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‘That she survived is a miracle’

NICOLA MILTZ

A Johannesburg mother escaped without broken bones after a freak incident in which she was run over by a private security vehicle.

In a matter of seconds on Monday 16 March, a routine morning walk turned life-threatening for Pamela Kantor, 47, a primary school teacher and mother of three.

A video of the incident, which has gone viral on social media, shows a CAP van reversing at speed, striking Kantor from behind, and driving over her.

The footage has shocked the community, but for the Kantor family, the reality has been far more harrowing.

“I’m still trying to process the level of trauma we are navigating,” said Kantor’s husband, Peter.

“My wife was mowed down. She was trapped under the chassis, and the driver proceeded to drive over her. Replaying those images is a cycle I cannot break. That she survived is a miracle I will never fully comprehend.”

Kantor had walked about a kilometre from home and passed the CAP vehicle parked on Felix Road, Glenhazel, exchanging greetings with the driver.

“They said hello to each other,” Peter said. “And then, within minutes, she was knocked down.”

The wheels rolled over her body.

“I was working from home when I got a call from Pamela,” Peter recalled. “She said, ‘I’ve been knocked down.’ I said what do you mean? I rushed there as fast as I could.”

Hatzolah arrived shortly afterwards and rushed her to Milpark Hospital.

“To think her head had been about 30 centimetres from the front wheel,” said Peter. “I’m amazed it didn’t run over her head.”

“My children almost lost their mother. I almost lost my wife. The realisation is difficult

to comprehend.”

Despite the severity of the incident, and her injuries, Kantor didn’t suffer a single broken bone – something both she and her family can hardly believe. “She’s battered and bruised, she has multiple stitches, and there are real concerns about her ankle,” Peter said. “She can barely walk. But no broken bones – it doesn’t make sense. Thank G-d.”

Speaking from home, where she is recovering, Kantor described the moments that replay in her mind.

“I remember being knocked down and then the vehicle driving over me,” she said. “I felt the air being pushed out of me, and I thought, ‘I’m going to die.’”

“I screamed for my mom to help me. My mom passed away seven years ago, but I was calling out to her. ‘Mommy, I’m going to die, please help me.’”

As the vehicle rolled over her, she was focused on survival. “I remember thinking, ‘I’ve got to get out from underneath this vehicle.’”

She is still coming to terms with what happened. “It’s tough. I’m not coping very well,” she admitted.

“I’m an active person, and now I have to rely on everyone. I even have a nurse helping me to the bathroom.”

The emotional toll is equally severe.

“Pamela wakes up every couple of hours, reliving the moment she was under that vehicle,” Peter said.

“I feel completely helpless as the person I love tries to piece herself back together.”

Yet, amid the pain, she remains focused on survival, he said.

“I’m alive,” she said. “It’s a miracle.”

CAP has expressed deep remorse over the incident, describing it as a devastating failure that falls far short of its standards.

Sean Jammy, CAP’s deputy chief executive, said, “I’m not going to sugarcoat this. This is a horrific incident. It’s a horror,” he said. “It’s our job to protect people and make them feel safe, and this should never have taken place.”

According to Jammy, a CAP driver and his crew had been speaking to a domestic worker on the side of the road when they had received a panic alert.

They said goodbye and, from what he understands, the driver intended to reverse into a nearby road to attempt a three-point turn. He reversed into Kantor, hitting her at full speed, Jammy said. “They had greeted each other moments before. It’s hard to understand what was going through the driver’s mind.”

Jammy confirmed that the driver was negligent and that standard operating procedures weren’t followed. He has since been dismissed. “It is part of our protocol that when reversing, the passenger must exit the vehicle and guide the driver,” he said.

“When you sit at Pamela’s sickbed, you realise that this must never, ever happen again,” he said.

“It’s a miracle, she survived,” Jammy added. “She was hit hard.”

CAP said it had immediately launched an internal investigation and has begun reviewing its operational protocols.

“This is not who we are,” the organisation said in a statement. “We are devastated that a careless act by one of our own has caused harm.”

Continued on page 3>>

Music, kinship and purpose



See story on page 9

Internationally acclaimed singer Simcha Leiner captivates his 2 000-strong Joburg audience this week



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Sharing a personal memory



CHIEF RABBI DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN

A few years ago, at the height of state capture, I joined the civil society movement to protest the corruption of President Jacob Zuma. There were many marches in Cape Town and Pretoria, one of which concluded on the lawns in front of the Union Buildings. I will never forget that moment because it was just a few weeks before

Pesach, at this time of year, and I spoke to a rally of tens of thousands of people.

At that rally, I instinctively turned to Pesach as the frame of reference for the struggle against the corruption of the Zuma administration. I told the crowd that the festival of Passover would soon be marked by Jews around the world, celebrating the liberation of Jewish slaves from Egypt. And then I asked them, "What did Moses say to Pharaoh?" And the entire crowd erupted together: "Let my people go!"

I continued, "And what should we tell Jacob Zuma, who sits in his office in the Union Buildings just behind you?" And again, the crowd responded in unison, "Let my people go!" And so I led them in a chant against the government of the time.

Reflecting on this episode, I realised that the events we mark on Pesach are acknowledged by billions of people around the world as historical fact. All Christians and Muslims accept the origin story of the Jewish people – how we were slaves in Egypt, and how G-d intervened in history with the 10 plagues and the splitting of the sea – with great "signs and wonders" – to free us. These events recorded in the Book of Exodus are not myth; they are real and true, and as Jews, we testify to them every single year.

Consider this: ever since that very day we



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein marching in the #ZumaMustFall protest in 2017

were liberated – which we know the exact date of, exactly 3 338 years ago – Jews have been gathering around seder tables to tell of the events. This has provided a direct historical record. No generation would have been the first to tell the story if it had not actually happened, and each succeeding generation knew about it because their parents had told them, and their parents before them. And today, billions recognise it as the birth of the Jewish people and a foundational moment in human history.

That rally reminded me of something else:

how many of our fellow South Africans share our sacred values. I have felt this especially over the past two and a half years since the horrific events of 7 October 2023. There is a silent majority of South Africans who stand with us, who understand the story of the Jewish people, our G-d-given connection to the Land of Israel, and our G-d-given values.

Those events on the lawns of the Union Buildings also brought home to me the eternal relevance of our Torah, a moral legacy that has inspired the struggle for freedom across millennia and continues to guide us to this very day.

But the seder is first and foremost a deeply personal Jewish experience. And while humanity has drawn inspiration from our origin story, the real reason we bear witness to and tell our story is to teach our children and the generations that follow what it means to be a Jew.

Let us remember: this is not just a family gathering, or some quaint tradition. It is the retelling and reaffirmation of our history, bearing witness to the Divine origins of our people, and how these miraculous events instruct, inspire and guide us to this day, uplift all of humanity, and shape our Divine mission and living legacy of what it is to be a Jew.

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Pesach in a time of uncertainty: Freedom, faith, and the eternal story



Rabbi Levi Lipskar
 Chabad of Hyde Park

Torah Thought

As we approach Pesach this year, our hearts are deeply focused on Eretz Yisrael. We think of our brothers and sisters living under the shadow of war, facing uncertainty, fear, and real danger.

We hold them close in our thoughts and prayers, hoping for their safety and strength, and for peace.

This tension is not new to the Jewish story. In fact, it lies at the very heart of Pesach.

At the seder, we declare that in every generation, a person must see himself as if he personally left Egypt. This is not just a remembrance of the past. It's a way of understanding the present.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that Egypt represents more than a historical place. It reflects the constraints and pressures that confine a person and a people. Every generation faces its own version of this challenge. Today, that reality feels especially present.

Pesach teaches a powerful truth: redemption doesn't begin when everything is calm. The exodus took place at a moment of deep darkness, when hope seemed distant. And precisely then, redemption unfolded.

The message is clear. Difficult times are not interruptions to the story. They are part of it.

This idea is reinforced in the Haggadah's assurance that Hashem saves us in every generation. Jewish history has never been free of challenge, yet it has always carried within it resilience, faith, and continuity.

The Rebbe emphasised that this is not only something to believe, but something to live by. When a person internalises this perspective, it changes how one responds to uncertainty. We are not passive observers of events. We are participants, shaping the future through our actions.

Every act of goodness, every *mitzvah*, every moment of strengthened faith contributes to moving both the individual and the world towards redemption.

There is also meaning in the timing

of Pesach. In the Holy Land, it arrives in the spring, a season of renewal. After the harshness of winter, life returns. This rhythm reminds us that even when circumstances appear bleak, renewal is already beginning beneath the surface.

The Rebbe often spoke about our generation standing on the threshold of the final redemption. The challenges we witness are not signs of despair, but part of a process that is leading somewhere meaningful, even if we cannot yet see the full picture.

As we gather at the seder table this year, we are not only retelling an ancient story. We are connecting it to our own lives. We are a people who have faced uncertainty before, who have endured and grown, and who continue to move forward with strength and faith.

May this Pesach bring not only a sense of personal freedom, but also renewed clarity, resilience, and hope. And may we soon see a time of eternal peace and security for Israel and for the entire world.

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Johannesburg	17:53	18:41	17:48	18:36	17:46	18:34	17:42	18:30	18:29
Cape Town	18:30	19:20	18:23	19:14	18:21	19:11	18:16	19:06	19:05
Durban	17:41	18:30	17:35	18:24	17:32	18:22	17:28	18:17	18:16
Bloemfontein	18:00	18:49	17:54	18:43	17:52	18:41	17:47	18:36	18:35
Gqeberha	18:01	18:52	17:55	18:45	17:52	18:42	17:47	18:37	18:36
Plettenberg Bay	18:10	19:01	18:04	18:54	18:01	18:51	17:56	18:46	18:45
East London	17:52	18:42	17:46	18:46	17:53	18:33	17:38	18:28	18:27
Jerusalem*	18:15	19:32	18:19	19:36	18:20	19:37	18:23	19:40 YTE	
Tel Aviv*	18:35	19:34	18:38	19:38	18:40	19:39	18:43	19:42 YTE	

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'A shift we can feel': South African Jews in London respond to ambulance attack

CLAUDIA GROSS

"It's something shocking ... but no-one is shocked," was how South African-born Rabbi Sandor Milun described the firebombing of four Jewish community ambulances in the early hours of Monday morning outside Machzike Hadath Synagogue in Golders Green, North West London.

Milun, a member of the shul's board, described the incident as both shocking and, in a troubling sense, expected. He brought up the series of recent attacks on Jewish communities globally that have created a sense that such violence was inevitable.

However, this suspected antisemitic hate crime, has horrified one of the United Kingdom's most established Jewish communities and deepened fears amid a sustained rise in antisemitism since 7 October 2023.

The attack targeted vehicles belonging to Hatzola, a volunteer emergency medical service that responds to calls across London and serves both Jewish and non-Jewish residents. The fire broke out near a synagogue and communal buildings, and according to those on the scene, came dangerously close to causing far greater destruction.

Milun said the intensity of the blaze nearly led to catastrophic damage. Flames spread towards the synagogue, with fire entering the building itself. The flames were drawing closer to bookshelves of siddurim near the shul's entrance, which if they grabbed hold of the books and timber, would have caused the shul to burn down.

"It was literally probably a minute or two away from catching on to the bookshelves. If that happened the shul would be down now," he said, recounting how someone entered in the early hours of Monday morning and managed to extinguish the flames inside. Unfortunately, the shul sustained damages to its roof and stained-glass windows were cracked.

Political leaders responded swiftly. The United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, described the incident as a "deeply shocking antisemitic arson attack" and

expressed solidarity with the Jewish community. Sadiq Khan, London's mayor, called it a "cowardly attack" and confirmed that police patrols in the area had been increased.

Two men, aged 47 and 45, were arrested on Wednesday 25 March in London on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life.

For Hatzola, the immediate priority has been maintaining operations. Despite the destruction of four ambulances, the organisation continued to respond to emergencies throughout Monday. "Our phones haven't stopped, our volunteers are responding to call-outs, and our service continues unbroken," said Laurence Blitz, Chair of Trustees for Hatzola UK. He added that support from the London Ambulance Service and St John's Ambulance, as well as government commitments to replace the vehicles, had enabled continuity.

Amy Lazarus, who moved to Golders Green from Johannesburg three years ago with her husband and children, said the incident had shaken what had long felt like a secure environment. "We all feel a bit shaken and a bit more on alert," she said, describing Jewish neighbourhoods in London as something of a protective bubble that had now been punctured.

She drew parallels with life in South Africa, where strong community infrastructure can create a sense of safety within defined areas. "You feel safe because you know you're in a bubble," she said, adding that the attack had disrupted any such sense of certainty. Despite this, she said daily life continues, and visible expressions of Jewish identity haven't changed. "Do I feel scared to go to shul? No. Does my son wear a yarmulke in public? Yes," she said.

Stephanie Daleski, originally from Johannesburg and living

just 500 metres from the scene, described waking to sirens on Monday morning and learning of the attack with alarm. "I was absolutely shocked ... but this isn't the first time something like this has happened," she said, pointing to a



The aftermath of the Hatzola ambulance blaze

pattern of incidents since 7 October, including vandalism and graffiti targeting Jewish businesses.

"It's an incredibly scary time to be a Jew," she said, adding that the sense of uncertainty is particularly acute for those who moved to the United Kingdom seeking stability. "You think, where to from here?"

She also stressed that the impact of the attack extends beyond the Jewish community. Hatzola's services are used widely, and the destruction of ambulances affects emergency response capacity for all residents.

Paul Berger, who has lived in London for 25 years after moving from South Africa, described the attack as a turning point. "This ambulance attack feels like a marked shift from the disguised anti-Israel sentiment to unashamed blatant anti-Jewish attack," he said.

He said that while Jewish life in North West London has long been vibrant and supported by strong communal organisations, the incident has unsettled that sense of normality. "We've always felt safe and secure," he said, adding that the attack has left many questioning what the future holds. "Many of us remain concerned for the future of British Jewry and whether our kids are likely to make a life for themselves here."

Milun linked the attack to a broader climate in which hostile rhetoric has become more visible and, in his view, more tolerated. "When you allow hate speech ... it becomes normal and the next thing from speech is action," he said, calling for stronger and

more decisive government measures.

He also raised concerns about security disparities, noting that Jewish institutions often rely heavily on volunteers rather than formal protection. He described standing outside synagogues

without adequate means of defence and said this was no longer sustainable.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies expressed solidarity with the London community and described the attack as part of a wider pattern. "We are devastated and horrified at this act of violence," said national chairperson Professor Karen Milner, referencing a series of recent incidents targeting Jewish institutions in the United Kingdom. She said that while condemnation from political leaders is important, broader and more coordinated action is needed to address rising antisemitism.

The attack comes at a time when antisemitic incidents in the United Kingdom have surged, with Jewish organisations reporting unprecedented levels of abuse, threats, and vandalism in the months following 7 October. Security groups have increased patrols and coordination with police, and additional measures have been introduced at Jewish schools and synagogues.

Despite these efforts, residents say the nature of the Golders Green attack represents a significant escalation, targeting not only individuals or property, but critical community infrastructure. For Hatzola, the focus remains on continuity and resilience. Blitz emphasised that community life has not stopped. "Our schools are open, our shuls are full, our shops, cafés, and restaurants are busy; life goes on," he said.

Yet for many, the sense of unease persists. Milun described a community grappling with uncertainty. "It's a real hollow feeling to feel you're under attack," he said, noting that conversations about leaving the United Kingdom have become more frequent in his community.

For now, Golders Green remains a central hub of Jewish life in Britain. But the burning of four ambulances has left both physical damage and a deeper psychological impact, raising difficult questions about safety, belonging, and the future of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom.

'That she survived is a miracle' >>Continued from page 1

CAP said it had committed to support the family through the recovery process.

But Jammy acknowledged it could have done more in the immediate aftermath. "In hindsight, we understand that the family wanted more from us, more face-to-face engagement, and justifiably so," he said.

The organisation is reflecting deeply on the incident, he said. "We operate in a dangerous, high-intensity, high-adrenaline environment. It's easy to lose sight of where we come from," he said. "This is a reminder that our heart is our strongest organ, and we must stay connected to it. Out of this horror, we hope to learn important lessons, to strive to do better

and be better."

Said Kantor, "I don't want to throw CAP under the bus. It's not about that. It's about humility, taking responsibility, and understanding what this has done."

As she begins what is likely to be a long recovery, Kantor is drawing strength from those around her. "I have an incredible support system," she said. "My family, my friends - the community has been amazing."

She describes herself as a positive and private person, now forced into a vulnerable space.

"It's hard," she said. "But from all of this, people need to understand that miracles do happen," she said. "I'm one of them."

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Iranian ambassador asks SA people for support

TALI FEINBERG

Cape Town politicians, anti-Israel extremists, members of civil society, and local media made it clear they have no problem with the atrocities of the Islamic Republic of Iran when they unashamedly met with the Iranian ambassador to South Africa, Mansour Shakib Mehr, at a briefing on Friday 20 March in Cape Town.

There, the ambassador said that the Islamic Republic “really appreciates the strong stance of Dirco [the Department of International Relations and Cooperation]” in maintaining South Africa’s relationship with Iran, and asked Pretoria to “use its influence” to stop the war.

“We also ask the people of South Africa to show their solidarity with the Republic of Iran and to demonstrate to the global community their strong will in opposing the aggression,” he said.

The event was hosted by the Cape Town Ulama Board, an Islamic organisation, which called it a “rare opportunity for first-hand insight into Iran’s perspective on resisting international aggression and navigating complex regional dynamics.”

Representatives from 56 local organisations attended, including a representative from PAGAD (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs), which has been implicated in episodes of urban terrorism, and retired Judge Siraj Desai.

Wearing a pin of the South African and Iranian flags, which were handed out at the event, the leader of the opposition in the Western Cape Legislature, African National Congress (ANC) Member of the Provincial Legislature Muhammad Khalid Sayed, said the briefing was a “brave” move and he was “honoured to participate”. He said that the current war aims to “weaken Iran so that it can no longer play the role of being in the vanguard of the struggle for Palestine”.

“ IN PLEDGING ITS ALLEGIANCE TO A VIOLENTLY OPPRESSIVE THEOCRATIC AUTOCRACY, THE ANC HAS SHOWN THAT IT HAS FORGOTTEN ITS ROOTS AS FIGHTERS FOR DEMOCRACY, AND SOLD ITS VALUES TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER. ”

Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Member of Parliament Mogamad Nazier Paulsen attended the briefing and wrote afterwards that the Iranian ambassador is “a friend and a brother – [it is] a brotherhood based on the principle of love for humanity and a quest for justice for oppressed people across the world”.

Paulsen went on to say that “we are equally appalled by the Epstein class and those who like to cosy up to them”.

His use of the term “Epstein class” is “a textbook example of modern antisemitism in coded form”, according to the chairperson of the Cape South African

Jewish Board of Deputies, Simone Sulcas. “By invoking Jeffrey Epstein and turning his name into a category of people, it acts as a dog whistle, inciting people to ascribe collective guilt and moral depravity to Jews, while preserving deniability.”

She says that “this is how contemporary Jew-hate often operates: implied, deniable, but rooted in the same old tropes”. Public figures like Paulsen “legitimise discrimination by using language like this. While we have come to expect such statements from Paulsen, it is no less dangerous than overt antisemitism, and must be called out plainly.”

Sayed and Paulsen’s comments came a day after the Iranian regime executed a

support, “and some of their key players here in South Africa have not been so supportive”, he says. “They’re trying to shore up whatever support they can, and the one place they can still get that is from the EFF and the ANC. They’ve pushed hard to activate that support and to work with parts of the Muslim community that might be more supportive, and that’s what we’re seeing on display.”

This was evident when, at the briefing, the Iranian ambassador called for “solidarity” and told local media and religious leaders, “Don’t let Western media stories cover the eyes and hearts of those seeking the truth. Publish the Iranian narrative of this conflict.” This was echoed

by religious leaders, politicians, and anti-Israel extremists at the briefing, who all called for “unity” in supporting the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesperson on International Relations and Cooperation, Ryan Smith, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the ANC and EFF’s “close proximity and public allegiance” to the Islamic Republic of Iran “only proves that these parties show total disregard for the principles enshrined in the South African Constitution, and continue to see the world through a complete subversion of reality”.

He emphasises that “Iran is not, and has never been, South Africa’s friend”.

Rather, it has made a “useful global pawn” out of the ANC through patronage and influence. “In pledging its allegiance to a violently oppressive theocratic

autocracy, the ANC has shown that it has forgotten its roots as fighters for democracy, and sold its values to the highest bidder,” says Smith.

He says the ANC’s “misplaced alliance” with Iran is “not only a betrayal of its own principles, but a betrayal of democratic South Africa’s very existence”. The DA “will not allow the ANC’s political international alliances to tarnish the reputation of the South African republic,” says Smith. “South African people are freedom-loving, and we don’t stand with countries like Iran.”

Veteran journalist and ANC critic William Saunderson-Meyer told the *SA Jewish Report* that such a briefing isn’t surprising given “the anti-Western narrative that now almost completely dominates public discourse in South Africa”.

He says the South African government is “becoming increasingly hardline and irrational in its embrace of rogue and dangerous regimes, oblivious to its growing isolation from the countries that have been its historic allies”.

Ray Hartley from the Platform for African Democrats agrees, saying, “South Africa continues to alienate itself from the democratic world with its uncritical embrace of the autocratic and violently repressive Iranian government. This irresponsible approach puts the country at odds with key trading partners and with countries that prize democracy. We are once again on the wrong side of history.”



Iranian ambassador Mansour Shakib Mehr with EFF MP Mogamed Nazier Paulsen

Photo: Facebook

19-year-old Iranian wrestler for taking part in protests, and two days after an Iranian missile killed four Palestinian women in the West Bank.

The mission of the Cape Town Ulama Board is “advocating for intellectual growth and rejecting radical ideologies in Islam”, and the organisation faced some backlash for hosting the briefing. But Desai defended the gathering, saying the Cape Town Ulama Board took the “historically correct position” in hosting it.

The event was held at the Castle of Good Hope, just weeks after many of the attending organisations protested events being held at the site.

Director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute Benji Shulman explains that the briefing can be seen in the context of Iran being extremely isolated, both internationally and locally. This was evident from the outset of the war, when Russia and China abstained from supporting Iran at the United Nations, and when Iran targeted the Gulf states, Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Locally, “we have Iranians living in South Africa who’ve been extremely vocal [in opposing Iran]. In addition, several Muslim community groups have come out with statements that have either been lukewarm in condemning Israel and America, or have said outright that they’re happy that the Ayatollah has died,” says Shulman.

So, Iran has been looking for diplomatic

Fiery Iran debate makes clowns of Parliament

STEVEN GRUZD

The National Assembly degenerated into a circus on 19 March during a debate on Iran. The Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesperson on international relations and cooperation, Ryan Smith, was repeatedly heckled by members of Parliament (MPs) from the left – the African National Congress (ANC), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party.

Smith was interrupted again and again by spurious “points of order”, forcing him to sit down almost a dozen times. Deputy Speaker Dr Annelie Lotriet struggled to control an unruly house that accused her of bias. Scant respect was shown for any speaker opposing Iran.

This unbecoming conduct threatened to stifle a rare parliamentary discussion of South African foreign policy.

Smith told the *SA Jewish Report*, “The debate was so heated because the DA rightly pointed out that the ANC, in its very public support for Iran, wasn’t only violating constitutional principles but acting contrary to its own political history. Claims

from the likes of Fikile Mbalula that Iran was a friend to the ANC during the struggle are imaginary. Iran traded oil for apartheid weapons throughout the 1980s, thus helping to prop up the regime when both countries were sanctioned. Any onlooker can only conclude that the ANC has sold its principles to the highest bidder and is willing to rewrite history when given a bit of money.

“The fact that they reacted so rabidly to the DA’s speeches shows that their cognitive dissonance on Iran is easily disrupted when you speak the truth. The ANC is a dying liberation movement and failed governing party that has now resorted, in

desperation, to maligned and outdated international alliances to keep itself afloat,” Smith said.

This would further sour relations with South Africa’s largest trading partners and allies.

The debate was requested urgently by Mmusi Maimane, head of Build One South Africa (a party with two MPs) and former DA leader. He told the *SA Jewish Report* that their mission in the debate was to hold the government accountable for its response to the Iran war, and the dire economic consequences. A key issue was safe repatriation of citizens caught up in the conflict (including some of his own family).

“My summation of the debate”, Maimane said, “is you can make it about political parties choosing a side in the conflict, you can make it about old ideological issues. I’m making it about the choice of politics rather than the people of South Africa.”

Parks Tau, the minister of trade, industry and competition, had launched the discussions by warning of the economic risks to South Africa: a rocketing fuel price, disruptions of supply and shipping routes, and inevitable inflation and food insecurity.

International Relations and Cooperation Minister Ronald Lamola slammed the DA’s viewpoint and called South Africa’s position “consistent and rooted in non-alignment”. He said Pretoria had supported peaceful protests in Iran. He questioned whether a foreign policy that selectively condemns actors could claim moral consistency (except, apparently, when it comes to Israel). Lamola said South Africa’s foreign policy was “not anti-American but anti-imperialist”, grounded in the United Nations Charter and sovereignty.

Lamola wasn’t shy in taking on the DA as supposed puppets of the West. He said, “You accuse us of one-eyed foreign policy, yet it’s your vision that is blinkered. Standing at this podium

and peddling discredited and unproven conspiracies from think tanks in Washington is cheap political point scoring, Honourable Smith.”

To no-one’s surprise, the EFF supported Iran and condemned Israel and the US.

Hussein Solomon, professor at the University of the Free State’s Centre for Gender and African Studies, said, “If the allegations of the ANC taking money from Iran are true, then it has a vested interest in defending the regime in Tehran.”

The noisy debate was a rare public discussion of foreign policy. Independent political analyst Sara Gon said, “Holding the parliamentary debate was important because the ANC has kept foreign policy close to its chest. The Government of National Unity [GNU] has had no input in what our foreign policy and relationships should look like. In this respect, the debate was necessary for a range of honest views, and contradictory ones, to be aired publicly.”

International relations researcher at the Southern African Liaison Office, Lwazi Somya, said, “The ANC portrayed the debate as a means of reporting how it is effectively trying to deal with the crisis”, citing Tau’s speech on measures to ameliorate economic shocks from the conflict. “The DA pushed the human rights angle”.

“In this instance, they were speaking past each other,” Somya said. He said the DA wants more influence on foreign policy, an issue from the birth of the GNU. “I suspect that the ANC will try to consolidate its foreign policy approach around itself heading into the next elections” and exclude the DA as much as possible, Somya said.

Political economy analyst Daniel Silke said the debate also sent a message that South Africa would not bow down to the wishes of the US, and that Washington’s pressure on domestic policies was having no effect. This would not win it any friends in the US.

Silke said, “This debate was an example of how the ANC needed to reassert its leadership on foreign policy. It regards total control of foreign policy as an absolute priority. It really doesn’t want to relinquish any aspect of its historical ideological stance to the DA or anyone else.”

For an institution valuing free speech and respect for different views, there was precious little on display in Parliament.



Mmusi Maimane in Parliament this week



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South African Jewish Report

Living in a time of miracles

As our families and friends in Israel run for their lives many times a day, they are unable to find any semblance of normality almost a month into this war with Iran. As ballistic missiles are being fired from Iran directly into densely populated areas, the world says nothing to assuage this.

It is astonishing that nobody seems to be censoring Iran for firing cluster missiles into densely populated civilian areas. This breaks all the rules of war, but somehow if it happens to Jews, it doesn't seem to be relevant.

Meanwhile, Israel is meticulous and strategically focused on fundamentally degrading Iran's military capabilities and neutralising its nuclear programmes to ensure it cannot do this again. Not sure anyone has noticed the minimal civilian impact in Iran, or have they?

Looking to London this week, with the torching of four Hatzola ambulances, I am also not really seeing a massive outcry about this. What kind of person torches an ambulance? That ambulance is an emergency vehicle that saves lives, potentially on an hourly basis. Why would anyone destroy that possibility for another human being? By virtue of the ambulances they destroyed being Hatzola vehicles, the only thing the attackers can guess at is that it would be Jewish lives in question. They would be wrong, considering Hatzola, when called, goes out to save anyone, not just Jews.

Clearly the attackers didn't do their homework and were out to harm Jewish lives.

While I know I have veered onto the topic of antisemitism, I actually want to focus on something far more elusive, and that is miracles.

And as ugly as the war and hatred for Jews is, there have been miracles all around.

First off, the torching of the ambulances right next to the Golders Green Synagogue was meant to do maximum damage. I believe those behind it intended for the shul to burn down too. However, with only minutes to spare, someone got inside the shul and prevented it being razed.

This doesn't take away from the horror of the firebombing, but it does make me think that a higher power was keeping an eye out for the London community.

Then, heading to Israel, where a number of missiles are getting past the Iron Dome. It had to happen unfortunately. Only the number of casualties and deaths despite that is comparatively minimal. With the help of G-d, I would say.

On Tuesday evening, a ballistic missile hit Bnei Brak, a Haredi centre in Israel. It's part of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area but far more densely inhabited. Bnei Brak is known to be the seventh most densely populated city in the world. As far as I understand, there are between 70 000 and 80 000 people per square kilometre and about 218 000 living in the whole city.

And Bnei Brak was hit hard. Not by fragments of a missile but a direct hit. The physical damage was extensive. Yet, the hand of G-d was clearly out protecting the inhabitants because there was not one death from this missile. There were seven injuries, most minor, and one of medium severity.

Some would say this is just good luck, but I find it hard to see it as anything other than a modern-day miracle.

This war has had a massive impact on people's lives and nobody has a chance to really go back to living normally. How can you when so many times a day you're running for safety? People living in more modern abodes have the luxury of a *mamad* (a protective room in their homes), but most Israelis are running to a communal shelter in their building's basement or on the ground floor. Others have to do a mad dash to a public *miklat* (bomb shelter) nearby. Some even run to underground parking lots for safety. The further you have to go, the more frightening it is. Also, what with the many skyscrapers in Tel Aviv, and other cities, I'm not sure how safe I would feel in a *mamad* in an apartment on the 21st floor. I think I might prefer the mad dash to a shelter. Just saying.

The point is, this isn't fun for anyone in Israel. No-one dares take the chance of ignoring the sirens because there's no mistaking just how real the threat is. So, while I more and more believe that G-d is protecting the people of Israel, there is an essential part to play by every single person in Israel. Even those who – by some miracle – made their way to spend Pesach in Israel.

And while we may not be seeing the parting of the Red Sea right now, we are seeing miracles. We aren't seeing burning bushes as such, but somehow lives are being protected.

In our front-page story this week, we tell of a freak accident in which a woman in our community was run over by a CAP vehicle. There was clearly no malice intended, it was a horrible error of judgement and a mistake. The point is, that Pamela Kantor is still alive and has not one broken bone is a miracle. I watched that horrific video of the CAP vehicle reversing fast, knocking her down, and then driving over her before stopping. I was so shocked, I was initially convinced it couldn't be real. So many AI-created videos these days. But it was real and horrifying. But for all concerned, the miracle of her survival was a blessing. May she heal fast!

And as we wind down to Pesach, I wish for many more beautiful miracles for all of us. May this Pesach be peaceful and enriching for all!

Shabbat shalom and Chag Pesach sameach!

Peta Krost
Editor

Please note: There will be no print edition of the SA Jewish Report over Pesach, but we will be putting out newsletters for you. Our next print edition will be on 16 April.



Talkin' Bout a Revolution

OPINION

HOWARD SACKSTEIN



Everyone loves a revolution! Every few years we get an opportunity to overthrow our government in what's called an election.

After the battering inflicted on the African National Congress (ANC) in the 2024 national election, where support dropped from 57% to 40%, everyone waits to see whether that decline will be echoed in the municipal elections, likely in November 2026.

How a party leader like President Cyril Ramaphosa remains in office after such a drubbing, relegating his party to minority status and forcing it into a coalition with the Democratic Alliance (DA), says more about the ANC's shallow leadership bench than anything else.

With local government elections just eight months away, the Social Research Foundation, together with the news website *The Common Sense*, has released fresh polling data. The results are startling.

More than 75% of South Africans, including 75% of black voters, believe the country is heading in the wrong direction. While the ANC still polls at 39% nationally, support has collapsed in major metros.

In the Zulu heartland of eThekweni, ANC support has fallen off a cliff, now sitting at a paltry 8%. Jacob Zuma's ethnically aligned uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party leads with 44%, followed by the DA at 28%, and the Inkatha Freedom Party at 18%. In Durban, the ANC has been all but decimated.

In Tshwane, which includes the nation's administrative capital, Pretoria, the DA appears within striking distance of an outright win. Led by the charismatic Cilliers Brink, the party polls at 45% against the ANC's 42%. Whether Brink can push past the 50% mark and avoid a coalition remains to be seen.

For now, Tshwane is governed by an unholy alliance of Herman Mashaba's ActionSA, the ANC, Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Gayton McKenzie's Patriotic Alliance (PA), and a collection of political minnows. The municipality has been mired in the stench of corruption and incompetence. Collapsing service delivery, water failures, and the grotesque spectacle of councillors profiting from water tanker contracts have left voters deeply disillusioned.

Johannesburg, South Africa's economic crown jewel, has become a symbol of urban decay and squalor. The mayoral race is crowded, with the DA's Helen Zille, Mashaba, and the PA's Kenny Kunene all in the mix. The ANC has yet to name a candidate and remains consumed by internal infighting, including attempts to oust Mayor Dada Morero after a dubious and fiercely contested internal election that may or may not have been rigged.

Zille, for her part, is running a savvy campaign, sitting in potholes, visiting broken water towers, and engaging directly with communities, often in fluent isiXhosa. Aware that her style can be abrasive, she's leaned into it with an insightful slogan: "You don't have to like

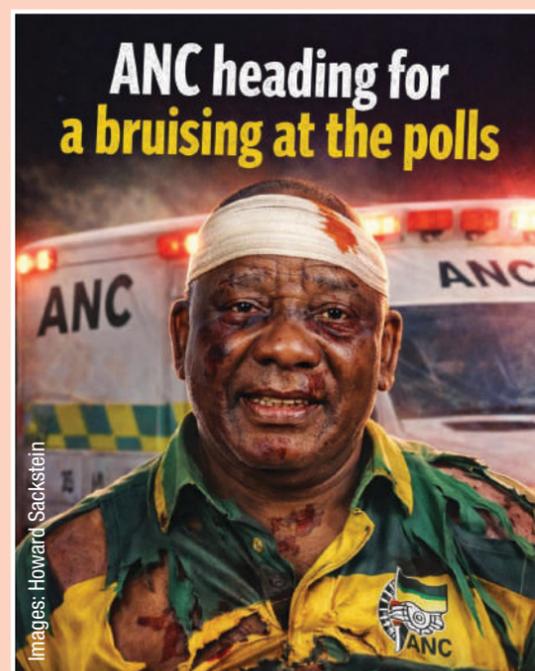
me; you just have to love Joburg." As the city crumbles, she's positioning herself as its last hope.

If an election were held today, the DA would secure 39% in Johannesburg, compared with the ANC's 30% and ActionSA's 10%.

And yet, among black voters, a striking contradiction persists: 80% believe their local conditions would improve under DA governance, but only 25% intend to vote for the party. In other words, mistrust still trumps perceived self-interest.

Much of this scepticism stems from the DA's perceived lack of credible black leadership. Voters want leaders who understand their lived realities, who understand why a child cries in Soweto, not just how to fix the budget. The DA still has work to do in shaking the perception that it remains, politically speaking, too pale.

Even with its growth, up 14.4% in Johannesburg since 2024, the DA numbers are still not sufficient to clinch control of the city.



Ultimately, the future of Johannesburg rests on the ability of either the DA or the ANC to cobble together a workable coalition. But the dirty and murky horse trading involved in forging a coalition takes compromise, something that doesn't come naturally to Zille.

How does the ANC still hold 39% nationally despite collapsing in the metros? The answer lies partly in the decline of its challengers. Support for MK outside KwaZulu-Natal is fading, while the once-formidable EFF is losing ground. MK now polls at 10%, down 4.5% over 18 months, while the EFF sits at just 6%, down from 9.6% in 2024. Its brand of confrontational, disruptive politics is no longer resonating with voters.

Another shift worth watching is the rise of the PA. While it polls just 3% nationally, recent by-election results suggest it is peeling away significant support from coloured voters who once backed both the DA and the ANC. McKenzie presents as an authentic voice for that constituency. Whether untested allegations of drug dealing, raised by KwaZulu-Natal police commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi at the parliamentary ad-hoc inquiry into police corruption, gain traction remains to be seen.

The sands beneath South African politics are shifting. And when voters head to the polls later this year, we may find out whether folk singer Tracy Chapman got it right when she sang, "And finally the tables are starting to turn ... talkin' 'bout a revolution."

• Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report, but writes in his personal capacity. He has a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and a Master's in political advocacy and international conflict resolution.



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The war with Iran is not a regional conflict. It's a message to the world.



ALON SACKSTEIN

OPINION

While Europe walks the tightrope, the US and Israel are redrawing the rules. And Beijing and Moscow are watching every move.

In the weeks and months after 7 October 2023, we observed a desperate attempt by the international community – led by malign actors such as South Africa (International Court of Justice case) and Iran – to pressure Israel into a handicapped response, aimed at crippling its right to self-defence through lawfare and disinformation. It appears these same forces failed to grasp the shift

Moscow as it is at Tehran: the world order is undergoing a tectonic shift, and the rules are being rewritten by the US and capable partners. The question worth asking is whether anyone in Europe is actually reading it. The evidence, as I will outline below, suggests not.

Iran's strategy was that of a chess player who had been setting up its pieces for decades. It armed and funded Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iraqi militias, building a multi-front regional network aimed at choking Israel and US interests in the region. It enriched uranium past every threshold set by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its successor frameworks. And it did all of this while Western governments, including the Biden administration continued to treat diplomatic re-engagement as both the means and the end.

The results speak for themselves. The cancer spread unabated. The Russian invasion of Ukraine. The 7 October attack. Hezbollah's decision to join the war. Hundreds of drone and missile attacks launched by Iran and its proxies across the region. The Houthis closed the Red Sea to commercial shipping for months, costing the global economy billions. At each juncture, the European response was calibrated, cautious, and largely ineffective, while the Biden administration coupled a big stick with a diplomacy-at-all-costs mentality that Tehran exploited at every turn.

Why? Because Western foreign policy's first instinct has been to keep talking no matter the cost.

If only we could dismiss this as wilful ignorance, a failure to seek out the relevant information. Unfortunately we cannot. These governments have had all the information they needed for years. The more accurate charge is wilful blindness, because drawing the obvious conclusion would require action. As any lawyer will tell you, wilful blindness is treated as equivalent to knowledge itself. That is precisely what we have

witnessed: not a failure of intelligence, but a failure of will.

The answer to this failure is written in US President Donald Trump's 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS), which admits plainly that American strategy went astray because its elites confused process with power and offloaded strategic responsibility onto allies who never intended to carry it. The NSS replaces that framework with something starker: peace through strength, and the explicit acknowledgement that red lines deter only when they are enforced. Operation Epic Fury is the fullest expression of that logic.

Europe, for its part, continues to confirm everything its critics have suspected. It has chosen impotence dressed in the language of international law. Some European capitals have raised legitimate concerns about the economic consequences of a prolonged conflict. These concerns are real. But they are arguments about cost management, not strategic vision, and they don't answer the question of what happens if Iran is permitted to acquire a nuclear weapon. This is moral bankruptcy dressed in the language of prudence, and it carries a strategic price that will compound over time.

This is not a distant conflict for Europe. Iran recently fired ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia, a joint US-UK base more than 4 000km from Tehran, revealing a missile capability that puts European capitals within direct strike range. Iran has also been the primary supplier of Shahed drones to Russia, used in thousands of strikes against Ukrainian cities. Iranian intelligence has conducted assassination plots and sabotage operations on European soil, targeting dissidents, journalists, and Jewish communities. That much of Western Europe still cannot bring itself to take a clear side raises questions that go beyond strategic incoherence.

The strategic significance of what is unfolding extends well beyond Iran. Russia may exploit the shift in international focus away from Ukraine to further its interests in the conflict. China continues to study every Western conflict in forensic detail, examining sanctions architecture, military aid timelines, and alliance cohesion.

If the US is willing to back a strike campaign aimed at Iran, what does that signal about its willingness to defend Taiwan? On the other hand, if domestic pressure causes Washington to falter mid-operation, what does that confirm about the durability of US commitments?

What Beijing and Moscow are watching now is whether the US and Israel will see this operation through, whether Epic Fury and Roaring Lion represent a genuine strategic realignment or a temporary deviation followed by the familiar retreat into managed inaction. Every sustained blow imposed on Tehran forces a recalibration of their risk assessments, while every European call for de-escalation reinforces their existing ones.

The accusations of escalation, disproportionality, and unilateralism are already reverberating through European foreign ministries and the morally hallowed corridors of the United Nations. What they will not offer is an alternative that has actually worked.

The alternative has been tried. For years, the West offered Iran negotiation after negotiation, framework after framework, sanction after carefully calibrated sanction. Iran enriched. It armed. It attacked.

Israel, and now the US, have chosen to forge a different path, to confront this enemy, rather than manage it. What comes next will require diplomacy of the highest order. But that diplomacy is only possible because two countries were willing to first establish the conditions for it through force.

This war highlights the contrast between those willing to pay the price of confronting reality for the betterment of future generations, and those who have chosen the comfort of pretending it away. One side is acting. The other is issuing statements and convening emergency sessions. History has a consistent verdict on which of those two postures shapes the world – and an equally consistent verdict on what awaits those who wait too long to choose between them.

• Alon Sackstein is a former strategic research team lead in the Research and Analysis Division of Israel Defense Intelligence. He holds an Executive MA in Diplomacy and Security from Tel Aviv University.



Israeli president's wife Michal Herzog visiting the site of an Iranian missile attack

in Israeli thinking caused by the horrors of 7 October – the decision to break free from the equations that characterised previous conflicts.

On 28 February 2026, the implications became impossible to ignore. The US and Israel launched Operation Epic Fury and Operation Roaring Lion, targeting Iranian missile infrastructure, military facilities, and leadership across nine cities. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and approximately 40 senior members of the Iranian security and intelligence apparatus were killed in the opening wave of Israeli strikes.

This is not simply a military campaign. Rather, it is a deliberate signal, directed as much at Beijing and



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Olim in-waiting remain committed to aliya

LEE TANKLE

What should have been a simple farewell for a group of *olim* leaving South Africa unfolded under the shadow of uncertainty, as the reality of life in Israel made every goodbye feel heavier.

About 20 *olim* in-waiting gathered at Beyachad on 18 March for a send-off. Many were supposed to have been in Israel already, with departure dates having been set for the beginning of March but now in limbo, waiting for normal flights to Israel to resume. Some are waiting to hear if their later flights will go ahead after all aliya flights before 23 March were cancelled.

But despite war raging in Israel, often with multiple sirens blaring a day, not one of these prospective *olim* has decided not to go to Israel.



"During this time, not one person has changed their mind," said aliya advisor at the Israel Centre Shelly Bookatz. "Everybody is still coming because this is our land, and nobody can change that because this is G-d-given, and you don't have to be Jewish to understand that. This is where we belong, and everybody's going home."

"At the moment, we are hanging in there, and all that we have is *emunah* (faith)," said Ziva Taitz, head of the Aliya Department at the Israel Centre of the Jewish Agency. "We don't know how or when it's going to be, but we have to trust that it will be the best way and the best date and arrangement, and whatever it is, it will be the best that is right for us."

Bookatz explained that she has been inundated with emails asking what is happening with flights and when people can book their aliya flight tickets. She spoke of her admiration for those who are choosing to make aliya now because they are uprooting their comfortable lives to go to a warzone.

"I can tell you that I know from what people have told me that you are safer in Israel than you are anywhere else, even with the bombs," she told the *olim*. "I don't even know how to express what a special time this is to make aliya. And each of you, you're going to go to Israel, you're going to build the economy, you're going to add to looking after everybody else, you're going to look after

each other, you're going to invest in property, and even the rent that you pay, you don't know how much that's going to build the country, and it is so deeply meaningful to all the Israelis who live in Israel."

Avi Kagan, the new Israeli representative from the Jewish Agency at the Israel Centre, explained that making aliya at this time epitomises what being a Zionist is.

"We grew up on stories about how Abraham, our father, left his land and went to the unknown. This time, what you're doing is no different from what our father Abraham did. Just going, just chatting with some of you, and knowing about your cases from our team. I know it's not easy," he said, "So for that, I think that's the most Zionist, that's the top of being Zionist. For some of you, all your life, you felt Zionist, you were Zionist, you donated. But now you're saying that it's not enough for you. You

want to be part of what's going on there. And as an Israeli, I'm proud, and I think that we, together, have an assignment to rebuild Israel. And just by coming, just by considering making aliya, I think it strengthens the country, and the people of Israel."

Kagan explained that though these *olim*

haven't actually set foot in Israel yet, there's already the uncertainty of red tape that is part of life in Israel.

"I want you to remember this moment. Right now, in Johannesburg, before we get into all the details: the flights, the passports, all the bureaucracy. I know some of you are already dealing with that reality," he said. "Some passports are sitting in Pretoria at the embassy, but staff can't access them because of security rules. That's the bureaucracy. Some of you already had flights booked, suitcases packed weeks ago, ready to go. We know, because we've been speaking about it constantly and trying to find solutions. And if you think the bureaucracy ends the moment you land in Israel, I have to tell you, it doesn't. It will continue. But maybe that's also part of what we love about our country. It's frustrating, but it's ours."

Kagan, who moved to South Africa only at the beginning of the year, explained that he considers these *olim* braver than Israelis like himself.

"We have the Israelis who actually, or someone like myself, who didn't make any choice. I was born there. So you are much braver than I am," he said. "I am a seventh-generation Israeli, as I like to say, and you are first-generation. Some of you already have kids in Israel. And they're first-generation, but you're also first-generation. And the young people, well, you're going to be like Israelis, born Israelis. So it's really moving."

Concert encourages *mitzvahs*

STAFF REPORTER

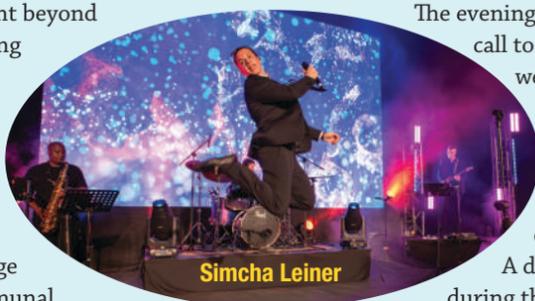
Nearly 2 000 Joburg Jews gathered at The Teatro at Montecasino on Tuesday evening, not just to watch two international music stars, Simcha Leiner and Nachman Solomon, but for a sense of togetherness, purpose, and responsibility.

The evening went beyond the songs, including moments of reflection and prayer. Rabbi Aharon Zulberg of The Base South Africa, delivered a message of unity and communal responsibility during a challenging time for Israel.

A collective recitation of Tehillim (Psalms) was a defining moments of the evening, with the audience joining in prayer for the safety and protection of Israelis, particularly

soldiers and civilians affected by the war.

Reflecting on the evening, Zulberg said, "The community came together in strength and solidarity for music and inspiration. It was powerful to celebrate our culture and who we are, with our voices united in prayer for peace and protection for our brothers and sisters in Israel."



The evening concluded with a call to action. Attendees were invited to take on one small, personal commitment, a *mitzvah*, as a way of carrying the experience forward.

A digital form, shared during the event and accessible at <https://jnml.io/TheBaseBandQR>, invites participants to choose a simple, meaningful action, such as daily prayer, an act of kindness, increased mindfulness in Jewish practice, or strengthening one's connection to Israel.

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The Kiffness, Matisyahu, and two Filipino children in the mix

LEE TANKLE

After seeing a video of two children in the Philippines singing the Matisyahu song *One Day*, South African musician The Kiffness, whose real name is David Scott, wanted to remix it with the young duo.

The video they created is a fresh, resonant take on hope in uncertain times. It has amassed 6.7 million views on YouTube so far.

The recording started the same way many of The Kiffness's songs do, with his followers sending him the video. He was immediately taken with child singers Anel and Nalyn.

"There's an innocence and a sincerity in children's voices that you just can't manufacture in a studio," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Given the heavy conflicts we're experiencing around the globe right now, seeing that raw joy from kids in the Philippines felt incredibly poignant. It just seemed like the right song for 2026. It's a reminder that despite all the noise, the universal desire for peace is still there."

Scott had never heard of the song or Matisyahu, an American singer, rapper, and songwriter known for blending reggae, hip-hop, and rock with themes of spirituality and Jewish identity. But when he saw the video, he had a hunch that it was a cover and went on an extensive Google search.

Reading about the pressure Matisyahu has

been under and the cancellations of several shows because of his Pro-Israel stance, Scott felt like this was a coincidence he couldn't ignore, given the online backlash he himself has received and the near-cancellation of his Kirstenbosch show.

"I felt an immediate kinship with him. It made the collaboration feel even more timely. It wasn't just about a song, but about two artists standing their ground and choosing to put out something positive in a very tense global environment," he said.

"There's a lot of noise and tension in the world right now, and I felt a responsibility to keep the tone uplifting. Instead of focusing on the 'brokenness', I wanted the direction of this version to be a celebration of what things could look like 'one day', when peace is not only possible, but achievable. It's a musical prayer for peace," he said.

During his research, he found out that one of the original writers of the song was a young Bruno Mars, who also has Filipino heritage, explaining its popularity in the Philippines.

Scott reached out to the children in the video to get their permission to make this remix and video and to include them, which he felt was central to the story.

"We tracked down their parents to make sure they weren't only happy with the track, but that the kids were fairly compensated for their talent. For me, the most rewarding part of this job is when a random Reel turns into a real-world collaboration that actually respects and rewards the original creators," he said.

Scott started by isolating the children's vocals and finding the natural groove they were singing in. From there, he built the beat around them, adding the bassline, some keys, and then layering in the verses and bridge with his own vocals.

When he reached out to Matisyahu for permission, not only did he get it, but the rapper wanted to work on the song with him.

"Working with Matisyahu was a total 'pinch-me' moment," he said. "He's a legend, but he was incredibly humble and open to the creative process. I've been doing these viral 'Kiff' remixes for more than five years now, and while I've done plenty of covers, this is actually the first time the original artist has collaborated with me on a project."

Matisyahu recorded his vocals on a beach in Los Angeles and sent them over. Scott mixed them in, and the track was finally complete.



Once the song was out, Scott was overwhelmed by the response. Millions of people around the globe have watched it and shared it across so many different communities regardless of race, religion, or background, which is exactly what they hoped for.

"When you see people from totally different backgrounds commenting and finding common ground through a song, you know you've done something right," said Scott.

He sees the track as a three-minute reminder that peace isn't just a nice idea but something that's possible.

"It's something worth singing about and working towards. I want people to feel a sense of optimism and, honestly, I just want them to feel a bit of joy when they hear those kids' voices hit the chorus," he said.

Raiding the kitchen to ease the stress of war

LEE TANKLE

In times of war, many people find themselves reaching for comfort foods, late-night snacks, or extra meals, not out of hunger, but as a way to cope with fear, uncertainty, and stress.

And so many South African *olim* in Israel are clearly comfort eating during this war, said endocrine dietician in Israel Dr Yardena Bauer, on a webinar hosted by Telfed (an Israeli organisation that supports Southern African and Australian *olim* in Israel) on 12 March.

Bauer likened this period in Israel to being back in the COVID-19 pandemic, or having a newborn baby.

"In such times, it makes sense that people try to comfort themselves with food. When we find ourselves eating, we're often actually trying to take care of ourselves. It's a form of self-soothing, even if it doesn't always feel like it's working. You might crave something sweet, then something sour, then something salty, constantly searching for something that will make you feel better," she said.

"Sometimes it feels almost automatic, like opening the fridge, closing it again, checking the cupboard, nibbling on whatever is there, even stale pretzels, while your mind races with everything else you need to do. The food brings a moment of comfort, but because the stress levels are so high, it can still feel as though nothing really helps. We're eating for a reason – we're trying to cope with an extraordinary amount of stress."

Bauer explained that stress is generally defined as a physical or psychological pressure that triggers a response in both the brain and body. It becomes harmful when it exceeds our ability to cope. We experience stress every day: when we're stuck in traffic and late for work, when we spill coffee, or when the internet stops working.

"Cortisol, known as the stress hormone, regulates this response. When stress occurs, the body reacts in several ways: blood sugar rises, memory and attention become heightened, and blood pressure increases. At the same time, the immune system is suppressed, sensitivity to pain decreases, and serotonin levels drop," she said.

People tend to respond to stress in three main ways: fight, flight, or freeze. "Fighters" move towards stress by trying to take control, often becoming highly productive or determined to manage everything. "Flighters" try to escape the stress by distracting themselves, such as constantly following the news or over-preparing for worst-case scenarios. "Freezers", meanwhile, shut down and withdraw, losing motivation and avoiding responsibilities as a way of coping with overwhelming pressure, and this is the point where emotional eating enters the fray.

Bauer explained that when we're in this state of freeze, we're more likely to raid the kitchen because the food we're seeking out will probably increase our serotonin and dopamine levels.

"When we're in a state of stress, we turn to food. What we're actually trying to do is make ourselves feel better. It's a form of self-care and self-love. So food works. Food works every single time. Food is loyal. Food will never let us down, as it will always be delicious," she said.

"But we have to understand how food works and why we choose the foods we do. Because when we're going to the kitchen, we're not thinking, 'I'm going to make an omelette now'. No, we want quick food. We want food that's normally sweet, salty, and can often go between both of them."

We choose these foods because foods that are high in sugar, fat, or salt are the fastest way to bring temporary comfort and increase our dopamine levels.

"Sugar triggers the release of serotonin and dopamine, giving us a brief sense of relief and reward, a momentary feeling that things are okay. These chemicals activate the brain's reward and limbic regions, the same networks are stimulated by drugs such as cocaine. That's why it can be hard to stop at just one piece of chocolate or a single chip, dopamine drives us to want more and

more," she said.

Bauer explained that understanding this is important because it helps explain why people often reach for sugary foods when they're stressed. Rather than



simply a lack of self-control, the brain is seeking comfort and relief, much like a magnet drawing someone towards something that temporarily eases their stress.

She said that besides stress eating, people in Israel now will often resort to eating because there is little else to do. So when there's nothing to do, our body wants to increase its levels of glutamate, which helps activate brain cells and allows signals to pass between them.

"Glutamate can help stimulate the brain in a way that may reduce sugar cravings. When people feel stuck in a cycle of constantly reaching for sugary foods, eating something protein-rich, such as cottage cheese or yoghurt, can help break that pattern. Higher-fat options like Greek or probiotic yoghurt are often recommended over low-fat varieties. These foods also support the gut microbiome because they contain beneficial bacteria, and it's worth remembering that about 95% of serotonin is produced in the gut."

What we eat can directly affect how we feel mentally. Probiotics, prebiotics, and fibre are important for gut health, which in turn supports serotonin production.

"Eggs are another powerful food. Often described as a superfood, they contain all 20 amino acids, including the nine essential ones the body cannot produce on its own. Eggs also have one of the highest satiety scores, meaning they keep us full for longer. When we feel full, we don't have to rely on willpower to control our appetite because we're simply not hungry," she said.

Preparing easy, nutritious foods in advance can help. Boiling eggs and keeping them in the fridge makes it easier to choose them when hunger strikes, since most people reach for whatever's quickest.

"It's also important to remember that we don't always eat because we're physically hungry. Sometimes we eat for pleasure, what experts call hedonic eating, driven by the brain's reward system and the release of serotonin and dopamine. That's why people can still want dessert even after a large meal: it's not about needing food, but wanting the pleasure it brings," she said.

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Life in Israel during the war

PHOTO ESSAY

Life in Israel at the moment moves between tension and routine. Sirens interrupt the day; people pause, look around, and head to shelter if needed – and then, quite remarkably, carry on. Cafés remain open, people walk their dogs, sit and talk, and daily life continues. There is a quiet resilience in the way ordinary routines are adjusted rather than abandoned.

What stands out most is the contrast. In between alerts, there are still moments of normal life: conversations continuing, people shopping, music playing, friends meeting. It's not that people are unaware of the danger, it's that they have learned to live alongside it. That contrast between anxiety and endurance is what I have tried to capture in these images.

On a personal level, being back in Israel feels especially meaningful. I was recently stuck in Manchester and only just managed to return, so photographing these moments now carries added weight. Moving between Netanya and Tel Aviv, I see how people support one another, adapt quickly, and carry on with quiet determination.

• South African oleh Harold Silber is a Netanya-based street and documentary photographer.

HAROLD SILBER



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Rabbi Yossy Goldman: 50 years of building SA Jewish life

GILANA LAB

When the young and determined New York Rabbi Yossy Goldman arrived in South Africa in 1976, he never imagined he would celebrate half a century on the southern tip of Africa.

He came as part of the global network of emissaries of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, known as *shlichim*. These rabbis and their families are sent around the world to strengthen Jewish identity and community life. Goldman, who had received rabbinic ordination from the Rabbinical College of Canada in Montreal in 1973, arrived in Johannesburg with his wife, Rochel, and a clear sense of purpose.

"I came here as a young rabbi on a mission," Goldman recalls. "The Rebbe's vision was never just about building a movement. It was about reaching every Jew and making Judaism accessible to them."

From the outset, Goldman emphasises that the work of a *shaliach* is never done alone. "In Chabad, the rebbetzin plays a major role," he says. "Rochel was a full-time partner in everything we did. She taught classes, she had people over every Shabbos, and she created a home that was open to the entire community."

Their work began in Yeoville, where one of the first Chabad centres in South Africa was established. "We wanted a place where any Jew could walk in and feel at home," he says. "That was always the philosophy."

Public celebrations quickly became a cornerstone of that outreach. "Purim is the most joyful holiday on the Jewish calendar," Goldman says. "We started organising big Purim parties that brought the whole community together." Chanukah celebrations took on a similarly public role. "Lighting a giant menorah in a public space sends a powerful message about Jewish identity and pride," he says.

Youth engagement was another priority. "One of the earliest successes was the Gan Yisrael day camp," he says. "Children had fun, but they were also building a lifelong connection to their heritage."

Education soon became central to Goldman's work. He recalls the early development of Torah Academy, nearly 50 years ago. "Our own children were among the first students in the nursery school. Torah Academy was built on a site that used to house a church – that's where it all started."

As the school expanded, the community was offered a much larger property. "We didn't have money and we wanted only one building," he recalls. "But the owner told Rabbi Lipskar, 'Take the whole thing. I'll give you a good deal.'" The land included 22 acres in what Goldman describes as "prime Jewish suburbia". "They bought it for R750 000," he says. "The land was equal to the dollar then, but it was still remarkable value."

The acquisition proved transformative. "Today it's arguably the most beautiful Jewish school campus in the country," he says.

A few years later, Goldman faced another defining moment. In 1986 he was approached to become the rabbi of the Sydenham-Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, widely known as Sydenham Shul.

At the time, the congregation was huge. "There were about 1 100 families, and close to a thousand people in shul on a Friday night," he recalls. "If you arrived late, you struggled to find a seat." He once

again sought the Rebbe's guidance. "Sydenham wasn't a Chabad institution," he says. "But the Rebbe wasn't interested in building a movement. He was interested in reaching Jews. If I could reach 1 100 families every week, he supported it."

Goldman began the role just two weeks before Rosh Hashanah. "I was 36 years old and suddenly responsible for this massive congregation," he says. "I was thrown in the deep end. But thank G-d, I swam."

From the beginning, he set out to transform the synagogue into a centre of learning and engagement. "I didn't take the job just to do what I call 'hatch, match, and dispatch' – weddings, Barmitzvahs, and funerals," he says. "I took the job to reach out and get people more involved in Jewish life." One of his early initiatives reflected that vision. "Trivial Pursuit was big at the time," he says. "So I created a programme called 'Meaningful Pursuit'. We had about 200 people coming to classes. They had never seen something like that before."

Over time, Sydenham became one of the most vibrant congregations in the country. "I take some credit for turning Sydenham into the premier shul in the country," Goldman says. "Other shuls started copying our programmes. But imitation is the highest form of flattery."

After 35 years leading the congregation, Goldman decided to hand over to his long-time colleague Rabbi Yehuda Stern. "He had been my associate for 14 years," he says. "When the time came, I felt he was ready to take on the position, and I was happy to become Rabbi Emeritus."

Even in this new role, Goldman insists little has changed in his day-to-day life. "I don't believe in retirement," he says. "If you're alive, you have to be productive. I'm still at shul most days, health permitting," he says. "I still give *shiurim*, I still speak, I still stay involved. It's not about a contract, it's about a sense of mission."

One of his proudest ongoing commitments is his weekly Talmud class, now in its 40th year.

With fewer formal obligations, Goldman has also been able to expand his global reach. "My wife and I have travelled to about 60 communities on six continents in recent years," he says. "We're able to accept invitations and speak around the world,

which is a great opportunity."

He has also turned more of his attention to writing. His next book, he says, will reflect a different kind of message. "My first book was on the weekly parsha," he explains. "This one is about life lessons – lessons from experience that have a broader, more

universal appeal."

Goldman is quick to emphasise the role his wife has played. "Rochel created something very special," he says. "Through Women of the World, she brought people together, inspired women, and strengthened families. People still tell her those events changed their lives."

Looking back on nearly five decades in South Africa, Goldman says the greatest reward has been seeing the long-term impact of that work. "When you see children grow up, get married, and build their own families within the community, that's incredibly meaningful," he says.

For Goldman, the mission that brought him to South Africa has never really changed. "It has been a privilege to be part of building Jewish life here," he reflects. "At the end of the day, it's all about reaching people and helping them connect with their Judaism."

Jewish anti-Zionists: The wayward sons of our generation

OPINION

RABBI DORON PEREZ



The phenomenon of fellow Jews misunderstanding the essence of our unique Jewish mission is, unfortunately, not new. It is nonetheless deeply disturbing.

To fit in with the dominant religious or cultural orders, some Jews have, throughout history, been willing to sever parts of our complex identity – cutting the indelible bond between Judaism and Jewish nationhood, while remaining determined somehow to maintain their association with the Jewish community. Jews for Jesus abandoned Judaism, while the early German Reformers – "Germans of the Mosaic persuasion" – abandoned Jewish peoplehood.

Today's Jewish anti-Zionists pursue the same goal, wishing to cling to Judaism while forsaking a core principle of both Judaism and Jewish nationhood: the ingathering of the exiles and the right of the Jewish people to sovereignty and self-determination in their ancestral homeland. Biblical and rabbinic tradition make it abundantly clear there cannot be authentic Judaism without the inextricable link between Judaism, Jewish peoplehood, and Jewish statehood in our ancestral homeland.

I have personally witnessed, in both New York and Toronto, members of Neturei Karta – thankfully numbering no more than a few hundred misguided Jews worldwide but perhaps the most dangerous representatives of this phenomenon because of their outward appearances – marching side by side with Hamas supporters calling for the annihilation of Israel.

On the progressive left, the numbers are unfortunately larger, though still marginal to mainstream Jewish communities. Incredibly, these types of Jews are able to somehow march alongside supporters of murderous internationally recognised annihilationist radical terror regimes – such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the ayatollahs – while feeling almost nothing for the suffering of their own people.

With pain, I would humbly contend that these Jews are the wayward sons of our generation, the very figure we read about in the Haggadah.

The Haggadah depicts the wayward son as one who sets himself apart from the Jewish people and places himself outside Jewish communal life. The Haggadah is harshly direct and critical to this well-meaning but wayward child, since he excludes himself from the people of Israel (*Klal Yisrael*), he has denied a fundamental principle of our faith. You should blunt his teeth and say to him that had he been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed.

Faith is not independent of fate, and Judaism is not independent of the Jewish people. One cannot claim to be either a good religious or humanitarian Jew without being intrinsically connected to the particular fate of our collective family and fortune of our people. Not out of tribal honour, but because of kinship of family. Kindness and charity does not end in the home but most certainly begins there.

The Haggadah could not be clearer as to who the misguided wayward children are – Jews who want Judaism without Jewish peoplehood, faith without collective fate, universalism without the bonds of brotherhood.

These often well-meaning but wayward members of our community need to decide which side of Jewish and human history they stand. If they do not feel the pain and cry of their long-suffering extended family and historic community,

from Pharaoh's horrific decrees through to the barbarism of Hamas and Hezbollah, the Haggadah is clear: they have divorced themselves from authentic Jewish life.

To those who question whether this wayward Jew can still find their way back, I believe the answer is a resounding "yes". I will never forget how a meeting of South African Jewish community leadership played an important role in shifting the views of Justice Richard Goldstone.

Goldstone naively led a harsh and characteristically biased United Nations report condemning Israel for war crimes and potential crimes against humanity in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9.

The Goldstone Report was released in September 2009, triggering outrage in Israel and across the Jewish world. Goldstone believed that leading this libellous report did not disqualify him from being a good Jew, a Zionist even, as he saw himself.

He did not anticipate the uproar that erupted or the planned communal protests surrounding his scheduled participation in his grandson's Barmitzvah in April 2010. An agreement was reached: no protests, on condition that Goldstone meet with the leadership of the South African Jewish community. He agreed, and we met on 3 May 2010, exceptionally led by then chairperson of the South Zionist Federation Avrom Krengel.

It was a remarkable meeting that I had the privilege to attend. Leaders from left and right, religious and secular, across all Jewish streams, came together with one clear message: not in our name.

You cannot claim to be a faithful Jew and Zionist when you have caused greater damage to Israel than arguably any other Jew of our time.

I was the last to speak – rabbinic privilege. Drawing on the proximity to Pesach, I explained to Goldstone who the wayward son of the Haggadah is and why his actions had made him such a harmful son of our people. We left that difficult but necessary meeting with the sense that our words had been heard.

Less than a year later, in April 2011, Goldstone incredibly retracted the key findings of his report, stating that the evidence did not support the claim that Israel had intentionally targeted civilians. He expressed regret over the report's conclusions and acknowledged that the report had failed to give sufficient attention to Hamas's targeting of Israeli civilians.

Goldstone understood, it seems, that as long as he wished to remain part of the Jewish community, he couldn't be oblivious to its pain and suffering, certainly not while actively strengthening the hand of its sworn, brutal terrorist enemy. If a wayward son wishes to be embraced by his family and people, he must return to them.

We are one family and ought to do all we can to preserve that family. The Haggadah reminds us that to be unable to feel the collective pain of our people is to miss something fundamental about Jewish life. It also reminds us that the wayward child is present at the table and wants to be part of our family story. We must be honest with them about their destructive ideas and actions. Without truth they cannot learn. But without love and an open heart, they may never return.

• Rabbi Doron Perez is president of the World Zionist Organization and executive chairperson of the World Mizrahi Movement. He is an *oleh* from South Africa.





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The shoes

OPINION

Someone walked through the split sea and complained about their shoes.

The Torah doesn't record it. Our sages don't tell us his name. There is no actual source for this image. And yet I am convinced that at one of the most astonishing moments in all of history, there was at least one person still preoccupied with something small and irritating.

The Red Sea had split. Water stood like walls on either side. The Midrash says fruit grew from those walls for the Jewish people as they crossed. The ground beneath them was dry. Dry ground in the middle of a sea. Behind them, Egypt was collapsing. Ahead of them, freedom. And somewhere in the middle of all that, one Jew looked down and thought, "This is not ideal for leather."

Human beings have a remarkable ability to stand inside something extraordinary and remain emotionally committed to something small. A couple can be under the chuppah, parents crying, grandparents glowing, generations folding into one another, and the father of the bride is still replaying something rude that somebody said to him that morning. A family can be sitting around a hospital bed after a real scare, the kind that rearranges your priorities for at least six minutes, and someone will still find a way to become preoccupied with the parking. A person can be blessed beyond what he prayed for 10 years ago and still spend his day irritated by the one message that wasn't answered properly. The shoes don't disappear just because the sea opened.

This matters because Pesach is coming, and Pesach places us right back inside that question. Not whether the sea split. We know the story and we tell it every year. The question is whether we know how to stand inside a moment of liberation without immediately reducing it to logistics.

Of course logistics matter. Pesach without logistics is a fine way to end up with hungry guests and a nervous spouse. The kitchen matters. The cleaning matters. The shopping matters. Anyone who has been in a Moishe's



aisle the week before Pesach understands that the logistics matter very much, to a great many people.

But Jewish life has always carried a risk of its own, namely that we can become very skilled at performing holiness while remaining strangely untouched by its content. We can kasher every surface in the house and leave the heart unchanged. We can remove every crumb of *chametz* from the cupboard while carrying entire storehouses of old resentment, fear, ego, and spiritual laziness from one *yom tov* to the next.

That, in truth, is the deeper meaning of Egypt – *Mitzrayim*.

Egypt isn't only where our ancestors were trapped. It is every narrow place we continue to live in because it is familiar. The word *Mitzrayim* shares a root with *meitzarim*, constraints, the narrow places inside us that we have furnished and made habitable because at least we know the roads there.

There are people living in emotional Egypt for years and calling it personality. Some have been stuck in a marriage dynamic that hasn't worked for a decade and consider it normal. Others have been telling the same tired story about themselves for so long that it now sounds like

humility, but it is really defensiveness with good public relations. We become attached to the shape of our own captivity. Captivity can eventually start to feel almost like home.

Pesach arrives each year and upsets that arrangement by pulling the whole story into our bodies. We taste the bitterness. We taste the bread of affliction. We lean on our left side like free people before we feel free, because the seder understands something the inspirational poster does not: sometimes the body has to go first, and the soul follows. The heart follows the actions.

That is harder than it sounds. Many people arrive at the seder exhausted, mildly irritable, and quietly proud of themselves for having made it through the seating arrangements. Still, it would be a shame to work this hard



RABBI LEVI AVTZON

for a *yom tov* and then miss the *yom tov* itself.

The great spiritual waste is rarely open rebellion. It is distraction, pettiness, and busyness. The slow triumph of the trivial. We imagine that if a moment of real liberation ever came near us we would rise nobly to meet it. In reality, many of us would first check whether this was a convenient time, look for somewhere comfortable to sit, and ask what exactly it was doing to our shoes.

So before Pesach begins, before the Haggadahs come off the shelf and the debate starts about which grape juice we are using this year, it is worth sitting quietly with one honest question. The real one. Where am I still living narrowly? What still owns more of me than it should? Where have I become so used to a certain pattern that I now mistake it for who I am?

Pesach isn't only about what Hashem did then. It is about what He continues to make possible now. There are moments in the Jewish calendar when something opens, when the walls of an old captivity become briefly less solid than usual, and a person gets help leaving what he could not leave alone. This is one of those moments. The sea opens. And even when it does, not everyone notices. Some are too busy with the shoes.

We are living through incredible and historical times. Let's notice.

Chag Pesach Kasher Vesameach to you and your family.

• Rabbi Levi Avtzon is the rabbi at Linkfield Shul.

Pesach 2026: The complex dynamic of Jewish survival

OPINION

RABBI YUVAL CHERLOW



Vehi Sheamda, in the Haggadah, reminds us of the tragic but all too recognisable aspect of Jewish national identity that in every generation we face enemies intent on our destruction.

While this is a reality that needs little reminder in our current times, the seder provides the annual forum to remember that it's been a constant throughout our people's history. But perhaps because this is something we have dealt with across the centuries, it's also necessary to distinguish between the different experiences.

The greatest distinction lies not in the desire of our enemies, because, as noted, that changes little over time. Most notably, despite our challenges today, we are no longer in physical *galut* (exile). We have a homeland of our own, which provides us with military, political, cultural and social strength unlike in generations prior. So when we reach this point of the seder, it's important that we make this distinction for ourselves and our children; yes we face evil enemies in every generation but our ability to counter them has changed dramatically.

This year, of course, that lesson is clearer than ever

before. At this very moment, the land of Israel is surrounded by millions of people who are actively committed to our destruction. Antisemitism has returned in ways that we had all hoped and prayed were a thing of the past, and in many parts of the world Jews are legitimately fearful for their very security.

Yet, despite all those fears and difficulties, seder night in 2026 cannot be compared to seder night in 1942, or so many other nights across history on which Jews were forced to hide. The State of Israel, with arguably the strongest military force in the history of warfare, alongside

the United States, is engaged in a campaign intent on securing our national survival. So when we ask how this night is different from other nights, we should also be asking how our situation as a people is different from other times.

Our history has taught us that Jewish survival is not an absolute. Even with the tremendous strength we have as a Jewish State, and the power being invested in this current war, we would be ignorant to think that the threats will be removed in a matter of weeks or months. All wars come at a cost and even when it ends, in all likelihood some remnants of our genocidal enemies will remain.

Like every year, the seder is designed to remind us of this "imperfect" circumstance in which we live.

On one hand, we live through the lens of history; a history of enslaved people who were brought to freedom, and all the many events that came about as a result and are at the essence of our very peoplehood. This is why we are biblically commanded to remember that past, because it is the root of our identity and the source of our national strength.

But at the very same time, the miracle of Jewish continuity is that every year is different. *Vehi Sheamda* sung this year will be defined by the unique events we are currently experiencing as a people. As part of this strength we recognise the heroism of our soldiers, many of whom have paid the ultimate price in defence of our people and our nation.

This dynamic, of being able to remember the past while being ultimately grateful for the present, is a central aspect of the very power of who we are as a Jewish people. Our gratitude to Hashem isn't simply that we survive, but more so that we thrive. That our Jewish world has strengthened in ways previous generations could never have even dreamed of. And with that recognition we pray for only better and safer days ahead and may it be a *Chag Pesach Kasher Vesameach*.

• Rabbi Yuval Cherlow is the director of the *Izohar Center for Jewish Ethics*.



Now we are here. Next year in Jerusalem

OPINION

RABBI ARI KIEVMAN



Once again, our vibrant community welcomes so many Jewish visitors from around the world to our renowned Safari Pesach Retreat beneath African skies.

As the rabbi of Sandton Central Shul, in Johannesburg's bustling hotel district, I and my family witness this phenomenon all year round. A businessman on a layover, a backpacker seeking a Shabbos dinner, or a family touring and attending a minyan before heading to the Kruger National Park,

countless individuals discover that Jewish life in South Africa isn't just surviving, but it's thriving.

From Cape Town to Johannesburg, our community sparkles with vibrant shuls, outstanding schools, kosher food that can hold its own with New York on a good day, and a warmth no travel brochure could ever capture. And during Pesach, that spirit reaches new heights.

For more than a decade we have hosted a Safari Pesach Retreat, blending gourmet *yom tov* meals, sunrise game drives, spirited seders, and inspiring programming. One message we try to emphasise every year is that Pesach isn't about retreating but rather about advancing. A moment from one past retreat captured this perfectly.

ChaiFM's Howard Feldman once broadcast his show live from the resort and interviewed the hotel's executive chef, Francois, who was working along with our catering team. Howard jokingly grilled him about how Jews manage to eat so well on Pesach. At the end he asked Francois whether he would join us again the following year.

Francois looked puzzled. "But next year you are going to Israel, would you take me with?"

he asked me. I asked why he thought that we were moving our annual Safari Pesach Retreat to the Holy Land.

He replied very simply, "It says so in your booklet. Next year in Jerusalem!"

It was a funny moment, but also a profound one. Sometimes it takes an outsider to remind us that those words at the end of the Haggadah, that we also recite at the culmination of Yom Kippur, are not just poetry. They are a declaration of hope. The Haggadah says, "Now we are here. Next year

in the Land of Israel."

Those few words capture the Jewish spirit. We celebrate the present with gratitude, yet we never stop yearning for something greater. Judaism never denies the beauty of where we are. We can celebrate a magnificent Pesach in South Africa, surrounded by family, community, and even the occasional troop of hungry monkeys eyeing the matza. But at the same time we keep our eyes on a larger horizon.

Pesach is the story of a journey. We left Egypt, but we were never meant to remain in the desert.

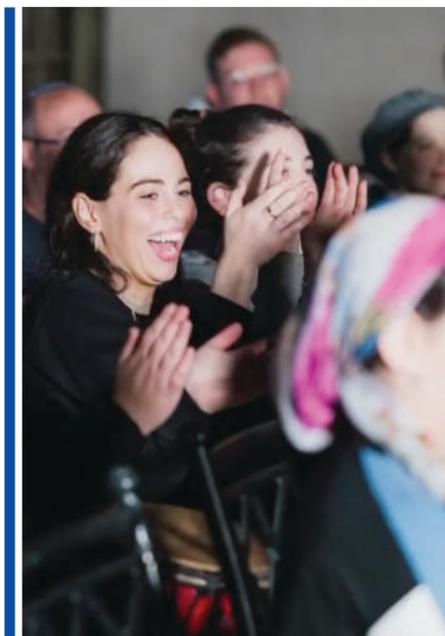
So wherever you celebrate this year, at an exquisite retreat or in your own kitchen surrounded by the familiar chaos of Pesach preparations, remember that freedom isn't only about where we are. It is about where we are going.

Now we are here.

Next year in Jerusalem.

Wishing our entire community a *Chag Kasher V'Sameach*, filled with meaning, laughter, and just enough maror to keep us humble.

• Rabbi Ari Kievman is the rabbi at Chabad Sandton Central.



Making the move to Israel

OPINION

The question of why it's necessary for a Jew to move to Israel is puzzling to me.

I'm not saying that everyone should drop everything and move to Israel. I believe in smart aliya, which includes plans for how to make a living and making sure that the timing is right for a family. But even if one remains away from Israel for either of those reasons, it doesn't change the reality that all Jews should be living in Israel.

I recognise that this may come across as extreme.

But imagine if G-d came to you right now and told you He has a gift He would like to give you. Is there any chance you would turn your back and say that it's not for you or it's not a good time for you to accept His gift?

The Peel Commission gathered in 1936 to try find a solution to the conflict in then Palestine. David Ben Gurion appeared before the commission and declared, "Our right to the Land of Israel is not given by the British government or the Balfour Declaration. It is much older. The Bible is our mandate to the land."

In Genesis 12:7, G-d appeared to Abraham and told him, "To your descendants I will give this land." G-d made the same promise to Isaac in Genesis 26:3, "to you and your descendants I will give all these lands", and to Jacob in Genesis 35:12, "The land that I gave to Avraham and Yitzchak I will give to you and to your descendants." G-d then reaffirms this to the Jewish people hundreds of years later in Exodus 6:8, "I shall bring you to the land about which I raised My hand to give it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I shall give it to you as a heritage."

"Your heritage!"
G-d has given every single Jew a heritage – the Land of Israel, the land He says is "more beloved to me than anything" (Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 23:7).

The Hebrew word for Jewish immigration to Israel is "aliyah", which literally means "going up". This does not refer to the topography of Israel compared with other lands but, rather, to the spiritual elevation one receives through moving to the Holy Land. King David teaches, in reference to being in Israel, that "One day in Your courtyards is better than 1 000 elsewhere" (Psalms 84:11). This is why our tradition teaches that "It is preferable to dwell in the deserts of the Land of Israel than the palaces of the Diaspora" (Bereshit Rabba 39:8), and that "it is better to live in the Land of Israel in a city mostly populated by gentiles (often translated in this context as "idolaters" or "non-Jews") than to live outside of Israel even in a city populated by Jews" (Tractate Ketubot 110b).

This is also why Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz, a prominent 18th-century rabbi, wrote, "If a person has all that he desires, he should always remember that he is lacking something, because he is not in the Land of Israel ... He should be sad about that because the most important thing is missing." Israel is our inheritance from G-d. He created us and knows what is best for us.

There is another dimension to the benefit of moving to Israel at this time in history.

The Bible relates that the people of Israel will sin and will be exiled all around the world. (See Leviticus Chapter 26 and Deuteronomy Chapter 28.) That certainly



Welcoming new olim

came true as the Jewish people were exiled to every part of the world.

But then the Bible says that G-d will remember His covenant with the people of Israel and will bring them back to their land (Leviticus 26:42, Deuteronomy 30:3). Prophets such as Isaiah say outright, "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth" (11:12).

Take a moment and think about the impossibility of this coming to fruition. A small nation will be scattered around the world with no common language and with no method of staying in close contact with one another. They will be mercilessly persecuted almost every place they go to. And then they will somehow survive as a nation for thousands of years and then return to their ancestral homeland.

And yet, this is exactly what is happening in Israel today. I am blessed to run an organisation called Yad L'Olim. We are an

assisting, supportive hand for all Jews who choose to return home to live in Israel. In just five years we have helped more than 50 000 families from 40 different countries with their move and settling in Israel. Jews are returning home from nearly every continent.

These olim come from all across the spectrum. They include high school and college graduates who want to build their lives in Israel. They include families whose parents want to raise their children in the Jewish State. They even include seniors who choose Israel as their retirement destination. They all hear a calling that inspires them to yearn to return to their spiritual home, a call which Isaiah (27:13) refers to as "the blowing of the shofar (ram's horn)."

By moving to Israel, you can be part of the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. And you can have a front seat to the future of the Jewish people, which is undoubtedly in Israel.

It is critical for everyone to understand that aliya isn't easy,

and living in Israel isn't always easy. Being away from family is a challenge. It's not a simple place to make a living and we, of course, have ongoing security issues. But, if one moves to Israel with the backbone of the ideology that I wrote above, you can weather the challenges, and it will be the best decision you ever made in your life. There is a reason that despite the many challenges of living in Israel, the Jewish State always ranks among the top five in polls assessing where people are the happiest. It's always Israel alongside a few Scandinavian countries at the top of the list. Happiness comes with living a

meaningful life and feeling like you are where you belong.

So, come and join us in your ancestral and biblical homeland. Take hold of your inheritance from G-d. You won't regret it. And if you can't come right now, raise your children to make Israel their home and then join them in your retirement.

This will cement your family's future in the land of Jewish destiny.

• Rabbi Dov Lipman is a former member of the Knesset and founder and chief executive of Yad L'Olim, an organisation that helps new immigrants to Israel.



RABBI DOV LIPMAN



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Generation to Generation

WE PROTECT

Families forced to spend yomtov apart

LEE TANKLE

In an ordinary year, the weeks before Pesach would see families confirming flights, preparing for reunions, and finalising holiday plans. Instead, many travelling between Israel and South Africa are facing cancellations and uncertainty.

Airlines have reduced or suspended flights as shifting airspace restrictions across the Middle East have made travel unpredictable. Passengers are being forced to reroute through multiple countries, delay departures, or cancel trips entirely, as the usual routes between Tel Aviv and Johannesburg are becoming increasingly difficult to navigate.

For many families, the disruption is more than logistical; it means confronting the reality that, for the first time in years, they may not be together around the seder table.

Vanessa Gruskin had travelled to Israel to visit her three sons, hoping to spend time with the eldest following his recent marriage, before returning to South Africa with the other two to celebrate Pesach with her elderly parents. Those plans were upended when all their flights scheduled for 15 and 21 March were cancelled. Now they are all spending Pesach in Israel together, but without

her daughter-in-law, who is stuck in Russia.

"Pesach would've been spent with my parents, who are in their 80s, and haven't seen their grandsons in three years, [although] my eldest son and his wife came through in January to show her South Africa. Now, unfortunately, my daughter-in-law is stuck in Russia and we are all stuck in Israel. But I'm very grateful that at least I get to spend Pesach with my three most favourite people in the world," she said.

Still, not being with her parents for Pesach is tough, and

her sons are extremely disappointed that they can't be with their grandparents, especially since the grandmother is a fantastic cook.

"For all of us, the *yomtvim* are about family, it's about being together and having special quality time, which is going to be very sorely missed because of the war," she said.

Gruskin explained that she's feeling pretty much how the whole of Israel is feeling – exhausted. "The constant sirens, alarms, and alerts are hard and disturbing. My heart goes out to all the parents carrying babies and children in and out of

of Israel, she was forced to stay home and mourn without her family.

"I had to sit *shiva* by myself and unfortunately watch the funeral via Zoom. It is probably one of the hardest, most heartbreaking things I've ever had to go through," she said, "Just to not have a support system there, to not feel like I've buried my father with respect and the way that he should have been buried, is just so incredibly unfair. And to have to go through sitting *shiva* on your own is just awful."

This gloom was compounded by the fact that she didn't have a single day uninterrupted by sirens.

"The first day was just horrendous. It was the first day after my dad passed, and then having to deal with all the rockets and the sirens and the stress that goes along with that. Then in the bomb shelter in town, and there were ongoing rockets, so it was a very stressful situation, and I felt helpless," she said.

Eva Waldman and her husband, who usually spend time with her daughter in Australia for Pesach, were planning to go to Israel after the seders, but are now unsure they will make it. They have cancelled trips to Israel before, in December 2023 and December 2025, because of security concerns.

"It's like sitting on an explosive. You don't know where you stand. And I really would like to know," she said. "So I'm preparing as though we're going. I'm booking my hair appointment, and I told everyone we're going. But we may not go, and to be quite honest, I don't want to go. I've reached a stage where I say, 'What do you want to go for? Look what's going on. You saw the news this morning. A bomb hit a car in Tel

Aviv."

Melissa Genede, who managed to leave Israel through Egypt, spent more than 30 hours getting back to South Africa, leaving her son and his young family behind.

"Being home has been very challenging, having anxiety about family there. Exhaustion in the first few days was debilitating," she said. "It was invaluable help to my kids, so I don't regret being there, and neither do I regret coming home to the rest of my family."



shelters at all hours, and, of course, all the poor animals," she said.

Lorelle Schwartz, who lives in Ra'anana, planned to come to South Africa on 19 March with her husband and two young daughters to celebrate a family wedding, when suddenly their flights were cancelled.

Worse, the Friday night before the war started, her father passed away from a brief illness. Since the war started early the next morning, and no flights were coming in or going out

Balancing our pain and hope is the heart of Pesach

OPINION

LISA HACK



It's time to start searching for *chametz*. Let's empty the cupboards, hunt down crumbs, and get ready to transform our kitchens. On the surface, it's a physical act, a seasonal halachic obligation. But this external ritual hints at something much deeper.

This year, that "something" is difficult to ignore.

Wars continue and their toll is clear, not just in headlines and statistics but in the anguish of communities. The global Jewish people are united in concern. Even for Jews who are far removed from immediate conflict, there's a sense of vulnerability.

And yet, here comes Pesach 5786, a living narrative that feels close to home.

We know the story, traditionally recited between bites of matza and maror. It's one of hardship winding into redemption. We recount our ancestors' time in Egypt, enslaved under a regime that dehumanised them, stripped them of their dignity, and aimed to erase their identity.

But this year, the bitterness of maror hits differently.

It's easy to romanticise the exodus story, focus on miracles, plagues, and liberation. Yet the Torah doesn't shy away from the suffering. The Israelites endured endless labour, the weight of oppression, and the mental strain of being treated as less than. They cried out, and for a long time it felt like it was all for nought.

There's something hauntingly familiar right now about that feeling of waiting, of calling out into uncertainty.

As images and stories come out of war, and Jewish communities globally deal with a hostile environment, many of us feel a similar tension. We're resilient. We're proud. But we are very tired. Tired of explaining, tired of defending, and tired of carrying the weight of history while trying to live fully in the present.

Yet, Pesach doesn't let us linger in despair. The genius of the seder is that it doesn't

simply recount suffering; it reframes it. "In every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as though they personally went out of Egypt." This is more than a nudge for empathy. It calls us to realise that the journey from constriction to freedom continues, that Egypt is not just a physically historical place but a condition that can emerge in various forms.

If Egypt stands for narrowness, fear, and oppression, then our current time, with all its challenges, can feel like a kind of modern *Mitzrayim* (Egypt).

But the story goes on.

One poignant part of the exodus narrative is that liberation doesn't happen all at once. Even after their escape, the Israelites face uncertainty and hardship as they navigate the wilderness. Freedom isn't a single event but a process requiring courage, faith, and a willingness to step into the unknown.

And perhaps that's where we find ourselves now.

We're in a moment between constriction and redemption, between fear and hope. The outcome isn't clear, and the ambiguity is unsettling. But if Pesach teaches us anything, it's that transformation begins in the in-between spaces.

Here, the metaphor of *chametz* becomes powerful.

Chametz quite literally means something that has expanded beyond its simplest form. Spiritually, it points to ego, arrogance, and the internal clutter that keeps us from being our

best selves. The act of removing *chametz* is about so much more than physical cleanliness; it's about introspection and asking ourselves what we need to let go of to make room for growth.

In a season strained by division and pain, this question feels urgent.

What *chametz* do we carry as individuals and as a people?

It might be instinct to respond to hate with hate, to retreat defensively rather than engage with clarity. It may also be the internal fractures in our communities, where genuine concern

morphs into something corrosive if left unchecked. And it

could be the quiet despair that whispers that not much will change, that the world is too broken.

Clearing *chametz* doesn't mean disregarding reality or sticking our heads in the sand. The Israelites didn't escape Egypt

by ignoring their suffering. They acknowledged it, cried out, and took steps – no matter how uncertain – towards a better future.

Similarly, our task is not to downplay the challenges we face, but to ensure that they don't define us.

This is by no means naive optimism. It's a conscious choice.

As we gather around our seder tables this year, we will again share the story of our people's journey. We will remember what it means to be vulnerable. We will taste maror and not shy away from bitterness. Yet, we will also drink the wine, lean in comfort, and celebrate the chance for redemption.

That tension between pain and hope is the

heart of Pesach.

It may also be the key to navigating our current moment.

We can't control the forces of war or the shifting tides of global sentiment. We can't single-handedly eliminate antisemitism or settle complicated geopolitical issues. But we can choose how to respond, how to carry ourselves, and how to interact with one another.

We can choose to clear our *chametz*.

We can choose to let go of the arrogance that blinds us to others' perspectives while still standing firm in our own truth. We can choose to shed the despair that holds us back and replace it with determined hope. We can create communal spaces of warmth and understanding in a world that feels cold.

Perhaps we can even dare to choose to believe that change is possible.

As we prepare our homes for Pesach, meticulously searching for every last crumb of *chametz*, we remember that the smallest details matter. A single crumb renders the entire kitchen unfit for the festival. Similarly, the little choices we make, the attitudes we carry, and how we treat one another have a greater impact than we realise.

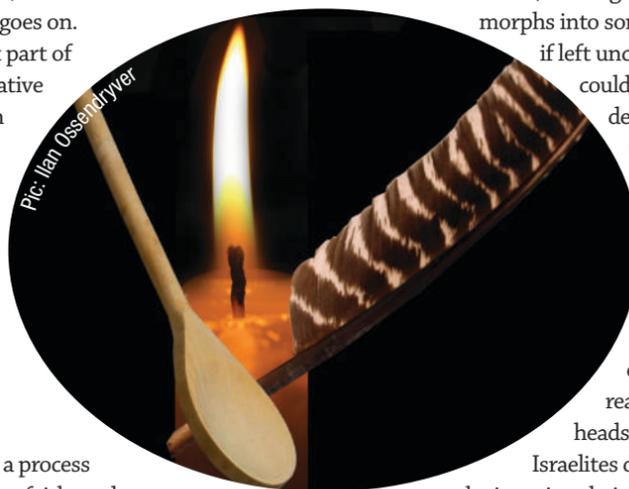
Let's take that to heart.

Let's not only clean our homes but also our hearts and minds. Let's identify the *chametz* within us, the habits and viewpoints that no longer serve us, and commit to letting them go. Let's make way for compassion, understanding, and peace – within ourselves and our communities.

The path may be unclear, and the journey could be long. But Pesach reminds us that even in the darkest times, redemption is possible.

And it starts, as it always has, with the courage to clear the *chametz* and make room for something better.

• Lisa Hack is the national chair of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism.



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Freedom as a Jewish and South African value



ALANA PUGH-JONES BARANOV

OPINION

The story of Pesach echoes through the generations: the journey of a people from oppression to freedom, from persecution to liberation, from bondage to dignity. Our Festival of Freedom isn't merely a memory of the past, but a living reminder of what it means to be human.

Here in South Africa, that story resonates deeply with our history too. Our national journey has been one of profound transformation, from centuries of painful racism, discrimination, and inequality to a democratic society



At the Freedom Seder

founded on human rights.

This connection between the Jewish experience and the South African narrative formed a central theme of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies KwaZulu-Natal (SAJBD KZN) Council's Freedom

including local government leaders, representatives of political parties, members of the media, and interfaith partners.

Led by Rabbi Gilad Friedman, the intimate and informal evening

unfolded with warmth as we explored the traditional elements of the seder plate and shared insights from the Haggadah, interweaving these ideas with contemporary reflections on the challenges facing South African society today. Participants enjoyed a taste of a traditional Pesach meal, complete with matza and soup and kneidlach, and shared similarities with their own cultural foods and traditions.

The timing of

our Freedom Seder was particularly poignant, taking place just after Human Rights Day, a moment to reflect not only on how far

Eric Apelgren shares the Haggadah story with guests



We are living the Haggadah

OPINION

We are a nation of memory. We hold tightly to our past, marking the great turning points of our history. That past is not a relic of culture. It lives within us.

No night is more saturated with memory than Pesach. We don't merely recall events. We relive them. The seder gathers memories across generations and weaves them into identity. "In every generation, a person must see himself as if he left *Mitzrayim* [Egypt]." Freedom, faith, and human dignity, first formed when we left *Mitzrayim*, are not abstract ideas; they are re-experienced each year and settle back into our shared consciousness.

When Rambam cites this halacha, he adds a striking word: a person must see himself leaving *Mitzrayim* now. We revisit the past and translate it into the present. The story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (The Exodus) is not sealed in the past. It reaches into the reality we are living through.

perspectives gathered around a shared memory.

This year, there is also a fifth son. The one who is not here to ask at all.

Across Israel, there will be empty chairs. Some belong to those who fell and will not return to the seder table. Others belong to husbands, sons, and fathers still serving, still defending our people, absent from their families on this night of gathering.

As we speak about the four sons, we should also think about the fifth, the one whose chair is empty, whose voice we miss, but who remains part of our seder.

In every generation ...

This is an obvious moment to connect to our condition, as we face enemies who have once again risen to annihilate us. On this night of faith, we are certain that these criminals will meet the fate of those who rose against us in the past. Many already have, and others will follow.

We recall the first who rose in hatred,

in tunnels and terror while abandoning their own people and their own future. Their hatred distorts judgement and ultimately turns inwards. These cultures of hate will all self-implode.

Lavan also introduced another pattern, false accusation. Despite Yaakov's integrity, Lavan projected his own corruption onto him. That pattern endures. Modern antisemitism uses updated language and categories, but the accusations themselves are familiar. Once again, our enemies project their own moral failures and insecurities onto the Jews.

Dayeinu

When we receive repeated Divine kindness, we often take it for granted. We feel gratitude, but it becomes general and unfocused. *Dayeinu* forces us to pause and name each kindness, allowing gratitude to deepen and faith to increase.

As we recite the 15 stanzas of *Dayeinu*, tracing the miracles of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, we might also think of the *Dayeinu* we would offer for the past two and a half years. Without softening the pain or ignoring the strain, we can still give thanks for Hashem's care and protection.

As I write these lines, a week and a half before Pesach, we have just endured a difficult night. Two direct Iranian missile strikes caused more than 150 injuries. Someone asked me whether this war is still worth it. I answered simply: those missiles were coming regardless. Without intervention, without Hashem granting us the wisdom and strength to defend ourselves, it would have been dozens or hundreds at a time. The number of injuries would have been far more severe.

Gratitude isn't reserved for easier moments. It must be found even when deliverance arrives alongside hardship.

Chizkiyahu Hamelech did not fully give thanks after the Assyrian siege of Yerushalayim was miraculously lifted. The moment was too heavy. The northern kingdom had already fallen, and deliverance came mixed with loss.

We are still struggling. But *Dayeinu* teaches us to mark each stage. Redemption unfolds step by step, and each stage calls for recognition.

A mixed bread

Matza carries a double meaning. It is *lechem oni*, the bread of poverty, which we break in half to place ourselves back into the cramped, dirty conditions of *Mitzrayim*, squalid spaces without dignity or freedom. We have lived through similar conditions more than once in our history.

Matza is also the bread that didn't

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN



have time to rise, a reminder of how quickly we were taken out of *Mitzrayim*.

When we eat matza, we hold both meanings together. Jewish history asks us to carry different emotions at once, to remember hardship while also recognising redemption.

This is a night to feel the bitterness, of *Mitzrayim*, of our long history, and of these past two and a half years. But that bitterness doesn't cancel the other side. Alongside it stands the reality of redemption, the endurance of our people, and the strength of the State of Israel.

As you eat the matza, make room for both emotions in your heart and on your tongue.

Afikomen deferred

The final and ultimate matza, the Afikomen, is deferred until the end of the meal. That moment is called *tzafun*, hidden. Hiding the Afikomen reminds us that as much as we try to decipher history, it remains partly concealed.

We have a general awareness that history has shifted. These past two years have not been local geopolitical conflicts, but events with broader historical weight. Yet the arc of history remains *tzafun*, hidden. We may sense general direction, but the details are still hidden.

We know we are moving somewhere, but the timing and the unfolding remain beyond us.

The Father returns

Late in the night, as the seder draws to a close, we gather to sing the story of a small goat purchased by a father. That goat is struck, and each act of violence gives way to another. The song traces the arc of Jewish history, cycles of harm followed by more violence.

Until the end, when a Heavenly Father brings that chain to a halt, dismantling each force, even the angel of death.

We are living through the final stanza of the song. Our Father has returned. We are no longer a small defenceless goat. We stand with the strength of a roaring lion, able to protect and respond. Our *Avinu Shebashamayim* (Father in Heaven) stands behind that strength and guides it.

On this night of Jewish history, remember that we are not only telling the Haggadah. We are living it. Let its story meet our moment.

• *Moshe Taragin is a rabbi at the Hesder Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush), and was ordained by Yeshiva University. His latest book, Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War, is available at mtaraginbooks.com*

we've come as a country but our responsibility to protect these freedoms. The commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre, a tragic chapter in our history when peaceful protesters lost their lives in the struggle against injustice, reminds us of the true cost of freedom, and of our duty to honour the legacy of those who fought against apartheid by upholding the equality, dignity, and rights of every person.

A highlight of the evening was the contribution of our guest speakers, including human rights lawyer and former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Ilan Lax; the Reverend Canon Peter Houston from the Anglican Church; as well as Hindu community leader Pravesh Hurdeen. Each of them offered a unique lens through which to understand the concept of freedom, reinforcing both its complexity and relevance across different communities, traditions, and contexts. Rabbi Friedman asked those present to reflect on the miracles they'd witnessed in their own lives, with many sharing the profound impact of the 1994 elections and the peaceful transition to democracy.

Our Jewish community in KwaZulu-Natal has long been an integral part of the province's cultural, political, and economic life and social fabric. Through philanthropy, civic engagement, and community-building initiatives, Jewish individuals and organisations have contributed meaningfully to social cohesion and development in the province. Events such as the Freedom Seder not only highlight this contribution but also our community's commitment to ongoing dialogue and partnership in the future.

For the Jewish people, freedom isn't simply an idea; it's at the very core of who we are. And so, in both our Jewish tradition and in our South African heritage, freedom calls on us to not only remember but to act: to stand against injustice, to protect the vulnerable, to welcome the stranger, and to contribute meaningfully to the world around us.

• *Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov is president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies KwaZulu-Natal Council and the country director of HIAS South Africa.*



This year, that demand feels immediate. The seder becomes a lens through which we can better understand the history that is unfolding before us.

Here are six moments within the seder that carry deep resonance and shape the flow of the night. This year, they invite a more immediate reading, grounded in the struggle we currently face.

The fifth son

The list of four sons reminds us that there are many ways to enter this story. Not every child, not every Jew, relates to identity in the same way, and the seder must hold space for different voices and different questions. The four sons reflect the scene at our seder table, families of varied temperaments and

Lavan, the father-in-law of Yaakov. His assault may not have been the most violent, but it revealed something enduring about antisemitism. Hatred is always corrosive, but antisemitism defies logic. It is psychopathic and it drives people toward self-destructive behaviour. Lavan was prepared to destroy Yaakov and his entire family, including his own daughters and grandchildren. He wasn't thinking; his hatred consumed him and led him towards the unthinkable.

History has seen this pattern before. Even as Germany faltered in war, trains carried Jews to their deaths instead of soldiers to the front. Hatred of Jews overrode national survival.

We see it again today. Our enemies invest

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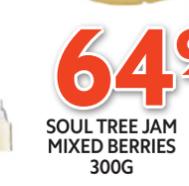
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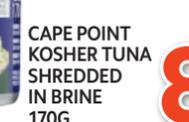
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The miracles of our slings and arrows

OPINION

RABBI YOSSEI CHAIKIN



In 2018, US Secretary of War Peter Hegseth delivered a speech in Jerusalem. At the time, he was a presenter for the Fox Network, and had been invited to a journalists' conference at the King David Hotel, arranged by media network Arutz Sheva.

He reflected on the miracles he'd witnessed during his tour of the Old City, and on a miracle he hoped would soon be realised. "1917 (the Balfour Declaration) was a miracle; 1948 was a miracle; 1967 was a miracle; 2017 (the recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as Israel's capital) was a miracle.

There is no reason why the miracle of the re-establishment of the Temple on the Temple Mount is not possible." To thunderous applause, he concluded, "I don't know how it will happen, you don't know how it will happen, but I know that it could happen."

The video clip resurfaced recently, courtesy of antisemite Tucker Carlson and company, who are currently obsessed with promoting the conspiracy theory that the war on Iran is inspired by this Messianic dream. The suggestion is that Hegseth's appointment to his position was part of President Donald Trump's plan for what is now called Epic Fury.

There are times when miracles are easier to recognise than at others.

As we prepare to celebrate Pesach, we recall the wonders that accompanied the exodus of our ancestors. Did the Israelites of old appreciate that they were living through history? Did they recognise the hand of G-d throughout the entire process that led to their liberation? Or was it only once they were out of bondage – crossing on dry land through the sea that would soon swallow their foes – that they fully grasped the Divine

nature of what had transpired?

Do we today realise the truly historical times in which we are living? The spectacular victories we have experienced since October 2023 over many of our haters attacking us from multiple simultaneous fronts?

We are devastated by the human and material toll of the past two and a half years. We mourn deeply for the victims of

Hamas, for the soldiers who have fallen in combat, and for the casualties of vicious missile attacks and cluster warheads.

Right now, over the skies of Israel, daily miracles occur through the continuous interceptions. Without these technologies, the losses would be infinitely worse.

But we must pause and reflect on the miraculous nature of these events. We dare not simply attribute them to technological advances and foreign aid. By Divine providence, even the

names of the anti-missile systems help us pause and recognise this very point.

The famous Iron Dome, which can intercept aerial attacks from as far as 70km away, is called *Kipat Barzel* in Hebrew. We wear a *kippah* on our heads as a constant reminder that G-d is above us, protecting us.

David's Sling can reach an altitude of 15km and disable missiles fired from as far as 300km away. What an apt reminder of young David's words as he faced the mighty Goliath and the

Philistine armies behind him (I Samuel 17), "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come against you in the name of the G-d of Hosts, the G-d of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied."

Then there are the Arrow interceptors, reaching as high as 100km and capable of disabling long-range missiles from 2 400 km away. If you have ever tried your hand at archery, you will know that an arrow reaches further the more tightly it is drawn back. This teaches us the value of introspection, prayer, additional *mitzvot*, and extra charity – our personal contributions to the war effort.

Long before Carlson developed his Third Temple obsession, we longed for it. For thousands of years, we have prayed for a Messianic era and for the ultimate re-establishment of Hashem's home in Jerusalem.

Pesach celebrates the historical exodus of long ago. But it is also the festival during which we reflect on Moshiach and the future world we yearn for. It is when we think about the miracles of the past, the miracles we are experiencing now, and the miracles still to come.

As for the secretary of war, we appreciate his deep faith. He may not know how it will happen, but our tradition has told us exactly how it will.

Rashi (Sukkah 41a) teaches that the Temple stands built and ready in Heaven, waiting to descend at any moment. We have been constructing it brick by brick with every act of kindness, every prayer, and every *mitzvah* performed over the centuries.

Not only is it ready, we are ready. Let us open our eyes to see and appreciate the miracles around us, and let each of us do our part to help usher in that era of global peace for all.

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



Photo: Screenshot

The clarion call of redemption

OPINION

REBBETZIN AIDEL KAZILSKY



Across centuries of exile, Jewish prayer has carried a quiet certainty: history is moving towards redemption and an era of Moshiach. Three times a day, Jewish lips ask for the rebuilding of our Temple in Jerusalem, the flourishing of David's line, and the revelation of a perfected world.

For generations, these words were recited with faith and conviction, yet the full meaning of that future often felt distant.

In the teachings of Chassidus (the mystical teachings of Torah), however, redemption is not merely an event that interrupts history; it is the uncovering of a deeper layer of reality that has always been present within creation, one that was obscured when Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

Chassidic masters, from the Baal Shem Tov onwards, taught that the world is filled with Divine vitality. Every object, every moment, carries sparks of godliness awaiting revelation through *mitzvot*, acts of kindness, and inner refinement. Yet Chassidus also teaches that as light intensifies, resistance grows. The struggle between good and evil doesn't disappear as redemption approaches; rather, it becomes more visible.

On the world stage, we see clashing visions of humanity's future – forces of unity, dignity, and purpose alongside those driven by fear, domination, cruelty, and fragmentation. In the language of Chassidus, this friction occurs as the layers of Divine concealment begin to thin.

Today, this struggle manifests clearly in every part of our environment, particularly in the

context of the war with Iran and the accompanying political discourse.

The commentary surrounding this conflict often reflects a desperate search for moral clarity and truth amid rising tensions and polarisation. As we witness intensified debates and narratives that seem to veer further into darkness, it is imperative to hold fast to the values of integrity and compassion. The narratives being spun often obscure the fundamental human realities that Chassidus encourages us to confront and elevate.

The appropriate response, Chassidus calls for, is not greater control but a different posture of the soul. Redemption begins when we release the illusion that we are the sole authors of history. Instead of tightening our grip, we need to learn to surrender, aligning our will with the Divine will flowing through creation. In that surrender, we don't become passive; rather, we become channels. Through acts of kindness, courage, prayer, and moral clarity, we allow the Divine energy within the world to flow through us.

Perhaps this is why the season of Pesach has always resonated for us as a people – and how much more powerfully today.

Pesach isn't only a commemoration of the liberation from Egypt; in Chassidic teaching, *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) represents every form of constriction – both external oppression and inner limitation. Each year, we are invited to leave behind the narrowness that enslaves us: the belief that the world cannot change, the fear that keeps us small, and the ego that clings to control. During our seder, we partake of matza – the

bread of humility – symbolising our need to release our egos, while simultaneously drinking four cups of wine, representing the promise of impending redemption. This juxtaposition invites us to shift our consciousness from mere remembrance to a deeper awareness of the transformative power of liberation, as we embody the truth of that there is a Divine and He indeed controls our world.

As we celebrate the seder, we must also remember the significance of *vehigadata levancha* (and you shall tell your son), the imperative to tell the story to our children. History cannot be learned from if we do not gather future generations, teach them about our mistakes and our wisdom, and encourage them to carry the flame forward. It is through this storytelling that we instil in the hearts of our children a sense of identity, responsibility, and hope for the future, inspiring them to pursue the path of light and truth.

The Jewish concept of redemption, characterised by the yearning for Moshiach, reminds us as well that this redemption is universal, embracing all humanity. Today, more than ever, we are witnessing unprecedented miracles and revelations that are paving the way for a world where light will ultimately overcome the dark forces of hatred and division that we have experienced. These signs of spiritual awakening and unity signal a

shift towards a brighter future, underscoring our collective journey toward fulfilment and peace.

So, as we gather this year in our homes with family and friends, and in our communities across the world, let us not only recount the story of freedom of a story long gone but also participate in a deeper transformation. By loosening the grip of the self and allowing the Divine flow to guide our actions, we actively participate in the unfolding redemption itself.

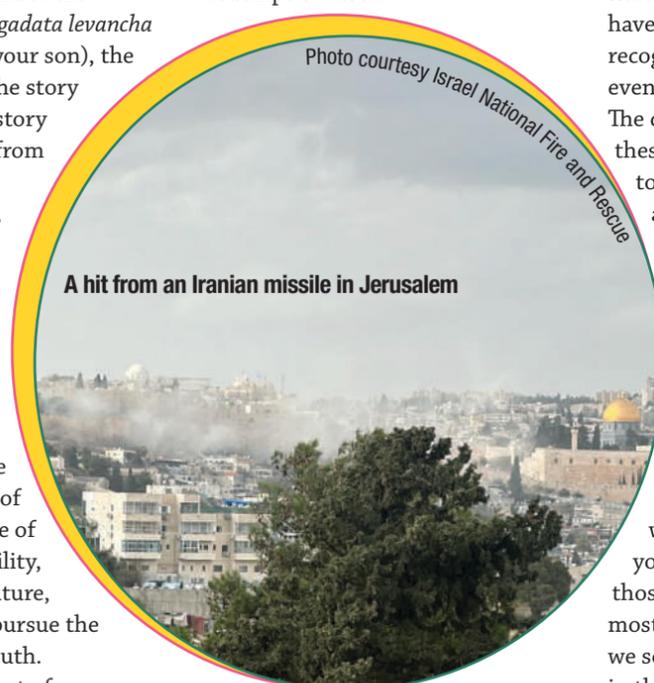


Photo courtesy Israel National Fire and Rescue

A hit from an Iranian missile in Jerusalem

In a strange, almost humorous twist of history, even the loud voices of modern media may be unwitting participants in this unfolding narrative. One could almost say – tongue firmly in cheek – that figures like American antisemitic commentators Tucker Carlson or Candace Owens contribute to the conversation in their own unique ways. They

may have misunderstood the script and wandered off the page entirely, but Chassidus reminds us that even unlikely actors can stir the deeper questions that prepare the world for something greater.

For thousands of years, Jews have prayed to witness this moment. Grounded in biblical prophecies and the remarkable pace of innovation, our generation is not merely waiting for redemption; rather, we have the incredible opportunity to recognise it as it begins to unfold, even amid the challenges we face. The call of the hour, as we navigate these complexities, is to be inspired

to cultivate the moral integrity and clarity that will guide us towards a full and vibrant redemption – both within ourselves and in the world around us. Practically, we can embody this by deepening our commitment to Judaism, performing acts of kindness, and engaging in *mitzvot* to illuminate the world. This year, ensure that you participate in a seder, invite those who might sit alone, and, most importantly, together in unity, we set the stage to be participants in the greatest revelation the world has ever seen – the one we have hoped and prayed for so long.

This year, the clarion call of "Leshanah Haba BeYerushalayim – Next year in Jerusalem", might very well be a reality.

• Rebbetzin Aidel Kazilsky is a radio and television host and an inspirational speaker who teaches the wisdom of Torah and applies it to contemporary times.

May we have freedom from Iranian terror



ROLENE MARKS

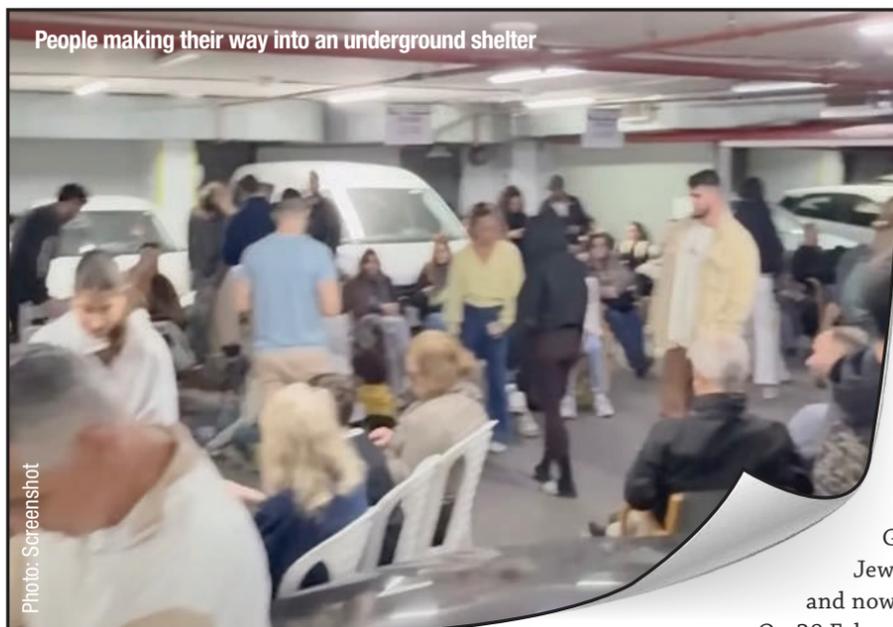
Freedom is a central theme of Pesach. From generation to generation and even through some of the most horrific circumstances, Jews have gathered at the seder table to recount the story of our deliverance from slavery in Egypt into freedom. We take the time over the Pesach period to contemplate our personal "Egypt".

For the past three years, the idea of freedom and what that means as a nation and personally has resonated more than I can remember in previous times. In the wake of the atrocities of 7 October 2023 – where more than 1 200 were murdered and 251 taken hostage – the wars that followed, and the hostage crisis, freedom has become an even more cherished value for us. We are acutely aware of how it can be taken in an instant.

For two years, Israelis and many around the world made sure that the hostage crisis was front and centre at their seder tables. The yellow accessories, the empty chairs, not just for Elijah the Prophet but for the hostages who remained in captivity. Two and a half years later, the hostages are all home. This year we can celebrate their freedom but, as we have the *maror* to remind us of the bitterness of slavery, we remember all they endured. There will still be empty chairs – for Elijah and those who will never come home. The victims, the fallen, and the slain in

captivity.

The story of the Jewish people from time immemorial is that of constant paradox, the honey and the sting, the bitter and the sweet. The story of Pesach is all of that. The "bread of affliction", the bitter tears,



People making their way into an underground shelter

Photo: Screenshot

and the miracles, so many miracles.

This year our freedom is entwined with that of the people of Iran. Since 28 December, hundreds of thousands of brave Iranians have taken to the streets to protest, first against economic strife and then against the regime that has brutally oppressed them for decades. Tens of thousands have been murdered by the

regime and the few stories that manage to get out from behind the internet blackout are horrifying.

As the Iranian people stood with us in our time of need so we in Israel proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with them. We

want an end to the modern-day Pharaoh that has enslaved our people in its iron grip of terror. Our two ancient people share a sacred bond that goes back thousands of years. Persian King Cyrus the Great freed the Jews from slavery, and now it is our turn.

On 28 February, Israel launched Operation Roaring Lion along with our partner, the United States, with Operation Epic Fury. While the war goals aren't regime change, we hope that by degrading the regime's nuclear, ballistic, and security abilities we are helping to create the environment in which the people of Iran can take their destiny into their own hands.

Israelis are paying a tremendous price,

having to run to shelters multiple times a day and night while missiles, often deadly cluster munitions, are fired at us, causing destruction and casualties. Our morale remains high despite the exhaustion. We want to finish this once and for all.

This brings me back to Pesach. When we gather to share the story that has resounded through the generations about the plagues and miracles, the long, arduous journey to freedom, we are reminded of the high price we pay for what we so often take for granted.

During the seder we sing *V'hi She'amda*, which reminds us that in every generation there are those who rise up to try and destroy us and Hashem frees us from their hands. From Haman in ancient Persia to Hitler, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Khameneis, they have all tried. Like the many before, we believe this latest iteration will be consigned to the trash heap of history.

This Pesach we will be more acutely aware of what freedom means – not just for us personally and as a nation, but for those who yearn for it and those who fight for it, those who use their power to prevent it and those who have died for it.

Freedom must be cherished and defended vigorously.

Let freedom reign! *Chag Pesach Sameach!*

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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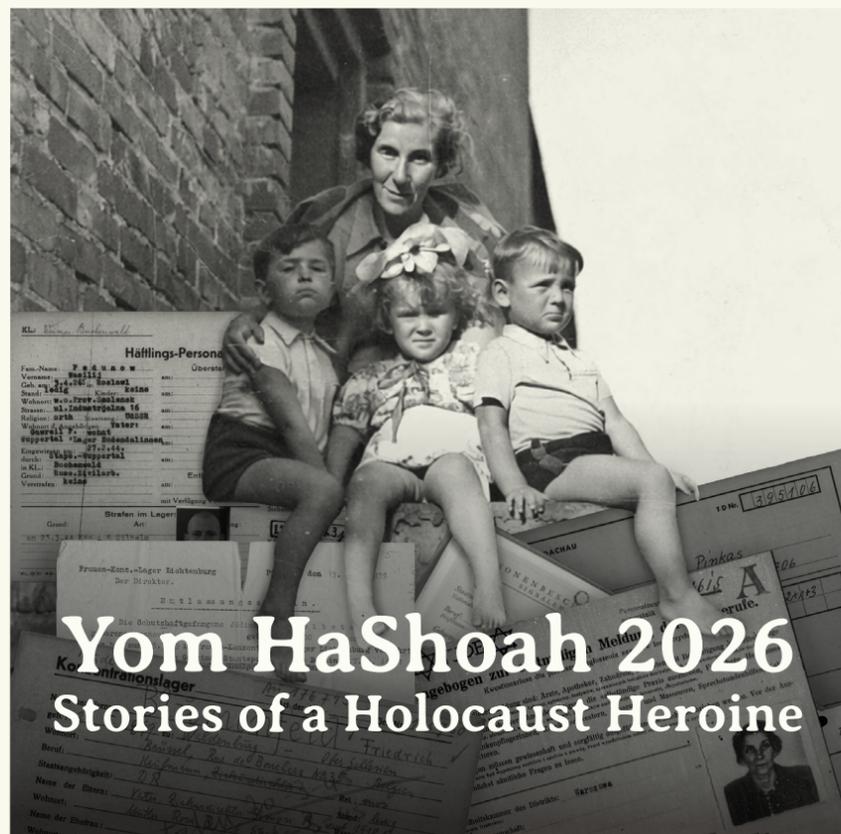
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This too we will survive

OPINION

RABBA SARA HURWITZ



"How do you live with existential fear of death?" This was the question several of my students asked when I checked in with each of them after Iran launched hundreds of missiles at Israel.

This year, more than ever, the words from the Haggadah resonate, "In every single generation people rise up to destroy us.

And then we declare, with deep faith: but the Holy One, Blessed be the One, who saves us from their hands."

But G-d responds with a promise, "Even as you grow old, I will not change, when you turn grey, it is I who will carry you; I am the Maker, and I will be the Bearer; and I will carry and rescue [you] Yishiyahu."

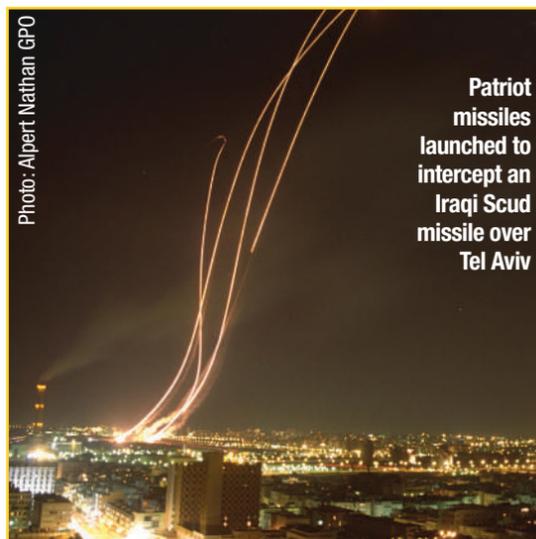
Despite the afflictions and dangers we would suffer, G-d embeds the value of perspective into our souls. G-d saw the full history of humankind, and understood that in every generation there would be hardships, devastation, and even sin. The words "in every single generation people rise up to destroy us", ring truer than ever. But G-d also understood that with those hardships would come love and joy and creativity. And that as long as G-d created, and then humans keep creating, the world will keep on turning. And so we also declare, in our next breath, "but the Holy One, Blessed be the One, who saves us from their hands".

The very essence of Pesach is to hold these multiple truths. It is to embrace the *lechem oni*, the poor person's bread, as a symbol of hardships and then we break that matza to re-enact the brokenness of our world. We don't even have to add any other symbols

to our seder plate to embody the *maror*, the bitterness that so many of us are naturally feeling this year. And still, we gather. We sing Hallel and praise G-d. We sit at the table filled with the reality that we don't know what the future will bring.

Somehow we garner the perspective that G-d had when creating humans. There has always been devastation and it is inevitable that there will be future hardships as well. And yet, G-d chose to create, so too must we commit to do the same. Despite a pervasive existential threat, this is the perspective I need to keep moving forward, with the knowledge that the Jewish people will thrive.

• *Rabba Sara Hurwitz is the co-founder and president of Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy. She also serves on the rabbinic staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.*



Patriot missiles launched to intercept an Iraqi Scud missile over Tel Aviv

Perhaps, the emphasis on the fact that in every generation the Jewish people had enemies gives us the perspective we need this Pesach.

In fact, even before G-d created humans, G-d's angels attempted to annihilate us. The Gemara in Sanhedrin 38b, records a conversation with the angels, "Do you agree that we should make humans in Our image?"

The angels responded by asking G-d, "What will the deeds of humans be?" G-d showed them the history of humankind, and the angels, in shock, asked, "These are the creatures you want to bring into this world?" Despite several angels trying to talk G-d out of creating, G-d persisted and created humans.

The Midrash continues with the angels continuing to question G-d's choice, pointing to humans' destructive nature, as well as the inevitable suffering they would encounter.

Grief is also welcome at the seder table

OPINION

SARIT SWISA



I am writing this as my first birthday ever without my mother is drawing to a close. It's been just more than two months and I have been settling into the ebb and flow and pressures of daily life, and on the whole, managing. But yesterday, with no warning, the taps opened and it was on and off tears the whole day, extending into today and to this moment. And that's absolutely okay with me – this is the price of love. This is memory. Processing. Longing. Wishing for what was and what wasn't. Feeling. Honouring my mom and the life she gave me.

Conventional wisdom says that the firsts are the

hardest: first birthdays, first anniversaries, holidays, milestones, triumphs, and failures. But someone wise said to me a few days ago, once losing someone close, one is forever a mourner. I expect to miss my mother on every birthday I am ever to have.

With Pesach being one of our most family-oriented festivals of the year, mourners are undoubtedly due to have moments of feeling the pain of the empty chair at the table (real or perceived). They might, like me, be surprised by the tears that come at the shops, or at the car wash, or while cooking. Our bodies seem to know the date

and the meaning of the time and force us to feel. If we don't make space for it when we can, it will come out in our dreams, in our acting out in strange, seemingly unrelated ways, in anger or panic or dissociation.

Last year my cousin who had lost his father some years before got married and wore a brooch with a picture of his father on his suit jacket. I found this such a beautiful way of honouring the present-absent. This is a term I learned in my English literature studies, that thing or person that is absent and yet so present in the space they take in one's mind and heart.

Instead of closing the taps, I plan to invite my grief to the seder nights with me, to remember my last Pesach seder with my mom in hospital and her relief at coming home a few days later. Maybe I will tell my guests to expect me to have some feelings and that's okay, I don't need to be made to feel better or, conversely, send them into awkward silence and fear of said feelings. Maybe I will light her candles for her, make her *charoet*, laugh about when she laughed at my pronunciation of an ass (donkey version) in the Haggadah reading. I suppose I'd like to give grief "permission" to be with all of us mourners this Pesach. And in that way love too.

• *Sarit Swisa is a clinical psychologist and counselling services coordinator for the Nechama Bereavement Counselling organisation in Cape Town.*



Light in the darkness

OPINION

RABBA ADINA ROTH



Of all the difficult conversations one has, this is one I never imagined: discussing with my husband what we each might include in our submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, a nationwide amassing of people's experiences of antisemitism in Australia.

My husband plans to share that he doesn't feel safe having a mezuzah on the outside of our apartment any more. It sits on the inside. He also plans to write to the commission of his experience of standing on our street in Bondi Beach with his kippah-wearing brother as two men drove past and screamed an antisemitic slur at them. If my husband is going to a Jewish venue and using Uber, he never enters an address of a shul or Jewish school, he enters the address next door.

I will write about fear; how I no longer walk the cliffs from Bondi to Bronte alone in the evening, how I question wearing my Magen David in public, how I don't feel comfortable visiting the cool, artsy parts of town because I will inevitably see posters and paraphernalia against Israel.

It's hard to describe how much the world has changed in such a short space of time. From 7 October 2023 to 14 December 2025. My daughter was born on the first night of Chanukah 16 years ago and so this last Chanukah, we thought we would light candles at home to celebrate her Hebrew birthday. We live about a stone's throw from Bondi Beach. About an hour before sunset, I left my home to run to the Woolies Metro opposite Bondi Beach and buy some salad ingredients. It's that funny hour when light slowly shifts into darkness, the hour of twilight, *Bein Hashmashot*. As I left my apartment, I saw about 50 people running down my street, away from the beach. My first thought was, this is a beach-side race and I must have missed the memo. Then I saw the fear on people's faces.

"There's been a shooting. The shooters are still about." Fear gripped me and I turned around and ran back to my home, we lowered our blinds and we waited.

In the days and weeks that followed, rabbis in our community tried to comfort us by encouraging us, and the wider Australian community, to spread light where there is darkness. It's a positive message – a very Jewish message. Even if sometimes the darkness in our world feels immense.

From Chanukah to Pesach, the Gemara in Pesachim 2a opens with a confounding discussion about light and dark. *Or la'arba'ah asar bodkin et chametz la'or ha'ner* (On the 14th [of Nissan], we search for *chametz*, using the light of a candle). It's commonly known that we do *Bedikat Chametz*, we search for *chametz* on the night of the 14th, the evening before *Leil Ha'seder*. But the Gemara's word choice is confusing. The word for night used by the Mishnah is *or*, meaning light. Thus begins a debate among our ancient rabbis. Is the Mishnah telling us to search for *chametz* on the day of 14 Nissan or the night?

For you and me, it's somewhat of a moot point because we all know that night is the final winner. The night before Pesach, we take our feather and our candle, and we search for *chametz* once the sun has set. After citing seven biblical sources and seven rabbinic sources, some arguing that *or* is day and others that it must mean night, the night wins. The rabbis remind us that in Aramaic, "night" is *orta*. And the case is closed. Well, kind of.

There's a reason our rabbinic tradition opens the Gemara on Pesach with pages of word play about light and dark. The rabbis cite sources that refer to morning light, but they bring, in equal turns, sources that point to the illuminations of the night sky, the stars. There

is the shining of the day and there is the shining of the night.

Sometimes, when we do our *chametz* search, it feels very triumphant and "daylighty" in the world. I have had many Pesachs like that when things feel good and secure. But there are other Pesachs, other cycles of the holiday, that have felt darker. I think of the Piaseczno Rebbe speaking to his community from the Warsaw Ghetto on the Shabbat Hagadol of Pesach 1942. I think of the last two years, when we placed chairs at our table for hostages yearning for their return. And I think about the Pesach holidays they endured in the dark tunnels. I think of us this year, planning our menus, going through the Pesach preparation routines, elbowing our way through the aisles for the last two briskets, as we consider the world our children are inheriting. The Commission on Antisemitism represents a disturbing reality, but it also brings hope to that reality. Maybe our voices and our civic action can change things.

We didn't dream we would be contributing our own personal experiences to a Royal Commission on Antisemitism. But G-d knows, there is still a lot of *or* (light) in the darkness



Memorial for the Bondi Beach Chanukah massacre

this Pesach. There are the lawyers working for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, giving up their time for the future of our community, and who make time to come to our schools and speak to our pupils. There are the countless non-Jewish staff who walk through our school gates, passing through policemen and barricades each day to be part of our community. There is the young man in my yoga class who thanked me for wearing my We Will Dance Again T-shirt, and the other young man who smiled at me and told me he was Jewish too. There are the children, wearing Magen Davids, smiling bravely, when their Israel trip gets cancelled, asking to start a tefillin club, leading younger students in Modeh Ani.

The Gemara in Pesachim eventually moves from the linguistic debate about what *or* means. We search for *chametz* at night. But the deeper message remains. Some Pesachs will feel darker than others, influenced as we are by personal and communal challenge and tragedy. But somehow, the darkness and the light both possess qualities of *or*. And so I re-read the opening lines of the Gemara Pesachim 2a, with my own annotations, "In the light that we choose to see, in the light that we create on the evening of the 14th of Nissan, we search for our *chametz* using the light of a candle."

Chag Pesach Sameach!

• *Adina Roth is a South African rabba and director of Jewish Life at Emanuel School in Australia.*



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Half a matza

OPINION

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN



Passover is around the corner and I will be so presumptuous as to suggest you may have opened your favourite Haggadah to have a look and start preparing for the big seder night.

Seder means “order” and one of the items in the order of the seder agenda is *yachatz*. Well, what is *yachatz*?

It’s one of the first things we do on seder night, even before anyone says the *Ma Nishtanah*. We break the middle of the three matzahs on our seder plates. The larger part is put away for the Afikomen and the smaller part remains on the seder plate throughout the recital of the Haggadah, until we say the blessing of *Hamotzi*.

This is true *lechem oni*, the bread of poverty. Not only is it matza; it is plain flour and water with no flavouring whatsoever, just a flat, tasteless wafer but broken as well. Back in Egypt, the slaves were fed the simplest, cheapest food. Bread of affliction, prisoners’ bread, what the most miserable pauper might be able to afford, a mere morsel rather than a proper meal. And now that it’s been broken, it’s a morsel of a morsel.

It’s bad enough that the Jews were forced to eat a matza, but now they are eating a broken matza.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin has pointed out that, seeing as the custom is to show the broken matza during the recital of the Haggadah, we therefore say all of *maggid*, virtually the entire Haggadah, over half a matza. And he makes a very powerful conclusion.

The whole Haggadah over half a matza. And isn’t life just like that?

There is always something eluding us. For some, it may be health, for others wealth or success, *nachas* or happiness in general. Somehow, as much as we achieve in life, there is always something more we want that keeps slipping out of our grasp.

Isn’t it so true – our whole life is but half a matza.

Our sages taught, “No person dies having achieved even half of his ambitions and desires.”

“Really?” you may say. Aren’t there many individuals who’ve achieved everything they set out to achieve? I know a couple of guys who seem to fit the description of “the man who has everything”, Just have a look at the *Forbes* list of billionaires.

The answer is yes; there are such people. The problem is that as soon as they achieve one ambition, they have broader horizons, and new and bigger ambitions. With each success, ambitions develop further.

The rabbis put it simply. “If a man has \$100, he wants \$200. And if he gets \$200, he then wants \$400.” And so it goes, on and on.

Take the lottery. When we’re in the fantasy stage of winning, we’re prepared to give a big percentage of our winnings away to charity, and family and friends. “Master of the Universe, if you help me buy the winning ticket, I promise to give 20% to *tzedakah*. I will renovate the synagogue, refurbish the seats – just tell me and I’ll get it done.” But once you do win (you should be so lucky!), and it’s no longer make-believe Monopoly money but cash in your pocket, suddenly, it’s not that easy to give away.

Take the story of Harry, the guy who won \$50 million. His family heard about the win before he did, and they were worried he might have a heart attack when he heard the news. So, they called his doctor to come and give him the good news. This way, if Harry went into shock or had a coronary, the doctor would be there with a remedy on the spot to administer an antidote.

In comes the doctor and says, “Harry, my friend, what would you say if I told you that you just won the state lottery? Fifty million smackers?” And Harry replies, “Doc, you’ve been so good to me all these years. If I won the lottery, I would give you half!”

And the doctor dropped dead of a heart attack!

It’s easy to give it away when you don’t have it. But when you do have it, it’s not so easy. When it’s yours, you don’t give half away so quickly.

The truth is that we do go through life with only half a matza; we never seem to get to the full one. While many of our dreams and aspirations do materialise to one extent or another, there is always something that remains frustratingly, mysteriously, almost hauntingly elusive.

But let me ask you. Just because we can’t have it all, do we desist from acquiring as much as we can? Do we say it’s either all or nothing? Or do we settle for as much as we can acquire? Do we turn down a deal that will make us a profit, even if it doesn’t make us instant millionaires?

The Kotzker Rebbe was renowned for his sharp wit and wisdom. He once asked his disciples, “What is the enemy of good?” One said that the enemy of good is bad. Another suggested it must be evil. But the Rebbe said “wrong” to all their answers.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

“Do you really want to know what the enemy of good is? I will tell you,” he said. “The enemy of good is excellence.” The Kotzker Rebbe explained that many people strive for excellence, but because they cannot achieve it, they stop trying altogether.

How many of us never achieved success in any given field of endeavour because it just wasn’t right, the conditions weren’t suitable or because “if I can’t do it right, I’d rather not do it at all”. So, what happened? Nothing. While we were waiting for the perfect opportunity, every other opportunity passed us by, and we were left with nothing.

“All or nothing” sounds very idealistic and principled. But it isn’t practical. When we say “All or nothing”, we usually wind up with nothing.

The seder reminds us that if the whole Haggadah can be recited over a broken matza, then there is nothing wrong with half a matza. If “half a loaf is better than no loaf” then half a matza is better than no matza.

Yes, says the Kotzker, the greatest enemy of good is not evil, but excellence. And the unrealistic demand for perfection – or nothing.

So, take half a matza. Take the broken morsel. It doesn’t have to be the end, the ultimate. But it can be a beginning and a good beginning.

Say kiddush. Put on tefillin. Light the Shabbat candles. Come to the *shuir* (a class on Jewish learning), even if you won’t become a rabbi. Do the deal, even if it isn’t the mother of all deals. And get married, even if he or she isn’t the fulfilment of every single fantasy. Don’t make the mistake of saying, “All or nothing.” You don’t have to settle for second best; just start somewhere, even if it is only a morsel of a morsel.

Yes, we recite the whole Haggadah on half a matza. And we can live our whole life on half a matza. And it can still be very satisfying indeed.

I wish you Passover seders that satisfy, physically and spiritually. *Chag Kasher v’Sameach!* • Rabbi Yossy Goldman is the life rabbi emeritus at Sydenham Shul, and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.

When your child will ask: Pesach, questions, and the peace of our homes

OPINION

RABBI PINI PINK



As Pesach approaches each year, Jewish homes begin to transform. Cupboards are emptied. Kitchens are kashered. Shopping lists seem to grow by the day. Families prepare to gather around the seder table.

It is one of the most beautiful times on the Jewish calendar. But if we are honest, it can also be one of the most stressful.

The pressure to clean, cook, host, and prepare can feel overwhelming. Everyone is tired. Expectations run high, and sometimes, in the rush to create the perfect Pesach, tensions can creep into the very homes we are trying so hard to prepare for the festival.

Yet Pesach itself teaches us how to avoid exactly that.

The seder focuses on a simple but powerful idea: questions.

The Torah introduces the Pesach experience with the words “When your child will ask”. The *mitzvah* of the night is not simply to eat matza or drink four cups of wine. It is to tell the story of the exodus, to pass our history, our faith, and our identity to the next generation.

The entire seder is designed to spark curiosity. We dip vegetables, recline like ancient royalty, hide the afikomen, and change the normal order of the meal. All of it is done so that a child will notice something unusual and ask the famous question, “Why is this night different?”

The Haggadah then introduces one of the most fascinating ideas in all of Jewish education: there are four children.

The wise child, the rebellious child, the simple child, and the one who does not yet know how to ask.

Each of them approaches the seder differently. Each of them asks, or does not ask, in their own way. And the Torah teaches us that each one deserves a different response.

Why does the Haggadah go out of its way to emphasise this?

Because the message is far bigger than education. It is about relationships.

Every family contains these four personalities. And so does every community. There are those who ask thoughtful questions and want to understand every detail. There are those who challenge everything. There are those who speak simply and directly. And there are those who sit quietly, unsure how to begin.

The Torah’s approach is not to silence any of them. Instead, it teaches us to listen.

That is the beginning of *shalom bayit*. Peace in a home is not created when everyone thinks the same way. It emerges when people feel heard, respected, and valued, even when their perspectives differ from our own.



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches us, that there is a powerful insight about the question of the “wise child”. The child does not ask abstract philosophical questions. Instead, the child asks about the details of the *mitzvot*, the practical actions we perform.

The Rebbe explains that true Jewish wisdom is found not only in lofty spiritual ideas. It is found in the way holiness is brought into the practical world through our daily actions.

In many ways, that insight applies just as much to family life.

A peaceful home is rarely achieved through big speeches about unity. It is built through small acts, patience during a stressful moment, kindness in a

conversation, and the willingness to answer a question instead of dismissing it.

Pesach preparation provides countless opportunities to practice exactly that.

Perhaps someone in the family cleans differently than you would. Perhaps a child asks endless questions while you are rushing to finish preparing the kitchen. Perhaps a guest at the seder table expresses an opinion you strongly disagree with.

The instinct might be to shut the conversation down, Pesach suggests the opposite, lean into the question.

The seder celebrates not only freedom from Egypt but the freedom to think, to ask, and to engage. In fact, some commentators note that slaves cannot ask questions. Questioning itself is a sign of freedom.

Every question asked at the seder becomes a small reenactment of redemption.

Of course, remembering this when the house is full, the children are tired, and the soup is getting cold is easier said than done.

Maybe that is why Pesach is filled with such powerful symbols.

Matza, the simplest bread imaginable, reminds us of humility. Maror reminds us of bitterness. Together they tell the story of the Jewish journey, a journey that includes both struggle and redemption.

Families experience the same dynamic. There will always be moments of sweetness and moments of tension. The goal is not to eliminate those differences but to transform them into deeper connection.

A seder table where questions are welcomed becomes a place where relationships grow. I see this every year in our own community seders.

Some guests arrive deeply familiar with every word of the Haggadah. Others are experiencing a traditional seder for the very first time. Some ask thoughtful questions about halacha. Others ask the most disarmingly simple questions imaginable.

And yet those simple questions often become the most powerful moments of the night.

Because when someone feels comfortable enough to ask, it means they feel that they belong at the table.

And that is something uniquely powerful about our South African Jewish community.

We are certainly not the largest community in the world. But we are close-knit. People show up for each other. Families, neighbours, and even relative strangers find their way to each other’s seder tables. There is a natural warmth here, a sense that no-one should be alone on Pesach.

And that works only when people feel they have a place, exactly as they are.

Because unity does not mean uniformity.

Just like the four children at the seder, our communities include different personalities, backgrounds, and journeys in Jewish life. The Haggadah does not remove the rebellious child from the table. Quite the opposite, the conversation happens precisely because that child is present. Community life works the same way.

When we learn to listen to one another, to answer thoughtfully rather than react defensively, and to make space for every kind of question, we create the kind of unity that has sustained the Jewish people for thousands of years. Pesach celebrates the birth of the Jewish nation. But perhaps just as importantly, it celebrates the birth of Jewish conversation. Parents speaking to children, teachers responding to students, families telling their story across generations, and in that process something powerful happens. Questions lead to understanding, understanding leads to empathy, and empathy leads to peace.

So as we rush to prepare for Pesach this year, cleaning the cupboards, setting the seder table, and making sure the matza supply is ready, perhaps we should prepare something else as well. A little extra patience a little extra listening, the willingness to answer a question, even a difficult one, with warmth and respect.

Because sometimes, the path to peace in our homes, and in our uniquely beautiful South African community, begins with the simplest words in the Torah: “When your child will ask ...”

• Rabbi Pini Pink is the rabbi at Chabad Greenstone.

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Importing foods for Pesach especially stressful this year

LEE TANKLE

Providing Pesachdik food is normally a well-oiled seasonal supply chain. But this year, with war in the Middle East, it has become a logistical nightmare. Getting kosher for Pesach foods from Israel and America to South Africa has become a challenge.

Delays at ports, limited cargo space, and rising transport costs have disrupted the carefully timed arrival of staples, many of which are produced specifically for the holiday.

Joel Back, one of the founders of KosherWorld supermarket, said this year has been especially challenging.

“There was a point where I said to myself, it’s all in G-d’s hands,” said Back.

Nevertheless, by mid-March, 95% of all the products were on the shelves.

He explained that soon after Purim, he had started getting inquiries about where the Pesach food was, and he would say that it was being shipped, to avoid creating panic.

Even some of the local producers had problems securing ingredients and, as a result, their production had been delayed. “For some of the matza-related products, like cake meal, which is an important ingredient in cakes and teiglach, they couldn’t get the raw materials, and without the raw materials, you can’t produce it. So they too are impacted. So down the supply chain, there have been a few challenges. And it’s just been a tough year,” he said.

Brian Flax, who imports food from Israel and is a supplier of KosherWorld, agreed it’s been an especially difficult year, even though things have been hard since 2023 because of the political situation in Israel.

“We’ve lost a lot of cooperation between the importers and our logistics groups. It’s difficult to say that you’re involved in importing products from Israel,” he said. “Even the big-brand stores are reluctant to be associated with the State of Israel, and even though it’s not blatantly antisemitic, it becomes difficult for Jewish importers.”

The logistics of getting products to South Africa has become even more difficult with the war with Iran.

Even in ordinary years, there is at least a 60-day shipping time for South Africa, without taking into account bad weather and other possible delays. This year, with the war, everything is taking that much longer, and many companies have rescheduled or cancelled ships.

Flax explained that, on top of that, the products are used for only one week of the year.

“Some essential items are simply unavailable, even basics like matza in certain forms. Importers are scrambling to source what they can, sometimes asking travellers to bring products in their suitcases, despite the significantly

higher costs. While it may not be commercially viable, retailers and importers have had to absorb these expenses just to ensure supply,” he said.

“Behind the scenes, the logistics

this, there has been notable cooperation across the board, with people from different sectors and communities stepping in to help where they can.”

He explained that retailers and

up to the plate and help importers get products through.

“There are email paper trails of us begging massive shippers, monoliths in the industry that normally wouldn’t even talk to

dealing with customer-service lines in India or the Philippines, and now they’ve gone into top management. It’s a challenging time for importers and retailers. We just hope the consumer understands. It’s a challenging time for everyone.”

The high shipping costs have massively affected the price of kosher products.

“It’s far more expensive than ever, and there’s no clear end in sight. Previously, shipments were already being disrupted along the East Coast routes, particularly due to Houthi attacks on vessels. Now, there are additional bottlenecks on the West Coast, creating even greater pressure on global shipping,” said Back.

“Even once goods arrive in South Africa, importers still face strict regulations, port clearances, and extensive documentation requirements. In some cases, containers are held for inspection, and if they are unpacked for checks, it leads to further delays and added costs. Altogether, it has made this an especially stressful Passover season.”



Rebbe Aviva Rabinowitz buying matza

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

are complex and demanding, making this a particularly frustrating challenge. Despite

importers had to join together and make this chain work. He had to beg big shippers like MSC to

us, to help us get our products so people can have them in time,” said Flax. “You’re normally

A lot of hard work goes into Pesach retreats

GILANA LAB

The transformation of a luxury resort like Zimbali, in Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal, into a strictly kosher Pesach sanctuary is no small feat. It is, as organiser Eli Feiglin describes it, a massive logistical operation that begins at least six months in advance.

His is just one of at least four such retreats in South Africa, and many around the world.

Now in his 10th year of running Pesach programmes, Feiglin has established a strong rhythm with the team at Zimbali, which is hosting the retreat for the third consecutive year. He credits much of the success to that relationship. “Our team knows their team and they get really excited when we come,” he says, noting that the process also allows the hotel to “take a break from their regular, do a proper deep clean, and change it up”.

Once the hotel’s non-kosher events conclude, Feiglin’s team steps in. “They never really understand what a deep clean means,” he explains. “You have to be able to essentially wipe your finger across a bench and come out clean”, with not a trace of grease remaining. Only once the *mashgichim* (kashrut supervisor) and other supervisors are satisfied can the kashering process begin.

But the experience is about far more than food.

The retreat offers a strong spiritual and intellectual programme, with “engaging talks and *shiurim*” from a range of speakers. This year’s line-up includes international guests, among them a speaker from Australia sharing her personal story following the Bondi Beach attacks.

For many families, the appeal of these retreats lies in their convenience. “They literally get to work normally till the last minute,” Feiglin says, “and just either drive six hours down to Durban or get on the plane for an hour, and they’re there.” What was once considered a luxury is becoming increasingly mainstream in South Africa, offering what he calls the “ideal kosher holiday without having to fly overseas”.

It was Rabbi Ari Kievman who first came up with the idea of a Pesach retreat in South Africa, inspired by what he’d seen growing up in the United States. “As a teenager in the 1990s, I used to see all these Pesach programmes advertised,” he recalls. After moving to South Africa in 2009, he noticed the gap.

That led to the launch of his own programme in 2014, with a clear purpose. “Any revenue, any proceeds would benefit the seniors programmes that I’m responsible

for,” he says. The scepticism, including being told he wouldn’t be able to run it alone, became motivation. “You think I can’t do it? So I will.”

Now in its 13th year, the programme has developed a strong track record and serves as a vital financial engine for Chabad Seniors

services, from daily activities like meals, therapy, and social programming, to broader community care.

The technical challenges of retreats are significant. Transforming an industrial kitchen for Pesach use is far more complex than preparing a private home. “It’s a lot more serious and intricate,” Kievman explains, describing the process as a tightly controlled, 24-hour turnaround overseen by the Beth Din. From the moment the kitchen is

last used, a full day must pass before kashering can begin.

Despite the scale of the operation, the philosophy remains consistent. “Everything else is made fresh on site,” he says, reinforcing the commitment to quality and authenticity.

Ultimately, the success of these retreats comes down to what they offer families. Kievman sums it up simply, “*Yomtov* is a pleasure without the pressure.” By handling every detail, from seder plates and seating arrangements to childcare and entertainment, organisers allow guests to focus on what matters most.

Every generation is catered for. Dedicated children’s programming, teen activities, and babysitting services are all part of the planning. “We make sure we book enough babysitters,” Kievman says.

Jeremy Emanuel, who coordinates the logistics for the Soetdoring Kosher Game Reserve retreat, north of Pretoria, views the retreats as full-scale productions where every detail must align. “For me, the process begins six to eight months in advance,” Emanuel says. “We’re designing a full culinary programme from the ground up, sourcing from more than 20 suppliers, and assembling a team that includes everyone from chefs and kitchen staff to a rabbi, rebbeztin, and children’s programme leaders.”

Because the Soetdoring property is owned, Emanuel notes a significant logistical edge. “Having full control of the venue allows us to bypass the usual 24-hour crunch; we can begin the intensive kashering process – overseen by an experienced *mashgiach* like Eli Goldman – days in advance.” This process involves everything from double-soaking glassware to high-heat cleaning of surfaces and the use of entirely new crockery. “It’s a two- to three-day operation that ensures we meet the highest kashrut standards set by the Beit Din.”

Beyond the kitchen, the focus is on a seamless guest experience that balances relaxation and adventure. “We want guests to enjoy a stress-free *yomtov* with high-end service and a strong Jewish atmosphere,” Emanuel says.

At Soetdoring, this includes game drives, bush walks, live entertainment like marimba bands, and even nearby excursions like cheetah encounters or ziplining. “Despite the challenges of global supply chains or regional safety concerns, our goal remains stable: providing a meaningful, successful experience where travel and community come together perfectly.”

From logistics and food to spirituality and family experience, every element is carefully considered. The result is a Pesach that allows families to arrive, unwind, and fully experience the holiday, while also supporting meaningful communal initiatives.



Pesach at Zimbali

From there, the operation becomes a high-level culinary production. A large team, including hotel chefs, external caterers, and Feiglin’s own staff, work around the clock. “We don’t do any frozen meals,” he says. “Everything is cooked fresh on site.” Over the course of 10 days, guests are treated to full breakfast spreads, buffet lunches, and elaborate dinners, along with details like a curated Pesach cocktail bar and local favourites such as biltong.

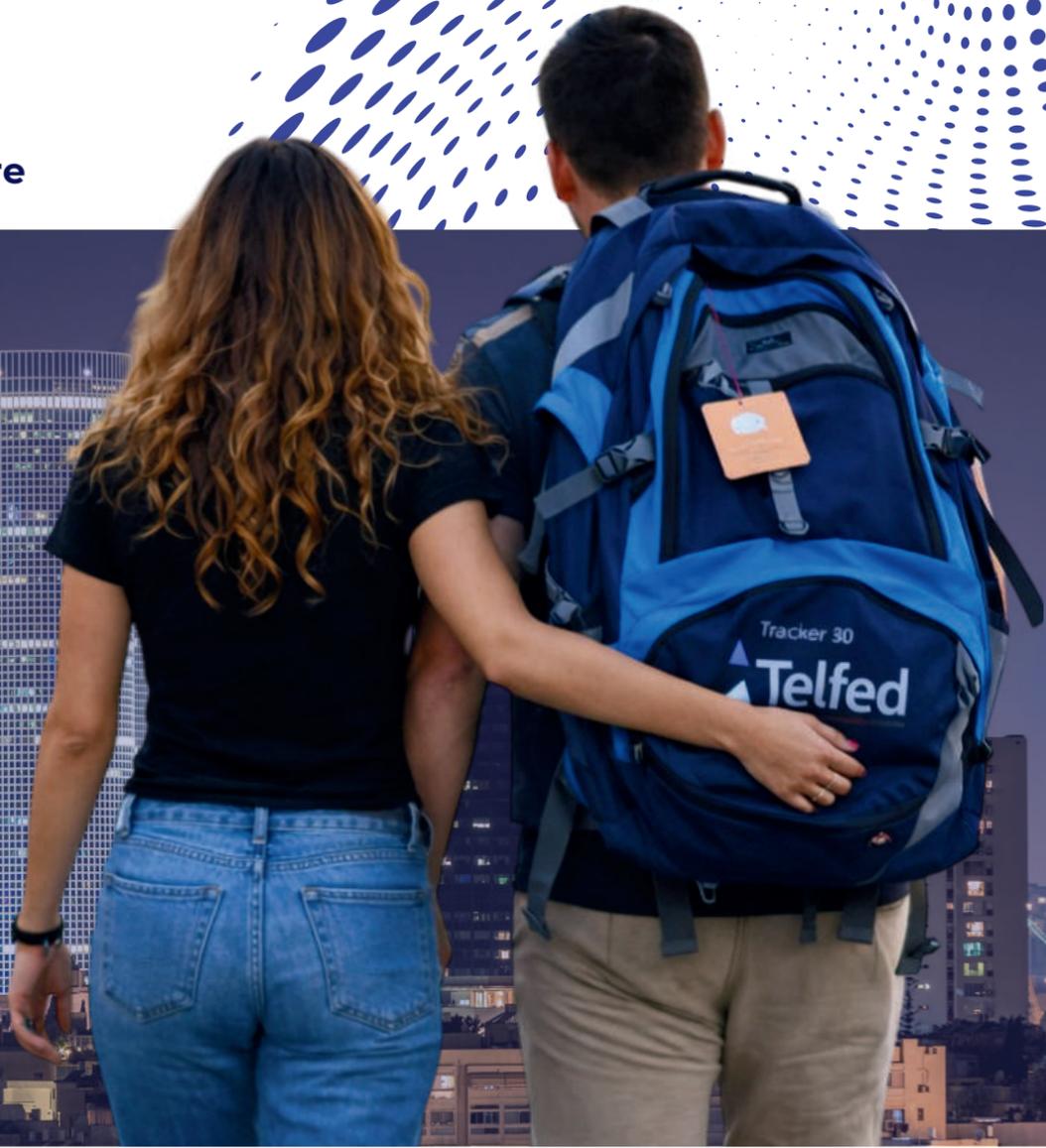


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Creating tantalising Pesach treats

Culinary creators **Lauren Boolkin** and **Romi Rabinowitz** give you recipes for dishes to either wow your guests with on seder nights or make for family and friends during *Chol Hamoed*.

LAUREN BOOLKIN

DATE AND ORANGE SPATCHCOCKED CHICKEN

This recipe works just as well with chicken portions. Should you be unable to find Kosher for Pesach Silan (date syrup), I've included Sharon Lurie's quick and easy homemade Silan. Make a lot! It's fantastic in salad dressings and sauces that call for syrup. Silan is a healthy option.

Ingredients

- 1 small red onion
- 1 clove garlic
- Zest and juice of an orange
- Zest and juice of a lemon
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup date syrup (use honey if you don't want to mission, but Silan is so much nicer)
- 1 sprig rosemary, destalked
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Ground black pepper

Method

- Process all the ingredients except the chicken and then pour the mixture over the chicken, which has been placed in a roasting dish breast-side down.



- Roast, covered, at 180°C. After an hour turn the oven up to 200°C, uncover the chicken and flip it over. Cook for another 30 minutes, basting every 10 minutes, until golden.
- Serve garnished with orange slices and rosemary sprigs.

Sharon Lurie's homemade Silan

Boil 500g dates in four cups of water for an hour and then liquidise. If you prefer you could boil the mixture for 90 minutes, strain it through a muslin cloth and then boil again until it is reduced by half.

CUSTARD ROULADE

I was given this cake recipe by my neighbour and friend. It's evolved into a roulade but can be baked in a round tin. It's light and delicious. Make sure you stock up on the Osem pudding mixes as they sell out quickly.

Ingredients

- 8 eggs separated
- 1 cup sugar divided!
- ¾ cup potato flour
- ½ cup oil
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 box Osem vanilla pudding (you will need another if you are using it for filling)

Method

- Preheat the oven to 170°C. Grease and line a large baking sheet, or two smaller ones, with baking paper.
- Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form and then gradually beat in ½ cup of sugar. In a separate bowl beat the yolks with the other ½ cup of sugar. Add in the remaining ingredients.
- Bake for 30-40 minutes until a tester comes out clean.
- Flip the cake onto a clean dish cloth and roll up to cool.

- Fill with beaten non-dairy whip or another packet of Osem pudding mix. (Made up according to the instructions on the box.) Garnish with dusted icing sugar, figs, and berries.



ROMI RABINOWITZ

SOFTTEST PESACH ROAST

Ingredients

- 1 raisin rib
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 5 whole cloves garlic
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 3 tablespoons syrup
- 3 tablespoons tomato sauce/tomato paste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut into chunks

Instructions

- Spread the sliced onions and garlic cloves on the bottom of the slow cooker.
- Place the roast on top of the onions and garlic.
- Pour the red wine around the meat.
- In a small bowl, mix together the syrup, tomato sauce, and olive oil. Spread this mixture over the roast.
- Sprinkle the cumin, salt, pepper, and paprika evenly over the meat.
- Add the carrots around the roast.
- Cook on low overnight

PERFECT POTATO KUGEL

Ingredients

- 2½kg potatoes, peeled
- 1 large onion
- 5 eggs
- ¾ cup oil
- 1 tablespoon salt
- Black pepper, to taste

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 230°C
- Process the onion using the S blade

of your food processor, scraping down the sides of the bowl midway to make sure it is finely pureed. Switch to the grating blade and process the potatoes. No need to empty the bowl in between onion and potatoes.

- Working quickly, crack the eggs into a bowl large enough to hold all the batter. Add the oil and seasonings and mix well. Add the processed potatoes and onion and mix until uniform. Pour into a greased pan and bake uncovered for about two hours.



LEMON AND HERB CHICKEN BREASTS

Ingredients

- 1.2kg skinless, boneless chicken breast (I ask the butcher to make them thin)
- 3 lemons
- Handful Italian flat-leaf parsley
- Handful basil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 125ml olive oil
- Pinch of salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

- Juice the lemons and with a hand blender, blend the herbs with the garlic, olive oil, a pinch of freshly

ground black pepper, and half the lemon juice. Pour the marinade over the chicken and leave it to marinate in the fridge for at least an hour.

- Once you are ready to cook the chicken, heat a griddle pan on the stove top. Sprinkle some salt over the chicken pieces and then grill them on the griddle pan for a few minutes on each side until they have a nice charred colour and the chicken is cooked all the way through.
- Once you have cooked all the chicken, pour the remaining lemon over the chicken and serve.

The go-to collection of South Africa home cook, Romi Rabinowitz's tried-and-true favourite recipes is now available. You can find 'Ever So Lovely – Family Favourites' at Chabad House, Kollel Bookshop, Selwyn Segal, Takealot, and Exclusive Books.

How an 'always-on' culture can make us slaves to work

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Whether its managing emails, WhatsApp, or Teams notifications, in a world of constant connectivity, switching off from work often seems impossible. Yet, before constant demands lead to burnout or other mental or physical health problems, it's vital to instil boundaries.

Technology has enabled remote working, undoubtedly creating more flexibility, but simultaneously fuelling expectations of ongoing availability. "This 'always-on' culture has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, and contributed to increased stress, burnout, sleep disruption, and difficulty detaching from work," says clinical psychologist Doron Zar. "The expectation of continual responsiveness can also heighten feelings of surveillance, urgency, and cognitive overload, which over time may reduce well-being and job satisfaction."

This is the case for Bianca Kahn*, who says she has been more stressed out than ever since starting her current job more than a year ago. "I've never been pushed to the extent that I have here," she says. "I work from 07:00 to 17:00, then exercise and start work again at 19:00 until about 22:00. I also work weekends. I am available day and night and on holiday. I have Teams and email on my phone and will answer messages at all hours."

She says things are coming to a head. "I am totally burnt out, I'm beyond exhausted, and my whole body is sore. I'm taking stimulants to keep myself productive in the day." While Kahn tries to prioritise urgent work and to use artificial intelligence to reduce admin, there's no escaping the need for overtime; without it, she cannot get her work done.

"I would love to work for myself, but I can't afford to be without a steady income," she explains. "I really believe that this affects single women the most. You don't have a partner to carry the financial load should you need rest or time to find another position

that doesn't reduce your life to working 24/7." She's currently trying to create a financial buffer should she lose her job. To boost her well-being amid the stress, she exercises daily and uses mantras to keep herself focused.

Having first burnt out more than 20 years ago, Terri Tanna Maselle was ultimately diagnosed with chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia. "I was a workaholic, my life was fear-driven. I landed up losing absolutely everything I had because I had to float my business from my bed, which didn't work out."

While dietary changes and naturopathic intervention made a big difference, Maselle says rediscovering her faith was a gamechanger, renewing both her mind

Human, Maselle deals with human resources executives every day. She has observed a proliferation of leaders who run toxic, fear-based organisations, she says, bemoaning the lack of emotional intelligence in the corporate world. That's why she's determined to work only with organisations with a positive company culture.

Those of us who don't work for such companies need to decide what we're able to handle. "You have to start from within," Maselle says. "People have these self-limiting beliefs, thinking they'll never find another job, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Rather than coming from a place of victimhood or people pleasing, she says, we need to shift to one of empowerment. "We must have the wisdom to discern

what is and isn't good for us. The first person that you lead in life is yourself." As such, Maselle lives a structured life, which includes gym, work and relaxation. "I start work at 09:00 and finish at 17:00. Then my phone gets switched off because tomorrow is another day." While the "always-on" culture is still common, companies are increasingly considering employee well-being, argues Nikki Temkin, a wellness coach with a niche in workplace wellness. "Being busy all the time and what I call 'hustle culture' is no longer a badge of honour," she says.

Naturally, this shift will take time and company cultures differ. "It filters down from top management," Temkin says. "You still have personality types that will always be pushing, which then becomes the cultural ethos of the company." We need to set new expectations around what is acceptable, she says. Especially for working moms, who face multiple work and home demands, companies that allow flexibility are becoming more desirable.

However, those working for companies that don't prioritise employee well-being face the risk of burnout. Zar says warning signs include constant fatigue and exhaustion, difficulty switching off from work, and feeling emotionally drained. It often comes with increased irritability, frustration, and a sense of being checked out. "Prolonged stress can also cause sleep disturbances, headaches, muscle tension, and illness."

Burnout can't be fixed between Saturday and Sunday, Temkin stresses. "It has to be tackled daily. The prevention framework is to recognise and identify the early warning signs before they escalate. Reflect, pause to investigate the root causes, regroup, and then build up your resilience again by making the necessary changes."

No-one but you is going to instil the boundaries you need to maintain a healthy work and home life, and these need to be clearly expressed. "The only people who will be upset by the boundaries that you put in place are those who would have gained by exploiting them," says Temkin.

You need to understand what kind of person you are and what you really want, she says. "Ask what kind of work will allow you to look after your health, to have quality time with your family, and to do the things that nourish you."

While old terminology was around work-life balance, the new terminology is around work-life integration, which requires flexibility, Temkin says. "This is where we can work in a way that supports the different parts of our lives that are important to us at different times of our lives. In line with this, something during your day or week is going to have to take priority."



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and her emotional state. In the process, she began studying ontological coaching, how humans function on a mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual level. "It starts in the mind," she says. "You must be able to take those negative thoughts and cut them off. You've got to train your brain."

Now the owner of recruitment agency The Good

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Traditions practised differently

GILANA LAB

Passover is often called the holiday of tradition, but traditions differ in various communities, and marrying across them is never easy. When an Ashkenazi Jew marries into a Sephardi or a Lubavitch family, for example, there's a lot to learn.

THE SHIFT WASN'T JUST ABOUT WHAT'S ON THE DINNER TABLE; IT REQUIRED A REWIRING OF HER SPIRITUAL HABITS.

"I was very 'Ashkenazed' before I got married," Mikayla Moshe says, reflecting on a childhood defined by the rhythms of a religious Ashkenazi household. That world offered a certain seamlessness that she took for granted. "I don't really have a favourite thing about it, but I guess it was the convenience. My school, my shul, and my home lifestyle were all the same ... everything was just available because it's one of the more common sects in Judaism."

That sense of uniformity was most apparent during the high-stakes preparation for Passover. "Pesach before my marriage was much stricter and on a totally

different level," she says. "My parents are part of a very religious shul, and that's just the way I grew up. Pesach was very strict."

Today, however, her home looks and tastes remarkably different. "I am now Sephardi. My husband's family comes from Iraq, and we obviously have a lot of different things now. We have *kitniyot* [legumes, seeds, and grains], and there's just slightly more leniency in terms of cleaning for Pesach and the food we can have. Even in terms of buying things on the 'green list', it's more lenient than my parents would be. We are now allowed rice and corn and all of the different legumes."

The shift wasn't just about what's on the dinner table; it required a rewiring of her spiritual habits. "In terms of changing traditions, there was a whole new way of davening and benching," Moshe explains.

"There are a lot of new Iraqi traditions, which are beautiful. But to change all of it takes a lot of time, effort, and commitment. Now, I'm so happy that's what I'm able to give to my family. I would never compromise on those traditions."

Nevertheless, the "sectarian" divide creates logistical hurdles when it involves her extended family. "It's complicated because my family obviously can't come



to me," she says. "We can only go to them. It's really complicated because we have the rice and the corn and all the different

legumes."

Despite the complexities, Moshe views the effort of bridging these two worlds as a vital part

of her story. To her, the beauty of the Iraqi tradition wasn't just something she married into – it's something she chose to make her own.

For Tamar Cohen*, transitioning from a traditional South African upbringing to a Lubavitch lifestyle was like "leaping from here to China", with added stringency, particularly in the kitchen. "I can't just go to the shops to buy everything," she explains, saying that her mother-in-law makes everything almost from scratch. In this environment, the reliance on processed goods vanishes: "They buy no sauces. She'll make her own tomato sauce. She makes her own mayo." The restrictions even extend to the spice rack, with only store-bought salt and pepper there. Family members roast peppers before Pesach, to make their own paprika. "This level of preparation is extensive and demanding," she says.

The most significant change for Cohen on Pesach is the strict observance of *gebrot*, which forbids "wetting your matza". "We can't put spread on our matza or have a matza sandwich," she says, meaning "no matza pizza, no butter on matza, no jam". This practice even delays holiday favourites: "We can't have kneidlach until the last day of Pesach, because that's like wetting your matza meal."

Beyond matza, Lubavitch dietary laws include the requirement to peel all produce. "We can't eat fruits and vegetables unless they've been peeled," she explains, saying that even the skins of tomatoes and cucumbers are removed.

As she navigates this new world, Cohen has realised that everyone has their own level of strictness. "I think for people with kids, it's a lot harder because these foods aren't necessarily what kids are going to want to eat." She can have boiled eggs for breakfast, but a child might want cereal. "I know a lot of people will buy the more processed stuff for their kids, but they won't eat it themselves."

She points out that while the main principles are shared, some people use garlic, but others won't. "There's some people who will have apple on matza, and there's some people who won't." Some individuals make exceptions for specific foods, such as avocado on matza.

These varying standards also transform the social landscape of the holiday, as the differences in stringency can make communal dining nearly impossible. "I have friends who won't accept invitations to a lunch meal during Pesach because they are so strict and they don't know someone else's level."

Despite the "crazy" adjustments, she finds a beauty in the stricter traditions. "Everything is so natural, there's no preservatives. There are no bad things. It's only good things in this food."

*She asked not to be identified in order not to embarrass anyone.

'People of Iran have no voice': activist speaks out at SAUJS UCT event

CLAUDIA GROSS

An Iranian activist who fled her country five years ago delivered a stark and deeply personal account of life under the Islamic Republic at a South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) event at the University of Cape Town (UCT) this week. Sam Nik warned that ordinary Iranians are living "between life and death", and insisted recent developments are a final opportunity for change.

Nik described widespread fear, repression, and economic collapse in Iran, while also addressing questions from students about international intervention, regime change, and the global response to the crisis.



Sam Nik addressing SAUJS

She said conditions in Iran had deteriorated to the point where daily life had become unsustainable. "We didn't have any economy. We lost everything," she said.

According to Nik, international inaction over many years contributed to the current situation. She argued that governments were reluctant to intervene because of the costs involved. "If you want to go and help a nation, you need to spend money. You need to use your weapons. You need to use your soldiers. No-one took that risk," she said.

Iranians welcomed Israel and the United States's intervention, Nik said. Those criticising such involvement should consider the realities faced by people inside the country. "If you don't have any experience of living in that

situation, it's better to keep quiet and read more," she said.

Central to her address was the isolation of Iranians, both through internet restrictions and regime control of information. "People in Iran don't have any voice," she said, describing a system in which propaganda dominates and communication with the outside world is limited.

Even outside Iran, she is not safe. "I keep receiving threats, phone calls. I keep seeing cars following my car," she said, attributing this to the reach of the Iranian regime beyond its borders.

She said families are often used as leverage, with relatives in Iran facing pressure or threats when individuals speak out abroad.

Reflecting on protests outside Iran, including demonstrations in South Africa, Nik expressed frustration at what she described as interference from groups not directly connected to Iran. She recounted instances where protests against the Iranian government were disrupted.

She argued that the Iranian regime prioritises financial and geopolitical interests over the well-being of its population, claiming oil revenues are used to fund external activities rather than support citizens. As long as the current system remains in place, she argued, resources would continue to be diverted away from the Iranian people.

Nik said she had left Iran for both political and personal reasons. She described restrictions on women's rights. "In Iran, by all the laws, you cannot get divorced as a woman," she said, explaining that even in cases of abuse, women could be forced to remain in marriages.

She would consider returning only if there were fundamental political changes. "I'm going to go back to Iran if the law changes. And the law changes only by changing the government," she said.

Responding to questions about public support for the regime, she said that attitudes had shifted significantly in recent months, with neutral or religious segments of society turning against the government following widespread

violence. "Three months ago, everything changed," she said, "40 000 people killed, 300 000 people arrested."

But Nik rejected the idea that Iran might fragment, instead emphasising its long cultural history and national identity. She said that despite centuries of external influence and conflict, Iranians have maintained a strong sense of continuity.

One student asked whether foreign intervention could undermine Iran's independence. Nik said external support didn't mean external control, and Iranians themselves would decide their future leadership. "We know our leader. We want just one person," she said.

Criticism of foreign involvement was unrealistic, said Nik, arguing that those opposing intervention often failed to offer alternatives. "If you're against the regime, how are you going to free Iran?" she asked, noting that protests alone hadn't succeeded in bringing about change.

Throughout the talk, Nik returned to the theme of urgency. She described the current moment as critical, warning that failure to act could have devastating consequences. "This is our last chance," she said. "If they don't go, we are all killed."

Nik said she had encountered both support and challenges in South Africa. She described people here as "warm-hearted" and said the country reminded her of aspects of Iranian culture.

She concluded her talk by encouraging the audience, particularly students, to seek out accurate information and to engage critically with what they see online. She emphasised the importance of education and awareness in understanding complex global issues.

Rachel Segal, SAUJS UCT chairperson, thanked Nik for sharing her story, especially given the risks involved in speaking out. Segal said many in the audience could relate to the experience of having others speak about situations they do not fully understand, and highlighted the importance of listening to first-hand accounts.

The event formed part of a broader effort to bring international perspectives to the UCT campus and to engage students in discussions about global politics, human rights, and conflict.



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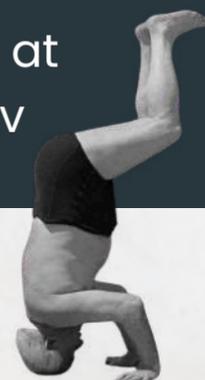
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Vilnius synagogue dispute lays bare tensions over leadership

CLAUDIA GROSS

A dispute over access to Vilnius's only functioning synagogue has escalated beyond a local religious disagreement, raising questions about leadership, authority, and the use of Holocaust restitution funds in Lithuania's Jewish community.

At the centre of the conflict are Rabbi Sholom Ber Krinsky, a Chabad emissary who has led religious programming in Vilnius for decades, and Faina Kukliansky, chairperson of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the country's main representative Jewish body.

The dispute came to a head over Purim this year when the Choral Synagogue was closed, forcing organisers to relocate celebrations at short notice.

Krinsky says the closure reflects a broader pattern in which access to the synagogue has been restricted during major Jewish holidays, disrupting communal life and placing strain on congregants. "Basically, every holiday, she locks it," he said, referring to Kukliansky, describing how organisers are left scrambling for alternative venues on the day of events.

In response, Kukliansky said the closures were not arbitrary, but the result of safety and regulatory concerns. Anyone organising events in the synagogue is required to comply with fire safety, hygiene, and kashrut regulations, she said, but these requirements were not met at Purim. "Mr Krinsky's actions more closely resembled an attempt to raid the synagogue than a desire to conduct Jewish life there," she said, adding that the closure was intended to prevent "a major disaster".

At issue isn't only access to a building, but who has the authority to define and lead religious life in the community. Kukliansky has emphasised that there is currently no officially appointed rabbi of the synagogue, and that formal roles must be determined through established procedures. She said, "Mr Krinsky doesn't hold an official position and is not the appointed rabbi of the Vilnius Choral Synagogue", and participates "on the same basis as any other Jew who attends prayers".

Krinsky rejects that characterisation. "I'm the only one in the synagogue for years, bringing people there, doing programming, making celebrations, teaching Torah," he said, suggesting that the refusal to recognise him formally, such as referring to him by the title of Mr rather than Rabbi, reflects an attempt to marginalise his role.

The dispute is also tied to the allocation of restitution funds, distributed through Lithuania's Good Will Foundation (GWF), established under a 2011 law to compensate for communal Jewish property lost during the Holocaust and Soviet periods. These funds support religious, cultural, and social life, including synagogue activities. Kukliansky confirmed that "every year, the synagogue receives funding from the Good Will Fund".

The World Jewish Restitution Organization, which is represented in the GWF, said it had not found any misappropriation of funds, noting



At the Purim celebrations in Vilnius

that the foundation operates under government reporting requirements and that its allocations are publicly available.

However, the situation in Vilnius highlights tensions over how these funds are distributed and who determines their use. Krinsky argues that control over restitution funding is central to the conflict, alleging that efforts to limit his role are connected to broader decisions about how resources are allocated for religious life.

He described a previous attempt to reach an agreement that would have formalised his position in exchange for funding support, saying the amount offered wasn't sufficient and that tensions resumed after a brief period of cooperation.

But Kukliansky rejects the suggestion that funding decisions are being used to exclude any individual.

The dispute has also involved disagreements over the use of synagogue space and resources.

Kukliansky disputed Krinsky's claim that items left in the synagogue for Pesach last year, including a commercial refrigerator, were removed, saying, "This information is untrue." She added that items and food had been brought into the synagogue without permission, including some that had expired or were of "questionable quality and kosher", and that requests to remove them were ignored.

Her response further alleged that Krinsky had borrowed furniture and not returned it, stating that he had been given a final warning and the matter could be referred to police if unresolved. Krinsky, in turn, maintains that restrictions placed on him have gone beyond administrative concerns and have interfered with normal religious activity.

The conflict is unfolding in a small community still rebuilding after near-total destruction during the Holocaust. Today, the Lithuanian Jewish Community's priorities include social welfare support for Holocaust survivors, cultural and educational programming, and strengthening religious awareness and participation.

Restitution funds play a central role in financing these activities, covering infrastructure, programming, and staffing. This makes disputes over control and access particularly sensitive, as they directly affect both communal services and the direction of Jewish life in the country. While both sides say they are open to cooperation, there is little indication of a resolution.

Kukliansky said the primary concern was safety and proper governance, adding that "there is only one constructive solution for anyone who wants to do something in the

synagogue: respect the place and the people who are there, observe the rules of Judaism, the laws of the Republic of Lithuania, and seek compromises".

Krinsky continues to call for recognition of his work and for fair access to communal resources, warning that the current situation is undermining the community's ability to function.

For congregants, the consequences are immediate. The disruption of

Purim celebrations, relocated at short notice, has become a visible example of how institutional disputes are affecting everyday religious life.

More broadly, the situation reflects ongoing challenges in post-Soviet Jewish communities.

As the dispute continues, the outcome may have implications beyond Vilnius, raising wider questions about governance, accountability, and the future of Jewish communal life in Lithuania.

An autism diagnosis can be the key to liberating self-acceptance

GILANA LAB

"We couldn't understand why there was so much hype," Kelita Hofman says of the overwhelming response to the couple's online community talk on autism, hosted by the Chevrah Kadisha on 25 February. "We did it very casually. And then there were WhatsApps, emails, people stopping us at school drop-off." It took a moment for it to click. "Talking about your differences, about the imperfect parts of your life – apparently that's still novel."

For her husband, Elan, those differences now include a formal autism diagnosis. He received it in late 2024, decades after first feeling that something about the world didn't quite fit. "What does it mean?" he asks. "It means nothing – and it means everything. I'm the same person I was five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. But now I understand why I am the way I am."

Autism Spectrum Disorder can be described as a lifelong difference in how a person's brain works that affects communication, social interaction, and how they experience the world. It works along a spectrum because it's different for everyone. Some people need a lot of support in daily life, while others need very little. It's not an illness or something that needs to be fixed. It's simply a different way of thinking and experiencing the world.

Born in 1986, Elan grew up at a time when autism was far more narrowly defined. "If you looked at what autism was in 1986, it was a much more limited picture. Today it's a much wider spectrum." As a child, he learned to adapt. "I thought I needed to be a chameleon. I needed to fit in and mirror the people around me. That's how I felt comfortable."

He had friends and excelled at sport. He studied accounting and business simultaneously. "People saw me as a jock rugby player. They didn't see the guy waking up at 05:00 to do his work."

Now, when people discover he's autistic, he says, the reaction is predictable. "Shock. Disbelief. 'But you look normal!' There's still this stereotype – Rain Man, the kid flapping his arms. But the spectrum is wide."

It was their son Raziell who ultimately led Elan to his own diagnosis. "We thought the cleft lip and palate would be the hardship," Elan says of Raziell's early medical journey, which included around a dozen surgeries.

But as speech delays and behavioural differences became more apparent, further diagnoses followed: autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and epilepsy. "Often we'd sit in therapy sessions," Elan says, "and the advice they were giving about Raziell felt like it was directed at me." Kelita remembers joking that perhaps Elan should see the same psychiatrist. "And then," Elan says, "my curiosity was sparked."

They printed the DSM-5 criteria at home and went through them line by line. "We dissected every word," Kelita says. "Did you meet all three criteria? Two out of three? What does 'social reciprocity' actually mean?" Eventually, Elan underwent a full assessment. "When I got the diagnosis, it didn't change who I was. But it changed how I understood myself."

That understanding explains the intensity of his sensory world. "I cannot sit in the room when someone is eating fruit," he says, half-laughing. "I would much rather take an olive and stick it under my eyelid than listen to that slopping sound. That's what it feels like." It explains his precision with language. "If someone says it's quarter past eight, I have to say, 'It's actually nine minutes past eight.' I can't help myself." And it explains why summarising something into two neat sentences feels impossible. As Kelita puts it, "He

genuinely cannot understand why you wouldn't want the extended explanation."

Diagnosis has reshaped their marriage as much as it has reshaped Elan's self-understanding. "If we're sitting and talking, I want him to look at me," Kelita says. "If he's staring off into the distance, I feel like he's not listening." Elan responds simply, "I am listening. I just feel more comfortable sitting at an angle." Now, instead of interpreting that difference as indifference, Kelita can say, "I need you to look at me – not because you're wrong, but because I need that connection." Elan says, "Knowing that we operate differently prevents a whole lot of fights."

He's also quick to dismantle the idea that autistic people lack empathy. "That's not true. For me, empathy is more logical. Something bad happened. The person is sad. The appropriate response is to console them. I might not get teary-eyed. But that doesn't mean I don't care."

In their home, autism isn't a whispered label. "In our house, 'autism is used freely,'" Kelita says. "Our daughters know what it means." They explain to Raziell that his brain works differently. "That means superpowers and that means challenges," she says. Elan adds, "Sometimes friendships are tough. Sometimes the playground is overwhelming. But he has an outstanding memory.

He's incredibly bright. He has amazing insights." Elan doesn't hesitate when asked if he would change anything. "There's nothing I would change about him. Not today. Not ever."

Raziell attends Bella Vista, a remedial primary school that has become, in Elan's words, "probably the best thing that could have happened to us".

Kelita acknowledges that choosing a remedial setting can stir complicated emotions for parents.

"Sometimes we're grappling with our own expectations. We had an image of where our child would go to school. You have to ask yourself – is this about what's best for my child? Or about the picture I had in my head?"

With three children, balance is deliberate. "We speak about the 'glass child'," Elan says – the sibling who becomes invisible because attention centres on the neurodiverse child. "So we prioritise time with our daughters," Kelita explains. "And we validate their frustration." Their daughter will sometimes ask, "Is this because he's autistic or because he's my annoying brother?" Kelita smiles. "And sometimes the answer is both."

Professionally, diagnosis has also been empowering. "A lot of people are scared to declare hidden disabilities," Elan says. "I saw it as an opportunity." He now has access to flexibility, quieter workspaces and noise-cancelling headphones. "When I cut the noise out, I can make two hours the most productive two hours. My brain sees patterns. That's not a weakness – that's a strength."

Ultimately, Elan resists being reduced to a single label. "Yes, I'm on the spectrum. But I'm also a father. A husband. A Jew. An accountant. Kind. Impatient. Introverted. All of it at the same time." Kelita describes him as "a living example of self-discovery", adding, "It doesn't mean the journey is perfect. But it's worth it."

Elan pauses before summing it up. "I'm only now learning to be unapologetically myself," he says. "Being comfortable with who I am. Why I am the way I am." Kelita's response is simple. "We want our son to be unapologetically himself. If diagnosis gives him that understanding, then it's worth everything."

"Different isn't bad," Elan says finally. "It's just different."



Kelita and Elan Hofman on the webinar

Jewish youth camp – answer for anxious generation



BETHIA MILNER

OPINION

For the past 12 years of my life, I spent every December at the Habonim campsite. Year after year, I returned to the same dusty fields and tents to learn about Judaism and Israel, to build lifelong friendships, to connect deeply with others, and, quite simply, to have the time of my life.

Now, as I come to the end of my time in Habonim and step into the adult world of work, taxes, and limited annual leave, it's clear to me that though camp may end, its lessons never do. Everything I carry into adulthood – my values, confidence, sense of responsibility, and connection to community – was shaped in profound ways by my years in a Jewish youth movement.

We're raising children in a time of unprecedented digital overload. Jonathan Haidt, in *The Anxious Generation*, describes how the constant presence of screens and social media have left young people more anxious, isolated, and disconnected than ever before. Jewish youth movement camps offer a rare and powerful alternative: a chance to disconnect from devices and reconnect with the real world.

Jewish youth movements in South Africa may differ in ideology, but they share a common set of values: community, responsibility, Jewish identity, and the belief that young people flourish when trusted and empowered.

In many ways, camp can be compared to Sukkot. Children leave behind their safe, comfortable, pampered homes for the uncertainty of a stretcher, a sleeping bag, and a tent. Sukkot teaches us that our security doesn't come from bricks and mortar, but from our relationships, our values, and our faith. Camp does the same. Living in tents exposes us to the elements, strips away layers of falseness and pretence, and reveals a deeper, more authentic sense of meaning in our lives.

Speak to anyone who has been through a Jewish youth movement – whether they are 18 or 80 – and they will tell you the same thing: camp was a life-changing, formative experience. In a single article, I cannot capture the full impact camp has in shaping the people we become. But there are five key lessons I believe every child takes with them.

A child-centred world

Camp is a rare space designed entirely around young people. It gives children the freedom to begin forming their own identities in a healthy, values-driven, wholesome way, away from their parents but within a safe and supportive framework.

Joy without crutches

From kids aged 11 through to their mid-20s, camp shows *chaverim* that they can have the time of their lives without alcohol, drugs, or other substances. Learning how to experience joy, connection, and belonging in this way is an invaluable life lesson.

Education that sticks

My experience at Habonim, which I know is reflected in other movements like Bnei Akiva, was one of informal Jewish and Zionist education that far outlasted any classroom lesson. Learning from people not much older than myself, through creativity, innovation, and shared experience, embeds values that stick better than formal instruction. Jewish camps have perfected a model of education that any system striving to teach ethics and morality could learn from.

Being part of something bigger than yourself

The psychiatrist and humanist Viktor Frankl taught that humans are driven by a search for meaning. In a world where Instagram reels and TikTok fill our days with watching other people live their lives, camp invites young people to live fully themselves. The sunsets, hikes, singing, and shared moments are deeply "Instagram-worthy", but instead of scrolling past them, you are present, experiencing them in real time.

Leadership for life

Leadership development at Jewish camps begins long before someone becomes a *madrich*.



A prominent business leader and former Habonim *chaver* once said that Habonim was the best MBA he ever had. This is no coincidence. Camps produce confident, self-assured, engaged individuals who go on to lead in our community and beyond. The skills gained at camp give young people a real advantage in further study, job interviews, and professional life.

Jewish youth movement camps do far more than fill a child's December holidays. They shape who our children become. They build resilient, values-driven, connected human beings – and that's something no screen, classroom, or textbook can replace.

• Bethia Milner is the president of the South African Union of Jewish Students and involved with Habonim Dror.

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Shift Happens when you take charge of stress

Richard Sutton writes books that help people manage stress and become more resilient. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to him about his latest book, *Shift Happens*, which was number one on the V&A Exclusive Books bestseller list.

What inspired you to write *Shift Happens*?

About two years ago, my phone started ringing constantly. Messages, calls, voice notes – from friends, strangers, parents at my kids' schools – all asking the same thing in different ways: How do I manage my stress?

Some were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of demands. Others were struggling to keep up with the pace of change. Some felt stuck, unsure of where they were heading in life. And many were simply anxious. About the future, about what was happening in their communities, and about the uncertainty unfolding in places like the Middle East.

What struck me wasn't just the number of people reaching out, but how similar their experiences were. It became clear that people didn't need more information. They needed something practical. Something that worked. Something they could access easily, without cost or complexity.

That was the starting point.

I wanted to create a resource where the tools are simple, effective, and grounded in real life, something people could return to when things feel overwhelming, and actually use.

What did/do you hope to achieve with it?

While managing stress and overwhelm is a core theme of the book, it's about much more than that.

At its heart, it's about helping the reader find clarity again. To step back and ask the questions that often get lost in the noise: Who am I? What do I really want? What needs to change?

I wanted the reader to feel like an active partner in their own story, not just someone consuming information, but someone engaging with their life in a more deliberate and practical way.

For some, that means reconnecting with a sense of purpose or rediscovering a passion that's been pushed aside by life's busyness. For others, it's about bringing a sense of order to a world that feels increasingly chaotic.

Why do you believe this book is important for our community?

It's important because it creates the momentum needed for meaningful change.

The book provides 12 science-backed tools that help optimise our internal state. They support us in feeling calmer, more composed, clearer in our thinking, and more energised, regardless of what's happening around us.

When we shift our state, we gain clarity on who we are and what we stand for. That clarity drives action, and over time, those actions shape our behaviour.

And ultimately, it's our behaviour that determines success in the areas of life that matter most.

The book offers a bridge between intention and reality by supporting consistency, especially during difficult and demanding periods, when it's often hardest to stay aligned with ourselves.

So many of us live with stress in our careers and personal lives. How important is it for us to shift from that, and how?

I think it's important to disentangle the concept of stress a little.

Stress isn't simply good or bad, it's both. Short-term stress that challenges and stretches us can bring out our full potential. Biologically, it can make us

15%–20% more capable across multiple domains. We see this when studying for exams, competing in sport, starting a relationship, or stepping into a new role.

But there's another side to stress.

When the demands we face are too much for too long, we shift from a state of challenge into a state of threat. In that unregulated state, people often feel depleted, overwhelmed, and anxious. Confidence drops, performance declines, and over time, both mental and physical health begin to erode.

The difficulty today is that stress is no longer occasional. It has become constant. From rapid technological change and global uncertainty to rising expectations and personal demands, many people are operating in an "always on" state. And when the system is continually stretched, we lose the performance-enhancing benefits of stress because we're simply too depleted to access them.

What we need to learn isn't how to eliminate stress, but how to regulate it. To switch it off biologically when needed, to recover properly, and to rebuild capacity. When we do

that, something shifts. Threat begins to feel like challenge again, and we're able to function, perform, and even thrive, despite what's happening around us.

You discuss 12 well-known figures, like Lady Gaga and Novak Djokovic. But they're celebrities, who have so much at their fingertips. How can we really relate our lives to theirs?

That's a common misconception.

In the book, I focus less on

their success and more on their journeys – the setbacks, the rejection, the periods of doubt, and in many cases, very real experiences of pain and feeling lost. When you look closely, their stories aren't that different from our own.

What separates them isn't access or advantage, but how they responded to those moments.

They developed ways of thinking, behaviours, and practical tools that allowed them to move through difficulty and, over time, rise above their circumstances, no matter how challenging those circumstances were.

Those same principles are outlined in the book. They're not reserved for elite performers. They're accessible, and can be applied in everyday life.

Where should we start?

Start with who you want to be. Identity is powerful, it shapes how we think, how we act, and ultimately the direction our lives take.

Then ask a simple but important question: What do I actually want for my life?

It may sound straightforward, but life has a way of pulling us off course. It gets crowded with responsibilities, fatigue, expectations. Over time, many people shift from living with purpose to simply trying to get through the day.

The next question is: What am I doing that I genuinely care about? What am I passionate about?

Here's the insight: If you don't decide what you want, life will decide for you.

Write it down. Who you want to be.

What you want. Why it matters.

Because clarity fuels action. Action builds momentum. And momentum is what creates real change over time.

What signs should we be looking for in terms of how close we are to burnout?

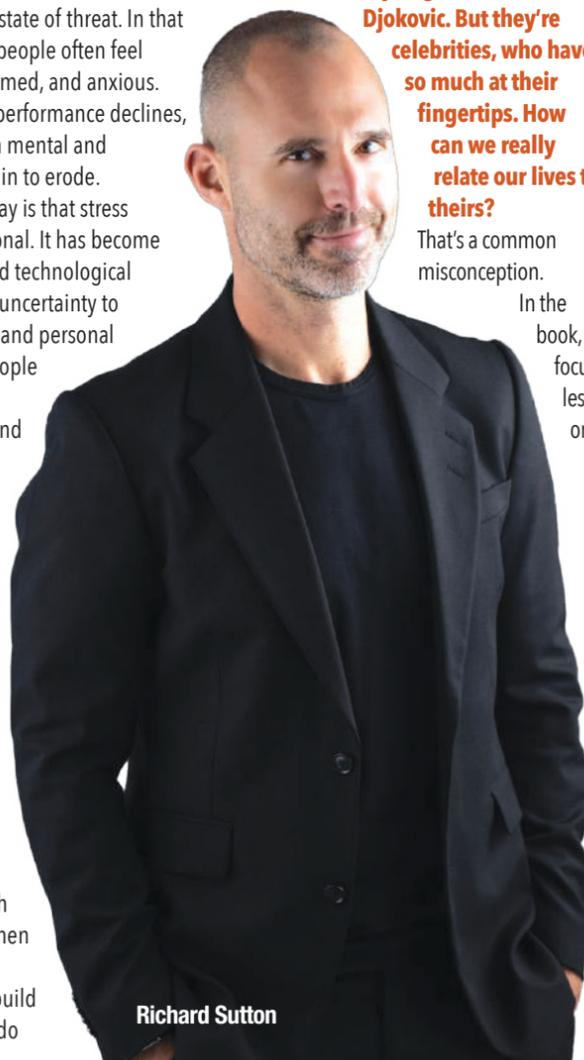
In many ways, burnout is the combination of sustained pressure and a lack of recovery. It builds gradually, often unnoticed (just a little more rigid, less open, more distant), until it starts to show up across different areas of life (depletion, low mood, negativity, overwhelm).

Chronic stress signs can vary from person to person, depending on their unique biology and life context. Emotionally, it may feel like increased anxiety, irritability, or a low mood. Physically, it can present as digestive issues, skin flare-ups, persistent fatigue, or recurring injuries and niggles.

Cognitively, people often notice reduced concentration, lower motivation, a lack of clarity, and poorer memory. Sleep is also commonly affected, with people either struggling to fall asleep, stay asleep, or waking up feeling unrefreshed.

What's important is recognising that these signals aren't random. They're the body's way of indicating that the system is under strain and needs attention.

• This is part of the interview done with Richard Sutton. For the full interview, visit sajr.co.za



Richard Sutton

King David puts the *Glory Days* on stage

LEE TANKLE

Some say that school days are the best days of your life, while others believe them to be the complete opposite. Nothing demonstrated this more than the King David High School production *Glory Days*, on stage this week.

The original jukebox musical – conceptualised by Claudia Caldeira, head of Arts and Culture at King David; Meryl Malkin, head of Social Work; musical director Debra Mizrahi; choreographer Hannah Gralnik; and Jodi Starkowitz, head of Marketing – was created to represent King David, especially as a now unified school.

The play was written by David Fleminger, an author, scriptwriter, and director based in Johannesburg who has worked in the media industry for more than 30 years.

Work on the production started in November last year, and when the team behind the show couldn't find an existing musical that they wanted to do, they decided to write their own.

"This year, we set out to create something truly meaningful, something that would authentically represent both schools and the unity between them. After exploring existing options, it became clear that nothing quite captured the story we wanted to tell. So, we decided to create a bespoke production, one that reflects our vision exactly and brings our shared identity to life on stage," said Malkin.

Glory Days was directed by Mizrahi, Renos Spanoudes as acting director, Aiden Sack as technical director, Gralnik as choreographer, Dylan Wiese as make-up and costume director, Shannen Shneier as set design and prop director, Simon Smith as band director, Malkin as producer, and Caldeira as the head of Arts and Culture at the school.

"The directors have skilfully blended the strongest traditions from both schools' theatrical backgrounds, creating a richer and more dynamic experience," said Starkowitz.

The pupils and their talents have been brought

together to represent the stereotypes of people from the school: the rich kid, the rugby boy who peaked in high school, the rebel girl who finds religion after school, the kugel, the one who felt like they never fitted in, the overachiever, the person who will do anything to get liked by the popular kids, and the singer who thinks he's going to make it big.

The story follows a group of 11 former high school friends who reunite for the wedding of Gideon and Michelle, bringing with them years of shared history, unresolved tensions and personal growth. The play shows the wedding, as well as flashing back to the characters' school days. This is all set to the soundtrack of some truly catchy pop songs that perfectly capture what the characters are feeling.

It then takes us back to the scene of the wedding,

Tali, who had a brief relationship in high school, but it ended because Josh wanted to focus on his music. Now, rather than being a superstar, he's the wedding singer. Tali is described as the "Rebel to Rebbetzin". In high school she smoked in the bathrooms, but in adulthood, she found religion and became a rabbi's wife.

"At the heart of the story are 11 main characters, each with a distinct backstory that shapes how they reconnect, reflect, and rediscover one another," explained Caldeira.

It is a true show of unity, bringing back good and sometimes bad memories for the audience as the characters act out relatable school scenes, like running late for class, trying to fit in with the popular crowd, seeking the attention of your crush, and high school relationship dramas, romantic and platonic.



A scene from *Glory Days*

where they catch up with each other's lives since school: businesses, marriages, children, and everything in between.

Old issues rise to the surface: explosive relationship drama, the rekindling of old flames, and the discovery of new relationships.

One of the major relationships is between Josh and

"Through this production, the cast has formed meaningful connections, using the opportunity to bond both on and off the stage. The 11 main characters, in particular, have grown into a unified ensemble, and their cohesion has naturally extended to the rest of the cast, creating a strong sense of unity throughout the entire production," said Malkin.

HAPPY PESACH

We wish you love, peace, health and happiness.
Today and always.

Pharaoh and the ANC

The idea that G-d "hardened Pharaoh's heart" has long been a source of debate at our seder table. One of my children, now an adult, but no less insistent, has always been deeply troubled by it. The question is simple and uncomfortable: what happens to free will if the central villain of the story is, at some point, no longer free to choose?

And then, to make matters worse, he is punished. In previous years, I have offered explanations. None was particularly satisfying. Least of all to him. This year, however, I think I may have something better. And it comes from the most unlikely of places: the African National Congress (ANC). Well, them and the Rambam. But bear with me. In a recent conversation with former Democratic Alliance leader Tony Leon, I asked a question that has been bothering me. "In the quiet moments", I pondered, "late at night, or early in the morning, when members of the ANC are alone with their thoughts, do they feel anything? Regret? Responsibility? Even a flicker of doubt about the damage done to South Africa? Do they genuinely believe that aligning with regimes like Hamas or Iran places them on the right side of history?" Leon's answer was as predictable as it was correct: we cannot see into the hearts of others. Especially not politicians. All we can do is speculate. And that's when something clicked. The words of the Rambam, the reality of politics, and the biblical narrative seemed to converge. According to Maimonides, Pharaoh absolutely had free will, at least initially. For the first five plagues, the Torah itself tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The choices were his. Repeatedly. Consistently. Only later does the language shift. Only later G-d steps in. Which raises a different, more unsettling possibility. Perhaps Pharaoh wasn't stripped of his free will. Perhaps he exhausted it. Perhaps, through repeated bad decisions, through arrogance, ego, and the need to maintain power at all costs, he slowly closed off the possibility of choosing differently. Perhaps he surrounded himself with voices that reinforced

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



his position. Or he created a system that made retreat impossible. Perhaps he received oodles of gold for his grand pyramid scheme. For whatever reason, he became, in effect, trapped inside his own narrative. Sound familiar? Consider an addict. The first decisions are voluntary. The early choices are theirs. But over time, those choices reshape the person. Until eventually, the ability to choose is diminished, sometimes almost entirely removed. At that point, intervention comes from the outside, from family, from circumstance, because the individual is no longer capable of reversing course on their own. Which brings us, somewhat uncomfortably, to the present. The ANC may well be past its fifth plague. We have lived through the plagues of corruption, loadshedding, institutional collapse, economic decline, and international embarrassment. Each presented a moment to pause, to reflect, to change direction. And yet, the pattern has continued. At some point, it becomes less about individual decisions and more about a hardened position. A place where acknowledging failure is too costly. Where changing course is seen as weakness. Where the system itself resists introspection. And perhaps that answers the question at our seder table. Pharaoh wasn't punished because he lacked free will. He was punished because he used it repeatedly, stubbornly, and disastrously, until there was nothing left to choose. Which should concern us. The ANC may not be the victim of some external hardening or influence. It may simply be the author of its own. A movement that once stood for freedom, now unable, or unwilling, to choose it. Because, like Pharaoh, it chose badly for way too long. *Chag Pesach Sameach.*

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Ambulances are not political



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Ambulances aren't political. They save lives, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Hatzolah doesn't discriminate. In fact, no organisation better demonstrates the positive impact of Jewish communities on their surroundings than Hatzolah, a volunteer organisation providing a critical service at life-or-death moments. The targeting of a Jewish ambulance service is an act of unremitting evil. Let's call it what it plainly is: an antisemitic terror attack. Torching civilian vehicles, especially ambulances, is never acceptable. Not in London. Not at Nova. Not when extremist Jews do it in the West Bank. Never. I agree with United Kingdom political leadership that the firebombing of four ambulances must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. But I believe it's time such statements translate into tangible action. Condemnation without consequence is just noise. On Monday evening, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) held its Freedom Seder, an event designed to engage our non-Jewish friends in the Pesach story while exploring the key themes of this critical festival. The event was hosted by KZN chair Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov, who delivered a meaningful opening address dealing with the meaning of freedom and how the story of Pesach resonates with South Africans of all backgrounds and races. Also on Monday, in Johannesburg, the Union of Jewish Women held its interfaith seder. The event was attended by SAJBD Gauteng chairperson Danny Mofsowitz and led by Rebbetzin Temmi Hadar, who spoke of the powerful symbolism of redemption and its relevance in our own lives today. As is so often the case in these moments, and as we felt at the KZN Freedom Seder, there was a strong sense that sharing our traditions with those of other faiths creates space for understanding. On Wednesday

evening, the Cape SAJBD will hold its Unity Seder. I am certain that it, too, shall be a success in bringing our community closer to fellow communities in the city. For Jews, the concept of freedom is at the core of who we are. As Alana so beautifully said, "Freedom calls on us not only to remember but to act: to stand against injustice, to protect the vulnerable, to welcome the stranger, and to contribute meaningfully to the world around us." In many ways it is this responsibility that sits at the core of the Hatzolah mandate, the very ideal that was targeted in London. As this is the last column before Yom HaShoah, I want to remind the community of our commemorations, to be held in Johannesburg on 14 April at 17:15 at King David School, in Cape Town on 14 April from 12:00 to 14:00, and in Durban on 13 April at 18:00. Yom HaShoah, and Holocaust memory as a whole, has taken on new meaning as the number of survivors dwindles and antisemitic incidents appear to become ever more violent across the world. The sacred duty to carry the memory of this unique catastrophe falls on us now. This year the international theme of Yom HaShoah is "The Family in the Holocaust". In this light, for the first time, Pretoria and Johannesburg will be holding a unified Yom HaShoah, coming together as a family, unified, and in strength. I urge everyone who can to attend and assist as we take on the duty of Holocaust remembrance in this new era. The generation that survived is leaving us. We are becoming the custodians of their memory. We cannot afford to treat this lightly. Wishing everyone a *Chag Pesach Sameach.*

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Above Board, 101.9 ChaiFM, every Friday from 14:00 to 15:00.

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



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HAPPY PASSOVER

Chag Sameach

Wishing you a happy and
prosperous Pesach

