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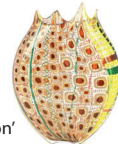
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South African Jewish Report

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SA drags out ICJ case against Israel

NICOLA MILTZ

South Africa's "genocide" case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is set to drag on for at least another three years after Pretoria requested an 18-month extension to file its response to Israel's defence.

The move has sparked widespread criticism from those who believe it undermines South Africa's longstanding claims that the case was so urgent that the world's highest court needed to intervene immediately.

The ICJ, based in The Hague, has now given South Africa until November 2027 to submit its reply to Israel's defence. Israel will then have until May 2029 to file its response, meaning the case remains years away from a final ruling.

The extension has fuelled questions about why South Africa is seeking more time after repeatedly stressing the urgency of the matter since launching the case in December 2023.

President Cyril Ramaphosa defended the development in an official statement on Tuesday, 2 June, saying, "A second round of written pleadings is common in ICJ cases; in fact, in all previous cases brought under the Genocide Convention, parties have submitted a reply and a rejoinder."

Ramaphosa also reiterated South Africa's position on the merits of the case, saying, "Self-defence is not a defence to genocide, there is none."

However, the National Chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, Craig Pantanowitz, labelled the developments as the "final unmasking of a political stunt that was never about the law, never about facts, and never about

saving a single life".

He said, "A government that claimed the world's most urgent humanitarian emergency has just asked for years to argue about it. And it is asking South Africans to keep paying for the privilege. More than R130 million of taxpayers' money has already been poured into this case, with tens, if not hundreds, of millions more to come now that the proceedings have been stretch out to 2029."

In a post on X, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that South Africa's "baseless 'genocide' case" was "collapsing" and all the claims of 'urgency' have now turned into South

Africa's quiet requests to buy more time.

"This case was never about the facts. It has always been a propaganda campaign by South Africa in the service of Hamas, masquerading as a legal process," it said.

Anne Herzberg, legal adviser at the Jerusalem-based NGO Monitor, said the lengthy delay would allow for the "genocide" allegation to continue hanging over the Jewish State for years to come, regardless of the eventual outcome.

"South Africa also sought a particularly lengthy delay because, by dragging out the proceedings, it is able to keep the spectre of

the genocide claim hanging over Israel's head," Herzberg said.

"If the court ruled in Israel's favour, South Africa, Iran, and other hostile actors would not have this weapon anymore."

Herzberg argued that prolonging the proceedings would continue to fuel anti-Israel sentiment and contribute to rising Jew-hatred around the world.

"It is absolutely true that by keeping this false narrative alive, it will continue to contribute to the explosion of global antisemitism," she said.

She was sharply critical of the court's decision to grant such a lengthy extension.

"It is disappointing that the ICJ continues to show itself as a politicised institution, because there is no doubt that by allowing this case to drag on, the ICJ has played into South Africa's lawfare motive."

Herzberg said the extension reflected the strength of Israel's legal response. "Israel presented a very lengthy and detailed rebuttal to South Africa's claims and told the ICJ that it was ready for the court to rule immediately on the merits."

She claimed this was another reason South Africa had sought additional time. "South Africa knew that what Israel provided to the ICJ would completely eviscerate its claims of 'genocide' and so sought a delay so that it would have time to go back to its well of nongovernmental organisations and other hostile actors to fabricate a response," Herzberg said.

South Africa might also be hoping to benefit from developments in another genocide case before the ICJ.

"The delay also works to South Africa's advantage because the court is about to rule on a genocide case involving Myanmar, and the country is hoping that perhaps the

Continued on page 3>>



Cape Town Jewish Board of Deputies chairperson Simone Sulcas and director Daniel Bloch bumped into former South African-Israeli hostage Aviva Siegel at the American Jewish Congress (AJC) Annual Global Forum in Washington, DC this week

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Staunch Israel critic wins New Jersey district primary

Adam Hamawy, the Israel critic who served as a trauma surgeon in Gaza, is expected to join Congress after winning the Democratic primary in New Jersey's 12th district on Tuesday. The political novice held a 12-point margin ahead of second-place Brad Cohen, with 86% of the vote in – even as he faced questions over his past ties to Omar Abdel-Rahman, the “Blind Sheikh” convicted on terrorism charges in 1995. Hamawy's camp had called the questions “gross and bigoted” and said the attacks against him were “getting more desperate than ever”.

At a time when Israel is becoming increasingly unpopular among Democratic voters, Hamawy's victory makes him the latest pro-Palestinian progressives to win Democratic elections in blue districts in this year's midterms, following fellow New Jersey candidate Anailia Mejia and Chris Rabb in Pennsylvania.

“The Democratic establishment just got a wake-up call!” wrote PAL PAC, a pro-Palestinian group that had endorsed Hamawy, on X. “This victory proves what we have known all along: Standing firmly and unapologetically for Palestinian freedom is a winning platform.”

Hamawy, who is credited with having saved Senator Tammy Duckworth's life during the Iraq War, was also boosted by \$2 million (R32.5 million) in spending by American Priorities, a super PAC (political action committee) that aims to counterweight the pro-Israel lobbying group AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) by installing pro-Palestinian progressives in Congress. He was endorsed by a slew of left-wing politicians.

As an opponent of Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system and supporter of a complete arms embargo and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, Hamawy will become one of Congress's sharpest Israel critics if he wins November's general election, which he is expected to do in the deep-blue district.

Finalists announced for lucrative Jewish literary award

Amir Tibon's memoir about his family's ordeal during the 7 October attacks on Israel and Laura Hobson Faure's history of Jewish children who fled from Germany to France during World War II are among the finalists for the 2026 Sami Rohr Prize.

The annual award – which alternates annually between works of fiction and nonfiction and which honours emerging Jewish writers – is considered one of the most prominent awards in Jewish literature.

The winner of the award, which comes with a \$100 000 (R1.6 million) prize, will be announced on 16 June.

Judges will decide among four nonfiction finalists for this year's award.

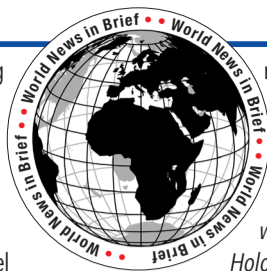
“What strikes me about this year's finalists is the remarkable range of stories they tell and the depth of insight they bring to Jewish life and history,” Debra Goldberg, director of the Sami Rohr Prize, said in an email. “Each of the four books explores questions of memory, identity, displacement, resilience and

responsibility through deeply personal narratives that feel both timely and enduring.”

The 2026 Sami Rohr Prize finalists are: **Laura Hobson Faure**, *Who Will Rescue Us?: The Story of the Jewish Children who Fled to France and America During the Holocaust*. Faure is a professor of modern Jewish history at Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne. Yale University Press, her publisher, describes *Who Will*

Yorker, National Geographic, and other publications, traces his Jewish family's history “from Moorish Spain and Ottoman Syria to Argentina and beyond”. A mix of travelogue, memoir, history, and reportage, *Stranger in the Desert* is his second book.

Amir Tibon, *The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderlands*. The debut book by the Israeli journalist is a first-person account of his family's ordeal as residents of Kibbutz Nahal Oz,



Shaul Kelner, Amir Tibon, Jordan Salama, and Laura Hobson Faure

Rescue Us as “the first comprehensive study of Jewish children's flight from Nazi Germany to France – and their subsequent escape to America from the Vichy regime”. It is her second book.

Shaul Kelner, *A Cold War Exodus: How American Activists Mobilized to Free Soviet Jews*. A professor of Jewish studies and sociology at Vanderbilt University, Kelner details, in his second book, how American Jews transformed a largely overlooked human rights issue into a landmark 20th-century mass-mobilisation effort.

Jordan Salama, *Stranger in the Desert: A Family Story*. Salama, an author and contributor to *The New*

which was violently attacked by Hamas on 7 October. Alongside accounts of the day's losses, Tibon recounts the heroic efforts by his father, a retired major general, to race into the battle zone and rescue his son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters from Hamas gunmen.

“As the prize approaches its 20th year, I hope it will continue to support writers whose work expands our understanding of the Jewish experience and sparks meaningful conversation for generations to come,” Goldberg said.

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Kindling the divine within

In Jewish tradition, rituals and symbols aren't mere decorations or static markers of identity; they are dynamic, transformative tools designed to reshape our inner landscape. In this week's Torah portion, Beha'alotcha, and the accompanying *haftarah* from the prophet Zechariah, we encounter one of the oldest symbols of our tradition: the seven-lamp golden Menorah.

As the name of the parsha implies, Beha'alotcha calls for an elevating of oneself, inviting us into a deeper understanding of how we interact with the sacred artefacts of our tradition and bring into life the values they model for us.

The Torah opens this portion with the words “Speak to Aaron and say to him: ‘When you raise the lamps, let the seven lamps give light in front of the Menorah.’” (Numbers 8:2)

This leaves us with a profound question: what is G-d really asking Aaron to do? When instructing Aaron on how to ignite the candelabrum, the text eschews the standard verb *lehadlik* (to light), using instead *leha'alot*, “to raise” or “to cause

to ascend”. G-d is asking Aaron to elevate his very being. It is precisely through this internal elevation, through his meditation and focused intention, that the lamps give light; his conscious spiritual orientation is what actually makes the

lights shine and radiate outward.

Zechariah the prophet encounters this very same symbol, the Menorah, centuries later during the return to Zion after the traumatic destruction of the First Temple. Zechariah spoke to a fractured community dealing with deep pain, economic distress, and internal political strife in the land of Israel. As they struggled to rebuild the nation from the ashes, Zechariah is shown a vision of the golden Menorah and asks the angel guiding him what it means. The divine response he receives is revolutionary: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit – said the Lord of Hosts.”

This eternal declaration reframes our understanding of human agency. As human beings created *B'tzelem Elokim* in the image of G-d, we all carry the divine attributes of compassion, justice, and truth as a blueprint within us. But in the harsh wilderness of human existence, these attributes often lie dormant.

The Menorah, lighting candles, other symbols, and all rituals shall always remind us that true transformation cannot be forced by “might” or “power”. It's “by My spirit” that we awaken our dormant godly consciousness through deliberate

Torah Thought

Rabbi Tamara Schagas
Temple Israel
Cape Town



intention. Like Aaron in the desert tabernacle, we use physical rituals not as rote obligations, but as tools to stir the soul. When we elevate our awareness and align our actions with the divine model, we transform the physical world. By kindling our inner light with sacred purpose, we ensure that the warmth of G-d's spirit radiates through us as long as we hold that awareness sacred. In every breath, an opportunity. In every action, a kind act. In every choice we make, the intention of peace. If we take this into our daily life it can also illuminate even the darkest of times.

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SA's xenophobia crisis blamed on Israel

TALI FEINBERG

South Africa's growing xenophobia crisis couldn't have less to do with the Middle East, and yet the hatred on the streets is being blamed on the world's only Jewish State. Conspiracy theories abound, from the idea that Israel is fuelling unrest in retaliation for South Africa taking it to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to Israel trying to weaken South Africa so that it can "take over" the country.

The recent resurgence in xenophobic sentiment has seen vigilante groups targeting foreign nationals, mostly Africans, giving them a deadline of 30 June to leave the country. Protests have resulted in violence and looting. The crisis has led to diplomatic tensions with and emergency repatriations by other African countries.

But according to people like social media influencer TJ Katana, "If South Africa withdraws from the ICJ case against Israel, xenophobia will disappear like the night when the sun rises."

It's not only at grassroots level that such narratives are being spread. Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola said last week that "with South Africa's role in the international space, including our case at the ICJ, you cannot exclude state and non-state actors trying to erode the human rights standing of South Africa."

While the minister did not name Israel directly, he explicitly linked his suggestion of coordinated foreign interference to the ICJ case. The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) wrote to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to express alarm at the remarks.

"South Africa's moral standing is being eroded by leaders who reach for conspiracy theories instead of taking responsibility for what is happening at home," says SAZF National Chairperson Craig Pantanowitz.

The conspiracy theories are spreading like wildfire on social media. TruVision International, which describes itself as the "Pan-African Voice of Africa" and has 68 000 followers, states that "Xenophobia in South

Africa is an engineered crisis. The Greater Israel project is not a conspiracy theory. When the Middle East is finally subdued and the empire needs a new battlefield – the guns are already being pointed at Southern Africa."

The message says that after fomenting chaos in South Africa, Western powers will take over and open its doors to "white Europeans, Americans, and Israelis". They will then "rebuild the country in their image, systematically pushing the black population to the margins".

Local antizionist hate group Mothers4Gaza, said in a post in May, "Imperial powers have always understood that divided people are easier to control. The US and Israel have openly shown hostility toward South Africa's positions on Palestine and global justice. Destabilisation does not only happen through bombs and sanctions. It also happens through manufactured fear and social fragmentation."

Zimbabwean journalist Hopewell Chin'ono, who has 767 000 followers on Facebook, wrote on 31 May, "South Africa took Israel to the ICJ, and now Israeli groups are funding anti-immigration groups to cause chaos in South Africa, creating the kind of instability that those who wish South Africa harm would like to see."

A post shared on the Facebook group UDF Remembered, which has 10 000 followers, surmised that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has redirected shipping around Cape Town, so foreign powers are looking to control the Cape, and are punishing South Africa for its foreign policy. The post describes this destabilising power as a "Third Force", along with an image of a sinister figure and Israeli and US flags.

And in an opinion piece entitled "South Africa's colonial hangover: Demonising Africans while courting Western parasites", published on IOL News on 1 June, Harvard law professor Ziyad Motala stated that anger at migrants should not be directed at Africans, but at Israelis and Westerners who immigrate to South Africa.

Emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town and antisemitism expert Milton Shain says that scapegoating Jews is "the same old playbook. We saw this repeatedly in the 19th century. The classic example is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."

Now, we see the same old tropes, says Shain. "The description of a 'Greater Israel' is a new

mutation of the *Protocols*. Ideas are adapted to new circumstances."

Norman JW Goda, a professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Florida, says painful moments of flux have been blamed on Jews throughout history.

However, "the Israelis have better things to do – like fighting a multifront war against jihadists hoping to destroy them – than thinking about South Africa's problems", says Goda. "Israel is not pleased with South Africa's 'genocide' case, but it is so poorly constructed that it will collapse from its own lack of merit."

Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov, country director of refugee support organisation HIAS South Africa, has seen the xenophobic violence firsthand, describing it as "a coordinated campaign of intimidation and violence directed against fellow Africans".

Foreign nationals have been targeted, with businesses and goods confiscated or destroyed, and South African-owned businesses threatened with violent consequences if they don't fire refugees and asylum seekers and employ South Africans.

"People haven't been able to earn an income and have been barricaded in their homes," says Pugh-Jones Baranov. "In response, HIAS South Africa, together with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) KwaZulu-Natal Council, launched an emergency fundraising appeal in the Jewish community. We raised money to purchase food parcels and have worked with refugee-led organisations to distribute them. We've assisted more than 120 families, and hope to assist many more."

Pantanowitz says that South Africa has a well-documented history of xenophobic violence. The suggestion that this is "somehow the product of foreign coordination is unsupported by evidence and serves only to distract from the country's own failures".

"Xenophobic violence did not begin with the ICJ case. South Africa experienced devastating xenophobic attacks in 2008, resulting in more than 60 deaths and the displacement of more than 100 000 people."

Similar outbreaks have occurred repeatedly over the past two decades. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has recognised xenophobia as a longstanding problem in South Africa.

"Instead of confronting that reality, Lamola chose to introduce a narrative that invites South Africans to look abroad for culprits," says Pantanowitz. "This creates fertile ground for old antisemitic tropes."

But blaming Israel "will not protect a single migrant or address any of the underlying causes", he says. "The victims of xenophobic

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violence deserve accountability, not conspiracy theories."

SAJBD National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner also says that resorting to conspiracy theories is deeply unhelpful in addressing the scourge of xenophobia. "Minister Lamola's and others' suggestions that the international diplomatic outcry to this xenophobia is being 'coordinated' by foreign actors seeking to undermine South Africa is a troubling deflection. The diplomatic fallout is the consequence of that

violence, not its cause."

Milner says the Jewish community carries a long history of displacement, refugee status, and persecution. "That history compels us to stand in solidarity with migrants and refugees, and we reject scapegoating in all its forms."

Invoking "vague foreign manipulation" to explain a domestic social failure is "deceitful, shifts focus away from the real problem, and mirrors the suspicion and scapegoating that lies at the root of xenophobic violence itself", she says.

SA drags out ICJ case against Israel

>>Continued from page 1

court will relax the intent standard for genocide, which is currently a very high burden to meet, and this high burden is simply not met in the Gaza case," she said.

Israeli diplomat Michal Maayan also criticised the extension, saying, "South Africa's frantic claims of 'urgency' have now turned into a quiet request to drag the process for as long as possible."

Maayan described the proceedings as "a complete waste of time and resources" and accused South Africa of misusing both the Genocide Convention and the court itself.

"The only tenable outcome remains the dismissal of South Africa's claims in their entirety," she said.

Pantanowitz said, "This case was never about Gaza. It was about politics, about service to the ANC's international friends and allies, and about distracting from a record of failure at home."

"The extension might reflect South Africa's desire to ease tensions with Washington, which has repeatedly criticised Pretoria's stance on Israel," said political commentator Daniel Silke.

He suggested the move could be linked to the appointment of

special envoy Roelf Meyer, giving him "breathing space" to repair relations with the United States.

At the same time, Pretoria might also be hoping that a future US administration will be more receptive to its position on Israel.

According to the ICJ, South Africa argued that it needed more time because of the complexity of the case, the size of Israel's submission, and Israel's objections to the court's jurisdiction and the admissibility of South Africa's application.

Israel opposed the need for another round of written arguments, but said that if South Africa was granted additional time, it should receive the same period to respond. The court agreed.

South Africa launched its case against Israel in December 2023, alleging violations of the 1948 Genocide Convention arising from Israel's military campaign in Gaza following Hamas's 7 October attack on Israel.

Israel has consistently rejected the allegations, arguing that it is exercising its right to self-defence after Hamas terrorists killed about 1 200 people and abducted more than 250 others during the deadliest attack in the country's history.



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CSO calls attention to antisemitism uptick in Gauteng

TALI FEINBERG

The Community Security Organisation (CSO) in Johannesburg says it has seen a spike in antisemitic incidents in Gauteng in recent weeks. There have been 15 aggravated cases over the past two months, compared with two in the previous two-month period, according to a CSO letter to the community this week.

The incidents have included verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment in public spaces, and, in a low number of cases, physical assault.

CSO Gauteng Chief Executive Liron Sanders told the *SA Jewish Report* that in one incident, a community member was physically hit while at a nightclub.

In another, a group walking home from shul on Shabbat were called “fucking Jews” and told to leave South Africa. The situation became so volatile that a community member called the CSO control room.

The organisation responded immediately, escorting the Jewish group to safety and attempting to calm things down. But the group of harassers only became more aggressive, hurling slurs at CSO staff. Having taken video footage, CSO is investigating its options in laying a complaint.

Both attacks happened in the past week.

“While recent incidents are concerning, and must be taken seriously, they should not deter us from continuing to live openly and proudly as Jews, participating fully in communal life and supporting our institutions,” said CSO leadership in the letter. It will continue to monitor the situation and update the community as needed.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) says it has not noticed a sharp increase in antisemitic incidents. SAJBD National Chairperson, Professor Karen Milner, says the Board monitors antisemitism across the country, as it has done since 1996.

The CSO letter says that, at this stage, “there is no information indicating a specific or imminent threat against the Johannesburg Jewish community”. However, it urges heightened situational awareness and the prompt reporting of incidents.

The letter said that “While most of these incidents have not resulted in serious injury, the increase in both frequency and severity warrants attention and constant vigilance.”

Sanders says that after picking up on the worrying trend, CSO has a duty to inform the community. “Also, by alerting the community, we ‘jump ahead’ of it, hopefully mitigating a potential increase in incidents. If we don’t get ahead of it, the situation could become like what we are seeing in London and Sydney,” he adds.

Milner says that at the end of May 2026, the SAJBD – which shares its annual reports with various embassies, universities, and global bodies – had recorded 32 antisemitic incidents across the country, an average of 6.4 per month. “This is the same number of incidents reported at the same point in 2025, and fewer than in 2023 and 2024.

“We note that April witnessed nine incidents, which is an increase on the five witnessed in March, but is in no way out of the expected range, or indicative of a sharp increase or trend,” she says.

According to the SAJBD’s records, “34% of incidents are social media-related, targeted hate mail, or discourse that can be considered hate speech. Verbal insults, threats, and abusive behaviour account for 41% of incidents and intimidation, with provocation and antagonism accounting for a further 13%. To date, there has been only one incident (3%) that can be labelled physical assault.”

Sanders says CSO is also noting a lot more online harassment, which has become more

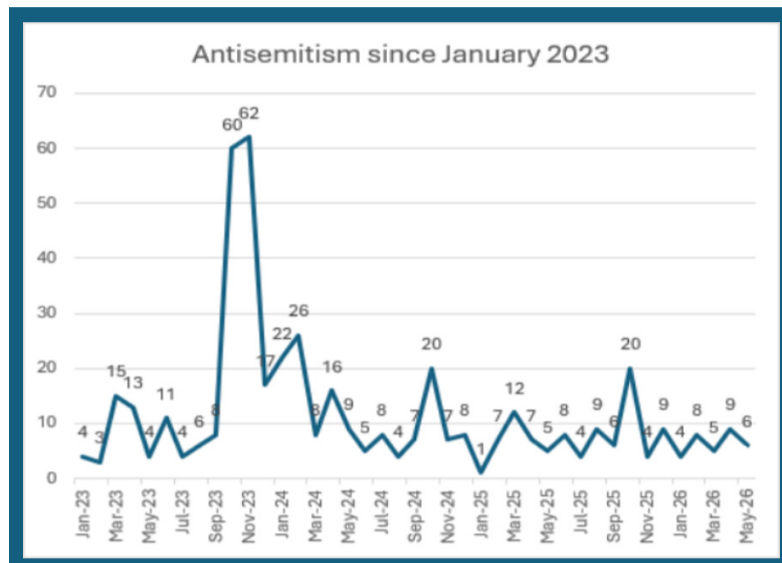
aggressive and threatening. He calls on community members to avoid getting into online debates.

The letter says that CSO continues to work closely with communal organisations, private security providers, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to monitor developments and maintain appropriate security measures across the community.

emails, texts, social media posts, or voice notes.

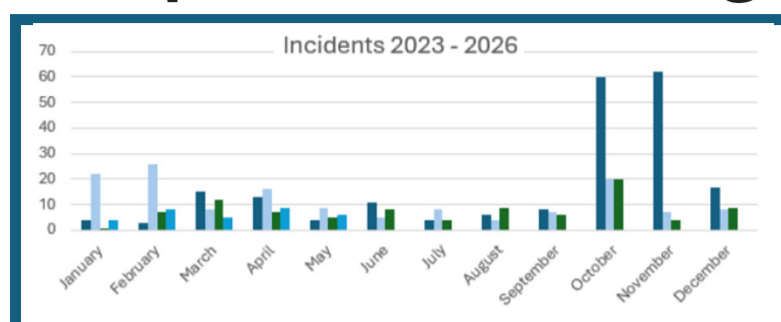
Report the incident to CSO as soon as possible. If threats have been made or criminal conduct has occurred, report the matter to the police. CSO will assist.

If you are physically attacked or believe an attack is imminent, take reasonable steps to protect and defend yourself and others



In the letter, CSO provides detailed advice on what to do if one experiences antisemitic verbal abuse or harassment: remain calm, do not engage or attempt to challenge the individual, and remove yourself from the situation if possible. If it can be done safely, take photos and videos, and record vehicle registrations and descriptions of those involved. Preserve electronic evidence like

while escaping the threat. Leave the area and seek safety. Call for assistance from security personnel, members of the public, or nearby businesses. Contact CSO, the police and emergency services immediately. Seek medical attention, even if injuries appear minor. Preserve evidence but avoid discussing the incident on social media until law enforcement and security personnel have



Antisemitism statistics recorded by the SAJBD

completed assessments.

Reporting incidents timeously is one of the most important tools available to the community, as every reported incident, no matter how minor, “contributes to a broader situational picture and assists us in identifying patterns, emerging threats, and repeat offenders”, as stated in CSO’s letter.

It is important to be particularly vigilant when going to shuls, schools, or any communal event or installation, when walking alone, interacting with hostile members of the public, as well as when using public transport or visiting unfamiliar areas.

Be alert to individuals conducting suspicious surveillance, unusual photography or video recording of Jewish institutions or security infrastructure, repeated appearances by the same individuals or vehicles near communal facilities, and behaviour that appears hostile, threatening, or out of place. “If something appears suspicious, trust your instincts and report it,” says CSO.

Milner says that “taken as a whole, the numbers of incidents thus far in 2026 are in line with statistics recorded before 7 October,

and are in no way indicative of a spike in aggravated antisemitism or in antisemitism in general.”

Additionally, “it should be noted that our statistics remain exceptionally low when compared with fellow communities around the world”.

For example, in Canada in 2025 there were 6 800 antisemitic acts reported nationwide. “While the majority of these occurred in the digital space, with 6 248 cases of online harassment, the B’nai B’rith survey recorded 10 incidents of violence, 299 cases of vandalism, and 243 incidents of real-world harassment. South Africa, in contrast, remains relatively safe for Jews,” says Milner.

She points out that SAJBD President Zev Krenkel uses a “stadium *kippah* formulation”, which states that the comfort and safety of the Jewish community can be understood by the number of *kippot* at a stadium event. “In South Africa we certainly continue to be able to wear our *kippot* in public, with little fear of antagonism or violence.”

Thousands turning to Jewish welfare in tough times

CLAUDIA GROSS

A man living in a township is carried into a welfare office because he is blind and unable to walk. A family of five squeezes into a one-bedroom flat after losing everything. Elderly people who never saved for retirement face homelessness. Children are removed from abusive homes and placed in care.

These are some of the realities confronting South Africa’s Jewish welfare organisations as they support thousands of vulnerable community members across the country.

While many people associate welfare with food parcels and financial aid, organisations such as the Chevrah Kadisha (Chev) in Johannesburg and Jewish Community Services (JCS) in Cape Town provide a far broader range of services. These include housing, child protection, counselling, rehabilitation, elderly care, disability services, healthcare support, and education assistance.

The Chev, founded in 1888, is the oldest and largest Jewish welfare organisation in Africa. It operates on a budget of nearly R400 million a year and reaches close to 10 000 people annually through its various programmes.

Chev Group Chief Executive Saul Tomson told the *SA Jewish Report* that the organisation’s role has expanded significantly over the past two decades. “My general observation, after more than 20 years at the Chev, is that both the reach and the scope of the organisation have expanded dramatically, from supporting roughly 2% of our community to closer to 20% today,” he says.

Tomson attributes this growth to an ageing population, increasing economic inequality, and the decline of public services. “As our community ages and becomes more economically polarised, the role of the Chev has grown significantly,” he says.

“In many respects, the Chev has become the de facto provider of welfare and social support for the Jewish community. We are, quite literally, all that stands between many vulnerable members of our community and destitution.”

The organisation’s residential facilities house almost 1 000 people, including elderly residents, children in need of protection, and adults with physical, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities. More than 400 elderly residents live at Sandringham Gardens, where accommodation, healthcare, meals, and social programmes are provided. Many have no family in South Africa and rely entirely on the organisation for support.

Also in Johannesburg, the Arcadia Youth and Child Care Centre cares for children removed from abusive or neglectful situations by court order. The centre also provides support programmes for at-risk children and young adults.

The Chev currently supports 1 122 people through financial assistance programmes and 2 621 through social services.

According to Tomson, inflation and unemployment remain major drivers of need. “Welfare expenditure has more than doubled, rising from R36.5 million in 2020 to R80 million in 2026, a 119% increase that reflects the growing scale of need within our community”.

Although rehabilitation and self-sufficiency are important goals, Tomson says some beneficiaries require lifelong support. People with severe disabilities, mental illness, or advanced age may remain in the organisation’s care for decades.

In Cape Town, JCS serves a smaller Jewish population of about 13 000 people, but faces many of the same challenges.

Chief Executive Hazel Levin told the *SA Jewish Report* that JCS currently administers grants and disbursements for about 590 people and provides social services to about 780 individuals. The organisation distributes about 6 500 Meals on Wheels meals each month and provides more than 600 food parcels containing perishable and non-perishable items.

JCS operates several residential facilities. These include an assisted living home for 46 elderly residents requiring constant care, accommodation for adults recovering from substance abuse and psychiatric challenges, homes for people with disabilities, and housing for unemployed adults who are being supported while they seek work.

Levin says the reasons people seek assistance vary widely. “Retrenched, unemployed, substance abuse, domestic violence, psychosocial issues. It’s across the board,” she says. She believes South Africa’s economic conditions have worsened existing vulnerabilities. “Personally, I believe that the socioeconomic environment has hit everybody badly.”

The organisation has seen growing demand in several areas. Already this year, JCS has placed seven people in rehabilitation programmes, compared with three during the previous year. Its children’s home currently houses seven children, up from three last year. As the statutory welfare body for the Cape Town Jewish community, JCS intervenes in cases involving child abuse, neglect, domestic violence, and vulnerable adults.

Levin says one of the most significant concerns is the number of elderly people reaching retirement without sufficient savings or family support. “We have a lot of people here that if we didn’t have the accommodation or the assistance, would be homeless,” she says.

Housing costs have become another growing challenge. JCS owns 38 apartments, but demand continues to exceed supply. The organisation also assists dozens of people with



rental support. Medical needs create further pressure. Many beneficiaries depend on public healthcare facilities and don’t have medical aid. Delays in treatment and medication shortages often require welfare organisations to step in.

Both JCS and the Chev emphasise that assistance is carefully assessed. Applicants undergo financial evaluations, and support is reviewed regularly to ensure resources are directed to those who genuinely qualify.

Despite the challenges, both organisations point to success stories that demonstrate the impact of long-term support. Levin recalls a family that had been homeless and living in extremely difficult conditions. With assistance from donors and JCS, the children remained in school and later pursued tertiary studies. “It’s just wonderful to see these kids blossom and grow,” she says.

Tomson says the work of Jewish welfare organisations has become increasingly important as economic pressures mount and public services struggle. The consequence is stark, he says. “Those without means are extraordinarily vulnerable. In Johannesburg, the Chev helps ensure that our community members don’t end up on the streets. Without this safety net, many would have nowhere to turn.”

For thousands of South African Jews facing hardship, that safety net provides far more than financial assistance. It offers food, shelter, care, dignity, and, in many cases, a path back to independence.

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South African Jewish Report

Leaders need to protect not scapegoat us

When CSO Johannesburg – those smart fabulous people who are out there protecting Jewish lives – warns of an increase in aggravated antisemitic incidents, it is hard not to become a tad concerned.

On Monday, CSO explained that these incidents “included verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment in public spaces, and in a low number of cases, physical assaults”.

In South Africa, we have been fortunate in not having the kind of antisemitism experienced in other parts of the world – and I don’t believe there has been a huge change in this.

CSO makes it blatantly clear that there is no indication of a specific or imminent threat to our Johannesburg community, but we must be aware and prepared. We dare not rest on our laurels or claim we don’t have problems. We cannot play ostrich and bury our heads in the sand.

The point is: could we really be surprised if there was an uptick in antisemitism? We have a predominant political party in this country that has literally set this up to happen.

In our last election, the ANC literally used hatred and denigration of Israel to gain votes. On 25 May 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa deviated from his prepared speech at his final election-campaign rally to lead the crowd in chanting “Free, free Palestine. From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free.”

We all know this is calling for Israel to be obliterated to ensure that the Palestinians have all the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, which is the whole of Israel today.

And that is just one tiny example of how our government, or at least the biggest party in it, has taken sides against the Jewish State. Now, no matter what our haters will tell you, Jews and the Jewish State go hand in hand. When you denigrate the Jewish State for its very existence, you are doing the same to the Jewish people, no matter how much you may claim this isn’t true.

The reality is that Jews know that they can hold their heads up high, no matter what, because there is an Israel. So, while nobody is obliged to love the Israel government of the day, or all its policies, they cannot call for the destruction of Israel without it being blatant antisemitism.

What Ramaphosa and so many in his party, and other parties, call for is exactly that. In their eyes, Israel can do no right. At no time since 7 October, since the increase in antisemitism, have our leaders come out in support of the Jewish community.

Now, whether people want to admit it or not, most of those outside the community lump Israel and the Jewish people in the same boat. Not a flotilla, just the same boat.

And as Jews, while we have different political views and beliefs, we want the Jewish State to survive and thrive. And people who want this, and only this, are called Zionists.

A Zionist is not someone who wants to commit or support genocide; it is someone who wants Israel to continue existing. That’s all! Despite this, “Zionist” has become a swearword and if you attest to being one of “them”, those who don’t like Jews will tar you with a “genocidal maniac” brush. Even if you support Shalom Achshav (Peace Now movement) in Israel or are socialists.

The whole issue of antisemitism is painting Jews as all bad or responsible for everything bad in the world. Doing the same to Israel is just antisemitism in newish clothing.

So, when we hear of an increased number of antisemitic incidents, can we really be surprised when our own leaders have taken sides against us?

In the International Court of Justice (ICJ) story on page 1, we recall how the government in December 2023, less than three months after the 7 October massacre in Israel, went to the highest court to demand an urgent stop to Israel committing what it called “genocide”.

Truth is, if Israel wanted to commit genocide, it could have destroyed Gaza in far less time, only it didn’t. South Africa threw millions at this case – and is still throwing millions at it close on three years later. Only now, it is not in such a hurry, for a few reasons. First, the damage of the world calling Israel responsible for a “genocide” is already done. And second, the truth is South Africa obviously cannot prove Israel is committing “genocide” otherwise it would have already done so. So now it is in the government’s interest to drag things out.

The alternative is to lose the case sooner – and that could impact the world continuing to see Israel as a demon. So, rather push out this “urgent” case for another three years. The longer it’s drawn out, the more damage is done to Israel and the Jewish community.

In every single anti-Israel protest around the world, Israel is blamed for a “genocide”, and Jews are being threatened because they support Israel. It works with the narrative.

Now, as related in our story on page 3, the rising xenophobia in South Africa is also being blamed on Israel. You might ask how in the world this is possible because this xenophobia is actually from South Africans against other Africans. No Middle East people involved at all.

However, if you want to make Jews look bad, blame them for everything so people hate them more. And this is exactly what is happening now right here. In fact, our minister of international relations and cooperation just last week claimed that diplomatic pressure on South Africa over xenophobia is being partly coordinated by state and non-state actors linked to the country’s ICJ case against Israel. What the hell is that about?

So, when we see a rise in antisemitism and Jews being harmed in this country, I blame the ANC and its leaders as they are not protecting us, the Jewish community of South Africa. They are literally pushing people to hate and turn on us. Shame on them!

They won’t succeed, but they need to look long and hard at what they are doing and stop.

Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



Childhood abuse does long-term damage

OPINION

DR EFRAT BARNES



The impact of abuse has lifelong implications. The seminal international Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study showed that abuse is one of the leading causes of negative and detrimental outcomes across a person’s lifespan. These include the expected psychological torment and mental health challenges, while substance misuse and self-harm are another troubling trend. But the ramifications reach further still, affecting physical health. The study linked childhood adversity to higher rates of heart disease, stroke, chronic lung disease, obesity, poor overall health, and even some cancers.

This leaves us no option but to take abuse seriously, and to believe and support the victims. Sadly, in a world of moral corruption, the sexual predators often roam unimpeded among us while victims hide and are silenced, sometimes forever.

South Africa has one of the highest burdens of child abuse in the world. The 2016 Optimus Study found that roughly one in three young people experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18. Unexpectedly to many, boys are as vulnerable as girls. Socially, however, boys are often raised with the idea that boys don’t cry and need to “man up”. The message they absorb is that disclosure is not for them.

A 2005 study conducted in Israel by Irit Hershkowitz and colleagues speaks to how often disclosure comes late, if at all. This national study of more than 26 000 children, interviewed between 1998 and 2002 using a carefully validated method, found that 65% disclosed when questioned, while 35% did not. The relationship to the suspect strongly influenced disclosure: children were markedly less willing to accuse a parent or parent figure than another adult. Girls disclosed slightly more often than boys overall, and the reluctance was especially concentrated among adolescent boys asked about sexual abuse by a parent figure.

body from their conscious mind. This altered awareness allows them to accept that someone they love or respect is hurting them. By pushing the boundaries of their consciousness, the child learns to treat the unbearable as normal, making a fragile peace with an attack their mind cannot reconcile.

The perpetrator, meanwhile, is well versed in grooming the child and clearing the path to an ideal victim. They deliberately target a child who is disadvantaged, isolated, or lacking in confidence, qualities that lower the risk of disclosure. The offender builds a trusting bond, showering the child with kindness, support, help, or even gifts and money, positioning himself or herself as the answer to an emotional or practical gap. By filling that need, the offender becomes indispensable, all while systematically separating the child from their support network and isolating them further, until the abuser is the primary source of connection and reassurance. The physical abuse is then established gradually – eroding boundaries, desensitising the victim, and normalising inappropriate sexual behaviour, deepening the confusion in an already disorganised mind. To keep control, the perpetrator wields shame, secrecy, fear, and reward.

Yet the ACE study also carries an essential caveat. Childhood adversity is not simply a set of temporary events with no sequel. The study’s findings describe population-level risk, not prognosis or destiny. Many people who have access to protective factors – supportive relationships, effective psychological therapy, stable communities, education, and other sources of resilience – go on to lead healthy, fulfilling lives with the right interventions.

Considering the recent disclosure of historic abuses that has reverberated through our community, I cannot help but commend the exceptional bravery of these survivors. They refuse to be silenced. It is not unusual to find

sexual predators embedded within a community, and the difficulty of reporting and restoring justice is that survivors are so often reluctant to speak up and open criminal cases. The secondary trauma of speculation and judgement is fierce, and it reinjures the victim.

Thankfully, that is not the case this time. We are fortunate to live under a robust

Constitution, and the Children’s Act (38 of 2005) offers far more protection than children had in the 1980s. But prevention is always better than cure. Talking to your child, and building regular conversations in which they feel safe to open up, is critical to keeping them safe.

I find it poignant that this story has come to light as South Africa commemorates Child Protection Week. Running this year from 29 May to 5 June, it reminds us to reframe the art of raising children. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes 365 days of awareness to keep one safe.

• Dr Efrat Barnes is a medical practitioner who has specialised in child protection medicine and forensic paediatrics for the past 17 years. She has been the head of the Child Abuse Unit at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital since 2015.



AI-generated image

The teenage years are challenging on every front. Physical change converges with extensive neuroplasticity in the brain: neural pathways that no longer serve the child are pruned, while growth and new connections take their place. This makes the adolescent brain particularly sensitive to what is happening in the teenager’s life – an impressionable, formative window. The ACE study confirmed what had long been suspected: children exposed to abuse and neglect frequently show scholastic regression. Learning difficulties and lower educational achievement take hold, and on top of school failure, relational and social problems often follow.

The impact on mental health cannot be overstated. The compounding trauma of repeated abuse produces lasting emotional injury. Dissociation is one such response, in which the victim detaches what is happening to their

Benji Rosman talks AI with the Pope

LEE TANKLE

Few South Africans get to shake hands with the Pope. Yet two weeks ago, Professor Benji Rosman did just that after attending an international conference, titled "Preserving Human Voices and Faces", at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Vatican City.

Organised by the Dicastery for Communication, the gathering on 21 and 22 May brought together experts from around the world to discuss the opportunities and challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI), culminating in an audience with the Pope.

Rosman, a professor in the School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand and a leading figure in AI research, was the only African participant among a select group of 15.

The academics, religious leaders, and communications professionals considered how technological innovation can be harnessed responsibly in an increasingly interconnected world, exploring the ethical, social, and practical implications of AI.

"The conference was around preserving human voices and faces in the time of AI, and some of the risks and challenges posed by AI," said Rosman. "The Pope's been releasing quite a few documents and talking a lot about AI. He's invested in it and discusses it a lot."

The Vatican has been interested in the ethics behind AI since Pope Francis became Pope. He would argue that AI should serve humanity rather than replace, control, or diminish it. Since 2020, the Vatican has raised issues regarding the ethics of AI with software companies such as Microsoft and global organisations such as the World Economic Forum.

Similarly, Pope Leo has repeatedly spoken about the need for AI to remain centred on human dignity, ethics, and responsibility, rather than profit or power. He has now brought many of these concerns together in his first encyclical, published on 25 May, "*Magnifica humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.*"

Both Rosman and Pope Leo were on *Time* magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in AI, so when the professor got the invitation in his inbox, he felt he could not pass it up.

"Being concerned these days about AI safety and the way that it's being rolled out and developed, any opportunity to engage with key people to figure out how to navigate us into a safer future, I think, is very important," he said.

"Particularly at the moment, a lot of the risks that we're facing around AI come from the arms race-type dynamics that we're in, where there are countries racing against each other and companies racing against each other. And that's not really a situation that anyone from the inside can change. You need people trying to intervene externally to change the setup of the way that it's being developed," he said. "A large entity like the Vatican and the Pope being invested in it, as outsiders invest in trying to steer for a better future. And if they're talking to people in the community to look at how they should do that best, then that really feels like a key opportunity to try and influence things in a positive direction."

He said that meeting Pope Leo was certainly daunting.

"Everyone who was there was worried about the procedures, but they were actually fairly relaxed about the formalities. But then, when we were there, there was quite a lot of procedure, like being driven up to the Apostolic Palace. We were greeted with a red carpet and had to wait in a room, and were then ushered to another room and then ushered to another room and then seated. When the Pope came in, he gave an

address, and we stood up in the right order and filed up to meet him and talk to him," he said.

When Rosman eventually got his brief face-to-face moment with the Pope, he introduced himself and spoke about his work in the AI space, drawing on his involvement with the Wits Machine Intelligence & Neural Discovery Institute; the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence and Learning

(RAIL) Lab; the Deep Learning Indaba; and his company, *LeLapa AI*.

Rosman thanked the Pope for the leadership he has shown on the issue, while highlighting what he sees as one of the defining risks of the current technological moment: that humanity is increasingly being shaped by AI, rather than shaping it ourselves.

Meeting Pope Leo

was a huge honour for Rosman. But the impact that this conference and visit had feels even more monumental.

"It's not so much that it's the Catholic Church in particular, but it's about the kind of different entities around the world playing different roles in society, or taking such an active role in the discussions around AI, that gives me hope. Before that, we were sitting in a situation where basically the large frontier AI labs are the ones really driving the narrative. Now we're getting some global leadership trying to steer things."



Professor Benji Rosman meeting Pope Leo XIV

Jewish advice for surviving the information wars

OPINION

PAULA SLIER



The most expensive currency in the world today is attention. Every company, politician, media organisation, advertiser, tech platform, and government is fighting for it. They're battling over who gets into our minds first – and who manages to stay there longest. And we are paying for it constantly. Not with money, but with clicks, scrolling, outrage, curiosity, and time. Where attention goes, beliefs are influenced, emotions are shaped, behaviour changes, and ultimately, identity is formed.

Some of the largest companies are built almost entirely on this model. Meta, the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, is worth more than a trillion dollars, yet most of us have never paid it directly. This is because its business model is not really about selling products; it's about extracting human attention and selling it to advertisers. You pick up your phone for five minutes and suddenly an hour is gone. That's not an accident. Phones and apps are doing exactly what they were designed to do.

As a war correspondent, I spent years covering physical wars. In the world we live in today, you no longer need to go to a war zone to experience conflict. You just need to log in. Most of us are now living in a digital war. In physical wars, violence destroys bodies. In digital information wars, the target is judgement.

Years ago, I was reporting live from the Israeli-Lebanese border. Nothing much was happening and I said as much on air. My editor phoned me, exclaiming that I was standing on the "wrong border" because Fox News, as she told me, was reporting that the situation was incredibly tense. I looked to my right. A few metres away was the very journalist she was talking about! He was wearing a bulletproof vest and speaking in urgent tones about escalating danger and uncertainty. Same reality. Different framing.

We don't react to reality as much as we react to our interpretation of reality. And our interpretation is shaped by fear, identity, belief, experience, and emotion.

I learnt another lesson about information during the Arab Spring. A colleague phoned to say that then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was in a Cairo hospital and dying. He told me he had excellent sources. I reported the story live almost immediately and my network was one of the first broadcasters to announce it. A few hours later, my colleague phoned again. This time he said all the Arab media were now reporting that Mubarak was dying in hospital and that they, too, had good sources. He asked me, "Who is your source?" I replied, "You are." The irony was obvious. Information had begun circulating rapidly because everyone was quoting everyone else. Speed had overtaken verification.

This is one of the great dangers of the digital age. The pressure to be first often overwhelms the responsibility to be accurate. Social media amplifies this even further because people don't share facts nearly as much as they share emotions.

Judaism understood the danger of this long before social media existed. In the Torah's Book of Numbers, Moses sends 12 spies into Canaan in the second year after

the Israelites had left Egypt. Ten return with terrifying reports of fortified cities, giant inhabitants, powerful militaries, and impossible odds. Most of what they said was factually true, but they focused selectively on fear while excluding hope, context, and possibility. The result was catastrophic. An entire nation lost confidence and collapsed psychologically. As a consequence, the adult generation that left Egypt was condemned to wander in the desert for 40 years and die there before reaching the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who resisted the panic and maintained faith, were allowed to enter Canaan. Jewish tradition also teaches that many women didn't participate in the same collapse of faith, which is why among those who eventually entered the land were elderly women who had survived the desert years.

What matters about this story is that the spies did not invent Canaan. They just exaggerated hopelessness. The facts they reported were not invented, but selected, emotionally amplified, and stripped of context. This feels very modern. One of the lessons of Shavuot, which we recently celebrated, is that receiving the Torah was not only liberation from slavery; it was readiness to step into responsibility, courage, uncertainty, and nationhood.

The Hebrew word for truth, *emet*, is made up of *aleph*, *mem*, and *tav*, the first, middle, and final letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It suggests completeness, patience, endurance, and context – the idea that truth spans the whole journey. By contrast, the Hebrew word for falsehood or deception, *sheker*, is made up of letters that stand narrowly and unevenly on the page. Jewish commentators explain that truth stands securely while falsehood is shaky. This is why Judaism places such emphasis on questioning, debate, and critical examination. Ours is a tradition that argues, interrogates, challenges, and asks questions.

So what does Judaism teach us about navigating fake news and misinformation?

First, slow down. In a world that rewards speed and reaction, Judaism pushes us towards reflection, questioning, and thoughtful judgement. We are living in a world of emotional activation. The first version people hear often shapes the version we remember. But the Torah reminds us that haste can distort judgement.

Second, check the source. There is a Chassidic story about a young traveller searching for a famous rebbe. As he nears the rebbe's town, he encounters a simple-looking man on the roadside and asks him where he can find the great teacher. "That rabbi knows nothing," the man exclaims. The traveller becomes furious. He passionately defends the rebbe and argues with the stranger. Eventually, he arrives at the rebbe's home and is ushered into the study, only to find – to his astonishment – the same man! The story is not about whether the rebbe is good or bad; it's about how quickly we react emotionally without first examining the source. Today we should be asking the same question every time we receive information online: Who wants me to believe this and why?

The battle for attention is ultimately a battle over human agency, our ability to reclaim ownership of our minds and choose what deserves our attention. Perhaps the deeper Jewish lesson for the digital age is this: slow down, question more, examine context carefully, and guard your mind as carefully as you guard your words.

• Paula Slier is a veteran journalist and foreign correspondent who has reported from conflict zones across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. She writes on media, geopolitics and information warfare.



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Rabbi Greg's journey from Netzer to North London

CLAUDIA GROSS

For two decades, Rabbi Greg Alexander has been one of the most recognisable faces of Progressive Judaism in Cape Town. He has stood beside congregants during births, Barmitzvahs, Batmitzvahs, weddings, illnesses, and funerals. He has helped shape Temple Israel into one of the largest Progressive Jewish congregations in South Africa and has become known simply as "Rabbi Greg" to most of the community.

Now, he is preparing to leave for London, where he will become senior rabbi of Alyth, one of the United Kingdom's largest Reform congregations. The move ends a significant chapter in both his life and the history of Temple Israel.

The journey began long before he entered the rabbinate. Alexander was born and raised in Johannesburg in a family deeply connected to South Africa's Progressive Jewish movement. His grandparents helped establish the first Progressive synagogue in Hillbrow alongside Rabbi Moshe Chaim Weiler.

His parents were active members of the Imanu-Shalom congregation, and his mother became the first woman elected to chair a synagogue in South Africa. "Community service was built into my DNA," Alexander says. He had his Barmitzvah at

Temple Shalom under Rabbi Adi Assabi and grew up in a congregation that combined Jewish life with a strong commitment to social justice.

As a teenager, he became heavily involved in Netzer, the Progressive Jewish youth movement. He describes it as one of the most important influences on his development. "Netzer was a place where I felt I could be my authentic self," he says. "It challenged me to think religiously, philosophically, politically, and spiritually about who I was and what I believed."

After matriculating from King Edward VII School, he went to study at the University of Cape Town (UCT). "I can honestly say that I had three majors, English literature and Psychology at UCT, and Netzer at the Zionist Fed offices in the old Leeusig Building, at the corner of Dorp Street and Leeuwen Street, in town. All the youth movements had their offices there and on any afternoon, you could hear robust discussions about Israel or Jewish identity going on in the basement with the leaders of Bnei, Betar, Habonim, and Netzer. It gave me a real sense of the breadth of views and of talent that this special community enjoys," Alexander told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Ironically, he didn't initially want to become a rabbi. He envisioned a future in advertising and worked as a copywriter. He says he enjoyed the discipline and creativity,

but gradually realised that his deepest passion lay elsewhere. "I yearned to teach Torah, lead services, build Jewish community, and do that full-time," he says.

His rabbinical studies eventually took him to Leo Baeck College in London, but even then, he expected to become an educator rather than a congregational rabbi. "The word Rav means teacher and that is what drew me to the profession."

Working in communities changed his perspective. He found himself drawn to the relationships formed during major life moments and the privilege of accompanying people through some of their most significant experiences.

His path to Temple Israel came through an unexpected conversation. He was living in Israel with his then fiancée, Rabbi Andrea Kuti, and they came to South Africa to explore possible opportunities. Johannesburg seemed the likely destination. Then Alexander decided to



Comedian Nik Rabinowitz having a laugh with Rabbi Greg

introduce his fiancée to Cape Town.

Temple Israel's president at the time, Greg Flash, a friend from the Netzer days, invited the couple to meet the congregation's leadership. "We loved Cape Town right away and the *shidduch* was made there and then," Alexander says.

Temple Israel, founded in 1944, is South Africa's largest Progressive Jewish congregation. When Alexander arrived

in 2006, it was seeking renewed energy, he says. Over the following years, he led significant changes in both its culture and programming.

He points to the introduction of choirs, bands, residential retreats, international guest rabbis, and new educational initiatives. He also helped create what he describes as a more relationship-based leadership model. "Instead of 'Rabbi Alexander', we are now 'Rabbi Greg' and 'Rabbi Andi'," he says. "Approachable, human, and ready to meet people where they are."

Temple Israel has since grown into a congregation of about 1 000 families across Cape Town. Among the milestones that stand out are initiatives that pushed boundaries within South African Jewish life. These included Temple Israel's first Pride Shabbat and the first Ramadan iftar, or evening meal, hosted by the congregation.

Alexander officiated at South Africa's first same-sex Jewish wedding, a landmark moment that reflected his commitment to inclusion and equality within Jewish communal life.

The congregation's 70th anniversary celebration remains one of his most treasured memories. Hundreds of congregants gathered at the Grand Africa Café & Beach near the V&A Waterfront to celebrate. "I often look at that photograph as a celebration of the joy and diversity that I love about this shul," he says.

Alongside his rabbinic work, Alexander has maintained a strong interest in education, public dialogue, and social justice.

Those themes have become increasingly important in recent years, and more so since 7 October. Rather than withdrawing from wider society, Alexander believes Jewish communities should continue building relationships. "I think the way forward is to continue to have one-on-one discussions with those we disagree with," he says.

His next challenge will come in London, where antisemitic attacks have increased sharply. But the city is also familiar territory. Alexander lived there for a decade and still has close family and friends there.

He describes Alyth as a congregation whose values align closely with his own. The synagogue, based in Golders Green, serves thousands of members and is among the most prominent Reform communities in Britain. "Alyth's commitment to courageous, compassionate Judaism, and engaging community life speaks powerfully to me," he said when his appointment was announced.

Although excited about the opportunity, leaving Cape Town is not easy. "All change is hard, and also not changing is hard," he says. He speaks warmly about the city's natural beauty, Sunday-morning Ultimate Frisbee games on Clifton Beach, and a Jewish community that he says consistently exceeds expectations. "After 20 years you build important relationships that feel like family."

Reflecting on his years in the rabbinate, he says the most profound lessons came not from formal study but from ordinary human encounters. "The daily learning that happens at the bedside of someone dying, when you're discussing what partnership means with a wedding couple, and when you listen to a Batmitzvah give her D'var Torah on the *bimah*," he says, "each moment is transformative."

After 20 years of teaching, leading, and building community at the foot of Africa, Rabbi Greg Alexander is preparing for a new chapter. Yet the values that shaped his journey from Johannesburg to Cape Town remain unchanged: education, compassion, inclusion, and a belief that Judaism can help build a better world.

When your child's device obsession trumps reality

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

From constant YouTube shorts to endless Snapchat conversations to late-night game updates they absolutely cannot miss, children's device use is a constant source of family discord. Despite resultant worries around cyberbullying, sexting and more, a recent Klikd survey found that what parents struggle with most is that their children love their screens more than real life.

If you've ever taken your child's tablet away and felt like the worst parent in the world, or worried that they prefer their phone to you, you're not alone. A mom of two sons in primary school, who asked to keep their identities private, says their device obsession clearly impacts the family dynamic. "They would rather be online with their friends than be around the family," she says. "Or if they think the family is doing something boring, then that's their go-to. It's a hard barrier to break."

Her boys respond differently to their devices, she says. "My oldest gets hyped on it, and while he doesn't want to disconnect, when I do take him off it, he can almost regulate himself. My youngest, however, is completely obsessed, and when he has to shut down, it can turn into an extreme meltdown that affects the whole mood of the household. When that happens, I often give in to avoid the drama." This, she says, creates conflict between her and her husband as he takes a stricter approach.

Nonetheless, she says that the devices have become central virtual meeting points where her children and their friends talk and socialise in the absence of such physical spaces. For her older son, this has, in fact, helped him establish new friendships. For her youngest though, it often causes discord, where he and his peers rage bait one another, often ending in tears.

"What worries me most about my kids spending so much time on screens is that I believe it chemically changes their brains and how they think and perceive the world," she says. "They should be out in nature, working their bodies – what kids are supposed to do. It's a constant fight between what they want to do, and what they should be doing."

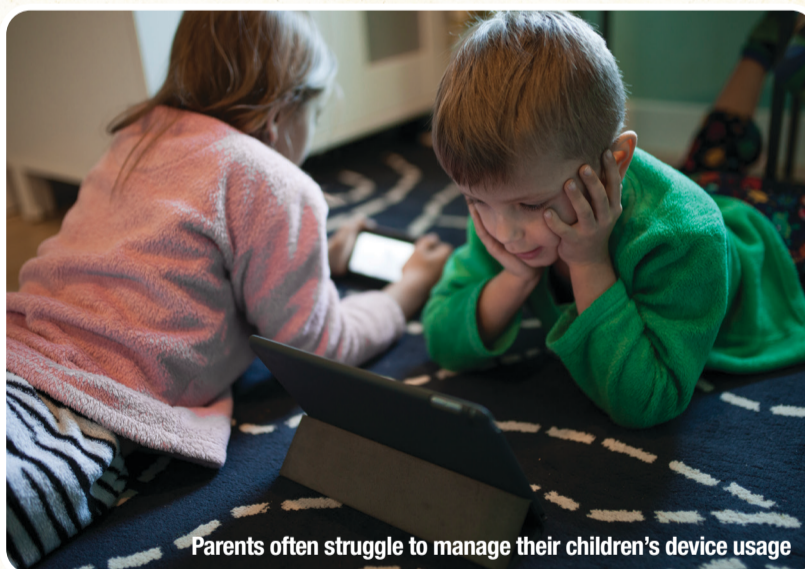
In a recent webinar hosted by Klikd – an organisation helping parents, educators, children, and teens cultivate safer, more productive relationships with technology – co-founders Sarah Hoffman and Pam Tudin discussed these challenges.

Device management is causing friction in families with children of all ages, becoming increasingly complex as they get older, said Hoffman, a social media lawyer. That's because children are affected by the dopamine hit present with any online platform working on algorithmic content. Dopamine is a "feel-good" neurotransmitter, a chemical

messenger in the brain that regulates feelings of pleasure, motivation, and reward. "These platforms give your children little dopamine hits that make them feel so amazing that getting off that device becomes increasingly harder."

As children continuously get these dopamine hits and then come down from them, real life seems boring in comparison. With increased dopamine exposure, it becomes increasingly challenging to do everyday things, from reading to sitting at the dinner table, to returning to soccer practice the day after a bad match.

Alongside the dopamine hits, older children chase a sense of belonging, which becomes increasingly important



Parents often struggle to manage their children's device usage

to them as they grow up, said Tudin, a clinical psychologist. While this is developmentally appropriate, it's problematic when the need to belong is met online rather than in the real world. "We're seeing some spaces online where kids are finding belonging in ways that aren't good for them," Tudin said. "Algorithmically, spaces like this come to our children when they're vulnerable."

Whether this is through the manosphere, which promotes toxic masculinity, or platforms like Instagram or Snapchat, which can amplify social ostracisation, these spaces can be damaging yet remain highly addictive. There's a constant fluctuation between dopamine hits when you're included and the lows when you're left out, which is very painful for children, Tudin said.

Gaming provides these highs and lows through wins and losses, but also through online interactions with friends, or alternatively through the hiding place it provides for those lacking real-life social skills. So, when we say, "Time's up," for children it's like being yanked out of the middle of a drug high.

Based on this understanding, Klikd offers parents device management tools. This includes a family tech agreement, a reciprocal, proactive, written arrangement between parents and their children.

Explain to your child that it's for the well-being of the family and that you will work out its contents together, Tudin said. With older children, clarify that you're not trying to control them, but rather finding a balance where you're not worried about them and they're not resentful.

Include one or two non-negotiables, including no screens in the bedroom at night, and say that everything else is up for discussion. Tudin also suggested creating screen-free

zones, such as the dinner table, as well as deviceless days, like before a test. "Your tech agreement is ultimately your third-party arbitrator," she said. "It takes you out of the power struggle."

The agreement also needs to lay out what happens if we don't stick to the agreement. "Using the device as leverage isn't what we want to do. Rather have the consequence considered and planned. That way, removing the device isn't a punishment, it's a logical thing to do in

the face of them pushing back."

This consequence shouldn't come when they're mid-scroll, Tudin said. "Don't try to manage this when their nervous system is unable to handle the change and when you yourself have raised cortisol." Rather, during a later calm moment, discuss how to work things out together.

"Say, 'I can see it was hard for you to stick to our agreement. That's okay. For now, I'm going to take the device, because we agreed on something else. Let me know when you're ready to stick to our agreement, and I'd love to give you the device back because I trust you. I know these devices are hard to get right.'" To demonstrate that the connection between you is still there, after this discussion, do something fun together like go for milkshake or play a game, she suggested.

• To download the family technology agreement, visit: <https://klikd.co.za/download-klikds-device-contract/?resources=contract>

The rebellious teen who became a French Sir

GILANA LAB

When recently retired education specialist, teacher, and former Department of Basic Education official David Silman stood before French Ambassador David Martinon last month to receive one of France's highest honours, he could scarcely believe he was there.

"The fact that a shit-stirrer like me can end up getting a knighthood is beyond any kind of understanding," he said. "How is it possible?"

On 26 May, Silman was awarded the rank of Chevalier in the Ordre des Palmes Académiques, one of France's oldest and most prestigious distinctions. Established

by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808, the order recognises outstanding contributions to education and culture and is considered the French equivalent of a knighthood.

"It's a rare honour," he said. "There are very few South Africans who have received this."

Accepting the award, Silman reflected on the role education plays in transforming lives and thanked France for its support of educational initiatives in South Africa, including curriculum development, technical and vocational education, and the production of Ocean Studies textbooks for Grades 10, 11, and 12.

"The Order of Academic Palms is more than a medal," he said in his speech. "It's a symbol of the enduring power of knowledge, of the belief that education

transcends the limits imposed by personal, national, and societal boundaries, and that it improves the quality of people's lives."

As he was receiving international recognition for a lifetime in education, Silman's thoughts returned to the person he believes made that life possible, former King David Linksfield principal Elliot Wolf. "Elliot Wolf actually saved my arse by taking a chance on me," he said.

Silman describes himself as "a cautionary tale that turned out okay".

The story began nearly five decades ago when, as a teenager, Silman found himself struggling to find a school willing to give him another opportunity. "At that point most schools wouldn't even grant me an interview," he said. King David Linksfield did.

Silman sees that decision as one of the defining moments of his life. "Wolf looked past the expulsions and saw I wasn't a lost cause – just a kid who needed a line in the sand and a chance.

"Had he not done that, nothing I've done would have been possible. Nothing good I've done would have been possible. That's a debt I can't repay."

The years that followed would take him far beyond the classroom.

Silman built a career spanning more than four decades in education, first as a teacher and later as a curriculum specialist and senior education official. He became known for his outspoken views and his willingness to challenge decisions he believed were wrong. "I've been a troublesome bugger most of my life," he admitted during his acceptance speech.

His reputation for speaking his mind often brought him into conflict with authority, making the knighthood

all the more unexpected. "I've been a prolific critic of our current and former government," he said. "It would never occur to me that that would put me in line for any kind of recognition, never mind a knighthood."

Reflecting on the honour, Silman was characteristically modest. "I'm just a school teacher," he said. "I'm not some big deal. I'm just an ordinary guy who obviously caught people's attention from time to time."

That humility was evident throughout his acceptance speech, in which he acknowledged the role played by family, colleagues, and friends. He paid particular tribute to his wife, Fiona, whom he described as the "tolerator of my all too many imperfections", as well as his children and grandson.

But when discussing the knighthood,

it's Wolf's influence he returns to most often. The French Republic may have bestowed the honour in recognition of a lifetime's contribution to education, but Silman believes the foundations were laid many years ago in the principal's office.

The lesson, he said, extends far beyond his own story. "If you're dealing with a kid like me, don't write them off too quickly," he told guests at the ceremony. "Sometimes the worst troublemakers just need the right place to land."

For Silman, the ceremony at the French embassy marked the culmination of a remarkable career. Yet in his telling, the journey to becoming a knight began long before curriculum reforms, government appointments, and international recognition. It began when someone chose to see potential where others saw only problems. And nearly 50 years later, Sir David Silman has not forgotten it.



French Ambassador David Martinon presenting Sir David Silman with the award

The sudden, sad closure of Silwood Lodge

LEE TANKLE

For decades, Silwood Lodge was a place of comfort, dignity, and care for Johannesburg's elderly. But following a serious medical scare involving owner Trish Maynard, the much-loved facility closed its doors at the end of April, bringing an abrupt end to a chapter that has touched the lives of countless residents, families, and staff.

The closure has been met with sadness by those who regarded Silwood Lodge as not just a care home, but an actual home. Under Maynard's leadership, the facility built a reputation for its warm, personalised approach, making the news of its closure all the more difficult for the community it served for years.

"The care that our parents received at Silwood Lodge was amazing; the staff were superb," said one anonymous daughter of a resident.

"The service of love was my great-grandmother's, my grandmother's, and mom's," said Maynard's daughter Amanda Rogaly. "This level of love, passion, and commitment to the residents' well-being – while this may have been taken for granted at times – unfortunately meant that my mom sacrificed many things in her personal life for her residents and families."

This dedication often took Maynard away from spending time with her family. Rogaly said that up until her mother had a medical emergency, her every waking hour was spent with her beloved residents, with the family's blessing.

"My mom has never begrudged her calling or the toll it has put on her family, as she's indeed a true angel. We have always supported and been amazed by her work ethic and her ability



One of the units at Silwood Lodge

to make things work perfectly," she said.

Before the closure, there had been many offers to buy Silwood Lodge, from buyers, developers, organisations, and even rabbis. That never came to fruition. "The individuals didn't have the know-how to run the business or the care of the aged, and selling to such people or organisations would be unfair and a disservice to my mother's legacy and the families and residents that had been a part of her life. Many offers fell through as interested parties didn't realise that such a business isn't a gold mine – it's a passion and a calling that my mom woke up and did every day," said Rogaly.

Over the years, Maynard had been struggling with her health, though she refused to slow down due to her commitment to her residents and staff. However, this year she was confronted by serious and sudden extreme health concerns and related complications, resulting in weeks in the intensive care unit. There was little idea of what the future would hold for her.

This left Maynard's family in a predicament that led to their decision to close Silwood Lodge to allow Maynard to focus on her health.

"This has been my life for 45 years, seven days a week, 12 hours a day," said Maynard. "But at the moment, the most important person is me. I've got to get well. This has been as hard for me as the residents'."

Rogaly said that every Silwood Lodge resident was placed in another facility.

"The most important thing is that my mother is alive and her legacy and reputation of care, compassion,

and giving the elderly and her staff dignity will always remain."

Many children of residents at Silwood Lodge praised the staff and said one of the reasons they were so upset about the closure was because their parents would no longer be taken care of by these people whom their parents had grown to love.

Rogaly agreed that the staff were what had made Silwood Lodge so special, and her mother knew this too.

"Staff knew that at Silwood Lodge their personal well-being was taken care of, and even when closing Silwood Lodge, instead of turning staff away, from her hospital bed my mother committed to personally pay an excellent settlement package, as well as generously handing over furniture, appliances, and homeware from the home to set them on their way. An unnecessary thing to do, but my mother would always see everything and everyone right. From upskilling cleaners and cooks, staff received better skills, direction, and firm fairness than any large hospital could provide. That is how she built the reputation she did, and why residents' families were reluctant to leave Silwood Lodge," said Rogaly.

For many residents and their families, the closure announcement was a shock as they were confronted by the fact that they had 90 days to move their relatives to other facilities.

"We were all scrambling to find places for our parents. I think everyone found a place, but it was traumatic for them, as most of them have dementia or Alzheimer's and relocating isn't easy," said one anonymous daughter.

Another anonymous daughter, whose mother lived at Silwood Lodge for about six years, said that when the news came that it would be closing, the family was devastated because they loved the

care that they received there.

"Our biggest upset was the fact that it was so abrupt and there was no closure. I am probably like a lot of other children, the only daughter or the only child here. So it was quite a thing. We went to look at some other places. Luckily, we found something at Willowbrook, but my mother has deteriorated in the last month," she said.

"There was a lot of fear and anxiety. It was horrible for everybody there. They didn't know what to expect," said one resident's daughter.

Denise Wynick, whose husband lived at Silwood Lodge for seven years, said that when they heard of the closure she feared he would no longer get the same level of care. But ultimately, she respected the decision.

"It was hard, but I can only praise Trish and her establishment and what she did," she said. I did find somewhere else for him. I'm not as happy as I was at Silwood Lodge. I trusted Trish and her staff, and my life was very good while my husband was there."

"Most families were devastated at the news of my mom's poor health and near-death situation, and understood, with the humanity that one should indeed have, that they now needed to feel a little bit of discomfort and sacrifice a little bit of the utopia that was provided to them at Silwood Lodge, to relocate their parents. Was this inconvenient so close to Pesach? Well, of course it was, but nearly losing my mother due to the selflessness of her calling for more years than I can remember was beyond 'inconvenient' to her and us, her family's future," Rogaly said.

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The billionaires club

Journalists and authors **Gus Silber** and **Jonathan Ancer** recently brought out *The Three Comma Club: How Billionaires Think, Act and Shape Our World*. They spoke to the SA Jewish Report about it.

Why did you write this book now? What was the appeal?

Gus: Mostly out of a compulsion of curiosity, which is the traditional instinct of any writer. When Jonathan asked me to collaborate on the book with him, the first image that popped into my mind was Scrooge McDuck diving into his vault full of banknotes and coins.

I wanted to find out whether that is an accurate picture of the way billionaires live and what they do with their money! What fascinated me from the start about billionaires is how few of them there are in the world and what a huge influence they have over almost every aspect of our lives, from technology to finance, to politics, to celebrity culture.

But firstly, I was curious to even find out what a billion is. It wasn't too long ago that a billion meant a million million. Now it means a thousand million, so it took a while to iron out that little disparity.

Jonathan: When publisher Jeremy Boraine suggested a book on billionaires, my first task was to get a grip on what a billion actually was. It's an absolutely staggering number. When you realise that a million seconds is 11 days, while a billion seconds is 32 years, you begin to get a sense of the scale. And then you start wondering about the people who have managed to accumulate that kind of wealth – who they are, how they did it, what they spend it on, and what influence they wield over the rest of us. That curiosity was impossible to resist.

What made the two of you collaborate on this book?

Jonathan: I've long been a fan of Gus. I've collected his books and followed his writing from his days at *Style* and *The Weekly Mail*. I thought working with Gus would be a lot of fun – and I was right.

Gus: Jonathan was asked to write the book and when he asked if I'd like to collaborate, I was immediately attracted to the idea of only having to do half a book. I've always enjoyed Jonathan's writing. He is an excellent journalist with a deft comic touch.

How did you make writing it together work?

Gus: I think we have a similar worldview and we are both journalists, which means we are used to the collaborative nature of working in a newsroom. Thanks to the fact that we live in a digital era, it was fairly easy to work together. We built a massive Google doc that grew as we added angles, articles, themes, and comments to it. Then we chose the angles we'd like to individually focus on. We took it from there, working closely together while at the same time working apart, since we live in different cities, me in Johannesburg and Jonathan in Cape Town.

Jonathan: We were able to bounce ideas off each other and give feedback on each other's chapters. It was a fairly organic process, chapters led to more chapters, and one billionaire's story would open a rabbit hole that led to another fascinating character we hadn't considered. What made it work is that Gus and I have a similar sensibility and sense of humour and we know a good story when we see one.

What did you each bring to the party?

Gus: Firstly, I think we brought the fact that we aren't economists or financial or business journalists. This allowed us to approach the topic from the fresh perspective of the ordinary person in the street. As for the actual writing, we each brought our own style to the project, which allowed for a contrast in the way the chapters are written, and at the same time hopefully for a universal understanding of the theme.

Jonathan: We brought ideas, creativity, and a sense of fun. Between us, I think we balanced the serious and the playful, which is exactly what a book about

billionaires needs.

How did you come up with the name *The Three Comma Club* and what does it mean?

Gus: My first encounter with "The Three Comma Club" as shorthand for billionaires comes from one of my favourite sitcoms, *Silicon Valley*. There is a scene in which the principal investor in the small start-up company discovers one day that his net worth has gone down from \$1 billion to only \$986-million. "I'm financially ruined!" he says. "I'm not a billionaire anymore."

He laments the fact that he is no longer a member of The Three Comma Club. In other words, his net worth no longer consists of nine zeros, separated by three commas.

His main concern is that this means he can no longer drive a car with gullwing doors. Instead, his doors have to open side to side just like anybody else's. This is the scene that inspired the title.

How did you select the people you wrote about?

Gus: We used the Forbes Billionaires List as our main source. There are more than 3 400 dollar billionaires on the list, which updates every year and in real time every day as well.

We wanted to go beyond its top 10, which consists mostly of white male tech billionaires. We wanted to be as diverse as possible and find lesser-known billionaires who don't fit the traditional stereotype. Hence, we have a chapter on women billionaires and a chapter on black billionaires. There are only 27 in the world and only one, Patrice Motsepe, in South Africa.

Jonathan: We chose themes rather than people – and then the people found us. As we were doing our research we would stumble on billionaires who had interesting and fascinating stories. One story would lead to another and suddenly we had more material than we could fit in the book.

How do you feel about the people who are billionaires and their impact on the world?

Gus: One thing I learned from researching and writing the book, which took me by surprise, is that not all billionaires are inherently evil and bad for the planet. There are many who are very generous with their money and who have invented products or services that make a difference to the world.

But in general, billionaires wield an extraordinary amount of power, purely because they have so much money. They seem unable to say "enough", which is a concept we go into in the book.

With the money that they have, they are able to make a positive and meaningful impact on the world. But just looking at the example of Elon Musk, their impact is often negative. In his case, his direct involvement in US policy meant that many charitable organisations in South Africa and other countries lost their funding. This is not to say that Musk doesn't give money to charitable causes, but in this case, his impact can only be considered as negative.

Jonathan: As a popular Facebook status relationship goes, it's complicated – which is what makes them such fascinating subjects. There are good billionaires, bad billionaires, and in-between billionaires. Some have changed the world by solving problems. Others have extracted wealth, gamed the system, and used political influence to protect their fortunes while ordinary people pay their taxes.

What are the similarities that make them members of a particular club?

Gus: As hard as it may be for some people to accept this, billionaires are as human as the rest of us. They have different backgrounds, different motives, and

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Wilf teaches Zionism to the shell-shocked and sceptical

LEE TANKLE

"We are living through massive transformations, a world that is in different forms of crisis. Our sense of who we are, our identity, our institutions, and our sense of self are all being undermined. And when you live in worlds of crisis, uncertainty, and rapid change, there are few certainties more comforting in the world than that the Jews did it."

So says Einat Wilf, former member of the Knesset, foreign policy adviser to Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and author of seven books, on why antizionism and antisemitism are so rife at the moment.

"And there is, especially in the West, but now it's gone global, this grabbing onto this certainty that tells you, 'I don't know anything anymore, but I know that the Jews are behind it'. It gives you a sense of control, of comfort in a world that doesn't make sense anymore."

Her latest book, *Teaching Zionism: Revelations from a Skeptical Classroom*, co-authored with Benjamin Kerstein and released in May, explores how students engage with Zionist thought and Jewish self-determination, while also confronting the misconceptions and prejudices that continue to shape discussions about Israel and the Jewish people.

The book was born when, in 2021, Wilf was a visiting professor at Georgetown University, teaching a course on Zionism and antizionism, which is the obsession with the non-existence of a Jewish State. The goal was to explore the arguments for and against a Jewish State by studying writers from the past century from across identities, such as Jewish, Christian, Arab, and Soviet.

The results were surprising. Students found that these old texts resonated powerfully in their own lives, especially the critique of Jewish life in exile, the nature of opposition to Zionism, and the hope for a renewed dignity that sovereignty could bring to Jews the world over.

"One student said the course was worth dozens of hours of therapy in terms of its value to her," says Wilf.

"Though I taught the course before 7 October 2023, a lot of educators, parents, and grandparents are struggling with how to teach Zionism, how to teach about antizionism, and they thought we could write a book that both describes the course, which actually teaches the material itself, but also reflects the actual process of teaching Zionism. It doesn't just give the material and the syllabus. It actually also describes the interactions in class," she says.

Through her course and this book, Wilf wants students to understand that Zionism, as the political movement for self-determination of the Jews in their ancestral homeland, was presented in response to a challenge to modernity in Jewish life.

She argues that Zionism should be understood in its historical context as one of several possible Jewish responses to the challenges of modernity, rather than as an inevitable path to the creation of Israel. She and Kerstein caution against viewing Zionist history as a straightforward sequence of successes – from the ideas of Theodor Herzl through the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate, statehood, and the Six-Day War. Instead, they emphasise that Zionism emerged amid uncertainty and competing alternatives, and its eventual success was not guaranteed.

"A lot of the work I had to do was to show that at every single moment, it was touch-and-go. That Zionism could have had a lot of other endings. We

could have ended like the Armenians, or like the Kurds," she says.

With the bombardment of antizionist discourse, she wanted to make sure that students are reading Zionist writers in their own words.

"What happens is that once you read the writers themselves, all this nonsense just melts away. The course showed that Zionism was very much a movement of its time. People speaking about self-determination in their homeland. And that was what everyone was doing at the time. And that antizionism as this singular obsession with the non-existence of a Jewish State, is a unique form of insanity," she says.

Wilf believes that by examining the original texts, people can see how antizionist discourse distorts facts.

"Quotes get cherry-picked most terribly," she says.

One of her favourites is a quote from Herzl that anti-Israel speakers use, "to build a new building, we need to destroy the old one".

"They bring it up as an example that Herzl understood that to build a Jewish State, we'll have to destroy a pre-existing thing. And I remember thinking, 'That's odd, that doesn't sound like Herzl.' So I went and found the quote," she says.

It's a quote in his introduction to the book, *The Jewish State*, in which

he talks to Jews about the need to destroy a mental building that keeps them trapped in an exile mindset, so that their minds are free to imagine something new.

"That's why it's so powerful when you go to the original text and not just one writer, multiple writers, and you really understand what Zionism is."

Wilf argues that Jews whose families came from places such as the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Iran, and the Arab world are often more willing to challenge antizionism because they recognise a familiar pattern. They have a historical memory of societies claiming to welcome Jews while targeting "only Zionists", and they know that such rhetoric often preceded the marginalisation or expulsion of Jewish communities.

By contrast, many Jews in the United States, whose families have lived for generations in relatively secure and prosperous circumstances, may be more inclined to view Jewish identity through the lens of privilege and social acceptance. Having experienced opportunities, success, and integration into mainstream society, they may be less likely to recognise the dangers that others associate with antizionist rhetoric.

However, after 7 October, many of these young Jews saw a complete shift in how they were viewed in the world, similar to what happens in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, where one morning the main character wakes up transformed into a giant insect-like creature.

"All these young Jews with zero muscle memory are waking up one morning. And they're genocidal baby killers; they're being yelled at everywhere they go. But they're the same person they were before," she says.

"Now, many young people today don't have the muscle memory that is the Jewish condition. So they wake up one morning, and the price of being Jewish, from their perspective, I would say, just went back to its normal historical price.

"You'll be platformed. You can publish an essay in *The New York Times*. You can build an academic career. The price of standing with your people is very high. The price of selling out your people is very lucrative. And if you don't have the muscle memory of what it means to be Jewish, a lot of young Jews, and not only young ones, are succumbing to the pressure," she says.



Einat Wilf



Jonathan Ancer

Gus Silber

Measure of a marriage

I was ordering something on Takealot when I remembered that the half-cup measuring thingy I use for my morning oats had gone missing in action.

Rather than convening a summit or opening an investigation into its disappearance, I simply navigated to "kitchen utensils" and ordered a set of measuring cups that appeared to meet my oatmeal-related requirements.

A few days later the package arrived. I opened it, walked into the kitchen where my wife was busy, and announced proudly, "Look what I ordered."

I removed the brightly coloured plastic measuring cups from their dusty packaging and tossed them into the drawer with all the other measuring implements that have accumulated over the years.

I'm not saying that I expected a standing ovation. But I did feel that a small acknowledgement of initiative would not have been entirely inappropriate.

As I closed the drawer, I was already composing my acceptance speech. "It was nothing," I would say modestly. "No need to make a fuss. Your measuring cups are my measuring cups. And if we cannot order measuring cups for the kitchen, then who are we?"

When I turned around, however, I was confronted by something unexpected. My wife appeared to be engaged in an internal struggle of epic proportions. Her body language was a riot of contradictions. She was trying very hard to look grateful while simultaneously looking like someone who had just watched a stranger try to brush her child's hair.

The wheels were grinding as they turned. Years of marriage manuals. Decades of relationship advice. Thirty-five years of rabbinical wisdom gathered from classes, sermons, and conversations. All of it was being rapidly reviewed before she responded.

Rather than forcing her into the awkward position of pretending everything was fine, I decided to help. "Let me put this into words for you," I said.

She nodded.

"The plastic multi-coloured measuring cups are not what you would have chosen. You want them in metal.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



You would not have put them into the drawer without washing them first. And you definitely would not have tossed them in the way I just did."

I paused.

"You want to be appreciative because I was trying to help. But at the same time, your irritation is winning."

"Yes!" she said. And then she added, "That is an article."

It's an article because after 35 years of marriage it is clear that men and women don't look at measuring cups in quite the same way.

To me, the measuring cups represented a problem to be solved. We had a missing measuring cup. We now had measuring cups.

To my wife, however, the measuring cups represented a series of entirely new problems. They were the wrong colour. They didn't match the existing set. They were in plastic. They had bypassed the mandatory washing phase. And they had been introduced into the drawer with all the subtlety of a military invasion. I suspect this explains a great many things about marriage.

Neither approach is wrong.

Judaism, of course, has a long history of accepting that intelligent people can look at exactly the same thing and arrive at completely different conclusions. Entire volumes of Talmud are built on debating the details, volume, qualification, and definitions of "measuring cups".

The lessons are numerous. There are lessons about marriage, communication, intentions, expectations, and the fact that "helping" is sometimes in the eye of the beholder.

But my biggest takeaway is this: Every morning at 04:00, I open the drawer, looking for my brightly coloured measuring cup. And when I see it I am reminded that even after 35 years of marriage, there is still an element of surprise. Not that my wife and I see the world differently. But that those offending items are somehow still in the drawer.

The billionaires club

>>Continued from page 10

different things that they do with their money. But they do seem to have a restless drive in common.

Jonathan: They have an extraordinary tolerance for risk. They aren't scared to fail and when they do, they move on without the shame that stops most people from trying again. They think long-term. While most of us think in days, they think in years and decades. They are also hands-on. The drive that builds a billion-dollar company doesn't come with an off switch.

What does it take to become a billionaire – luck, rich parents, a great degree or what?

Gus: Having good genes is very useful! A third of the billionaires on the Forbes list get their money from family fortunes. The rest are self-made.

But there are also many who come from backgrounds of struggle and poverty. An example is Oprah Winfrey, who grew up literally wearing rags.

Many of the contemporary billionaires on the list come from the current AI tech boom. So sometimes it is being in the right industry at the right time that creates billionaires.

It also, at least from the outside, takes an incredible amount of hard work. I doubt that Elon Musk gets much sleep.

Which are your favourite billionaires in the book and why?

Gus: Mine are:

1. Chuck Feeney, who co-founded the duty-free shopping empire and then went on to give away almost every penny of his money through his philanthropic institute. A condition of his giving was that the donor would never be revealed. He gave a lot of money to South African causes such as the Constitutional Court and HIV/AIDS charities. He grew up in New Jersey, in humble circumstances with a strong religious background. He felt as he grew older that he had too much money and that there were too many deserving people in the world who could benefit from his fortune.

2. Sara Blakely. She was a door-to-door fax salesperson in Florida in the US. In a Eureka

moment, she cut the feet off her pantyhose and invented Spanx, the foundation garment that went on to make her a billionaire. She had a dream of becoming rich by inventing something that would be of benefit to people, and she achieved that.

Jonathan: Mine are:

1. Chuck Feeney – successful, generous, and humble. In a world of virtue signalling and public relations philanthropy, he did it all secretly.
2. Hetty Green, the Witch of Wall Street. She's in the *Guinness World Records* as the stingiest person. The stories about how mean she was are legendary. It was said that her greatest joy was making money, and her greatest pain was spending it. But after researching her life, it turns out that she was actually misunderstood and unfairly treated. In fact, she bailed out New York three times, and her billions have been quietly absorbed by hospitals, libraries, educational institutions, and charities, many of which have lost track of the source of the largesse.

Having studied these people, does money bring happiness?

Gus: I would say there is no great correlation between money and happiness. Money can certainly bring moments of joy and contentment, which is not quite the same thing.

But Elon Musk, who is the wealthiest person on the planet with a net worth of \$840 billion (R13.6 trillion), comes from a dysfunctional background and that dysfunction is a strong part of his personality, including with his own family. So, he doesn't seem happy in that sense.

Happiness is such a complicated and elusive concept for any human, no matter their station in life. One example of a happy billionaire, I think, is Richard Branson, who always seems to have a mischievous smile on his face and who seems to be content with his lot in life, which he worked very hard for.

As Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, it's no great shame to be poor, but it's no great honour either. The same applies to being rich, I suppose!

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

A worldwide web



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

This week, members of the Gauteng and Cape Town leadership of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) represented the South African Jewish community at the American Jewish Congress (AJC) Annual Global Forum in Washington, DC.

The AJC is one of the oldest and most important Jewish advocacy organisations in the world. Founded in 1918, it was built on a conviction that has lost none of its urgency in the century since: that the security and dignity of Jewish communities depend not only on our own efforts, but on robust engagement with the democratic institutions and civil society structures of the countries in which we live. It fights antisemitism in all its forms while building the coalitions and institutional relationships that allow it to speak with a voice that carries weight in the spaces that matter most.

This year's conference brought together more than 2 000 Jewish leaders from across the globe to address the most pressing issues facing the Jewish people, Israel, the United States, and the wider international community. Delegates heard from an exceptional lineup of speakers, including former hostages Aviva and Keith Siegel, award-winning author Dara Horn, and Sarah Hurwitz, former speechwriter to Michelle Obama.

The South African delegation was invited to participate in an exclusive meeting with senior representatives from major social media platforms to discuss the challenges of antisemitism and online hate affecting our community. A key message that emerged from the conference was the urgent need to confront and challenge antizionist hate groups online. As one speaker powerfully said, "Lo and behold, if you let violent language become normalised, you get violence."

For us as Jewish leadership, the AJC, and other gatherings of this nature, represent something important: the reminder that we are part of a global architecture of Jewish self-defence and civic

engagement. It's also a constant reminder that Jewish communities around the world aren't isolated and acting alone, but rather part of a greater structure upon which we can all lean. Through these engagements we also gain valuable insights into developments across the global Jewish world and, equally importantly, build meaningful partnerships that strengthen our ability to fulfil our mandate to enable Jewish life in South Africa. We are deeply privileged to represent our community at international forums and conferences of this nature.

Closer to home, we are approaching the exam period at universities. The SAJBD works with universities to find accommodations that ensure observant Jewish students aren't disadvantaged when exams fall on *yomteivim* or Shabbat. If you're a student and have an exam scheduled on such a day, please contact the SAJBD and we will assist with finding a fair alternative arrangement. Email sajbd@sajbd.org.

And, while we're on the subject of universities, congratulations to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) on its improved international ranking. The recently released 2026 Center for World University Rankings placed Wits as the best university in Africa and within the top 1% of universities globally. Wits secured 200th place out of 21 000 surveyed institutions. The University of Cape Town is also within the top 1.3%, with other South African universities, including Stellenbosch, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Johannesburg, and University of Pretoria, receiving excellent ratings. We are immensely proud of all these institutions. Our universities aren't merely safe spaces for Jewish students, they're world-class academic institutions, and that's something worth celebrating. To all students heading into the exam season: study hard, stay calm, and do us proud.

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

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Generous South Africans give homeless man new life

LEE TANKLE

Three weeks after a chance encounter on a storm-battered Sea Point promenade captured the hearts of South Africans, Sidney Miller's life looks very different.

The homeless wheelchair user, whose story sparked an outpouring of support after videographer Chad Nathan, otherwise known as Ginger with a GoPro, shared it online, has gone from facing another winter on the streets to navigating a future made possible by hundreds of thousands of rands in donations.

Since Nathan posted the video with Miller on 12 May, appealing for help, more than R500 000 has poured in for his care and future needs. Nathan also ran the entirety of the Cape Town Marathon on 24 May with Miller's name on his back.

Supporters offered everything from medical assistance and accommodation to practical help and words of encouragement, with Miller receiving winter gear and getting fitted for an electric wheelchair. As plans began to take shape, the focus shifted from immediate relief to a more difficult task: ensuring that the generosity sparked by a viral moment would lead to meaningful and lasting change in one

man's life.

Nathan explained that he has handed the funds for Miller over to The Angel Network charity organisation to manage.

"The money has left the BackaBuddy account and has gone to The Angel Network account," he said. "They have taken a lot off my plate and have been helping extensively with investing the funds, and they are the ones that are paying out funds to Sidney for medicine or other [things]. They take control of all the money."

Miller has since undergone surgery to amputate his other leg, and Nathan went to visit him on 29 May. "It was quite a shock to see him with his other

leg gone now," he said. "I watched them clean the wound, and he says he doesn't feel any more pain. But he says that could be the morphine speaking. He's just happy he's no longer in pain. He's just feeling that little ghost niggles where it feels like your foot is still there, but it's not."

Aquazania and The Sweethearts Foundation are sponsoring an electric wheelchair, "which actually looks like a bit of a Harley Davidson", for Miller.

Nathan explained that Souper Troopers, a Cape Town-based non-profit that works to empower people living on the streets to achieve sustainable independence, is also involved. "We're working

with a lady named Tasneem. She used to be on the street herself and has gone through a whole programme to know what it means to help people to get off the street. She is absolutely amazing because she knows exactly the situation Sidney is in."

Over and above the virality and attention he has received from the Miller story – about 20 000 Instagram followers in the first week – Nathan has been blown away by how Miller's story has moved people.

"It's inspired so many people to actually be kind and to do good out there, which was the goal at the end of the day."

He said all the extra followers push him to continue what he is doing and allow him to do even more.

"That provides a whole array of opportunities, more eyeballs on your work, but what also comes with that is that people are now coming out of everywhere asking for help, from the smallest thing to the biggest thing. I do want to try to help everyone, but I can't, so I'm doing it slowly, one step at a time. We're finishing up with Sidney. We raised half a million rand for Sidney, and now whatever money comes in after that will be used for different funds," he said.



Sidney Miller and Chad Nathan in the hospital after surgery

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