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south african Jewish Report

■ Volume 28 – Number 37 ■ 6 November 2025 ■ 15 Cheshvan 5786

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UN expert's censure ends year of anti-Israel invective

NICOLA MILTZ

The Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA's) ruling last month against controversial United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng, has sparked outrage among her supporters while at the same time exposing her apparent anti-Israel bias.

The council found Mofokeng guilty of unprofessional conduct, and fined her R10 000

for "bringing the profession into disrepute" through abusive, racially charged, and profane language on social media. The decision followed a formal complaint by the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) after she used the words "F** you Netanyahu" and "You white man. Evil scum. Voetsek." in online exchanges while serving as a UN mandate holder.

The incendiary social media posts that triggered the complaint date back to early January 2025. In response to news of a Gaza ceasefire postponement

announced by Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mofokeng posted on X: "F** you Netanyahu." A day later, she targeted human rights advocate Hillel Neuer of UN Watch, calling him "evil scum" and "you white man ... voetsek", after he called on the UN to address her conduct. The episode quickly drew international attention, and was widely reported in late January 2025, forming the basis of the complaint later pursued by the SAZF.

According to the HPCSA's official finding, Mofokeng was found to have violated Regulation

4(9) of the Health Professions Act through conduct unbecoming of a medical professional and contrary to the ethical standards of her profession.

The SAZF hailed the ruling as an important affirmation of professional ethics and accountability. "The ruling has sent a clear message: South African professionals who use their platforms to spread hate, racial slurs, or incite hostility will face consequences.

"Professional standing carries a duty to act with impartiality, ethics, and respect for all communities. Those who exploit their status to promote prejudice or hatred undermine not only their own credibility but also the institutions they represent," it said.

Mofokeng's defenders, however, went on the offensive. A lengthy statement signed by activists and academics "as friends and colleagues of the UN mandate" condemned the decision as "spurious", accusing the SAZF of "weaponising complaints procedures" and calling the finding an attack on free expression. The signatories insisted that the HPCSA had "no jurisdiction" over a UN official protected by diplomatic immunity, and alleged that "Zionist supporters ... are using South African institutions to insulate Israel from accountability".

The Economic Freedom Fighters echoed that rhetoric, labelling the ruling "politically motivated" and denouncing the HPCSA for allowing itself to be "weaponised by the apartheid Zionist lobby". The party claimed the sanction represented "a dangerous precedent for professional regulation in South Africa", and warned against "Zionist infiltration" of national bodies.

Amid the backlash, anti-Israel organisations including Healthcare Workers for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Alliance circulated social media posts insisting that the ruling was only "provisional".

The SAZF swiftly corrected the record, releasing the HPCSA's letter dated 16 October 2025 to show that the outcome was final and the penalty already imposed.



Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng

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Elation and consternation at World Zionist Congress

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



South Africans will celebrate South African-born Rabbi Doron Perez, the chairperson of the religious Zionist World Mizrahi movement, having been chosen to be the next chairperson of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) at the 39th World Zionist Congress (WZC) from 28 to 30 October.

Perez's son, Captain Daniel Perez, was killed in battle on 7 October 2023, and his body was kidnapped into Gaza with 250 other Israelis. Rabbi Perez was recently able to bury his son after his body was returned.

However, passionate debate, robust negotiation, and steely determination to secure the Jewish future was the crux of this congress, for which hundreds of delegates from around the world gathered in Jerusalem.

When large groups of Jews with divergent opinions gather, there are inevitably disagreements and even some controversy. At this congress, there was much consternation around the proposed tapping of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's controversial son, Yair, for a senior role at the World Zionist Organization.

Often referred to as the "Parliament of the Jewish people", the congress brings together delegates from

a variety of political factions and unions as well as international Jewish organisations as long as they have accepted the Jerusalem Programme. This defines Zionism as the unity of the Jewish people, the centrality of Israel, and the strengthening of Jewish life globally.

This congress came at a time when disunity is rife among factions, a threat that we as a global community can ill afford. Attempts were made by different factions to try find solutions, a challenge considering that there were fractions within factions like the Likud party.

Yaakov Hagoel, a Likudnik who has chaired the WZO for the past five years and Benjamin Netanyahu have a strained relationship. It was while parties were trying to find solutions that would result in agreement on appointments at key Zionist institutions and a new arrangement for the leadership of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish National Fund-Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael that Culture Minister Miki Zohar put forward Yair Netanyahu for a role.

To say this caused upset is an understatement. The young Netanyahu is a highly controversial figure, derided among many in Israel for his social media activity, which is often inflammatory. Netanyahu would reportedly receive a comfortable position, with a car and other perks. Netanyahu "wanted to be involved in advocacy". The plenary erupted into a shouting match, and factions moved to suspend the congress. This effectively torpedoed the unity agreement and the voting, which was suspended until earlier this week. Delegates had to vote remotely.

In the end, the proposal was dropped, and factions reached an agreement that still requires the approval of

the leadership of Zionist institutions.

Halfway through Perez's five-year term as chairperson, Hagoel, the current chairperson, will replace him. Leadership of the Jewish National Fund-KKL would remain as previously agreed. Yesh Atid MK Meir Cohen

Rabbi Doron Perez was elected chairperson of the World Zionist Organization



would serve as the next chairperson of the Jewish National Fund-KKL.

When Theodor Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, did he envision this? The WZC serves as the legislative authority of the WZO. After the founding of the modern state of Israel, the WZC still maintains importance in the Jewish world. It's here where important strategic decisions are made including determining policies and leadership for key Zionist institutions for the next five years. Many have opined over the years whether the WZC still has relevance, and the robust discussions and sense of

urgency on a number of important issues proves that the congress still has importance in Jewish life.

It's at the WZC where voting will decide where much needed budget will be allocated, especially at this crucial time in Jewish history, where antisemitism is at record high levels around the world and the modern iteration of this ancient hatred manifests as anti-Zionism.

Israel has endured two years of war, and there are still eight deceased hostages whose remains are being held by Hamas. This was certainly felt in the mood and discourse at sessions. It's a fight for limited resources, and political movement behind the scenes often determines who gets the bigger slice of the pie.

The WZC is a democratic assembly. Representation is divided between Israel (38%); the United States (29%); and other diaspora countries (33%). It was noticeable that there was a lot more diversity of representation and a higher number of young delegates this year.

Speaking to fellow delegates, I heard firsthand the fear and concern many feel about rising antisemitism in their countries and what kind of future their communities have. Some delegates expressed frustration at the focus of resolutions on antisemitism in the US at the expense of other communities facing threats to their safety. It's imperative that the WZO doesn't focus just on the US despite its size and financial contribution. It would be more productive to funnel less budget into political factions and more into organisations that are "doing" Zionism, including through education.

The Zionists converged on Jerusalem, and proved that more than 100 years later, Herzl's dream is still as strong as ever.

• Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.

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Torah Thought



Rabbi Ryan Goldstein
Muizenberg Shul

Akeda twist challenges paradigm

I have been learning about the *parsha* of the week since I was a kid, first at Shaarei Torah Primary school in Yeoville, continuing at Torah Academy. My teachers held me and my classmates spell-bound with these fascinating stories. Granted, this was at a time when the alternatives were *Wielie Walie* and Atari tennis. But what still fascinates me more than 40 years later is the fact that every week, I discover something in the *parsha* that I have never heard before.

I challenge you to have a similar experience with any other book. How many times can you read *Harry Potter* and discover a new idea that you never thought of before? How many years can you study Shakespeare and find a novel concept that really blows your mind?

This week's *parsha* deals with the *Akeda*, the Binding of Yitzchak. Not only do we read it every year in the *parsha*, it's the *leining* for the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

I always learnt that Hashem was testing Avraham, and that it was his most formidable test among the other nine he was subjected to. I also learnt that Avraham passed with flying colours.

However, a few weeks ago, I heard an amazing shiur by Rabbi Efraim Palvanov that suggested that Avraham actually failed the test!

Because of the *Akeda*, Sarah, Avraham's beloved wife, dies. Surely this was an indication that something went wrong?

Also, Avraham was 137 years old at the time of the *Akeda*, and he died at the age of 175. In those almost 40 years, isn't it strange that Hashem doesn't speak to him ever again and the Torah doesn't record any conversations between him and his son, Yitzchak, after this incident. Avraham merely returns to Be'er Sheva to live out the rest of his life.

Rabbi Palvanov explains that Avraham's "mistake" was that when Hashem asked him to perform an act of human sacrifice, which was quite in-vogue, Avraham should have challenged Hashem. He was no stranger to putting right the

moral bankruptcy of his time. When Hashem informed him about the destruction of Sodom, Avraham challenged Hashem and tried to save as many lives as he could. Avraham stands as the voice of morality for the world. But when Hashem asked him to do the most deplorable thing, Avraham didn't fight, he didn't argue, he merely acquiesced. Avraham missed the opportunity to tell the world that G-d wants you to live for Him, and not be a martyr. Service to Hashem can never be a death-cult.

I was fascinated by this concept, and enjoyed the mental challenge of trying to digest something that shifted my paradigm and decades long thinking.

The lesson here for me is: don't stop learning. Don't stop discovering the beautiful lessons of the Torah, and don't stop questioning and challenging a perceived wrong. If you upgrade your cell phone every year, why not upgrade your Torah knowledge every year as well.

Shabbat shalom.

Shabbat Times

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Outrage and suspicion over Irma Stern Museum closure

CLAUDIA GROSS

The sudden closure of the Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town has ignited outrage across the South African arts community, with campaigners accusing the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Irma Stern Trust of secrecy, mismanagement, and neglect of a national treasure.

Heritage researcher Phillippa Duncan said the decision had "left people angry and deeply suspicious".

"Staff were removed from the museum without clarity about their future, the public was kept in the dark, and



In the Irma Stern Museum

the official announcement came only after pressure," she said. "There's been a complete lack of transparency."

Art historian and specialist art writer Robyn Sassen described the closure as "a crying shame".

"The South African arts community is alive and vibrant, and an announcement that the museum would close the next day effectively silences all dialogue and possible help," Sassen said. "The explanations we have been offered are insufficient. It seems like my generation is leaving the arts in hands which don't care for this country's heritage."

Many believe that the decision, framed by UCT as an administrative and logistical step, represents something deeper, the quiet dismantling of an irreplaceable part of South Africa's cultural identity.

On 30 October 2025, UCT and the Irma Stern Trust issued a joint statement confirming the end of their 56-year partnership managing the museum. Stern's collection will be moved to a secure storage facility, and her former home, The Firs, will be repurposed.

The statement called the change "not an ending, but a renewal" and promised "exciting plans" in 2026 to

showcase Stern's work "in new ways that will engage an even wider audience".

UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Elelwani Ramugondo said in the statement that the university was "proud to have been a custodian of Irma Stern's legacy for decades", and looked forward to "seeing her work reach new audiences in innovative and more impactful ways".

Dianna Yach, the chairperson of the Irma Stern Museum Committee, is quoted in the statement as saying that the decision "opens new doors for audiences to encounter her art and be inspired by the passion and curiosity that defined her life's work". Yet for many, the closure was far from inspiring.

Duncan, who completed her master's research on the mismanagement of Stern's legacy, said the process appeared to unfold behind closed doors. "I put two and two together already in January 2024," she said. "There was an email from UCT and the museum praising the university's arts work on Upper Campus, and announcing that the museum's interim director had been seconded there full time. That was the first red flag."

She said she later learned that UCT's Council had approved the termination of its 1969 agreement with the Trust on 18 October 2025 but delayed the announcement. "I was told the Council had already ratified the decision and that the press release sat on the vice-chancellor's desk for two weeks," she said. "During that time, museum staff were reassigned elsewhere with no explanation."

According to Duncan, the public announcement came only

because "UCT was cornered by media attention. If it hadn't been pushed into a corner by my interview on Cape Talk, I believe we'd be hearing about the closure only now," she said.

Duncan said there was little chance for the public to visit the museum before it closed. "I'd love for someone from UCT to come out and say they wanted to give people a moment to say goodbye," she said. "But the reality is that most people had one day, Friday 31 October, to see a space that's been part of Cape Town's cultural life for 60 years."

Attempts by the *SA Jewish Report* to engage UCT further were met with references to already published statements. The university said it was in the process of internal communication on the matter and couldn't speak to the press at this stage.

Duncan said the closure is the culmination of decades of underfunding and missed opportunities. "There has never been any proper attempt from either UCT or the Trust to bring funds into that space that would sustain it for the future," she said.

She said UCT's policies prevented the museum from

fundraising independently. "UCT would say, we support you in fundraising, but you can't approach our existing funders because then you're taking money away from us," she said.

She also cited a lost restoration offer. "About 15 years ago, Qatari donors offered to fund a full restoration," she said. "UCT blocked it because the donors would pay into an account only in the name of the Irma Stern Museum, and that account has never existed." Even the museum's entry fees were misallocated, she said. "If you paid your R65 ticket, that money went into a student-fees account."

The building, which dates to 1842, has also suffered from long-term neglect. "Old houses need airflow," she said. "In its current state, it hasn't liked being locked up with no ventilation for a very long time."

Duncan said that warnings about damp and deterioration had been raised repeatedly since the 1960s. "When Johannes du Plessis Scholtz examined the collection after Irma's death, he was already noting damage from damp and oxidation," she said. "Everyone has known about it, but nobody has been listening."

She said Scholtz, who knew Stern personally, resigned soon after. "He couldn't be part of what he saw happening between the Trust and UCT," she said. "If you read the minutes, it's the same conversation repeated decade after decade."

Since Nedbank took over administration of the Trust, Duncan said, "there has been a high turnover of trustees and no proper continuity". She believes "many trustees simply don't understand what that space represents".

"Future plans are deeply concerning because Nedbank has no intention of reopening the Irma Stern Museum in a preserved, renovated state with her collections in it," she said. "It talks about finding a new, larger, better venue, but it fails to understand what Irma's home has become in terms of her legacy."

She described The Firs as "the only true house museum in South Africa", saying that it's "where Irma worked, created, and hosted the cultural figures who shaped mid-20th-century Cape Town. Once that connection is broken, it's gone forever."

The petition Stop the Closure of the Irma Stern Museum is calling for an immediate halt to the relocation of the collection, and an independent review of the decision. Campaigners are urging UCT, the Nedgroup Trust, and the Department of Arts and Culture to ensure the museum's protection and long-term restoration.

Duncan said the estimated R30 million needed for specialist repairs "is achievable if proper governance and accountability are in place. The Irma Stern Museum isn't just a gallery. It's a living record of South African art history. Once it's gone, we can't get it back."

- *The petition can be accessed at <https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-closure-of-irma-stern-museum>*
- *"Save the Irma Stern Museum" will be holding a public meeting in the Nedbank Auditorium, located in the Clock Tower, V&A Waterfront on 13 November at 15:00.*

UN expert's censure ends year of anti-Israel invective

>>Continued from page 1

In a statement this week, the SAZF said, "The HPCSA process is stringent, deliberate, and guided by due process. The council informed the SAZF as far back as June that Dr Mofokeng's legal representatives had been in communication with it, and that the council was waiting for her formal letter of explanation," underscoring that this was a carefully considered matter, not one decided "on a whim".

It further urged the council to stand by its finding and "not succumb to organised political pressure being directed at its ethics committee".

The SAZF described the ruling as vindication of Neuer's concerns about bias and misconduct by a senior UN official.

Mofokeng, who once described Israel as "Israhell" and insisted that " Hamas aren't terrorists", has long been a lightning rod for controversy. Her online tirades against Israel and Jewish critics, many of them riddled with expletives and racial invective, have repeatedly raised questions about the UN's capacity for impartiality. Her close alignment with fellow controversial UN rapporteur Francesca Albanese, herself sanctioned by the United States for antisemitic and inflammatory remarks and facing defamation proceedings, has further fuelled criticism that the UN human rights apparatus is compromised by entrenched bias.

While Mofokeng has built her public persona

as a women's rights advocate and outspoken campaigner against gender-based violence, frequently commenting on sexual violence in war zones and the rights of women in conflict, she has remained conspicuously silent on the documented cases of rape and sexual abuse inflicted on Israeli women during the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023. Her refusal to acknowledge or condemn these atrocities has deepened perceptions of selective outrage and ideological hypocrisy.

For the Jewish community, the HPCSA's ruling marks a welcome moment of institutional accountability. But it has also provoked an avalanche of hostility from political factions that see any censure of Mofokeng as a Zionist plot.

Mofokeng has 30 days to appeal the finding. The SAZF says it will monitor the process closely. The case was never about silencing political views, it said, rather it's about the duty of professionals, particularly those representing South Africa and the UN, to uphold decency and restraint.

For many in the Jewish community, the question now is whether the UN itself will take note or continue to turn a blind eye to conduct that undermines its own credibility.

At the time of going to print, Mofokeng hadn't responded to a detailed list of questions. The HPCSA, too, has declined to comment further about the repercussions of the ruling on her career or confirm whether she has lodged an appeal.

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Not consulting Jewry renders UCT resolutions ‘unlawful’

TALI FEINBERG

University of Cape Town (UCT) students and alumni demonstrated at the Western Cape High Court on 30 October, calling on UCT’s leadership to “save UCT first” over adopting resolutions that put the future of constituents and the institution in jeopardy.

Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at UCT, took his own university to court over two anti-Israel resolutions it adopted in June 2024, and the protest took place before the third and final day of court hearings.

His advocate, Eduard Fagan SC, argued that UCT’s failure to consult stakeholders, including the Jewish community, rendered the resolutions irrational and unlawful. “Not only does rationality impose a need to consult, there was a specific legal duty to consult,” he stated.

Meanwhile, the protesters said that “UCT must ensure financial stability and preserve its academic integrity, free from political influence.” One observer noted that “The irony is that Mendelsohn is on the side of UCT, and UCT isn’t,” lamenting that in court, the lawyer representing the institution “never represented UCT’s interests, only those of its chairperson and executive [Exco].”

In court, Fagan replied to UCT’s arguments, painting a damning picture of how the leading figures and bodies at UCT – its chairperson, executive committee, and Council – breached their fiduciary duties to the institution, acting unlawfully, irrationally, and unconstitutionally.

His descriptions of how the chairperson and Exco “concealed” information from the Council, meaning it adopted the resolutions in an “information vacuum”, led Judge Mark Sher to say that the way the Council adopted the resolutions was “scary”.

Mendelsohn is calling on the court to order UCT to review or set aside the two resolutions. The first “resolves to reject the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s [IHRA] definition of antisemitism”. The second states that “no UCT academic may enter into relations with, or continue relations with, any research group or network whose author affiliations are with the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] or the broader Israeli military establishment”.

Judge Tandazwa Ndita said that after the Donald Gordon Foundation (DGF) stated that UCT was in breach of its contract of donation by rejecting the IHRA definition, there was no need for it to reiterate this. She said UCT was fully aware of what rejecting the definition would mean, including the loss of a teaching hospital from the DGF.

Judge Robert Henney said that Council Chairperson Norman Arendse SC and the UCT Exco “knew about the risk of losing donations, but failed to disclose it to the Council”, and that Arendse “lied to this court” about these events.

Fagan argued that the Exco and Arendse had a plethora of information which they consciously chose not to share with the Council, including that the DGF was critical of the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism. However, they allowed Council to choose that definition when adopting the resolutions, therefore “exacerbating the risk”.

While UCT argues that the DGF never

explicitly stated that it would withdraw funding, “Exco discussed that they must not be ‘manipulated by donors,’” said Fagan. “This shows that the Exco understood that there was a legitimate threat from the DGF to cancel the agreement.”

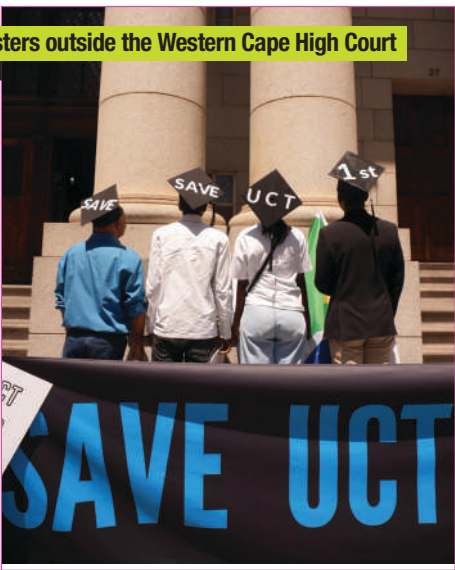
Fagan said Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi SC, representing UCT, introduced new arguments in court hearings, and “the extent to which UCT is searching desperately for a viable defence” shows that “the facts in this matter weigh so heavily against it”.

One new defence from UCT was that the “moral imperative” of standing against Israel superseded the need to know the impact on UCT. However, Arendse has admitted previously that the resolutions would have no impact on Gaza.

Another argument was that the Council chose not to rescind the resolutions on two later occasions, with more information at hand, meaning that it undertook due process. However, this doesn’t “cancel out” UCT’s unlawful process when it first adopted them, noted Fagan.

As for Ngcukaitobi’s argument that the Council and Senate represented constituents, Fagan said these representatives were never asked to canvas those they represented, such as staff or students who could face retrenchments or a loss of scholarships if the resolutions were adopted.

South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks says the



effects of the resolutions are already being felt, “with a clear chilling of engagement with Israeli academia”. For example, in June, the organisers of the IAMHIST (International Association for Media and History) conference at UCT demanded that Israeli applicants submit sworn statements confirming they had no ties to the IDF.

“No such demand was made of any other nationality, and no such requirement appears in IAMHIST’s or UCT’s policies,” says Marks. “The same UCT department sent its own members, days later, to an international conference where Israeli scholars served on the organising committee and presented papers.”

She says the resolutions were “born of ideology, and are corroding fairness,

scholarship, and the university’s moral standing”.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn says it was a “privilege” to be in court to hear Fagan detail how “information was deliberately withheld from Council members in determining resolutions that have such consequences”.

She says it’s “imperative that public spaces be welcoming and open for all, including the Jewish community. We must always stand up for these critical principles.”

Journalist William Saunderson-Meyer, who previously described UCT’s refusal to modify the resolutions as “opting for suicide”, told the *SA Jewish Report* that he expects Mendelsohn to succeed. This is because of UCT “deliberately withholding critical information from its stakeholders; wilfully endangering the financial and reputational future of the institution; and depriving its staff of their constitutional rights to freedom of association and expression.”

But even if Mendelsohn is vindicated judicially, “UCT has been captured by an Islamist clique in much the same way that South Africa’s foreign policy has been captured by a group in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation,” he says.

There’s “no concern” in either of those groupings “of the costs of their actions on UCT or South Africa,” says Saunderson-Meyer. “And there’s no doubt that Jewish UCT staff

who don’t toe a radical line will be targeted.”

Political commentator Tim Flack says Mendelsohn’s case is “strong” because it “exposes how the Council blurred the line between governance and activism”.

At a recent event where UCT hosted Francesca Albanese, Arendse publicly praised her and declared that the resolutions would stand, even before the court ruled. This conduct “compromises institutional neutrality, and validates Mendelsohn’s claim that these were political acts dressed up as governance”, Flack says.

Independent practising attorney David Polovin, whose expertise is business law and litigation, says “the legal threshold for reviewability is clearly met: the resolutions are arguably irrational, *ultra vires* [beyond power], and procedurally flawed”.

He says UCT faces significant risk of losing US federal research grants “unless the chilling effect on academic freedom is reversed. The court must guard the integrity of academic freedom and inter-university partnerships.”

Upholding the resolutions “would risk the university’s funding, reputation, and commitment to constitutional values”, says Polovin. For those reasons, Mendelsohn’s application “should succeed”. The court’s intervention “will not only vindicate the applicant’s rights, but safeguard the public interest in a free, fair and globally engaged university”.

Judgement was reserved, and a written judgement is expected in several months.

The genocide blood libel

OPINION

BARUCH THE BALANCED



With the high profile visit to South Africa of Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and her recent report to the UN General Assembly, it has become clear that the blood libel against Israel – that it has perpetuated a genocide in Gaza – hasn’t gone away. In fact, despite the war now seeming to die down, the campaign seems to be gathering momentum. Let’s analyse the legal and factual aspects of this false claim.

Legal definition of genocide

In short, according to the 1948 UN Convention, genocide involves acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. These acts include killing members of the group; causing serious harm; deliberately creating life conditions intended for the group’s physical destruction; preventing births; or forcibly transferring children.

The key point to understand from the definition, is that it requires intent – or *dolus* in legal terms – which requires proof that the perpetrators subjectively aimed to destroy the protected group, in whole or in part, as their objective. Without this intent, the act, even if it causes great harm, isn’t considered genocide.

This is where the case against Israel is extremely weak. The bulk of the case of intent depends on statements made by certain Israeli Cabinet ministers – mainly, but not solely, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich – to clean out Gaza and destroy it. However, these two, although in Cabinet, don’t control the war effort and never sat in the war Cabinet. The fact that they made some wild and outrageous statements is hardly conclusive of anything – they have said similar things about the left wing opposition in Israel! If Israeli generals told their troops to go and destroy Hamas and its supporters

and generally made it clear that this group was different to the rest of the civilian population, that’s surely to be expected of generals trying to “gee up” their troops in war, and similar statements are made by generals all over the world. What does the special rapporteur expect generals to say to their troops?

Such statements are taken out of context and twisted to try to create a false conclusion. What’s ironic is that when President Cyril Ramaphosa went to visit United States President Donald Trump in the White House, he had similar statements from a South African politician not in government thrown at him by Trump to try and create a false conclusion of a genocide in South Africa. Both sets of accusations of intent, resting on statements of politicians, are equally flimsy, and don’t satisfy the strict onus required.

Analysing the facts in Gaza

Reported Palestinian fatalities, according to Gaza’s Hamas-controlled Health Ministry, are about 67 000 as of early

October 2025. Of course, this number lumps civilian and Hamas fighters together, and lacks any real independent verification. However, even accepting this number, there must then be deducted an amount killed by Hamas by misfiring rockets into its own civilian areas; the killing of “collaborators” and opposition gangs in Gaza, etc. On top of that, there must be deducted natural deaths that weren’t caused by Israel, and that gives a more likely figure of 57 000. Once you also deduct the amount of Hamas fighters claimed to have been killed by Israel of 24 000, that gives a civilian tally of just more than 33 000 deaths. Add on some extra deaths from those bodies not yet discovered in the rubble, and you get a more likely figure of about 35 000 deaths. That’s still a tragic amount, but much lower than 67 000.

To give some context of how war is always hell, and large amounts of civilians always die in war, here’s an analysis of civilian casualties in World War II in some German and Japanese cities that were heavily bombed:

Hamburg

In Operation Gomorrah (July-August 1943), a joint British-American bombing campaign, and one of the most destructive of the war, the raids killed between 40 000 and 50 000 people, mostly civilians. The attack created a massive firestorm with winds of hurricane force and temperatures reaching more than 800°C, incinerating many residents. Note that this high number of civilian deaths was reached in two months. The bombing destroyed 60% of the city’s homes, and left an estimated one million people homeless.

Dresden

In February 1945, an intense, multi-day bombing campaign by British and American forces created a firestorm that consumed the city. Estimates place the number of deaths

Continued on page 7>>

Wheelchair bound Andy conquers New York Marathon

LEE TANKLE

Twenty-four years to the day after being in a car accident which left her wheelchair bound, Andy Sostak crossed the finish line at the New York Marathon after completing 43.6km alongside Kira Horwitz and Rabbi Eitan Ash.

“It’s just surreal,” said Sostak. “I can’t actually believe that I crossed the finish line. I have the medal and the finisher’s jacket.

“It was Andy and my first marathon ever. But it was the perfect team effort. We put everything together. We ran it together, we pushed together,” said Ash. “Andy works the entire time. Andy uses her hands to move the wheels the entire time. She’s not afraid. She works and works and works. She’s a superstar.”

Ash said their only goal was to finish the marathon, as none of them had ever done one before, and didn’t know what to expect. They drew strength from one another, their training, and the incredible support of the crowd and friends who had come to cheer them on. Crossing the finish line, especially in less than five hours, felt like the culmination of months of hard work and an unforgettable dream come true.

“It’s the most impressive thing I’ve ever done at this late

stage of being a non-sporty human at 57,” Sostak said.

Years ago, Sostak was encouraged by a friend connected to Achilles International, an organisation affiliated with the New York Marathon, to take part in the race. She signed up and began training, but after falling ill, she had to abandon the idea, and for years, running or fitness never crossed her mind again.

That changed when a friend of hers, Erin Lazarus, underwent an amputation. Knowing her athletic spirit, Sostak introduced her to Achilles, hoping she’d run the New York Marathon. To her surprise, the organisation insisted that she join too. Though reluctant at first, the challenge reignited something in her. While Erin went on to run the London Marathon, Sostak began training in earnest.

“Andy came with me on a Poland tour last year. She had always wanted to do it, but due to being in a wheelchair, she was always nervous to do certain things,” said Ash, “But it was a dream of hers to do it, so she came to Poland. And while she was in Poland, she was walking in Majdanek with a lady named Sam Fanaroff. And they decided they had to do something different to bring good and love to the world, to create something different. They came up with the idea of running.”

Sostak trained every day, each time with a different group, to ensure that she would cross the finish line at her

first marathon. She ran to raise funds for a BackaBuddy campaign for people with disabilities to show that nothing holds people back.

They were also cheered along the way by friends and family who flew to New York to support them with “Team Andy” shirts.

“I started off thinking well, I’ll never do this,” Sostak said. “The first training that Sam and I ever did was over 3km. She pushed me pretty much all of the way. I’m so proud of myself, sweating, I’ve done nothing. But [that changed] literally inch by inch over a year, increasing distance, speed, hill training, lots of biokinetics to strengthen the core, and all of that,” she said.

“There were times that it was incredibly hard. But I don’t think I took the smile off my face for five hours,” said Sostak, “The crowd gets you going. I was in a movie. It was the most insane experience I’ve had in my life.”

She said that even when she felt like she couldn’t run anymore, “there was no way of giving up anyway, you have to finish. You can’t not finish, so you just keep going.”

Sostak said that through running the marathon and raising the money, she is inspired to keep going. “I raised a lot of money for charity before I left. And I figured if that if I’m going to do this, I must make it count and let other people also share the privilege of this opportunity,” she said.



Kira Horwitz, Andy Sostak, and Rabbi Eitan Ash running the New York Marathon



Kira Horwitz, Andy Sostak, and Rabbi Eitan Ash having completed the New York Marathon

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Jewish Report

We are all winners



There weren't any losers at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on Sunday night. We were all winners, and walked out of the Sandton Convention Centre feeling buoyed by the incredibly inspiring night we had and the phenomenal human stories we heard.

It would have been an effort not to be energised and spurred on by the people who took home the awards. Every person who accepted an award spoke of the determination, commitment, and positivity in their careers – not sweating the small stuff and not taking no for an answer.

Most spoke about how they had always considered others along the way, being conscious of not stepping on them but helping them out. Some of the award winners spoke of how they had defeated the odds stacked against them to get to where they are.

Can you imagine being Benjy Rosman's parents and being told that your baby isn't going to amount to much because he was born with cerebral palsy? They didn't accept it, and neither did Benjy. Today they are able to witness his career flying. They see him become the most recognised and respected expert on artificial intelligence on this continent. I can only imagine how his parents felt in the audience on Sunday night!

I wonder how many people at school with Grace Harding thought she was going to become a success story. She spent time living at Arcadia Jewish Children's Home as a little girl, and her childhood was tough. However, Grace was always someone who made a plan, and today the result of her plan feeds so many in South Africa and around the world and employs between 5 000 and 10 000 people.

Khaya Lam is an organisation I believe few in our community had ever heard of. I certainly hadn't. However, because of it, about 15 000 to 16 000 families who would previously not have been able to have their own house now own a home. The kind of people who dedicate their lives to helping empower and uplift people on this scale are nothing short of angels. Or so I would imagine.

When they stood up to accept their award, it was obvious that they were such humble and genuine human beings who had simply found their way to helping others.

Every single award-winner on Sunday night was an inspiration, however there was something that Howard Sackstein said in his speech that rang very true for me. Even we don't recognise just how much this small community achieves, not just for ourselves, but the for greater good of South Africa and its people.

We are in a difficult situation right now with the South African government and various organisations and individuals turning on us because, they claim, we align ourselves with Israel. As I have written so many times, as Jews, our past, present, and future is intrinsically linked to the Jewish state in the Middle East. A few years back, I really wanted to believe it was Israel they were critical of and not us as Jews. However, as time has worn on, it has become blatantly clear that anti-Israel is just a new form of antisemitism. It's easy to couch hatred in criticism.

Not every person who is critical of what Israel may have done is antisemitic. However, when it's only Israel that is constantly lambasted for everything it does, and there's no balance in perspective, we need to accept that when it "quacks like a duck ..."

My point here isn't about antisemitism, which is an increasing problem globally, but more about, as Howard pointed out, how much South African Jews have done in this country.

So, when he called on the government to recognise what we have achieved and not to ignore us and turn its back on us, I hoped those in government heard or would hear him.

As he said, whatever we do in this country, we do because we are proud South Africans. We love this country, and want it to succeed always. We want to be able to be proud of our government and stand by it, but the ANC has made it really hard for us to do this.

Nevertheless, we will continue to do our best because this is our country. Not for the ANC, but for South Africa.

Shabbos Project

This coming weekend is the Shabbos Project, which as most of us know, is the brainchild of the chief rabbi. This project, launched 12 years ago in 2013, has long captivated our community and Jews around the world.

This year, I really resonate with the theme of switching off your cellphone for the hours of Shabbat. I don't know about you, but my phone is at my side 24/7. And because of that, I'm always working.

There's something so beautiful about the peace one achieves simply by switching off your phone and putting it away for 25 hours. For some, it seems endless and unimaginable, but in truth, it's just one day and night. Simply a day and night without communicating with the outside world. Being able to go inwards. Share precious time with family and community.

I remember interviewing arguably the most powerful Jewish businessman in South Africa who keeps Shabbos. He told me back then that more than doing it for specific religious reasons, he is *shomrei Shabbat* to spend time with family and to be able to disconnect from work by switching off his cellphone.

I have to say this makes extraordinary sense to me, and always has. Now, when we are all tired after a long and tough year, one weekend in which we all switch off our cellphones and take some precious personal time cannot be bad.

One of the special aspects of the Shabbos Project is that it isn't about calling on you to do something you hate or something you are going to have to train for. It isn't a massive challenge either. It's simply taking time out for Shabbat, something Jews have done for centuries and do all around the world.

I honestly don't need a prize to switch off my phone this weekend and take some personal time and time with my family. How about you?

To all the Investec Jewish Achiever Award winners, we wish you a heartfelt *mazaltov* and thank you for all that you do! To all our finalists, *kol hakavod* to you! To everyone who joined us physically at the awards and online, thank you!

If you would like to watch the Investec Jewish Achievers Awards 2025, you can find it on <https://bit.ly/jaa2025watch>.

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

Not in your service: Haredi draft a divisive issue



OPINION

PROFESSOR GLEN SEGELL

No rabbi, nor even the Oxford Union, could have articulated the dissatisfaction regarding the extensive and profound debate over ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The discussions in the Knesset aimed at legislating this service, along with the ensuing arguments in households, Friday morning coffee shops, the media, and across social media platforms, have evolved into one of the most divisive issues in Israel.

Discussions revolve around the need for national security; the principle of equality; freedom of religion; and safeguarding a unique lifestyle. On the one side, Haredi Jews, who make up roughly 15% of the population, typically refrain from serving in the IDF due to their deeply rooted religious, cultural, and ideological convictions that emphasise rigorous Torah study as their foremost obligation and a means of spiritual protection for the nation.

Conversely Leumi, a two-year-long conflict following the 7 October invasion by Hamas has prompted calls for fair distribution of military service responsibilities, particularly in reserve duty. Secular Jews and Dati- (Modern Orthodox) Jews are growing increasingly frustrated by the emotional and physical strain of enduring extended periods on the battlefield and away from their homes.

Arguments for Haredi service

Social cohesion and personal development: mandatory service for the Haredi could strengthen social cohesion by helping to bridge the significant rift between different sectors of Israeli society. Military service could help Haredi men develop a sense of individual and social responsibility, and strengthen their connection to the state of Israel;

Economic benefits: military service can provide Haredi men with vocational training and an “entry ticket” into the broader Israeli job market, improving their employment prospects. This would also boost the national economy by increasing tax revenue and decreasing the need for state subsidies;

Rule of law: the Israeli Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that the mass exemption of Haredi men is unconstitutional, illegal, and discriminatory, so enforcing conscription is a matter of upholding the rule of law;

Increased manpower for the IDF: the ongoing war and increasing security needs have created significant manpower shortages in the IDF, which could be alleviated by drafting Haredi men, and could reduce the heavy burden on the rest of the standing army and reservists;

Strengthening the “people’s-army” model and ensuring national security: universal service is central to the “people’s-army” ethos in Israel. Including the Haredi helps retain this model, as opposed to a fully professional, volunteer force; and

Equity and civic duty: proponents argue that in a democratic society, all citizens who benefit from the state’s protection should share the burden of defending it, especially during a time of war and heightened security needs.

Arguments against Haredi service

Primacy of Torah study: the Haredi view full-time Torah study – “*Torato omanuto*” (Torah is his profession) as a life calling for men that would be disrupted by military service;

Divine redemption: some Haredi believe that the state of Israel can be fully established only with the arrival of the Messiah. So, IDF service is inconsistent with religion;

Spiritual versus physical defence: the Haredi believe in a division of labour in which secular Israelis provide physical defence with weapons; while the Haredi provide spiritual protection through prayer and study;

Maintaining modesty and lifestyle: the Haredi lifestyle is strictly conservative, with rules regarding gender interaction and kashrut, Shabbat, and prayer times. Service could negatively impact this lifestyle, and violate religious freedom and commitments;

Secularisation and assimilation: there is fear that integration into the secular environment of the IDF would lead to secularisation or assimilation. Some state that they would rather go to jail than enlist;

How many would serve? Some contend that forcing Haredi men to enlist is numerically irrelevant. Many would receive exemptions for other reasons, or find ways to evade service. For example, married men and those with families, or those unsuited for military roles aren’t required to serve; and

Parental and rabbinic authority: the Haredi community operates under the supreme authority of its rabbis. The community fears a loss of control over its children’s environment and education if they are to enter the military system.

Obstructions to compromise

Historical continuity: since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, policy has consistently permitted a specific group of Yeshiva students to postpone their military service. As time has passed, this policy has broadened, leading to significant exemptions that have become a fundamental aspect of the Haredi relationship with the state. Such arrangements cannot be modified quickly to satisfy immediate or even prolonged military requirements;

Financial consequences: Haredi political groups have leveraged their power within coalition governments to uphold these exemptions and secure state funding for the Yeshiva. This has evolved into a vital economic foundation for Orthodox educational establishments;

Legal decisions and laws: in June 2024, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that permitted the IDF to enlist Haredi men, yet the execution of this ruling is contentious. This persists as a significant political and social chasm in Israel, accompanied by massive street demonstrations; and

Political instability: Haredi political factions have traditionally wielded their power as “kingmakers” within coalition governments to obstruct conscription legislation. Pressing the matter could lead to the government’s downfall and trigger a possible political crisis.

The future is known: both supporters and opponents of Haredi service acknowledge the deadlock, along with the consequences. The Israeli political system has always demanded a coalition government. The options are clear. The Haredi parties, which possess 17% of Knesset seats, would consent to join a coalition only if the exemption system remained intact. Without their participation, any coalition would need to incorporate the Arab and far-left parties, which together represent about 12% of the total Knesset seats. Therefore, the foreseeable future appears to suggest continued military exemption for the Haredi community.

• *Glen Segell is a professor at the University of Cambridge.*



Haredi men protesting the draft

An inspiring tale of how we make Mzansi strong

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Coming home to its original title sponsor, this year’s Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November celebrated the power of a community whose massive impact belies its small size. From retail giants to chess prodigies, to those fighting for a better South Africa, the ceremony, held at the Sandton Convention Centre, was a rousing tribute to those dedicated to making Mzansi strong.

Take some glittering gowns and tailored suits, add a dose of schmoozing, mix in some delicious eats from Food by Flavours and the Family Bakehouse, and you have the base of a memorable evening. Combine it with electric performances, and top it all off with speeches by inspiring award recipients, and the recipe is complete.

In his opening address, Howard Sackstein, the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards committee chairperson, discussed the proud history of South Africa’s Jewish community. In the face of the country’s ongoing challenges, innovative Jewish leaders have worked tirelessly, not only to create a better life for ordinary South Africans, but also to have a real economic impact. Many of these people and organisations have been honoured on the Jewish Achiever Awards stage over the past 26 years.

Lauding the event’s renewed partnership with Investec and other key sponsors, Sackstein spoke of the power of collaborating with those who are also dedicated to building a better South Africa. Laurence Kaplan, the chairperson of Investec Private Bank, said the Jewish Achiever Awards and Investec shared a belief in excellence and in making a meaningful difference.

Referencing its disproportionate impact, Kaplan said South Africa’s Jewish community made up less than 0.1% of the country’s entire population. “The power of this community and what it’s done is remarkable,” he said.

Spectacular musical performances included those by Dylan Janse van Rensburg, the star of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and Arias

Anonymous, who stunned the audience with their tabletop operatic act. Another highlight was a duet version of Israeli Eurovision hit, *New Day Will Rise*, sung by internationally acclaimed singer, Dani

The introduction of the event’s first ever humanoid-robot presenter, Maximus, who joined two of the Mann brothers to present the Mann Made Community Service Award, provided a glimpse into

the future. The evening’s entertainment was underpinned by the hilarious commentary of master of ceremonies, comedian John Vlismas, who joked that he identified as a “he he”.

Taste buds were dancing as attendees dined on canapés, including a sriracha salmon

savoury doughnut that had everyone talking. A rosemary lamb and tomato

chicken ensemble main was followed by a showstopping mixture of desserts in the form of the Callebaut Chocolate and Strawberry Leather Protea, a stunning ode to our national flower.

Yet it was the stories of the nominees and winners that formed the heart of an uplifting gathering. Those associated with renowned brands such as Pick n Pay; Joshua Doore; Ocean Basket; Peregrine Holdings; the University of the Witwatersrand; and Monster Energy revealed the value of vision and hard work. Various humanitarians working to help single mothers; assist underprivileged communities access title deeds to their properties; or provide clean drinking water to villages across Africa, reminded us of the importance and power of purpose.

In emotional speeches, Jeffrey and Barbara Wolf accepted the Mann Made Community Service Award for King David Victory Park as it prepares to amalgamate with King David Linksfield. Not only did their words encapsulate the legacy of a truly exceptional school, they also reminded all present of the power of Jewish education in producing some of our community’s biggest success stories. As always, the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards was proud to celebrate them all.



Robbie Brozin congratulates Grace Harding

Bitton, who appeared onscreen, and Janse van Rensburg, who performed onstage.



Rebbetzin Gina and Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein



Laurence and Karen Milner



Gaby Rajak and Greg Wacksman



The Mann brothers



Laurence Kaplan



Batya and Ari Kievman



Neill Abrams and Howard Sackstein



Photographs in this supplement by Ilan Ossendryver and Zandi Goeieman

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Chairperson and sponsor messages

True story: the Jewish community built this nation

There are some weeks that seem like years, and some years which seem like weeks.

All in all, we are just ordinary people living through extraordinary times.

In a few weeks from now, the G20 will meet here in South Africa and begin its heady discussions. It will be a tsunami of words; a collection of photo opportunities; and a competition for media attention. It's a perfect little bubble in an ocean of decay.

accept it or proactively change the country into "Mzansi Strong".

Though many say the South African Jewish community needs to improve its public relations, in reality, a small group of South Africans has had a profound impact on the development of our nation. We need to pierce the veil over that truth.

In politics, human rights, the arts, business, entrepreneurship, and the professional world, we will tell you 11 stories of remarkable South Africans, people who have led and built this country, and there are hundreds or thousands more stories still to tell.

Yuval Harari, probably the greatest thinker of the modern era, teaches us that human history advances when we all agree on common stories: the story of G-d, which allowed us to live together in a rules-based society; the story of money, that somehow a piece of paper or coin had value that allowed us to trade; and the story of human rights, which after the horrors of World War II convinced us to believe that all humans were somehow entitled to equal rights, equal opportunity, and the right to live in peace, freedom, and dignity.

Harari's lesson to all of us is that humans learn by storytelling, and our job is to tell the stories of what South Africa needs to be Mzansi Strong.

The problem is that our community doesn't have an "Intel Inside" sticker that tells the world that it lives within the engine of good that we do. So, I want to highlight just a few projects, many of them winners of Jewish Achiever Awards to explain to all who dare to listen what our community has done for South Africa.



Outside of the plush interiors of the five-star hotels will still be the true reality of South Africa, the traffic lights which won't work; the poor who are hungry; the youth, who are unemployed; a government paralysed by state-sponsored corruption; and 27 000 South Africans who will be murdered in their homes this year.

This is the harsh reality, and no amount of talking at the G20 will change the bitter lives faced by most South Africans every single day.

This isn't the country we want, and certainly not the South Africa we deserve. And so, we have a choice to

co-founded by the Union of Jewish Women and led by Ina Perlman which fed more than two million people in the dark days of apartheid; Ikamva Labantu, led by Helen Lieberman, which touches more than 32 000 people each year; operates in 486 preschools in Khayelitsha; runs 28 after school clubs and 17 seniors clubs; or Afrika Tikkun, led by Marc Lubner, which serves more than 45 000 people from cradle to career, running the most sophisticated early childhood education curriculum in South Africa, educating more than 20 000 children, placing 9 000 people in jobs,

Ellerine Trust helps entrepreneurs start small, dream big

DIONNE ELLERINE HIRSHOWITZ

It is with great pride that Eric Ellerine Trust Proprietary Limited is sponsoring the Entrepreneur Award at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards for the second consecutive year. This award is a tribute to the enduring legacy of Eric Ellerine, a pioneering entrepreneur who built successful enterprises and empowered others to do the same.

Eric's entrepreneurial journey began as a 16-year-old, using his Barmitzvah money to open a single furniture store. Eric and his brother grew what would become Ellerine Holdings into one of South Africa's most successful retail enterprises with a national footprint and listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Eric loved South Africa, and devoted himself to creating jobs, investing in people, and supporting other budding entrepreneurs. It was a commitment that continued even after his tenure at Ellerine Holdings had ended, with the establishment of Eric Ellerine Trust Proprietary Limited, an investment holding company through which Eric, together with his family, backed and continues to back entrepreneurs.

Through this award, we honour the essence of what Eric stood for: resilience, integrity, and a commitment to excellence. We hope that it serves as inspiration for others to pursue their dreams with the same tenacity and vision that he embodied. Eric believed in building something greater than oneself, a legacy, and it is our privilege to encourage and recognise those who follow a similar path.

We hope this award will encourage entrepreneurs who, like Eric, dare to start small, dream big, and invest in the future. Thank you to the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards for this platform to celebrate and perpetuate the spirit of entrepreneurship.



and running post-secondary school education.

The Moshal Scholarship Foundation has graduated 1 275 students through university with scholarships and psychosocial support; the Kaplan-Kushlick Foundation has provided 727 university scholarships; The Angel Network and Glynne Wolman have provided more than 30 million meals and built 90 homes over the past 10 years; and Khaya Lam and the Feldmans, the Sacks, and Markmans have given 21 000 families title deeds to their own homes.

Sivan Yaari and Innovation: Africa have provided fresh clean drinking water to one million South Africans and six million people in Africa; Taddy Blecher and the Maharishi institute, have graduated more than 21 000 university graduates with free tertiary education; Robbie Brozin and the Jozi My Jozi team are re-imagining what all of Johannesburg could be; the David and Tracey Frankel Foundation is running its NextUp project in Olievenhoutbosch in Tshwane; the Jewish National Fund is leading in environmental education and food gardens in Mamelodi; the Kirshes have funded more projects than anyone can count in South Africa; the Victor Daitz Foundation is the second largest charitable trust in the country; and what about what the Ichikowitzes have done for the country.

I could go on all night. Not to mention CAP's improvement of security and targeting of criminals; and CAP Green's efforts to improve the neighbourhood; ORT, which does STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) and computer education in our schools; and the Gordon family and Wendy Appelbaum, who have built hospitals, art galleries, and business schools and funded our universities.

Our community has done more in real meaningful terms for South Africa than anyone else.

But let those in power not take us for granted, we do

what we do out of love for our country. Do not treat us in a way that is unrequited and allows our love to wane.

Mzansi Strong will be built through partnerships with those who wish to build an inclusive, prosperous South Africa that genuinely tackles its problems. That's why the Jewish Achiever Awards is delighted to partner with Investec.

Investec Bank was started by five young Jewish entrepreneurs from Benoni, who built a global brand which represents the best of our nation to the world. In the days when I was a lowly law clerk, Lacky Kaplan, now chairperson of Investec Private Bank but then a partner at Werksmans, would invite me into his office and make me tea. The friendship with Kaplan has been replicated into the true and enduring friendships which we have with Fani Titi, Cumesh Moodliar, Nick Riley, Lesley-Anne Gatter, and many others of the Investec team here tonight.

These awards are a family, and our other sponsors are very much part of the DNA of the Jewish Achiever Awards: the Ellerine family; the Lubner family; the Kirsh family; the Ichikowitz family; the Mann family; Europcar; Sydney Back Wines; Diageo; and Johnnie Walker are all part of the magic that makes tonight so special to our community.

Tonight isn't about public relations; it's an evening of storytelling. It tells the tale of how one small segment of South Africa unencumbered by its size has had a profound impact on the lives of every South African. It's a story of heroes and role models. It's an evening of inspiration of how to make Mzansi Strong."

Howard Sackstein
Chairperson
Investec Jewish Achiever Awards committee

pwc

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Sponsors’ Messages

Ambition and compassion: extraordinary female leaders who inspire

MARTIN LYDALL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, EUROPCAR

Europcar is proud to have sponsored the Europcar Women in Leadership Award for the past 10 years. As a women-founded organisation, we are committed to empowering women, celebrating their achievements, sharing their stories, and inspiring future leaders.

The Europcar Women in Leadership Award honours women who stand out for their vision, innovation, ingenuity, tenacity, moral compass, and resolve. We recognise their leadership in business performance, inclusivity, ethics, and sustainability.

The nominees are women in business, corporate social investment (CSI), leadership, and entrepreneurship who have consistently demonstrated resilience, creativity, and a commitment to making a difference. In CSI, these women combine ambition with compassion. They identify societal needs and craft impactful initiatives that uplift communities and empower the vulnerable, they are pioneers, breaking barriers and opening doors for those who follow. Their courage, perseverance, and mentorship inspire others.

We congratulate all the nominees in this category, you are all an inspiration.

This year, we are pleased to announce Grace Harding as the recipient of the Europcar Women in Leadership Award. Grace exemplifies extraordinary leadership, entrepreneurship, and compassion. Her people-focused philosophy blends vision, integrity, and dedication. Grace has dedicated countless hours to mastering the intricacies of business and life. She is a champion for women, underrepresented voices, and inclusion. Grace is a worthy winner of this award.



Serving the mantra: “To give, to love, to live”

MARC LUBNER

The Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award celebrates individuals or organisations committed to community, inclusion, and making a sustainable impact.

Through their sponsorship of this award, and in keeping with their ethos of “to give, to love, to live”, the Lubner Family Foundation honours those who go beyond the conventional and act courageously in the service of others; those who not only identify need, but actively engage, uplift, and empower communities.

The award draws inspiration from the late Dr Bertie Lubner, whose lifemission embodied the belief that “we make a living by what we earn; but we make a life by what we give”. Through his founding of initiatives such as Afrika Tikkun and the Field Band Foundation, he modelled hands-on humanitarian engagement, humility, and sustained service.

Today, the Lubner Family Foundation is carried forward by the second and third generation – led by Takara Lubner – who actively lead projects that promote disability inclusion; youth development; and social innovation. Their vision is simple but far-reaching: to create a world where everyone, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Central to their work are four organisations built on the founding principles of responsible kindness, collaboration, and community engagement:

- Afrika Tikkun; a Jewish-led movement for change and transformation founded in 1994 by Bertie Lubner and Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris. Marrying tzedakah with the spirit of ubuntu, Afrika Tikkun collaborates with donors, volunteers and business investors to develop and upskill the lives of young South Africans. Its cradle-to-career model is a comprehensive approach to child and youth development, and considers the holistic needs of each young person across different stages of their lives, including nutrition, education, psycho-social support, and primary healthcare;
- Smile Foundation; established out of a request by Nelson Mandela, the Smile Foundation provides reconstructive surgery and integrated support for children with facial and other disabilities;
- Field Band Foundation; founded by the Lubners in the late 1990s, the Field Band Foundation is a non-profit company that develops youth through music, performance, and lifeskills training, especially in township communities; and
- Sabrina Love Foundation; in memory of Sabrina Lubner, this Western Cape-based organisation offers holistic care, therapy, and inclusive education for children with special needs.

The Lubner Family Foundation's sponsorship of the Investec Jewish Achiever Humanitarian Award honours an enduring commitment to inclusive development and social responsibility. The award is more than recognition, it's a call to action for all of us to contribute to a society where compassion and inclusion guide every interaction. We look forward to recognising and celebrating exceptional humanitarians whose work embodies dignity, courage, and a vision for a more equitable world.



A story of selfless service worth telling

MIC, KEVIN, AND SHAYN MANN, MANN MADE

Mann Made is deeply honoured once again to sponsor the Community Service Award at this year's Investec Jewish Achiever Awards. This accolade is dedicated to recognising a Jewish individual or organisation whose exceptional commitment, compassion, and service has made a meaningful and lasting difference, both within the Jewish community and across South Africa. At its heart, this award celebrates consistent acts of kindness, leadership, and humanity, and we congratulate the winner: King David Victory Park!

As we gather to acknowledge this year's nominees, we are reminded of the extraordinary power of service. The individuals and organisations in this category represent the best of what we can be: selfless in spirit; generous in action; and unwavering in their pursuit of a better, more compassionate society. Their work strengthens our community's fabric, and inspires every one of us to do more, give more, and care more.

At Mann Made, our identity as a family-run business has deeply shaped our belief in community, connection, and impact. Our work, brought to life through storytelling, creative production, and strategic partnerships, is driven by a desire to



inspire positive change. We are passionate about amplifying voices of significance, and shining a light on stories that move people to action. Sponsoring this award is a natural extension of that purpose.

Beyond our creative role in the world, we remain committed to empowerment and education. Our long-standing partner, the Maharishi Institute, enables deserving students to access meaningful opportunities each year, helping to shape future leaders for South Africa. Likewise, our continued investment in innovation and emerging technologies reflects our belief that when people are equipped with the right tools, they can transform their communities.

With this award, we celebrate those who have chosen service as their life's work. To the 2025 nominee group and our winner, King David Victory Park, we salute you! Thank you for your compassion, your leadership, and your relentless dedication to others. Your light guides us, your actions strengthen us, and your impact will be felt for many years to come.



African youngsters innovating and building – that’s worth backing

IVOR ICHIKOWITZ, CHAIRMAN, ICHIKOWITZ FAMILY FOUNDATION

Our family and our foundation remain firmly rooted in South Africa. That's not sentiment, it's conviction. We love this country, not blindly, but with the understanding that love is tested most when things get hard. We have been through hard times before, and every time, our resilience has defined us. We believe in South Africa's future because we believe in its people: their brilliance, endurance, and ability to rebuild again and again.

Now, more than ever, our community must stand tall, loud, and proud. We need to take our rightful place as pillars of the greater South African family – to help create jobs; uplift lives; contribute to growth; and commit ourselves to this nation's success. Do not run. That's what the cynics and the detractors want. They want us to give up, to withdraw, to shrink. But we aren't a community of quitters. We are a community of fighters, of dreamers, of doers. We are a community with grit, faith, and staying power.

Yes, South Africa is complicated. But it's also extraordinary. The formation of the Government of National Unity this year wasn't a miracle, it was a moment of maturity. For once, politicians had to put the country before themselves. That's not politics as usual; that's progress. And it signals something bigger: that South Africans are tired of excuses and ready for results.

Across Africa, a new generation is rewriting the rules. Young Africans are no longer waiting to be “given”

a future, they're building it. They are innovating in fintech; energy; artificial intelligence; and agriculture. They are investing in Africa, not escaping it. The African Continental Free Trade Area is starting to take shape, and the message is simple: the more we trade with one another,



the more we own our destiny. Africa is no longer a place of potential, it's a place of momentum.

For our Jewish community, this has been a year of reckoning. The global surge in antisemitism has been ugly and painful. We've felt it here too. But if there's one thing our history has taught us, it's that hatred wins only when we become silent. So, we will not be silent. We will speak out, stand up, and show up. We will respond not with anger, but with achievement. We will build, we will employ, we will educate, and we will lead. We will remind this country – and the world – that South African Jews have never been bystanders. We have been builders, innovators, and patriots.

I was raised in a small Jewish community that taught me that identity isn't a burden, it's a



superpower. My parents, Bernice and Louis, believed that your heritage gives you strength, but it also gives you responsibility. To young Jewish South Africans, I say, do not dim your light to fit in. Bring your full self to the table – your creativity, courage, and conscience. This country isn't something we are passing through. It's our home. And we have work to do.

That's why we're proud once again to sponsor the Jewish Achiever Rising Star Award. This award isn't about applause; it's about accountability. It's a reminder that success without contribution is hollow. It challenges our young achievers to use their talent to build companies that solves African problems, and mentor the next generation so that success becomes a cycle, not a privilege.

We also honour the quiet heroes – the teachers; nurses; the small business owners; and entrepreneurs – who keep this country moving when the headlines say otherwise. You are proof that South Africa's story isn't written in the corridors of power, but in the courage of ordinary people who refuse to give up.

Our message as a family has never changed: back the youth; back the builders; back the believers. Celebrate identity, but never retreat into it. Challenge the naysayers. Prove them wrong. Optimism in this country isn't naïve, it's an act of rebellion.

If we combine imagination with integrity, there's nothing Africa's youth cannot achieve.

May this year's Rising Star finalists inspire us to stand taller, dream bigger, and commit deeper to this country, this continent, and each other.

Community – the gold thread in ‘Mzansi Strong’

JULIE LEIBOWITZ

“Mzansi hero” Mpumelelo Mhlongo won gold at the Summer Paralympics in Paris in 2024, running 100m in 11.12 seconds, only two seconds slower than Usain Bolt, the greatest sprinter of all time.

He is also doing his PhD in chemical engineering, and works in Investec’s multi-asset structuring team, an extraordinary list of achievements for anyone, let alone someone born with a clubfoot and financial disadvantage.

But this Investec-sponsored athlete believes that success is nothing if it’s not harnessed to build the community and make life happier for those around him.

Mhlongo was speaking at the Investec Jewish Achiever Award Business Breakfast at Investec in Sandton on 31 October.

“Circumstance is a reality that we choose to forge,” Mhlongo said of his almost inhuman rise above challenges, including discrimination from family members for being disabled; going from academic underachiever to win a scholarship at Kearsney College; and making its top rugby and soccer team.



At the pinnacle of his performance at the Paris Paralympics, Mhlongo said, “I wondered why 80 000 people were screaming my name – I’m not that important – then realised the Springbok rugby team was there as well. But there’s no pressure that isn’t a privilege.”

Among other achievements, Mhlongo was named Sportsman of the Year with a Disability” at the SA Sports Awards for the second consecutive year. He credits the “abundance and tough love” of his mother, Lungi Charity Mthembu, for his success and philanthropy. “She taught me not to limit myself nor see my achievements as mine alone,” he says, “to question how



our achievements change the reality of others; and to do something every day to make someone smile.”

The excuse of disadvantage is relevant in South Africa, Mhlongo says, but like his mother, who said, “So what?” in response to his sense of disadvantage, he questions how it changes anything. Talent is irrelevant, he says, it’s all about coaching, and “it takes a village to change things”.

Investec Jewish Achiever Awards Chairperson Howard Sackstein, and Cumesh Moodliar, chief executive of Investec Bank Limited, elaborated on the notion of individual heroism built on community, and the power of entrepreneurship and moral leadership to rebuild South

Africa.

Sackstein referenced the “five Jewish boys from Benoni” who had the vision and drive to build Investec into a global powerhouse; as well as legendary previous Jewish Achiever Award winners who built businesses, philanthropy, creativity, and provided moral



leadership. It’s this kind of communal force that can realise the remarkable potential Johannesburg has and turn it into “Mzansi Strong” – the theme of this year’s awards – he said.

Investec’s sponsorship of the awards was a “home coming”, Sackstein said, as the bank sponsored the awards on their

founding 26 years ago. “Finally, we’ve come home to a partner who shares the values and morals of our community.”

Eight hundred and eighteen nominations; 87 interviews; 37 judges; and 10 555 public votes later, South African Jews should be proud of their place and contribution to this country, Sackstein said. He pointed out that this year’s awards include 13 new winners, who join legends like Adrian Gore; Johnny Clegg; Albie Sachs; Sol Kerzner; Pieter-Dirk Uys; Jane Raphaely; and Arthur



Chaskalson.

“Hold your heads up high,” he said. “We create the role models that the rest of this country should be emulating.”

Moodliar said Investec’s support of the Achiever Awards was about “doing the right thing” in tune with the bank’s founders’ sense of moral responsibility and entrepreneurial DNA.



South Africa – and Mzansi’s – renewal must come from citizens and entrepreneurs, not government, he said, praising Jewish citizens’ disproportionate impact in anti-apartheid activism, professional services, and corporate South Africa. “The answers are going to come from ordinary South Africans, entrepreneurs who fix water, infrastructure, education, and healthcare.”

There were signs of renewed confidence in South Africa from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, Moodliar said, based on our Constitution; rule of law despite “awkward moments”; fiscal surplus and low inflation; strengthening rand; and free media. However, enormous corruption at senior government level and Johannesburg’s reputation for being a “failing city with homeless traffic wardens” make one “want to laugh and cry at the same time – but it

shows these things are fixable”.

“The future is African, and we’re in a fortunate position to take advantage of that,” said Chris Holdsworth,

Investec Chief Investment Strategist. He highlighted Africa’s long-term potential based on its “demographic dividend” – the fact that it’s almost the only continent with a growing population.

He cited United Nations figures that show fertility rates dropping below (population) replacement level in 15 years in most parts of the globe, with Africa as the exception. Rapidly declining populations create a crisis in funding “entitlement economies, which in some European countries represent 600% of gross domestic product”, and a rapidly ageing population.

“The one difference happens to be here. Africa will deal with this in only 50 years’ time.

“The next few decades will be defined by education, where we’re going to see a huge amount of investment over the next 20 to 30 years,” he said. Similarly, healthcare across the globe. “Every single country that’s seen their population percentage over the age of 65 grow by 20%, has seen their healthcare sector outperform the parent index, without exception.”

Our population growth creates opportunities for infrastructure development and goods and services, not to mention the need for labour in the rest of the world. “But if we don’t get it right, we face huge unemployment and risk,” Holdsworth said.

“Despite global turbulence, Africa’s long-term opportunity is clear,” Holdsworth said. “There’s a huge opportunity just north of our borders. The path to get there is going to be lumpy, but we must keep our eye on the prize.”



Investec Business Icon Award

Furnishing his vision: David Sussman’s retail revolution

From working as an assistant receiving clerk in the Joshua Doore Boksburg warehouse to taking over Joshua Doore stores as part of his own retail group, David Sussman has always dreamed big. Now retired, Sussman, the founder and former chief executive officer and executive chairperson of the JD Group, reflects on his business journey and on those who helped him along the way.

“I was always ambitious,” he says. “I had this dream, and I wanted to make it happen.” Yet, despite all his professional accomplishments, Sussman, this year’s Investec Jewish Achiever Awards Business Icon Award winner, says his main claim to fame is sharing a birthday with the state of Israel. Now 77, Sussman looks back on his career with pride and gratitude.

His first job in the retail space was in the head office of Ellerines. “They called me the personnel manager, but I was really the pay clerk because I had to verify the attendance register,” he recalls. “Being responsible for attendance registers put me under the eyes of Eric Ellerine, who was quite a formidable boss.” Yet Ellerine became a good friend and mentor, and was one of the first to call Sussman and wish him well when he started his business years later.

Always interested in merchandising and marketing, Sussman was aware that he wouldn’t be able to work in these areas at Ellerines. So he persuaded the then managing director of Russells who owned Joshua Doore, to give him a job.

“I was fascinated by the concept of Joshua Doore, which was very different,” Sussman says. “I loved that high volume hypermarket-type operation. It became an obsession.”

Yet, starting at the bottom wasn’t easy. “At the time, my wife, Ros, and I had one child, she was a teacher, and she used to drop me off at the corner of Corlett Drive and Louis Botha Avenue in the morning. From there, I would hitchhike to get to work.” Having just built a house, his R200 monthly mortgage payments meant that Sussman had to sell his car.

Yet due to his notable work ethic, he rapidly climbed the “corporate grease pole”, and within two years, he was second in command at Joshua Doore. The position came with a company car. “I thought I’d died and

gone to heaven,” Sussman says. “Working at Ellerines and then Joshua Doore served me well, because they were both well-run, publicly listed companies. Coming from a boys’ boarding school in Kimberley, I also understood the importance of discipline, which stood me in good stead.”

In 1979, Sussman was approached by a head-hunter who offered him a position at listed furniture company, World, at ten times his existing salary. “I wasn’t interested in moving from Joshua Doore, I loved my job,” he says. On a subsequent tour of the United States which included meeting the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Sussman asked his rabbi to ask the Rebbe two questions. One was whether he should stay in South Africa, and the other was whether to take the job. His reply? “Stay where you are.”

So he did. A few years later, having become disillusioned with Joshua Doore’s management and ready to fulfil his dream of running his own

store, Sussman revisited the idea of joining World. It was always his plan to start his own DIY business, and World’s management agreed to help him do so while he worked for them and developed a template. Yet once he had done so, they wanted to keep him at the company.

“That’s when I decided to go on my own,” Sussman recalls. “My father-in-law offered me the seed capital, and my wife’s brother, a qualified accountant, joined me. It suited me because though I recognise the need for administration, I’m a people’s guy who likes to be in the field.” Having grown up in an agricultural village, Sussman refers to himself as a country boy, which is where his affinity for dealing with people was nurtured.

Sussman’s business interests soon grew. “Every opportunity that came my way was through the good offices of people who wished me well, from my supply base to investors,” he says. Soon seeking capital to grow the business, Sussman met Arnie Witkin, who had just started New Bernica

Limited, the first formalised private equity company in South Africa. Witkin agreed to take a stake in the business, and introduced Sussman to Mervyn King, who at the time was chairperson of Kirsh Industries, which owned the Russells group that included Joshua Doore.

“I persuaded Mervyn to sell us Joshua Doore, which necessitated us listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1986,” Sussman recalls. Their growth was exponential. “Every time we made an acquisition, it doubled our size.” Along the way, they also purchased World and Bradlow’s. “The Russells group, which we took over in 1996, was the crowning glory,” Sussman says. Guided by attorney Michael Katz, Sussman and his partners signed the deal at midnight, exactly 10 years to the day that they had opened their first shop.

Continuing their growth trajectory, the group took over Profurn in 2000, and later Incredible Connection. “In about 2010, we bought the motor retail division and Timber City from Steinhoff. Steinhoff in return landed up with about 27% of JD Group,” Sussman says.

Along his journey, Sussman was also involved in community projects, particularly education. “I became aware of how rotten so-called “Bantu education” was when we were interviewing customers applying for credit,” he says. “One was the deputy head of a high school in Soweto who was semi-literate.” Sussman knew he had to make a difference.

“We started our first school in 1985 in the admin section of our small warehouse close to Soweto. The authorities at the time tried to shut the school down, but we prevailed.” The school moved into bigger premises as its popularity grew. Called the Freedom Centre, it drew the attention of Chris Hani and later Nelson Mandela, both of whom summoned Sussman for meetings.

In 2013, Sussman’s wife was diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening autoimmune disease. “It became clear that if we were to beat this challenge, which we eventually did, it would have to be properly managed as a project,” he says. And so, at the end of 2013, Sussman retired from the business he’d started.

Offering advice to entrepreneurs, Sussman says, “The two most critical things are believing in yourself, and being committed to achieving your dream. I had this unquenchable thirst, I was driven. I had all the right counterbalances by being surrounded by the right people who all became mentors to me. It was all a bracha from Hashem.”



Building dreams with faith and purpose

CLAUDIA GROSS

When David Sussman appeared on the screen from Israel to accept the Investec Business Icon Award at this year’s Investec Jewish Achiever Awards, the audience erupted in applause. “I didn’t expect this award,” he said, “I’m so grateful. We [the Jewish community] have always punched above our weight.”

Sussman, the legendary founder of the JD Group, spoke not as a titan of retail, but as a humble South African. In the tribute video he recalled the beginning of his career, “I landed up in the Joshua Doore Boksburg warehouse. I was assistant to the receiving clerk. Every Saturday – I didn’t have to but I wanted to – I was on the showroom floor.”

The busy showroom, he said, inspired his love of retail and the passion and perseverance that built his career. In a couple of years, he became second in command in the Joshua Doore Group. His friend,

Motty Sacks, himself a titan in business in South Africa, described Sussman as “a rare individual” who “led with vision, strength, and an unshakeable moral foundation.”

Sussman recounted taking over Joshua Doore from Mervyn King, and how he dismissed King’s concerns by telling him, “Joshua Doore is in my DNA. I promise you, I’ll turn it around.”

At 77, Sussman remains characteristically forward-looking. Those close to him say that he is still dreaming, still mentoring, still believing. Sacks described Sussman as confident and optimistic.

Beyond business, Sussman’s philanthropy, particularly in education, speaks to his moral compass. In 1985, disturbed by the inequities of “Bantu education”, he opened a school near Soweto called The Freedom Centre that grew into a beacon of empowerment. He has since supported numerous projects aimed at skills development and literacy.

This project resulted in a call from former president

Nelson Mandela asking him to build a school in Pongola, a town in KwaZulu-Natal. During the call, Sussman had the *chutzpah* to ask Mandela to write a note to his son and daughter-in-law who were about to get married. Mandela not only wrote the note, he also made a speech – at the wedding.

In November 2013, his wife, Roz, was diagnosed with Neuromyelitis Optica. Realising that her care would require his full attention, he chose to retire so he could take care of her. “Today, thankfully, my wife is as fiery as she ever was. We’ve been married for 54 years, and have four grandchildren. We love being in South Africa. The Johannesburg that we live in, we love.”

Senior counsel Arnold Subel congratulated Sussman on the award, saying that he truly deserved it. In his acceptance speech, Sussman thanked Sacks and Subel for their kind words, describing them as icons in their own right.

Even in retirement, Sussman’s presence looms large in South African business circles. Those who know him describe an entrepreneur who valued people over profit, and saw growth not just in numbers, but in the lives transformed along the way.

Sussman’s affection for his homeland and community shone through in his speech. “We admire the South African Jewish community. We love being in Israel, and we love being in South Africa just as much. G-d bless you all, and G-d bless South Africa!” he said.



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Howard Tradonsky, Dionne Ellerine, Geoff Rothschild, Sharon Wapnick,
Alan Fainman, Garron Chaitowitz, Greg Solomon, Ivor Polo (inset)

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Investec Business Leadership Award

Business acumen plus social responsibility equals success

LEE TANKLE

Investec Business Leadership Award winner Rob Katz built his career on spotting opportunities where others see risk.

As a co-founder of Capitalworks and later a key figure at Citadel, he has helped shape some of South Africa's most significant investment stories, combining sharp financial acumen with a long-term vision for growth.

Katz, now 60 years old, has established himself in the world of finance, going back to his days studying a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of the Witwatersrand and a Master of Commerce in Finance from the University of Johannesburg. He then went on to become a Chartered Accountant after completing his articles at Ernst & Young. Since then, he has held executive positions at Standard Bank, Peregrine Holdings, and Capitalworks Investment Partners.

Capitalworks, founded in 2006, is an independent alternative asset management firm providing investment access and specialist solutions to its clients across a wide range of industries and investments in global emerging markets.

"With a focus on alternative asset investments and a unique team of investment professionals, Capitalworks brings a distinctive edge to the market," says Katz. "It seeks to add value beyond the capital invested. As strategic partners, we are actively involved with our investment partners, and bring our collective skill, knowledge, and relationships from our team's investment experience."

Katz has an integrated approach to leadership, which means combining business acumen with a commitment to social responsibility.

"I have dedicated my career to excellence, integrity, and impactful leadership," he says. "As the founder of two charitable organisations aimed at alleviating suffering, I strive to translate success into tangible help for others."

Katz entered Citadel Investment Services through his leadership of Peregrine Holdings, which owned Citadel. He joined Peregrine in 2010 as chief financial officer, and became chief executive of the company in 2017, overseeing the group's strategic direction, with Citadel as its crown jewel.

Citadel is a specialist wealth management company with 32 years of experience in providing holistic wealth management solutions. It offers a variety of services including investment advice; asset management;

philanthropy; local and offshore fiduciary services; forex strategy; and family office solutions.

Under Katz's leadership, Citadel has expanded assets under management, reporting strong inflows – billions of rand annually – and retaining clients. Katz guided Citadel through growth by acquisition, such as buying Purpose Wealth, to broaden its wealth management footprint.

"We are based in South Africa, with nine offices across the country and one in Guernsey, Channel Islands," Katz says. "Advice is the cornerstone of our offering – not only where to invest, but why."

He believes the reason these businesses have been able to thrive is that "my leadership style is predicated on creating safe spaces where others feel seen, heard, valued, and are allowed to succeed. I nurture relationships and try, wherever possible, to lift people by concentrating on their strengths. Citadel has a 99% client retention ratio, which is a result of honest and nurtured relationships."

Outside of his business career, Katz is an avid boxer, runner, and a philanthropist. He has completed the New York and Paris Marathons, as well as two Comrades Marathons. Boxing, his first passion, has greatly influenced his approach to business, instilling discipline, methodical thinking, and the perseverance required for long hours of focused effort.

The greatest opportunity for Katz and his business lies in finding good private equity investments in global emerging markets. "This should be an asset class that has good potential, noting that in the past 10 years, this asset class has underperformed relative to developed markets," he says.

Katz's biggest achievement over his decades-long career has been "maximising shareholder value in Peregrine by disposing of non-core businesses with volatile earning streams, and delisting the company at a price favourable for shareholders".

However, "Holding it together is the biggest challenge when it comes to managing or leading in financial services," he says. "I always

put significant effort into this challenge, and try to create a workplace environment in which people are happy and fulfilled."

Over the course of his career, Katz has learned that every day presents the opportunity to learn something new, just like a school day.

"Yesterday's success doesn't mean that today and tomorrow will be successful," he says. "I keep abreast of change by reading copiously and engaging often with young leaders in the business world."

Katz believes the secret to surviving future challenges in business is to keep focusing on trends and innovation in the industry, as well as on annuity income streams. "In financial services, we compete on talent and as such, always strive to attract and retain the best talent," he says.

Outside of business, Katz founded the The Shoshana Foundation, a charitable organisation which supports single mothers in South Africa. It provides financial support, resources, and a community for these women to help them achieve independence and stability for themselves and their families. The organisation was inspired by Katz's own experience of growing up with a single mother.

"Our foundations are dedicated to alleviating poverty by creating projects that make a positive difference in the communities we work in," says Katz. "We continue to strive to embark on projects related to sustainable skills development,



empowerment for self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurship."

Katz envisions a future of continued growth, impact, and meaningful contribution. "For my business, I envision a thriving, innovative organisation that leads with integrity, fosters inclusivity, and delivers sustainable value to all stakeholders. I aim to continue to nurture a culture where ethical leadership and social responsibility are fundamental, enabling us to adapt and excel in a rapidly changing world."

In regard to personal aspirations, he says, "I aspire to broaden my influence as a leader who inspires positive change in all aspects of my life as well as those I come across."



Rob Katz: 'Holding it together' through purpose and people

CLAUDIA GROSS

When Rob Katz took the stage to accept the Investec Business Leadership Award, he made a disarmingly simple statement: "In leadership, the three hardest words are 'hold it together'." Those words captured both his humility and his depth. Katz is a man who has led complex financial institutions through stormy times, yet still measures success in human terms.

Katz, known for steering Peregrine Holdings and its flagship wealth-management arm, Citadel, has built his career on foresight and empathy. At the awards evening, he spoke not of markets or margins, but perseverance. "Do what you need to do to keep a team together and motivated despite adversity," he told the audience.

His philosophy has always fused sharp

business sense with moral responsibility. At the helm of Citadel, Katz championed transparency, mentorship, and culture over ego. "I love the world of business. I love the world of people. Bringing it together has really enabled me to have a most fantastic career," he said in his tribute video. Katz noted that success happens when someone does what they like with people they like.

Equally defining is his philanthropic heart. Katz founded The Shoshana Foundation nearly 20 years ago, which supports single Jewish mothers and their children, a tribute to his own upbringing. In his work with the foundation, he brings his business skills to a worthy humanitarian cause. "It's probably my single proudest achievement in life," Katz said. Additionally, he champions the importance of Holocaust education, noting that one needs to understand the past to improve the future.

However, he didn't want to help just Jewish single mothers, but insisted that the foundation's support be extended to black single mothers in South Africa. To achieve this, he brought in former colleague Khanyi Mowebe to head up that arm of The Shoshana Foundation. Katz recalled an anecdote where one of the beneficiaries told him that the

foundation had ensured that her and her children had blankets and jerseys during winter for the first time.

He shared his wish that "we hold it together in our families; we hold it together in our communities; in our businesses; and in our country". Katz acknowledged his wife for all her hard work raising their children as his work had involved many late nights and long hours. He also gave a special mention to Howard Sackstein, saying, "You are a vital thread in the fabric of our precious Jewish community."





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Investec Professional Excellence Award

Benji Rosman brings AI to Africa

LEE TANKLE

Investec Jewish Achiever Award Professional Excellence Award winner Professor Benjamin Rosman has quickly established himself as the leading figure in South African Artificial Intelligence (AI), demonstrating to South Africa and the rest of the world that Africa is at the forefront of AI and machine learning.

At the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), he directs the Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute. He also leads initiatives like the Deep Learning Indaba and Lelapa AI, shaping the next generation of AI talent across Africa. In 2025, *Time* named him one of the 100 most influential people in AI, reflecting his impact on both science and society.

Rosman was born with cerebral palsy, leading to a right-sided hemiplegia. "This has given me constant challenges throughout my life, physically and psychologically, but it has taught me the value of perseverance, having a strong support group around me, and looking for unique strengths rather than following what everyone else is doing," he says.

In addition to founding the MIND Institute at Wits in 2024, which focuses on the fundamental science of intelligence in machines, humans, and animals, Rosman, as professor of computer science in machine learning and robotics, runs the most research-active AI lab, the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence and Learning (RAIL) Lab dedicated to conducting cutting-edge research in the field of AI systems.

"The MIND Institute is the only AI institute in Africa dedicated to the development of AI itself and ensuring that Africa doesn't just remain a consumer of AI developed in the rest of the world. This already involves 36 Wits researchers from diverse fields ranging from computer science to neuroanatomy and philosophy, and recently received funding of \$1 million [R17 million] from Google.org," he says.

The work of MIND doesn't only apply to areas of technology. Rosman has applied AI to other areas like healthcare and business. The Institute recently launched a project supporting African musicians in exploring novel uses of AI.

"We are also active in the policy space, with some of our fellows, including myself, being on government advisory panels," he says.

Rosman hasn't just made waves in the South African AI space, he has influenced the entire continent through the Deep Learning Indaba, of which he is a co-founder. The indaba is a pan-African movement to strengthen African AI, and has become the largest AI summer school in the world, with about 1 300 attendees at this year's event in Rwanda, with satellite events in 47 African countries. Rosman is also co-founder of the start-up Lelapa AI, dedicated to building AI for Africans by Africans.

This year, Rosman was the only African to be named a fellow of the prestigious Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR), in the area of Learning in Machines and Brains, which includes many of the godfathers of modern AI. He was made a fellow in 2025 after being named one of 18 early-career researchers in the world to be selected for the prestigious CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars programme for 2022-2024.

Moreover, in August 2025, Rosman was announced by *Time* as one of the 100 most influential minds in AI globally in the "thinkers category", where he was the only South African to be featured.

Despite all these achievements and recognition, Rosman's biggest achievement is the launch of the MIND Institute. "MIND is focused on fundamental research rather than delivering quick wins. This is something incredibly difficult to get funding for, but I managed to rally considerable support for it, and now it has achieved global recognition," he says.

Though Rosman completed his PhD in the United Kingdom, he always knew that he wanted to return to South Africa because he saw so much potential in the AI space.

"I never had any idea how to do this, but I was always looking for opportunities to give back," he says. "When the chance came in 2017 to start what became the Deep Learning Indaba, I jumped on it wholeheartedly, and through that experience, started learning more about Africa more generally, and where the gaps are that I could contribute to filling. My view of the rest of the continent has changed in this way from complete ignorance to a driving passion to promote activities and support people wherever I can."

Rosman has been extremely lucky in the fact that throughout his career, the popularity of AI has continued to soar.

"Despite this, I have always based what I do on core principles, and making sure that I am doing what I am doing because it is the right thing to do," he says,

"This means that we are future-proofed, rather than just chasing hype cycles. I have also made sure to surround myself with people who inspire me greatly, students and colleagues who can help us adapt our mission as we need to."

Rosman says that everything he does leads back to training people and giving them new skills.

"Every year, I have been teaching hundreds of students skills in machine learning and robotics," he says, "and now the people that I have trained are doing this as well. The Deep Learning Indaba now has a community of more than 10 000 Africans working in AI, so all of this is about building a more positive future for Africa."

He says truly embracing AI, not just in a superficial way, is the only way he can see us scaling economically the way we should – through start-ups and innovation. "If we are an active participant in the development of this technology, the benefits to our society will be immense, but if not, we run the real risk of being completely dominated and exploited by foreign powers. I dream of large numbers of South Africans working in different areas of AI and using this to support and empower their communities," he says.



AI visionary blends technology, empathy, and Jewish roots

LEE TANKLE

"I'm a computer scientist, so it's no surprise that I honestly believe that technology, particularly artificial intelligence, provides the best path to benefit humanity," Professor Benjamin Rosman said on receiving the Investec Professional Excellence Award at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on Sunday, 2 November.

Rosman has established himself as a leading figure in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI).

He spoke of how his Jewish roots had inspired him to find ways to connect and empower people. "As a Jewish South African, I was raised with the core value of wanting to help my fellow South Africans by providing opportunities for others and contributing to society wherever possible. I'm privileged to be a member of this amazing community that has such a long history of doing so much for South Africa and its people," he said.

As well as being a professor of computer science at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Rosman runs the Robot Learning and Artificial Intelligence (RAIL) laboratory at Wits; is one of the founders of the Deep Learning Indaba, the largest machine learning summer school in the world; the cofounder of Lelapa AI, a start-up dedicated to making sure that people in Africa can use and access technology in their own language; and the founder and director of the Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute at Wits.

"What I do in a lot of my work is first, try and

advance the technology to make sure it's safer and better suited to us," said Rosman, "but also that it's able to interact with different spheres of society, ranging from the work we do in healthcare through to safety, ethics, and policy work. And even touching on some work in ensuring that the creative arts can positively use this technology."

Rosman recognises that AI is already ever-present in today's society and is starting to find its way into every aspect of life. However, he wants it to be known that Africans can "sit at the adults' table" of AI, and it can be used to improve the lives of those around us.

"I am who I am because of the people closest to me," Rosman said. "When I was a baby, my parents were told that I had cerebral palsy and may not be able to walk or talk. I can't imagine how difficult that was for them, but regardless, my parents and brother taught me to believe in myself as well as in education, empathy, love, and community."

Rosman said that it's often easy to forget the potential this country has, but through his work, he is reminded of it every day, especially through his work

at Wits. "The students and raw talent that we have here is the fuel that drives everything," he said.

"None of these initiatives would have started or thrived without the environment we have here in South Africa," Rosman said. "I'm so lucky to be surrounded every

day by the most inspiring, dedicated, and passionate youth of every creed and background who are not only now winning many international awards for excellence, but spend much of their time in the service of others too."





JUDGING PANEL

NOMINEES

Europcar Women In Leadership Award



Dawn Nathan-Jones, Della Lawrence, Dorianne Weil, Judge Sharise Weiner, Johanna Makgalemele (online)



Scan here for more information on the
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Award** nominees

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Europcar Women in Leadership Award

Flipping the script on leadership

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Delivering results without sacrificing integrity, Grace Harding heads Ocean Basket with “more grit than superglue”. Harding has never been confined by the expectations of others. Her core strength, in fact, lies in not fitting the mould.

“I stand out like a sore thumb,” Harding says. “I represent a different kind of leadership: human, candid, and unafraid to challenge the script. My Jewish roots have shaped my resilience and my instinct to question; wrestle with complexity; stand up to power when needed; and to carry responsibility for people and performance. I don’t posture; I connect.”

When people ask what she does, Harding’s response exemplifies her unique approach to leadership. “I listen, sift, synthesise, form, ask around, recalibrate, check again, pull the team together, create a clear vision, ensure that every person has a clear script, and then we put the performance together. I’m less interested in titles and corporate posturing and more interested in outcomes that benefit all stakeholders.”

It’s all about a way of working, she says, centred on blended leading and working for the long-term benefit of all. “I’m generous with accountability, and tough on the things that matter: clarity, promises, and follow-through. I believe strength lives in vulnerability and that candour, offered with care, is a gift. I champion women and underheard voices, mentor future leaders, and insist that profit and purpose are partners, not rivals.”

Harding’s strong work ethic and leadership savvy took root when she was a teenager and began working in her father’s general dealer on Troye Street in Johannesburg. “That’s where I learned that I have the skill of getting people to accomplish things well,” she says. Having worked in retail and owning her own business for 15 years, Harding was well placed to lead Ocean Basket, a South African-born seafood brand with a global footprint, which has made seafood, widely considered a luxury, accessible by giving customers value for money.

The business’s mission is simple but powerful, Harding says. “We make seafood joyful and accessible, served with warmth and generosity.” The business operates on a franchise model with a focus on backing entrepreneurs with hands-on support, strong systems, and supply partnerships.

“It’s about creating jobs, growing local ownership, and building a sense of belonging in the communities we serve. Our real business is hospitality in its truest sense: making people feel welcome, valued, and seen.”

Harding says it’s important to change traditional thinking to keep brands like Ocean Basket relevant. “I changed my idea about what it means to have a relationship with franchisees,” she says. “It’s not a ‘franchisee/franchisor’ relationship, it has become one. Knitting all this together has seen incredible results starting to emerge.” Her ideas about accessing a new generation of customers and loudly promoting the highly competitive price points have also been particularly beneficial to the business.



Being open to change ties into the need to future-proof Ocean Basket, which starts with the people it serves, says Harding. “It involves staying closer to the customer than to the balance sheet or competitor. This

pivot has been life changing.” It’s about giving customers what they want and finding ways to make this work in the broader business strategy.

Harding also stresses the importance of embracing technology and artificial intelligence while learning to blend the resulting benefits into a brand that remains human-centric. And she’s excited about further developing this human-centric philosophy that underpins Ocean Basket’s success. “Now the focus is to embed inclusion that brings neurodiversity and invisible-disability awareness into hiring and training,” she says.

Harding says Ocean Basket’s potential to contribute to the betterment of the country is unlimited. “The restaurant industry has the lowest barrier to entry when it comes to employment. You don’t need to be highly skilled and there’s space for people not only in restaurants, but in the entire value chain that the restaurant industry supports.”

The business is therefore working with non-profit organisation, Afrika Tikkun, which empowers youth “from cradle to career” to build a strong pipeline. “Private companies in South Africa are the educators of the workforce,” Harding says. “We have an easy-to-use learning platform and conduct face-to-face training not only on the hard skills needed, but other life skills.”

It’s such life skills that have helped Harding herself establish such a successful career. She says people would be surprised to know that she doesn’t have a degree and, in fact, failed maths at school. This, however, is just further proof of the value of hard work and drawing on one’s inborn talents.

However, Harding has sometimes struggled with self-doubt. “This caused me to believe in people who were bad for the business, and there were two years of horrible outcomes,” she says. Yet addressing this disappointment fostered significant growth. “I got rid of them. I found big girl panties, and never again will this happen.”

Today, Harding says she’s built the best executive team she has worked with in more than a decade. She did it by finding people who have aligned values about the world and people.

“We also improved the way we measure cognitive and emotional intelligence muscles, as we need them both,” she says. Creating a ritual of “walk and talks” has also been invaluable. “I believe my role is to support my team and remove obstacles. I truly put them first and they are amazing *menschen*.”

Maintaining a work-life balance in her own life, however, has always been a battle, admits Harding, a self-proclaimed workaholic. “It has made me a bit sad in my later life. This is the next personal journey I get to focus on, where I’ll aim for better blending, which is better than balance, which sounds too hectic.”

Harding believes her greatest business achievement is still to come. She is, however, particularly proud of the way she has driven the transformation of the Ocean Basket business this year off a base of flat growth to growth of 14% year-to-date. “I kicked, fired, and reconstructed,” she says, “and it’s not stopping.”



Harry Scherzer and Melissa Kahn



Judge Sharise Weiner and Heidi Brauer



Clive and Janice Blechman

Grace Harding walks the talk of brave leadership

CLAUDIA GROSS

There was laughter, then a hush. Grace Harding, the chief executive of Ocean Basket, didn’t deliver a packaged acceptance. She offered something far rarer, a glimpse of the person behind the profit and loss. Harding started her acceptance speech by calling herself a “flop Jew”, but her award and career shows that she is not.

She spoke about growing up in a blended family with a Sephardi mother and English father. She thanked the Chevrah Kadisha for support when times were tough, saying, “Without the Jewish community, I don’t know what I would have done.” She remembered a season of temporary homelessness with her sister at Arcadia Children’s Home, and a schoolgirl’s sting watching others take home prizes.

“At King David, I watched awards go to other kids,” she said, grinning, before cheekily throwing up zap signs. The room roared. Then she pivoted to the message she wanted the community to hear. “Be vulnerable, work hard. Someone has to tell you there’s snot in your nose if you don’t know it.” It was disarmingly frank and tender in its way.

During her tribute video, Harding spoke about the 14 years she has spent in the Ocean Basket group, which prides itself on being the only seafood-exclusive group in the world. In its 30th year, Ocean Basket proudly boasts more than 180 restaurants in 16 countries.



Harding said the group’s aim is to bring excellent quality seafood to the middle-class of the countries in which it operates, and that accessibility is at its core.

For Harding, keeping the business strong and safe is imperative, because she believes that without that foundation there can be no growth. She said the system on which a business is built must be sustainable to create longevity.

One way Harding does this is by engaging stakeholders. “Business is no longer about one person winning, and the other people just tagging along. If there isn’t value derived and felt by everyone from staff to franchisees to suppliers, then that doesn’t contribute to a healthy reputation.”

Harding said the hospitality industry is a major employer, and she loves it. She thanked Ocean Basket founder Peter Lazarides for his mentorship, and Marc Kahn from Investec for his support.

The applause for Harding also felt like a tribute to the many women who carry family and business at the same time. She spoke of a “blended” identity, and how it sharpened her instinct to question. She also said it grounded her belief that opportunity in this country must be built, not begged for. Her call was practical: train people well; pay attention to life skills; and partner with organisations that can grow a pipeline of talent.



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Dina Diamond interviewing Judah, Caleb, and Shaun Levitan

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NOMINEES



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Caleb Levitan and
Judah Levitan



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Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star Award

Teen chess prodigies ponder next move

GILANA LAB

At just 15 years old, twin brothers Caleb and Judah Levitan are blazing a trail in chess in South Africa. The country's youngest International Master and FIDE (International Chess Federation) Master, respectively, they are not only breaking records, but reshaping what it means to compete with purpose.

"Our journey began at six years old, learning the game at home," the brothers, this year's Investec Jewish Achiever Awards Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star winners, recall. "Having a partner in each other made us competitive, first across the kitchen table, then in local tournaments."

That sibling rivalry quickly turned into something bigger. In 2018, at just seven years old, Caleb won the South African Junior Closed (U8) Championship, and Judah finished second. "It earned us the chance to represent South Africa at the African Youth Championship in Kenya, where we tied for first place."

It was a moment that shifted their perspective. "We quickly learned that titles aren't just medals, they give you a platform, and it's up to you how you use it."

Since then, their paths have run in parallel, but with distinct highlights. "With guidance from a Grandmaster coach, I won the SA Junior Closed (U10) in 2019; reached the last 16 at the FIDE Online World Cadets (U10) in 2020; and at 11, won the SA Junior Closed (U16), becoming South Africa's youngest FIDE Master," Caleb says.

In 2024, Caleb's career leapt again. "I stepped into the adult circuit, finishing runner-up at the SA Closed Championships at age 13 – the youngest ever – and represented South Africa at both the African Games in Ghana and the Chess Olympiad in Budapest."

Judah's milestones are equally remarkable. "I represented South Africa in India, Spain, and Panama, and at just 12, made the U16 Olympiad team in Azerbaijan. That same year, I became the South African U12 Champion, and earned a podium finish at the African Youth Championship. In 2025, I won the South African Junior Blitz Championship and earned the FIDE Master title."

Today, their status speaks for itself. "Caleb is the top-rated active player in the country of all ages. Judah is ranked sixth, and together, we are Africa's highest-rated siblings," they say.

But the brothers insist that their journey isn't only about results. "Off the board, we wanted chess to mean more than ratings," they say. Visiting schools showed them how many children had intelligence and enthusiasm but "no access to boards or clocks".

They began raising funds, donating equipment, and conducting regular sessions. "We've coached development teams; run outreach in under-resourced areas; and partnered with schools that use chess to build focus, planning, and confidence."

For the Levitans, these experiences are priceless. "The best moments aren't trophies, they're watching a beginner spot a tactic they once thought impossible, or win a game that changes their self-belief."



Heather Casey, Odi Mashishi, and Sandiswa Memela



Lara Cohen and Dorianne Weil

Their success hasn't been without challenges. "Caleb missed out on the International Master title aged 13 due to one bad move.



Judah missed out on qualifying for the SA Adult Chess Championship," they share candidly.

Yet these disappointments became catalysts. "These setbacks were important as gaps in the game were identified and there was a shift in training. Two years later, Caleb achieved the International Master title, and Judah has

qualified for the 2026 edition of the tournament."

Chess, they believe, has shaped their approach to handling adversity. "It has taught us to try and see things many moves ahead, so we are trying to set big goals and see the bigger picture rather than worry about minor setbacks or bad tournaments"

One of their unique challenges is managing the "double life" of being school students and elite competitors. "We have the same school responsibilities of a regular kid, but compete against adults or kids who are home-schooled," they say.

This is done "with great difficulty. Chess comes first unless it's an exam period or a *chag*." Support comes from a close-knit network. "Our dad is our manager, but we have a team of Grandmaster coaches – in different time zones – and experts who support us. We have the support of family and freedom granted from school."

Their mentor, Grandmaster Melikset Khachiyani, is another source of inspiration. "He is a chess superstar from Armenia who fled his country to start a new life in the United States. His family and friends always come first, and we're lucky that he treats us like family," they say.

Professionally, their goal is clear. "We have one goal: to become Grandmasters," they say. But their vision extends to every classroom in South Africa. "We would love to play a meaningful role in chess being introduced into all schools in South Africa."

That vision is rooted in their identity and values. "We have been really fortunate to daven the Yom Kippur service in Baku; have a Shabbos meal in Budapest; and daven in Singapore, and there's no place like home. Our vision is that the youth of today keeps the values of those that came before it while using new opportunities to build a stronger, prouder South Africa for the future."

When asked why they believe they deserve this award, their answer is simple yet profound. "We would be worthy winners for competing beyond our years; showing resilience; and serving our community. Winning would expand our outreach; inspire young players; and support our journey to become South Africa's next Grandmasters."

At just 15, Caleb and Judah embody what it means to be Rising Stars: exceptional talent matched with humility; vision; and a commitment to giving back. Their story isn't only about chess, it's about resilience, purpose, and the future of South Africa itself.

‘Heroes are our parents,’ say Levitan chess prodigies

GILANA LAB

When Caleb and Judah Levitan accepted the Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star Award at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November, their words captured exactly why they have become two of South Africa's most admired young talents. It's not just about their success on the chessboard, but their humility, gratitude, and sense of purpose.

"It's such an honour to be standing up here with my brother tonight," Caleb said. "Thank you for nominating us; thank you for voting for us; and thank you, judges, for believing in us. I think this is our third year of being nominated, so thank you for being the reason that we always have a suit in the cupboard that fits us."

Judah followed by reflecting on what it means to be recognised among so many talented young South Africans. "Everyone nominated in this category is so deserving," he said. "It's incredible to belong to a community of such talented and inspiring people, and to have so many young people who showcase the strength and talents of South Africa. We are lucky to grow up in such a close community, and one with such great examples of leadership and a spirit of giving."

For the brothers, chess is far more than a competitive sport. "It's surreal being recognised for doing something that we really just love to do," Caleb said. "We're lucky enough to have the opportunity to play the game we love for our school, for our city, for our province, and for our country."

The twins recently received their Springbok blazers from rugby legend Victor Matfield, a moment they described as unforgettable. "He couldn't have described it better," Caleb said. "He worked harder than anyone. But when you work at what you love, it doesn't feel like work."

Judah spoke about what makes their sport so unique. "Chess is a sport that is open to anyone of any age or background," he said. "Our South African chess community is full of amazing personalities. It's diverse, smart, and filled with the kind of warmth you expect. Travelling with a team to represent South Africa and wearing the green and gold is a true honour, and some of the best times we have had."

Their travels have also deepened their Jewish identity. "As Jews, we try to uphold our traditions even when travelling," Caleb said. "We recently spent Yom Kippur at Chabad of Tirana; shook lulav and etrog in Albania; fasted in Baku in Azerbaijan; and spent Shabbat with local communities in Budapest and Warsaw. We have yet to play in a country

where there hasn't been a Chabad, and the international Jewish community has always given us a sense of home."

The brothers' success is the result of years of discipline, teamwork, and determination. "Competing at this level requires hours of work, long games, up to six hours preparation, coaching, losses and comebacks, and the grit needed to keep on going," Judah said. "We've easily put in more than 10 000 hours since we were six years old. I don't think it would be possible without my brother by my side. While we started off competing against each other, we're now partners, and this has been a huge factor in continuing our journey."

Their admiration for each other was clear. "I'm Judah's biggest fan," Caleb said. "I was so proud when he became the youngest South African to receive the FIDE Master title earlier this year. He's the current South African Junior Blitz Chess Champion, and is rated among the top five players of any age in the country." Said Judah, "Caleb is the top-rated active player of any age in South Africa, and

earlier this year, he became an International Master. We're not done yet, and hope to be South Africa's first Grandmasters one day."

They also paid tribute to those who made it possible. "The hidden heroes in our story are our parents, who have given us so many opportunities and literally travelled to the ends of the earth for us," Caleb said. Judah thanked their sisters, school, and friends for supporting them, and their coaches "who continue to help us learn and grow".

Their speech concluded with the values they live by. "Give it everything you've got," Judah said. "Have the grace to lose with dignity, and the strength to fight back. Keep your family close on your journey, and embrace the support of your communities. Love what you do, and give back whenever you can."



Ruby Ichikowitz, and Caleb and Judah Levitan

Sivan Yaari brings clean water, hope to African villages

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Sivan Yaari, the chief executive and founder of Innovation: Africa, which uses solar energy to address Africa’s water crisis, accepted her 2024 Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award at this year’s Investec Jewish Achiever Awards. Unable to attend last year’s ceremony due to her father-in-law’s death, she was thrilled that the 2025 event was sponsored by Investec, which was instrumental in her expansion into South Africa.

Amid a standing ovation honouring the staggering impact of Innovation: Africa which, to date, has brought clean drinking water to more than six million people across 10 African countries, Yaari accepted her award. Reflecting on the fortuitous timing of Investec’s awards sponsorship, she described how the company funded the first 11 South African villages that have received access to clean water with Innovation: Africa.

Convinced that South Africa was a rich country that didn’t need her services, Yaari was sceptical seven years ago when former Investec Chief Executive Stephen Koseff called her and asked to meet. Upon his insistence, she cancelled her flight out of the country to

see what he had to say. After their meeting, Yaari travelled to some of South Africa’s rural villages.

“What I saw in the villages didn’t make sense to me,” she said. “They had TV, electricity, and yet, the women were walking hours every day just to get to a small, dirty, contaminated source of water or to the rivers. But what really touched me were testimonies from the

South Africans are getting access to clean water thanks to Israeli technology,” she said.

Yaari attributed much of her organisation’s success in South Africa to the country’s Jewish community. “I’ve never seen such a community, and I’ve been around,” she said. She made special mention of the Kirsh family.

“Thanks to them, millions of people today in Africa have a better life. They trusted us. They

back to Israel, and by chance saw an advert for a job at Jordache Jeans. She was hired to do quality control at its factory in Madagascar because she could speak French. “This is how 27 years ago, when I was 20, I got to the continent, and haven’t left,” she said.

“I didn’t have much growing up in Israel, but the poverty that I saw in the villages was quite different. When I grew up, I had shoes, I had a bed, I had a blanket, I had water, I had electricity. The poverty I saw didn’t make sense. I remembered growing up in Israel and seeing solar panels all over, and I said to myself, ‘It doesn’t make sense that they have to go and get dirty water.’ Some of them were dying from thirst because there was no water at all. Schools and medical centres had no electricity.”

With sponsorship from Jordache, Yaari attained her a masters in energy from Columbia University in New York. “As a student, I went back with two solar panels to a small village in Tanzania, and that was the first one. Then I did another, and another,” she said. Today, she has almost 100 employees across Israel and Africa. “We’re working hard, going village by village to try to change the lives of people because it’s the right thing to do, because people deserve access to clean water,” Yaari said.

Innovation: Africa is only one of many Israeli organisations doing good work around the globe, Yaari said. “I hope that one day, the world will see the real and vast contribution that Israel is making to the world, a country that, despite all its challenges, continues to give, share, and innovate. One promise I will make tonight is that as long as I can, I will continue to fulfil our Jewish destiny to empower others. I will keep going village by village, using Israeli innovation to improve lives and show the true face of Israel.”



Sivan Yaari and Marc Lubner

women.” They told Yaari of their fear, how they were attacked and some were raped walking to get water. “They feared for their daughters, and were begging me to help them.”

Afterwards, Yaari called Koseff and said, “Let’s do it.” Today with Koseff’s continued involvement, Innovation: Africa provides clean water to more than 200 villages across South Africa and counting. “More than one million

than 1 300 villages across Africa, including in Cameroon, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Senegal, Ethiopia, and more. “The knowledge of Israel, the technology of Israel is now providing them with a better life, with hope and dignity,” she said.

Yaari revealed that she was born in Israel to a poor family who moved to France seeking a better life when she was 12. Later, she moved



Bafana Modise



Jonathan and Dr Sheri Hertz



Yael Rosen and Bianca Toman

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The Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award

in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris

A good deed: Khaya Lam turns tenants into homeowners

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Khaya Lam executive Terry Markman is audibly moved when speaking of the joy that emanates from those who receive title deeds to their properties after decades of being denied this right. It's the result of the work of Khaya Lam (My Home), an initiative of the Free Market Foundation (FMF). Khaya Lam has been awarded the Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris.

In some cases, those who receive title deeds to their property have been living in their houses for 30, 40, and even 50 years, says Markman. "These handovers are what it's all about. You might see a woman in her late 90s, who hasn't owned a property all her life, getting her title deed. "She says, 'Now I can die, and my children can get the house.'" I'm emotional just talking about it."

Searle Sacks, the manager of the Free State Khaya Lam branch, says the handovers make the immense frustration that come with dealing with sometimes dysfunctional municipalities worthwhile. "When you hand out the title deed to somebody who is 106 years old, who walked to and from the venue to collect her title deed, I can't explain the feeling that you get."

David Ansara, chief executive of think tank and policy advocacy group the Free Market Foundation (FMF), active in South Africa for 50 years, says Khaya Lam reflects the group's philosophy. "One of the FMF's core principles is private property rights, around which we do a lot of advocacy work," he says. "Providing people with these rights is a way of empowering them to be free individuals, to make their own choices, and to be agents of their own future."

"We believe that as an individual, you have the

inalienable right of ownership, and that your rights as a human being extend to your possessions. That's critical not only for economic development, but also in terms of respect for people as human beings, you don't arbitrarily seize their wealth or property.

"So, while we're critical of expropriation without compensation, we believe in affirming people's property rights. Unlike many other think tanks, we therefore have a very practical component, which is the Khaya Lam project."

The project dates back to apartheid, which instilled a long history of deprivation of private property rights. This came in the form of the Group Areas Act and other pieces of legislation which controlled where people could live and denied many black South Africans ownership rights. Yet, at the end of apartheid in the 1990s, the state in most relevant municipalities relinquished ownership of council-owned properties. "So, people who used to be tenants of the council, effectively became the owners of these properties," Ansara says.

In many instances, there are families who had been living, sometimes for generations, in these properties that they had always rented, he says. "While everybody in the community now recognises them as the rightful occupiers of that home, they don't have a title deed to prove their ownership status. That's where the Khaya Lam project comes in – to assist with the transfer of the title deed from the municipality to the owner. And so, that individual, and by extension his or her family, becomes a legitimate owner of that property."

The economic benefits this brings include intergenerational wealth transfer and having an asset that can be leveraged to acquire a loan or to use as collateral, Ansara says. "Beyond the upward mobility and

economic advancement this offers is the principled moral argument that poor South Africans deserve the same protections as wealthy or middle-class citizens do. It recognises their fundamental dignity as human beings."

Ultimately, Khaya Lam is about formalising property ownership rights. "We work with the

collaborator.

In 2010, the FMF received funding from First National Bank to do a pilot project formalising 100 transfers in the Free State, a process that took three years to complete. The successful transfer of 100 title deeds in 2013, 100 years after the Natives Land Act of 1913 which deprived many black South Africans of private property, was symbolically significant.

Perry continued running operations on the ground in the Free State until he passed away from COVID-19 in 2021. Thereafter, Markman came to the fore as the leader of Khaya Lam. Though he admits that the role came with a steep learning curve and still requires constant perseverance, the project has grown exponentially.

By early 2023, Khaya Lam had facilitated 10 000 title deed transfers; today, just two and a half years later, about 21 000 deeds have been transferred.

Khaya Lam is funded by many private donors, but the majority of its funding has come from billionaire businessman Johann Rupert. The team attributes a big part of the project's success to Rupert, whose father, Anton, was involved with the FMF in the late 1970s. Yet, Khaya Lam remains a capital-intensive project that will require recapitalisation in the new year, they say.

In terms of operations in the Free State where much of the work is done, Markman has been supported by Searle and Lorna Sacks. The couple also live in Parys, and took over upon Feldman's passing. "Perry and I were partners in business forever," says Searle, "and he married my cousin, Veronica." Through their close relationship with the Feldmans, the Sacks couple were familiar with Khaya Lam.

"Perry was so passionate about this, we felt, it's just such a good cause," says Lorna, who serves as associate manager, explaining how she and her husband got involved. "We would also like to give back to Parys; we've had such a wonderful life here."

Lorna says Feldman would have been thrilled by Khaya Lam winning a Jewish Achiever Award. "I wish he could see it. It would have meant absolutely everything."

Khaya Lam opens doors to dignity and homeownership

CLAUDIA GROSS

When Terry Markman, the executive project manager of Khaya Lam, stepped forward to accept the 2025 Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in hour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, he carried with him the quiet pride of a man representing thousands of families whose lives have changed through a single document.

"The organisation has helped 21 000 council tenants become homeowners," he told the audience. The number drew applause, but the real power of his words lay in what they meant. Each title deed represents security, independence, and the start of generational wealth.

Markman's voice softened as he credited those who came before him. "Khaya Lam wouldn't exist without Dr Anton Rupert and Perry Feldman. They should be accepting this award," he said. Both men envisioned a South Africa in which ordinary people could legally own the homes they had lived in for years, a simple idea that became a quiet revolution.

Founded under the Free Market Foundation, Khaya Lam – which means "my home" – works with municipalities, funders, and banks to convert long-term rental housing into ownership. The project's genius is its practicality. It doesn't build

new houses. It changes the status of existing ones, transferring title deeds from councils to the families who live there.

The evening's audience, filled with business leaders and community figures, seemed moved by the straightforward power of it. "Thank you to Absa and Investec for their support, and for providing financial education for beneficiaries," Markman said. He then looked up from his notes, and made a quiet appeal to the audience. "We need your help to keep doing this work."

That call hung in the air. In a country still scarred by housing inequality, the notion of home ownership as empowerment struck a deep chord. For the Jewish community, long involved in social-impact projects, Khaya Lam's work resonated as an example of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world)

through practical, measurable change.

Khaya Lam's progress is also a testament to partnership. Local municipalities collaborate on land transfers, and banks fund legal processes. Each transaction is modest on its own, but together, they signal a shift in ownership that reaches across provinces.

The award, named for Lubner, himself a philanthropist who believed in combining compassion with competence, could hardly have found a better home this year. Khaya Lam represents what South Africans do best when vision meets persistence: they fix things.



Marc Lubner, Searle and Lorna Sacks



Terry Markman addressing recipients at a handover event in Bela-Bela

municipalities, signing a memorandum of understanding to help identify which properties fit these criteria," Ansara says. "Then we commission conveyancers to facilitate the transfer process. As the volume of the transfers is so high, conveyancers can give us beneficial rates, enabling us to do a successful full ownership title deed transfer for R3 750." Funds are provided by private donors, and are separate from the institutional funding of the FMF.

The Khaya Lam idea germinated between FMF directors Leon Louw, Eustace Davie, and Temba Nolutshungu. Khaya Lam was spearheaded in 2010 by businessman and farmer Perry Feldman, who, upon retiring, decided to work on acquiring title deeds for applicable property owners in his hometown of Parys. As early as 2008, Feldman approached Markman, a close friend associated with the FMF, which he thought would be an effective



Della and David Lawrence



Dan Goldberg and Gina Myers



Ingrid and Stanley Seeff

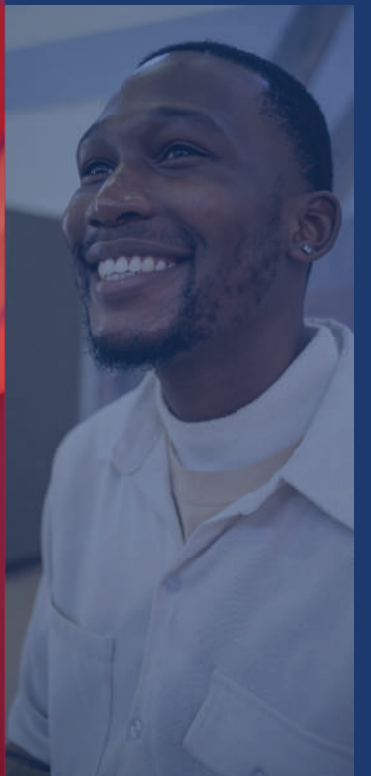


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JUDGING PANEL

The Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award



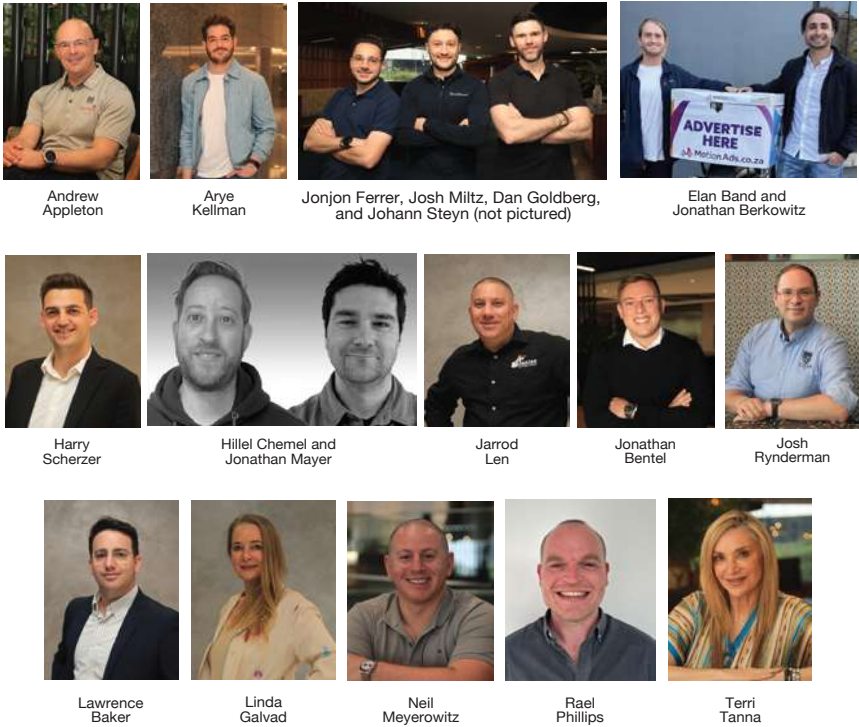
Avi Mishan, Liran Assness, Heidi Brauer, Romeo Kumalo, Marc Ackermann, Rob Fihrer (online)



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The Eric Ellering Entrepreneur Award

Bikes deliver brand power and transform drivers' lives

Now serving leading brands including PepsiCo; Holland; Naked Insurance; Decathlon; and Vodacom, Jonathan Berkowitz (32) and Elan Band (34) founded MotionAds in 2019 armed with a clear purpose and vision to transform everyday delivery bikes into high-impact, local advertising platforms while creating meaningful opportunities for drivers.

"At its core, MotionAds is more than an advertising platform; it's a movement that connects brands, drivers, and communities," say Band and Berkowitz. "We have redefined what Out-of-Home [OOH] advertising can achieve, proving that creative, technology-enabled campaigns can be commercially effective and socially responsible. Our work shows that when business serves people as well as profit, the results create value far beyond financial performance, empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and inspiring change."

In conceptualising MotionAds, this year's Eric Ellering Entrepreneur Award Winners were motivated by a desire to marry two pressing challenges in South Africa. "We wanted to provide innovative, measurable solutions for OOH advertising; and support gig-economy workers, who often struggle to make ends meet," they say.

Partnering with Uber Eats, MotionAds turns delivery bikes into moving billboards, creating campaigns that generate value for brands and drivers. "Brands gain access to highly visible, mobile, and data-driven advertising, while drivers earn supplemental income and become active participants in the campaigns they help deliver," the business partners say.

Having grown from three to more than 2 000 branded bikes in its six years of existence, MotionAds has recently been able to pay millions in additional income directly to its drivers. This is a clear demonstration of the company's commitment to creating social impact alongside commercial success. Though Band and Berkowitz consider the company's substantial growth to be their biggest achievement, they are particularly proud of being able to distribute this level of income.

"Reaching this milestone exemplifies the social impact at the heart of MotionAds, empowering drivers with meaningful supplemental income while turning them into active brand ambassadors," they say. "It reinforces our vision that entrepreneurship can do more than generate profit, it can create lasting value for people, communities, and the broader economy." And it fosters the kind of collaborative growth that helps build a nation defined by its potential, not its problems, the business partners say.

Now operational in seven cities throughout South Africa, MotionAds accesses suburbs, townships, and communities often overlooked by traditional media. But the company's exponential growth hasn't just been driven by broadening its reach, but by focusing on innovation.

"We've invested in proprietary technology that tracks campaigns in real time; maps geographic exposure; and provides transparent reporting dashboards for clients," say Band and Berkowitz. This solves a longstanding challenge in the OOH industry, namely measurability, allowing for precision and accountability. "This combination of creativity, mobility, and technology has enabled us to execute successful campaigns for leading brands and well-known businesses," they say.

Yet scaling up the business rapidly brought growing pains. "Early on, we found ourselves wearing multiple hats – managing operations, client relationships, creative strategy, driver engagement, and technology development – all at the same time," the entrepreneurs say. "Though this hands-on approach was essential in the early stages, it became clear that sustainable growth required knowing when to step back and allow professionals to take ownership in their respective areas."

So, building an effective management team became a priority. "By investing in training, clear systems, and collaborative and scalable processes,



we've empowered our team to take ownership, make data-driven decisions, and respond effectively to changing client needs and market conditions. This approach ensures that MotionAds can scale responsibly while maintaining quality, agility, and impact."

Nonetheless, learning to trust others and pass on responsibility has been a significant growth journey, they admit. "It has taught us the importance of leadership that empowers others, balances oversight with autonomy, and focuses on strategy and vision rather than on being involved in every detail."

Leading with empathy also helped them to create a positive working environment. "Maintaining balance between work, family, and community requires intention and a supportive culture," say Band and Berkowitz. "Beyond our own need for balance, we build strong teams and systems that allow the business to run smoothly while giving our team the space to focus on personal priorities when needed – and encouraging them to do so."

Aside from navigating fast growth, another significant challenge was the fact that the company was launched in 2019 and had to recalibrate when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020. Its founders were forced to confront the resulting uncertainty, shifting urban dynamics, and broader societal and economic disruptions that affected drivers and clients.

"These early challenges taught us resilience,



adaptability, and the importance of developing scalable systems and building a business that could support drivers through unpredictable circumstances," they say. "Over time, we learned that true business achievement isn't just about growth or expanding reach, it's about creating opportunities that genuinely empower our drivers. Our journey reinforced a core belief: businesses thrive when people are at the centre, and even challenging times can be transformed into meaningful opportunities for impact."

Futureproofing MotionAds by being proactive and implementing a flexible business model allows the team to adapt to challenges and changes. While continuously refining their approach, the partners plan to continue building MotionAds into a leading platform for innovative, socially responsible advertising with measurable impact. "By combining technology, strong systems, and a values-driven culture, we have positioned MotionAds to thrive sustainably, regardless of external changes," they say.

Band and Berkowitz aim to expand the opportunities they provide for gig-economy drivers, helping more people to earn with dignity and grow their skills. They also hope to collaborate with more brands and sectors that share their values.

"We envision continued growth as entrepreneurs who lead with purpose, innovation, and integrity, creating ventures that generate commercial and social value," they say. "For South Africa, we hope MotionAds

serves as a model for how business can be a force for good: driving economic inclusion; supporting informal economies; and fostering a culture where entrepreneurship strengthens communities and creates lasting social change."



Entrepreneurs' bike branding empowers drivers along the way

GILANA LAB

"As Jews, we're a people shaped by resilience. We're descendants of those who have turned exile into renewal, and struggle into purpose," said Jonathan Berkowitz, the co-founder of MotionAds on accepting this year's Eric Ellering Entrepreneur Award at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November.

"Every day, I wake up and in every single one of our drivers, I see a reflection of my great-grandfather, Samuel," said Berkowitz. "I don't see Tendai, I don't see Lungu, I don't see Steve. I see a man who has endured extreme hardship before immigrating to this country, and who works tirelessly to build a better life for his family."

Through his work at MotionAds to empower motorcycle drivers to take their future into their own hands, Berkowitz is reminded how his great-grandfather fled Europe at the age of 13, and had to work his way up from nothing so that four generations later, Berkowitz has the privilege and opportunity to use his entrepreneurial skills to help others.

"After the war, [my grandfather] opened up a shoe shop with my grandmother before later selling insurance. His son, my father, Neville, was born middle class in Durban, and studied auditing. He made the big move to Johannesburg, where he pioneered the field of property economics in South Africa before becoming a property developer and later an entrepreneur. And then me, Jonathan, born into privilege, without a want in the world, and all of life's opportunities at my feet," he said.

This is why six years ago, he and Elan Band came together to found MotionAds, a South African digital advertising company that specialises in

mobile and in-car digital screens, offering brands dynamic, high-visibility advertising opportunities.

Band said that when he decided to step away from a law career, everyone around him saw the potential. "I'll never forget the moment I first told them about this crazy idea of building MotionAds. They didn't hesitate for a second. My dad said, 'You should 100% do this. You've got this all the way,'" Band said.

Although Berkowitz and Band started MotionAds six years ago, Berkowitz said it felt like it was just the beginning, "with an entire ecosystem that we're building for drivers to access financial services, insurance, discounted phones, data shopping, vouchers, and everything that they need to continue to power their micro enterprises on two wheels".

"The thing I'm most proud of with MotionAds is the thousands of drivers we empower every month, giving them a fair shot at making it in this world. It's a real impact, and the sort of opportunity that I could only wish that my great-grandfather, Samuel, had," Berkowitz said.

"There's so much negativity and pessimism floating around about South Africa, but our story represents opportunity. It's about being enterprising and seeing possibilities where others see challenges," said Band. "It all started with a simple idea from two boys from Linksfield. Through work and belief, we turned that idea into a reality. And we're so lucky to have this community that we can learn from."



Mann Made Community Service Award

KDVP – a little school with a giant impact

NICOLA MILTZ

In the dust and dreams of 1950s Johannesburg, a handful of Jewish families stood on what was once a peach farm and imagined something extraordinary: a place where their children could learn, pray, and belong. With rolled-up sleeves and boundless determination, they built more than a school, they built a legacy.

King David Victory Park began with a dream, and with parents who turned that dream into brick and mortar. Guided by love and purpose, they shaped not only walls, but a future.

As former principal Jeffrey Wolf recalls, “From the very beginning, there was something special about King David Victory Park (KDVP). It wasn’t just about buildings or textbooks, it was about people.”

From those humble beginnings, KDVP was born and became the little school that built giants.

More than six decades later, that vision has come full circle. KDVP has been awarded the 2025 Mann Made Community Service Award, a tribute not only to its academic excellence, but to the generations of love, resilience, and belonging that it helped to build.

KDVP has been far more than a school, “it has been a home”, said Wolf, a sanctuary of Jewish identity and a forge of character where compassion, curiosity, and courage were lived, not merely taught. Its story was one of grit, heart, and togetherness, he said.

Its roots stretch back to 1958, when the Greenside and Emmarentia Hebrew Congregations appealed to the South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) to build a school for the growing community in the north-western suburbs. A 20-acre peach farm was purchased and steadily morphed into classrooms, and in 1960, the first 109 pupils walked through the doors of what would become a cornerstone of Jewish education.

“The school’s foundation was literally laid by its community. Parents and teachers rolled up their sleeves, planting trees, mixing concrete, and levelling playing fields,” said Wolf.

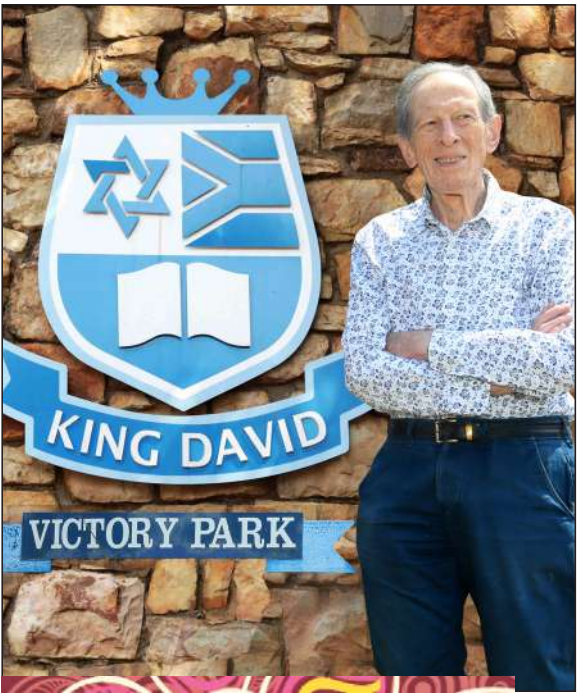
What emerged was not just a school, but a village built with love and determination.

By 1968, Victory Park High School opened its doors to 250-odd pupils in a new complex – still modest, but filled with promise. That same year, David Ben-Gurion visited the school. As students sang Hebrew songs, he beamed at the sight of so many young Jewish faces, far from Israel yet bound deeply to its spirit.

Few names are as synonymous with the school as Jeffrey Wolf and his wife, Barbara. Jeffrey joined the school in 1968, and went on to serve as principal from 1975 to 1998. Together with his twin brother, Elliot, who headed King David High School Linksfield, the two were affectionately known as “the twin principals”, shaping generations of Jewish students with wisdom, warmth, and discipline.



Lisa and Grant Friedman, Kevin Fine and Jenna Blend



“It was a thoroughbred community school from juniors to teenagers,” Wolf recalls. “This was felt in all the successes and achievements. From the sports

fields to public speaking and chess, there was collective jubilation. Everybody took part in it, and was proud of what we had achieved.

“I knew every student’s name, I knew their strengths and weaknesses, their personalities, and each person felt they had a place,” he said.

Barbara, who taught Latin and English, said Jeffrey set an example by attending Shacharit prayers every morning.

“I’m not ultra-Orthodox – traditional, yes – but I saw that as part of my duty. If the school was expected to be in shul, then I had to be there too, with them,” he said.

The school’s strength, said Barbara, who became the school’s deputy head, came not only from its teachers, but from the extraordinary dedication of its parents.

“One mother caught the bus every day from Emmarentia to serve in the tuck shop, never missing a day. No-one asked her to do this.”

“The parents wanted a good school with the highest standards in secular subjects, but they also keenly and enthusiastically wanted Jewish education for their children,” said Wolf.

“Luckily, I found a wonderful, devoted, outstanding

team. There was a lovely harmony.”

That harmony extended far beyond the walls of the classroom. It became a family school, where everyone from bobbas and zaidas to toddlers and teens felt at home, with a synagogue on the grounds giving a spiritual heartbeat to the campus.

“In most schools, the juniors are treated as juniors by the seniors. It didn’t work out like that at Victory Park,” Wolf said. “The little ones felt totally at home with the bigger ones, and they were all friendly with one another.”

Teachers stayed late, parents volunteered endlessly, and the children thrived in an atmosphere of warmth and care. “It was a school where every pupil mattered; where individuality was celebrated; faith was lived; and community was cherished,” said Wolf.

Behind the scenes, beloved staff like Eida Schneiderman, Wolf’s devoted assistant for 25 years, kept the spirit alive. She dispensed Panado and kindness in equal measure, tending to children and staff alike with the same care she would give her own family.

The school flourished academically, spiritually, and emotionally. From its classrooms emerged alumni who would go on to leave indelible marks across the globe.

“The school produced 19 rabbis, many of whom were head boys and have become renowned,” said Barbara.

Honouring King David Victory Park’s heartfelt educational journey

LEE TANKLE

Although the King David Victory Park (KDVP) campus will be closing at the end of this year, the thousands who passed through the school “didn’t merely pass through the school; the school passed through them. They continue to carry the spirit and special ethos of Victory Park wherever they go. Once a Parker, always a Parker.”

So said Barbara Wolf on accepting this year’s Mann Made Community Service Award on behalf of King David Victory Park at this year’s Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November. Though the award was for the school itself, the Wolfs were called to accept the award in its stead.

“It’s a profound honour to stand here tonight as representatives of our school. A school which served not only the communities around the school, but the Jewish community as far afield as Florida and Krugersdorp,” said Barbara, “And as I reflect on our

Victory Park is heartbreaking for Barbara and me.”

Barbara and Jeffrey say that they didn’t do it alone, there were many brilliant educators who were involved in educating “Parkers” through the years.

“I pay tribute to the fine, loyal educators who taught the thousands of special souls that were entrusted to King David Victory Park. We gave them all, including our own three children, a home from home,” said Barbara.

“We led by example; we encouraged them to express themselves politely; we taught them to think critically; we disciplined them; and then we sent them out into the world as decent, upright young men and women, proud of their heritage and with a love of Israel,” she said.

Jeffrey said the roles of headmaster filled by his brother, Elliot Wolf, and himself, at King David Linksfield and King David Victory Park respectively, were simultaneous, and closely resembled the lives they both lived.



30-year journey of the school, which became my husband’s *magnum opus*, I’m filled with immense gratitude.”

Barbara and Jeffrey Wolf joined KDVP in 1969, and under their care, the little community school continued to grow from strength to strength, where it quickly became “the best little Jewish day school in Johannesburg”.

“The closure of King David Victory Park for demographic reasons reminds me of the end of Johannesburg synagogues like the great shul in Walden Street; the Berea and Yeoville synagogues; great centres of the surrounding vibrant Jewish communities in their time,” said Jeffrey, “Sadness enveloped each of us just as the demise of King David

“These appointments were in total accord with everything else which had happened before in our lives. I’m not talking about mistaken identity here, because that was a common occurrence as well,” said Jeffrey, “But we were always in the same class at school and *cheder*. We majored in the same subject at university. We played the piano and tennis together. We were members of the same Zionist youth movement. In fact, we shared everything in our lives, except, of course, my wife Barbara, but he certainly is the second father to our three children and all our grandchildren.”

On the fourth anniversary of his brother’s passing, Jeffrey said, “The comforting thought is now so relevant for me as I consider the end of Victory Park, a high school he knew as well as I knew Linksfield, from our daily calls of the 30-odd years that we were together as joint heads.

“The amalgamation of the two schools fits so neatly together with the completely shared past of our lupine era. For this reason, I have the feeling that Victory Park will be warmly welcomed and integrated as a twin brother in the new one King David for a shared future. This is my comfort.”

“It’s a small school that has had a disproportionate impact on the world,” said Rabbi Ricky Seeff, general director of the SABJE and former principal of the primary school.

“It has been home to thousands of South African Jews, and provided them with a superb education and deep-rooted appreciation for Judaism and community. It’s a warm place that created a culture of inclusivity and care and always punched above its weight.”

He said the school had created a staunch loyalty and affinity among its alumni, who remain connected and passionate decades after leaving.

“An incredible attribute is the success of alumni in so many fields,” he said. “There are famous rabbonim, artists, musicians, scientists, and business people. It’s remarkable what the school has produced, and the impact it has had on the globe.

“It has been a mainstay of the community for 60 years, and it’s impossible for anyone in our generation to think of Johannesburg without it.”

When news broke that the school was closing, the outpouring of emotion was immense. For many, it felt like the fading of something sacred, a piece of communal identity too precious to lose.

As one alumnus wrote, “Victory Park wasn’t just where we learned. It was where we became.”

As the school is honoured with the Mann Made Community Service Award, we are reminded that while buildings may close, legacies do not. The school’s story continues to echo through every life it touched.



Refilwe Monageng and Maphefo Mfalo



Hannah Ben Moshe

Art, Sport, Science, and Culture Award

‘Now I’ve made it,’ says award-winning filmmaker

LEE TANKLE

Although filmmaker and producer Adam Thal received a nomination for an Academy Award for the short film *The Last Ranger*, he was more shocked to hear that he had won an Investec Jewish Achiever Award because, as he put it, this felt like he had actually made it.

“As a filmmaker, I’ve often felt like an outsider, especially as a young Jewish boy who didn’t follow the expected path into accounting, law, or medicine. I’ve had to work harder to prove myself, and growing up Orthodox in South Africa, my community has always meant everything to me. That’s why this recognition feels like the ultimate pat on the back. This is a sign that I’ve truly made it.”

Thal was born in Harare, and he and his family moved to Johannesburg when he was only six years old. His father had to start over, and throughout his childhood, this inspired Thal to believe that he could do anything he set his mind to.

“When we moved from Zimbabwe, I saw him literally start from scratch,” he said. “We got to Joburg, he didn’t have a job, he didn’t have anything. And what he did to support us as a family and give us the lifestyle that we were able to have was nothing less than a huge miracle and the result of extreme dedication and passion.”

Thal’s passion for film began in Grade 6 at Fairways Primary, when a classroom lesson on cameras sparked an instant fascination. At King David Linksfield, he nurtured this passion through Glance, the school’s television department led by Gary Block, where he helped produce fortnightly videos recapping school events for assembly.

“I wanted to make a career out of making movies and capturing people for a good hour, hour and a half, giving them a little bit of escapism,” he said. “And so, after doing all the stuff at King David or Glance, I wanted to study it and become a filmmaker.”

“But I guess like any young Jewish kid at the time, especially back in 1998, I thought this is just a dream.



Josh and Chana Rynderman



Roanne and Darryl Brainin



Tessa and Arnold Forman

It’s just a hobby,” he said.

So, Thal reluctantly went to study electrical engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand, which he hated. He lasted only eight or nine months.

“My parents saw me absolutely hating it, and saw my passion, so they allowed me to take film seriously. And for the rest of that year, I went to work for SuperSport as an assistant and a cameraman at live sporting events.”

Thal then enrolled in the African Film and Drama Academy (AFDA), one of South Africa’s leading film, television, performance, business innovation, and creative arts schools, where he studied a Bachelor of Arts degree and Honours in Motion Picture Medium, majoring in producing.

He said, “From year one to year four, I always wanted to produce. I love the art of filmmaking, but I want to be involved in the business side of filmmaking, so I studied producing and editing.”

In his third year, he and one of his classmates, Ryan Poole, were competing to be the best producer in their class, and were asked to produce a film for a fourth-year student. This endeavour led to Poole and Thal deciding to come together and start a business called Star Productions, which then became The Star Film Company.

“We didn’t ever want to go and work for someone. We wanted to create our own careers. And there was nothing better than the two strongest producers teaming up to do it together,” he said. “In our fourth year, while we were attending lectures, we were

counting cash from the jobs we were doing in between lectures. We were shooting music videos, commercials, corporate videos, whatever we could basically at the time. And that’s what launched our career.”

Thal always wanted to work on long-form media like film and television, however, he knew that to do that, they needed money, so they started doing commercials.

“In 2003, when we created the business, long-form filmmaking wasn’t a lucrative side of our industry,” he said. “So we decided that if we’re going to stay in South Africa and grow this business, the lucrative side of filmmaking is TV commercials. So the main reason we went into TV commercials was to become financially successful, but always with the end goal of being long-form filmmakers. One of the biggest hurdles in the filmmaking industry is fundraising.”

The biggest career challenge Thal experienced was when Poole tragically passed away in 2007 in a car accident.

“I thought to myself, what do I do? Do I continue the business? Do I close down, or go start something else? That was definitely challenge one, and I decided, obviously, to continue the business and make a name for both of us.”

One of the highlights of his career was being able to attend the Academy Awards as a nominee for the short film *The Last Ranger*, which he produced.

“Sadly, we didn’t win the gold man. But the experience of being at the film industry’s biggest night was literally unbelievable. Los Angeles has always



been the capital of filmmaking, in Hollywood. To go to the biggest festival as an entrant not just a spectator, is every filmmaker’s dream. The whole experience was, to be honest, just surreal. You had to pinch yourself.”

However, even after a high like this, he and his colleagues were asking what the next big project was, something they are always searching for.

“I’m at the Academy Awards with a short film that’s been nominated. And the first question anyone asks is, ‘What’s your next project?’ It’s like, just give me a chance to celebrate this one, but that’s our industry. It’s always, ‘What’s next?’ So you have the most successful film, you could have the most successful commercial, could be winning awards left, right, and centre, could be making a lot of money. Still, it’s always about what’s next,” he said.

Adam Thal brings SA stories to global screens

CLAUDIA GROSS

When filmmaker and producer Adam Thal walked to the lectern to accept his Art, Sport, Science, and Culture Award at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November, he looked almost startled. “Imposter syndrome,” he admitted, smiling. Thal expressed gratitude for the award, saying that being recognised by his own community was the highest acknowledgement.

Then he told a story that belongs to every creative in this country who has ever wondered if they should pack for somewhere else. People often ask why he stays, he said. His answer on Sunday night was simple. “This country is brimming with stories to tell. The world wants South African stories.”

In his tribute video, Thal, the chief executive and founder of The Star Film Company, recalled his company’s humble beginnings. He and his late business partner, Ryan Poole, started the company straight after graduating from film school with whichever projects they could get. Today, The Star Film Company works on multimillion rand commercials and film productions.

“A passion of mine has always been long form,” Thal said. “It’s always been about storytelling and filmmaking.” He went on to recount working on the film *The Last Ranger*, which was an official nominee at the Academy Awards, which took place in March. Though it didn’t win in its category, everyone who worked on the film has the honour of it being rated one of the five best live action short films of the year.

The video included photographs of Thal on the red carpet, proudly wearing a yellow-ribbon pin on his suit jacket, and being in the same room as Quentin

Tarantino and Adam Sandler. “I got to experience the ultimate in our industry that everyone dreams of being a part of,” he said.

However, his success doesn’t stop there. The Star Film Company’s film, *The Heart Is a Muscle*, won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Berlin International Film Festival and Best Feature Film at Die Silverskermfees. It’s in the nomination race for Best Foreign Film at next year’s Academy Awards.

The company has also worked with Netflix, which licensed its television series, *Go*, which it was able to make without any financial input from the government or any other organisation. This allowed for an amazing level of creative freedom, as it wasn’t bound to anyone’s prescriptions.

“We have the most talented actors, and the most amazing crews in the world,” Thal said, and you

could hear the recognition in the room from directors, cinematographers, and sound technicians who have spent years building an industry often held together by willpower and WhatsApp.

What made his speech so compelling was how frankly he set aside the gloss. “This award is different,” he said. “It’s me, the filmmaker, not a particular piece of work.” He has stood on red carpets and inside edit suites at 03:00. He knows the highs and lows of the industry, and has used his grit and determination to come out on top.

Thal also reached back to the classroom with a sentence that used to live rent-free in his head. A high school English teacher told him that he would never amount to anything in the creative industry. On Sunday, he became the gentlest rebuttal to every young person who has been handed a small vision of themselves. Thal closed with gratitude, and a promise to keep building locally while reaching globally.



John Vlismas



Salome and Martin Strous



Shira, Suri, and Avi Lange

Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award

A lifetime of worthy causes

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

From helping to build a retail empire to championing education and women's rights through her philanthropical initiatives, Wendy Ackerman, now 89, is proud to have been part of South Africa's journey of growth and transformation. Co-founder and Honorary Life President of Pick n Pay Stores, Ackerman is one of this year's two Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award winners.

"I'm not ambitious and I'm not a person who looks for publicity," says Ackerman. "I'm observant – I see needs, and I try and help fill them in my own quiet way. That's how I've always done things."

Together with her late husband, Raymond Ackerman, she helped to build Pick n Pay, which today has about 2 000 stores and employs nearly 90 000 people. Yet, guided by a philosophy rooted in the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* (repair the world), Ackerman has fulfilled a role that goes far beyond commercial success throughout her decades-long career.

"Both my husband and I, as very young people, had horrible experiences of antisemitism," she says. "This made us aware of the underdog, and we dedicated our lives to fighting prejudice and divisiveness." In the days of apartheid, this often meant crossing boundaries.

"We broke the law, left, right and centre," Ackerman says. Often called into the president's office as a result, her husband was nevertheless never arrested. "Years later, former president FW De Klerk told him, 'Half the Cabinet wanted to put you in jail, and the other half said you'd get too much publicity.' Raymond was disappointed he never went to jail because he wanted to see whether he'd get publicity," she laughs.

Ackerman herself remained dedicated to ensuring that Pick n Pay could be a force for social good. "I fought for black managers to have access to housing; for black cashiers to serve customers; and for women to be recognised as senior professionals in retail. These were bold steps at the time, but they set the tone not only for our business but for the wider industry."

This spirit underpins her ongoing philanthropical work and lifelong commitment to empowering others and breaking barriers. For example, both the Ackerman Family Educational Trust, launched in the 1970s, and the Ackerman Pick n Pay Foundation, founded in 1997, have enabled sustainable development through education, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

Long before the government implemented policies amid the rising rate of HIV in South Africa, Ackerman introduced workplace education and antiretroviral drug access at Pick n Pay, saving countless lives.

A champion for women's rights, she also co-founded the 1000 Women Trust to fight gender-based violence and provide resources including shelters, advice centres, and survivor support initiatives. "I read a lot," Ackerman says. "When you read 19th century novels, you see the appalling way women have been treated through the centuries. My husband always said I would have been a suffragette, and I probably would have been one, right in the front."

When Ackerman was once asked to make a speech at an event, she was introduced as the chairperson's wife. "I got up and said, 'I am not the chairperson's wife. I am a person in my own right. I am Wendy Ackerman, a director of Pick n Pay.'" Nobody ever called me the chairperson's wife again."

Having married young, Ackerman had her first child at 20. "My husband was always interested in retailing," she recalls. "He wanted to go to America to study supermarketing, and a new course came up called 'Modern merchandising methods'. I thought



carefully, and realised that in 20 years, my son would be off at university, and I'd be left high and dry."

So she left her baby with her mother, and joined her husband in America, where she studied alongside him. Here, they learned about the importance of "serving the consumer, not the shareholder, and not ourselves". Ackerman hopes that this philosophy will remain Pick n Pay's legacy.

She also speaks of various initiatives which reflect

her eclectic interests. For example, when her daughter was deemed too young to go to school, Ackerman built a bigger school to accommodate her.

"Then a friend of mine asked me to come to Soweto to teach English and run a Shakespeare Festival at the English Academy," she says. "The person who was running it was ill, and I had to take over. That's been my life. Things have happened, and things have needed to be done. I never said, 'I can't do it.'"

Inspired by her domestic worker's grandson who is autistic, Ackerman contacted Rotary a few years ago and established a school for autistic students in Cape Town's townships, which has grown from 28 to more than 100 students. "When the boy outgrew the school, he was sitting at home again, and it just hit me one night," she recalls. "I jumped up out of my shower, nearly injuring myself, and ran down to tell my husband I was starting a workshop for sheltered employment for autistic people."

Within six months, Noluthando Sheltered Employment Workshop, one of Ackerman's proudest accomplishments, was born. Providing job opportunities in carpentry, sewing, weaving, and gardening for young adults with autism, Noluthando means help. "It's just a start, but we've got 16 people whose lives we've managed

to change," she says.

Stemming from her long-held passion for music and nurturing talent, Ackerman has also run bursary schemes for aspiring musicians, many of whom now perform at the world's leading concert halls and opera houses. "Through the Duet Endowment Trust for the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and Cape Town Opera, I have worked to ensure the sustainability of the arts in our city," she says. "Nurturing young talent and watching it flourish on the global stage is one of my greatest joys."

In 2024, Ackerman received an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree from Stellenbosch University, recognising her decades of philanthropic work and contributions to the arts and education.

She remains inspired by the courage and integrity of her late husband, who she calls her mentor and role model. "From our earliest days in business, we worked side by side, not just as business partners but as life partners, learning from each other, and building a partnership based on trust, shared vision, and mutual respect," she says.

Fighter, philanthropist, trailblazer: Wendy Ackerman's enduring impact

LEE TANKLE

"I've never done anything to be thanked. I've just done the things I've done because I've felt the need for them."

These are the words of Wendy Ackerman, the powerhouse co-founder and honorary life president of Pick n Pay stores, upon receiving one of the Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Awards at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 2 November.

Wendy's daughter, Suzanne Ackerman, chairperson of the Ackerman Pick n Pay Foundation, who accepted the award on her mother's behalf, said, "My mother is actually the foundation for my dad's success."

Ackerman has spent her entire life working not only in the commercial space with the establishment of Pick n Pay as a retail juggernaut, but in philanthropic efforts, championing women's rights and education.

Ackerman fought against apartheid by hiring black store managers and providing housing for them. She also co-founded the 1000 Women Trust to fight gender-based violence and provide resources, including shelters, advice centres, and survivor support initiatives. Similarly, she founded a school for autistic children inspired by her domestic worker's grandson, who is autistic.

"I've also been involved in education because I believe that education is the answer to so many of our problems, and people who haven't had the opportunity cannot have the doors opened that are opened for them," she said.

At 89, Ackerman has worked all her life, and still enjoys working. "I enjoy challenging and being challenged. I left school, and was determined never to be bored again, and I haven't been bored again," she said.

"Her day is active," Suzanne said "She actively exercises. She drives my dad's golf cart around the garden. She's a passionate gardener, and her garden is magnificent. She goes on her own to do shopping to help a family in need. She doesn't send anybody to do it, she'll do it herself. She'll get in her car with her driver, and go to the hypermarket and do the shopping for someone in need."

Upon receiving the award, Suzanne said with tears in her eyes, "Mom, this is for you. You deserve it."



Suzanne Ackerman accepting the award on behalf of her mother, Wendy



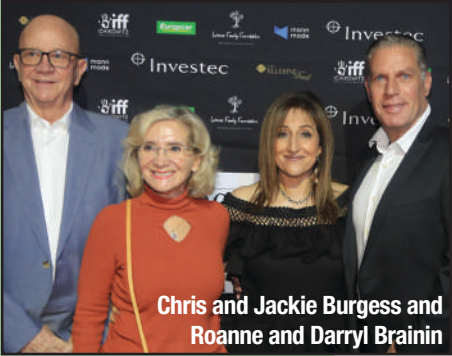
Josh Miltz, Jonjon Ferrer, Dan Goldberg, and Johann Steyn



Arnold and Joceline Basserabie



Basetsana and Romeo Kumalo



Chris and Jackie Burgess and Roanne and Darryl Brainin



Charles and Dianne Chemel; Dawn and Rob Katz; Khanyi Mlambo-Mbewu and Petros Mbewu; and Rabbi Aharon and Gila Zulberg

Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award

in honour of Helen Suzman

Monster success for Joburg lawyer turned drinks tycoon

LEE TANKLE

From the bustling streets of Johannesburg to the boardrooms of Los Angeles, Rodney Sacks' journey is one of extraordinary vision, perseverance, and global influence. As chairperson and chief executive of Monster Beverage Corporation, Sacks transformed a small energy drink company into one of the world's most iconic brands, a testament to his strategic brilliance and entrepreneurial spirit.

Yet, beyond the global success story lies a proud South African and a deeply committed member of the Jewish community. In honour of a lifetime marked by leadership, integrity, and inspiration, Rodney Sacks is celebrated this year with one of the two Lifetime Achievement Awards at the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards.

Born and raised in Johannesburg, Sacks earned his law degree from the University of the Witwatersrand and quickly distinguished himself as one of South Africa's youngest senior partners at Werksmans Attorneys.

"I started my career as an audit clerk at Werkmans when I was 18 years old," he says, "On my first day, Natie Werksman told me that despite having the smartest lawyers and smartest agreements, the deals you do or your client does with the parties they're transacting with are only going to be as good as the integrity of the other party. And they're going to find a way to get out of any deal if they really want to. When you look at advising your clients, you need to assess the integrity of the other party. That's going to be one of the most important things. It resonated with me my whole life."

In 1989, he and business partner Hilton Schlosberg took a bold leap, relocating to the United States, where Sacks joined his late younger brother's renowned art dealership, Leslie Sacks.

"I looked at the country and the future, and I didn't know where things were going to end up," he said. "I looked at my own position as a lawyer, and said, if I really want to do something for the family that will endure for generations, I will have a better shot if I am in another country, and decided on the US. It was just before I turned 40, and I thought that unless I did it then, I wouldn't have a chance to start a new career."

Together, they acquired Hansen Natural Corporation, a small juice company that had gone

through bankruptcy and had one brand and 12 employees. They soon realised that expanding into major grocery stores was costly due to slotting fees, so they shifted focus to beverages that could be sold through the convenience channel – small mom-and-pop and liquor stores. This pivot led to the development and launch of a smoothie line.

It was actually on a trip back to South Africa and to the United Kingdom that Sacks got the idea to launch an energy drink line, as he saw the emerging popularity of energy drinks. Initially, it launched under the Hansen name as he felt there wasn't enough money to market two separate brands.

"We started to have internal conflicts between our marketing departments because they were trying to give different messages to consumers," he said. "We soon realised that we really had to have a separate brand if we were going to succeed and appeal to younger male consumers and not in any way alienate the moms and kids we were trying to market the Hansen brand to, and that prompted us to develop a separate brand."

That's when Sacks and Schlosberg



developed the Monster Energy Brand in 2002 with the idea that it would be something not yet seen on the market.

"It was different from everything else. Everything else was in a slim eight-ounce [236.5ml] can, so we decided

we were going to create a brand for the blue-collar male," Sacks said. "We wanted it bigger, better, and more powerful. We really were selling an image, and the only way we could do that and still give value was to give a bigger product, but for the same price. So we designed a 16-ounce black can."

Sacks wanted Monster to stand out. Its black can and green emblem quickly became instantly recognisable.

Monster Energy launched in April 2002 with a single flavour. Today, the Monster brand now accounts for more than 90% of the company's total business.

In 2015, Coca-Cola bought a stake in Monster and transferred its energy drink brands to the company, creating a powerful partnership. Monster gained global distribution support, while Coca-Cola strengthened its presence in the booming energy drink market.

Monster started with 12 employees, with Sacks as the 13th. Today, the company has grown substantially, with more than 6 500 employees worldwide. Monster products are sold in more than 140 countries, and including all other brands, the company reaches 159 countries and territories. In South Africa alone, Monster offers four energy drink brands: the original brand

acquired from Coca-Cola; Burn (a European import); Monster; and Predator, its affordable line.

In June 2025, Sacks stepped down as chief executive of Monster Energy as he felt it was time for younger talent to step up and he wanted to set his sights on innovation.

"Innovation and developing new products and packages is probably the fun part of the business I've enjoyed all my life. I've been involved in that throughout, so I'm continuing to do that. I also continue to be involved in marketing and directing the brand and its positioning, and that of other brands, and that enables me to do both," he says.

Sacks said the guiding principles he has followed throughout this career are integrity, honesty, and maintaining close relationships.

"We all face obstacles in life, but we can achieve our goals if we persevere," he said. "Stay strong, keep your values and integrity – that's what truly matters. Success doesn't come overnight; it takes hard work and focus. Take life one day at a time, stick with it, and you'll have a real chance at success."

Jewish achiever creates Monster with energy drink

LEE TANKLE

Rodney Sacks, one of two Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award winners at this year's Investec Jewish Achiever Awards, says he believes success doesn't require being the smartest or the most qualified. What matters most is determination, focus, and perseverance.

For Sacks, the co-founder, former chief executive, and chairperson of Monster Energy, winning this award didn't signal the end of something, but "reminds me how lucky I've been to have lived this journey; to work with extraordinary people; and see an idea grow and continue to inspire".

Speaking from his home in California, he said, "To be able to see products that you have created on shelves in small stores in remote places around the world and on TV screens at leading international sporting events every week is extremely gratifying and makes it all worth it."

"Although life has taken me far from South Africa, South Africa will always be a part of me. You can take the *boyjtjie* out of South Africa, but you can never take South Africa out of the *boyjtjie*," Sacks said.

Sacks started Monster Energy with his business partner, Hilton Schlosberg, after leaving his successful legal career in South Africa and moving to the United States in the 1980s.

"When I think back to 1989, when my business career began following my relocation to California, I could have never imagined that it would lead me here tonight," he said. "While I had qualified as a lawyer in California, I decided to follow a business career even though I had no experience of running a business, let alone a business in a new country. That was quite a daunting task. The one thing I knew was that failure wasn't an option."

Sacks and Schlosberg bought Hansen's, a natural drinks company, in 1990. Spotting the

rising popularity of energy drinks, they initially launched under the Hansen name to save on marketing costs. As the market grew, they recognised the need to target young, blue-collar men with a distinct brand. This led to the birth



of Monster Energy, instantly recognisable by its black can and bright green claw logo.

Monster Energy has grown exponentially and is now sold in 140 countries. "We weren't just selling beverages, we were building a vision, a culture, and a story that connected with people. We were able to create

a beverage that represented a lifestyle in a can. To tap into the lifestyles of a strong, passionate fan base who aspired to the values that the Monster brand stood for," he said.

Sacks attributes the success of the Monster Energy brand to his South African spirit and having grown up in the South African Jewish community.

"The beverage industry in the US is one of innovation, resilience, and constant reinvention," said Sacks, "Over the years, I've been fortunate to be part of and have helped shape this transformation by creating and developing cutting-edge innovative beverages instead of just mindlessly marketing boring traditional beverages and flavours over and over again."

Sacks hopes that his journey inspires the next generation of Jewish South Africans to dream boldly, and succeed internationally while keeping hold of their roots.

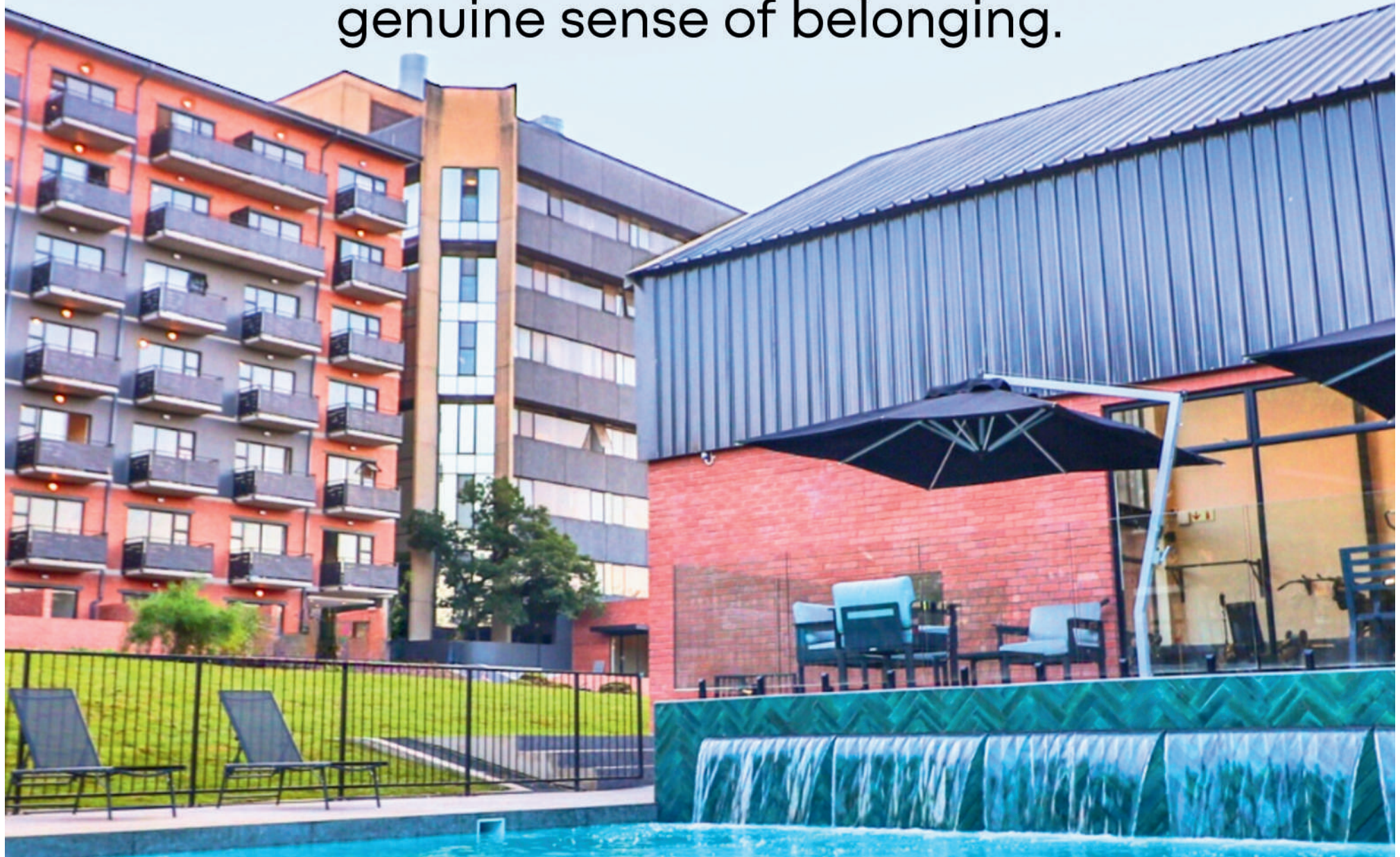
"Your roots and your community will always be a source of strength, no matter where life takes you. South Africans' work ethic and culture affords you a great springboard to be able to succeed not only in South Africa but internationally," he said.



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PROPERTIES

CAP gives blow-by-blow on Glenhazel devices

LEE TANKLE

Members of CAP heaved a sigh of relief last Wednesday, 29 October, when it became clear after many hours of work that our community wasn’t in danger on 24 October, when two suspicious devices were found in a suburban street in Johannesburg.

Sean Jammy, the deputy chief executive of CAP, said that after the incident on 24 October, when two suspicious devices were found on Summerway Road, Glenhazel, CAP teams activated the organisation’s investigative infrastructure, including extensive CCTV analysis and intelligence tools so that they could track down who placed the devices and their intention.

“On the afternoon of 24 October, we treated it as a very suspicious object, and it became quite clear soon afterwards that it wasn’t an improvised explosive device, and therefore, it brought into question what the intention was. The actual components and makeup of the device have obviously been sent for testing, and we’ll have the results of that, which will be definitive in hopefully not too many weeks,” CAP chief executive Mark van Jaarsveld said on ChaiFM this week.

Jammy told the *SA Jewish Report* that the devices were “believed to be the internal components of an old model of a specialised commercial battery. CAP located a reseller who confirmed, from photographic comparison, that the recovered objects matched the internal elements of one of their discontinued product ranges.”

However, the South African Police Service (SAPS) is continuing its investigation and forensic testing. CAP and CSO continue to assist authorities until a conclusive determination is made.

Through this, CAP was able to determine that it was a waste picker who routinely comes in and out of Glenhazel who had placed the two objects at the bottom of a tree as he couldn’t sell them.

“By reviewing and enhancing footage from multiple properties, investigators pieced together a detailed timeline of the individual’s movements throughout the suburb,



ultimately identifying and tracing him,” said Jammy.

CAP was able to confirm that the recycler entered the suburb at 05:00, and left at 14:00 on the afternoon of 24 October. Most of his activity was along the normal recycling routes that one would expect, and his trolley got bigger and bigger as the day progressed and he sorted through things.

The recycler told CAP and the police that he had picked up the two devices on 23 October near a scrapyard in a public space while on his way to sell his daily recyclables.

“He believed the items to be specialised batteries with potential resale value. He described them as ‘four or six cylinders taped together, with an electronic board and wiring’, and said he had no reason to believe they were dangerous,” said Jammy.

This recycler tried to sell the devices intact. When unsuccessful, “he broke open the outer casing and tried to sell the internal components at another scrapyard, again without success”, said Jammy.

So, the recycler kept his devices in his trolley and started on his route for the next day, where he would go around Glenhazel and Highlands North.

“His trolley had become unstable while full, prompting him to stop near the tree on Summerway Road to repack,” said Jammy. “He still had the internal components of a specialised battery that he had been unable to sell the previous day. Given the difficulty in selling the items and their weight, he discarded them at the base of the tree. There’s

no evidence of any intent to target or cause alarm.”

Jammy said that the CAP teams

were able to locate this recycler using enhanced imagery, which was circulated to field teams and local informants. Areas known to be frequented by him were searched. Intelligence later indicated that he had left Johannesburg temporarily, but returned the following week. On Wednesday, 29 October 2025, CAP and SAPS located him on 6th Avenue, Highlands North, while collecting recyclables. He was subsequently taken in for questioning.

The story of the recycler was confirmed as “video footage shows the same individual placing the objects at the scene. This was corroborated by additional footage, supporting information, and his own statement to the SAPS, in

which he admitted to doing so,” said Jammy.

“His account aligned with time-stamped CCTV footage and other corroborating evidence. He identified the scrapyards where he had attempted to sell the objects, and the location where he broke open the casing. Investigators recovered fragments of the casing, including a serial number and manufacturer markings, which were handed over to the SAPS together with formal statements. A statement was also obtained from an independent third party, who confirmed that the recycler had attempted to sell the items at their scrapyard and that they witnessed him breaking open the casing in an effort to separate the materials.”

The genocide blood libel

>>>Continued from page 4

at about 25 000. The raid remains controversial because Dresden was known more for its cultural significance than its military industry.

Pforzheim

In February 1945, a short but extremely destructive Royal Air Force raid used a combination of high-explosive and incendiary bombs. About 20 277 people were killed, about one-third of the city's population.

Tokyo

When the B-29 Super Fortress came into being, the US Army used it extensively over Japan, most specifically over Tokyo. According to reports, 90% of the bombs dropped on Tokyo were done by B-29s.

Of all the operations against the city, the most intense occurred from 9-10 March 1945, dubbed Operation Meetinghouse. This attack is still considered the single most destructive bombing campaign ever. About 1 700 tons of bombs were dropped into the city, which destroyed 286 358 buildings and killed more than 100 000 civilians with the explosions and resulting firestorms, plus about one million were injured.

Atom bombs

Estimates of the total number of people killed by the atom bomb being dropped on Hiroshima were about 70 000 to 80 000 people killed instantly, with more deaths occurring in the immediate aftermath and many more in the following months and years due to injury and radiation sickness. By the end of 1945, the total death toll was estimated to be about 140 000. In Nagasaki, about 40 000 died instantly, with the total reaching 74 000 by the end of the year.

To be clear, the argument being made isn’t that because the Allies killed more civilians, it exonerates Israel, but rather that in all wars, even those fought with noble intent and by democracies like the Allies, civilians die. That’s the sad reality. The fact that Israel killed fewer civilians than the Allies did in their intensive bombing campaigns, despite fighting an enemy embedded in the civilian population, hiding among

schools, mosques, and hospitals, and in such a highly concentrated and densely populated area like Gaza, speaks volumes as to how this cannot be a genocide.

Comparing civilian deaths in Gaza to those in World War II simply shows that it isn’t possible to fight an intense war without civilians dying. To expect otherwise is to ignore reality. No one in their right minds would accuse the Allies in World War II of genocide, and it’s hard to understand why Israel is being treated any differently to them. To judge Israel so harshly for the number of civilian deaths is to expect it to comply with impossible standards.

Finally, for a country supposedly so keen to inflict a genocide, Israel was very quick to accept the ceasefire once it was offered to it together with a guarantee that all the living hostages would be immediately released!

Real genocide

To create context, there is a real genocide taking place before the eyes of the world. Sudan has plunged into a civil war in which more than 150 000 people have died in the conflict across the country through massacres, starvation and disease; and about 12 million have fled their homes in what the UN has called the world’s largest humanitarian crisis.

In addition, while an exact figure is impossible to determine, at least 522 000 children are estimated to have died from malnutrition and related illnesses since the start of Sudan’s conflict in April 2023. This number doesn’t include those killed directly by violence, and is considered a conservative estimate.

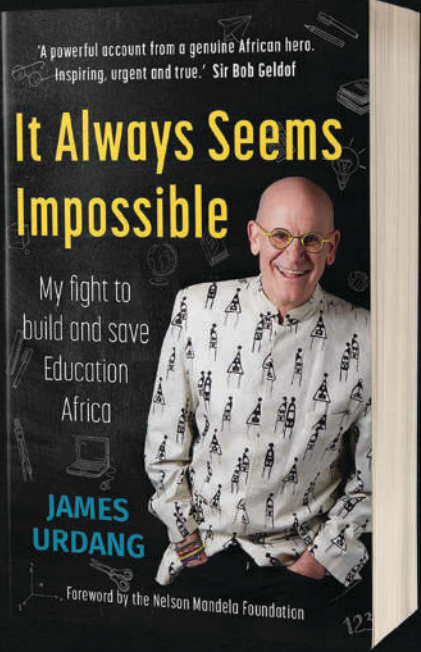
Strangely, the world isn’t taking any drastic action here to intervene, and when Sudan brought a case against a country accused of arming the rebels to the International Court of Justice, the ICJ refused to hear the case for lack of jurisdiction!

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

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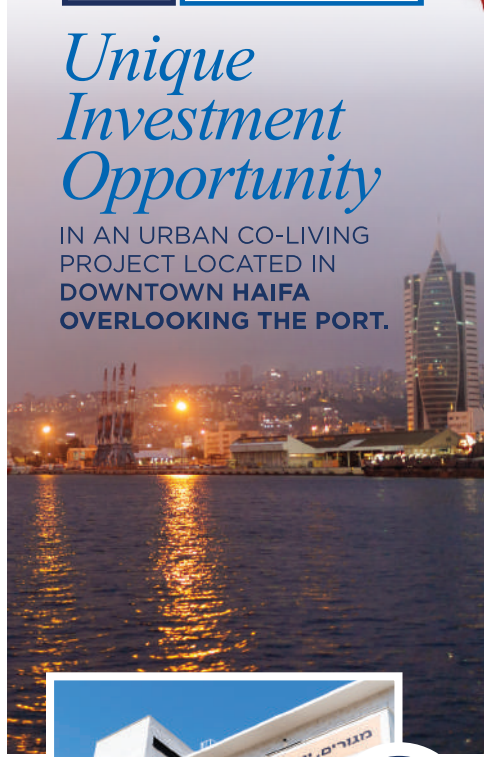


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Cost of keeping kosher forces people to vegetarianism

LEE TANKLE

Keeping kosher in South Africa is becoming increasingly expensive, putting pressure on households that want to maintain Jewish dietary laws. In some cases, to manage financially, people have opted to eat less or no meat.

From meat and cheese to imported products, the price difference between kosher and non-kosher food has grown sharply in recent years, raising questions about accessibility.

Though South Africa's Jewish community remains committed to kosher observance, many households are feeling the strain of rising food prices and a weakening rand. Kosher certification, limited suppliers, and import restrictions have all contributed to higher costs, particularly for meat and dairy.

Johannesburg businessman Ivor Blumenthal posted on Facebook on 14 September asking if he was the only one who felt like keeping kosher had become almost impossible to afford. "What started as a noble commitment to observance now feels like it's propping up entire industries," Blumenthal said.

He was inspired to make the post because he had seen many young families in Johannesburg contemplate not keeping kosher as they simply couldn't afford to put food on the table. Blumenthal showed in a comparison photo non-kosher chicken at Pick n Pay retailing at R64.99 per kilo, whereas a kosher chicken is 150% more expensive, at R164.99.

A Johannesburg Jewish mom told *the SA Jewish Report* that she was choosing to go partially vegan rather than stop being kosher. Asking not to be identified, she said that she had kept kosher since she was a child, and wanted to keep a kosher home into adulthood.

"I'm finding it hard to have decent, healthy meals nightly and for school as the cost of chicken and meat is outrageous," she said. "If I went non-kosher, I could feed my family for the full week on the same budget with protein options nightly. Currently we have two nights of protein, excluding Shabbat, and the rest we opt for vegan or Italian style meals, but my family really don't enjoy the vegan options".

Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, the managing director of Kosher SA, the kashrut



department of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa, says, "Companies put a price on their products based on their costs and what they believe they are worth. Ultimately, the market controls it. If it's expensive, people don't buy it or they'll shop elsewhere."

Goldstein said that from a food-service perspective, as in restaurants, cafés and bakeries, *mashgiach* fees, staff, and insurance all factor in setting the price of food items.

"In industrial kosher, which is the vast majority of those 65 000 products on the shelf, there is no *mashgiach* present. So the cost of kosher, I would say, is pretty much negligible or makes absolutely no difference to the ultimate price," he said.

"I would never want to be non-kosher in my home," said Blumenthal, "My children have been brought up in that way. They are proud, religious, Zionist Jews. And I thank G-d every day for the fact that I've managed to do that for my family. But I interact with people who just don't have that benefit."

Said the anonymous Johannesburg mom, "I listen to friends and community members, and more and more are feeling the pinch.

School fees have once again risen, so has medical aid, and these are two things people prioritise as they have no choice. It's sad that schooling, medical, and other costs like electricity and taxes are putting families in a position where they need to choose between keeping kosher or having food on their table.

"More and more people in the community are choosing non-kosher or vegan options to survive," she said.

However, as many contemplate going vegetarian to keep kosher, Goldstein emphasised its importance, saying that it was "one of the basics of our faith, a basic law, a basic *halacha*. It's something that we've adhered to over three and a half thousand years. Like Shabbat and our festivals, Kashrut is an absolute cornerstone of our religion. It's almost an unbreakable part of our faith."

This is part of the reason why the Beth Din is constantly monitoring the companies it works with and to ensure that their kosher certification is accurate for the type of product.

For example, the Ina Paarman vanilla cake mix changed its formula so it was considered dairy and no longer parev, he said.

Companies are constantly reformulating products. It could be due to new legislation, or suppliers not being available anymore, meaning that ingredients aren't available. It could also just be to make it a better product," said Goldstein.

He said a few years ago, Jelly Tots stopped being kosher for about 18 months as Beacon wanted to put in more real grape juice so that Jelly Tots would have a fruitier flavour. Goldstein went to find a certified kosher grape juice supplier, and it became kosher again.

Calm, confident parenting ‘starts with introspection’

GILANA LAB

Parenting feels different today. Between school schedules, work stress, social media, and the endless noise of modern life, it's easy for parents to feel like they've lost their grip on what truly matters.

That was the idea behind the recent talk at the Chevrah Kadisha, where Dr Ken Resnick, educational psychologist and creator of the Smart Choice Parenting Programme, and Lisa Kotzen, a passionate advocate for mindful parenting, led a discussion about taking back control.

Hosted by Chevrah Kadisha social worker Talya Gottlieb on Wednesday, 29 October, the event focused on shifting the mindset of parenting away from pressure and perfectionism toward being present, calm, and connected.

Gottlieb said she believed the goal we need to strive towards is to "pause and reconnect with ourselves, our children, and the kind of parents we want to be".

From personal experience, Kotzen said, "Parenting isn't about controlling who our children become. It's about guiding them, loving them, and helping them find the courage to become themselves."

She described the enormous expectation that parents face – from school systems, social media, and even other parents – and how easy it is to fall into the trap of comparison.

"So often," she said, "we hand over parental power to the system without realising it." Her words resonated with many in the audience who nodded in agreement. Kotzen explained that parents can become so reliant on external structures – teachers, therapists, schools – they forget their own natural authority and instincts.

"In order to create any kind of meaningful change, we need to begin with introspection," she said. "It's not about telling anyone how to raise their children. It's about creating a culture that supports families, one in which communication replaces judgement, and community replaces competition."

Resnick picked up on this, expounding on his philosophy of staying calm, being consistent, and

remembering that discipline doesn't have to mean punishment.

"We overdo it," Resnick said, referring to the modern tendency to micromanage children's every move. "They get confused by all the reaction to them, but we can sort this out quickly by being chilled, not punitively."

Resnick said that when parents overreact or try to control everything, they actually create more anxiety for their children. "Kids need calm parents," he said. "They learn emotional regulation from us. If we can stay grounded, they will too."

He also warned against what he calls "reaction parenting", which means constantly responding to children's behaviour instead of setting clear expectations. "Children learn best when there's structure, not stress," he said. "Boundaries aren't about control; they're about safety and clarity."

Resnick homed in on decision-making and responsibility as a parent. "As much as we have choices, kids have choices too," he said. Teaching children how to make their own decisions – and to live with the consequences – builds resilience and grit. "We need to start instilling the decision-making process within our kids," he said. "Resilience comes from practice, not protection."

Resnick said mistakes aren't failures, but essential learning opportunities. When parents rush to fix or prevent every problem, they rob their children of that experience. "We think we're helping them," he said, "but what we're really saying is, 'You can't handle this.' That's the opposite of what we want them to believe."

His approach replaces punishment with accountability. Instead of shouting, withdrawing affection, or

threatening consequences, Resnick encourages parents to talk through what happened; help the child understand the impact; and let them come up with ways to make it right. "It's not about controlling them," he said. "It's about guiding them and giving them the tools to manage themselves."

Kotzen agreed, saying that part of her own growth as a parent has been learning to step back and let her children figure things out. "Parenting has never been easy," she said. "But today feels especially challenging. We're raising children in a fast-paced, hyper-connected world where information is instant and expectations are sky high."

She urged parents to shift from fear-based to connection-based parenting. "We can't teach our children resilience if we're constantly trying to prevent discomfort," she said. "They need to know that we trust them, and that we trust ourselves."

Resnick echoed that sentiment. For him, reclaiming parental power doesn't mean being authoritarian, it means being anchored. "It's actually simple to get along with our job as parents," he said. "But we complicate it by trying to do too much, too fast, and by reacting instead of reflecting."

Both Resnick and Kotzen called for a return to balance. They believe that parenting doesn't have to be perfect, but it does have to be intentional. It's about slowing down, being present, and trusting that small, consistent choices make the biggest difference.

As one parent reflected after the talk, "Tonight reminded me that I don't need to have all the answers, I just need to show up and stay calm."

Resnick left the audience with something to think about: "We all have choices, and so do our children. The best thing we can do is teach them how to make good ones, and to keep choosing connection, every single day."



Cape conference helps leaders engage with tough times

CLAUDIA GROSS

“The most revolutionary act is introducing people to one another,” Robert Bank, the president and chief executive of the American Jewish World Service, told more than 100 Jewish rabbis, teachers, business leaders, and volunteers in Cape Town last Sunday, 2 November, epitomising the reason for the gathering.

Bank was speaking at the Eliot Osrin Leadership Institute (EOLI’s) first-ever InGathering, held in Cape Town on 2 and 3 November.



Vision 2040 attendees

The two-day event brought Jewish leaders and professionals from across South Africa and abroad together to explore what leadership means in turbulent times. There were no speeches to endure, no slogans to repeat, just honest conversations about courage, responsibility, and renewal.

“Leadership isn’t about recognition,” said EOLI Director Viv Anstey. “It’s about responsibility, about equipping one another to lead.”

One of the event’s most anticipated sessions was “CT 2040: Route Map to Lead into the Future”, led by Raoul Miller, Paul Berman, Samuel Seeff, and Anstey. The team outlined Vision 2040, a long-term plan for the Cape Town Jewish community that emphasises collaboration, efficiency, and continuity.

“Vision 2040 imagines a smaller but stronger community,” Anstey said. “It’s about staying connected while adapting to change.”

Miller described the project as “right-sizing, not downsizing”, while Seeff highlighted the importance of creating a leadership pipeline for younger generations. “We have emerging talent,” he said. “Now we need pathways from involvement to influence.”

“Leadership isn’t about recognition, it’s about responsibility, about equipping one another to lead.”

Although focused on Cape Town, the conversation struck a chord nationally. Delegates from Johannesburg and Durban nodded in recognition of shared challenges around sustainability and succession.

Global experience met local reality in “Leadership in Turbulent Times”, a live discussion between Anstey, Bank, and Gali Cooks, the president and chief executive of Leading Edge. Cooks spoke about the pressure facing Jewish non-

profit organisations worldwide. “Our job is to raise the floor,” she said. “We want leaders to flourish, not just survive.”

Bank reflected on the moral dimensions of leadership in a divided world. “When we connect authentically, we dissolve fear,” he said. The exchange left a mark. “Leadership today is messy,” Cooks admitted. “But it’s also where the hope lies.” That sense of hope carried into Rabbi David Rosen’s address, “Building Interfaith Bridges over Troubled Waters.”

In conversation with Rabbi Osher Feldman and interfaith activist Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov, Rosen recalled how his years in Cape Town in the 1970s inspired a lifelong

commitment to interreligious co-operation, a journey that later saw him help establish diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican, and advise the Abu Dhabi-based Abrahamic Family House.

Rosen described his early experiences in apartheid-era South Africa, when creating the country’s first interfaith forum meant engaging courageously across divides of race, politics, and religion. “Judaism,” he said, “isn’t an insular faith. It calls us to engage with creation, with all of it.”

Rosen acknowledged that global events, particularly the war in the Middle East, have

tested interfaith relationships, but insisted that dialogue must continue. “Every bridge we build matters,” he said. “For every two steps forward, there may be one step back, but without those steps, nothing changes.”

“Our shared responsibility,” Pugh-Jones Baranov said, “is to protect the most vulnerable: refugees, minorities, and those marginalised by faith or circumstance. That’s where leadership begins.”

The final timeslot of the first day the session, “Managing Reputation from the Inside Out”, pulled no punches. Media trainer Janine Lazarus, joined by Annika Larsen, unpacked how organisations can survive – and even grow – through crises. “Reputation isn’t what others say about you,” Lazarus said. “It’s what you do when they’re watching.”

She urged organisations to respond with transparency and empathy in times of controversy. “The story will be told either way,” she warned.

“You can tell it, or someone else will.” For attendees juggling public-facing roles, the advice was blunt but welcome. “In leadership, perception is reality,” Larsen said. “But it can be shaped with honesty, skill, and speed.”

If Sunday was about ideas, Monday was about implementation. The second day of the InGathering, exclusive to community professionals and lay leaders, turned inspiration into practice through a series of hands-on workshops.

Sessions tackled the dilemmas that keep leaders awake at night, such as making tough ethical calls; sustaining partnerships; navigating media crises; and finding new energy after difficult years. A common thread emerged, that Jewish leadership in South Africa must continue to evolve, remaining rooted in values while open to new ideas and partnerships.

Many younger participants at the InGathering spoke of feeling energised by the openness of the discussions and the sense that they, too, have a role in shaping the community’s next chapter.

“The conversations were challenging but hopeful,” said a participant from the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation. “It felt like a true community dialogue, not just a lecture series.”

The event also reflected EOLI’s growing reputation as the Jewish community’s central hub for leadership development. Since its establishment in 2018, the institute has trained dozens of emerging leaders through its leadership development programme, board governance masterclass, and leadership conversations series.

Anstey said the InGathering was a natural next step, a forum where those graduates and community heads could come together to exchange experience. “We’ve spent years equipping individuals,” she said. “Now we’re weaving them

into a network of practice and purpose.”

The conference reflected on Eliot Osrin’s enduring influence. A pioneering communal professional and chief executive of the United Jewish Campaign in Cape Town for nearly two decades, Osrin was remembered for his humility, mentorship, and belief that strong leadership is an act of service.

“Eliot Osrin built systems that worked, but more importantly, he built people who believed they could make a difference,” said Anstey. “Our mission at EOLI is to keep that flame alive.” As participants lingered after the final session, exchanging ideas and contact details, it was clear that the InGathering had achieved what its name promised.

In a world often marked by fragmentation, the EOLI’s first InGathering was a reminder that real, lasting leadership, begins with connection, curiosity, and courage. “We leave here reminded that leadership isn’t a title,” Anstey said. “It’s a commitment, to learn, listen, and serve.”

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Kaplan’s 10-hour batting marathon takes Boland to victory

LUKE ALFRED

Think about doing something for almost 10 hours. The same thing. Think about being on your feet, with only one substantial break, for 10 hours; think of packing and unpacking supermarket shelves for 10 hours. Think of reading your grandchildren bedtime stories until morning – for 10 hours, in other words.

All of this is a way of trying to understand, if only imperfectly, what Gavin Kaplan, a Boland batsman, did in a four-day match in Paarl in September, where he scored 238. He batted for more than 10 hours as he did so, helping them to a nine-wicket victory against the Titans in the process.

The facts and figures are impressive. Boland batted first and Kaplan batted at three, coming in before the end of the fifth over when Pieter Malan was out for eight with the total on 12. Kaplan occupied the crease for the rest of the day, reaching his century.

He was 167 not out overnight and, the following morning, resumed the innings he will doubtlessly tell his children and grandchildren about. Finally, after actually batting for 551 minutes, he succumbed. The marathon was over.

“If I’d been told before that I’d bat for 10 hours, I would have looked at you and thought, ‘No, I can’t really do that,” said Kaplan over the phone. “But I can bat for 30 or 40 minutes, and I can bat until the next drinks session. Breaking up the innings into small pieces, that I can do.”

Kaplan hasn’t really digested his

mammoth 10-hour stint, he’s been too busy occupying the crease in later games. Last week, for instance, he followed up his 238 with a scandalously below-par 152 against KwaZulu-Natal Inland, again in Paarl. “I’m sure at some stage it will start sinking in,” he said with good grace. “At the moment I’m just trying to enjoy it and not thinking too much about it.”

Kaplan’s purple patch – for the statistically minded he has scored 629 runs so far in the four-day season at an average of 104 for 83 – has come about for a variety of subtle reasons. Now approaching 28, he enjoys the fact that he’s trusted by the Boland coaching staff, who understand that he best understands his game. He’s probably a little fitter and stronger than he was this time last year, and he enjoys the company of his teammates.

“The coaches aren’t breathing down my neck here. They know what to say, and when to say it,” he said. “Added to that, we’ve got a really good team culture here at Boland. There’s a care factor. The guys are friends. That really helps.”

Listening to Kaplan speak, you also sense that the right-hander is at ease with himself. He’s certainly matured since moving from Western Province, where he couldn’t catch a regular game, and he’s probably a bit more laid back and philosophical nowadays.

“There’s not a whole lot that pisses me off in general, to be honest,” he said. “My relaxed approach keeps my feet on the ground and means that I never get too far ahead of myself.”

With age, Kaplan has become a more supple player, tailoring his game to the

conditions. The Paarl wicket can be slow, and Paarl can be blisteringly hot. None of this particularly fazes the boy who went to Rondebosch Boys’ High. He can play red-ball cricket, and he can pivot towards the white-ball game with ease, it doesn’t seem to perturb him in the slightest.

It might have helped his white-ball game that he played 50-over cricket for three months earlier this year in the Netherlands, and although Voorberg Cricket Club in the Hague struggled in the league, Kaplan’s season was a successful one.

“This was my second year,” he said. “We finished in the bottom half, so it wasn’t that successful, but I scored more than 700 runs at an average of over 50, so I was personally pleased with my form.”

It’s a little surprising to find out that

Kaplan hasn’t been snapped up by one of the six SA20 franchises for this year’s tournament in December. Such is his form that surely, he could have made a contribution? He’s not letting it bother him, though, saying that the country is full of good players, and what will be will be.

It’s a good attitude to have. It protects him from disappointment and from the kind of selectorial thoughtlessness that required that he move from Western Province to Boland in the first place. The move could have been a silver lining. Kaplan is happy and trusted by the people around him. It’s simple but, when you think about it, what most of us crave.

Cricket South Africa’s four-day domestic competition now goes into recess until early December, so Kaplan has time to reflect on what he’s achieved so far in the season. Boland, which currently lies in a very respectable third position on the log, next takes on the Lions. It’s a big fixture, not to be taken lightly. Kaplan will be there to play his part.



A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Storm wall against politically motivated resolutions

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Over the past two weeks, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies has been involved in a Western Cape High Court case: Professor Adam Mendelsohn versus University of Cape Town (UCT) Council. The case centres on the alleged lack of correct process followed by the UCT Council in its decision to pass a boycott resolution against Israel.

The resolution that was passed ultimately contained two key elements which are highly problematic for us as a community: a boycott of all co-operation with individuals or organisations linked to the Israel Defense Forces; and a rejection of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism in favour of the “Jerusalem Declaration”. The passing of these resolutions mark not just overt hostility, but a quieter erosion of process and fairness that can do just as much damage over time.

The court case is actually a procedural case, focusing on whether all the proper processes were followed in the passing of the resolution, most importantly whether the Council was made aware of the massive losses that the university stood to incur with the passing of the resolution. The Board took the decision to join as an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) after UCT was supported by *amici* who claimed that there was no antisemitism on the campus; that the decision to alter the definition of antisemitism was considered and correct; and that the university shouldn’t be beholden to donor pressure.

In 2024, UCT recorded the highest number of recorded antisemitic incidents of any campus in the country. It’s true that relative to our fellow communities across the globe, our campuses are in an incredible position, however, we cannot sit idly by and surrender one of the most important campuses, allowing it to become inhospitable to our community.

By way of background, the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism is the most widely adopted standard worldwide. It serves as the gold standard, and has been embraced by thousands of university campuses globally. Among other provisions, it outlines scenarios in which anti-Israel rhetoric may constitute antisemitism. For instance, it states that, “Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism . . . to characterise Israel or Israelis” may be considered antisemitic.

In response, and as a rejection of any potential linkage between anti-Israel rhetoric and antisemitism, a group of academics drafted the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. This document primarily emphasises what doesn’t constitute antisemitism. It defines the term narrowly as “discrimination, prejudice, hostility, or violence against Jews as Jews [or against Jewish institutions as Jewish]”. Under this formulation, a Jew facing discrimination as a banker, sportsman, or artist wouldn’t be deemed a victim of antisemitism.

The Jerusalem Declaration also provides explicit examples of conduct that isn’t antisemitic, including the assertion that: “Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.”

The Board obviously doesn’t wish to dictate to any institution what it should or shouldn’t accept as best practice. However, it’s crucial that the relevant parties be consulted before taking such a decision. In this case, the Jewish community was ignored, and a well-regarded and global standard of antisemitism was rejected on our behalf for clearly political reasons. As our brilliant advocate put it, it was as if a group of men gathered to decide on the meaning of sexism. It was especially laughable when an advocate standing against us stated that consultation should also take place with “those who would be accused of antisemitism”. I cannot imagine anyone expecting the Ku Klux Klan or Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging being a necessary voice in the definition of racism.

This case is especially important in creating a storm wall against the tide of narrow politically motivated resolutions and movements that have affected our community in so many professional, social, and cultural spaces. We’ve seen it before: the boycotts; the divestments; the casual conflation that blur into something uglier. By joining this fight, we’re not just defending process; we’re affirming a deeper truth. Our story; our safety; our right to exist in the public space, these aren’t negotiable.

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

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Being wrong before you’ve even spoken

The other day, I was wrong. And whereas in itself that’s far from unusual, what differentiated this particular incident is that I hadn’t yet said anything in order to be wrong. It unfolded around our dinner table, as it often does, when my wife and son were having a robust discussion. As soon as there was a gap, I proffered my opinion. Before I had completed a full sentence, my wife, gesturing towards me like a judge whose verdict was final, said, “Howard. You are wrong.” “But I haven’t said anything yet!” I protested. “I know what you are going to say,” she replied calmly, “and I’m sorry, but you are wrong.” (Reader’s note: she didn’t sound sorry.) “And that,” I said to my son, “is what it means to be married.”

It means apologising to my wife for something I did in her dream. Because although she knows, on a rational level that I was sleeping quite innocently beside her when she conjured up my misdemeanours, she also remains committed to her knowledge that I could




well have said or done whatever it was I apparently did. Because it’s what I would

say or do, and that, in her view, makes me guilty enough. Which makes no sense at all. Yet it’s frustratingly difficult to argue with. There’s a logic to long marriages that defies science and reason. It’s a kind of emotional quantum physics, where two things can be true at the same time: I can be both asleep and guilty, silent and wrong. Schrodinger’s husband, as it were. It’s the law of relational relativity, what Einstein might have discovered had he been married longer. There’s an additional nuance that comes with being a Jewish husband. We grow up learning that peace in the home – *shalom bayit* – is sacred. And that sometimes peace is achieved not through being right, but through saying, “Yes, dear.” The rabbis never quite wrote that into the *Gemara*, but they probably should have. In Jewish tradition, we say that the home is built by the *eishet chayil* (woman of valour). Which leaves the husband, presumably, responsible for taking out the bin, making sure that the Wi-Fi is working, and accepting blame for everything else. Over time, one learns that marriage isn’t about being right; it’s about being

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



together. It’s about knowing when to let a discussion go, when to make tea, and when to nod knowingly even though you have no idea what you’re agreeing to. It’s about understanding that “It’s fine” never ever means it’s fine.

There’s a kind of comfort in that. Because if someone can anticipate your thoughts, interpret your silences, and still choose to argue with you over dinner, it means that you are, in some profound way, seen. So yes, the other day, I was wrong. But maybe that’s what being married is: an ongoing exercise in humility, humour, and love. And perhaps, after all these years, being wrong before I’ve even spoken isn’t such a terrible thing. It just means that someone knows me far too well, and is still willing to have dinner with me anyway. In many ways it’s simply the triumph of optimism over experience.

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