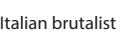




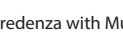
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SA loses key ally as Colombia chooses Israel

South Africa is losing one of its closest international partners in its diplomatic campaign against Israel. This after Colombia's newly elected president, Abelardo de la Espriella, announced the closure of his country's embassy in Pretoria as part of a sweeping foreign policy overhaul.

The decision comes just 18 months after South Africa and Colombia co-founded The Hague Group, a coalition established to coordinate legal, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Israel over the war in Gaza. Under outgoing President Gustavo Petro, Colombia emerged as one of Pretoria's strongest allies, backing South Africa's "genocide" case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Benji Shulman, executive director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute, says South Africa and Colombia's relationship had become significantly stronger under Petro because of their shared position on Israel.

Shulman says that historically, relations between the two countries had been relatively limited because of geographical distance and modest trade.

there is no longer the same ideological cooperation, reducing diplomatic representation becomes a logical part of Colombia's broader recalibration of its international relations," he says.

For South Africa, The Hague Group became a key

platform for building international support around its legal campaign against Israel, and Colombia's participation gave Pretoria an influential Latin American ally.

The Colombian government has described the South African embassy closure as part of a broader diplomatic restructuring that will see 14 embassies shut worldwide. This is aimed at streamlining what

it considers an oversized foreign service and redirecting diplomatic resources to countries it regards as strategically more important.

"It is clear that President De La Esperiella seeks to reverse the damaging decisions of his predecessors, including the former government's alignment with South Africa's hostile stance towards Israel, support for Hamas, and exploitation of the International Court of Justice. De La Esperiella has determined that a strong relationship with Israel is morally correct and far more beneficial to his country's interests."

South African Zionist Federation national chairperson Craig Pantanowitz describes Colombia's policy reversal as a significant development for South Africa's international campaign against Israel.

"Colombia's incoming government has confirmed that it will withdraw its declaration of intervention when President-elect Abelardo de la Espriella takes office on 7 August. No state that joined the case in support of Pretoria has reversed itself before. Colombia is the first."

"Colombia filed its intervention in April 2024, severed relations with Israel a month later, and stood beside Pretoria as a founding member of The Hague Group. This was not a sympathetic bystander. It was among the most committed partners the campaign had."

changes in government.

Continued on page 3>>





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OPINION

WILLIAM D PETOK, PHD



Today, we are less likely to rely on divine intervention for fertility problems. Reproductive medicine has developed an array of strategies for both men and women who are unable to create children “the old-fashioned way”. These include assisted reproductive technology (ART), the use of a gestational carrier, and egg freezing.

What does Judaism, the religion that brought us “Be fruitful and multiply”, have to say about these methods? The range of opinions on what is acceptable is significant. Generally, the more strictly one adheres to Jewish law, the more restrictive the options.

Judaism in its most conservative forms is fairly flexible when it comes to ART. In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is acceptable, particularly when the sperm and egg come from the individuals who will carry to term and raise the infant. Intra Uterine Insemination (IUI) is acceptable if the sperm

comes from the husband of the woman who will carry the pregnancy.

There are rabbis who will reject the use of donor eggs, while others allow it with the husband’s consent. A major concern if the donor is Jewish would be the “provenance” of the egg for future marriage of the child. Regardless of faith, it’s a bad idea to marry a half-sibling. The genetic consequences could be problematic. In the most religious circles, a gentile donor is preferred, the assumption being that the child will marry only a Jew, thus removing concerns about gene lines and consanguinity, being related by blood. Many authorities would favour a full conversion to ensure the Jewish heritage of the child.

The use of sperm from a Jewish donor isn’t allowed because it constitutes an adulterous relationship, at least metaphorically, because the donor creates a child with a woman who is not his wife. The child would then be considered a *mamzer*, or bastard.

For men with male factor infertility this option is removed. A non-Jewish donor, on the other hand, changes the equation. The child can’t unknowingly marry a half-sibling because in “proper” marriage arrangements there is only a Jewish option. If a donor is Jewish, accurate records must be kept to ensure that the donor’s subsequent children aren’t potential marriage mates.

The issues of IUI, IVF, and Intracytoplasmic

Sperm Injection are complicated by how the sperm and egg “get together”. Since these procedures all take place without intercourse, “spilling of seed”,

machinations are less than desirable but acceptable. When it comes to

surrogacy, some Jewish denominations allow the use of a gestational carrier. This is a distinctly different form of surrogacy than the one Abraham employed. Today that would be referred to as “traditional surrogacy”, in which the carrier is inseminated with the father’s sperm, carries the child to birth, and then turns the infant over to the parents who will raise it. Advances in IVF now allow creation of a foetus outside the womb and subsequent transfer to a carrier. In the best case, the carrier would be an unmarried woman. However, some halachic authorities raise the question of maternal identity. Is the carrier,

whose only contribution to the birth is her womb, a mother? It is possible to find halachic authorities who make the case both for and against gestational surrogacy.

Liberal Judaism, which has accepted patrilineal descent, finds gestational surrogacy acceptable.

Most gestational surrogacy arrangements today involve a woman who is done creating her own family. As with any pregnancy, one risk is future infertility due to complications of gestation or birth. Another reason for this guideline is that a woman who has her own children is more likely to turn over a child she has carried for someone

Continued on page 13>>



Ultrasound-guided IVF consultation

AI-generated image

or masturbation, is required. The original text from Genesis (38:9) and then again in Leviticus presents questions about emission of semen and raises similar questions about ritual purity. Jews who follow a strict interpretation of text will then have a problem with how sperm are obtained for the procedures above. In order to avoid the prohibition, special collection condoms have been created so the couple can have intercourse and the “seed is not spilt”. In the most observant situations, there is a small hole at the top of the condom, so it is “possible” for seed to escape into the vagina and it won’t be “wasted”.

From a medical or scientific point of view, these

Success has many fathers

There are few things we are better at than explaining our own success.

We tell ourselves that we worked harder than everyone else, made wiser decisions, took risks others were afraid to take, saw opportunities that everyone else missed.

There is usually some truth in all of that. Effort matters. Judgement matters. Discipline matters. But if that were the whole story, the world would look very different.

The hardest-working person many of us know is probably not the wealthiest. Our gardener works harder than we do. The woman who cleans offices before dawn works harder than we do. The man laying tar on the highway in the middle of January works harder than we do. They work until their backs ache and their hands are worn, yet they are unlikely to retire early.

So what made the difference?

Perhaps we were born into a family that valued education. Perhaps someone took a chance on us when we were young. Perhaps we met the right mentor at exactly the right moment. Perhaps we married into a family that opened doors we could never have opened ourselves. Perhaps we enjoyed good health while someone equally talented watched illness derail a promising career. Perhaps we were lucky to win gold in the IQ or EQ lottery.

We like to tell the story of our success as though it is almost entirely our own doing. Life is never that simple. There is no such thing as a self-made

person.

As the Jewish people stand on the threshold of entering the Land of Israel, Moshe looks ahead to a prosperous future. Homes will be built, vineyards planted, wealth accumulated. There will be genuine achievement. People will work hard for what they have. And then comes the warning: Be careful not to say, “My strength and the power of my hand made me this wealth.”

Notice what Moshe doesn’t say. He doesn’t deny that they worked. He doesn’t tell them that effort is meaningless. He simply refuses to let them edit Hashem out of the story.

Perhaps that is our greatest temptation. We are all editors of our own biographies. We instinctively place ourselves at the centre of every success while quietly pushing Hashem into the acknowledgements. We remember the late nights, the difficult decisions, and the risks we took. We forget the opportunities we never created, the talents we never earned, the people who believed in us, the health that carried us, and the countless moments where things simply fell into place. It takes a village. The Torah asks us to tell a truer story. Work as though everything depends on us, but remember that

Torah Thought

Rabbi Levi Avtzon
Linksfield Shul



everything we have to work with came from Hashem. Intelligence is a gift. Health is a gift. The family we were born into, the country we grew up in, the resilience to recover from setbacks, even the ability to recognise a good opportunity when it appears, are all blessings before they become achievements.

Humility isn’t pretending we accomplished nothing. It’s remembering that every achievement is built upon gifts we could never have given ourselves.

Thank you, Hashem!

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	Starts	Ends
Johannesburg	17:23	18:14
Cape Town	17:48	18:42
Durban	17:05	17:58
Bloemfontein	17:26	18:18
Gqeberha	17:19	18:13
Plettenberg Bay	17:28	18:22
East London	17:12	18:06
Jerusalem*	18:57	20:16
Tel Aviv*	19:17	20:18

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Tu B’Av was on Wednesday, a romantic Jewish holiday often described as the Jewish Valentine’s Day: a day for matchmaking, weddings, and proposals. At **You Realty**, we love matchmaking all year round, bringing buyers and sellers together.

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Complaint filed at UN over EFF mayoral candidate

TALI FEINBERG

The international nongovernmental organisation UN Watch has filed a formal complaint with United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres over Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng's acceptance of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) candidacy for the mayorship of Johannesburg.

UN Watch describes this as a "grave violation and serious misconduct" by Mofokeng, who is still the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health.

On 25 July, the EFF announced that Mofokeng would be "deployed" as its mayoral candidate for the City of Johannesburg in the November local government elections. Mofokeng has no experience running a city, but is known for her antizionist hate and hurling insults on social media.

"A UN expert cannot claim to be independent while standing on a political stage, addressing a party leader as 'Commander-in-Chief' and accepting 'deployment' as that party's candidate for one of Africa's most important mayoralties," said UN Watch executive director Hillel Neuer in an official statement. "This is an open-and-shut conflict of interest that strikes at the credibility of the entire UN human rights system."

The UN Watch complaint cites two separate abuses: Mofokeng's public acceptance of the EFF "deployment" while she remains listed as a serving UN mandate holder; and her attempt to invoke UN functional immunity in South African court proceedings concerning her social media insults.

UN Watch is a Geneva-based nongovernmental organisation whose stated mission is "to monitor the performance of the United Nations by the yardstick of its own charter".

A UN Special Rapporteur cannot actively campaign for or hold partisan political office while serving in their mandate. Mofokeng's second three-year term runs until August 2026, no resignation letter has been posted on the Human Rights Council extranet, and the UN website continues to list her as Special Rapporteur.

When she took office, Mofokeng pledged to act from a "completely impartial" standpoint, without accepting instructions from any party. Yet she has publicly accepted the EFF's mayoral candidacy, making political pledges and referring to Malema as

"Commander-in-Chief" on 25 July.

"By accepting a political party's 'deployment' before her UN term had ended, Mofokeng erased any meaningful distinction between an independent human rights mandate and a partisan political platform," Neuer said. "Secretary-General



EFF mayoral candidate Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng

Guterres should condemn this breach unequivocally."

The UN Watch complaint also asks Guterres to confirm that Mofokeng's social media attacks weren't acts performed during her UN mission and therefore aren't protected by the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the UN.

In 2025, Mofokeng posted "fuck you" to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. After Neuer called for her to be disciplined, she referred to him as "evil scum". The Health Professions Council of South Africa subsequently found her guilty of misconduct for using abusive language and for bringing the medical profession into disrepute. She was fined R10 000.

In April, Mofokeng applied to the High Court in Johannesburg to set aside that finding and the sanction. Her principal argument was that the professional council lacked jurisdiction because she enjoyed immunity under the UN privileges and immunities convention.

UN Watch's letter cites a broader pattern of posts in which Mofokeng told a critic to "shove it up your ass", called another person "that hoe", and described a political figure as a "disgusting elder".

She has also said that Hamas aren't

terrorists; called the Jewish State "Israhell"; publicly supported flotilla activists arrested by Israel for terrorism links; publicly endorsed Hamas-linked figures; promoted Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions; and described Israel's defensive war in Gaza as "genocide".

Neuer says, "Functional immunity protects the independent performance of legitimate UN duties; it isn't a personal licence to disparage people online. To characterise this abuse as the official work of the UN Special Rapporteur on health would degrade both the immunity convention and the UN itself."

UN Watch called on Guterres to strongly denounce Mofokeng's acceptance of a partisan political candidacy while still serving as a UN Special Rapporteur. It also called on him to confirm that her social media posts weren't made in the performance of her official functions and are therefore not protected by UN functional immunity.

"Silence from the UN would send a dangerous message: that mandate holders may openly join partisan campaigns and then invoke the UN as a shield against accountability for purely personal misconduct," Neuer said. "Guterres must act to protect the integrity and reputation of the institution."

The EFF's selection of Mofokeng comes amid much speculation that the African National Congress (ANC) will choose struggle stalwart Reverend Frank Chikane as its mayoral candidate for Johannesburg.

Like Mofokeng, Chikane is known for his invective against the Jewish State. He has described Israel as worse than apartheid South Africa, accused it of committing "genocide", publicly backed South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, and advocated for isolating Israel globally.

Meanwhile, the RISE Mzansi mayoral candidate for Johannesburg, Lukhona Mnguni, often wears a

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keffiyeh draped over one shoulder. On 12 May 2021, Mnguni hosted a programme on Power FM on which callers propagated various antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories concerning Jewish financial influence without being challenged by him. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies lodged an official complaint at the time. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa ruled against the station.

Elections analyst Wayne Sussman says that on one hand, "we have Helen Zille for the Democratic Alliance [DA] – who I think is leading in the polls – who is a former premier of the Western Cape and mayor of Cape Town. There's ActionSA's Herman Mashaba, a former mayor of Johannesburg, as well as Kenny Kunene, a member of the mayoral committee, as the Patriotic Alliance candidate."

All three represent "executive experience, which those parties think will be a positive for voters".

On the other hand, there's Mofokeng, possibly Chikane, and Mnguni, "who are seen as people with 'activist' credentials".

Sussman says it will be interesting to see which type of candidate will emerge as the preferred choice of Johannesburg voters.

Sara Gon, policy fellow at the Institute of Race Relations, says that both the EFF and the ANC are "unashamedly anti-Israel" so their mayoral candidates' views fit in with that position.

However, "I don't think it's core to the

reasons for their appointment" she says. "Anti-Israeli attitudes aren't core to their platforms. They don't resonate with South Africans who want their municipal services improved."

She thinks the real issue is the candidates' fitness to hold office, and to deliver what the citizenry wants. "Neither has experience," says Gon. "Mofokeng gives no sense of offering anything. I think Chikane is intended, as an old hand with a certain image, to act as a counterweight to Helen Zille. I'm not sure that will work, as he has no profile among many who will vote."

South African Zionist Federation national chairperson Craig Pantanowitz says the EFF didn't choose Mofokeng to fix Johannesburg. "She was chosen because she spent her UN mandate as an anti-Israel agitator, insulting anyone who disagreed. For the EFF, that's not a blemish on her record. It's the record they were shopping for."

On competence, "she offers nothing", says Pantanowitz. "She has never run a metro, a department, a water network, or a billing system. Yet Johannesburg is a city of six million people with a budget of more than R97 billion."

Johannesburg needs water, electricity, working traffic lights, and accurate bills, says Pantanowitz. "Residents should ask the EFF one question on 4 November: if this is your answer to Johannesburg, what do you think the problem is?"

SA loses key ally as Colombia chooses Israel

>>Continued from page 1

"Colombia's new centre-right administration is reviewing the foreign policy decisions of its predecessor.

"We are likely to continue seeing countries alter their positions on Israel as governments change. These shifts make it more difficult to sustain international coalitions because foreign policy priorities evolve alongside domestic political change."

Pantanowitz says changes in political leadership could ultimately reshape support for South Africa's case.

"The reply from Pretoria's defenders will be that this is merely Colombian domestic politics, a new government discarding its predecessor's foreign policy. That is precisely the point, and it is an admission rather than a defence. A case that depends on which faction happens to hold office in a handful of capitals is not a principled application of the Genocide Convention. It's a political coalition in

legal dress, and political coalitions don't survive elections."

Referring to the ICJ's decision to grant South Africa a further 18 months to file its next submission, he adds, "The case is now measured in years. Its backers are measured in electoral terms. The question is no longer whether the case is sustainable. It's how many of its supporters will still be standing there when the filing date arrives."

South Africa and Colombia established diplomatic relations in 1994 following the end of apartheid. For much of the time that followed, relations remained cordial but relatively low profile, centred on multilateral cooperation rather than deep strategic or economic ties.

It was only under Petro that the relationship acquired a strong ideological dimension through the two governments' close alignment on Israel and the Palestinian issue.

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Sooliman’s antizionist group calls for retail boycott

TALI FEINBERG

An anti-Israel organisation founded by Dr Imtiaz Sooliman is calling on South African retailers to publicly declare their businesses “apartheid-free zones”. While the organisation avoided using the word “Israel” in announcing its campaign, its content demonises Israel and repeatedly describes the Jewish State as “apartheid Israel”.

When launching the programme, The Coalition for Good (The Coalition) included an image of a person wearing a keffiyeh around their head and a mask over their face, with an image of a Palestinian flag.

Sooliman, known as the founder and chair of the Gift of the Givers charity, launched The Coalition in 2024. Speaking on SABC News, he described Israel as a “terrorist state” and said his new organisation would reveal “the truth”. He is on The Coalition’s board of directors, along with antizionist extremists Dr Naledi Pandor, Reverend Frank Chikane, Reverend Munther Isaacs, and Ronnie Kasrils.

The Coalition says it is “dedicated to eradicating the injustices against humanity” but makes it clear that Israel and Zionists are in opposition to “humanity”. Similar language is used by Gift of the Givers,

which advertises The Coalition and urges supporters to follow it.

One of The Coalition’s main campaigns, “It’s Not Complicated”, encourages South Africans to avoid asking questions, doing research, or engaging in debate about Israel. The campaign portrays Israel as the epitome of evil, and Palestinians as the embodiment of innocence. Now, The Coalition is telling South Africans to create visible anti-Israel shopping spaces. Ironically, Gift of the Givers has sent Israeli medical supplies to Palestinians in Gaza – but it never sent anything to Israeli hostages.

On 20 July, The Coalition announced that it was rolling out its “retail programme”, inviting retailers to join a voluntary pledge to “support humanity”. It encourages them to review their sourcing practices, “reduce reliance on products or supply chains linked to injustice”, support local and alternative suppliers where possible, and provide consumers with “practical ways to align their spending with their values”.

Participating retailers will display point-of-sale material carrying the message “We Support Humanity”, together with QR codes linking to “educational resources” on The Coalition’s website. They will also link customers to the “No Thanks” app, which tells consumers about Israeli-linked products

to boycott.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) national chairperson Craig Pantanowitz says the choice being given to retailers and consumers “isn’t a choice at all. It’s asking people to affirm that one country is uniquely evil, or to accept the label of ‘apartheid collaborator’. That isn’t conscious consumerism, it’s reputational coercion, and it turns South African shops into ideological checkpoints.”

South African Friends of Israel national spokesperson Bafana Modise says campaigns of this nature “risk shifting the cost of political activism onto ordinary South African consumers, employees, suppliers, and businesses”, at a time when households are already under immense financial pressure.

“South Africans shouldn’t have their access to quality products, competitive pricing, or employment opportunities restricted to advance a selective political campaign,” he says.

The campaign ties in with libels that

The Coalition spreads about Israel on its website, such as “attacks on Christians by Jews are a regular occurrence [in Israel]”. It asks followers to “share the truth to help free Palestine from the tyranny of apartheid Israel”.

The organisation platforms antizionist extremists like TikTok influencer Guy Christensen, who hailed the antizionist murder of two Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, DC, and author Zukiswa Wanner, who stated that the “lord” of “SA Zios” is the late American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, and has implied that Zionists are “eating children”.



The Coalition peddles antisemitic tropes, such as the notion that Israel and Jews are hiding information from the average person. It says its content “reveals the truth”. On social media, the organisation poses questions that portray Israel as sinister and evil, such as “who can hold absolute power and still claim to be under threat?” and “Who can criminalise resistance while enforcing occupation?” The organisation then answers its own questions, demonising Israel, which it describes as a “state” in inverted commas.

Advocate Mark Oppenheimer says that if The Coalition is asking South African retailers not to stock goods from countries that practise injustice and oppression, there can be few clearer candidates than China, which is persecuting the Uyghurs.

Estimates suggest that anywhere from 100 000 to more than a million members of this Muslim minority have been detained or persecuted. Several countries have described their treatment as “genocide”, while the UN has concluded that the abuses may constitute crimes against humanity.

“A principled organisation cannot concern itself with oppression only when doing so is fashionable or commercially convenient,” says Oppenheimer. “South African retailers who sign onto the retail programme should therefore be prepared to make the considerable sacrifice required to remove China’s products from their shelves.”

Labour law expert Michael Bagraim says The Coalition’s retail programme is “very similar to early Nazi Germany”, and will add a new restriction to doing business in South Africa. He says the Competition Commission “should investigate this, and the business community should refer The Coalition to that commission”.

Pantanowitz says that The Coalition’s founding directors tell you what this campaign is about. Kasrils called Hamas’s 7 October assault a “brilliant, spectacular attack”. Pandor phoned Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh within days of the massacre. Chikane fronts a global anti-apartheid movement that has found only one country on earth worth its attention. Sooliman has predicted the end of Israel and reached for old insinuations about money, power, influence, and control.

“The Coalition doesn’t hide its purpose either,” says Pantanowitz. “Its own material calls for the ‘eradication of Zionism,’” which is an identity of the overwhelming majority of South African Jews.

Therefore, the campaign isn’t asking retailers to take a view on Gaza, says Pantanowitz. “It’s asking them to declare that they are against the peoplehood of their own Jewish customers, staff, and neighbours.”

Singling out the Jewish collective for elimination “while every other national movement on earth goes unremarked, has a name, and the SAZF will use it plainly: this is antisemitism”.

To appropriate the apartheid struggle “to cast the world’s only Jewish State as a contaminant is an insult to the people who fought it”, says Pantanowitz. “Our shops should welcome every customer who walks through the door. They shouldn’t be places where a Jewish family reads a sticker in the window and understands it was put there with them in mind. The SAZF calls on South African retailers to reject this campaign outright.”

South African Jewish Board of Deputies national chairperson Professor Karen Milner says The Coalition “hides a hate-filled antizionist agenda behind sweet-sounding language”.

Its professed “consumer activism” is exposed by the simple fact that it deems only goods from Israel to be problematic, says Milner. The Coalition has “appointed itself an arbiter of which businesses South Africans may support. Its divisive agenda has found little traction in South Africa, where ordinary South Africans mostly reject the division fostered by those with an antizionist agenda.”

Architects of King David sports centre among the world’s best

LEE TANKLE

Hubo Studio has put South African architecture on the global stage. Its design of the Klaff Family Sports Complex at King David High School has been shortlisted in the sport category of the prestigious World Architecture Festival (WAF) Awards. The project is one of just seven sports buildings worldwide to make the 2026 shortlist.

The World Architecture Festival is regarded as one of the world’s most prestigious architecture competitions, attracting hundreds of entries from leading architects across the globe. Shortlisted projects are judged by a panel of international experts before finalists present their work live at the festival. The recognition is a milestone not only for Johannesburg-based Hubo Studio, but also for King David, placing one of South Africa’s Jewish schools alongside internationally acclaimed architectural projects and reinforcing the school’s investment in world-class facilities.

“WAF is the biggest live judged architecture event, and it’s basically the global stage for architecture,” says Asher Marcus, founder and lead designer at Hubo Studio. “The work happening in Johannesburg and in King David schools and in our Jewish community is relevant to the global conversation”, he says.



He says that what makes the King David sports centre special is the different approach to sport, particularly through the use of colour.

“Sports is a space that has prolific amounts of bullying, pressure, and discomfort. What we tried to do was create a spatial approach to how sports can feel and how it can be accessible to everyone,” he says. “We’re a community that doesn’t have many professional athletes, but that doesn’t mean we can’t create a space that feels professional, special, and wonderful, and where we can celebrate the heroes in our own world.”

The centre is described as a sports village, with a dance studio, indoor and outdoor courts, a cardio gym with double-volume views of the sports fields, amphitheatre seating, and recovery rooms with ice baths. These spaces are connected by terraces, spill-out zones, and shared courtyards, encouraging a strong sense of community.

Hubo Studio isn’t an unfamiliar name at the World Architecture Festival. Last year, it won the Best Use of Natural Light award for the Redhill Early Learning Centre in Johannesburg.

Similarly, Hubo Studios won two Architizer A+ Awards for its work on the Redhill Early Learning Centre in June.

It was named the Jury Winner in the Best Kindergarten category, placing the project at the forefront of early-learning design worldwide. The project was also awarded the Popular Choice Winner in the Educational Interiors category.

“The Popular Choice Award holds a particularly special meaning for the studio,” says Marcus. “It reflects the incredible support of the people around us, our clients, collaborators, friends, families, and wider community, who came together to champion this project. Seeing so many people take the time to vote, share, and support Hubo Studio was a powerful reminder that architecture is never created in isolation. It is shaped by the communities it serves, and celebrated by the communities that believe in it.”

After the studio’s success at WAF last year, it submitted the King David Sports Centre for another education award. However, the organisers of WAF shortlisted the project under the sports category.

Marcus, also a judge at WAF this year, says being shortlisted shows that the relatively small studio can compete with some of the world’s biggest architectural firms.

“It was exciting for us to find out that the project resonated so much with the jury. They have since been invited to exhibit at the World Architecture Festival. It’s a big deal for us. We punch above our weight, but we’re very ambitious and also conscious of the fact that this is no small feat. It’s among thousands of entries, and it shows what rigour, hard work, determination, and forward thinking can do,” he says.

This sets the tone for future projects, including a school in Miami.

“We’ve set the standard. We want every project we do to be of a quality that is the best in the world, and that for me is quite an outrageous thing to say. But having won a World Architecture Festival prize and the two Architizer A+ Awards gives us the confidence and global backing to know that what we’re doing is world-leading, not just world-class,” says Marcus.



Modise says “one mustn’t ignore the political agenda and profound hypocrisy underpinning” the retail programme.

Israeli-developed technologies and innovations are “deeply integrated into the global systems on which ordinary South Africans rely every day”, says Modise. “Selectively targeting visible retail products while continuing to benefit from these technologies is neither principled nor coherent.”

The SA Jewish Report asked The Coalition a list of detailed questions, including why it believes Israel is an apartheid state, and if Zionists and Israelis would be allowed in stores that are “apartheid-free zones”.

The Coalition’s media coordinator, Lauren-Aaliyah Kolia, couldn’t answer why Israel is an apartheid state. Instead, she responded that The Coalition “is guided by international law and the findings of internationally recognised human rights organisations and legal bodies. Consistent with those findings, we regard Israel as an apartheid state.”

She said the retail programme “doesn’t exclude or discriminate against customers. Participating retailers remain open to everyone. Our opposition is to apartheid and injustice, not to people.”

Trio show Israel is not simply black or white

LEE TANKLE

What do a Christian Lebanese-Israeli activist, an Arab-Israeli public diplomacy advocate, and a Jewish Ethiopian content creator have in common?

They happen to be in South Africa this week to offer perspectives of Israel that they say are often overlooked.

Maryam Younnes, who grew up in southern Lebanon; Fuad Ahmad, the Arab Israeli; and Havtam Layo, otherwise known as @blacknjewish on Instagram, are in South Africa with the organisation Israel-Is as guests of South African Friends of Israel.

Their mission is to engage audiences in conversations about identity, coexistence, and the many voices that make up Israeli society. The three are shaped by their different backgrounds, communities, experiences, and how they go about their activism.

“Our purpose is to show the Middle East as this complex place that isn’t black or white,” said Younnes. “Moderate voices are coming forward and asking for solutions, for peace agreements. We’re asking to eradicate extremism and terrorist organisations, and just showing that every one of us, within our diversity, lives in Israel, and that it’s possible.”

Younnes’s father was a commander in the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which fought alongside Israel. After Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, her family moved to Israel with thousands of other SLA families. Today, she is known for her Arabic-language social media videos, which showcase Israeli society, culture, and coexistence to audiences across the Arab world.

She says that through her activism, she shows people that extremism isn’t the lay of the land in the Arab world and that there are many moderate voices that want peace.

Younnes’s videos about Lebanon and Israel have reached Lebanese media, making her the first Lebanese Israeli to appear on Lebanese television to discuss these issues.

“For me, that showed my videos were having a real impact, not just reaching people, but helping shape conversations and encouraging dialogue about peace. Even when Arab media covered my videos critically, I saw it as significant because it meant my message and opinions were reaching audiences across the region,” she said.

Ahmad, a Muslim Arab-Israeli communications professional and public diplomacy advocate, currently

they couldn’t come to Israel to see the reality, and we couldn’t go there,” he said. “So, when people started sharing on social media about their lives in Israel and everything, a lot of people didn’t accept the reality that there are Arabs in the Israeli State and that they’re part of the fabric of the country, in the Israel Defense Forces, police, government, everywhere.

“Also, some of them are fed a lot of fake news about Israel. So, it was very hard for them to accept our reality

or positive stories about us. When we share anything about Israel, they take it like we’re sharing fake news and that we’re just making PR for Israelis, and they think that most Arabs in Israel are suffering in Israel, just like in East Jerusalem or the West Bank,” he said.

Since 8 October 2023, when Hezbollah attacked Israel, Younnes said she has seen more encouragement than ever from Lebanese people.

“People were saying, ‘We’re so tired of this, and you’re our voice. We can’t speak out from Lebanon.’ Since then, many of the taboos in Lebanon have begun to break down. More people are no longer afraid to say they want peace. They kept telling me, ‘Please keep going.’ They saw me as someone who wasn’t afraid to speak up on behalf of Lebanese people because I was living in Israel. The response was overwhelmingly positive. While there was some criticism, the positive comments increased dramatically, and the exposure was incredible,” she said.

Similarly, what Layo does on her Instagram page is challenge the view of Israel. Part of her mission, especially as an Ethiopian Jewish woman, is to show that life in Israel is not what the haters believe it to be.

“Although I’m Jewish, I was still born in Ethiopia. And when you see that they’re using words like

‘slavery’ and ‘apartheid’ to describe Israel, it’s not only offensive towards Jews and Israelis, but it is very offensive towards people whose family went through apartheid and slavery, and undermines their history and their trauma to justify hate and antisemitism,” she said.

One of the most shocking things she heard was an African American woman on a podcast claiming that Israel is a segregated country and that black people are treated as slaves there. “I found that especially surprising given the history of slavery. She made those claims publicly, despite not speaking Hebrew or Arabic or having first-hand knowledge of what is happening in the Middle East. To me, it’s concerning when people hear statements like that and believe them. There are still people being enslaved in different parts of the world today and Israel is certainly not one of those places. In my view, Israel is an example of a country that works to balance many different cultures and identities.”

Ahmad sees peace as a possibility when the Arab world connects more with Israeli society.

“It is a difficult mission, but we continue because we believe that if people stop engaging on these important issues then hate and extremist groups will prevail. Over the past five years, we’ve seen that remarkable changes are possible. Before 2020, there were no formal relations between Israel and the Gulf states, and now the region looks very different. We’ve also seen significant developments in Syria, with new negotiations taking place, something many of us never imagined would happen. That gives us hope that, over the next few years, we could see even more positive relationships develop across the region,” he said.



Maryam Younnes; Yifat van Leeuwen, manager of international programmes and partnerships at Israel-Is; Havtam Layo; and Fuad Ahmad

serves as the spokesperson for Israel’s Ministry of National Security. He is known for engaging Arabic-speaking audiences on regional issues, Israeli society, and security matters, through interviews, media appearances, and social media.

He explained that, over the years, in the Ministry of National Security and the Office of the President, he has assisted many people get their voices heard in international and Arab media in the aftermath of 7 October. He tries to combat the misconception that people like him aren’t part of Israeli society.

“Before the social media era, there was no connection between the Arab world and the Arabs of Israel. There were no diplomatic relations, and

The Best CEO changes young people’s lives

GILANA LAB

For Martin Sweet, being named Best CEO at the CSI Legacy Awards isn’t a personal achievement. Rather, he sees it as recognition for thousands of young South Africans whose lives have been transformed through the work of his company Primestars over the past 21 years.

“Being named a CSI Legacy Awards finalist is an honour that reflects not only my journey, but the collective dedication of an exceptional team, our partners, and every young person who has walked through our programmes,” he says. “It affirms that our commitment to servant leadership, innovation, and nation building is making a meaningful difference.”

Sweet recently took on the role of group chief executive of Prime Impact Holdings, which brings together Primestars, Signa, Seed Academy, School Media, and InternFit to create what he describes as an integrated ecosystem taking young people from learning to earning.

Despite the growth of the organisation, his purpose has remained unchanged. “My passion is driven by service,” he says. “I knew my purpose was to stand with the young people who are so often overlooked. I feel a profound responsibility to use every resource, connection, and skill I have to widen the circle of opportunity.”

That commitment can be traced back to his childhood. Raised in Klerksdorp by parents who survived the Holocaust, Sweet says they did everything they could to ensure he received a good education, instilling in him the belief that learning has the power to transform lives. It became the foundation on which he would later build one of South Africa’s largest youth development organisations.

After a successful corporate career and time as a Johannesburg city councillor, Sweet says he felt called to dedicate himself to addressing the inequalities that continue to limit young South Africans.



Martin Sweet accepting his award

“My inspiration came from a simple but powerful calling: to uplift the disenfranchised and ensure that where a child is born doesn’t determine how far they can go,” he says. “South Africa’s youth face disproportionate barriers, poor schooling, limited exposure, lack of guidance, and systemic inequality.”

When he founded Primestars in 2004, then known as Marketing Stars, it was little more than what Sweet describes as “a small team with a big idea”. “We believed South Africa’s youngsters deserved more than hope. They deserved access, opportunity, and a bridge between where they were and where they aspired to go.”

One of the organisation’s first breakthroughs came from an unconventional idea, transforming cinemas into “theatres of learning” and allowing thousands of matric pupils to revise maths and science in an immersive environment. That programme, eduCate, remains one of Primestars’ flagship initiatives. Projects promoting entrepreneurship, financial literacy, career guidance, leadership development, and healthy masculinity have since been added.

Reflecting on the organisation’s growth, Sweet says the focus has never simply been on education. “We helped young people explore careers they didn’t know existed. We encouraged them to step into entrepreneurship, to see themselves as creators of jobs rather than seekers of them. We challenged stereotypes around gender and masculinity. We taught financial literacy in ways that spoke to human behaviour. We built leadership programmes that helped young people find their voice, their agency, their purpose.”

To date, Primestars has reached more than 1.7 million young people across South Africa, with more than 90 000 participating in its programmes each year.

Sweet believes the greatest misconception about young people is that they lack ability. “The youth of this country aren’t broken. They are brilliant. They simply need scaffolding, encouragement, and environments that allow their gifts to rise.”

Although honoured by the Best CEO award, Sweet believes it’s far from the end of the journey. “When you follow your calling, and you serve with integrity, the ripple effects can reach far beyond what you ever imagined,” he says. “For Primestars, this recognition strengthens our resolve to scale our impact even further.”

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Jewish Report

Jozi shows us who we really are



On Sunday morning, as thousands walked through our beloved, battered but still beautiful Jozi, something happened that we can’t take for granted. Or perhaps it wasn’t extraordinary at all. Perhaps it was simply South Africa as it is.

Members of our community walked alongside everyone else in the 702 Jozi My Jozi Walk the Talk, the event that returned to the heart of Johannesburg on 26 July, inviting Gauteng communities to reclaim the streets.

Many wore T-shirts with “Jews 4 Jozi” emblazoned proudly across their backs. They didn’t hide. They didn’t whisper. They didn’t make themselves smaller to soothe anyone else’s discomfort. They walked as Jews, Joburgers, and South Africans.

And nobody badgered them. They were part of the greater Johannesburg community, as we have always been. They were included in the greater Johannesburg dysfunctional family.

It made me proud. Proud of our community for showing up. Proud of the kind of South Africa that still exists beneath the shouting, political opportunism, and poisonous noise.

Let’s face it, visible Jewishness around the world is no longer uncomplicated. In London, New York, parts of Canada, and Australia, Jews may think twice about walking in public with any overtly Jewish paraphernalia visible on them. If they did, they might expect abuse, filming, screaming, or worse. In too many supposedly enlightened places, being openly Jewish now comes with a risk assessment.

So when Johannesburg gives us a morning like Sunday, we should recognise what it means. It tells us that ordinary people in this city aren’t the ones driving the hatred. The person walking next to us, pushing a pram, laughing with friends, or trying to keep up with a teenager, doesn’t see us as the enemy at all.

And yet, in the very same week, we publish a story about Dr Imtiaz Sooliman and an organisation with an almost comically ironic name, The Coalition for Good. It is pressuring retailers to stop stocking anything to do with Israel. Its intention doesn’t appear to be to argue about it, or persuade, but rather to frighten people into succumbing to its “request”. To bully businesses into proving their so-called virtue by cutting off anything connected to the Jewish State.

How noble. This is the work of so-called humanitarians. People draped in the language of goodness while deciding what the rest of us may buy, sell, stock, support, or be connected to. They say it’s about Israel not antisemitism. But what they do or don’t realise – who knows anymore? – is that most Jews are connected to Israel. It is part of our DNA, history, religion, family story, prayers, trauma, and hope.

Even if we wanted to disconnect from Israel – and we don’t – we couldn’t. We can rage about Israeli politics and disagree fiercely about its leaders, policy, war, courts, and almost everything else. We do, constantly. But Israel isn’t a political hobby Jews picked up at university. It is woven into us.

So when activists demand that retailers remove anything linked to Israel, they are also telling Jews that our connection is unacceptable. Our identity must be sanitised. Our history is inconvenient. Our grief is irrelevant. Our attachment to the Jewish homeland must be punished in the supermarket aisle.

Businesses, it seems, are in for more bullying from these self-appointed guardians of morality. One wonders why tactics of intimidation so often dress themselves up as humanitarian concern. There should be discomfort when people claim the moral high ground while using pressure to crush choice, debate, and nuance.

Another story in this week’s publication about this feverish anti-Israel sentiment, which will also spill into hostility towards Jews, concerns the race for Johannesburg mayor. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has announced Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng as its candidate. She is a medical doctor and the outgoing United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health. The possible African National Congress (ANC) candidate is Reverend Frank Chikane, a veteran activist.

Neither of their résumés screams “I can run a city”. Johannesburg isn’t a seminar, a pulpit, a rally, or a United Nations platform. It is a broken, complicated, neglected city that needs the unglamorous work of governance. It needs someone who is going to put their nose to the grindstone and sort out water, electricity, roads, refuse removal, billing systems, and infrastructure. It, or should I say we, desperately need a leader who knows municipal government isn’t a stage for ideological theatre.

And yet the ANC and the EFF seem to favour those who publicly express hostility towards Israel, which is so far from Jozi. Severe criticism of the Jewish State somehow becomes a credential in certain parties’ politics. As if fixing potholes requires taking a position on Israel. As if restoring water supply depends on one’s view of Zionism. As if traffic lights will suddenly work if the Jewish State is denounced loudly enough.

G-d help us if either Mofokeng or Chikane becomes mayor. Actually, we have had mayors with hardline ideological views before, and they did nothing particularly bad to us as Jews. But they did nothing good for the city either. Like so many mayors and leaders over the past decades, they presided over the decline, drift, and decay, and did nothing.

Our city is collapsing in front of us, and some who are poised to lead it appear more excited about their hatred of Israel than any desire to fix Johannesburg. And when Jews object, we are told not to worry, that antizionism has nothing to do with antisemitism, that this is all justice. Forgive us if we don’t applaud.

Because we know how this works. First, it is Israel. Then Israeli products. The line keeps moving, and somehow we are always told we are imagining it.

But Sunday’s walk told another story. It reminded me that the loudest voices aren’t the majority. The people issuing threats, launching campaigns, shouting slogans, and seeking office on the back of fashionable hatred don’t represent the soul of this city.

Could it be that Jozi, in spite of everything, remains more inclusive than we fear? Could it be that the best of its people understand that Jews are part of this place, not guests to be tolerated?

Sunday didn’t erase the hatred. It didn’t make the bullying disappear. It didn’t mean we can relax our vigilance or pretend antisemitism isn’t mutating in ugly and dangerous ways. But it gave us a glimpse of something worth holding onto: a Johannesburg where Jews can walk openly, proudly, and safely; where we can be fully Jewish and South African.

That matters. In a world in which Jews are increasingly made to hide or sever ourselves from Israel to be acceptable, Jozi gave us a different message. It said, “Walk. Be seen. Be proud. You belong here.” Thank you, Jozi!

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

Seeing the gaps in a state’s ‘sovereignty stack’

OPINION

AMIR MIZROCH



Almost every advanced economy is quietly trying to do the same thing right now. A pandemic cut their supply chains. A war turned energy into a weapon. An artificial intelligence (AI) race started between Washington and Beijing, and everyone else is trying to find a way not to lose their own future. And one by one, governments stopped believing they can simply buy what they need from whoever sells it cheapest. They want to own the things that matter: their chips, their energy, their defence, their AI, and the people who build all of it.

Call it a sovereignty stack. It’s the full chain a country needs to stand on its own. Money at the base; skilled people in the middle; real production, factories, power, and hardware at the top. Money hires people, people build things, and a country that owns the whole chain can’t be held hostage by another one.

Wanting the stack is easy. The trap is that your own gaps are invisible until something tests them. A country can look strong at every layer you can see and be quietly dependent underneath. Most nations have no idea what their own gap actually looks like, because nothing has forced them to find out yet.

Israel is the exception worth studying, not because it’s failing, but because it’s being tested in public. It’s a sophisticated country discovering, in real time, exactly where its sovereignty stack leaks. Every gap it hits is a gap sitting in some form in someone else’s stack too, undetected.

billion (R127.2 billion) in the first half of 2026. But a strong currency and rising costs meant that money bought fewer local jobs, not more. In 2025, for the first time in more than a decade, the number of research jobs in Israel actually fell, while funding surged. Money coming in isn’t the same as capability going up. Plenty of countries read the inflow and miss the erosion underneath it.

Talent leaves through the side door. You don’t have to fire the engineers a sovereignty stack depends on to lose them. You price them out, wear them down, or let a stronger currency abroad pull them away. Only 62% of employees at private Israeli tech firms are still based in Israel, down from 69% in 2019. You can fully fund the mission and still lose the people who were supposed to deliver it.

The “independent” project isn’t. Israel’s flagship self-reliance programme is stitched through with the exact dependence it was built to end, like navy vessel hulls built abroad, and a new plant for its own Iron Dome interceptors that opened not in Israel but in Arkansas. Relabelling dependence as partnership doesn’t make it independence.

Then physics sends its bill. Israel wants to be an AI hub. AI runs on data centres, and data centres run on electricity. This summer, Israel’s power regulator froze all new data-centre connections after requests hit three times the country’s entire electricity

Start with why it’s trying. For years, Israel bought big parts of its arsenal from allies and slept fine. Then, during the recent war, those allies used the supply as leverage. The United States slowed weapons deliveries mid-fight, and Britain and Canada froze export licences. The lesson is universal, and most countries are starting to learn it now. A supplier who can pause you at the worst possible moment isn’t a supplier. It’s a kill switch, and someone else’s hand is on it. Every country that imports what it can’t live without owns this risk. The bill is coming soon.

Israel has committed to invest about \$110 billion (R1.8 trillion) in its own stack, but its gaps are serious and only now coming into full view. These gaps are often hidden in most national stacks, so it’s instructive to look at Israel’s case.

A booming top line hides a shrinking base. Israeli tech raised a record \$7.6

use. Ambition met a grid that can’t carry it. Every country chasing AI is walking towards the same wall.

Sovereignty is a system, money, people, factories, and power, and being world-class at one layer tells you nothing about the others. The dangerous gap is always the one you can’t see from where you’re standing.

Israel is finding its gaps out now. The useful question for everyone else is: do you actually know where yours are?

• *Award-winning writer, editor, and host of The Dejargonizer podcast, Amir Mizroch was born in Israel and raised in Krugersdorp, South Africa, studying journalism at Rhodes University. He worked at The Jerusalem Post and Israel Hayom and was later director of communications at Start-Up Nation Central. He was also tech editor EMEA for The Wall Street Journal.*

AI-generated image

Giving away sovereignty stacks to country leaders

New alliance to strengthen Judaism in East Africa

CLAUDIA GROSS

For years, small Orthodox Jewish communities across East Africa have practised their faith largely in isolation. They have struggled to access Jewish education, kosher food, religious items, and recognition from the wider Jewish world. Now, leaders believe a meeting in Nairobi could mark the start of a new chapter.

Representatives from Orthodox Jewish communities in Uganda met Rabbi Yosef Zimmerman, the rabbi of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, in Kenya earlier this month to discuss creating a coordinated East African Orthodox Jewish network.

Hoshea Silver Walugembe Magezi, chairperson of the Uganda Jewish Wealth Creation Initiative, said the journey itself reflected the growing relationship between the communities. "It was a great experience being in a different city for the cause of Judaism, something that you believe in," he said. "We kept Shabbat with a community that we're becoming more comfortable calling our sister community."

The discussions began before Shabbat and continued throughout the weekend. Magezi said one of the most important topics was how isolated many Orthodox Jewish communities in East Africa have become. "We want to stop being in isolation because every community is working on its own. The leaders carry the burden of their communities alone, yet we all face similar challenges."

He said many communities know little about one. "Only on that Shabbat did I learn there was a Jewish community in Arusha. We need to exchange information, benchmark each other, and share knowledge because we face the same problems," he said.

One example discussed was kosher slaughter. Most Ugandan Orthodox communities currently perform kosher slaughter only for poultry. Magezi said Zimmerman recently visited Ethiopia with

Dr Ari Greenspan, who trains communities in kosher slaughter, and hopes to bring similar training to Uganda.

"We want to exchange knowledge within African Jewish communities," Magezi said. "We want strict observance of *kashrut*, and we want to learn how to slaughter goats and sheep because those are much more common here."

Orah Lawrence, a rabbinical student in Uganda who attended the meeting, said Zimmerman had already committed to visiting Uganda later this year to provide that training. "He promised he would come and upgrade us from doing chickens to goats and sheep," Lawrence said.

Education emerged as another priority. Magezi said many Jewish schools in the region struggle to balance religious and secular studies. Limited funding makes the challenge even greater because many families live below the poverty line.

Parents wanted children to receive both a Torah education and the academic qualifications needed to compete in the wider job market.

Lawrence also emphasised the need for more educational resources. "I teach members of the community every morning after prayers until noon," he said. "We need more Jewish resources so that we can strengthen Judaism in this region."

Access to religious items is another challenge. Many essential objects must be imported

from Israel at considerable cost. Lawrence said Zimmerman brought several items from Israel during the visit, including *tzitzit*, *tefillin*, *mezuzot*, and a sharpening stone used to prepare kosher slaughter knives. "We were so glad to receive them," Lawrence said. "Everything has to be

imported. Even our matzah for Pesach comes from outside."

Beyond practical concerns, participants discussed one of the most sensitive issues facing several African Orthodox communities, namely recognition of conversions. Many members of these communities underwent Orthodox conversions overseen

by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin of Efrat in Israel. However, those conversions are not universally recognised by Israel's Chief Rabbinate, limiting the ability of converts to make aliya or receive recognition within some Orthodox institutions. Magezi said participants accepted that the issue remained complicated. "We discussed how

our conversions are viewed," he said. "There is hope because we understand there are different opinions within the Jewish world. We believe Hashem is the ultimate judge."

Lawrence described the issue as disappointing but not permanent. "If it's politics, it's not always the final thing. Politics changes. We hope that one day there will be greater recognition."

Rather than allowing those disagreements to divide communities, Lawrence said the meeting reinforced the importance of stronger regional ties. "We're looking for East Africa to become a strong Jewish community," he said. "We have all been isolated for too long. It's better to coordinate and see how we can sustain Judaism for generations."

The proposed network could also help create common approaches to religious education, community development, and future conversions. Lawrence said leaders hoped a coordinated regional structure would eventually become recognised within the broader Jewish world. "We want to be recognised as a strong Jewish community here," he said. "We want to be embedded in the greater Jewish world."

The discussions also explored possible support from the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

Although no formal organisation was established during the Nairobi meeting, participants described it as the beginning of a long-term process. For Magezi, the greatest achievement was creating new relationships.

"Once we consolidate and harmonise, and share knowledge about how to deal with our challenges, it will make all of us stronger," he said. Lawrence believes the meeting showed that East Africa's small Jewish communities no longer need to face challenges alone. "We're looking forward to future consolidation and strengthening Judaism in this part of the world. We want our people to feel they are part of the wider Jewish family."



Hoshea Magezi, Orah Lawrence, and Rabbi Yosef Zimmerman in Nairobi

Last week to nominate achievers

GILANA LAB

With just one week before nominations close for the 2026 Investec Jewish Achiever Awards, the response from the community has already exceeded expectations.

More than 300 nominations have been received so far, putting this year's awards on track to become one of the strongest nomination drives in the event's history. Whether it proves to be a record or not, one thing is already clear: an extraordinary number of South African Jews make an impact that far outweighs the community's size.

underpin the community: resilience, innovation, generosity, and a determination to make South Africa stronger.

The pages of the *SA Jewish Report* have chronicled many of their remarkable journeys. Last year's Business Icon winner, Dion Friedland, shared how determination and a willingness to challenge convention helped him build one of South Africa's best-known retail brands, Dion Stores. Humanitarian Award winner Sivan Yaari has transformed the lives of millions across Africa by bringing clean water and electricity to remote communities. Veteran politician Tony Leon reflected on a lifetime of public service after receiving the Professional Excellence Award, while boxing trainer Colin Nathan was recognised for guiding South African fighters to the pinnacle of the sport. Their achievements are very different, yet they all embody the spirit the awards seek to celebrate.

The awards are as much about discovering the next generation of achievers as they are about recognising established names. Every year, nominations uncover inspiring stories of people quietly making a profound difference, often without seeking recognition.

With nominations closing in just one week's time, it is now up to the community to ensure no deserving individual is overlooked. Whether it's an entrepreneur creating jobs, a doctor transforming lives, a scientist breaking new ground, a volunteer strengthening the community, or a young leader already making an outsized impact, this is the opportunity to ensure their contribution is recognised.

Nominations for the 2026 Investec Jewish Achiever Awards close at 17:00 on 7 August, with the awards ceremony taking place on 1 November.

If you know someone who deserves to be celebrated, now is the time to nominate them.

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver



From the 2025 Investec Jewish Achiever Awards

A community of fewer than 50 000 people has consistently produced business leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists, philanthropists, artists, sports stars, and humanitarians whose influence extends well beyond the country's borders. Time and again, Jewish South Africans build industries, drive innovation, strengthen communities, and make an impact around the world.

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After the move from Joburg to Cape Town

CLAUDIA GROSS

For years, people have been packing up their lives in Johannesburg and heading to the Western Cape, drawn by the promise of beaches, better municipal services, and a slower pace of life. Property trends have reflected this movement, with Cape Town and surrounding towns attracting families, retirees, and professionals looking for a different way of living.

More recently, however, another trend has begun to emerge. People are returning to Johannesburg after discovering that the reality of semigration differs from the dream.

For Jews, especially, the decision often involves more than work or property prices. Community, schools, synagogues, family, and friendships all play a role. Five members of the community who have made the move south, or returned north, shared what they gained, what they lost, and what ultimately determined where they call home.

For Talia*, 34, moving from Glenhazel to Sea Point delivered exactly the lifestyle she'd hoped for. She and her husband relocated two years ago with their two young children, leaving behind a large Johannesburg home for a three-bedroom apartment overlooking the Atlantic Seaboard.

"In Johannesburg, we lived behind high walls. Here, our living room is the Sea Point Promenade. The lifestyle upgrade for my kids has been priceless."

Talia says the children were the main motivation for the move in the first place. Johannesburg's traffic, security concerns, and constant planning gave way to a more relaxed, outdoor lifestyle. "Here, my kids' childhood is defined by tidal pools, parks we can actually walk to, and the beach.

"On Friday afternoons, we walk down to the Sea Point Promenade to watch the sunset before Shabbat, and there's this beautiful, collective sigh of relief. You just can't put a price tag on that level of freedom."

Although downsizing from a spacious house was a significant adjustment, Talia says it was one her family willingly embraced. "The biggest anxiety was the schooling and community transition, but the Herzlia network and the Marais Road Shul community opened their arms to us immediately."

Her work as a freelance digital marketing consultant and graphic designer made the move easier because she continues to serve Gauteng clients while building relationships in Cape Town.

She acknowledges that Cape Town can be difficult socially for newcomers, but believes initiative makes all the difference. "A lot of people warned me that Cape Town is cliquey, and it can be if you just wait for people to invite you in. But as a young mom, if you are willing to make the first move, show up at the local kosher deli, and chat at the school gates, you find your tribe quickly."

For corporate commercial attorney David*, semigration was very different. After his divorce, he moved from Melrose to Green Point, expecting to enjoy semi-retirement while continuing his consulting work. Instead, he returned to Johannesburg just 18 months later. "Cape Town is a beautiful postcard, but Johannesburg is a home."

David says he underestimated how difficult it would be to establish meaningful friendships after relocating alone. "When you are 60-plus and moving alone, the 'Cape Town clique' is a very real, very cold barrier."

He contrasts that with his experience in Johannesburg. "In Joburg, if someone finds out you're new to a shul or a neighbourhood, you'll have three Friday-night dinner invitations before the service is even over."

The weather also surprised him. "Everyone talks about the summer, but nobody warns you about three consecutive months of grey, relentless wind, and horizontal rain."

Professionally, he found that most of his work and business relationships remained firmly based in Gauteng. "I went down there thinking I would ease into semi-retirement, but the slow pace of business actually drove me crazy." After returning to Johannesburg, he says he immediately felt at home again. "Coming back to Melrose felt like putting on a pair of perfectly broken-in shoes."

Business owner and creative Nicola Hetz spent much longer in Cape Town before deciding to head back to



Johannesburg. After 13 years in the Mother City, she says rising operating costs, changing business conditions, and family considerations made returning north the logical choice.

"I've always enjoyed Cape Town's creative energy and the film industry was booming when I moved there," she says. "But after COVID-19, things shifted."

Commercial property costs became increasingly difficult to justify, while much of her client base had already shifted to Johannesburg. Rather than transporting work between provinces, she decided to relocate her business. "I felt it was a better opportunity to come to Joburg because property is more affordable here, and most of my clients are here."

She also believes Johannesburg has evolved considerably since she left. "I think it's a really vibrant city these days. It feels much more multicultural and gives a real sense of the new South Africa."

For Diane Wolpert, semigration became an opportunity to reinvent herself. She moved to Cape Town almost five years ago after being retrenched. Although she had planned to relocate later to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren, losing her job accelerated those plans. "The lifestyle that I have here has been unbelievable," she says. "It's changed my life completely."

Wolpert has embraced an active lifestyle that she never imagined for herself. She has completed hundreds of hikes, tackled the five-day Whale Trail, gone kayaking, camped regularly, and taken part in outdoor events that have transformed both her physical fitness and her social life.

Unlike some newcomers who struggle to establish themselves, Wolpert deliberately sought out opportunities to meet people rather than waiting for friendships to develop naturally. "I started from scratch. I had to make a life for myself and I did."

She acknowledges that meeting people was challenging initially and understands why Cape Town has a reputation for being cliquey. "It was difficult," she says. "My daughter suggested hiking. I'd never hiked in my entire life. From there it literally just grew."

Joining hiking groups opened the door to other clubs and activities, eventually creating a wide social network. Having built a fulfilling life centred on outdoor activities and new friendships, Wolpert has no intention of returning to Johannesburg. "Never. Never ever."

Janine Elin's experience could hardly have been more different. After dreaming for years about relocating to Cape Town, she sold everything she owned and accepted a job offer there once her children had grown up. She expected a fresh start, but returned to Johannesburg after just six weeks.

"I love Cape Town as Cape Town," she says. "I love what I see aesthetically." However, she says living there was very different from visiting on holiday. "I found Cape Town very cold. I found it very cliquey"

Coming from Johannesburg's fast-moving property sector, Elin struggled to adjust to Cape Town's business culture. "I found Cape Town backwards then," she says.

"Tomorrow's already too late in the kind of business I'm in."

Although several factors contributed to her decision to leave, she says the lack of social connection reinforced her feeling that Johannesburg was where she belonged. "If you're a new person coming to Joburg and you're in the community, the first thing we do is ask you to come for Shabbat. We include you."

Returning to Johannesburg brought immediate relief. "It was like I never left. I came straight home and I've never looked back."

These stories illustrate that there's no single semigration experience. Lifestyle, career opportunities, stage of life, family support, and personality all influence whether the move is a success.

For Talia and Wolpert, Cape Town delivered the quality of life they had hoped for. Both actively embraced new communities and built lives centred on the outdoors and local Jewish networks.

For David, Hetz, and Elin, however, Johannesburg ultimately offered something they valued more. Whether it was stronger business opportunities, established relationships, affordability, or a greater sense of belonging, returning north felt like coming home.

As semigration patterns continue to evolve across South Africa, the experiences of these members of the Jewish community suggest that the decision is rarely about scenery alone. While mountain views and ocean air may attract people to the Western Cape, long-term happiness often depends on something less tangible: finding a place where work, community, family, and friendships all come together.

*Interviewees have asked for their names to be changed for privacy reasons.

‘Compassion has no borders’

LEE TANKLE

For foreign nationals at the Lindela Repatriation Centre, the days are marked by uncertainty. But beyond the centre's gates, a small network of mostly Jewish volunteers is determined to ensure those awaiting deportation are not forgotten. They provide practical aid and a reminder that compassion can reach even the most difficult places.

Joburgers Tayla Smith and Terri Maselle have taken it upon themselves to try to bring displaced migrants some comfort.

At the beginning of July, Smith, 25, posted on her social media that she would be visiting the Malawi Consulate in Woodmead, Johannesburg two days later with essential supplies, and inviting others to join her. Friends, family, and strangers came forward, and she raised R5 000.

Maselle, founder of The Good Human, a people-first recruitment agency, saw this post and wanted to jump on board.

"For me, this wasn't a difficult decision. Humanitarian work has been part of my life's journey for many years. Through The Good Human, we have always believed that our purpose extends beyond helping people find employment. It's about restoring dignity and offering hope wherever it is needed," she said.

"I simply couldn't walk away," said Maselle. "These men, women, and children had been stripped of virtually everything they owned. They were sleeping in freezing conditions for days while waiting to be processed before being transported to repatriation centres. No human being should have to endure that without compassion from others."

While at the consulate, Smith spent time speaking to Malawian nationals who were waiting for transport back home. "One conversation stayed with me," she said. "A man named Thom shared how he had come to South Africa three years ago to find work so that he could support his children and his sick mother in Malawi. He had built a life here as a food delivery driver, but in the face of xenophobic attacks, he felt he had no choice but to leave everything behind and flee for his safety."

Many of the people gathered at the consulate would be transported to the Lindela Repatriation Centre in Krugersdorp while funds were being raised for buses to take them home. It became clear to Smith that the need extended beyond the consulate; there were vulnerable people arriving at Lindela who would also require support.

She started a larger donation drive, raising R15 000 in a matter of days.

Maselle also sprang into action to mobilise donations of food, blankets, clothing, toiletries, and other essentials.

"One of the most inspiring aspects has been watching people from different faiths unite around a common purpose. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities have worked side by side, demonstrating that compassion transcends religion, culture, and



background," she said.

"When I arrived at Lindela, I expected to distribute supplies to Malawian and Zimbabwean nationals preparing to return home. However, I noticed a small group of people standing quietly apart from everyone else. When I approached them and asked why they weren't collecting supplies, one person softly replied, 'We are refugees. We will come afterwards and take whatever is left,'" Smith said.

She was even more shocked to find that 23 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and Ethiopia had been living at Lindela for seven years.

"I spent the remainder of the day listening to their stories and trying to understand how they had ended up there. Each story revealed unimaginable hardship, loss, and resilience," she said.

"What struck me most was the reality of their daily lives. Many struggle to afford even the most basic necessities such as soap, toilet paper, and sanitary products. One woman showed me how she tears strips of fabric from her clothing to use during her menstrual cycle because she cannot afford sanitary pads. She washes and reuses the same fabric repeatedly because she has no alternative."

Smith believed it was necessary to step up because she believes that regardless of where people come from, no one should feel invisible or abandoned in their most vulnerable moments.

"For me, helping was never about solving every problem. It was about restoring a sense of dignity, offering practical support, and reminding people that they are not alone. These refugees have been silently suffering for years, so for me, simply offering them space to talk about their struggles instilled hope in them. Sometimes the simple act of being seen, heard, and treated with kindness can make an enormous difference," she said.

Over the past two weeks, Smith and Maselle have assisted thousands – between 250 and more than 1 000 people on any given day – through the distribution of donated food, clothing, blankets, and essential supplies.

As the situation continues to evolve, those numbers grow, and the support extends to additional vulnerable refugee groups who require urgent humanitarian assistance.

While both women have been criticised for not focusing exclusively on South Africans in need, they believe their efforts aren't about politics but rather humanity.

"When people are cold, hungry, traumatised, and have lost everything, our first responsibility is compassion. We're not taking sides in a political debate; we're responding to human suffering," said Maselle. "I believe that helping another human being doesn't diminish anyone else. Kindness has no nationality, and compassion has no borders."

"One of the biggest lessons this experience has taught me is that empathy is not a weakness; it is a strength. The incredible generosity I have witnessed has shown me that compassion is contagious. When one person chooses to care, it often permits others to care as well." she said.

"One of the most profound lessons I have learned through this experience is the power of social media to amplify empathy. By sharing the stories of people who are suffering, we allow others to see beyond statistics and headlines and connect with individuals on a human level. I have watched strangers come together to support people they have never met, simply because they were moved by their stories. It has reminded me that awareness can inspire action, and that collective kindness has the power to change lives," Maselle said.



Proudly Jewish on the streets of Joburg

OPINION

Imagine walking through the centre of almost any major city in the diaspora in 2026 wearing a T-shirt celebrating your Jewish identity. For many Jews, that would feel like an act of courage. Yet on Sunday, 26 July, a team of Johannesburg Jews did exactly that.

As part of 702’s Walk the Talk, our team proudly wore shirts emblazoned with the words “Jews 4 Jozi”. We weren’t simply taking part in a walk. We were making a statement: Jews belong in Johannesburg, and we are proud to be part of its story. The day began with a Gautrain ride, a walk through the upgraded Park Station, and a spotless Metrorail journey to Ellis Park, alongside thousands of fellow Joburgers. Before setting off on the 8km route, our group gathered for a *minyán* so that one participant could recite kaddish.



As Raphy Da Costa reflected, “Feeling completely safe while putting on *tefillin* in front of thousands of people is something you can’t take for granted in today’s world.” That sentiment captured what made the day so remarkable. Across the world, Jews have become accustomed to questioning whether it’s safe to wear a *kippah*, a Magen David, or clothing identifying them as Jewish. The atmosphere of fear experienced by Jewish communities internationally inevitably affects us too. It can make us hesitant to step beyond the boundaries of our neighbourhoods or to participate fully in public life.



But Sunday reminded us that Johannesburg tells a different story. Michelle Blumenau admitted that her family had discussed over Shabbat dinner whether she should wear a shirt openly identifying her as Jewish. “The only reaction I got,” she said, “was from a woman who tapped me on the shoulder and said, ‘I love your shirt!’ What a blessing to come from special Joburg.” Along the route, Amira Cohen heard strangers calling out, “Jozi for Jews!”, “Keep going, Jewish people”, and “We love Jewish people!”.

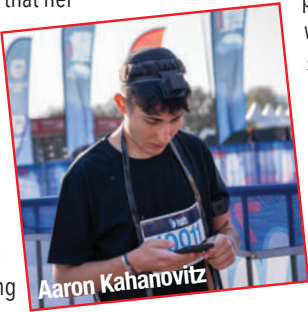
Our team ranged in age from two to 83, walking, laughing, and sharing memories while soaking up the warmth of a Johannesburg winter morning. As Shelli Strous observed, “*Ubuntu* and *oy veys* merged seamlessly with participants helping one another with prams, wheelchairs, and encouragement.”

The city’s renewal mirrored the pride many of us felt simply walking openly as Jews through its streets.

At the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), we often speak about growing attempts around the world to push Jews out of public spaces and make them unwelcome. But



there’s another danger: that we begin to withdraw ourselves. If fear prevents us from venturing beyond the familiar confines of the “bagel belt”, we risk losing something precious. Johannesburg belongs to all of us. We strengthen both our community and our city when we participate in civic life, whether commemorating 16 June in Soweto or joining thousands of fellow citizens for events like Walk the Talk. That is why the SAJBD and the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) created the Jews 4 Jozi team. As SAUJS national chairperson Sasha Said explained, “Wearing our Jews 4 Jozi T-shirts was a conscious affirmation that our Jewish identity



and our place in Johannesburg are inseparable. We weren’t simply representing a community; we were participating in a city we love and in which we are invested. Visibility isn’t just about being seen, it’s about belonging.”

For Steven Lowenstein, who completed the walk with his family of six, the experience was equally meaningful. “We never once encountered any antisemitic responses,” he said. “In fact, I felt very much part of the Rainbow Nation every step of the way.” His children delighted in discovering a *mezuzah* on the gate of Nando’s Central Kitchen in Lorentzville, a reminder of the many Jewish threads woven into Johannesburg’s history.

The walk itself became a journey through memory. Every block evoked stories of Jewish Johannesburg, from the Carlton Centre to Small Street and countless family milestones that unfolded in the city’s heart. Perhaps the most moving moment was related by Gauteng SAJBD chairperson Danny Mofsowitz. As they left the Ellis Park tunnel, her 10-year-old daughter pulled her hair aside to point to the words “Jews 4 Jozi” on her T-shirt. “Mom,” she said, “I’m proud of who I am.”

In a world where too many young Jews are learning to hide their identity, those simple words were profoundly powerful. They reminded us that belonging isn’t something to be taken for granted. It’s something to celebrate, nurture, and protect. As Jade Copans said, “This is what the future of Joburg needs to be: happiness, community, and pride.”

Sunday was about far more than walking. It was about reclaiming public space with confidence, strengthening the bonds between our community and our city, and demonstrating that Jewish pride and South African pride go hand in hand. For one morning, thousands of footsteps carried a simple message through the streets of Johannesburg: We are Jews. We are Joburgers. We belong.

• Wendy Kahn is the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

The information age gap

LEE TANKLE

No matter how many times a mother or father explains that they were once a teenager, their child is still likely to believe that their parents won’t understand what they’re going through. This, according to a clinical psychologist, is perfectly natural and part of growing up. And the teens aren’t wrong. “We underestimate how different their world is,” says clinical psychologist David Abrahamsohn. “This generation is growing up with social media, constant comparison, friendships that live mostly on a screen, intense academic pressure, and now artificial intelligence. “Most parents didn’t have any of that at the same age. So even when a parent means well, the child can still feel that they just don’t get it. What I often tell parents is that acknowledging that things are different now, but that they still genuinely want to understand and listen, is likely to lead to a conversation far more than pretending it isn’t there.”

Clinical psychologist Ruth Ancer says though many parents feel that their children have vanished behind a closed door or glowing screen, a strange paradox exists in our hyper-connected digital world. Children are constantly connected to the universe via their devices, yet they often feel deeply isolated from their own families. Ancer says this feeling of disconnection usually stems from a mix of natural development, relentless digital noise, and conversations that don’t really connect. “During adolescence, a core developmental task is forming a distinct identity separate from the family. Teens naturally pull back and lean on their peers for validation,” she says. “It’s important that we, as parents, remember that this emotional distancing is a normal, healthy part of growing up; it isn’t a pathology. Parents often take it personally – it’s hard not to – but it’s not actually a personal rejection; it’s an appropriate part of adolescence.” Danella Cassel, a 19-year-old who matriculated from

King David Victory Park in 2025, says she definitely doesn’t tell her parents everything, mainly because she doesn’t want to disappoint them. For her and many other teenagers, some rules are meant to be broken as a way of growing up. “Let’s say, for example, a teenager breaks a rule that’s been set. Now they’re in trouble. I think they’re actually scared to call their parents. They would rather call a friend or someone else out of fear, having broken the rules that were set in place, and they don’t actually want to tell their parents.” The biggest misconception Abrahamsohn has come across is that children and teenagers don’t want to connect with their parents. In his experience, it’s the opposite. But children want to be understood rather than judged. “It’s important to remember that adolescence is the stage where a young person is building their own identity and pushing for independence, while still needing the emotional security of home. Those two needs pull in opposite directions, and that tension is completely normal. The problem is that when conversations start to feel like interrogations, or lectures, or a rush to fix the problem, a lot of teenagers simply go quiet or withdraw. Not because they’ve stopped caring; because they no longer feel comfortable emotionally.” “If they anticipate that telling the truth will result in an explosive emotional reaction, lecturing, or shaming, their brain treats honesty as a threat. Withholding information becomes a way of avoiding this,” says Ancer. “One thing that really restricts them from telling their



parents is the thought of being in trouble and ruining those expectations that their parents have and the need to not disappoint their parents,” says Cassel. Dr Hanan Bushkin, psychologist and founder of the Anxiety & Trauma Clinic and the Anchor Based Approach, says, “They may fear anger, punishment, disappointment, judgement, or losing their parents’ trust. In close-knit families and communities, the fear of disappointing the family or being judged by others can make this even stronger.”

What looks like dishonesty is very often self-protection, says Abrahamsohn. “The pattern I see most often in my work is that the harsher the response to the small things, the more reliably children learn to hide the big things. The goal of parenting was never to raise children who don’t make mistakes. It’s to raise children who still come to you when they do,” he says. Ancer says parents need to remember that rebellion isn’t a sign that teenagers have stopped

caring about their parents’ opinions; rather, it’s an aggressive defence mechanism. “They may act out to mask their deep-seated vulnerability, choosing to actively push parents away before they can face what they feel will be ‘inevitably’ letting them down.” Teenagers may also worry that if they share a problem, the parents will swoop in to fix it, rather than let them figure it out on their own, she says. “They keep secrets to guard their developing sense of independence. Remember their cries of ‘Please don’t get involved, you can’t tell the school that this happened’. When parents notice a disconnect, the instinct is often to snoop or implement intense digital tracking. However, research proves that increased parental control and intrusive monitoring actually decrease a teen’s willingness to share and increase secrecy.” When a teenager inevitably comes to a parent with a problem, the most important thing to do is respond calmly. “This doesn’t mean approving everything the child has done. Parents can still set boundaries and consequences, but those should come after the child has felt heard and understood,” says Bushkin. “The single most useful thing is to listen more than you speak. Children don’t always need a solution. Very often they just need to feel heard, and to know the person listening is on their side,” says Abrahamsohn. “Children don’t need perfect parents. They need parents who are emotionally available, curious, and ‘safe’ to talk to. When a child genuinely believes ‘I can tell my parents anything, even if they won’t like what I’ve done’, that’s one of the strongest protective factors there is for their mental health. And one that no piece of technology can offer in a parent’s place.”

B’not Mitzvah give lasting gift to 100 children

CLAUDIA GROSS

For most girls, a Batmitzvah ends when the party is over. For 30 Johannesburg girls, it marked the beginning of a year-long mission that has left a legacy for 100 children in an under-resourced community.

Instead of focusing only on celebrations, the girls spent a year raising enough money to provide 100 MiDesks to children in Zenzele township in Randfontein, west of Johannesburg. The portable desk and chair units include solar-powered lights, giving children a dedicated place to study even when there is no electricity.

The initiative formed part of The Nourish Project, a non-profit organisation founded by Amanda Shapiro to address food insecurity and skills development. The girls’ fundraising campaign became a dedicated branch of the project, called My Chesed. *Chesed* means loving kindness, while *tzedakah* refers to righteous giving, a core Jewish value.

Shapiro said she got the idea when she met Dr Farana Boodhram of MiDesk Global about 18 months before the handover. She learned that an estimated 2.4 million to three million children in South Africa don’t have access to a desk, and that MiDesk was helping by providing portable workstations.

“I knew straight away that this was something I wanted to bring to the Batmitzvah girls,” Shapiro said. “It offered them a meaningful way to channel this important milestone into something with lasting impact.”

About 30 girls participated in the 2025 programme. Together, they committed to funding 100 desks for children who often complete schoolwork sitting on the floor or using any available surface at home.

Over the course of a year, the girls produced a fundraising video and shared it with relatives, friends, and members of the community. They appealed for donations and explained how a simple desk could transform a child’s ability to learn.

Their efforts succeeded. Every rand needed to purchase the 100 desks was raised through their own fundraising campaign. The project culminated in a handover ceremony in Zenzele last month, where the girls met many of the children who would receive the desks.

For 13-year-old Eva Abramson, the visit challenged many of her assumptions. “I didn’t

really know what to expect before we went to Zenzele. I had never been to a place like that.”

She said visiting one woman’s home left a lasting impression. “The people there are

when you can give something to someone that they really need.”

Gia Arenson, also 13, said she was struck by the excitement of the children waiting to receive

“Watching them wait and walk up to receive their desk and seeing the smiles on their faces is something I’ll never forget.”

Arenson said the experience changed the way she thinks about helping others. “I learned that kindness can change everything. Something so small from us is something so big for them.”

Twelve-year-old Ariella Shapiro said, “What surprised me was how warmly I was greeted and how welcoming everyone was. I felt so grateful I had the opportunity to do it and for the family, who was very invested.” The image that has stayed with her is the reaction of one young recipient. “I will always remember the look on the little girl’s face after handing over the desk.”

Asked what she had learned during the year, she gave a simple answer. “How good you feel after doing it.”

The MiDesk is designed to address several barriers to education. Each unit unfolds into a desk and chair, creating a stable workspace for children who may not have furniture at home. The integrated solar light allows them to continue reading and completing homework after sunset, during power cuts, or where there is no access to electricity.

Each desk is expected to last about 12 years, supporting a child throughout most of their school life. For Shapiro, that longevity reflects the purpose of the project. Rather than creating a once-off charitable donation, the girls have given children tools they can use every day for years to come.

In doing so, they have transformed one of Judaism’s most important coming-of-age milestones into a practical expression of responsibility, generosity, and community that will continue long after the celebrations have ended.



A boy sitting at the new desk he had just received from the B’not Mitzvah

very poor. When I went into one of the lady’s houses, I couldn’t believe how small it was. I felt very sad for her. But she was proud to show us her home.”

Abramson said the experience made her appreciate her own circumstances. “I had such a fun party for my Batmitzvah,” she said. “I felt very lucky when I saw girls at Zenzele who are my age. They have probably never had a party.”

Knowing the desks would help children her own age made the project especially meaningful. “I was happy that the desks could help those girls because I have a desk at school and at home.”

She encourages other Batmitzvah girls to consider similar projects. “I would say she must definitely get involved because even though it takes a long time, it feels so good at the end

their desks. “I expected a simple handover and imagined it would be a quick thing, but I was surprised and it made me so happy to see how happy and grateful the children were.

Faith, fertility, and the reproductive lab

>>>Continued from page 2

else. Many carriers comment that they loved being pregnant and look forward to the process especially because they will be able to sleep through the night after the delivery!

While egg and sperm donors were initially required to be anonymous for reasons that don’t make sense today, there is a strong movement to create donor sibling registries. This allows donor conceived children to find their half-siblings, “diblings” in some circles, and obtain ongoing medical information about their donor that might impact them in the future. When donor sperm and later donor egg procedures became possible, no one could have predicted the impact of technology on reproduction. Today, with genetic testing from organisations such as 23andMe and Ancestry.com, it is almost impossible for a donor to remain anonymous. In the not too distant future, children who aren’t told about their donor conception could easily discover the “truth” when they take biology in middle school and bring home the DNA swab kit to learn about their own genetic makeup.

Egg freezing is gaining acceptance in the Orthodox community. The procedure allows eggs to be retrieved by needle aspiration while the woman is sedated. They are subsequently frozen and stored in cryopreservation tanks for later use. For an unmarried woman in her late 30s, this is a significant development as it allows her to preserve

some measure of fertility until she finds a mate. It is also significant for a woman who has a medical condition that requires treatment that can render her infertile, such as some treatments for cancer and other diseases.

Preimplantation genetic testing was developed to diagnose genetically transmittable disorders. The process involves removing a single cell from a day-three embryo and studying the genetic makeup of that cell. While the process is taking place, the embryo is frozen for later use. At day three, the eight cells that make up the embryo are undifferentiated. Removing one will not affect the subsequent development of the embryo. The information obtained can prevent the transfer of embryos with Tay-Sachs, Down syndrome, and other disorders. It could also be used for sex determination, something that halachic and non-halachic authorities consider frivolous.

- *Dr William Petok is a clinical associate professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, United States. He also works in a programme that offers support and resources to Jews experiencing infertility.*
- *This will be one of the topics he speaks about at Limmud 2026 in Cape Town on 14 to 16 August; Durban on 17 August; and in Johannesburg on 21 to 23 August.*



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The wandering rabbi returns

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft has just brought out his second book, *The Travelling Rabbi – Journeys Continued*. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to him about it.

What drew you to becoming ‘The Travelling Rabbi’, and when and how did it happen?

In some ways, the journey began when I was 14 years old. As a pupil at Yeshiva College, I was part of a programme in which we travelled to small Jewish communities to help make a *minyan* and *daven* with Jews who rarely had the opportunity to pray as part of a congregation. I still remember the warmth with which we were welcomed and the difference such a simple visit made. I don’t think I realised it at the time, but that experience lit a spark that never really went out. After that, I went on other visits as part of the Yeshiva College country communities programme, and as a military chaplain during my national service continued to engage with and assist Jews living in the country areas.

In 1993, I was invited to become the country communities rabbi with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Before long, the work expanded across southern Africa, with the establishment of the African Jewish Congress. Following the production of a documentary by the SABC called *The Travelling Rabbi*, the title stuck, and I became known as ‘The Travelling Rabbi’.

You do unique work that few even consider. Why do you believe it’s so important?

Judaism teaches that every Jewish soul matters, wherever they may live. That belief has guided my work from the beginning. For someone living far from a synagogue or Jewish community, a rabbi’s visit is about

sub-Saharan Africa. Looking after these places and, to the greatest extent possible, ensuring that the records and physical legacy they have left behind are safeguarded for posterity honours those who built Jewish life before us. Ultimately, my role is about connecting past, present, and future.

and building connections. It felt like the right moment to continue the story.

Another important motivation was to pick up the threads of previous narratives and bring those stories up to date. A great deal has obviously changed since the first book appeared.

You’ve devoted considerable time to preserving Jewish graves and heritage. Why is this work so important to you?

A cemetery tells us that a Jewish community once lived, worked, loved, and contributed

to that place. If we allow those cemeteries to disappear, we lose part of our collective memory.

This is aside from the sacred duty we have to ensure that the final resting places of our forebears are properly maintained and protected. Honouring those who came before us is one of Judaism’s deepest values. Preserving graves isn’t simply about maintaining stones; it’s about showing respect, preserving

not obtainable outside the main centres like matza and wine for Pesach, *siddurim* and other literature, Jewish calendars, and so on, or simply sharing a meal. But often the greatest gift is presence – listening, sharing stories, strengthening a sense of connection, and offering them encouragement.

As for what they mean to me, they continually inspire me. Their commitment to Jewish life, often in circumstances that require enormous determination, reminds me that faith and belonging aren’t measured by numbers, but by the strength of the human spirit. Every journey leaves me richer than when I arrived.

You often speak about being a beacon of Judaism. Why is that so important to you?

Judaism has survived for thousands of years because each generation has accepted the responsibility of passing it on. That responsibility doesn’t belong only to rabbis, it belongs to every single Jew.

In many of the communities I visit there may not be a synagogue, a Jewish school, or regular communal life. Sometimes simply showing up, celebrating Shabbat together, or helping someone put a mezuzah at their front door, giving them a Jewish calendar or *yahrzeit* candle

values they lived every day.

Both [the late] Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and [the late British] Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, with whom I shared meaningful relationships. Their vision transformed the way I think about Jewish leadership. They taught that no Jew is ever too far away, geographically or spiritually, to deserve care and connection.



OUR HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT JUDAISM IS SUSTAINED NOT ONLY BY LARGE COMMUNITIES, BUT BY INDIVIDUALS WHO CHOOSE TO REMAIN CONNECTED, WHEREVER THEY MAY BE.



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft visiting the Rabbi Moshe Library at the Vulindlela Orphanage Care Centre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

What does it mean to you to do this work?

Over the years I have shared life’s most important moments with people across Africa, weddings and funerals, celebrations and heartbreak, often in places where there is little organised Jewish life. Many of the people I first visited as congregants have become lifelong friends.

The greatest lesson has been one of humility. People often think I’m bringing strength to isolated communities, but the truth is they continually strengthen me. Their resilience, generosity, and commitment to Jewish life remind me why this work matters and why I continue to do it.

Why was it important to share these stories in both *The Travelling Rabbi – My African Tribe* and now *The Travelling Rabbi – Journeys Continued*?

The first book introduced readers to a Jewish world that many never knew existed, replete with fascinating personalities living in faraway places few had even heard of, let alone visited. Fourteen years later, there were many more stories that deserved to be told. I wanted to preserve those stories before they became lost to history, and honour the people in them.

Why wait 14 years before writing a second book?

Writing a book requires time to reflect. Looking back after 14 years allowed me to see the broader story, not just individual journeys, but the legacy of a lifetime spent travelling, serving,



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft at the Barmitzvah of Joseph Borman in Mbombela, Mpumalanga in March 2021

history, and ensuring that those who built Jewish life in Africa are never forgotten.

You spend time with Jews in some of the most isolated places in Africa. What does your visit mean to them, and what do they mean to you?

For many, my visit is a reminder that they haven’t been forgotten, that their fellow Jews still care about and value them as members of “the tribe”. It tells them that they remain part of the wider Jewish family, no matter how far they live from a synagogue or organised community.

The practical side of my visit may involve leading services, officiating at lifecycle events, providing Jewish-related items

reminds people that Judaism is still alive where they are.

Being a beacon isn’t about standing in the spotlight. It’s about bringing light where it’s needed, helping people feel connected to their heritage, to one another, and to something greater than themselves. I hope my work has done that.

Looking back over your life, who are the people who have had the greatest influence on you?

Without question, my parents, of blessed memory, shaped the person I became. They taught me the importance of integrity, kindness, humility, and a deep commitment to Jewish life. Much of what I do today is rooted in the

That philosophy has guided every kilometre I have travelled and every community I have visited.

Africa has become your home on the road. Do you have a favourite place?

People often ask me that, but it’s almost impossible to answer. Africa is extraordinary because every country, every landscape, and every community has its own character. I have travelled through magnificent wilderness, vibrant cities, and tiny towns that few people have ever heard of. Each holds memories that are special to me.

If I have a favourite place, it’s rarely because of the scenery. It’s because of the people. Over the years I have built friendships across the continent that have enriched my life beyond measure. It’s those relationships that keep drawing me back.

What message would you most like to leave with Jewish communities across Africa?

Never underestimate the difference one person can make.

Some of the most inspiring Jews

I’ve met live in places where they’re the only Jewish family for hundreds of kilometres. Yet they continue to celebrate, to remember, to teach their children, and to keep the flame of Jewish life burning.

Our history has shown that Judaism is sustained not only by large communities, but by individuals who choose to remain connected, wherever they may be.

My hope is that every Jew knows they are part of one family. No matter how distant or isolated they may feel, they are never forgotten. As long as we continue to care for one another, honour our heritage, and build for the next generation, the future of Jewish life in Africa will remain strong.



Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft presenting a shofar to Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema in October 2021

far more than leading a service. It’s a reminder that they belong.

The work also extends to preserving Jewish cemeteries and conserving and promoting Jewish heritage in far-flung places across

The case for being curious

There are two types of people in the world. Those who delete a document, unopened, when they realise it was sent to them by mistake. And those who open it first, before deleting it. I know which group I belong to. I also know which group I tell people I do.

Recently, on a large WhatsApp group I'm on, somebody made a mistake that could happen to any of us. Several private documents found their way onto the group. Within moments the sender realised, apologised profusely, and deleted them and everyone agreed to move on.

Crisis averted.

Except it left me wondering about the people. Some admitted they'd opened the attachments. Others proudly declared they hadn't. They'd seen they weren't intended for them and had simply ignored them.

I want to believe those people exist. I also want to believe everyone washes behind their ears, flosses every evening, and has actually read the terms and conditions before clicking "I agree".

The truth is that curiosity is one of humanity's greatest design features. We're a species that slows down to look at car accidents. We watch people arguing in Woolworths as though we've accidentally wandered into live theatre. If somebody whispers, "Don't look now", every fibre of our being immediately wants to look now.

We're not nosy. We're conducting research.

There's a reason the saying "Curiosity killed the cat" has survived for centuries. Although most people forget the second half, "but satisfaction brought it back". Curiosity isn't the problem. It's one of the reasons we've survived as a species.

It persuaded Christopher Columbus that there might be something beyond the horizon. It sent Ferdinand Magellan's expedition around the world. It drove Ernest Shackleton to Antarctica and Sir Edmund Hillary up Everest. It inspired scientists to

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman



ask impossible questions and engineers to build rockets capable of leaving earth. It even convinced seven astronauts to climb aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger, because exploring the unknown has always involved extraordinary courage as well as extraordinary risk.

If nobody had ever been curious, we'd still believe the world ended at the edge of the map.

It's why children ask "Why?" every 23 seconds. It's why journalists have jobs. It's why detectives solve crimes. It's why scientists discover things nobody knew yesterday. And, it's why Jews have built an entire culture around asking questions rather than simply accepting answers.

It's why we read the comments before the article. Why we slow down when we pass a house with police cars outside. Why the phrase "I've got something to tell you" can derail an entire afternoon.

Admittedly, not every question advances civilisation.

The WhatsApp incident simply exposed that there are really three kinds of people. Those who didn't open the documents. Those who did. And those who opened them and now insist they didn't.

Of course, there is a line. Reading something obviously shared in error isn't something to celebrate, and respecting another person's privacy matters.

But if you've ever accidentally overheard a conversation in a restaurant, noticed an intriguing email subject line on someone else's laptop, or glanced just a fraction too long at the shopping basket of the person in front of you at Checkers, then welcome. You're human. We're endlessly fascinated by what we don't yet know. The only difference is that some of us are curious enough to admit it.

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

Exercising precious freedoms

On Sunday 26 July, more than a hundred members of our community pulled on shirts that proudly declared "Jews 4 Jozi" and joined the tens of thousands who took part in Walk the Talk. What made it especially poignant is that, for the first time ever, the walk moved through the city itself, through the central business district, the streets of Doornfontein, Bertrams, and Troyeville. A geography that is precious to so many of us and yet has come to feel like foreign territory.

I have written often in this column about the threat of shrinking spaces for our community, and about the need to stand our ground against every attempt to isolate or other us. So to stand on those streets and declare openly that we are Jewish, that we are proud Joburgers, and that we belong, matters enormously to who we are. South Africa, and Johannesburg in particular, remains a place where we can identify openly as Jews. Heartbreakingly, that is no longer true in many cities around the world. It was powerful, then, to see a group like ours this weekend identifying loudly and publicly, exercising a freedom that is precious and far from universal. I congratulate every one of our Jews 4 Jozi, and I hope that next year we return in even greater numbers.

The event highlighted the best of Joburg and its famously warm people. The spotless Gautrain, the renovated Park Station, the excellent rail service, the bands, the dance troupes, the vendors lining the route. All of it was a reminder of what Joburg once was

ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner



and what it can be again. The Jozi My Jozi organisation does remarkable work cleaning up, revamping, and securing the inner city, but this work cannot be left to the private sector alone. We have a responsibility to take up the mantle as a community and to lend our weight to the task. The first place we must do so is at the ballot box, in the municipal elections on 4 November.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies is running a campaign to get as many of our community, and as many South Africans generally, registered to vote. If you haven't yet registered, please do so. The Board will also host two pre-election debates, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town, giving the various parties a platform to address our community and us the chance to question them on the issues closest to our hearts. On election day, as it always does, the Board will lead an interfaith observer mission under the "Make Us Count" banner. This is how the Jewish community becomes an active participant in our democracy, safeguarding open debate and free and fair elections.

Walk the Talk reminded us of what Joburg can be, and of who we need to be as a community. We must harness these feelings into action. Register to vote, vote, and do our bit to move our country in a better direction and to reclaim all of our spaces.

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