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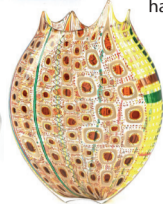
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south african Jewish Report

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Storms turn into miracle for homeless Cape Town man

LEE TANKLE

Striking up a friendship in the howling wind led to an outpouring of care that will change the life of a disabled, homeless man.

This followed days of stormy weather, uprooted trees, and flooded streets that transformed parts of the Western Cape into scenes of chaos between 5 and 12 May, to the extent that the government has declared a national disaster.

The storms led to flooding, road closures, and damage to infrastructure in several areas, with emergency crews responding to incidents as officials urged residents to remain cautious amid ongoing warnings.

According to Charlotte Powell, Disaster Risk Management spokesperson for the City of Cape Town, 83 184 people living in more than 21 000 dwellings have been affected, with 10 confirmed deaths.

However, none of this stopped videographer and social media personality Chad Nathan, otherwise known as Ginger with a GoPro, from going for a run along the Sea Point promenade on 12 May. He chose to brave the weather, run, and video along the promenade to show people the effect of the storms.

"I thought it would be beautiful to be on the promenade all by myself," Nathan told the SA Jewish Report.

"There's not a soul in sight, a little bit of rain. I'm taking a few videos to show people I'm braving the storm. The sea is so rough. It's coming, it's blowing all the foam over, and I'm just capturing some content. I'm also hating the run because I'm now getting really cold," he said.

About four kilometres into his run, he decided to turn back, and while he was doing so, he saw a 50-year-old man in a wheelchair on his own. He went up to him and asked the man, Sidney Miller, if he wanted to be pushed to shelter. On the way to the Sea

Point pool bus stop, where Miller sleeps, about four kilometres from where they started, the pair struck up a friendship.

Miller told Nathan that five years ago, he had been knocked over by a car in Sea Point, leaving him disabled. Since then, he's been destitute and homeless as he's never received anything from the Road Accident Fund. One of his legs was amputated and he had just received news that he would have to have the other leg amputated on 21 May.

Nathan took Miller to get a coffee and croissant in a quiet Sea Point and he bought him some food. Nathan asked for Miller's phone number, but he said he didn't have one. Everything he owns, he explained, fitted into his wheelchair.

"He told me he sleeps at the bus station. And I just said, 'Let me see what I can do to help.' He said he needed a new wheelchair, clothes, and a bag. That's all he asked for. Didn't even ask for money," he said.

Nathan immediately took to social media to post a plea for help for Miller, to get him what he needed. He then put his phone down and went to meet a friend for lunch.

When he later opened his phone, the video had 50 000 views in maybe five to six minutes.

"I calculated the donations and about R25 000 had already come in," he said. "That's when I knew we had a viral video about to blow up and a lot of money about to come in. I then had to drive somewhere for another couple of hours. When I came home, R70 000 had been raised."

He decided to write Miller a note and go surprise him with all the money that was his. By the time Nathan left his home, he had raised R115 000.

Nathan spent about an hour searching the promenade for Miller, asking homeless people where he was. Eventually, someone pointed him in the right direction, and when Miller finally saw him, he looked shocked, having already been recognised on

the streets from the video without realising how much attention and support was coming his way.

"He said to me, 'You found me.' And he just knew I had something to give him. We went down to the Sea Point pools, where it was a bit quieter. I asked him if he wanted the thousand rand or the mystery gift. He opted for the mystery gift. He told me he doesn't know how to read. So I read him the letter. He broke down in tears when I had told him we had raised R115 000."

At the time of going to press, R400 000 had been donated for Miller.

"Sidney started handing out hundred rand notes to his friends. And we tried to get him into a shelter, but all the shelters were full. So, he said, 'Don't worry about me. I'm just going to be where I normally am, at the bus stop. I'll see you tomorrow.'

"It's amazing to see how the whole community came together to help someone and show that someone is seen and heard. You know, Sidney had tried to take his own life a couple of times. It's amazing to see what you can do for someone when you show them they are not invisible," Nathan said.

His goal is to make Miller's life easier while

longer-term plans are put in place, including finding financial guidance, securing sponsorships for a new wheelchair, and arranging comfortable care for him ahead of another amputation.

While most Jewish community members in the Western Cape were fortunately spared major damage, they may have witnessed apocalyptic scenes brought on by the recent storms. Johnny Amoils, who has lived in Plettenberg Bay for about 20 years, said the storm that struck the coastal town from 5 to 7 May, washing away beaches and tearing down trees, was the worst he's ever seen.

Michael Allschwang, who has been living in Plett for 15 months, explained that people in the Greater Plettenberg Bay Jewish community had been affected.

Continued on page 3>>



Chad Nathan tells Sidney Miller how generous people have been

Photo: Screenshot

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MICHAEL KRANSDORFF

OPINION

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's recent letter to Johannesburg Mayor Dada Morero was, by the standards of South African intergovernmental relations, extraordinary. It stated plainly that the City owes creditors R25.2 billion while holding only R3.9 billion in cash, a shortfall exceeding R21 billion.

"This is a marker of severe financial distress," Godongwana warned. That's Treasury-speak for: Johannesburg is effectively broke.

The mayor insists the City is not legally bankrupt, at least not yet. Technically, he is correct, but the distinction between legal form and financial reality is wearing thin. The current ratio – a basic measure of whether an entity can meet its short-term obligations – is well below the crucial parity level of 1. In fact, the City now has cash on hand to cover only 9.3 days' worth of expenses, well below the 30-90 day level required by National Treasury.

The City has been forced to borrow short-term money just to try to keep the lights on – at least intermittently. Meanwhile, the roads crumble, the pipes leak, and the billing system sends out statements that bear only a passing resemblance to reality.

The immediate trigger for the latest crisis was a R10.3 billion wage deal signed with municipal workers in November 2025, rushed through ahead of the G20 Summit, without proper authorisation. This represents an 8.3% increase in employee-related costs – more than double inflation. Godongwana has told Morero this cannot be afforded and threatened to withhold R8 billion in national government grants for the City if it is not reversed.

But the wage deal is a symptom, not a cause. The deeper rot runs through every line of the budget. A third of the City's revenue is eaten up by administration costs – mostly salaries. Money allocated for upgrading much-needed public infrastructure sits unspent – by December, the City had used barely a quarter of its annual infrastructure budget. Moreover, repairs and maintenance expenditure remain well below National Treasury guidelines, compounding an infrastructure backlog now visible in every potholed road and burst pipe.

And then there is the waste. Staggering, almost unbelievable waste. Nearly a third of all the electricity the City buys from Eskom never reaches a paying customer. It disappears through ageing cables, illegal connections, and outright theft. Water is no better. Roughly half of the water pumped into the system generates no revenue at all. The city is haemorrhaging billions of rand every single year.

The November municipal elections may be the most consequential vote Johannesburg has seen in a generation. Helen Zille and the Democratic Alliance (DA), which polls suggest could emerge as the largest party, have been remarkably successful at turning Johannesburg's decline into a political issue that can no longer be ignored. But exposing the collapse is easier than reversing it. The next administration, whether DA-led or ANC-led, will inherit a city running out of cash, credibility, and time. Turning Johannesburg around will require far more than snorkelling in potholes or abseiling off Ponte. It will require a programme of financial stabilisation, which will upset almost every organised interest group in

the city.

Start with fixing municipal services. The electricity and water losses aren't just an operational embarrassment, they are the City's single biggest untapped revenue source. Public-private partnerships structured around loss reduction, with private operators paid from the efficiency gains they deliver, could unlock billions without requiring massive upfront capital expenditure. City Power and Johannesburg Water need genuine commercial autonomy, independent boards, and an end to political interference.

Next, the bloated bureaucracy needs to shrink: fewer entities, fewer cadres, and an honest reckoning with a wage bill that is consuming the budget from the inside out.

The City also sits on large amounts of land and property that it neither uses nor maintains effectively. Long-term concession agreements, ground leases, joint developments, and selective asset sales could generate infrastructure capital without additional borrowing. Cities around the world, including Cape Town, have effectively used these models to fund renewal and expand infrastructure capacity.

Finally, and probably the least popular: revisit rates. Johannesburg's property rates collections underperform relative to the City's economic footprint. Residents are far more likely to accept higher rates if they are accompanied by visibly improved service delivery. They will not accept



Photo: Al generated

paying more for the same dysfunction.

Cities don't collapse all at once. They decline gradually, then suddenly. Godongwana's letter was a warning shot that we are fast approaching the free-fall phase. A new administration in November with a credible financial turnaround plan is our last realistic chance to avoid it. We want a City of Gold, not a city of holes – financial or otherwise.

• Michael Kransdorff is the chief executive of the Institute for International Tax and Finance and is a Harvard-trained development economist.

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We are more than our number

This week we start a new Book of the Torah, Bamidbar. Our Parsha – also called Bamidbar – tells us about the time before the Jewish people begin their journey through the desert, when every single person is counted. Not just as part of a crowd, not as a statistic, but individually, by name.

In a world obsessed with numbers, the Torah reminds us that people are never just numbers.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that counting the Jewish people wasn't merely an administrative exercise. Hashem already knew how many Jews there were. The counting itself was an expression of love, importance, and value. When something is precious to you, you count it repeatedly. You make sure nothing is missing. You notice every detail.

Living as a Jew in South Africa today, this message feels especially relevant.

For years, conversations in our community have revolved around shrinking Jewish numbers. Every study, every communal discussion, every demographic report seems to focus on decline. We hear about emigration, assimilation, smaller schools, fewer young families staying behind. It's easy to become anxious about the future and to view our community only through the lens of statistics.

But Bamidbar teaches us something powerful, every Jew matters infinitely.

A community is measured not only by size. It is measured by soul.

Sometimes we become so focused on how many Jews there are

that we forget to notice the individual Jew standing right in front of us. The teenager who quietly walks into shul once a year. The elderly person sitting alone at home on Friday night. The family trying to reconnect after years away from Judaism. The young professional searching for meaning. The child asking questions no one has answered properly.

Each one counts.

And perhaps that is one of the great strengths of South African Jewry. Despite our relatively small size, there is warmth here. There is community here. People still know each other. Rabbis still call congregants personally. Neighbours still invite neighbours for Shabbos meals. There is still a feeling that Judaism is not only something you practise, but something you belong to.

The desert, where Bamidbar takes place, is also significant. A desert can feel empty, lonely, and uncertain. Yet it was specifically there that the Jewish people became a nation. Sometimes growth happens especially in difficult places, in moments of uncertainty, in communities that feel vulnerable.

Perhaps the challenge facing South African Jewry is not only how to preserve numbers, but how to strengthen connection. To ensure that every Jew knows they matter. That they are wanted. That

Torah Thought

Rabbi Pini Pink
 Chabad of Greenstone



Judaism belongs to them too.

Because when a person feels counted, they begin to count themselves.

And maybe that is the deeper message of Bamidbar. The Jewish future is built not only through large crowds or impressive statistics. It is built one person at a time, one family at a time, one soul at a time.

Hashem counted every Jew in the desert because every Jew was precious.

That has never changed.

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On the third day of the Six-Day War in June 1967, Israeli forces captured East Jerusalem – restoring Jewish access to the Old City and the Western Wall.
 *Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead

Jewish Australians testify about pervasive hatred

CLAUDIA GROSS

A Jewish mother at an under-12 netball game heard another parent allegedly shout that Jews “should all be eradicated”. A rabbi is being asked by his congregants whether they should leave Australia. A teenage gamer described being told online that “Hitler was right to kill them all”.

These are some of the people who have testified before Australia’s Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, established after a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents in Australia since 7 October and the war in Gaza.

The most notable of these events is the attack at Bondi Beach during a Chanukah

community. I’m thinking about the reality for the Jewish community here and its future.”

Rabin, who grew up in Johannesburg and attended Torah Academy, said what disturbed him most was the brazenness of antisemitic rhetoric. He said people were now openly spreading claims that “Jews control the media” and “Jews control the banks”. “This is coming from regular Australians who are just being fed this propaganda. It’s spreading like a virus.”

He spoke of the fear filtering into family life. Rabin recalled walking home from synagogue with his son shortly after 7 October and people in a passing car shouting abuse at them. “My son said,

‘What’s going on? Why do these people hate us?’”

Sydney mother Dina*, who is married to a South African expat, also testified about how daily life had changed. She told the SA Jewish

the first time. She was attending a large community netball fixture in Sydney when another parent allegedly shouted that Jews should be eradicated.

“What was really difficult to swallow was that it was a mother,” she said. “The fact that this came from an Australian mother just like me, standing and watching kids play netball, was deeply confronting.”

She said the incident showed how emboldened some people had become. “There’s social licence now because of how things have gotten here.”

Dina said antisemitism was increasingly affecting ordinary decisions and interactions. She recalled taking her daughter to an emergency room after she broke her nose. The child was wearing her Jewish school uniform. “I sat in that waiting room wishing she wasn’t in her school uniform because I wasn’t sure if she was going to get the right treatment,” she said.

Several witnesses described the impact of antisemitism on children. An anonymous 15-year-old from Perth told the commission he had experienced repeated abuse while playing *Minecraft* online with classmates. One message described him as a “filthy” Jew and another declared “Hitler was right to kill them all”.

“It made my stomach turn upside down,” the teenager told the commission.

South African expat and former New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies Chief Executive Dr Vic Alhadeff said antisemitism had become normalised in Australia. “Prior to 7 October 2023, antisemitism was socially unacceptable and confined to the margins,” he told the SA Jewish Report.

“However, since 7 October, it has shifted from the edges of society into mainstream Australia and is now part of the ecosystem.” Alhadeff described hearing a woman at a Sydney Writers Festival event refer casually to the “tentacles” of Australia’s “Israel lobby”, echoing classic antisemitic tropes.

“What alarmed me was that it was thrown out so casually, confidently and unashamedly,” he said. He also described being subjected to antisemitic abuse during a road rage incident while parking at Bondi Beach. “Fucking South African Jew!” another driver allegedly shouted at him.

Alhadeff said the issue extended

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beyond politics or the war in Gaza. “The issue is not the conflict thousands of kilometres away. The issue is who we are as a nation, respect for diversity, denigration of minorities.”

Joshua Moshe, a Jewish Australian saxophonist, told the commission that he and other members of a private WhatsApp group for Jewish creatives were targeted after screenshots and details from their group were leaked online in 2024.

He said social media users shared his and his wife’s personal accounts and the Instagram page of their Melbourne homewares store, accusing them of being “Zionists” and encouraging harassment. He said police told him that posts attacking him as a “Zionist” did not meet the threshold for antisemitism. Moshe explained to the commission that terms like “Zionist” and “Zio” were increasingly being used as substitutes for “Jew”.

Despite the distressing testimony, many witnesses also expressed hope. Dina said she had received deeply moving support from non-Jewish Australians. “There are a lot of good people out there who just want to live

good, happy, supportive lives,” she said.

Rabin said Australia’s leaders and wider society now faced an important test. “One is that I hope this helps leadership in Australia recognise that they have to be part of the solution.” Political, religious, and business leaders needed to challenge falsehoods and hatred directly, he said.

At the same time, Jewish communities also needed to build stronger relationships outside their own circles. Rabin said his synagogue had started initiatives inviting non-Jewish colleagues and neighbours into Jewish spaces. “People realise we’re not what these libels and ancient tropes are saying,” he said.

Alhadeff said the future of social cohesion in Australia depended not only on the commission’s findings, but on whether ordinary Australians are willing to confront the antisemitism, bigotry, and hatred openly. “The question that cries out to be answered applies to everyone else,” he said. “Will we speak out?”

*She asked that her surname not be used for security.

Rabbi Daniel Rabin testifying at the Royal Commission



celebration on 14 December 2025, when two men opened fire on members of the Jewish community, killing 15 and wounding others.

The Australian government established the commission on 9 January and public hearings began in February 2026. The commission is due to deliver its final report by 14 December, the first anniversary of the Bondi attack.

The commission is examining the extent of antisemitism in Australia, its impact on Jewish Australians, and what can be done to address it. Witnesses are describing a community living with heightened fear, increased security, social isolation, and anxiety about openly expressing Jewish identity.

Rabbi Daniel Rabin, a South African who has lived in Australia since 2009, told the commission, “I think the biggest shock to me was people asking me, genuinely, should they leave Australia? Is this the writing on the wall?”

Speaking afterwards to the SA Jewish Report, Rabin said, “I’m thinking about my children. I’m thinking about my

Report that many Jews had once viewed Australia as exceptionally safe. “I’ve heard many people refer to it as the golden age,” she said, referring to Jewish life in Australia before 7 October.

Dina said the anti-Israel protest outside the Sydney Opera House on 9 October 2023 became a turning point for many Jews. “It was a wake-up call for us to understand what was really lurking underneath.”

Jewish leaders had repeatedly warned authorities about rising hatred, she said. “We’ve been pleading for a long time for government and law enforcement to take it more seriously.”

She described appearing before the commission as both emotional and historically significant. “Our grandparents never had an opportunity to stand before a government inquiry and tell the government how bad things were getting,” she said. “The fact that we have this opportunity is very fortunate for us.”

Just days after testifying, Dina experienced direct antisemitic abuse for

Storms turn into miracle for homeless Cape Town man

>>>Continued from page 1

“We had massive winds, and we had lots of rain. We did have leaking in the shul, but unbelievably, there was absolutely no damage at all to any of the sacred books or the Torahs or anything. It was quite miraculous,” he said.

He explained that the Robberg and Hobie beaches were severely damaged, leaving little beach visible. And what is left is filled with debris from the storm.

“The wind took out the stairs completely, so there are no walkways to get to the beach,” he said.

Despite days-long power outages and damage to beaches, homes, and roads in Plettenberg Bay, the

community came together to help with clean-up efforts. Allschwang said residents, including children, volunteered to clean beaches and support those affected, while a member of the shul launched a relief fund that received major support from the local Jewish community.

In George, restaurant owner Michael Said said strong winds on 11 May caused more damage than the rain, with roofs blown off, trees uprooted, and informal homes damaged. Much of the city lost power for a day, forcing many businesses to close, though his restaurant, The Fat Fish, remained open and busy. He said he was grateful his staff were safe.

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OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



WARNING: SENSITIVE CONTENT

On 7 October Hamas committed the most evil of crimes and their victims and survivors will no longer be silenced by those who deny, downplay, and justify the atrocities.

This week, the Civil Commission – an independent Israeli non-profit organisation led by human rights expert and 2024 Israel Prize laureate Dr Cochav Elkayam-Levy – released a report on what happened that day. “Silenced No More” was meticulously documented and referenced over two years and is a devastating collation of the crimes against humanity and sexual violence committed on that day and to hostages in captivity.

Please don't look away. As unbearable as the testimonies are to read and hear, we must bear witness. We have a moral duty to be their voices. Silence is a second violation. We must bear witness and be the voices of victims and survivors.



Photo: Ian Ossendyver

Back in 2024 I was invited with a small group of journalists and diplomats to view some of the evidence found on the terrorists on 7 October and subsequently discovered in the Gaza Strip. Under close supervision at military intelligence headquarters, we viewed weapons, maps, books, and other material – and detailed orders to commit acts of appalling sexual violence, including instructions for the victims to remove their clothing.

Ushered into another room, phones prohibited, we were shown a 20-minute collation of footage from Hamas body-cams, first responders, and desperate family members searching for their loved ones. This, we were told, would be evidence submitted to the International Court of Justice, where South Africa has filed a case accusing Israel of “genocide”. The images are seared into my conscience, including that of a partially burned woman, her legs splayed, dress pushed up, and her naked intimate parts for the world to see. There was a slice across one of her thighs. I recall another image that I see as clear as day. The body of a woman, on top of a pile of corpses, bleeding from her crotch where she had been shot with the deliberate intent to defile her femininity.

The evidence of what I saw is undeniable.

These are two specific examples of the horrific crimes of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and crimes against humanity committed against Israeli women, men, and children on 7 October and hostages in captivity.

Despite irrefutable proof noted in reports by UN Women, the Dinah Project, and one from the Association of Rape Crisis Centers, denial, downplaying, and even justification of the atrocities continue – including by feminist organisations. It would appear that the voices of victims matter – unless they are Israeli.

This report is close to 300 pages long and contains documentation of at least 10 000 items, including videos, photographs, forensic findings, and the testimonies of 430 victims and survivors. Hamas proudly filmed and distributed evidence of its crimes. The hope is that not only will this be documented to fight back against denial but could lead to further legal action against the perpetrators. Israel's Knesset has approved the convening of a special tribunal to try the perpetrators of 7 October.

The individual testimonies are absolutely devastating.

In the weeks and months following the atrocities, eye witnesses and forensic experts testified about what they saw. Forensic experts spoke about the condition of the bodies brought in for identification, saying they'd been shot in their eyes, their faces, and their breasts, and even targeted in their most intimate parts. Women were stripped, bound, stabbed, shot, and burned. Heads were decapitated and pelvic bones shattered.

Even after death, sexual assault continued. A Nova survivor testified to a victim being shot in the head while her rapist continued his assault. The intention was clear – to destroy their beauty and femininity. Forensic pathologists spoke of an “obsession with sex organs”. First responders echoed the same sentiment and have addressed numerous

nongovernmental organisations and global institutions, sharing their testimonies on the defilement and horror they saw on the kibbutzim, road 232, and at the Nova festival grounds.

Former hostages have spoken about the abuse they suffered. Guy Gilboa-Dalal spoke about how he was touched on his private parts and how his captor “wanted to make a porn movie with him”. Romi Gonen testified to daily abuse.

Keith Siegel, a 67-year-old grandfather who was taken from Kibbutz Kfar Aza along with his wife, Aviva, 65, testified that he was made to undress in front of a terrorist who then shaved his pubic hair and made comments about his penis.

Aviva spoke about how she was nearly executed after she comforted a girl who was sexually assaulted in captivity. She recalled telling girls to take feminine products with them to the bathroom so that if their captors thought they were on their period, they wouldn't abuse them.

The commission also identified 13 recurring patterns of SGBV repeated across multiple sites. They include a damning list of crimes:

- Rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual assault.
- Sexual torture, including intentional burning and mutilation.
- Deliberate shooting in the head, face, and genital area.
- Killings and executions following or committed during abuse.
- Postmortem sexual abuse, humiliation, and the desecration of bodies, including cutting off body parts.
- Forced nudity and exposure, including to family members.
- Handcuffing, binding, and restraint of victims.
- Public displaying and parading of women and children. One such example is the parading of the body of Shani Louk, whose partially undressed and twisted limbs were paraded on a truck in Gaza while men spat at her.
- Abduction of mothers and children.
- Sexual violence in the presence or near vicinity of family members, including kinocide, the deliberate targeting and destruction of families as a weapon of war or terror, recognised as a distinct form of violence against humanity.
- Filming and digital dissemination by the perpetrators, including the use of social media to document, glorify, and amplify the atrocities.
- Threats of forced marriage.
- Rape and other forms of sexual violence against males.

President Isaac Herzog released a statement on social media platform X on behalf of his wife, Michal, who said, “We must continue to amplify around the world the voices of the victims of sexual violence committed by Hamas terrorists on 7 October and thereafter.”

Michal commended the Civil Commission on October 7th Crimes against Women and Children for its “dedicated research and tireless work, resulting in the publication of an important new report that once again gives voice to the victims”.

To read the full report or selected highlights, go to <https://www.civilc.org/silenced-no-more>

• 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.

Is anyone out there listening?

OPINION

DR VIC ALHADEFF



I know I speak for thousands of Australians when I say we desperately hope that the Royal Commission on Antisemitism, which is currently under way in Sydney, will be a key factor in bringing about the change our country urgently needs.

Because a crucial question is: Is anyone out there listening? Does anyone outside the pristine walls of the commission, and beyond the good people carrying out their sacred duties within those walls, actually give a damn?

Last Saturday – despite the volume of vilification being live-streamed from the commission for the world to hear – a mother on the sidelines of a children's netball match that involved a Jewish team is alleged to have made offensive comments, and has been charged. To its credit,

her club swiftly condemned all forms of bigotry, and specifically antisemitism, and apologised.

Incredibly, this allegedly occurred just a day after the commission concluded its first week of hearings. Hearings in which Jewish Australians narrated, some in tears, harrowing experiences. And after a miscreant turned up outside the hearings wearing a T-shirt declaring he was proud to be accused of antisemitism.

I've been immersed in human rights work for decades. Serving as chief sub-editor of the anti-apartheid *Cape Times* in South Africa. And in Australia, going to the barricades for gay rights. Defending MP Ed Husic taking the oath of office on a Koran as Australia's first Muslim federal frontbencher. Calling a radio station to support a teenager who was abused because she wore a hijab on the netball court. Fighting antisemitism in every conceivable forum, from the legislature to the football field, from the workplace to the classroom. And responding to a speech urging violence against Jews by spearheading a coalition of 34 communities and leaders that campaigned for legislation to outlaw incitement to violence. Section 93Z of the New South Wales Crimes Act was duly enshrined on the statute books, the community-wide endeavour transcending cultural differences.

All the above informed by a personal story in which 151 members of my family, including my paternal grandparents, were deported from the Greek island of Rhodes and murdered in the Holocaust.

Despite all that, despite confronting countless manifestations of antisemitism during 17 years at the

New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, I have never seen our country as polarised as it is today. Of course, this relates to the shadow of Bondi, 14 December 2025. A day that changed everything for the nation, and specifically for thousands of Jewish Australians, prompting us to question our place in society and our future in this country. And most unnerving of all, to experience grotesque vitriol and violence.

Yet the tragedy of Bondi is compounded – after the fact – by the unprecedented litany of vilification that witness after witness has brought to the Royal Commission. The calumnies spewed at Jewish Australians of all ages, professions, and political leanings, across almost every conceivable walk of life, are a profound indictment of the depths we have plumbed as a nation.

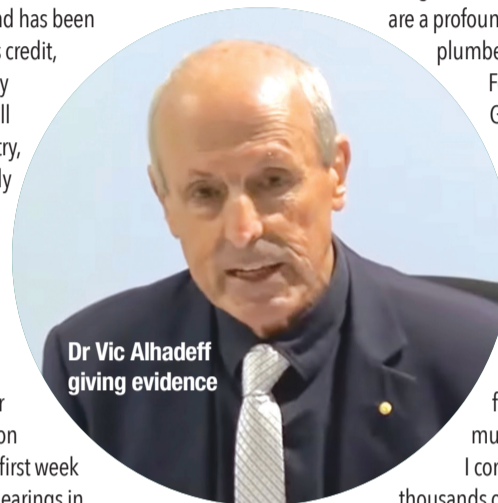
Former newspaper editor Michael Gawenda summed it up during his testimony when he asked where the media were when the above was happening. Where were the investigations, he queried, when the number of antisemitic incidents soared to 2 062 in one year, 2024. How did it happen that our country regressed so markedly from being the quintessential multicultural success story?

I concluded my testimony by saying that thousands of Jewish Australians and millions of Australians across the board hope desperately that the commission will be a catalyst, which seizes this moment as an inflection point in the nation's history, one with the wherewithal to repair our fractured social cohesion and restore it to being the greatest of nations that it was.

Which turns the spotlight onto Australian society itself. It's a given that the bigots on the sidelines are deaf to what is happening at the Royal Commission. Will persist with their abuse. Will continue to hold Jews accountable for a conflict thousands of miles away in which we have zero agency. The question that cries out to be answered applies to everyone else – the law-abiding, well-meaning, silent, vast majority. Will we speak out? Will we summon the courage to approach the bigots on the sidelines and make it clear we do not do that in this country? We just don't.

And there is the heart of the issue. The Royal Commission's findings will be critical and will say what they must. It's the openness of the bulk of the population, the caring, decent majority, to listen to what Jewish Australians are saying, and to hear them, and to respond in kind, that will be equally critical in healing our country.

• Dr Vic Alhadeff OAM is former Chair of Multicultural NSW and former chief executive of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in Sydney, Australia.



Dr Vic Alhadeff giving evidence

Closer engagement with the Bible

Rabbi Jonathan Fox, the group rabbi of the Chevrah Kadisha, has recently published *The Bible Challenge*. The SA Jewish Report chats to him about it.

What inspired you to write this book?

As the Bible is the most influential book of all time and the foundation of Judaism and other major religions, it is crucial for everyone to know the basic narrative. Many people study ideas and commentaries, but are less familiar with the simple, literal meaning of the text itself. I wanted to create an engaging way for readers to strengthen their direct knowledge of the Five Books of Moses.

What is the challenge the title speaks of?

The challenge is to test one's own familiarity with the text. The book encourages readers to see how carefully they know the basic narrative and to improve their attention to detail, memory, and understanding of the entire Bible.

Why do you believe this book is necessary?

A strong foundation in the actual words of the Torah is

essential. The book helps readers review and reinforce their knowledge in a simple and enjoyable format. It encourages active learning rather than passive reading.

Who did you write it for and why?

My previously published book, *The Rashi Challenge*, was aimed at a Jewish audience, *The Bible Challenge*



Rabbi Jonathan Fox

is for everyone. It's intended for students, teachers, parents, and anyone who wants to improve their knowledge of the Five Books of Moses. It can be used by both beginners and more advanced readers because the

question-and-answer format makes learning accessible and engaging.

As the Five Books of Moses form the foundation of most religions, the book is aimed at Jews and non-Jews alike.

What would a reader get from this book?

Readers will improve their familiarity with the text, sharpen their recall, and notice details they may previously have overlooked. The best way to use the book is interactively, either testing oneself, studying with a partner, or using it in a classroom or family setting.

How did you choose the questions that you used and what are they based on?

I literally went through the entire Five Books of Moses, and turned each paragraph or topic into a pertinent question and answer. The questions focus primarily on the plain meaning of the verses. I aimed to include questions that are concise, clear, and useful for strengthening textual knowledge and comprehension.

• The book is available from austinmacauley.com/book/the-bible-challenge.

The Hague Group's terror links exposed

TALI FEINBERG

When the anti-Israel bloc of countries known as The Hague Group resolved to target the Jewish State with legal, economic, and diplomatic measures in July 2025, the terrorist group Hamas issued a statement of approval. It has now been revealed that the bloc, led by South Africa and Colombia, has been advised by groups supportive of terrorism from its inception.

South African Zionist Federation National Chairperson Craig Pantanowitz says this is a "national embarrassment" for South Africa.

Pantanowitz says the government's posture "does not elevate South Africa, but diminishes it. When the language of justice is captured for narrow political ends, every genuine human rights cause is weakened, and South Africa bears a measure of responsibility for that loss."

On a webinar on 30 April, Executive Secretary Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla said that The Hague Group, and its South Africa and Colombia co-chairs, are advised by "a variety of Palestinian organisations [sympathetic to Hamas]", from "Al-Haq to Al-Shabaka, both based in Ramallah", as reported by Jewish news site JNS.org.

Gandikota-Nellutla went on to say that these groups have been present at "every single ministerial meeting".

She said the groups have not been "formally" included in The Hague Group "because that's precisely what would scare away the Europeans – to see this as a radical campaign group, not as a diplomatic bloc". The South African and Colombian co-chairs of the group have "done a fantastic job building this hybrid model, getting advice [from anti-Israel groups] while still retaining diplomatic integrity", she said.

Formed in January 2025, The Hague Group was created to coordinate measures to hold Israel accountable". Ignoring human rights abuses and wars in members' own backyards, the first meeting included representatives of the governments of Belize, Bolivia,

Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa. However, Honduras and Bolivia left the group in March, after establishing warmer ties with Israel.

Gandikota-Nellutla's comments were made during a webinar hosted by United Staff for Gaza, an organisation that consists of current and former United Nations (UN) staff members, who push for boycotts of Israel. She may have thought she was speaking confidentially. On the call, Andrew Gilmour, United Staff for Gaza Chair, told her "not to tell us anything that you would rather was not made public".

Regarding the groups that Gandikota-Nellutla said

struggle" against Israel. In September 2024, Progressive International praised former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. In October 2021, it condemned Israel for designating PFLP-affiliated groups such as Al-Haq as terrorist organisations.

Gandikota-Nellutla is also the Co-General Coordinator of Progressive International, and has stated that "Zionism turns everything it touches into evil".

One of the speakers at the first meeting of The Hague Group was Ahmed Alnaouq, Outreach and Advocacy Officer for Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor. Investigative organisation Gnasher Jew found that Alnaouq spreads antisemitic narratives and promotes terrorist propaganda, and his family has deep ties to Hamas.

Dr Ariel Cohen, non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council Eurasia and Global Energy Centers, tweeted in response to the JNS.org report, "By collaborating with these terrorist organisations, South Africa, Colombia, and other UN members are providing state support to terrorism."

Executive Director of UN Watch Hillel Neuer tweeted, "the mask has slipped ... the so-called 'Hague Group' is not a neutral coalition defending international law but a

coordinated political campaign guided behind closed doors by PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organisation]-linked organisations in Ramallah, including Al-Haq, a group under US sanctions and tied to the terrorist PFLP."

Pantanowitz says, "The Hague Group has now been exposed for what it is." A coalition that presents itself publicly as the "conscience of the international legal order", while "disguising the company it keeps", has "forfeited any serious claim to credibility. Coalitions built on concealment do not defend international law, they corrode it."

He says this pattern is familiar. "A network of governments and activist organisations, several with documented links to extremist and sanctioned actors, drapes itself in the language of human rights to pursue the isolation of the world's only Jewish state."

The selectivity "gives the project away", says

Pantanowitz. "No comparable energy is directed at the regimes that detain, torture, and slaughter their own populations across the region. Only Israel attracts this elaborate diplomatic apparatus, because Israel is the target it was built to attack."

David May, a research analyst at US think tank The Foundation for Defense of Democracies, says international law has become another front in the campaign to destroy Israel. "Palestinian terrorist groups have branched out into this space, using nonprofits to raise money and attack Israel."

Al-Haq is one of the primary embodiments of this strategy, says May. "Jabarin was a senior PFLP activist according to Israeli court documents, simultaneously overseeing human rights work and terrorist activities."

Al-Haq's involvement in The Hague Group and other lawfare efforts is unsurprising, says May. "It has been a chief architect of this strategy. The only surprising thing is that some Western countries have come along for the ride, and in so doing, have exposed the hypocrisy of political activism posing as an impartial pursuit of justice, potentially undermining the very foundations of international law."

Former senior White House official Lawrence J Haas is a senior fellow for US foreign policy at the American Foreign Policy Council think tank. He told the *SA Jewish Report* he, too, is not surprised that The Hague Group is being advised by these organisations.

"Global institutions, from the UN to various collective bodies of nations, have long been infused with anti-Israel outlooks and activities," says Haas. The Hague Group is a "quintessential example of such a collective body".



At the first Hague Group gathering in 2025

are advising The Hague Group, Al-Haq's General Director, Shawan Jabarin, has been linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a designated terrorist organisation. In 2024, *The Jerusalem Post* and NGO Monitor reported that Jabarin was part of the South African delegation to the International Court of Justice, along with other individuals linked to Al-Haq and the PFLP.

Al-Shabaka, a US-based nonprofit, is billed as a Palestinian think tank but has a long history of boycotting Israel and justifying terrorism.

In February 2025, news site *Jewish Online* reported that the first gathering of The Hague Group was hosted by Progressive International, which "has repeatedly expressed support for terrorist groups". For example, in November 2023, Progressive International published excerpts from a PFLP programme, advocating for "armed

Maccabi SA Juniors not going to Games

CLAUDIA GROSS

The dreams of more than 100 South African Jewish teenagers have been dashed by the decision to pull them out of the 2026 Maccabiah Games in Israel.

Maccabi South Africa made the choice to cancel all junior participation because of security concerns, international withdrawals, and mounting logistical challenges.

After the Games were cancelled altogether last year, athletes trained hard for an opportunity to play this year. For some, it was their last chance to compete as juniors at the Games, often called the "Jewish Olympics".

"It's the most incredible opportunity," said Bianca Rubinstein, whose 14-year-old son, Judah, had been selected for junior soccer. "You don't know if you can ever do it again because if it's only in four years' time, that opportunity is gone."

The Maccabi South Africa board took the decision on 4 May 2026, and junior athletes and their families were informed in personalised letters two days later.

Maccabi South Africa is doing its best to make up for it. Chairperson Clifford Garrun said. "We decided to convert the disappointment into opportunity. We're going to have our inaugural Maccabi Africa Junior Games in September this year." It will bring together the junior athletes from across South Africa who had been preparing for Israel.

However, for many families this cannot replace the experience of competing in Israel alongside Jewish athletes from around the world.

Rubinstein said the appeal of Maccabiah extended far beyond sport. "It's about the experience of going and

playing and socialising," she said. "Playing with young people from all over the world at an elite level."

The Maccabiah Games are held in Israel every four years and traditionally attract thousands of Jewish athletes from dozens of countries. South Africa has long been one of the strongest participating nations, particularly in junior rugby and cricket.

This year, however, the war with Iran and growing instability around travel to Israel dramatically affected participation. "As the war dragged on, the challenges just increased," Garrun said.

Countries including Canada, Australia, and Great Britain either withdrew junior delegations or faced strict travel restrictions that affected flights and insurance. "To have an actual event itself, you need a minimum of three countries participating," Garrun said. "The competitions themselves were just becoming not viable."

South Africa had planned to send rugby and cricket



Girls' Junior Maccabi football trials

teams. "We generally have dominated those sports over the years," Garrun said. "Then Great Britain withdrew their rugby team and it just became untenable."

Safety concerns also became increasingly difficult to

ignore. "The prospect was reducing and the risks just increasing," he said. "We would have had a junior group there facing rockets, bomb shelters, and uncertainty."

More than 100 South African juniors had been expected to compete, making up most of the planned national delegation. Physiotherapist and soccer convener Daryn Edinburg was to manage the boys junior soccer team, while his daughter had been selected for the girls futsal side.

"I'm very disappointed for the kids because I know they all looked forward to it," he said. "It's normally the most amazing experience."

Edinburg said many parents felt torn between protecting their children and not wanting them to lose a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "I'm actually relieved not to have to take them into an environment that's unstable," he said. "It could have become a negative experience rather than the positive thing Maccabiah normally is."

He said fears about rocket attacks, flight disruptions, and uncertainty around getting children home safely weighed heavily on families. "Our kids aren't used to that," he said. His daughter, now in matric, will probably not have another chance to compete as a junior athlete. "She's disappointed because she's waited so long to go," he said.

Jordan Kletz, who had been selected for junior soccer, said players understood why the decision had been made, but were still heartbroken. "Everyone was really looking forward to it."

Another parent, who asked to remain anonymous, said many families had already sensed for weeks that the trip was unlikely to happen. "Training had dipped off and the enthusiastic approach had changed," she said.

Her daughter had been selected for a newly created

Continued on page 9>>

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South African Jewish Report

Acts of G-d

There are some disastrous events that we cannot control, nor can we prevent them happening. There was nothing anyone could have done to prevent the severe storms that hit the Garden Route last week and then Cape Town at the weekend, with gale-force winds and flooding.

The government has since declared the storms and floods a national disaster in six provinces, the Western Cape, North West, Free State, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and Mpumalanga. So much damage has been done.

By Tuesday, 10 people had been confirmed dead as a result of the disaster and at least 2 500 had been rescued by emergency personnel from floodwaters.

Tens of thousands of people have been impacted across the country, with more than 41 000 in Cape Town alone. The people most affected are those living in informal settlements, where more than 10 000 homes were destroyed.

Many roads and bridges have been damaged, schools were closed, and there were extensive power outages in parts of the country. Families were displaced and there have been massive agricultural losses.

This was because of an act of G-d – a disaster that could not have been anticipated or prevented and was unrelated to any human intervention. Much like the extensive and disastrous drought suffered in Cape Town between 2015 and 2018. There was nothing that could have been done to stop it.

Having said that, there are a great many things that can be done to safeguard lives and property from the damage of natural disasters. It's about securing infrastructure, ensuring that the areas that are generally worst hit by these events are better structured and safeguarded.

A tin shack built on the side of a river that is likely to flood is a disaster waiting to happen. If you look at some of the photographs and footage from this week's flooding, such places were the worst hit. For those in informal settlements who clearly have nowhere else to go, raising the floor level of their homes and digging trenches around the structures could have helped divert rainwater. This may not help a whole lot in a massive flood, but it is something people can do, and city leaders should be advising and guiding them to do.

When you hear of someone killed by a tree falling on their car, you may think there was nothing that could have been done to prevent it. Perhaps, but trimming branches hanging over power lines or structures can prevent them falling during high winds. This is the responsibility of municipalities.

Municipalities are also responsible for clearing rivers, bridges, canals, and culverts to prevent blockages that could lead to flooding. They are also meant to ensure clear access roads to vulnerable informal settlements and to prevent municipal drain blockages.

Municipalities are also supposed to clear rivers and strategically open estuaries in coastal areas to allow floodwater to get to the sea.

My point is that while there is nothing we can do to prevent acts of G-d, death and destruction can be curtailed significantly if we have a proactive government.

Now, while the infrastructure in Cape Town is so much better than it is in Johannesburg and the rest of the provinces, extensive damage was still done.

We in Johannesburg aren't experiencing the floods, which is a relief, but can you imagine what would happen if we did? Just with all the unseasonal rain we've had, our roads are in the worst state I have ever seen them in.

There is hardly a stretch of road without massive potholes. I have to say, being a fan of the Waze app, I am always grateful that it warns me about potholes. However, it probably alerts us to about 5% of the actual potholes in the city. I can't say I am surprised as I don't think Waze was set up to be a warning for the holes dotting and dashing each road we drive along.

Sadly, our roads are falling apart and need to be upgraded, and fast. However, that isn't happening.

While we no longer have loadshedding, how often do we have water crises? I cannot tell you how many times in the past year the water hasn't run from the taps in my home. Tell that to someone in most European countries and they will think you are nuts. Tell that to an Israeli and they will tell you it never needs to happen because Israeli technology and innovation have made sure of that. Unfortunately, the South African government would rather we suffer water crises than get help from Israel.

Many experts have argued that the extent of the damage done during this latest national disaster was made worse by long-standing infrastructure and planning problems. They maintain there was poor stormwater drainage and blocked systems in many municipalities, and informal settlements were built in flood-prone areas. Also, the weak maintenance of roads, bridges, and water infrastructure was asking for trouble.

Why is our government not proactive in this? I appreciate that declaring a national disaster means it can ensure funding goes to help fix things fast. However, the damage was already done while our government was looking elsewhere and most probably lining someone's pockets.

Just this week, our president – who wants us to believe he is determined to crack down on corruption – told the country that he will not step down over the Phala Phala debacle, which points to him being corrupt.

Johannesburg, as Michael Kransdorff writes on page 2, is badly in the red. Where has the money gone? How is it possible that the economic hub of this country is bankrupt? Most of the money in the country, especially businesses and high-income earners, is based here. Our taxes are higher than average – even in Europe, Australia, and the US. I have to say, if my taxes were going to help uplift this country, I wouldn't mind. However, my taxes and yours are most probably going to enrich some government employee or politician and that is unacceptable.

If they weren't, we wouldn't be in this trouble.

We need a government that is proactive in fighting corruption and fixing the cracks in our infrastructure and society. We now have an election set for 4 November. It is up to us to make the change.

Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



Of Gaza, genocides, and blood libels

OPINION

PROFESSOR MENACHEM Z ROSENSAFT



Gaza was and remains a humanitarian tragedy of enormous, perhaps incalculable dimensions. Thousands of Palestinian civilians, women, children, infants, and the elderly, were killed there alongside thousands more Hamas terrorists and their accomplices in the two-year war that was sparked by Hamas's savagery against Israeli civilians on 7 October. Gaza's population today is living in the wrecked remains of what were once their homes, hoping for an eventual return to some level of normalcy.

All this is heartbreakingly true. But what occurred in Gaza was not a genocide. And no amount of inflammatory repetition of what the Israeli-American author Yossi Klein Halevi accurately refers to as a blood libel can make it so.

When the South African Nobel laureate JM Coetzee refuses to take part in a Jerusalem literary festival on the grounds that "for the past two years the State of Israel has been conducting a genocidal campaign in Gaza that has been vastly disproportionate to the murderous provocation of 7 October 2023", he knowingly misapplies the legal concept of genocide.

Moreover, by downplaying the 7 October savagery as nothing more than a "murderous provocation", Coetzee effectively seeks to absolve Hamas of responsibility for the carnage that followed. On 7 October, Hamas set out to kill as many Jewish men, women, children, and infants on the Israeli side of the Israel-Gaza border as possible, knowing full well that its actions would trigger a harsh Israeli response.

But for Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad murdering approximately 1 200 people that day, raping and violating Israeli women and girls, and brutally abducting more than 240 hostages into Gaza, there would have been no war. Coetzee, the South African government, and far too many others across the globe refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of Israel's subsequent retaliation against Hamas and instead insist on depicting it as an act of "genocide".

Genocide is not an abstract, amorphous term subject to academic or philosophical debate. Nor is it a vitriolic polemical missile to be hurled indiscriminately for maximum rhetorical effect. On the contrary, genocide has a specific, narrow legal definition, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December of 1948 and ratified by 153 countries, including South Africa, however belatedly, in 1998.

Under Article II of the Genocide Convention, genocide is defined as one or more of certain specified acts if, and only if, they are "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group".

More than two million Palestinians lived in Gaza on 6 October 2023. More than two million Palestinians live there today. The contemplation of all but a handful of extremist Israeli political and military leaders throughout the war that more than two million Palestinians would still be living in Gaza after the war effectively undercuts the charge of "genocide".

In the 2007 case of Bosnia and Herzegovina versus Serbia and Montenegro, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that, "The *dolus specialis*, the specific intent to destroy the group in whole or in part, has to be convincingly shown by reference to particular circumstances, unless a general plan to that end can be convincingly demonstrated to exist; and for a pattern of conduct to be accepted as evidence of its existence, it would have to be such that it could only point to the existence of such intent."

Simply put, Israel's motivation – its *dolus specialis* or specific intent, as it were – for going to war against Hamas was not to destroy the Palestinian presence in Gaza. Rather, its motivations for waging that war were to prevent Hamas from ever again slaughtering Israeli civilians as its members did on 7 October and to free the captive hostages.

The ICJ also held in some detail in Bosnia versus Serbia that an intent to commit genocide could not be inferred even in the face of a policy of "ethnic cleansing" – let alone ruminations regarding such a theoretical policy – or of forced displacement of members of a protected group without a clear showing that such policy was part of an intention to destroy that group in accordance with the Genocide Convention.

As the ICJ held in that case, even ethnic cleansing "can only

be a form of genocide within the meaning of the Convention, if it corresponds to or falls within one of the categories of acts prohibited by Article II of the Convention. Neither the intent, as a matter of policy, to render an area 'ethnically homogeneous', nor the operations that may be carried out to implement such policy, can as such be designated as genocide: the intent that characterises genocide is 'to destroy, in whole or in part' a particular group, and deportation or displacement of the members of a group, even if effected by force, is not necessarily equivalent to destruction of that group, nor is such destruction an automatic consequence of the displacement."

In other words, one cannot as a matter of applicable international law infer an intent to commit genocide from actions or even a pattern or patterns of conduct that are the result of another motivation, such as, in the case of Israel in its war against Hamas, the intent to eliminate a murderous terrorist organisation, Hamas, as an existential threat to Israeli civilians.

Hamas's intent in perpetrating the 7 October onslaught, on the other hand, is not in question either. "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it," reads Hamas's 1988 Covenant. Replete with antisemitic tropes and citing the antisemitic forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as authority, the Covenant makes abundantly clear that Hamas's goal is not just to obliterate the State of Israel but to eliminate all "warmongering Jews" from the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. This determination – in contrast to Israel's motivation after 7 October – falls four square within the legal definition of genocide.

Let me be clear. I am and have long been an outspoken supporter of the Palestinians' right to self-determination, both in Gaza and the West Bank. Despite the respective intransigencies and bellicosities of both the Netanyahu government and Hamas, I continue to believe that the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is through an eventual two-state solution. But calling Gaza a "genocide" is another matter altogether.

The proponents of the latter proposition, with the help



Author JM Coetzee

of "useful idiots" like Coetzee, seek to demonise and delegitimise not the Netanyahu government or its policies, which richly deserve opprobrium, but the State of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants as a whole.

This is antisemitism in one of its most egregious forms.

I am not arguing here that the Israel-Hamas war was always waged appropriately or proportionally. Nor am I suggesting that Israel cannot be accused of or should not be held accountable for other alleged violations of international law.

But those are entirely separate questions from whether Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, which I submit it has not. And continuously charging Israel with "genocide" only serves the interests of Hamas and its international acolytes whose nefarious agenda was and is to wipe Israel off the map, displace or subjugate its Jewish population, and replace it with an Islamist Palestine.

• Menachem Z Rosensaft is Adjunct Professor of Law at Cornell Law School, Lecturer-in-law at Columbia Law School, and General Counsel Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress. His most recent book is *Burning Psalms: Confronting Adonai after Auschwitz*.

Teen saves himself due to King David swimming lessons

GILANA LAB

A 14-year-old Alexandra pupil fell into the fast-moving Jukskei River in Johannesburg during heavy rains on 5 May. Had Lesetja Mokonyama not learned to swim through a partnership programme between King David High School and the Alexandra Youth Swim Academy, he would certainly have drowned.

Instead, Mokonyama didn't panic and relied on the survival techniques he'd been taught during his weekly swimming lessons. He focused on controlling his breathing, staying calm, and keeping himself afloat, skills repeatedly reinforced through the programme's water safety training.

Mokonyama – who had been heading from school to an extra lesson at the Phuthaditjhaba Afrika Tikkun centre – was eventually able to move towards the river bank, where people helped him to safety.

Despite the life-threatening experience, he still went off to his lesson.

His mother, Julie Mokonyama, said her son had asked to take the swimming lessons.

"He's a respectful, quiet, helpful, and very handy guy in everything he does. He is academic. He loves cooking, planning, and dancing," she said.

Jodi Starkowitz, marketing manager at King David Schools, said hearing that a pupil had survived because of the programme was deeply affirming for everyone involved.

"It's incredible to see our programme saving lives," said Starkowitz. "Of course we always speak about the potential of saving a life should one of our swimmers ever be faced with the challenge, but to see it play out in real life affirms that what we are doing really does make a difference."

The partnership was established in 2023 to provide

swimming lessons and water safety education to children from Alexandra. Through the initiative, pupils are bussed to King David High School every week for swimming instruction and outreach activities alongside King David pupils.

Starkowitz said the school has always viewed swimming as far more than an extracurricular activity. "King David has been part of the Alexandra Youth Swimming Academy since its inception in 2023. The school sees the importance of teaching all children to swim as a life skill, more than just an extramural. Clearly it literally can save lives," she said.

The project has been "extremely successful". "By the end of 2023, 200 students had been taught through the programme. In 2024, an additional 225 students were successfully trained to swim for survival. An additional 190 students were registered in January 2025. To date, more than 600 students have received training through the academy," she said.

The programme has created meaningful experiences and opportunities beyond swimming for the Alexandra pupils. "Not only do they learn to swim, but they play games with our outreach committee students who volunteer every week. They also get to play on grass and in an open field, which we take for granted, but is something that the Alex kids don't see," Starkowitz said.

Participants get healthy meals, while newer initiatives, including soccer and dance programmes, run by pupil volunteers, are helping broaden the impact of the partnership.

Awareness of the programme's importance has grown considerably since it began, she said. "When the

programme started in 2023, many students and families within our community didn't realise the impact that this programme could have, but over the years, it has proven

itself. We now have people begging to be part of what is fondly called 'Sunday Swimming'."

The recent incident has also renewed conversations around water safety education in South Africa, where drowning remains a significant concern. "I think not enough attention is paid to water safety at all," Starkowitz said. "As many as 1 500 people drown every year in South Africa, that's four people a

day, most of which are children. The more people we can teach to swim, the better chance they will have if they are ever faced with a situation like this."

She emphasised the importance of telling stories like Mokonyama's responsibly and respectfully. "The focus should never be on exploiting trauma, but on highlighting the positive impact of education, access, and community partnership," she said. "Ultimately, the goal is to raise awareness and inspire support while always respecting the people at the heart of the story."

Looking ahead, Starkowitz said the hope is to expand access to swimming lessons and water safety education. "Our dream is for other schools to join our programme. We have proven that the programme works, that it is successful and worthwhile. The more schools that join us, the more people we can teach to swim, and the safer everyone would be," she said.



At the swimming lessons

Most are not falling for code scam

LEE TANKLE

"Mamash, a code popped up."

The warning, posted in a Jewish community group after a suspicious phone call allegedly linked to a pro-Israel organisation, is one of a growing number online describing possible WhatsApp phishing attempts disguised as advocacy or prayer outreach.

They are anything but. These calls are, in fact, a way for scammers to try hack into WhatsApp so they can get hold of people's contacts. For what reason is still unclear.

"WhatsApp takeovers can occur when the scammer impersonates someone you know or an organisation and asks you to share specific information that will ultimately give them access to your WhatsApp account," says Manie van Schalkwyk, Chief Executive of the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service (SAFPS). "This is a highly advanced process and once they gain access, they will generally start contacting people in your contact list asking for urgent financial assistance."

"I usually never answer my phone if I don't know the number calling. However, over the past year and a half, I have been doing so for work," says Menucha Odendall, who has been living in Israel for two years but still uses her South African number on WhatsApp.

She says she received a call at night sometime in April and the caller said they were from the South African Friends of Israel, and were running a prayer meeting for Israel.

"I just said I wasn't interested because I usually don't participate in this kind of thing. Then he randomly said, 'But there's a WhatsApp group that if you want to join the prayer meeting later, you need to click on it.' And I just wasn't interested," she says.

The man on the other end of the phone said that for the WhatsApp group, there was a code he'd sent and that she must read it out. Once the code came through, "that's the instant I knew that it was a scam. It was like when you try to log into another device, you need a code or something to verify that it is you. I knew immediately that it was a scam because there's no way anyone needs any codes from you. So I just dropped the call," she says.

Sharon Lichtenstein got a similar call from someone claiming to be Pastor Michael, who said he was representing the SA Jewish Report and they were holding a prayer session for Israel that night.

"They called me on a Tuesday afternoon, then again at night, and both times I cut the call. He then called me on a Friday night, and nobody calls me on Shabbos, so I blocked him. He then called from a different number, and I blocked it. I suspected a scam because I never get phoned for prayers for Israel. It's usually from a shul if anything" she says.

Margaret Rawicz received a near-identical call from "Pastor Mike". He also claimed to represent the SA Jewish Report and knew she was a reader. While claiming to represent the publication, he said, "We are collecting money for Israel because we love Israel."

He then sent Rawicz a message with a code to read out in order to continue.

"I did get a message with a code on it. There was also something in the message that said 'Do you know this person – be careful! I immediately put the phone down. I subsequently heard that this is possibly a Nigerian scam group that is contacting lots of people to scam them out of money," she says.

Van Schalkwyk says impersonation scams are rife in South Africa. She says this type of scam has many different methods, and criminals adapt their approach to exploit trust and create a sense of urgency and fear. Ultimately, they are trying to find convincing tactics to get you to take action (like transfer money), click on a link to download malware (malicious software) to your device, or share personal information like card details, an ID number, or passwords.

The techniques used are sophisticated, and common impersonation scams in South Africa include impersonating law enforcement, impersonating the South African Revenue Service, business email compromise, where they pose as colleagues or suppliers to redirect funds, and vishing (phone-based

scams), where fraudsters call pretending to be from an organisation, such as has been seen in the Jewish community recently.

"Vishing in particular is a problem and for that reason, the SAFPS launched the Just Say Goodbye awareness campaign last year," says Van Schalkwyk.

According to the SAFPS, the principle is simple: If you didn't expect a call and the caller offers help with an issue related to your account, don't press any buttons, don't share one-time pins, or respond to pop-ups. Just say goodbye and end the call.

While one may think, "This will never happen to me; I won't fall for these scams," Van Schalkwyk warns against complacency. "The method of deception used to scam targets involves a sophisticated blend of impersonation, social engineering, and technology.

"We urge people always to be vigilant about unexpected calls or messages. Don't simply click on links, share information, or assume you are speaking to the person they are claiming to be. Always stop, think, and verify," she says.

What to do

- Just say goodbye**
If the call is unexpected, end it immediately. Do not press buttons, share one-time pins, or respond to prompts.
- Do not share information**
Never provide sensitive, personal or financial details over the phone. Legitimate organisations will not ask for confidential information like your banking PIN or login.
- Verify**
Contact the organisation using the official number on their website or account statement. Confirm whether the call or request was legitimate before taking any action.
- Report it**
Report suspicious calls to the organisation, relevant authorities, or Yima. Reporting helps prevent others from falling victim to similar scams.

Graphic supplied by the South African Fraud Protection Service

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The Talmud from a woman's point of view

LEE TANKLE

For much of her adolescence, Gila Fine was fascinated by the Talmud. However, because she was a girl in a small right-wing Jewish community in London, she was outright forbidden to study this fundamental text.

Now, she has become one of the most influential voices when it comes to Talmudic studies, especially when looking at the Talmud through a female lens. Though she is not trained in rabbinics – she, in fact, studied English literature – she has amassed a wide following teaching the Talmud, which started in a friend's living room.

So as Midrasha Melton celebrates 20 years of Midrasha Melton adult Jewish learning in Cape Town, and launches the International Scholars Programme, it seems a no-brainer to have Fine give four lectures, on Tuesday evenings from 12 May to 2 June.

Her book *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud*,

is a literary exploration of female figures in the Talmud.

"Women in the Talmud are almost always anonymous; they are the mother of Rabbi X, or the daughter of Rabbi Y, or the wife of Rabbi Z. In fact, in all of rabbinic literature, there are just 52 named women, as opposed to more than a thousand named men," she said.

In the book, she examines six women from the Talmud, many of whom are marginal, misunderstood, or briefly mentioned. At first glance, these women seem to fit negative stereotypes of "bad" or unfeminine characters. But a closer reading reveals they are actually complex and nuanced figures, and their stories suggest that the rabbis held unexpectedly progressive ideas about women, gender, and relationships.

Fine remembers that one night as a young teen, after her parents had fallen asleep, she crept over to her father's bookcase and pulled a volume of the

Steinsaltz Talmud, a groundbreaking edition that makes the Talmud far more accessible to readers.

"I didn't even open it, I just stood there holding the volume, honestly waiting for the lightning bolt to strike me down," she said.

But that never happened. She completed her high school and national youth service. She went to seminary to study Talmud.

"I had many questions, many struggles growing up – about Judaism, about my

place as a woman in Judaism, about the truth of the tradition – and I held

on, believing that one day I would study Talmud, and that is where I would find the answers. I finally got to study Talmud, and everything fell apart." She was shocked at how human the Talmud actually was; the text had all of the imperfections, the trivialities, the multiplicity of voices, the wild associations, everything that characterises human conversation. "At 19, when you're looking for the truth, with a



Jewish feminists find themselves in no-man's land

CLAUDIA GROSS

In the days after 7 October, many Jewish women turned to the feminist spaces they had long trusted to support them and to stand against the mass rapes and sexual abuse women in Israel suffered. What they found instead has reshaped their sense of belonging – or lack thereof.

For some, the shift was gradual. For others, immediate. Across interviews, surveys, and personal accounts, a pattern emerges of support giving way to silence, and in some cases, exclusion.

A recent study by the United States-based Jewish Women International found that nine out of 10 young Jewish American women reported experiencing antisemitism since 7 October. Many described feeling unwelcome in feminist spaces unless they distanced themselves from Israel.

Josie Stein, a co-founder of Feminists Against Antisemitism, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the advocacy group grew directly out of this moment. It is a response to what members saw as silence and avoidance in mainstream feminist spaces following the 2023 attacks.

Stein explains that the group initially organised a fringe event titled "Solidarity means all women", bringing speakers to address the lack of engagement with the experiences of Israeli and Jewish women, and creating a space where these issues could be discussed openly.

"It wasn't so much political about where we stand on Israel and Palestine," Stein says. "It's more about why aren't they talking about these issues? Why did they deny the violence against Israeli women?"

The initiative expanded into an ongoing platform. Stein says the group now publishes articles, hosts discussions, and works to provide resources to feminists, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, who feel uncertain about how to engage with antisemitism in their spaces.

Professor Karen Milner, national chairperson of the South African Jewish

Board of Deputies, describes what happened post-7 October as a contradiction of core feminist principles. "The very suggestion that women would lie about sexual violence feeds into misogynist sexist ideas," she says.

Milner adds that silence in the face of such allegations undermines long-standing feminist advocacy. "No one should be silent in the face of gender-based violence," she says.

The Jewish Women International study found that many respondents were aware of denial or dismissal of sexual violence related to the attacks, and reported emotional distress linked to these responses.

Stein argues that part of the issue lies in how feminist spaces respond to conflict. "There's this idea that somehow you've got to pick a side," she says.

betrayed," she says.

That sense of betrayal is echoed in many personal testimonies. Dee Moore, a lay leader from Temple Israel in Cape Town, describes a shift from early solidarity to growing tension. "The first thing I remember from liberal spaces was the support," she says.

She recalls clear condemnation of the Hamas attacks in the immediate aftermath. But within days, she began to notice what she calls "cracks in the responses". Moore points to silence from organisations that had previously spoken strongly about gender-based violence.

She also describes increasingly polarised conversations.

"My intersectional feminist sources were firmly with the Palestinian cause, and the only way they seemed to know how

identity publicly. Many also described changes in their personal relationships. Large numbers reported negative impacts on friendships, with some ending relationships entirely.

The emotional toll is also evident. Many respondents said their mental health had been negatively affected, describing feelings of anxiety, isolation, and fear.

Stein points to misunderstandings about Jewish identity and antisemitism shaping reactions within feminist spaces. "People are quite confused," she says. She argues that many struggle to understand antisemitism beyond religion, which complicates discussions. Her organisation aims to address this by providing context and resources. "It's about helping people understand why antisemitism is a problem."

At the same time, Moore's account shows that the tension is not only external. "Debate became tricky in my Jewish spaces," she says. Some people avoided difficult conversations, while others felt the need to express strong views. This made what she calls a middle ground difficult to maintain.

While many survey respondents reported stronger connections to Judaism after 7 October, some also felt alienated from parts of the Jewish community. These overlapping pressures have left many navigating multiple forms of tension at once.

Moore's experience reflects this dilemma. She describes trying to hold space for different perspectives while remaining true to her values. "We occupy a middle ground, one of nuance," she says.

For some, that position has come at a cost. It can mean feeling out of place in both feminist and Jewish spaces. Despite this, many continue to seek dialogue. Many respondents say they want spaces for open discussion and mutual understanding.

Stein also emphasises engagement over confrontation. She says her group is not focused on calling out individuals, but on providing tools for discussion. "It's much more general," she says. "It's about helping people navigate something that is really complex."

For Jewish feminists, that complexity remains unresolved. Their experiences suggest a broader conversation about how feminist spaces respond to conflict, identity, and difference. What has changed since 7 October is not only the content of those conversations, but who feels able to take part in them.



Feminists Against Antisemitism: Luba Fein, Heidi Bachram, Nicole Lampert



to do that was to be anti-Israeli."

As positions hardened, she says, nuance became harder to sustain. "We started debating which spaces it was safe to be openly Jewish in," she says.

This sense of caution appears in wider findings. More than half of respondents in the survey reported feeling less comfortable expressing their Jewish

She rejects that approach. "You can be a feminist and have all sorts of political opinions, but you recognise that what women have in common is oppression," Stein says. For her, the current climate has created a sense of division that feels personal.

"On a personal level, I feel completely

capital T, that discovery was devastating," she said.

In fact, she struggled with her religion throughout her teens. That struggle started three days before her 12th birthday. She was at her grandparents' home and was told to do nothing but write her Batmitzvah speech. Her family had gone out for the day, while she was left behind with a pile of her grandfather's books and strict instructions to write her speech.

"Not knowing much about, well, anything, I reached for the first book on the pile, *The Book of Legends*, a collection of the stories of the Talmud and other rabbinic works, organised according to theme," she said.

She opened the theme of women, thinking she would get valuable insight going into her Batmitzvah.

"Three stories in, I felt a little uneasy; by the tenth, I was in tears, sobbing as only a nearly-12-year-old can. I was so hurt, so deeply offended that the rabbis, the architects of my religion and heroes of my childhood, could have such a low opinion of me and my kind," she said.

The women seemed to her weak, irrational, petty, promiscuous, and vain. "When woman was created, the Devil was created with her," one of the sources read. Woman was the mother of all vice, Fine said.

That day fundamentally changed her. Her simple, unquestioning faith was gone, and questioning of everything began.

"I fought to make peace with a religion I so loved, knowing that its founding fathers felt about me the way they did. I spent many years questioning, searching, and reading everything in sight. I went to seminary, which didn't really help. In fact, it wasn't until I went to university to study literature that I began to find the answers I was looking for," she said.

"Learning how to read Talmudic stories as Talmudic stories ought to be read, I discovered that they aren't at all as they first seem; that there is a great deal more to the heroines of the Talmud than initially meets the eye; and that the rabbis had some surprising – so as not to say proto-feminist – ideas of marriage, childbirth, female sexuality, and what it means to be a woman in the world."

Fine explained that it was in fact this struggle that pushed her to write *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic*. She wanted to write a book for her 12-year-old self.

"And for anyone who, like me, might be fighting to make peace with their religion. Anyone who might be struggling with the place of women in Judaism, or any marginalised minority in Judaism. One of the central claims of the book is that when the rabbis tell a story of a woman, nine times out of 10, they tell a story of another with a capital O. Anyone who, opening the Talmud or the Torah, is confronted by the inevitable and sometimes heartbreaking gap between what they believe and what they see in the text," she said.

Fine sees a direct line between English literature and why she loves the Talmud. "The stories of the Talmud are literary masterpieces; they are exquisitely crafted and intricately stylised. You have whole worlds of passion and emotion, conflict and drama, held together in three short lines. There's something uniquely challenging and extremely fun about trying to unpack a Talmudic narrative, especially if you approach it, as I do, from a literary standpoint," she said.

The very best cheesecake for Shavuot

LEE TANKLE

Golden biscuit bases, smooth cream cheese fillings, and carefully placed toppings lined the judging table as five contestants battled it out in a Shavuot cheesecake competition hosted by KasherWorld this week.

In the style of the technical challenge, mixed with the signature challenge in the *Great British Bake Off*, five Chalav Yisrael cheesecakes were tasted blindly to decide the best recipe for people to prepare this Shavuot.

After the success of its 2019 competition to find the best kosher "MasterChef", KasherWorld brought the concept back, this time in search of the best kosher baker. Hundreds of home bakers submitted recipes, with only five contestants ultimately selected to showcase their skills. Lara Rosenthal, manager at KasherWorld and organiser of the competition, said the success of the previous event inspired her to revive it, with Shavuot providing the perfect occasion.

"Obviously, when thinking of Shavuot,



The cheesecake bakers

Photos: Ian Ossendryver



Chaya Taback

we think of Chalav Yisrael and dairy desserts. Basically. Almost all the recipes are like cheesecakes in some form or another," she said.

Home bakers Carol Bome, Naomi Lichtenstein, Tracy Milner, Ilana Zelkin, and Chaya Esther Taback

started baking early on the morning of 12 May in a shul kitchen in Johannesburg.

Before they could even get into the kitchen, they'd had to submit the detailed recipe they would use. Everything had to be made from scratch; no premixed or prebaked ingredients were allowed.

The five bakers used ingredients and equipment provided by KasherWorld and



Naomi Lichtenstein

the shul, ensuring they were on the same playing field. The only thing that each competitor had to bring in was their own topping, such as berries.

The four judges tasted their desserts without knowing who had baked what, so there were no personal biases.

"I just love cheesecake," said Ilsa Vuyk, one of the judges and an accountant at KasherWorld.

The judges each critiqued and scored the desserts according to taste, overall presentation, difficulty, originality, technical skill, and creativity. They were also judged according to their adherence to the theme, which is that it is a Chalav Yisrael dessert.



Tracy Milner

Taste was the highest-scoring category, followed by texture, which is the lightness, and then by appearance.

Once the judges had sufficiently eaten their weight in cheesecake, they carefully weighed up each decision and score so that the winner could be decided.

"I'm supposed to be on a diet, but they are all so delicious I don't care," said caterer and judge Jody Kruger.

Ultimately, Zelkin was chosen as the winner for her creamy cinnamon



Ilana Zelkin

vanilla phyllo dessert. She won a SpeedMixer, a hair voucher, and an Oh Mio Gelato voucher. The other contestants left the competition with prizes of their own. "They are all so delicious, I don't care who made what," said Vuyk, "If each one of them were selling them in a shop, I would buy them all."

• All the recipes are available online at <https://www.sajr.co.za/shavuot-recipes-2/>

Maccabi SA Juniors not going to Games

>>Continued from page 5

junior girls soccer side that would have competed at Maccabiah for the first time. "There was quite a lot of excitement around that."

She criticised the way the cancellation was communicated, saying some parents first heard through WhatsApp groups rather than directly from organisers. Still, she said the decision itself ultimately made sense. "The bigger teams, the UK, the US, and Canada, had already pulled out," she said. "There wasn't actually much of a tournament left." Garrun said Maccabi South Africa had surveyed parents before making the final decision. "The large majority of parents were very unwilling about travelling and the risk involved," he said.

Although a small number of South African senior athletes may still travel to Israel for sports including tennis, cycling, golf, and

padel, Garrun said participation would be extremely limited. "It's a handful," he said.

Attention has now shifted to the proposed Maccabi Africa Junior Games. According to Garrun, the concept has already been approved internally, and planning structures are beginning to take shape. "We're going to really put on a significant community sporting event for under-18s," he said.

Edinburg, who is helping to organise the event, said he hoped it could strengthen Jewish youth sport locally and create opportunities for families unable to afford overseas tournaments. "A lot of kids stay away from trials for overseas competitions because they can't afford to go."

Even so, he acknowledged that for many teenagers, the cancellation of the Israel trip remained deeply painful. "There's disappointment," he said. "A lot of disappointment."



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Sussman earns global recognition for round-the-world voyage

CLAUDIA GROSS

South African yacht captain Brett Sussman won the Voyagers Award at the World Superyacht Awards on 1 and 2 May after completing a global journey that lasted three and a half years.

While Sussman has spent more than two decades working at sea and his seafaring career has taken him across the world, it's this voyage that set him apart from the rest.

Sussman says he believes he won for circumnavigating the world in a motor yacht, which is unusual and a huge achievement.

The trip followed a route that covered tens of thousands of nautical miles and included crossings of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans.

Sussman received the recognition at the World Superyacht Awards in Venice, an annual event honouring excellence in the design, construction, and operation of the world's finest yachts. His specific award highlights exceptional long-distance journeys and the skill required to complete them. It's judged by experienced yacht owners and industry experts, and is considered one of the highest honours in the global superyacht sector.

For Sussman, the award prompted reflection. "You realise the enormity of what you've achieved," he says. "It's not to be taken lightly to go around the world in a motor yacht."

Sussman grew up in North West and later attended high school in Kimberley. After school, he served in the army and then on the family farm. He was just 20 and, as the oldest son, took responsibility for the farm after his father passed away. "To be trusted with that responsibility at that age was too young," he says.

After six years, he decided farming wasn't for him and chose rather to travel the world and explore new opportunities. He visited his brother in Israel, where he discovered diving in the Red Sea. He trained as and began working as a dive instructor.

Sussman later worked on dive boats in the Caribbean. During this time, he obtained his captain's licence. By 2002, he was working as a captain, and by 2004 he had moved into the superyacht industry.

He describes the career path as one that requires continuous learning and experience. "You start, then you step up, then you become a mate, and eventually you become a captain," he says.

His recent voyage stands out because of its scale and duration. During this journey, he had extended stays in several locations, including Polynesia, the Galapagos, Indonesia, New Zealand, Thailand, and South Africa.

Sussman says these visits were among the highlights of the trip. Polynesia and the Galapagos stood out for their natural environment, while time spent in different countries allowed the crew to experience local cultures. The voyage included a crew of nine, along with the yacht's owner, who joined for major ocean crossings.

"As a South African, having the opportunity to bring a boat into Cape Town Harbour was something special," Sussman says.



The motor yacht in which Brett Sussman circumnavigated the world

The journey required extensive preparation. The yacht had a range of about 5 000 miles, allowing it to travel long distances across oceans. Before departure, it underwent a full refit in the United States. Further work was carried out during scheduled surveys, including a major survey in New Zealand.

Sussman says the condition of the vessel was critical to the success of the voyage. He also highlights the role of the crew and support team. "There are many people behind the scenes who don't receive recognition," he says. "Our engineer was an integral part of making sure we achieved this."

The journey was not without challenges. During one leg, a tender boat capsized in rough conditions and had to be cut loose. It washed ashore after drifting for weeks. Sussman says incidents like this are part of long-distance travel at sea.

Leadership is central to his role as captain. With more than 20 years of experience, he says the role involves constant planning and decision-making. "You're always on it, you're always planning," he says. He also emphasises teamwork. "You're either a leader or you're not," he says. "But it's still a team effort." External support also plays a role. Weather routing services, for example, provide guidance throughout the voyage.

Sussman says there are common misconceptions about life on a superyacht. "People think parties and glamour," he says. "But there are months away from family. It can be a lonely life."

Sussman is married with two children, aged 16 and 13. His wife, who previously worked in the yachting industry and understands the demands of his work, lives in Somerset West. "There are sacrifices," he says. "Time away from home is one of them."

Despite this, he says he would choose the same career again. "If I could do it again, I would".

Sussman identifies strongly as South African and Jewish. He says both aspects of his identity are important to him. "I'm very proudly Jewish," he says. "It's deeply ingrained in who we are." He says he often seeks out Jewish communities while travelling, although he finds they never quite feel like home.

He also speaks about the impact of global events, including those affecting Israel, and rising antisemitism. He says that he hasn't

personally experienced significant antisemitism in the yachting industry, but that effects of the conflict in the Middle East, such as closures of certain shipping routes, had an impact on this journey.

Sussman says he remains focused on his job as captain of this superyacht. "I'm quite content," he says. "There are always more places to see and more adventures to come. I've always gone with the flow," he says.

For young South Africans interested in the industry, he offers practical advice. The work requires commitment and persistence. "It's not easy," he says. "You have to work

hard and be prepared for time away from home."

He also highlights challenges such as visa requirements and the difficulty of securing a first job. "You just have to get that first opportunity." Once established, he says, the industry can be rewarding. "If you work hard, it will treat you well."

From his early years in the North West to captaining a yacht across the world's oceans, Sussman's career has followed an unconventional path. The award marks a significant milestone, but he remains focused on the work itself and the journeys still to come.

Many ways of Being Jewish with Jonah Platt

LEE TANKLE

"Being Jewish is as compelling as it is complex and as beautiful as the people who embody it."

This idea is at the heart of *Being Jewish with Jonah Platt*, the rapidly growing podcast hosted by American actor, singer, and advocate Jonah Platt, where conversations range from culture and comedy to antisemitism, identity, and belonging.

At a moment when headlines and social media increasingly shape discussions about Judaism, Platt's approach feels deliberately human. Rather than debating issues from a distance, he invites guests to share personal stories, perspectives, and experiences, creating conversations that are thoughtful, honest, and often deeply emotional.

"I want to celebrate Jewish identity and empower and encourage, which is the core thesis of my advocacy, and also to help create the inclusive-looking Jewish community that I aspire to," he says.

In the immediate aftermath of 7 October, Platt was very engaged as a Jewish advocate online, doing many videos and Q&As, and meeting with hostage families in real life and trying to put out fires in the media.

Although he has been advocating for Jews for some time, 7 October was "the generational occurrence of my lifetime". And so the podcast was born.

"It felt natural to pour my time and energy into meeting this moment. After about six months, I had to ask myself whether this was becoming my new direction, whether I would continue pursuing acting as I had before, or fully commit to where my heart and energy were leading me. Ultimately, it wasn't a difficult decision. I feel deeply fulfilled by this work and by the impact it's having."

It must be noted that Platt doesn't concentrate only on Israel, politics, and antisemitism. He also focuses on the different issues and flavours that exist within Judaism.

"A lot is happening in the Orthodox world, which is beautiful, but that's not the majority of Jews. That's not the world that I generally come from, although I'm looking for ways to bring us all together under one umbrella more than ever," he says. "And the shows that I was seeing were much more academic ... more religious, and text-based ... Or the people hosting those shows are educational professionals, or rabbis, or Jewish organisational professionals."

His podcast has featured a diverse mix of entertainers, business leaders, rabbis, activists, and public figures. They include high-profile names such as businesswoman-philanthropist Sheryl Sandberg, actors Josh Gad and Marlee Matlin, and political voices like Josh Gottheimer, who spoke about antizionism within the Democratic Party. Other episodes have explored topics ranging from conversion and antizionist hate with screenwriter-singer Our Lady J, to entrepreneurship with

business mogul Daniel Lubetzky, and antisemitism in Canada with entrepreneur Harley Finkelstein.

The podcast also highlights cultural voices, including Israeli chef Eyal Shani, TikTok creator Melinda Strauss, and Broadway composer Jason Robert Brown.

Through hosting such a variety of guests, Platt proves his belief that there is no one correct way to be Jewish.

"It continues to reinforce the importance of, and how lucky we are to be Jewish. What a beautiful tradition it is," he says.

Platt says he is constantly learning from and being surprised by his guests.

"It's very hard to find too many through lines that everybody falls under. Certainly, when I have really intelligent writers and thinkers whose job is to think and talk about this stuff, I'm always learning from those folks, like [writers] David Baddiel, Dara Horn, or Sarah Hurwitz. When I have people of that [calibre of] mind on, I think it's amazing."

"Any time you have rabbis on the show, you're going to learn something, whether that's a religious tenet or how a spiritual leader is in this moment and how they're responding to it. Something is interesting to learn there, about leadership or human behaviour or about the time we're in."

Recently, Platt hosted black, Christian, Republican influencer Xaviaer DuRousseau.

He's had his own wife, father, and mother on the podcast, and was able to discuss things they'd never thought they would, such as antisemitism in Hollywood.

Platt intentionally creates a safe space not only on his podcast but in his advocacy in general. He says it allows for nuance when it comes to controversial or sensitive topics.

"Allowing for nuance is not that hard. I think we act like it is for some reason because the culture has become one that allows a lack of nuance, and has tacitly communicated to us that it's fine to be polarised. It's fine to speak hatefully to each other, like our politicians are doing ... but we're fully capable of not doing that. It's almost like a mad smoke-and-mirrors thing. It's like we've all got the muscle of [deciding], well, what if we just didn't get really mad when we were talking and just disagreed and talked about it, and then had happy lives and went on our way without our blood pressure going up?"

"We can all do that. And I can say from experience that it's a muscle. The more you do it, the easier and easier it gets, to the point where you can't believe everybody is not just doing it. It's way better. It's way easier. From the very beginning, my ethos was to create very intentionally a really safe space. The only way I am going to get these notable people to get really raw and honest with me and really speak their truth is if they trust me and know that I'm here not to judge anyone, but to listen."



Jonah Platt

Dead men don't prompt

My wife wasn't impressed. Not for the first time, she was concerned about something I was "putting out there". To be fair, what I said was a little weird, but there was enough of a back-story to justify my "poor" choices.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



This is how I came to disappoint her. I have noticed, increasingly, that at function after function, the speeches sound the same. People who used to be delightfully illiterate, who couldn't string a coherent sentence together, are now publicly describing their feelings and gratitude for the mother-in-law as though they sat at the feet of Wordsworth himself, drinking from his poetic juices. People who were unable to distinguish syntax from sin tax are now able to structure their toast to the lovely couple without offending anyone.

impossible. Then came the real blow. ChatGPT observed that I had built a career out of asking difficult questions while simultaneously refusing to answer simple ones like "What do you want for dinner?" and "Have you booked the flights yet?"

Judaism, interestingly, has always understood the danger of reducing a person to a simplified version of themselves. We are never only one thing. We are contradictions. We are holy and petty. Profound and ridiculous. Capable of wisdom in one moment and arguing about parking in the next.

King David wrote psalms powerful enough to survive 3 000 years, yet his life is a masterclass in human complexity. Moshe leads a nation but loses patience. Yaakov becomes Israel while still limping from the struggle. The Torah presents people as human.

AI is the very antithesis of this. Although we imagine that the danger is that machines will become human, increasingly it's that the humans are becoming data. AI is fundamentally a pattern-recognition machine. It takes thousands of fragments and builds a coherent narrative, patterns, preferences, and search histories. The result? Sameness. Perfection. Structure and deathly dull wedding speeches.

Still, even my wife would have to admit that my ChatGPT obituary was excellent. Sharp. Funny. Uncomfortably observant.

Which raises a horrifying possibility. At my funeral – in 120-minus-my-age years – there may come a moment when somebody stands up to speak emotionally about my life, my impact, and my legacy. And there is a good chance that in the back row somebody else may quietly whisper, "Ja, not bad, but ChatGPT's version was better."

104 years old and still a kid at heart

LEE TANKLE

Apparently, the secret to living until you are 104 is eating yoghurt and scrambled eggs with thick toast every day.

This is what Golden Acres resident Hadassah Kobrin, who turned 104 on 7 May, does. However, when asked how she's managed to live this long, all she says is, "Ask Hashem, not me."

Her son Trevor says, "It's extraordinary. It doesn't seem real. I have somebody in my family who's just turned 104. Those numbers were numbers that we made jokes about."

Hadassah Kobrin with some cousins from Australia celebrating her birthday



Born on 7 May 1922 in the Strand in Cape Town, the second youngest of six daughters, Kobrin has fond memories of her childhood and wishes she could go back to the Strand today. She attended Hottentots-Holland High School and then tried her hand at shorthand and typing. But she gave that up because she couldn't read back what she had written in shorthand. So, she went to work with her father, the Strand's baker.

As a teenager, she had dreamed of becoming an opera singer. Her father dissuaded her from pursuing that as a career because he believed it wasn't a profession. Kobrin, however, never stopped singing and Trevor vouched for that, saying, "I grew up listening to singing in the bath."

His mother married his father, Basil Kobrin, and

moved to Benoni, where they ran the Van Riebeeck Hotel. She continued running it until she retired in 1992, thoroughly enjoying her work because, she says, "I loved meeting and seeing all these new people, something I don't get to do much of now."

Her children are the pride of her life. Other than Trevor, a photographer who lives in Dallas, Texas, there is Gillian Kaplan, who lives in Australia, and Sue Rosen, who lives in Johannesburg. Her late son, Raymond, was murdered in 1991.

"They were good children. Who am I to judge? But they were kind and that was very important," Kobrin says.

She doesn't miss a moment to gush about her children, many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, whom she refuses to count. This is because, as Trevor explains, to her, family is the most important thing.

Kobrin says that before she became wheelchair-bound after a fall, she loved to travel, and spent many years going to places such as the Seychelles and Switzerland. She would also often visit her daughter in Australia, even in her 80s.

"Can I remember all the lovely places I've been to? No, but I remember that I loved doing it," she says.

After she retired, she also spent some time as a volunteer teaching children how to speak English.

"I'm not a teacher, but I taught the little ones to speak English. And I would say, 'This is your nose, and this is your mouth.' They just loved me. If only I could find the letters I got for the kindness that I'd given to them," she says.

Kobrin says she's still a child at heart. "Being 104 years old doesn't feel that different to when I was just 10 years old. I've got very young ideas."

Says Trevor, "There've been good things and bad things in her life, but she has this amazing positive attitude about everything. When the worst of a situation comes about, she always just looks on the bright side."

----- A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies -----

Those who stand bravely against Jew-hatred



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

It is with profound sadness that we learnt this week of the passing of Abraham Foxman, former director of the Anti-Defamation League, tireless campaigner against antisemitism and other forms of hate, and, not incidentally, a Holocaust survivor himself. Abe was, quite simply, a legend. A towering figure in the history of the Jewish people and in the broader struggle for human dignity and decency. He believed that the world could be made better and that hatred could be defeated, and he worked courageously and genuinely towards this end.

In directly naming Iran and calling for political intervention, Chief Rabbi Mirvis stepped beyond the customary restraint of his office. That he felt compelled to do so is itself a reflection of the gravity of this moment, not only for British Jews, but for Jewish communities across the diaspora.

This week, South African Jewish Board of Deputies Vice-President Mary Kluk and I are attending the World Jewish Congress (WJC) conference in Geneva. The WJC was founded in this very city in the historically urgent year of 1936, and this conference marks its 90th anniversary.

The conference featured a remarkable address by Axel Springer chief executive Mathias Döpfner, who provided one of the most forceful defences of Israel and the Jewish people I have heard from a non-Jewish public figure.

"Antisemitism is no longer a dark shadow from Austria and Germany," he said. "It has become a global export hit." His call for zero tolerance towards Jew-hatred, stronger action against online incitement, and expanded Holocaust education resonated deeply. As did his simple, unequivocal declaration: "I am a Zionist." The willingness of allies like Döpfner to stand with us, publicly and without qualification, is something we must acknowledge and cherish.

I was honoured to address a session on community and government action on antisemitism, presenting our South African experience as a case study in operating under a challenging political environment, and drawing practical lessons about achieving meaningful results in spite of difficult conditions. It is always a privilege to represent our community on the global Jewish stage, and always a reminder that, whatever the local burdens, we are never facing this alone.

What strikes me most, reflecting on his legacy, is the extraordinary way in which he transformed the weight of a devastating personal history into a force for good. Abe didn't allow the trauma of his past to diminish him. He channelled it, with discipline, and purpose, into a lifetime of advocacy, education, and action. That's a lesson for all of us, in every community, in every generation. May Abe's memory be a blessing, and may his life's work continue to inspire all of us to carry it forward.

In this light, we were so proud to watch the march against antisemitism in London at the weekend. The turnout was powerful and, notably, the crowd extended well beyond the Jewish community. Many allies chose to stand with us, lending their voices and their presence to a message that needed to be heard.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis addressed the march with the grace and gravitas his role demands, and with a directness that the moment required. "A poisonous antisemitism has become normalised in the UK. It is unacceptable that our communities can only function behind high fences and with security guards. It is unacceptable that social media platforms continue to spew out Jew-hatred with impunity. It is unacceptable that Iran is inspiring violence against British citizens on British soil."

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

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One man's quiet archive of Israel news

ELKA COHEN

A handcrafted collection of newspaper clippings offers a rare window into how Israel's story was told, and why preserving it still matters.

The book cover carries the headline "Israel and Arabs plunge into raging battle", datelined Durban, 5 June 1967. The page is yellowed, the ink faded in parts, but the urgency remains intact. It's not history retold, but history as it broke, captured in real time and carefully preserved by Robin Hugh Carter.

The handmade volume, centred on coverage of the outbreak of the Six-Day War, is a work of patience and conviction. Each clipping was deliberately selected, cut, and placed by hand. Each page captures not only what happened, but how it was reported and understood at the time.

Following Carter's passing in July 2024, the collection was recently donated for public use to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) archives, ensuring that what he quietly built over time will continue to inform and educate.

Carter was born in Oudtshoorn in 1943, his father ground staff for a Royal Air Force training base during World War II and his mother a nurse. When he was about a year old, the family moved to the United Kingdom, returning to South Africa roughly a decade later. Carter grew up near Durban and carried vivid memories of post-war Britain, including playing among bombed-out buildings in London, impressions that stayed with him throughout his life. After beginning a career in banking in Durban, he later moved to Johannesburg in 1976.

Though he had no direct geographical or religious connection to Israel, friendships with Jews deepened his lifelong engagement with Israel and the Middle East. What began as curiosity evolved into a commitment to documenting how the region's story was carried in the press.

The result is a treasure, both simple and profound. Inside the book, the past speaks in fragments: a monochrome map of a region in crisis, captions tracking troop movements, headlines cutting through the noise. One declares, "We're winning, say both sides", a stark glimpse into competing narratives unfolding in real time.

There's no commentary from Carter, no footnotes, no interpretation. He allows the reporting to stand as it was – urgent, contradictory, sometimes incomplete. In doing so, he preserves not only events, but perspective. That restraint gives the collection its power.

In an age of instant updates, shifting narratives, and real-time distortions, where facts blur into opinion and trends move faster than verification, Carter's archive reflects a different rhythm. News fixed in print, carrying the assumptions and limitations of its moment. These clippings are snapshots of understanding before the acceleration of the digital age, when information moved more slowly and remained, in a sense, finite.

Across the pages, a broader picture emerges not only of conflict, but of how it was understood far from its centre, in places like South Africa. The Durban dateline is a subtle but important detail, pointing to a global conversation in which Israel's story has always been interpreted through different lenses.

For Carter, preserving those lenses mattered. His son, Gareth Carter, who facilitated the donation, describes the collection as part of his father's enduring legacy, a reflection of intellectual curiosity and careful attention. It's a gift not only of content, but of continuity: a reminder that history is shaped not just by what happens, but by what is kept.

To cut out a newspaper article is to pause and decide that a moment is worth saving. To paste it into a book gives it permanence – an act that becomes a quiet resistance to forgetting.

Turning the pages now, long after the ink has dried, that intention is

undeniable. "Israeli jets bomb Cairo". "World leaders called together". "Pilot speaks". Each line carries the immediacy of its moment, even though time has filled in the gaps.

Placing Carter's collection within the SAJBD archives ensures it will become a shared resource for researchers, students, and anyone seeking to better understand not only what happened, but how it was told.

In a time when narratives around Israel are contested and continually reframed, such primary material carries added significance. It offers an unfiltered glimpse into the past, inviting readers to engage critically and reflect.

Beyond its historical value, the collection also reveals another story: one about the individual behind it. Carter wasn't a historian or journalist, but a careful observer and collector by nature. Family and friends remembered him as an honest family man – principled, diligent, and quietly generous. His archive is modest, but meticulous and deliberate in spirit. That spirit now endures in the pages left behind.

A man shaped by the aftermath of World War II documented another region's unfolding story not through grand narratives, but through the everyday language of newspapers. He captured history as it happened.

The book remains. Not as a statement, but as a record of what one person chose not to let disappear.



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