deeply felt”, commitment to the children’s future remained strong.

“I’ve seen how this beautiful school has shaped minds, resilience, and belonging, qualities that will serve our students well, always. This is also a unique opportunity to reimagine how our broader school system can best prepare every child for a changing world.”

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Conversation

ISRAEL AND CURRENT AFFAIRS



Irwin Manoim
Is Empathy Still
Possible? Navigating
Humanity in the
Israel-Palestine
Debate

Israeli Journalist
The Tipping
Point of
October 7th



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Ittay Flescher
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HISTORY AND HOLOCAUST



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TORAH AND TEXT



Yuval Cherlow
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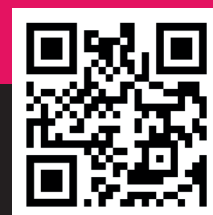
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Female leaders suited to modern workplace

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

As Women's Day approaches with a flurry of female-empowerment messaging, it's clear that for many women, the glass ceiling is firmly intact. Yet, though challenges like imposter syndrome and lingering gender stereotypes persist, tapping into their unique brand of leadership can help set women apart in today's workplace.

Women may lead differently to men, says Yael Rosen, an organisational psychologist and the co-founder of outsourced human resources company Ferva, but ultimately, their leadership style comes down to nuance and context.

"There are clear trends in how women and men tend to lead, shaped by their life experiences; how they are socialised; and what's expected of them. Women often lead with more empathy, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional awareness. Men may lean more toward directness, assertiveness, and decisive execution. These are patterns, not rules, and often we find the best leaders are able to tap into the different traits across the board."

Moreover, she says, leadership isn't only about gender but about the environment in which the person leads. "The culture of a business; its level of diversity; its history; its current challenges; and the types of people within it all influence the kind of leadership needed. The most effective leaders know how to bring forward the right strengths at the right time."

Debby Edelstein, the founder of QualityLife Company, a global leadership coaching consultancy, and the co-author of *Unapologetically Her: Global perspectives of Women's Triumphs, Strategies and Resilience*, agrees. "The most effective leaders are those who can integrate the best of both worlds: strength with empathy; clarity with collaboration; strategic thinking with emotional intelligence."

Though she acknowledges that there are certain patterns of women's leadership, Edelstein cautions against reinforcing gender stereotypes around leadership. "We don't generalise about how men lead, we recognise a range of leadership styles," she says. "So why do we expect a single narrative about how women lead? If we're serious about fostering more representative leadership, especially in the face of a global leadership crisis, we can't afford to exclude half the world's population."

Reeva Forman, the founder of one of South Africa's leading cosmetics companies, Reeva Beauty & Health, has a career spanning decades. She also argues against conforming to and applying gender stereotypes, especially when your career doesn't progress as expected.

"Let's not jump to conclusions based on stereotypical thinking," she says. "There's always an exception to the rule. The curse of our day is creating our own self-fulfilling prophecies." So, instead of blaming a male boss's anti-female bias or a female boss's jealousy when you're not promoted, look at what you could do differently or where they're coming from. "Put yourself in the other person's mindset. What would you want from an employee if you were the employer?"

The glass ceiling isn't only an issue pertaining to women, she says. "It exists in many different minds today, those who may be physically impaired or anyone who sells themselves short and thinks, 'I cannot do this' for whatever reason. In fact, most women in this era take their ability to achieve, their major goals and dreams as a given."

Hayley Gillman, the founder and chief executive of the Business Optimization Training Institute, which services more than 800 clients and more than 10 000 delegates around the world, argues that both female and male leaders have strengths and weaknesses. "Women often have more finely tuned interpersonal skills, which are essential for a leader. However, we can sometimes be overly emotional, which could potentially cloud our judgement when making crucial business decisions."

Despite the progress she's observed in larger corporations, Gillman believes that the glass ceiling persists, particularly in smaller companies. Yet she argues that women often also stand in their own way.



Hayley Gillman

"Women's biggest threat and barrier to progressing to top levels of management is pervasive imposter syndrome. We need to start believing and owning our truth – that we are equally, and sometimes even more, competent and skilled than our male counterparts in performing specific job functions."

While both women and men have valuable leadership traits, Rosen says those most associated with women are often undervalued. "Empathy, inclusion, and collaborative problem-solving aren't nice-to-haves, they are critical leadership skills in 2025."

So rather than looking at generalised gender differences and deciding which style is preferable, it's best to ask what kind of leadership the world needs, she says. "In today's world, where trust, inclusion, collaboration, and adaptability are essential, many traits associated with feminine leadership are incredibly

valuable."

However, women are often penalised for these critical traits, says Rosen, when, "empathy is mistaken for softness; collaboration gets mistaken for indecision; and assertiveness gets punished instead of praised."

She argues that though the glass ceiling lingers, with fewer women than men in senior leadership roles and a persistent and systemic payment gap, it also manifests differently in the modern workplace. "It's no longer just about overt exclusion. Today, it's more subtle and often harder to name, but just as limiting. "It shows up as being left out of informal networks where real influence happens. It's not being considered 'ready' for



Yael Rosen

promotion without clear feedback, or being asked to jump through multiple hoops. It's having to overprove competence in ways that aren't expected of male peers. It's facing bias in performance reviews. And it's managing leadership responsibilities while also, for many, juggling the full weight of carrying the primary responsibility at home, a significant emotional and logistical load that often goes unacknowledged."

This often leads to burnout and exhaustion, Edelstein says. She also speaks of workplace dynamics like the "double bind" where women leaders, for example, have to balance being likeable with being competent, something not expected from men.

"There's still a long way to go for organisations – especially for those in senior leadership roles – to create the conditions for more women to rise and to thrive in senior positions," says Rosen. "It's not just about making space. It's about truly enabling women to lead with strength, without having to sacrifice themselves in the process."

The lonely load of single parenting

GILANA LAB

Doing it on your own is near impossible, educational therapist Dr Elzette Fritz told the audience at a talk on single parenting by the Chevrah Kadisha on 30 July. That's why you need a good support structure to survive and thrive.

Fritz said there is the perception that people become single parents either because they are divorced, or their partner is dead or absent due to illness. But sometimes they take on solo responsibility simply because their partner is absent in general.

"We have this perception that a single-parent household entails one parent because there was either death or divorce," she said. "What we don't realise is that sometimes people can be married, there can be another partner under the same roof, but one person still carries the responsibility of maintaining the household and raising the children."

Fritz compared a single parent to a dung beetle rolling around a ball of dung on its own while another beetle just watched. "When I saw this, many lights went on in my head. Because the reality is that we're all somewhere in life finding ourselves busy rolling. Sometimes we get stuck in it."

"In nature, even dung beetles take turns," said Fritz. "But for many single parents, it feels like you're the only one pushing the load, and that load isn't always healthy. The challenge is learning to work with it, to transform the mess into something useful, like turning dung into fertiliser. That's the work of single parenting," she said.

"But here's the hard truth: doing it completely on your own is nearly impossible. We're not meant to carry it all alone. Having a support system isn't a luxury, it's a necessity when you're raising children alone," she said.

"The most detrimental factor is isolation. Without a support structure, when your child is struggling and triggers you, there's no-one to help you pause and take a deep breath. That's why kids benefit from having two caregivers so that when one is overwhelmed, the other can

step in and create balance."

When it comes to the mental health of a parent, Fritz emphasised that self-care isn't optional, it's essential. "If you're raising children alone and have no-one to lean on, you simply can't afford to collapse," she said.

To help parents regulate themselves in moments when they are overwhelmed, Fritz demonstrated a simple grounding exercise: while seated, use the armrests to lift your body slightly off the chair, hold for a moment, then gently lower yourself back down.

"As you lower yourself, you begin to feel grounded," she said. "For those of us who had a tough adolescence, it's about building the strength not to lash out, but to stay regulated. This kind of movement shifts your breathing, engages your core, and even helps release feel-good hormones. It's a small act of strength that



can change your emotional state in the moment. "It's like a mini workout – once you've done it, you're better able to face your child again," said Fritz. "Your body plays a vital role in

building emotional capacity. But when we feel overwhelmed, our instinct is to lie down or withdraw. The problem is, the more we do that, the less energy we have to get back up and try again."

Fritz introduced the idea of the "three brains": head (logic); heart (emotion); and gut (intuition/body). "We store trauma in the gut," she said. "It's why stressed children have stomach aches, and why anxious parents forget to breathe."

In an additional experiential segment, she guided the audience through a simple breathing exercise. "Breath is the bridge between the head and the heart. When you breathe deeply, you invite safety into your nervous system." She urged parents to notice their posture, digestion, and breath – signs of whether they're truly "coping" or just functioning.

"Children don't need Disneyland," she said. "They need eye contact. They need calm." She reminded parents that children often act out not to manipulate, but to connect. "Every tantrum is a test: Are you strong enough to hold me in my chaos?"

In one of the most striking metaphors of the evening, Fritz compared parents to rocks. "Your child needs a strong rock to grow next to. But if that rock is too hard – nothing grows. There needs to be a crack. A bit of vulnerability. That's where the tree takes root."

Despite everything, she said, "As long as your child has one environment where they feel loved, safe, and cared for, you are doing more than enough."

However, she said, "Single parenting is hard, not because you're doing it wrong, but because it's hard. You don't need to be superhuman. You need to be supported. You're not broken, you're carrying something incredibly heavy, and you're still showing up. That's resilience."

My F*k, ANC!

Six years ago, South Africa was gifted a national treasure: a shaky cellphone video of Marelize Horn trying to ride a bicycle on an otherwise empty rugby field. Empty, that is, except for the one goalpost she somehow managed to ride directly into.

Her mother's now-iconic expletive, "My f*k, Marelize!" didn't just capture a moment. It captured a mood. It was the soundtrack to our national psyche: frustration, disbelief, and helpless laughter, all packed into a single wheezing gasp.

But what we didn't know then was that Marelize wasn't just a meme, she was a metaphor.

And that the African National Congress (ANC) would become her spiritual successor.

Because if there's one thing the ANC does better than any governing party in the democratic world, it's to find the only obstacle in an open field, charge toward it blindfolded, and crash loudly, while insisting that it was part of a "transformational" agenda.

We can begin with the latest face plant: the failure to secure a trade agreement with the United States. After months of muddling through negotiations, South Africa now faces punitive 30% tariffs, a direct gut punch to exports in agriculture, steel, and automotive manufacturing. Tens of thousands of jobs hang in the balance. The ANC's response? A shrug, a press conference, and a vague promise to "look for other markets".

This didn't come out of nowhere. Washington made its position clear: stop embracing terrorist regimes; stop weaponising international courts for ideological battles, and maybe we'll keep talking.

Instead, the ANC doubled down, rolling out the red carpet for Iran; hosting Hamas delegations in

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Pretoria; and leading the charge to drag Israel to the International Court of Justice for the crime of not lying down in the face of terrorism.

And then they act shocked when the US administration stops taking their calls.

The impact on South Africans is significant. Because while the ANC performs its geopolitical pantomime, the trains don't run; electricity is a part-time service; crime has gone full *Mad Max*; water is rationed, when it arrives; hospitals are death traps; policing is optional; and youth unemployment hovers among the worst in the world.

In three decades, the ANC has not only failed to transform the lives of the disenfranchised, it has turned the country into a dysfunctional playground for corruption, cadre deployment, and empty slogans.

And every time it all goes wrong, it blinks in disbelief, as if the goalpost leapt out at it.

That's where the metaphor ends. Because Marelize was trying to stay upright long enough to become an au pair in the Netherlands. The ANC, meanwhile, is hellbent on steering South Africa into diplomatic irrelevance and economic ruin. All while waving a victory flag and shouting, "See? We're still upright!"

Except we're not. The ANC has hit the goalpost. Repeatedly. And it has taken the rest of us down with it.

If ever there was a phrase that captured the state of the nation, a slogan for this bizarre, broken moment in our democracy, it's this: *My f*k, ANC!*

SA dancers create a *Hurricane*

LEE TANKLE

With passports in hand and dreams in motion, a group of young Jewish dancers from South Africa stepped onto the global stage, competing in the Global Dance Open in Birmingham in July.

After qualifying in the semi-finals in November 2024 in South Africa, where each dance had to come in the top two of every category and get a score of 75 and above, 11 dancers, nine of whom come from the same studio, rehearsed from morning to night for months to compete among more than 1 500 other finalists from around the globe from 16 to 21 July.

One of the standout performances was a dance to Eden Golan's song *Hurricane*, performed by nine girls from Soul Dance Studio for their first international dance competition: Georgia Dave, 13; Kayla Taurog, 13; Georgia Schmulian, 11; Ashleigh Schmulian, 11; Cassie Nagle, 14; Tyla Civin, 11; Gemima Saven, 11; Micah Medalie, 13; and Kayla Medalie, 14.

"It was nerve-wracking stepping out on that stage, especially because it was my first time," said Dave, "but it was worth it."

Soul Dance Studio choreographer Paige Sundelson said that as soon as she heard *Hurricane* when it was released in 2024, she knew she had to create something to the song. "I looked at what happened on 7 October 2023, and I wanted to express our support for the hostages," she said. "Dance is our way of expressing what we want to convey. That was what *Hurricane* was for all of us."

"I feel the dance brought out my Jewish heritage," said Dave.

"I liked dancing to *Hurricane* because when we danced, it felt like we had Israel in our hearts," said Medalie. "When we danced, we felt connected, not only to each other, but to Israel."

Dave's older sister, Gabi, said that the Israeli dancers were amazed that a team from South Africa was dancing to their song. "It was surprising, especially for team

Israel, to hear that a South African team was dancing to *Hurricane*," said Gabi. When they heard the Hebrew part of the song at the end, their jaws dropped that a South African team, a country that has taken Israel to the International Court of Justice, had kept that part of the song in and danced to it."

Team members were sitting next to some of the Israeli dancers when they won the Junior Hip Hop – Large Crew division, and they jumped up and celebrated with them, waving an Israeli flag.

"When they heard other people – not their parents and teachers – cheering for them, they were confused. We explained that we were Jewish, we loved Israel, and we just sent our love to them. They were taken aback by it," said Gabi.

Similarly, once the Israeli team heard about the dance to *Hurricane*, all the dancers from Israel made sure that they came to watch, taking up three rows of the conference centre.

Said Gabi, who was sitting in the audience, "They were shocked that first of all, we were doing *Hurricane* and kept the Hebrew verse. Throughout the dance, you could hear a pin drop, and at the end, they were screaming and cheering."

The dancers used a large piece of mesh as a prop for the majority of the dance, which filled the entire stage, with dancers going under it and creating movement within it.

"The mesh represents the storm, the loss, and feelings of being buried. The mesh represents our shared pain," said Sundelson.

The team danced morning and night, and often throughout the weekend to make sure that the dance was the best that it could be.

"The competition was at a high level," said Saven. "The classes were hard, but we held our own. We were amazing. There wasn't one part of me that felt that we were below anyone."

Hurricane ultimately scored 83% and came seventh. "It was more than a dance. It was about identity, resilience, being seen, and speaking out," said Sundelson. "It wasn't really about the score or how we placed, it was more about showing the world that we stand with each other, that we want to show that's who we are, and that we're not afraid of who we are."



The SA team dancing in the finals

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Compassion, commemoration, and conferences

It is difficult to keep our community strong, hopeful, and united in the face of a war which elicits such strong emotions. We are also trying to establish truth in the midst of the fog of war. Like everyone I know, I feel a great depth of despair over the war in Gaza. My heart hasn't healed from the 7 October 2023 devastation, and the recent pictures of the hostages and the cruelty they have been subjected to, leaves me, as I have no doubt it leaves you, bereft.

I know you join me in sending love to the hostage families. We cannot imagine the pain they feel, and we wish we could share the burden with them. Most of all, we wish for peace. I also don't avert my eyes from the suffering of innocent Gazans. There's no doubt that humanitarian aid must be increased to end the food shortages. The United Nations must assist with this in ways that ensure that the aid isn't used to prop up Hamas. I hope that we are experiencing the darkness before the dawn, and that soon, a peace deal will be signed so that the hostages can go home and the people of Gaza can find a way to live a better life in peace.

This past week, I had the privilege of addressing the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) conference at Oxford University, a gathering of antisemitism scholars from around the world. The central concept that underscored the ISGAP conference was the idea that the academic response to antisemitism must evolve with integrity and urgency. Through the conference, we worked to build an international academic network committed to combating antisemitism through pedagogy and scholarship.

Topics at the conference included rape denialism; philosophy, hate speech, and the law; conspiracy theory, antisemitism, and contemporary political culture; and Judeophobia and anti-Israelism in global

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



I was honoured to present at the conference, speaking on how South Africa has become "ground zero" for narratives vilifying Israel. I traced the roots of this phenomenon to the 2001 Durban World Conference Against Racism and the decolonisation student movements, which laid tracks in South Africa and then reverberated globally.

This weekend, we commemorate Women's Day, a moment to honour the courage and resilience of about 20 000 women who, in 1956, marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to petition against the oppressive pass laws of the apartheid regime. That historic moment was extraordinary, not only for its scale but for its non-racial character, a bold act of unity in a divided society. The women who stood together, black, white, Indian, and coloured, embodied themes of empowerment, solidarity, and unyielding courage, forging a legacy that continues to inspire.

Yet, 69 years later, in spite of their ongoing contemporary significance, the day's deeper themes of solidarity and empowerment often feel diluted in our celebrations. I recall with pride the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' opportunity to join the surviving marchers in a commemoration a few years ago. Standing alongside those remarkable women, I was struck by the enduring power of their message. Their words, "You strike a woman, you strike a rock," resonated as fiercely today as they did in 1956, a testament to the timeless truth that women's resilience is a cornerstone of societal progress.

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

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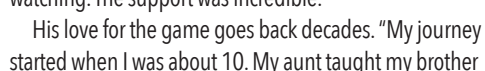
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"I should have won it," Claxton said. "I had one hand on the trophy. I was 16-4 up, then 16-10, then 16-14. It ended 19-17. Nine seconds on the clock. It couldn't have



Claxton hadn't even planned to attend the tournament. "It was a last-minute decision," he said.

Now, Claxton has big plans. "It's been beyond my wildest dreams," he said. "I wasn't even supposed to be there. But now? I think I've put South Africa on the backgammon map."

