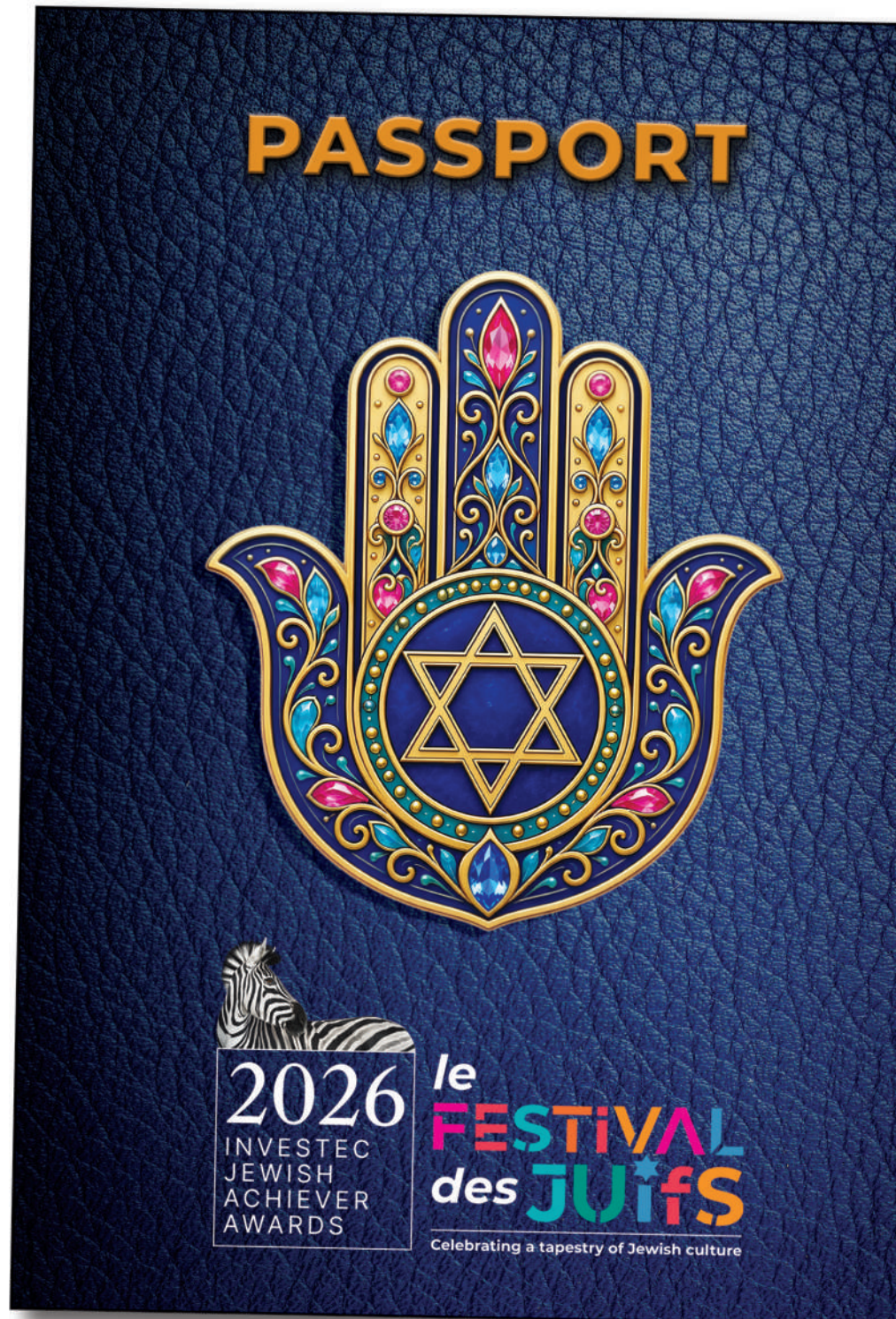


Investec Jewish Achiever Awards 2026

Join us for an unforgettable evening as we recognise 10 remarkable members of our community and their contribution to building South Africa.

Get your passport to a magical journey as we celebrate a tapestry of Jewish culture at le Festival des Juifs.



BOOK NOW 1 NOVEMBER 2026



2026
INVESTEC
JEWISH
ACHIEVER
AWARDS

le
FESTIVAL
des **JUifs**

Celebrating a tapestry of Jewish culture

BOOK
NOW

Go to:  bit.ly/ja26book



 events@jewishachievers.co.za

1 NOVEMBER 2026

 Lounge Pod (12 seats) R75 000

 Lounge Pod (8 seats) R65 000

 Table of 10 seats R50 000

 Seats R5 000

**All prices exclusive of VAT*



Queries: events@jhbchev.co.za

South Africans lead as Israel’s first English pre-meds graduate

CLAUDIA GROSS

When South African student Avi crossed the stage to collect his qualification at Ariel University last week, he wasn’t just celebrating three years of hard work. He was part of a milestone that had been years in the making. The ceremony marked the graduation of the first English-

language pre-med class in Israel, opening a new pathway for diaspora Jews hoping to study medicine while building their lives in Israel.

The programme was launched in 2022 after six years of negotiations between Telfed and Israeli universities. It’s designed to give English-speaking students access to a three-year Bachelor of Science in Medical Sciences at Ariel University before continuing to medical school. At the time, it was the first programme of its kind in Israel and was created partly in response to the challenges South African students face securing places to study medicine at home.

For Telfed chief executive Dorron Kline, the graduation represented the fulfilment of a long-held ambition. “More than 10 years ago, we had a dream at Telfed to set up a pre-med degree in English that would enable South Africans to start their medical career in Israel,” he says. “It was so fulfilling to stand on the stage and speak on behalf of Telfed and our South African students and to see the realisation of this dream.

“Once you have your first graduating class, it can only grow from there,” Kline says. “I really hope more South Africans will take this opportunity.”

The first graduating class had six students, but programme coordinator Ora Geller says the small size allowed the university to provide individual support while establishing the new degree.

“We already had the Hebrew medical sciences programme, so we knew we could create an English version at the same academic level,” she says.

Although the programme was initially designed to feed into English-language medical degrees in Israel, government policy changed shortly before it launched. International students now need to make aliya to continue into English-language medical degrees in Israel. Rather than discouraging applicants, Geller believes the English pre-med programme has become an important stepping stone for students settling into Israeli life.

“If you’re going to get better grades in English, stick to the English programme,” she says. “You want your grades to reflect your knowledge, not how quickly you can translate questions.” Students study in English while



Dorron Kline speaking at the English pre-med course graduation at Ariel University

attending ulpan to improve their Hebrew before applying to medical school or other healthcare programmes.

Professor Iris Barshak, dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Ariel University, told the *SA Jewish Report* the programme supports the university’s broader vision. “It is very important for us because we want to encourage aliya,” she says. “We want to put together the vision of aliya and teaching pre-med and medicine.”

She says the curriculum combines strong scientific foundations with newer disciplines such as artificial intelligence, computer science, and bioinformatics.

Graduates earn an internationally recognised bachelor’s degree that allows them to apply to medical schools in Israel and abroad.

Avi achieved the highest marks in the class, graduating *summa cum laude*.

“It felt a bit surreal,” he says. “Three very intense years, quite an abrupt ending. It felt good.”

His journey to Ariel began long before the programme existed. “I really wanted to study medicine, and I also really wanted to come to Israel,” he says. “Before this programme, it felt like I had to choose one at the risk of

the other.” After making aliya in 2019 and serving in the Israel Defense Forces, he learned about the programme almost by chance. “Someone sent me the advert. It was everything I’d ever wanted. Studying medical sciences in English in Israel was basically what I had been dreaming of.”

He describes the course as demanding but rewarding. “It’s very intense, but very interesting. They do it specifically to prepare you for the intensity of medical school.” He will begin a four-year Doctor of Medicine degree in Hebrew later this year, either at Ariel or Tel Aviv University.

For Rachel, another South African in the programme, studying in Israel offered much more than academic training. The 26-year-old from Johannesburg had already completed a biomedical science degree and an honours degree in physiology before moving to Israel. She says Ariel gave her the opportunity to continue towards medicine in English while making aliya.

Rachel says one of the programme’s greatest strengths is its close-knit community. “The courses were really cool, but even more than that, it was the people,” she says. “The university is amazing.”

Because of the small class size, students from different countries quickly became friends. “There are people from the most random countries,” she says. “Everyone becomes one friend group.”

Geller says that sense of community has become one of the programme’s defining features. “It’s collecting people from different cultures and different societies,” she says. “They become one community and help each other out.”

Friendships have developed into long-term relationships. “We already have a few couples,” she says. “That shows how close they become.”

Barshak says Ariel places as much emphasis on supporting students outside the classroom as inside it. “They have a coordinator who spends a lot of time with them,” she says. “One student wasn’t feeling well, so we took her to Sheba Medical Center, and I visited her.

Continued on page 11>>

Appliance Repairs on Site

Fridges, Dishwashers,
Washing Machines, Stoves
Tumble Dryers & more

Call Jason
082 401 8239 / 076 210 6532

FREE QUOTATIONS

FOR SALE

Timeshare Beacon Isle
Plettenberg Bay
Week 4 and 5

Contact: Bernice Katz
079 583 0003

ETERNAL MEMORIALS

Rabbi Ryan Goldstein
083-458 9965
RabbiRyanG@gmail.com

“I will help you through this difficult time in your life with all the necessary tombstone requirements”

Continuing Rabbi Sher's z"l Legacy

D&S PRESS

creating the right impression

EST 1983

LITHO
DIGITAL
PACKAGING
WIDE FORMAT

Quality Print Solutions

Tel: 011 907 7882
info@dspress.co.za | www.dspress.co.za

See our website
www.benchingcards.com

ANDREA BUYS

Old Jewellery, Old Coins
and Antique Hallmarked
Silver Items

Fair and Friendly Buyer • I Come To You!

083 760 0482 • andrea.attic@gmail.com

VEHICLES WANTED

ANY MAKE
ANY MODEL
ANY CONDITION

BEST PRICE
GUARANTEED

Arnold Orkin 082 823 7826

Before you choose

At the beginning of Parashat Re’eh, as the Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land, Moshe tells them, “See, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse.” (Deuteronomy 11:26)

The message appears wonderfully straightforward. Two paths lie before us, one leading to blessing and the other to curse, and the choice is ours to make.

If only life were so simple!

The greatest challenge we face is rarely choosing knowingly between obvious good and obvious evil. More often, we confront situations in which the moral distinction itself is unclear. What one person understands as justice, another experiences as cruelty. What one sees as necessary self-protection, another condemns as aggression. Even when we share the same facts, values, and hopes, we may still disagree about which path leads towards blessing and which towards curse.

Sometimes, the difficulty is discerning which path is truly the good, and which leads us away from it. The Tanakh itself recognises that reality is more complex than our first impressions suggest. In the Book of Isaiah, G-d says, “I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil.”

The same G-d who creates light also creates darkness; the

same G-d who makes peace also creates evil. The world, Isaiah reminds us, is more complex than the neat categories through which we instinctively try to understand it.

That insight feels especially relevant today. We live in a culture that rewards simplification. Social media algorithms favour the strongest opinion, the quickest judgement, and the simplest story. Nuance rarely goes viral. We are constantly encouraged to sort people into opposing camps, leaving little room for ambiguity, doubt, or genuine listening.

Perhaps that is why the opening word of our *parsha* is so important. It doesn’t begin with “Believe”. It begins with *Re’eh*, “See”.

Seeing, in the Torah, is never passive. It means paying attention, looking beyond first impressions, and refusing to accept appearances at face value.

Nor is seeing enough. Variations of the verb *sh’m’a*, “to listen”, appear repeatedly throughout the *parsha*. Understanding demands openness, patience, and the willingness to hear voices other than our own.

Then comes a third

Torah Thought

Rabbi Rogério Cukierman
Bet David Progressive Shul



instruction, repeated again and again: *shamor*, “guard”, “keep”, “be careful”. It reminds us to pause before reaching conclusions, to protect ourselves from hasty judgements, and to treat certainty with caution.

In an age that rewards instant reactions and simplistic narratives, *Re’eh* invites us to do something profoundly countercultural: to see carefully, listen deeply, and hold our convictions with humility.

Shabbat Times Brought to you by

Spencer Schwartz from You Realty
Residential Property Sales and Rentals + Auctions

	Starts	Ends
Johannesburg	17:26	18:17
Cape Town	17:53	18:47
Durban	17:09	18:01
Bloemfontein	17:29	18:21
Gqeberha	17:24	18:18
Plettenberg Bay	17:33	18:27
East London	17:17	18:10
Jerusalem*	18:51	20:09
Tel Aviv*	19:11	20:11

Spencer Schwartz • 084 524 4616 • spencer@yourealty.co.za

You.
Realty

This Shabbat we bless the new month ahead with a prayer:
“May it be Your will... that this new month be for us a month of goodness and blessing.”
Wednesday night marks Rosh Chodesh Elul, a time for reflection and renewal.



*Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead

Jewish Report

Editor Peta Krost – editor@sajewishreport.co.za • Sub-editor Tania Levy • Senior Journalist Claudia Gross
Junior Reporter Lee Tinkle • Digital Media Coordinator Gilana Lab • Photographer Ilan Ossendryver
Proofreader Kim Hatchuel/A-Proofed – kim@a-proofed.co.za • Distribution Sandy Furman – admin@sajewishreport.co.za

Design and layout Bryan Maron/Design Bandits – bryan@designbandits.co.za • Advertising Britt Landsman: 082 292 9520 – britt@sajewishreport.co.za
Laura Kaufman: 083 468 3867 – laura@sajewishreport.co.za

Advertisements and editorial copy do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, staff, and board of directors. www.sajr.co.za. Tel: 011 430 1980.

Bravery during deadly Sea Point fire

CLAUDIA GROSS

Black smoke poured through the stairwells of the Dorchester as residents fled for their lives. Harel Iluz had just escaped the burning Sea Point apartment block when people outside shouted that an elderly resident was still trapped on the upper floor. "I just stormed back in," he said.

Each floor became darker than the last, he said. "I was coughing. I couldn't breathe." Twice, thick smoke forced him back. As he prepared to give up, he heard a woman screaming somewhere above him. "I yelled, 'Keep shouting. I can't see you, but I can hear you. I'm going to follow your voice.'"

The cries led him to a terrified nanny trapped with two young children. "She was hysterical. She didn't know what to do. I grabbed the kids and told her to follow me." Iluz carried the children through the smoke to safety before helping to calm both them and their caregiver. He later tried to return to rescue other residents, but the fire had become too intense.

Eventually, he required oxygen treatment after inhaling large amounts of smoke. Although the two children survived, 93-year-old Sam Strime died from smoke inhalation, trapped in his apartment.

The fire tore through the Dorchester on High Level Road on Thursday afternoon, 30 July, destroying several top-floor apartments, displacing dozens of residents, and leaving families mourning loved ones and homes. It prompted an outpouring of support from Cape Town's Jewish community, even as antisemitic comments surfaced online in the tragedy's aftermath.

Iluz, one of three Israeli *bachurim* spending the year working in Cape Town's Jewish community, said he had thought the smoke was something minor after another resident had knocked on his door and told him everyone had to evacuate.

"I opened it up and I saw a lot of smoke coming in. He said, 'They're evacuating the building. Everybody needs to go.'"

Only after reaching the street did he realise how serious the situation had become. "I looked at the building and thought, 'okay, that is not something little.'"

He immediately ran back inside on hearing that someone was still trapped on the upper floor. As he climbed the stairs, visibility disappeared. "The smoke

was getting thicker and thicker." He tried approaching from another side of the building, but burning debris was falling from the ceiling and thick black smoke made it impossible to see.

"I was holding my breath and running up, but I couldn't see anything." After rescuing the nanny and children, Iluz returned once more in an effort to reach his neighbour. "Unfortunately, it was getting very rough. There was nothing more I could do."

Having lost almost all of his possessions, Iluz was overwhelmed by the support from the Jewish community. "Everybody offered stuff. We're getting so many texts asking, 'How can I help?' People have offered accommodation. It's amazing."



The fire at the Dorchester

Photo: Facebook

Shalom Perl, another of the Israeli educators who shared the apartment, said they had initially struggled to believe the news that their building was on fire. Fortunately, they had been away organising a school event and had taken their *tefillin*, laptops, and other essential belongings with them. But their passports were in the safe in their flat.

Reflecting on the experience afterwards, Perl said he had shared an important lesson with the children he teaches. "A situation happens in your life. You can't control it. What you can control is how you react.

"We choose to smile."

For David Silverman, the fire unfolded differently. He was in the middle of a work meeting when his phone buzzed with a voice note from the caretaker of his mother's apartment building. "It was two seconds long," he said. "David, the apartment is on fire."

Believing his 83-year-old mother was trapped inside, Silverman sprinted towards the Dorchester without even collecting his car. As he approached, he saw smoke billowing from the top floor, where his mother lived. He repeatedly tried to force his way into the building, using a fire hose in an attempt to

cool the entrance before climbing the stairs.

"I got about five steps into the back of the building and it was too hot, and there was too much smoke. I couldn't see anything. I was screaming for my mother the whole time." He desperately tried phoning her as he searched.

Only later did a location-tracking application reveal that she wasn't inside the building. When she eventually answered her phone, she told him she had spontaneously gone to have her hair done shortly before the fire had broken out. "As soon as I found out she wasn't in the building, that's when I left the stairwell," he said.

Although relieved that she had escaped unharmed, Silverman said almost everything she owned had been destroyed. "For her, it's everything she had. Every item in her home has a memory. Now it's gone." The community had immediately rallied around his family. "The community has been unbelievable."

Kevin Strime was driving through rush-hour traffic from Pinelands when he learned that his father, Sam Strime, was trapped in the burning building. "My daughter phoned me and said, 'Zaida's building is on fire.'"

As he fought to reach Sea Point, his phone rang again. "They had just found his body and he had passed away." Kevin believes his father spent his final moments trying to help others.

A witness later told him they had seen his father come onto the back balcony while a nanny below was desperately trying to protect a young child. "I think he either went back into the flat because he was overwhelmed by the smoke or he went back to get the dog," Kevin said.

Firefighters found the 93-year-old in the bathroom with his phone still in his hand. "I'm sure he was trying to phone me at the same time I was trying to phone him." Although devastated, Kevin said there was some comfort in knowing his father hadn't suffered burns. "He didn't get burned. He must have passed out very quickly. The smoke inhalation just takes you."

He described his father as a gentle, selfless man who still drove himself to work every

Dukes Gold & Diamond Exchange

We buy all your gold jewellery, Krugerrands, diamonds, luxury watches & gold coins.



 079 893 4163  www.dukesgde.co.za  info@dukesgde.co.za

day, helping at his son's construction business and spending time on Jewish school campuses. "Hundreds of people have phoned from all over the world," he said. "They all said he was an absolute gentleman. He always put everyone else first."

The response from emergency services and the Jewish community had also been remarkable. "The firefighters, the police, CSO, everybody has been unbelievable. We are so lucky to be Jewish."

That sentiment was echoed across the community in the days that followed the fire. Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies executive director Daniel Bloch said community organisations had mobilised within hours of the fire.

Working alongside CSO Cape Town, Jewish Community Services, volunteers, and community members, they arranged emergency accommodation, counselling, food, water, and practical support for displaced residents.

"The impact on residents has been significant," Bloch said. "Some have lost everything, while others were more fortunate and will be able to return to their apartments or retrieve belongings that were untouched by the fire."

Community members have launched fundraising initiatives, including a BackaBuddy campaign, to help families replace essential belongings and begin rebuilding their lives. Bloch said the tragedy had highlighted the importance of strong community institutions.

"In difficult circumstances, we once again saw the very best of our community, people putting aside their own concerns to help others, opening their homes, giving their time, providing resources, and simply being there for those who needed a helping hand."

Sadly, as messages of support flooded in, some social media users responded very differently. News24's reporting on Strime's death attracted a series of antisemitic comments.

One commenter questioned where Jewish people "originally" came from before living in Sea Point. Another claimed, "The media is really owned by you know who." After another user challenged the remark, the commenter replied, "Oh hello Zionist."

Another post simply read, "Love this for them", apparently celebrating a fire that had claimed a life and left dozens of people without homes. Other readers challenged the comments and called for them to be removed.

While investigators continue determining the cause of the fire, survivors say they have been sustained by the generosity shown by neighbours, strangers, and the wider Jewish community.

For Perl, the experience reinforced a lesson he hopes to carry long after the apartments have been rebuilt. "If your house is getting burned," he said with a smile, "think this is a nice location. You have Table Mountain, you have the sea, and you have a lovely community."

PAGAD leader tells Zionists 'to hide'

>>Continued from page 1

towards a constitutionally protected religious community" because "Zionism forms an important part of the identity of a significant proportion of the Jewish community".

The glorification of violence and rejection of peaceful coexistence have no place in responsible public discourse, he says.

While both the frequency of these demonstrations and the number of participants has declined, with this being only the second significant protest this year, "such conduct should never be normalised or dismissed".

The Jewish community "can be assured that these incidents have been documented and referred to the relevant authorities, and will continue to be closely monitored by the Cape SAJBD," says Bloch. "We will not hesitate to pursue all appropriate legal avenues where the circumstances warrant."

The SAZF Cape Council condemned the gathering, where "terrorist organisations were openly glorified, and speakers delivered explicit

threats and calls for violence".

Schwartz says the reference to "the party of Allah" was "an apparent reference, in context, to Hezbollah".

And Orrie's speech was "an open threat, directed at businesses, political parties and individuals".

The presence of Hezbollah and Iranian regime flags alongside Orrie and Mohamed's remarks "moves this gathering well beyond the bounds of legitimate protest", says Schwartz.

"A march at which Hezbollah flags are openly displayed, terrorist organisations are praised, and a speaker instructs his audience to fight Zionists 'wherever we find them' and 'bullet to bullet' isn't ordinary political expression," says Schwartz. "It's intimidation and, in our view, constitutes incitement to violence."

The SAZF Cape Council has called on the South African Human Rights Commission to investigate whether the statements constitute prohibited hate speech under the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act.

JAWITZ

PROPERTIES

Leading

REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD

FOR SALE



HIGHLANDS NORTH | R 1 799 900

3

2

Web Ref: JRL33913

Charming 3-bedroom family home offering 2 modern bathrooms (m.e.s.), spacious living areas, a modern open-plan kitchen with play room, patio, sparkling pool and garden. Double automated garage, staff accommodation/ cottage potential.

Joel Harris: 082 926 0287

Laureen Shalpid: 083 789 0229



FOR SALE



SANDRINGHAM | R 2 795 000

3

2

Web Ref: JRL44014

Secure estate living with breath-taking golf course views. This elegant 3-bedroom duplex offers 2.5 bathrooms, a modern open-plan kitchen, double-volume entrance, lock-up garage plus carport, staff accommodation, and exceptional security. Close to schools, shops and major amenities.

Joel Harris: 082 926 0287

Laureen Shalpid: 083 789 0229



FOR SALE



WAVERLEY | R 1 950 000

3

2

Web Ref: JRL43287

Immaculate, 3 bed, 2 bath apartment with open plan lounge, dining, Galley style kitchen, private, covered sun-drenched balcony, double garage & staff room. Enjoy secure living & that lock-up-and-go lifestyle in one of Waverley's top complexes. Walk right in – unpack – you're good to go.

Chrissie Hammer: 082 568 0440



FOR SALE



BENMORE GARDENS | R 4 999 999

4

3.5

Web Ref: JRL43742

Set on 1,000m²+ in the secure Benmore Gardens Enclosure, this classic Georgian home offers generous proportions, 4 spacious bedrooms, sizeable living areas & great renovation potential. A pool, staff accommodation & excellent footprint make it the perfect opportunity to create your dream family home.

Linette Oosthuizen: 082 572 5314

Trudi Barklem: 083 955 9898



www.jawitz.co.za | Registered with the PPRA

Buy • Sell • Rent • Manage • Own

Tlhabi calls Israel supporters ‘indoctrinated’, ‘pathetic’

TALI FEINBERG

South African *Al Jazeera* presenter Redi Tlhabi targets the Jewish State in multiple tweets a day, but on 30 July she took this a step further, targeting all of Israel's supporters.

Commenting on a video in which Israel's defence minister, Israel Katz, said that he had ordered the Shin Bet to declassify settler violence as terrorism, Tlhabi ignored the many supporters of Israel who have spoken out against such violence.

"Israel's indoctrinated supporters sound so pathetic with their 'Israel just wants peace ... Israel never kills children ... Israel never bombs hospitals ... the most moral army...'," tweeted Tlhabi to her almost 700 000 followers on X. "Their leaders are telling us what their evil grand plan is! And we should not be quiet."

This isn't the first time Tlhabi has attacked "Israel's supporters", which includes most of the South African Jewish community. Earlier this year, she tweeted that Israel's "murderous soldiers" are "filth", as is "everyone who cheers them on". She often calls the Jewish homeland a "terrorist state".

When Roedean School refused to play a tennis match against King David High School, Tlhabi said the Jewish community was lying, calling the outrage "the typical play book" and saying, "This is a battle for the soul of South Africa."

She said the Jewish community has been shown "so much grace", implying that Jews aren't part of South

Africa; that the community "seeks to cause mass hysteria and division"; and that "Israel's supporters" are "always sowing fear, hate, and paranoia".

The 30 July tweet follows a pattern of Tlhabi painting Israel as an extremist, "genocidal" society, ignoring its diversity, protest culture, democracy, and the fact that it is fighting terrorist organisations.

Tlhabi has targeted others who have been affected by terrorism.

In July, she called to racially profile the family members of 9/11 victims who are demanding that New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani be banned from the 25th anniversary memorial. "What is the race – or religion – of the family members making this demand?" she asked on X. Tlhabi lives in Washington, DC.

In May, after the vehement denials of *The New York Times* "dog rape" libel, Tlhabi retweeted a post saying, "This is *Hasbara* [Israel advocacy] season! \$730 million gets the creative juices flowing: Every Zio and his Shabbos goy are burning the candle at both ends to get their share ..."

Norman JW Goda, a professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Florida, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "If Tlhabi bothered to read newspapers, or to talk to actual Israeli or Jewish journalists, she would know how dismayed so many of Israel's supporters are by the settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank."

The harshest critics include *The New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens, Israeli journalists such as Haviv Rettig Gur and Yossi Klein Halevi, and scholars

such as historian Benny Morris. "These are not obscure names," says Goda. "These writers have a massive audience among those who have supported the war against Hamas, but who think poorly of the Netanyahu Cabinet, and they and their readers are hoping for a change of government with the October election [in Israel]."

Even *The Jerusalem Post*, hardly a left-wing newspaper, has been critical of Katz, says Goda. "The problem is that Tlhabi is a propagandist, so reading informed work and thinking about it before posting on X are not part of her skills set," he says. "Does Tlhabi even know that Katz was speaking to a limited group of supporters in his own Likud Party?"

Tlhabi flattens the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in other ways. For example, when conflict flares between Israel and the Palestinians, she repeats the phrase "return the hostages and all this is over", implying that Israel promised to end the entire conflict with the Palestinians if the hostages were returned, which it never did.

On Tlhabi describing Israel's leaders as having an "evil

grand plan", Goda says, "The notion that all bad events are part of an 'evil grand plan' hatched by Jewish leaders and supported by all Jews comes from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the most important antisemitic text of the modern world.

"Thanks to Tlhabi and many others, the *Protocols* have sadly enjoyed a revival as of late, tailored for our own times," says Goda. "We live in an age where too many people believe in such antisemitic conspiracy theories, but Tlhabi does a lot more than believe in them; she helps to disseminate them." Preeminent Holocaust scholar Dr Michael Berenbaum told the *SA Jewish Report* that while Tlhabi is correct that the decision not to use administrative detention to counteract settler violence is a significant one, "she goes on to needlessly attack Israel's supporters, and to suggest a conspiracy of Israel having an 'evil grand plan'."

He believes most Jews and "Israel supporters" don't agree with Katz regarding settler violence. Tlhabi's tweet "treats the Jews as sinister, it builds on antisemitic tropes, and it would be regarded by antisemites as confirming their understanding of Jews", he says.

National chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Professor Karen Milner, says Tlhabi "peddles in antisemitic tropes of Jewish power, greed, conspiracy, and lying".

Tlhabi, she says, "has an unhealthy obsession with the Jewish State, which goes far beyond criticism, in a manner that serves only to enhance her own credentials, rather than engaging and seeking genuine solutions".

South African Zionist Federation chairperson Craig Pantanowitz says Tlhabi's post is a "vicious, hate-filled rant" masquerading as journalism. "By describing Israel's supporters as 'indoctrinated', 'pathetic', and accomplices to an 'evil grand plan', she deliberately collapses millions of diverse people, including South African Jews, into one sinister, morally-contaminated collective."

The reference to an "evil grand plan" is especially revealing, says Pantanowitz. "It draws directly from the oldest antisemitic conspiracy trope of Jews and Zionists secretly conspiring to deceive and control the world."

Pantanowitz says this isn't "an isolated lapse". He says that Tlhabi has repeatedly described Israel's supporters as "brain-dead", "brainwashed", "psychotic", and incapable of independent thought.

"She has amplified claims about Zionists controlling media spaces, manipulating information and suppressing the truth; reposted comparisons between Zionists and Nazis; and promoted inflammatory allegations from activist accounts as established fact," says Pantanowitz. "She doesn't investigate claims; she selects whatever reinforces her fixation, broadcasts it as truth, and dismisses every challenge as further evidence of the conspiracy. That isn't intellectual seriousness. It's the closed-loop reasoning of a propagandist."

Pantanowitz says Tlhabi is entitled to criticise any Israeli government or policy, but "she isn't entitled to disguise antisemitic tropes and collective hostility as courageous journalism. Her obsession with Israel has destroyed her objectivity, corroded her judgement, and consumed the credibility she spent decades building. She is no longer illuminating the subject; she is exposing herself."

The *SA Jewish Report* asked Tlhabi a number of questions: If she really thinks all "Israel supporters" support Katz and settler violence; why she said Israel's leaders have an "evil grand plan"; what she meant by that; and why she never retracted her statements about the Roedean scandal, when it was clear the Jewish community wasn't lying.

In a tweet on X, Tlhabi made it clear that she wouldn't respond. "You DO NOT get to ask ME anything. And deadlines? You? Giving me time frames?" she wrote.

This was days after she stated, "I always find it particularly loathsome when people who are in the business of asking others for comment on matters of national importance pull a 'no comment' when they are under scrutiny. What do you mean you have nothing to say? Your business is media. Your business is 'comment'. Always. Say something. Anything!"



Regev says diplomacy matters most in wartime

CLAUDIA GROSS

Mark Regev, former Israeli ambassador and senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, offered a rare glimpse into diplomatic decision-making during war when he addressed a packed audience in Cape Town recently.

In conversation with *SA Jewish Report* chairperson and commentator Howard Sackstein, Regev reflected on global diplomacy, regional security, Israel's relationships with its allies, and why he remains optimistic despite almost three years of war.

The event was hosted jointly by the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council, the *SA Jewish Report*, and South African Friends of Israel. It formed part of Regev's national visit, during which he addressed more than 1 700 people at public events, leadership briefings, media interviews, and meetings with Christian and Jewish leaders.

Regev spent decades at the centre of Israeli diplomacy, advising prime ministers, and participating in conversations with world leaders during some of the country's most significant moments.

He was born in Melbourne, Australia and, as the son of Holocaust survivors, his family's history shaped his outlook even though little was spoken about it at home.

After completing a youth programme in Israel through Habonim Dror, he returned to Australia to complete his studies before making aliya at the age of 21. "I went to Israel and never looked back."

His diplomatic career began almost by accident. After deciding that academia wasn't for him, he saw an advertisement for Israel's foreign service entrance exams, applied, and was accepted.

Regev acknowledged that he had considered carefully whether to visit South Africa now, given the strained relationship between the government and Israel. "I spoke to the relevant people and they said it would be okay."

Asked whether anything had surprised him during his visit, Regev responded by recalling how his son had once formed friendships with Egyptian and Palestinian teenagers at an international peace camp in the United States. Although they remained friends while abroad, invitations to visit Egypt never materialised. "My son told me, 'They can be my friend in Maine. They can't be my friend in Cairo,'" Regev recalled. The experience illustrated how political realities often prevented personal relationships from developing beyond neutral settings, he said.

The conversation then shifted to Regev's decade working alongside Netanyahu. "You have a life, but it's not yours," he said of serving in the prime minister's office. He described countless family dinners interrupted by urgent phone calls from the prime minister, saying such a position demanded complete commitment. Regev said Netanyahu had one of the most demanding leadership positions because the role combined national security responsibilities with the everyday pressures of governing a small, politically divided country.

He'd regarded his role as making the prime minister's job easier, but "It didn't mean that I didn't tell him things when I disagreed."

Regev said Netanyahu valued advisers willing to challenge him, rather than surrounding himself with yes men.

Looking back, Regev said his respect for Netanyahu had deepened rather than diminished while working with him. "I know that he's fallible. I know that he's a human being," he said. "When you see them close up, you see warts and all, and still, I learned so much working for Netanyahu."

On Israel's relationship with the US, Regev said that US President Donald Trump's first administration had fundamentally changed Israeli public opinion by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, facilitating the Abraham Accords, and adopting a tougher approach towards Iran.

He expressed concern about the future of bipartisan support for Israel in the US. "The relationship with the US is our most important one," he said, warning that younger Democratic politicians appeared more willing to criticise Israel than previous generations.

Turning to the Middle East, Regev said one of the most overlooked developments was the changing political landscape in Lebanon. He argued that Hezbollah's weakened military position had created opportunities that hadn't existed previously. Lebanon had elected a president whom Hezbollah would previously have blocked and who had publicly called for the organisation to be disarmed.

"The dynamic in Lebanon is very positive," Regev said, adding that he believed a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon was possible before the end of the current US administration.

Regarding Gaza, Regev acknowledged that Israel hadn't yet achieved every objective it had set after 7 October. "If you take the stated war aims of Israel, it failed," he said. "But in the real world, never let the perfect stand in the way of the possible."

He pointed out that Hamas's military capabilities had been substantially degraded and that Israeli communities bordering Gaza were now significantly more secure than they had been.

As for the Palestinian Authority, Regev said its president, Mahmoud Abbas, had missed an opportunity after 7 October. "If he had stopped on 8 October 2023 and said, 'We condemn what Hamas did', he would be in a totally different position than he is today."

Instead, Abbas has alienated even many Israelis who had historically supported a negotiated peace process, he said.

Responding to questions about South Africa's relationship with Israel, Regev said meaningful diplomacy required engagement with both sides of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. "How do you advance peace when you only talk to one side?"

Regev encouraged South African Jews to work more closely with Christian supporters of Israel. "The Jewish community might be wonderful, but you're small," he said. "Think about coalitions."

South Africa, he said, carried significant influence internationally because of its history and moral standing. "South Africa punches above its weight in soft power. If South Africa was to have a better relationship with Israel, I think that's a global game changer."

Sackstein asked Regev why he remained optimistic after years of conflict. Regev pointed to Israel's consistently high ranking in the United Nations World Happiness Report, despite repeated wars and security threats.

He said Israelis drew strength from a sense of shared purpose, resilience, and belief in the future. "We've been through a very tough time, but we're coming out of it, and the future's only going to be better," he said.



THE MOST LIMMUD

Sunday
23
August

YOU CAN FIT IN A DAY



Are you ready to take part in the busiest, most session-packed day of Limmud?

You can expect up to 10 sessions an hour, powerhouse international and local presenters, plus all-day kosher eats and even a dedicated kids programme!



A teaser of the sessions you can expect to choose from:

- Bibi or Not Bibi: The 2026 Israeli Elections
- Not a Love Match: The Roedean Incident
- The Purpose of Torah Study: Maimonides Versus the Mystics
- Raising Human Children in an AI-Powered World
- A Chocolate Journey: Make Your Own Belgian Chocolate
- The Hallways of Grief: Finding the Courage to Move Forward
- Tunisian Jews During the Holocaust
- Cancelled Shmancelled with Gilli Apter & Nik Rabinowitz
- Be Fruitful & Multiply: Jewish Approaches to Reproductive Tech
- #MeToo: A Talmudic Lens on the Epstein Files
- Finding One's Own Voice with Jesse Clegg



Register now
limmud.org.za



south african

Jewish Report

Stereotyping is fuelling Jew hatred

It's enough of people tarring all Jews with the same brush. It's lazy, ignorant, and offensive. It's like saying all women are the same, or all Portuguese or black people are the same. We all know that's absurd and prejudiced. It reduces human beings to labels and then punishes them for it.

And yet, when it comes to Jews, there are people who believe stereotyping is permissible, even virtuous. If you are Jewish and support the existence of the State of Israel, then, in their minds, you must support every decision made by the current Israeli government. You must be an apologist for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. You must agree with every minister, every policy, every word, every action. There is no room for nuance, nor acknowledgement of complexity, and certainly no interest in the truth.

Anyone who knows Jewish people, knows how ridiculous this is. We are a people of argument. We question everything. We debate at the Shabbos table, in shul, in WhatsApp groups, in the supermarket queue, and long after everyone else has gone home. Put three Jews in a room and you are likely to get at least six strongly held opinions.

So to assume that every Jewish person who calls themselves a Zionist supports Netanyahu's government is not only wrong, it's closed-minded. Worse, it rests on the ugliest assumptions. It sits uncomfortably close to the antisemitic tropes that have followed us for centuries: that Jews are greedy, manipulative, powerful, disloyal, or somehow part of one sinister collective. Those caricatures are racist. Dressing them up in the language of political activism doesn't make them less so.

This week, we carry an article on someone I respected as a journalist, but who seems to have become lost in her hatred, Redi Tlhabi. She isn't alone. Too many intelligent people, people who should know better, now treat every Israeli and every Jew who supports Israel as if they are the same person, with the same politics, the same views, and the same moral failings.

What is most distressing is watching smart people share ugly AI-generated videos and images that are obviously fake, or at least highly suspect, without making any attempt to check them. They pass them on because the material fits a narrative they believe, that the Jewish State is uniquely evil, that those connected to it are uniquely culpable, and that Jews who object are somehow trying to silence criticism.

Let me be clear. Criticism of any government, including Israel's, is legitimate. Israelis do it every day, often loudly, passionately, and publicly. Many Jews in South Africa and around the world do it, too. What isn't legitimate is taking that criticism and using it to flatten an entire people into a single, hateful caricature.

This matters because words and images don't float in the air and vanish. They land somewhere. They shape how people think. They make it easier for someone to look at a Jewish child in a school uniform, a Jewish student on campus, a Jewish shop owner, a Jewish journalist, or a Jew walking to shul, and see not a person but a political symbol to be blamed, shamed, threatened, or hated.

That is dangerous. You don't have to look far to see how antisemitism is rising across the world. It is so clearly pointed out in Adam Charnas's piece on this page about the Anti-Defamation League's 2026 J7 report.

For Jews, this isn't theoretical. It means security guards outside schools. It means parents telling children to tuck in a Magen David. It means perhaps wearing a cap instead of a *kippah*. It means Jewish students deciding whether to speak up, stay quiet, or avoid certain spaces altogether. It means people looking over their shoulders because someone, somewhere, has decided that "Zionist" is a word that strips them of individuality and humanity.

So when public figures, journalists, academics, activists, or social media influencers lazily lump "the Jews" or "Zionists" together and paint them all as cruel, bloodthirsty, dishonest, or morally diseased, they aren't merely expressing an opinion. They are adding fuel to a fire that is already burning. They may not light the match that causes the next attack, but they help create the atmosphere in which hatred feels justified.

And that carries responsibility. As does sharing a fake video because it confirms your bias, or repeating a slur because it wins applause from your ideological tribe. Wise up. Don't do it.

On page 7, we carry an OpEd by Menachem Rosensaft about just how strong the anti-Netanyahu forces are in Israel. That should tell anyone willing to listen that Israelis aren't marching in lockstep behind their government. Like citizens of any democracy, some support the government, some oppose it, and some take to the streets in protest. In Israel, perhaps because Jews are so opinionated, the disagreements may be even louder and more relentless than elsewhere.

That is the point. Supporting the State of Israel doesn't mean supporting every Israeli government, or government ministers like Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir. Calling oneself a Zionist doesn't mean abandoning moral judgement. Having a connection to Israel doesn't mean surrendering one's individuality, conscience, or political views. Jews are no more a monolith than any other people, family, community, or nation.

This isn't complicated. We know not all Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, or atheists think alike. We know families disagree and people within communities may contradict each other. Why, then, is this basic understanding so often abandoned when the people in question are Jews?

See people as people. Look at everyone in their individuality. Listen to what someone actually says. Judge their actions, words, and values, not the ugliest version constructed for political convenience. Don't paint millions of people in ugliness simply because it makes your argument easier.

The good news, if there is good news in all this, is that many people are beginning to see through the haters. Their methods are becoming transparent. Their narrative is less believable than it once was. When intelligent people spread material that is obviously questionable, ignore nuance, and reduce Jews to a single ugly stereotype, they reveal more about themselves than about us.

So here is my plea: don't tar us all with the same brush. Don't assume that because we are Jews, because we care about Israel, because we believe the Jewish people have a right to self-determination in our ancestral homeland, we all think, vote, feel, or speak as one.

Like members of any family, we argue, disagree, question, criticise, worry, love, and sometimes drive one another mad. But we are individuals. We have our own views. And we deserve to be treated as such.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

SA one of the safest places to be Jewish

OPINION

ADAM CHARNAS



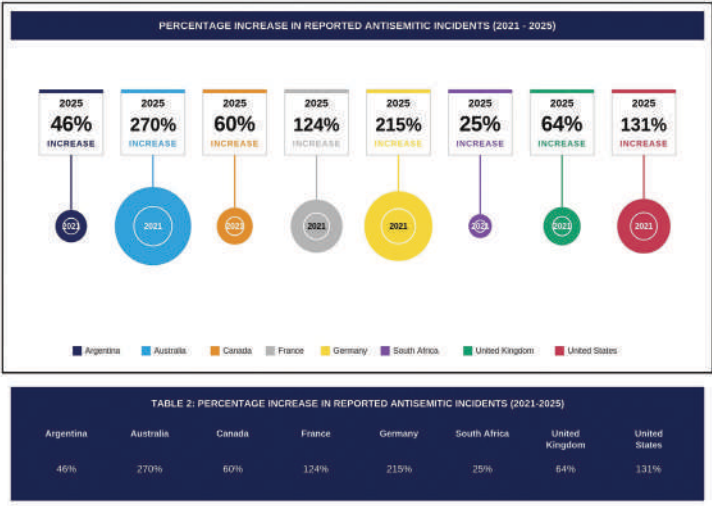
The J7 Annual Report on Antisemitism reveals a harrowing story that is unfortunately no longer a surprise to any Jew in the diaspora. However, we feel a deep empathy and pain when studying the data.

The J7 is a coalition of major Jewish organisations representing the seven largest Jewish diaspora communities outside Israel. It doesn't include us in South Africa, but the report, and the data it encompasses, reveals a lot about our unique position.

At the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) we compile our own data on antisemitism. Through the year, in conjunction with CSO, we receive reports of antisemitic incidents and events that we then categorise. It's important to say that not all antisemitism can be counted as an "incident" and that we make a special effort to ensure that every incident is correctly counted.

Additionally, public statements may leave our community feeling uneasy ("Red Card Israel" in graffiti at a busy intersection), but aren't themselves antisemitic and thus aren't counted. Conversely, an incident that may affect only one person, such as verbal abuse, can have very little impact on the overall atmosphere among the community, but will register in the statistics. This means the numbers represent only verifiable antisemitic incidents, and may not directly reflect the mood or general feeling within the community.

Finally, we have a strict "broken windows" policy, chasing down and addressing even the most minor incident to ensure that major attacks don't occur.



A particularly notable graph produced by the J7 compares the number of incidents in 2021 – before the 7 October massacre – with their recorded number in 2025, as a demonstration of the large increases in recorded incidents. When reproducing the graph to include our statistics, we see that South Africa has recorded a much smaller increase, of 25%. While this is not to be taken lightly, as a 25% increase is still a noteworthy bump, the base of 76 incidents in 2021 is relatively low, and it takes only a few incidents to register a significant increase. It is also worth noting that 25% is well below the next lowest increase, which was witnessed in Argentina (46%).

It is humbling to understand that our statistics have come down sharply since the peak in 2023-24 and now resemble our pre-7 October norm. And while no act of antisemitism is acceptable or palatable, it is worth noting that we haven't seen anything like the increase in violence that fellow communities have witnessed.

The J7 report indicates that across the countries measured, incidents that can be considered "violent" are up by 78% when comparing 2021 with 2025. Our statistics show numbers that are nowhere near the type of violence and hostility that have come to define the type of antisemitism in the post-7 October context.

SAJBD president Zev Krengel uses his "stadium *kippah* test" as a measure of the comfort of the community in the country. Certainly, we remain one of the last countries in which Jews can wear *kippot* openly in any stadium in the country without fear. Anecdotally, the Walk the Talk event held in Johannesburg in July featured openly identifying Jews, who even held a *Shacharit minyan*, *tefillin*, and all in the public space (and outside of a stadium!), without fear or worry.

With that said, we cannot congratulate ourselves too much, and the fight against antisemitism remains an ongoing endeavour. Just last week the Board was able to resolve amicably two significant incidences of antisemitism, choosing to work without publicity to create sustainable, effective, and good-faith resolutions.

With all of this said, the real story of evolving antisemitism comes in a qualitative and not quantitative form. The J7 report highlights a number of convergent trends in 2025 that have affected all of them. These are normalisation of antisemitism in mainstream spaces; instrumentalisation of antizionism as a vehicle for antisemitic expression; campuses and educational institutions as acute flashpoints; the digital sphere becoming the primary arena of antisemitic expression; and growing Jewish concern for personal and communal safety.

We in South Africa have experienced normalisation of antisemitism in mainstream spaces in a less acute fashion. That said, the real impact on our community is what the SAJBD terms the "closure of spaces", a subversive hostility toward Jews and Zionists that has led to a diminishment of Jewish participation in public spaces, such as at academic conferences or in professional organisations. Our efforts to counter this phenomenon have taken many forms, and we have countered every attempt at boycott, antagonism, or hostility towards our community in mainstream spaces.

We have also noticed a fundamental shift in the expression of hostility through the instrumentalisation of antizionism. In this respect we recently made a presentation to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on antisemitism and the use of antizionism as a front to mask base Jew hatred. We were pleased to have been received so warmly by the commission, which even provided kosher food, and are certain our presentation will have an impact on its understanding of the issue going forward.

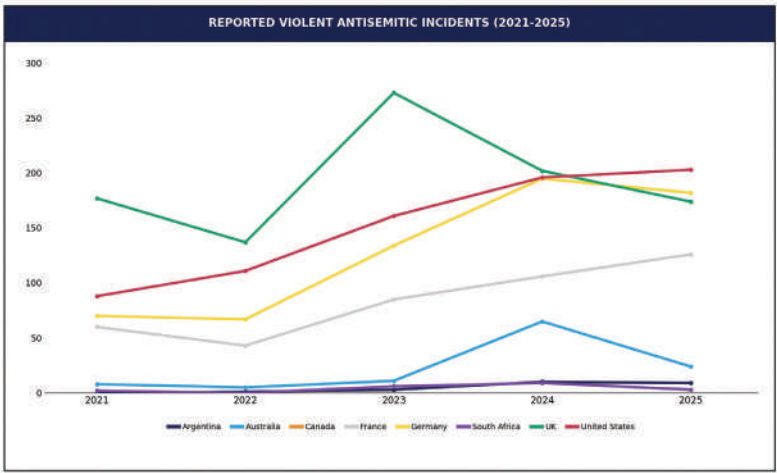
After years of committed work, South African campuses and educational institutions aren't the flashpoints we witness overseas. In many cases, most notably at the University of Cape Town, the upper echelons of academia have attempted to introduce boycott resolutions and anti-Israel measures that may be seen as hostile. Nevertheless, the campuses are welcoming and safe environments for Jewish students, some of the most Jewish-friendly in the diaspora, and we are extremely proud of this fact.

Our community, in common with our overseas counterparts, has also witnessed a steep escalation in online hostility, which is often overtly antisemitic. We monitor this

space closely, and over the past year have successfully taken a number of social media accounts to the SAHRC and courts on the grounds of hate speech.

Taken together we can see that, relative to our fellow communities, South Africa remains among the safest places to identify and practise as a Jew. This is in spite of a government that is openly hostile towards Israel and Zionists, and demonstrates the cleavages between official policy and ground-level attitudes.

That said, it has been shown that the government's policy can serve as a legitimising permission structure for those who harbour antisemitic attitudes. This was most noticeable in the very public case of Roedean pupils' refusal to play tennis against King David, citing that they were following the government's policy.



Our low antisemitic statistics cannot be taken for granted and are a result of relentless and quiet work by our community organisations at multiple levels, to secure our community's continued safety and viability. It falls on every one of us to continue to exercise this hard-won freedom, and to fight against the closure of spaces, antagonism, hostility, and blatant bigotry wherever it appears.

• Adam Charnas is a professional at the SAJBD, where he manages the antisemitism desk.

The honourable, non-Netanyahu, anti-Netanyahu face of Israel

OPINION

In addition to fomenting and inciting violence against Jews, the anti-Israel agitators and demonstrators who demonise Israel as a state, Israelis, and supporters of Israel collectively with calls for “Death to Israel”, “Death to the IDF”, and “Death to Zionists” wilfully ignore all those Israelis and Zionists who have spoken out against and are condemning the policies and actions of the Netanyahu government.

A case in point is the open letter addressed to US President Donald Trump by retired Israeli Major General Matan Vilnai as chair of Commanders for Israel’s Security (CIS) in advance of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent trip to Washington, DC.

CIS is a movement made up of “more than 550 retired Israel Defense Forces [IDF] colonels and generals as well as Mossad, Shin Bet [Internal Security], police, National Security Council, and diplomatic corps equivalents” who are “committed to securing Israel’s future as the strong democratic home of the Jewish people”. According to its mission statement, “CIS views separation from the Palestinians, leading to an eventual two-state solution, as a most essential condition for a secure future and is convinced that the continued slide towards a one-state reality jeopardises that vision and must be reversed”.

This alone puts CIS and its members on the other side of the Israeli political divide from the Netanyahu government, which has consistently sought to undermine Israel’s democracy and categorically rejects any consideration, let alone recognition, of Palestinian rights and Palestinian self-determination in any shape or form.

Vilnai’s letter, couched as a “Red Alert”, calls President Trump’s attention to the looming “calamity” of “escalating violence” by, to use Vilnai’s term, “Jewish terrorists” – that is, radical Israeli settlers – against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank. “It

is no secret,” Vilnai wrote, “that certain members of our current government orchestrate much of this chaos, including by shielding their followers, who are armed and driven by messianic impulses, from the law and its enforcement ... Should the rising swell in Jewish settler terror activity and the government policy of choking the Palestinian Authority (financially and otherwise) continue, the consequences may prove even more catastrophic than the 7 October Hamas atrocities and its multi-front fallout.”

The letter’s warning is unambiguous and blunt. “Unless arrested swiftly and decisively, escalating violence in the West Bank is poised to ignite the region and carries severe ramifications for both Israeli security and US regional interests.”

As *The New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens has pointed out, the violence in question includes, most recently, settler rampages “in several Palestinian villages, reportedly setting fire to a home and two mosques, attacking a stonecutting factory and committing other acts of outright terrorism”. In 2025, Stephens went on, citing a *Times of Israel* report, there were 867 incidents of such “nationalistic crime and settler violence ... up from 682 the previous year”.

To understand the true significance of this letter, we must focus on the fact that, as Stephens noted accurately, “Vilnai is no peacenik”. But neither is he an ultranationalist or crypto fascist in the mould of far too many members of the present Israeli government, including but by no means limited to National Security

MENACHEM Z ROSENSAFT



Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. On the contrary, Vilnai is as “Israeli establishment” as they come. So are the other CIS members. But I am referring here to the pre-Netanyahu Israeli establishment that was committed to the vision of a simultaneously Jewish and democratic Israel, one rooted in adherence to law and the protection of the civil and legal rights of all for whom Israel is responsible, Israeli citizens and residents, as well as Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Vilnai epitomises that establishment. Born in Jerusalem in 1944, he served as a major general in the IDF before holding numerous government positions between 1999 and 2012, including deputy minister of defence and minister for home front defence. From 2012 to 2017, he served as Israel’s ambassador to China. “But,” again in Stephens’ words, “like many other patriotic Israelis, he’s aghast at a government that prioritises the prime minister’s political needs and his Cabinet’s ideological obsessions over the rule of law”.

It is also important to note here that the members of the CIS have long been opposed to the Netanyahu government’s vision of indefinite if not permanent Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza. In a prior letter to Trump, dated 14 December 2025, Vilnai wrote that, “Based on our cumulative millennia of security experience, it is our professional judgement that once Gaza is demilitarised, the IDF can effectively defend our border and nearby communities from within Israel’s sovereign territory.”

Not only that. In the same letter, Vilnai emphasised that “the involvement of the Palestinian Authority – however imperfect and in need of reform – is essential” in the implementation of the plan, and that “early Palestinian Authority involvement will ensure a smooth eventual transition to reformed PA governance and signal commitment to a future in which Gaza and the West Bank form a single polity”.

Contrary to the jingoism emanating from Netanyahu and other members of his government, the CIS members with their “cumulative millennia of security experience” believe that the eventual withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza and returning it to a non-Hamas led Palestinian governance is not only possible but in Israel’s

ABSOLUTELY ALL HOME REPAIRS

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR 26 YRS

All our work unconditionally guaranteed.

15% discount for all over 60.

To ensure your security, 2-man teams only.

Call Mendel 084-559-7923

FREE QUOTATIONS

best interests and that the Palestinian Authority, shunned by Netanyahu ever since he became prime minister in 2009, must play a part in this process. In other words, Vilnai and the CIS affirmatively support an eventual union of Gaza and the West Bank into “a single polity”, in effect, a two-state solution.

Vilnai and the CIS aren’t outliers on the Israeli scene. Far from it. Gadi Eisenkot, the former chief of the IDF General Staff who has the greatest chance of replacing Netanyahu as prime minister in Israel’s coming October elections, is cast in the same mould. As a Knesset member of the opposition National Unity party, together with former Defense Minister Benny Gantz, he joined the short-lived emergency war government in the aftermath of the 7 October pogrom. However, Eisenkot, whose son and nephew were killed fighting Hamas, publicly criticised Netanyahu’s conduct of the Gaza war while a member of that government.

“As a democracy,” Eisenkot said in a January 2024 television interview, “the State of Israel needs to ask itself after such a serious event, ‘How do we continue from here with a leadership that has failed us miserably?’”

Several months later, in June 2024, both Eisenkot and Gantz resigned from the war government.

Yair Golan, a former deputy chief of the IDF General Staff and the leader of Israel’s left-wing Democrats party, is another retired major general who has been unsparing in his criticism of Netanyahu and his government. On 7 October, he was hailed as a hero for courageously rescuing survivors of the Hamas rampage.

The likes of Vilnai, Eisenkot, Golan, and the CIS members remind us of the honourable, the non-Netanyahu and anti-Netanyahu face of Israel. They personify the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who have demonstrated against the present extremist Israeli government since its inception and who want Israel’s future to be a continuation of its pre-Netanyahu past. And they deserve our acclamation and support as they fight for Israel’s soul and moral integrity.

• Menachem Z Rosensaft is visiting professor of the practice at Cornell Law School and lecturer-in-law at Columbia Law School. His most recent book is *Burning Psalms: Confronting Adonai after Auschwitz*.



Photo: Screenshot

Andrea Mendelsohn
Hospital Care
Public Sector

Sarit Swisa
Nechama

Shelly Korn
Sunset Care
Hospice at Home

Samantha Klynsmith
Highlands House

Rod Bloom
Rowan Bloom Foundation

Rafaella Joffe
Soul Carers Network

present:

END-OF-LIFE CARE

Sunday, 23 August 2026 7pm - 9pm Online

Supporting our Community. Honoring life. Dignifying every Journey.

Join us and our panel of local experts online as we explore palliative care and support for individuals and families living with serious illness, frailty, and end-of-life needs within the Cape Town Jewish community.

Register here or scan the code

www.jewellness.org

The Wilfred and Fay Back Charitable Trust

Work-life balance means dropping some balls

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Happy marriage, thriving kids, successful career, active social life, regular exercise. For decades, women especially have been sold the lie that we can have it all. Which is why when the perfect balance proves unattainable, many feel excessive guilt and frustration. Confronting this dilemma at a parent morning at King David Primary School Linksfield on 30 July, social worker and therapist Judy Alter admitted she didn't have all the answers. While as far back as the baby-boomer generation, women have been told they can have it all, she said, this simply creates unrealistic expectations. "When I became a young wife and mother, I was led to believe you could be the mother, the wife, hold down a job, be a good daughter, see your friends, and have it all. It was all there for the taking. In a way, that was even worse than not being told anything at all, because I strived for it. And I couldn't understand why it didn't happen," she said. When you're at work, you're worried about your children. When you're at home, you're stressing about impending deadlines. "You're just running after your own tail all the time, and wherever you are, you shouldn't be there," Alter said. Ultimately, she argued, you can't have it all.

"Wherever you are is where you're meant to be, but there's something that you're going to have to let go of, and that's okay. It doesn't make you less of anything, it just makes you a sensible person who's realistic in setting expectations." You might choose to put off having children until you've achieved your career goals or, conversely, take a break from full-time work to focus on parenting. "There's a time and a season for everything." While having a two-income household is often a necessity today, creating a work-life balance isn't taking your pile of commitments and dividing them equally, Alter said. "Nobody can do that and not feel as if they've got something wrong because they're time watching rather than being in the moment." There will always be things that won't get done, and you'll need to let go of the idea that you're only good enough when and if you maintain the perfect juggle. Only you can determine your priorities. This requires being honest about who you are, what you can manage, what you want, and what holds value for you in different contexts. Where do your partner, your kids, your boss, and self-care fit in? It's often about what stage of life you're in. When you have younger children and are also working, you may only have energy to manage those two things well. "While I encourage putting energy towards your marriage, it's probably not a daily priority for you at this stage," Alter said. "By the time you get into bed, you're exhausted, you're irritable, and taking care of the marriage is hard." Yet unless that is examined and discussed, it will create difficulties. So, in maintaining self-awareness, these things need to be confronted.

Alter also tackled the need to carve out family time, especially on weekends. Unfortunately, for many families, weekends are often also jam-packed with extramurals like soccer clubs or dance lessons. "Here's what you probably don't know yet," she said. "Your son is not Cristiano Ronaldo. Your daughter is not Margot Fonteyn. The kind of energy and money that's put towards extramurals and that weekend schlep is a waste of time. That time as a family will have more value for your child than club soccer three times a week. Pick an extramural and go for it, but don't pick five." Research consistently shows that

what young children want most is time with their parents. Whether you go out for ice cream, have a picnic in the garden, or simply watch a show with them when you're feeling depleted, those will be the memories that stick. well situated in your life is strong connections, which seems to be the panacea for most ailments." This is even more relevant today, when technology has ironically fostered a world with less genuine human connection. "The balance for you is the connection to your child and to your partner," she said. "The balance for your children is connection to their siblings and parents. It's thinking about what you value and putting energy into that, with the knowledge that none of us is superhuman or can do well at everything." It may be hard now, but think about the lessons you're teaching your child for the future. Alter also stressed the importance of parents setting boundaries for their children, bemoaning the rise of gentle parenting. It's not about being

a dictator, she said, it's about your children knowing who's boss. "There's a lot of value in them feeling safe around who is steering this ship." One can combine parenting approaches in that your child can choose whether they'll wear the red or blue jersey, but they will wear a jersey, she said. "Once they have a sense of safety in your home, everything else about your comfort starts to settle. You're not fighting all the time. You want to connect with them because they're easier." Setting boundaries for yourself without the self-imposed guilt trip is as important. Being able to say no teaches your children to do the same. "If you can't say no to a child, to your own parent, or to your boss, they hear it. You will never train them to take care of their own bodies, emotional health, or self-regulation because children do as they see, not as they're told. It's about setting the boundary, being flexible around it, and taking care of your emotional health, to teach your children how important it is to take care of theirs. The flexibility in balancing your life and being kind to yourself about what you can manage is critical."

ourselves how we can use the privileges we have to help the rest of the country." His first priority at Bet David is getting to know the congregation. "I want to know each one of our members by name and learn something about their lives," he says. "I really admire rabbis who ask people about their children, their families, and what is going on in their world." His second priority is leading a process of reflection on where Bet David wants to go in the coming years. He compares it to *cheshbon nefesh* (an accounting of the soul), the period of self-reflection associated with the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashanah. "We need to ask what we did right over the past 10, 15, or 20 years. What did we do wrong? Where do we want things to be different? Then we can strengthen what is working and change direction where we are missing the mark." Education will also be central to his rabbinate. Cukierman believes many Jews are unaware of the breadth of Jewish scholarship. "The Jewish library is huge. People often take just a little peek and assume what they saw is the whole thing." He says many people, often the partners of conversion candidates who attend his Introduction to Judaism classes, are surprised to discover centuries of debate and differing interpretations within Jewish tradition. "No one ever told me that," is a response he hears regularly from people who attended Jewish schools. His goal is to encourage congregants to explore Jewish texts more deeply while remaining open to different perspectives. He also hopes to strengthen respectful relationships across denominational lines. Although disagreements are inevitable, he believes different Jewish communities can work together. "We can disagree respectfully while keeping civil discourse."

New Bet David rabbi to help chart Progressive future

CLAUDIA GROSS

For years, Rabbi Rogério Cukierman built a career helping organisations plan for the future. Today, he is applying the same strategic thinking in a very different setting, Bet David Progressive Synagogue in Morningside, Johannesburg. Although he officially took up his role as rabbi only last month, Cukierman is no stranger to the congregation. He has worked with Bet David since early 2025, initially remotely from Brazil, while making two visits last year to South Africa. "Until now, there was always the sense that I was a visitor in an interim position," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "I was trying not to change anything, as if I were in someone else's house. Now I can start thinking more strategically about the direction we want to take Bet David and how to get there." That strategic mindset comes naturally. After earning a degree in business administration, Cukierman worked as a management consultant specialising in strategy before pursuing a master's degree in economics in Israel, with the intention of building a career in that field. Instead, a deeply personal experience changed the course of his life. While he was studying in Israel, his father was diagnosed with cancer and died after an 18-month illness. During that difficult period, Cukierman began attending services at Beit Daniel, a Progressive congregation in Tel Aviv. He discovered a Jewish life he'd never experienced in São Paulo. "I was raised completely secular," he says. "We didn't even go to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." Back in Brazil, he struggled to find a congregation that reflected his understanding of Progressive Judaism. "There were synagogues that were technically affiliated with the Progressive movement, but they were neither egalitarian nor inclusive of LGBTQ+ people," he says. "In many respects, they weren't truly Progressive." At the same time, his consulting career was becoming increasingly unsustainable. "There were weeks when I worked 120 hours. At some point, I became exhausted and realised I needed a sabbatical." He decided to spend that break studying Judaism in the United States. What began as a master's degree in Jewish Studies soon became something much larger. Immersed in Jewish texts and learning, Cukierman realised he wanted to become a rabbi. He chose Hebrew College in Boston because of its

pluralistic approach to rabbinic education. The institution welcomes students from different Jewish denominations while maintaining an egalitarian environment. Cukierman was ordained there in 2013. His experiences in Brazil shaped the philosophy he now hopes to bring to South Africa. One of his strongest convictions is that Progressive Judaism is often misunderstood as requiring less commitment than other streams of Judaism. For Cukierman, Progressive Judaism demands study, reflection, and personal responsibility. Rather than simply following



Rabbi Rogério Cukierman

prescribed rules, he believes Jews should actively engage with Jewish tradition and determine how it can bring meaning to their own lives. "Being a committed Progressive Jew requires not only fulfilling what other people tell you, but also studying and deciding what proper Jewish conduct is," he says. That process of exploration is itself spiritually rewarding, he believes. "The effort of studying the sources and deciding how Judaism will shape your life becomes the reward." Instead of seeing Jewish practice as fixed, Cukierman encourages people to think about how rituals can remain authentic while speaking to modern life. "The idea that Judaism has been frozen in time is simply not true." He believes Brazil and South Africa share many social realities, including the stark inequalities that exist alongside areas of prosperity. "I think Judaism needs to be a force for the betterment of society as well," he says. "We need to ask

Lisa Hack, national chairperson of the South African Union for Progressive Judaism, welcomed Cukierman's arrival. "We look forward with anticipation to the value he will bring to the congregation, our wider Jewish community, and the Progressive Rabbinic Board as a whole. "Rabbi Cukierman joins us at an exciting time for Progressive Judaism in South Africa, and we have no doubt his presence will be a blessing. We wish him every success and a warm, meaningful journey ahead," she says. For Cukierman, the appointment represents an opportunity to help shape both a congregation and a wider movement. "If we can slow down, reflect together, and decide where we want to go," he says, "then we can take the right steps to get there."

ELEVATE

inspired by Cape Town Kollel

INSPIRE 2026 Series



CHANGEMAKERS SERIES

Accomplished voices
reflecting on
leadership



JEWISH THOUGHT SERIES

Respected global
Rabbis sharing ideas
that resonate



WELLBEING SERIES

Experienced
professionals exploring
emotional wellbeing

YOUR NEXT MOVE STARTS HERE.

connect@myelevate.co.za

SA women blaze trail for other Jewish communities

LEE TANKLE

Women are not only central to Jewish communal life, but they run the main communal organisations, too. Wendy Kahn is the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD); Stacey Dembo is executive director of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF); Ariellah Rosenberg is chief executive of ORT South Africa; Bev Schneider is national director at the Jewish National Fund South Africa; and Sasha Said is national chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS).

“Leadership should reflect the community it serves. The example we set today will shape the Jewish community our children will inherit tomorrow,” says Dembo.

Rosenberg agrees, saying however that “women are still sometimes judged through contradictory expectations. A woman must be confident, but not too forceful; empathetic but not perceived as soft; ambitious, but never self-promoting. The same directness that is accepted from a man can be interpreted differently when it comes from a woman.”

Dembo adds, “There is no single way in which women lead, but many women bring a powerful combination of strength, emotional understanding, and practical thinking. They often see both the bigger picture and the people and families behind it.”

“In our office, care is not separated from leadership. We can be focused, firm, and demanding while still noticing when a colleague is struggling or when a family needs support. Women often understand that kindness and strength are not opposites. Some of the strongest women I have met are also the most caring.”

Kahn says the South African Jewish community is somewhat of a trailblazer when it comes to women running communal organisations, with Marlene Bethlehem having been the SAJBD’s first female national chairperson and later national president, starting in 1995.

“In the past few years, we’ve heard major Jewish communal organisations around the world comment on the appointment of their ‘first’ woman president or chair. We had our first in 1995, and others have followed and are following,” she says.

Kahn, who is celebrating 20 years as national director of the SAJBD this August, says that when she started, she’d walked into a cold, dark office with rows and rows of photos of past SAJBD presidents looking down on the new woman director taking office.

“I grinned, thinking what these austere, stern-faced men must be thinking,” she says. “There was one woman, however, who beamed down from my walls, the remarkable Marlene Bethlehem, who led the Board during our country’s transition to democracy, forming close

relations with Nelson Mandela, even accompanying him on his official visit to Israel. Marlene heralded an exciting new chapter for the SAJBD and our community as she ushered in a woman-led representative body of the South African Jewish community.”

However, Rosenberg asserts that though there are many more women in leadership roles, there is still no equality between the genders.

“Visibility should not be mistaken for equality. We should ask not only how many women are

present, but whether they hold real decision-making power, control meaningful budgets, and are considered for the most influential roles. My observation is that women have moved into professional and executive roles considerably faster than into the lay leadership positions that control budgets and appointments. The chief executive

is often a woman. The chair and board members frequently are not,” she says.

Schneider believes communal leadership should reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. “Women bring valuable perspectives, experiences, and approaches to

leadership, and organisations are stronger when they benefit from a broad range of voices around the decision-making table,” she says. “Representation also matters because it encourages younger women to believe that leadership

opportunities are open to them and that their voices are valued.”

“A room of people with similar backgrounds and similar assumptions reaches consensus quickly and is wrong more often than it realises,” says Rosenberg. “Homogeneous leadership does not produce bad intentions; it produces blind spots, and blind spots become institutional habits. Women bring experiences and insights that may otherwise be absent when priorities are set.”

Currently on the SAJBD executive, the chairs of its three largest regional councils, the national chairperson, three vice-

chairs, and the national director are all women. Fifteen years ago, when Kahn joined Twitter, she chose “@broadattheboard” as her

handle; today they refer to much of their leadership as the “broads at the Board”. “When we attend global Jewish conferences, we are struck by the male-dominated committees, something that has not been the case at the SAJBD for many decades,” Kahn says. Similarly, the office at the SAZF is filled mainly with women, many of whom are mothers.

“We understand that people have lives, families, and responsibilities beyond the office. We take a personal interest in one another’s well-being and notice when someone needs support. That care doesn’t make us less professional; it creates a stronger, more loyal, and more committed team,” says Dembo.

“We are seeing more women leading organisations and making important decisions than ever before. Women are no longer expected only to support

communal work from behind the scenes; they are shaping its direction,” she says. “This matters because young girls are observing this. When they see women leading major organisations, speaking from public platforms, and making difficult decisions, they understand that these opportunities are open to them too. Female leadership should not be seen as unusual; it should simply be part of how our community works.”

Said says she was inspired to step up into communal leadership through SAUJS because of the women who’ve come before her.

“I have been incredibly fortunate to grow up in a Jewish community where strong female leadership has always been visible,” she says. “From my own family, with my mom and sister serving as constant role models, to women such as Wendy Kahn, Karen Milner, Stacey Dembo, Gabi Farber-Cohen, and Charisse Zeifert, along with many others, I have been surrounded by women who have led with conviction, compassion, and integrity.”

“Because of these role models, I never felt that leadership was something reserved for someone else. They showed me that women belong at every level of communal leadership and that there is no single way to lead. Their example has given me the confidence to step into leadership myself, and I hope future generations of young Jewish women continue to grow up seeing that same representation.”



Bev Schneider



Stacey Dembo



Sasha Said



Ariellah Rosenberg



Wendy Kahn

Women needed to give AI emotional intelligence

LEE TANKLE

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes the way people work, learn, and communicate, the need for diverse perspectives has never been greater. Women working in AI say that greater representation isn’t just about equality, it’s about building technology that better reflects and serves society as a whole.

Women remain underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and that lack of representation has significant implications for AI, says Nadine Smith, director of educational technology and digital transformation at King David Schools.

“AI is influencing policies, the way people work, and even hiring decisions. If the data and systems shaping AI are developed primarily by men, they will inevitably reflect their perspectives and influence how society functions. That’s why we need more women in AI. Their experiences, cultures, and knowledge must be represented in the decisions these technologies make.”

Smith is the only African recipient of the EDGE in Tech Athena Award for Early Career Leadership presented by the Centre for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society and the Banatao Institute at the University of California, Berkeley in 2025. She says that when she was starting her career in the technological space, she felt that, as a woman, she had to prove herself more.

“It’s not an attack against men. I don’t think it’s a conscious thing. We’ve made huge strides in the industry and in life in general, but I believe there is still that unconscious bias. If you think of someone technical, a leader, an engineer, you do tend to think of a man,” she says. “And so I feel that women subconsciously need to prove themselves more when they are in this field. And women also tend to take a step back, and they tend not to enter mentorships and conferences when they don’t feel 100% ready, while men are more willing to take that leap.”

Similarly, Leora Hessen, founder of the programme Hello Aida, which helps pupils use AI as a learning tool rather than simply to generate answers, says it is important for women to be involved in the development of AI because sometimes the human factor gets ignored.

“As women, moms, and daughters, we know what it takes to build the future

generations. We also know what our kids need. If you don’t have a woman’s voice while you’re developing, it’s a very male-centric development. So if you develop without any emotion, without any feeling, often it’s just black and white. [It needs to] consider the human, which is something that females do quite naturally,” she says.

Shelli Weltsman, a creative entrepreneur who works at the intersection of art, design, and AI, says women definitely bring in the human and creative element. “Being women and mothers, we are creators by nature. We are creators of human life. We are creators of our destiny. We are creators of our future. And so we must create our destiny.”

Hessen says she’s not seeing enough girls becoming coders and developers. “We need more female voices. We need more females to be sitting around the table making decisions around AI, around ethics, around the emotional side of things. And I think that oftentimes the females have a very different perspective from the males, and we need both voices at the table,” she says.

Studies on the AI gender gap say that while representation has improved, it doesn’t necessarily translate to influence in the space. “Just because there are more women doesn’t mean that the actual impact and influence they have has increased,” says Smith.

She says that after giving a talk about AI to schoolgirls, two came up to her and said they wanted to pursue a career in STEM but were discouraged by the fact that many of these faculties at universities are dominated by men.

“If this is your passion, it is about following it despite any challenges, despite what anyone else tells you, despite the bias towards it, or the pressures. [You must believe] in your own passion and going through with it, believing you’ll make a difference,” she says. “And making a difference doesn’t mean becoming chief executive of a big company or inventing a new product. You can make a difference in small ways, even if it’s just bringing a new perspective to a design or something that is being developed. That is enough. And it is about making these girls believe that they can be that.”



Leora Hessen



Nadine Smith

Mahjong is the latest social craze

LEE TANKLE

Forget card games; Mahjong is rapidly becoming the game of choice for many South African Jews. The ancient Chinese tile game has experienced a recent boom in popularity, drawing in newcomers eager to test their strategic thinking while enjoying a social afternoon.

The four-player strategy game with 144 tiles – some versions use slightly fewer – has attracted people who want to use their intelligence while also building community. The goal is to be the first player to complete a winning hand by collecting sets of matching or related tiles.

There are two distinct versions of Mahjong. In the traditional Chinese version, instead of following a card, players generally aim to complete a winning hand of four sets, such as three identical tiles or a sequence of three consecutive suited tiles, and one pair.

The American version of the game, played according to National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) rules, was started in 1937 by a group of Jewish women in New York. The goal of American Mahjong is to be the first player to complete a valid winning hand listed on the NMJL card.

Johannesburg Mahjong teacher Tracy Jay says that after selling her business last year, and with both of her children out of school, she was looking for something to keep herself busy. “I play kaluki, klaberjass, and am always up for a game of any kind. A couple of friends were starting and I jumped at the opportunity to join.”

“Mahjong has both cognitive, psychological, and social benefits,” she says. “I love challenges and brain stimulation as much as the social aspect. This is why the American version has grabbed me. Just when you know the cards by the end of this year, the NMJL in the US will release a new card for 2027 around April,” says Jay, who plays according to the strict American rules.

Sue Blou, who teaches Mahjong with Jay, says she found the game through a friend and was enticed by the idea of



playing something new.

“I ordered my first set and practised by playing on my own. I also practised playing on apps. Then I played my

first in-person game, and I was hooked,” she says.

“I realised that I had a passion for teaching others to play so that they could get the benefits that I have gotten from playing. As a bit of a rule follower – one group that I play with calls me the Mahjong Police – I wanted to teach people to play according to the rules of the NMJL so that they can play anywhere in the world where American Mahjong is played,” she says.

When Cape Town moms Sarin Stern and Adi Cohen couldn’t get into bridge lessons, and since Stern had a Mahjong set, they decided to learn how to play.

When they wanted to spread knowledge about Mahjong, they started the Bam Club, where they teach people how to play and sell Mahjong sets so they can play at home. They have taught 10 groups of students so far and are planning for more.

“It’s not so much about learning and teaching people and selling the sets. It’s about really building a community of people who want to do something together and socialise. It’s a fun game. It’s not as stressful and intense and competitive as bridge. So you can learn it quite quickly. It’s not something that requires years of studying. And once you get it, you can apply your skills to any cards,” says Stern.

Gilla Mac Gregor started playing Mahjong with her father when she was six or seven years old and has continued to play for about 40 years since then. She now teaches people how to play Chinese Mahjong.

“We played weekly games every week when he was still at home. And then when he moved into Sandringham Gardens, he carried on there. And he teaches and has his own game group there,” she says.

Leon Lipschitz, who runs Mah Jong South Africa, discovered the game in 1965 through a magazine, *Games and Puzzles*, and has been hooked ever since,

playing nearly every day. When he was going to propose to his wife 50 years ago, he told her that if she didn’t learn to play Mahjong, they could not get married.

“When I die one day, and they bury me, and someone says that they want to play Mahjong, I’ll get up and I’ll go play. That’s how much I like Mahjong. I’m totally addicted to it,” he says.

Even when he moved to Sandringham Gardens, he ensured that he would continue to play, and now has around 50 people coming faithfully to play at different times throughout any given week.

“It keeps your mind active. You have to remember what’s been discarded, so it’s similar to games like Rummikub or cards in that it exercises your memory. Unfortunately, many people come to the home and end up sitting staring at the four walls and the ceiling, with very little to do. This group gives them something to look forward to and helps keep their minds engaged.”

Transformational catalyst, leadership coach, and facilitator Janet Goldblatt started playing Mahjong some 15 years ago when her friend’s mother started to teach them. Since then, she has played regularly with about six of her friends and has taught her two children.

Goldblatt sees it as a good way to meet with her friends while also stimulating their minds, as there is a fair bit of strategy needed to play. Because of this, she also has started teaching Mahjong with one of her friends.

“When I stopped working for a while, there was always this gap, and then you tend to just have coffee and talk rubbish, which can sometimes be meaningless,” she says. “I was learning Torah, which helped. But not everyone is into that. And I just think that there’s a lot of loneliness. And I see, for me, I think that what would be amazing is if there is a space where people can come and learn and play and also have joy and meet other people.”

“For the two or three hours while you are playing, you set aside your worries and just enjoy being in the moment of playing and laughing, whether you win or lose. It’s a great distraction from the mundanities of life,” says Blou.

Herzlia swimmer races Israel’s best

LEE TANKLE

While most Grade 8 pupils were settling into high school, Herzlia’s Yoni Melnik was testing himself against some

of Israel’s best young swimmers at the Israeli National Swimming Championships in Netanya from 28 to 30 July.

After being disappointed at not being able to compete at the Maccabi Games in July, and since he was already going to be in Israel, he decided to join a local club in Ramat Hasharon and swim in any way he could.

The coaches there encouraged him to try to qualify for the Israeli National Swimming Championships.

“I competed in a qualifying meet and achieved the required time in the 200m breaststroke, which earned me a place at the Israeli National Swimming Championships. Unfortunately, I missed

the qualifying event for the 100m breaststroke because it had already taken place before I arrived in Israel, so I was able to compete only in the 200m breaststroke,” he said.



Yoni Melnik

Melnik has always had a passion for swimming, having watched his older brother swim competitively. He has himself been competing since he was 10 years old.

Since he has swum in the South African Championships, he wasn’t surprised that he was able to qualify in Israel. He travelled to Hungary with one of Israel’s leading youth squads for a two-week training camp.

“I trained twice a day in the pool, along with daily gym sessions. After returning to Israel, I continued training with the club until the national championships. It was a lot of hard work, but it was an amazing experience, and I learned so much from the coaches and the other swimmers.”

Melnik qualified for the 200m breaststroke final and two relay events.

And even though he didn’t achieve his personal best times, the experience was, he said, extremely valuable and something he will never forget.

South Africans lead as Israel’s first English pre-meds graduate

>> Continued from page 2

“They enjoy the high level of teaching and also the supportive way we treat them,” she says.

Half of the graduates who immediately applied to medical school have already secured places, according to Geller. Others are pursuing research or other careers in healthcare while preparing to apply again.

Avi believes the programme prepared him for what comes next. “I’ve had the time to get used to the Hebrew,” he says. “I’m happy for the next step.”

Although his family couldn’t attend the graduation because of a recent bereavement, they celebrated from afar. “They definitely took part in my joy,” he says.

Rachel is now preparing for the entrance exam that will determine whether she progresses to medical school next year. “I’m working on the knowledge for the exam, but also the Hebrew,” she says.

Kline says the graduation is already encouraging more prospective students to consider the programme. “The fact that the student who received the highest grade out of 40 [English and Hebrew pre-med] students is South African is tremendous,” he says.

He also points to the financial support available to qualifying students. “If one makes aliya, the entire degree is paid for. On top of that, students can also apply for Telfed scholarships.”

He believes concerns about studying in Hebrew after the English pre-med programme shouldn’t discourage applicants. “After spending three years in the English-speaking pre-med, going to ulpan, and learning Hebrew, people shouldn’t be scared about the language barrier.”

For Barshak, the programme offers young people more than a qualification. “If they come to Israel and don’t have something to study, or something to work for, and their family isn’t in Israel, it’s much more complicated,” she says. “What we are doing is giving them high-level studies, a social life, and support in their private lives.”

As the first graduates prepare for medical school and careers in healthcare, the ceremony marked more than the end of three demanding years. It also signalled the beginning of a pathway that Telfed and Ariel University hope many more South African students will follow.



YOUR LIFELINE

FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES CALL

083 222 1818

Don't waste time, seconds save lives.

HELP IS ON THE WAY

Hatzolah Medical Rescue • Treatment Excellence • Unsurpassed Response Times

 Hatzolah Medical Rescue JHB  @HatzolahSA  @hatzolahsa

The heavy weight of words

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

“You’ve lost so much weight, you look amazing!” For some this may be the ultimate compliment, but for many others, it’s a thinly veiled insult that sends them into an emotional spiral around how terrible they looked before. The same is true when people make uninformed, and ill-advised, comments on a supposed pregnancy when you’ve picked up a few kilos or, unprompted, tell you about the latest diet fad. “We live in a society where it’s so normal to comment on people’s bodies,” says psychiatrist Dr Felicity Marcus, who has a special interest in eating disorders and works with teenagers with body-image difficulties.

Kelsey Buchalter, whose own experience with anorexia led to her career as a nutrition practitioner and metabolic health coach, agrees. She says this normalisation is particularly true in close-knit groups like the Jewish community, where food is central to celebration, family, and tradition.

“Most comments about weight aren’t made to wound; they’re often attempts to connect, show concern, or even offer what someone believes is a compliment,” she says. “That doesn’t mean they can’t hurt, but it does remind us that the impact of a comment and the intention behind it are often two very different things.”

Yet, we all need to be more cognisant of the impact of our words, Buchalter adds. “For someone vulnerable to an eating disorder or poor body image, even an offhand remark can reinforce the belief that their body is something to be constantly monitored, judged, or ‘fixed’. We rarely know what someone is battling privately. Weight is often the symptom people see. It’s rarely

the whole story.”

Therein lies the danger of focusing on external attributes, says Marcus. “Whether it’s that you’ve lost weight or that you’re overweight, people will rarely say, ‘Wow, you’re so kind and caring’, but they’ll always make comments around your physical appearance.” They’re also often ignorant of, or indifferent to, the emotional effects of their words.

While both men and women are subject to body-image pressures, Marcus says, it’s often women who judge other women. Melissa Singer*, who has experienced this, says that since losing weight is a lifelong struggle for many people, flippantly passing judgement can be harmful.

“I had weight to lose when a woman once commented on how much I had lost. I had only lost a few kilos, and she made it sound like I’d lost a ton of weight. I thought to myself, how much of an elephant did she think I was? It felt like a slap in the face, but what could I do? I did tell her how much I had lost, but that seemed to go over her head, and she had no idea how hurt I felt.”

Singer also recalls an incident where a

friend of hers had cancer and her stomach bloated from the chemotherapy. “It broke her heart every time someone asked her when the baby was due. Life is hard and we’re hard on ourselves, which makes it cruel for other people to ‘shine a light’ on something like weight for us.”

Maybe women feel that most of us struggle with our weight and so it’s okay to comment, she says, or that you’ll feel good if they tell you that you’ve lost weight. “Yet, I always think a generic compliment like ‘You look good in blue’ is much better and has far fewer landmines.”

While a preoccupation with weight is not new, today’s social media dominance and its focus on superficial qualities has undoubtedly upped the ante, Marcus says. Increasingly, skinny celebrities like Ariana Grande and Demi Moore reflect changing beauty standards, with their images and those of similar stars and influencers hard to escape. “It’s now so accessible, you go on your phone, on social media, and you’re just bombarded with these pictures. Before, the photos or appearance pressures would be out there, but you wouldn’t constantly confront them.”

Buchalter elaborates. “Personally and professionally, I see how pervasive our cultural obsession with weight has become,” she says. “Somewhere along the way, we’ve confused thinness with health and body size with personal worth. We’ve reduced one of the most complex biological systems in existence to a single number on a scale, when that number tells us remarkably little about a person’s metabolic health, mental well-being, or quality of life.”

Considering why people think such comments are acceptable, Marcus argues that such words may sometimes be a projection of their own insecurity around their bodies. “A lot of people just don’t feel comfortable in their own skin today,” she adds, speaking of her own professional observations. This, she says, is exacerbated by external influences, pressures, and unrealistic beauty expectations that none of us can meet without cosmetic intervention.

Beyond casual acquaintances, it can be especially triggering when one’s parents or even

doctors approach one’s weight without the requisite sensitivity, Marcus says. “Especially in the younger generation, who are very vulnerable and impressionable, it has a lasting impact,” she says.

Even when someone’s weight is affecting their health, there’s a better way to broach the subject, she says. “It’s how you say things, make it more about directing it towards a healthy, balanced lifestyle than just saying, ‘You’re fat and you need to lose weight.’” Conversely, when commenting on someone’s weight loss, consider that positive reinforcement on weight loss can also fuel eating disorders, she says, especially in those who are vulnerable to such dangers.

The increasing use of GLP-1 receptor agonists like Ozempic can also be problematic, says Buchalter. “They absolutely have an important place in medicine. Yet, my concern is not about the medication itself. Rather it’s with the growing societal narrative that everyone should strive to become thinner, regardless of whether they are metabolically healthy, and that medication offers a shortcut to achieving that ideal.” Thinner is not always healthier, she says.

In handling upsetting and intrusive comments about weight, Marcus suggests setting clear boundaries, and saying you prefer not to discuss your body or weight. She suggests commenting on someone’s positive characteristics rather than focusing on their appearance.

Regardless, once we become more comfortable with our bodies, we’re better equipped to build the kind of resilience that reduces the power of comments on weight. “For me, one of the greatest indicators of recovery wasn’t that my body changed, it was that my nervous system changed,” says Buchalter. “The comments that once consumed me gradually lost their emotional charge.”

“While this process takes time, my hope is that people stop outsourcing their self-worth to other people’s opinions. Your body is not here to win a popularity contest; it’s the vehicle through which you experience your one precious life. Look after it and let objective markers of health, not passing comments or changing beauty standards, be your guide.”

*Name has been changed due to social sensitivities.



Orphans survived the Holocaust at immense emotional cost

OPINION

JANYS ORELOWITZ



Over the past couple of months, an eclectic group of us, who would most probably never otherwise have met, have come together and bonded through our shared passion for Israel and for deepening our understanding of what it means to be Jewish. The group reflects the diversity of Johannesburg’s Jewish community, spanning generations from students to retirees and encompassing a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

I was drawn to this work because it offered something profoundly different from my role as a social worker. My professional environment had become increasingly uncomfortable as policies reshaped the field in ways that have left many social workers effectively excluded. Against this backdrop, the sense of comfort and belonging I have found in working within a Jewish environment has been meaningful.

The ugliness and taunting of the world around us Jews encouraged our group to turn to one another, to honour our identity in community, thereby enhancing a shared pride in our Jewishness and a need to understand how historically we as a people have reacted to similar provocation.

The project we’ve been working on, a partnership between the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Yad Vashem Israel, aims to document the role played by the South African Jewish community during World War II, both locally and internationally. It has been a fascinating journey of uncovering stories, heroic individuals, and remarkable acts within my own community.

While cataloguing documents, I came across records relating to the Orphan Plan. As a social worker specialising in adoption for many years, this theme resonated deeply and prompted many questions. What exactly was this plan? How did it operate, and who was affected by it?

The Orphan Plan was for the many children who had survived the tragedy of the Holocaust, and whose parent or, in most cases, parents had not. Most children came from Eastern Europe and had survived by being hidden by non-Jewish families or in the camps themselves. They ranged from infants to children up to 12 years old, later changed to include teens up to 17 years old in certain circumstances. The Orphan Plan aimed to bring the children to the Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg (now known as Arcadia) and to Oranjia Jewish Child and Youth Centre in Cape Town.

These children were in displacement camps or had been reunited with distant family members who were unable to care for them. In addition, there were children who had been sent away from their families in London during the Blitz, for their safety. Often, it was non-Jewish families who took them in and provided care. In some situations, the children were badly treated and put

to work as servants or in businesses. It was often the very young children who were loved and fully integrated into the family. These families may have found themselves struggling or, in some cases, unable to return the children to their biological families when the war was over.

Stepping back for a moment to examine what I have just written, there are truly no words to convey the piercing trauma, loss, and grief that this encompasses. The mothers knew in the depths of their beings that the only way to protect their beloved offspring was to make the agonising decision to hand them over to a stranger. The possibility of a reunion was unknown, unforeseen, and unlikely, and there was no reliable way to stay in communication.

There are many accounts of heroic mothers during the Holocaust pushing their children out of the line to the gas chambers or handing their children to strangers as they were forced onto the death trains. They knew they might never see their children again.

To add to an already complicated situation, in many instances, the non-Jewish families who cared for these children formed a strong bond with them over several years, and were unwilling or unable to sever this bond when the time came. The damaging tentacles of intergenerational trauma have been widely documented and researched, specifically relating to circumstances such as these.

When it comes to adoption, the biological family, the adoptive family, and the child each suffer their own losses and traumas. Strong emphasis is placed on screening and counselling as a result. But this does not happen in urgent placements, such as post-war ones.

In the South African context, transracial adoption introduces additional layers of cultural and social complexity. Was this the case during the war, when children may have been placed with Catholic families? What would happen if they were then removed from those families and placed in Jewish homes? There are legendary accounts of people going to orphanages after the war and singing the Shema, causing children who did not know that they were Jewish to start crying, indicating the depths to which they felt their Jewish identity.

Adopted children may struggle with identity, seeking information about their biological relatives or desperately looking for family resemblances, a sense of belonging. During the war, everything was lost or destroyed, leaving

many unanswered questions for orphaned children.

Children placed in foster care at a very young age, for whatever reason, may form a stronger bond with their foster parents, as they have little to no memories of their biological parents. Their identities are formed by the family that currently raises and nurtures them. If they are later reconciled with their biological parents or their family, they may be highly resistant and deeply mourn their foster family.

The biological parents, who may have spent years idealising their greatly longed-for children, only to be rejected, may be deeply disappointed, hurt, and traumatised.

Rejection and abandonment, the seesaw of emotions, are complex and not necessarily based on facts but rather on the lived experience of the child. Although children were sent away as a life-saving measure during the Holocaust, many may have thought that they had done something bad, which had caused them to be “given away”. The effects of this experience may result in a deep-seated anger at their parents, difficulty in later life forming healthy relationships and attachments, and damaged self-esteem.

Adopted children sometimes describe the feeling of abandonment as a black hole that can never be filled. Their identity may forever feel like it skipped a few momentous stages. I cannot help but wonder how the beautiful children ripped from their safety by war, to a new reality with new languages, food, and customs, were able to carve their identities.

My mind also goes to the wonderful adoptive parents who opened their hearts and homes to war orphans. There was no time or space to prepare and support these parents for the psychological wounds they might have been faced.

I feel privileged to be part of this project, which will leave a meaningful legacy for future generations. We are a people shaped by resilience and grit, sustained by the strength of community both in the diaspora and in Israel.

Throughout biblical and historical narratives alike, women have remained the often-unacknowledged life force at the heart of Jewish survival and continuity. I am left with overwhelming awe for the mothers who were compelled to do the unimaginable. I honour and revere these unnamed historical heroes. The depth of their pain can never be fully comprehended. Many did not survive the war, and those who did were not always successful in reestablishing a relationship with their beloved offspring. Many childhood survivors have expressed the heartbreaking sentiment that their relationship with their parents was never repaired. How does one survive the greatest act of love with the most devastating consequences either way?

• Janys Orelowitz is a social worker with many years of experience in adoption and family counselling. In addition, she is trained in family law.

Give us a break from running the world

I d like to make a request on behalf of the Jewish people. Could someone else please take over for a week?

We're exhausted.

Running absolutely everything might sound glamorous, but it isn't. It's mostly meetings.

According to the internet, somewhere beneath an entirely unremarkable office block sits The Mervyn and Cecilia Goldberg Centre for Global Affairs, home to the legendary Jewish Operations Centre.

People imagine a sleek underground command centre. Think NASA. Except with better catering, a kosher coffee shop with a *chalah* option, a padel court that's always booked, a cold plunge, three shuls (because nobody could agree on *nusach*), and a lift that's permanently out of order because apparently *nobody* controls Otis.

Inside, enormous screens monitor world events. A digital map tracks every election, war, financial market, and weather system. There are clocks showing Jerusalem, New York, London, and Johannesburg, all running slightly late because someone forgot daylight saving.

The day's briefing begins. "Morning everyone. Quick updates. Before lunch we need to manipulate the media, move the stock market, control Hollywood, choose the next Pope, organise a protest in South Africa, invade Spain, assassinate Charlie Kirk, rig Eurovision, decide who wins the World Cup, and if someone has five minutes, could they please sort out the weather over Gauteng? Also, Motti, your mother called. Again."

A hand goes up. "Sorry, I can't do the invasion. I've got my grandson's school play."

Another voice from the back. "I swapped weather with Shlomo because I've got *cheder* pickup."

Someone else asks whether the meeting could have been an email. The invasion is moved to Thursday. After *Mincha*. Assuming the catering arrives.

Honestly, it's becoming impossible.

Then there are the KPIs. Not only must we orchestrate every geopolitical event on earth, we're also expected to win a wildly disproportionate number of Nobel Prizes; invent revolutionary technology, write bestselling books; produce world-class economists, scientists, and doctors; discover life-saving medicines; cure diseases; collect

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



a few Olympic medals; and somehow still remember Auntie Sylvia's birthday.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, we're already arguing about Rosh Hashanah synagogue seating and the kiddush committee has split into two factions over sushi. The family WhatsApp group has spent three days trying to decide whether Friday night's dinner should start at 18:15 or 18:30. Half the cousins haven't replied. One uncle has responded only with a thumbs-up emoji. Another insists he never got the message.

And we're expected to coordinate world domination? Please.

So here's my proposal. We need to outsource and let the Swiss take banking. The Canadians can handle diplomacy. The Japanese can take punctuality. The Italians can organise the catering because, frankly, ours is becoming repetitive.

As for us, we'll keep the Nobel Prizes. That seems to be one thing we genuinely do rather well. A people who make up around 0.2% of the world's population have produced an extraordinary number of Nobel laureates, along with remarkable contributions to medicine, science, economics, literature, and technology. That's not a conspiracy. It's just statistics.

Everything else? We're tapping out.

Because the next time I hear that the Jews are secretly behind the latest war, election, economic crisis, celebrity scandal, sporting result, or unusual weather pattern, I'll know exactly what's happened.

Some poor intern at the Jewish Operations Centre forgot to update the shared calendar.

Now Hollywood has been booked over the same time slot as Spain, someone accidentally scheduled a coup during a Nobel Prize ceremony, the weather committee has mistaken Johannesburg for Johannesburg, California, and Motti still hasn't called his mother.

Honestly.

The real miracle isn't that Jews supposedly run the world. It's that we apparently do it despite being unable to reach consensus on sushi.

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

Welcoming our friends

E very so often, we get to open our doors and show gratitude to the people who have stood beside us. On Shabbat, the Board hosted an extraordinary evening in honour of US Ambassador Leo Brent Bozell III, the US embassy, and the members of his diplomatic team who have supported us through some of the most difficult years our community has known.

The evening began with us walking together to a Friday-night shul service. From there, the ambassador and his staff, each of them wearing a shweshwe *kippah*, walked with us through the streets of Glenhazel to the dinner. It was an immersive evening where we welcomed friends not simply to a meal but into the rhythm of our community and the heart of our most Jewish neighbourhood.

At the dinner, South African Jewish Board of Deputies president Zev Krengel spoke about the long history of cooperation between the US embassy and our community, and thanked the ambassador and the United States for the support they've consistently shown the Jewish people, and our community in particular.

The ambassador then made an impassioned speech about the closeness between his Catholic faith and the Jewish people, and about his steadfast support for our community and for Israel.

This support has never been abstract. In the days after 7 October, which were among the darkest world Jewry has known, the concern from the US embassy was constant. When serious issues arose, our leaders heard directly from diplomats at the embassy. One of the first meetings Ambassador Bozell held after arriving in the country was with our leadership, and he later hosted a roundtable with the Board to engage on antisemitism in South Africa. This is what real allyship looks like, and it is exactly why it mattered so much to say thank you, and to welcome

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



him into our "home".

On Friday afternoon, a high-level meeting was held between our national leadership, including colleagues from Cape Town, and the Hawks [the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation]. We have long-standing relationships across the national security cluster, and engagements like this are essential in creating channels of communication with these critical bodies for our community. While we have differed with our government on other issues, it has consistently stood by us on security issues.

Then on Monday morning, Zev Krengel hosted a diplomatic engagement with incoming Israeli Deputy Ambassador Hen Feder and visiting Ambassador Ilan Fluss. Hen will serve as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Pretoria, and takes up the role at a particularly sensitive moment in the relationship between Israel and South Africa. He previously served as spokesperson for the Israeli embassy in Paris. It was wonderful to meet him at the start of his tenure, to introduce him to our communal leadership.

Last week also brought the publication of the Anti-Defamation League's J7 report on antisemitism, which examines the seven largest Jewish communities in the world and their experiences of this hatred. We are not among the J7, but its findings still give us a valuable point of comparison. The picture is a harrowing one, a wave of antisemitism that has swept across the globe. South Africa remains less affected than many of our fellow communities. That is no reason for complacency. Several of the report's themes apply to us too, and we must keep working to ensure our incidents of antisemitism continue to remain low.

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

Achievers support the Achiever Awards

GILANA LAB

W ith nominations for this year's Investec Jewish Achiever Awards closing on Friday, past winners say receiving the recognition was important to them.

Together with long-time supporters of the awards, they see the annual celebration as much more than individual achievements. It's an opportunity to acknowledge resilience, celebrate contribution, and remind the community of its continued accomplishments in an often-difficult environment.

community. The problem is that we get so consumed by the challenges that we forget to celebrate who we are and what we've built."

That, he says, is where the Jewish Achiever Awards play such an important role. "The awards make us stop and look at the remarkable men and women in our community and acknowledge what they've achieved. They remind us that this country, with all its problems, still gives Jewish South Africans an incredible environment to excel in, and to take that excellence to the world."

For Afrika Tikkun chief executive Marc Lubner, the awards have significance from two perspectives. As a previous winner, he understands what it means to be recognised by his peers. As sponsor of the Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, he also sees them as a way of ensuring the values of generosity and service continue to be celebrated.

"Jewish Achiever has deep personal meaning for me," he says. "As a small but powerful and contributing community, our Jewish individuals are integral to South Africa's history and future. We don't only honour ourselves but extend our compliments and acknowledgements to other South Africans and international contributors to our society."

Receiving the award was a moment he still treasures. "It felt amazing to be recognised by my Jewish 'extended family,'" he says. That experience inspired his family's continued support of the awards, in memory of his father. "I determined therefore a few years ago that Bertie, would've wanted to know the joy of giving through recognising the Humanitarian Award winners."

While each speaks from a different perspective, Feldman, Ichikowitz, and Lubner arrive at much the same conclusion. The Jewish Achiever Awards shine a light on a community that continues to innovate, lead, build businesses, strengthen society, and improve lives.

They hope more people will take a last chance to nominate those whose contributions might otherwise go unnoticed. In doing so, they say, the awards not only honour today's achievers but inspire tomorrow's.

WANTED!!! TOP PRICES PAID



Free Evaluation & Buying on:

- South African & International coins and banknotes
- Medals and Militaria
- Silver and Gold Jewellery in any condition
- Silverware
- Collectable Items
- Pocket and wrist watches

Remember your I.D. and banking details if you wish to sell your items

Collectors Investments

Dealers in Coins, Medals & Banknotes

Enquiries:
Tel: 011 880 9116 / 076 741 8801 • WhatsApp: 066 596 3215
32 Fricker Road, Illovo, Johannesburg

www.collectorsinvestments.com



Marc Lubner presenting the Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award to 2025 winner Khaya Lam

For past winner and entertainment entrepreneur Hazel Feldman, the awards provide a powerful message at a time when many in the community feel under pressure. "The awards are an affirmation of continued strength, purpose, and excellence. Despite, not because of, the greater negative cloak being thrown over the community," she says.

Her comments are echoed by businessman and philanthropist Ivor Ichikowitz, whose family foundation sponsors an award. "The Jewish Achiever Awards have never been more important," he says. "We live in a country that breeds pessimism, and the global reality right now gives us plenty to worry about. But here's the thing, the Jewish community in South Africa is truly blessed.

"We live in a magnificent country, on a continent with enormous potential, and we're part of a very special

Jack’s Wife Freda serves the taste of home

LEE TANKLE

Thousands of kilometres from Johannesburg, a slice of South African Jewish culture has found a home in the heart of New York. Jack’s Wife Freda, the restaurant founded by South African and Israeli-born couple Dean and Maya Jankelowitz, has become a celebrated dining destination by blending the tastes and traditions they grew up with.

Opened in SoHo in 2012, Jack’s Wife Freda, was born from a simple idea: to build the neighbourhood restaurant the couple wanted to spend time in. “We had both grown up in homes where the table was the centre of everything, and we wanted to recreate that feeling in New York as immigrants from Israel and South Africa,” Maya Jankelowitz told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“When we were thinking about a name, we kept coming back to Dean’s grandparents, Jack and Freda. They were the kind of people who made everyone around them feel like family. Their home was always full, always warm, always welcoming. We wanted to capture that feeling in the restaurant, and the name felt like the most honest way to honour them. It’s also a wonderful name to say out loud. There is something warm and slightly whimsical about it, which felt very us.”

The menu also started off as a reflection of Dean and Maya’s background and families, from South Africa and Israel respectively. However, their palates also grew up in New York after they both immigrated some 20 years ago.

“Israeli food is already a conversation between Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. South African food whispers of Mozambique, India, Portugal. By the time it lands on a plate in SoHo, it’s less a recipe and more a love letter written in several languages at once,” said Jankelowitz.

She explained that the restaurant’s food, feeling, and philosophy all trace back to the tables they grew up around.

“My grandmother’s pastilla. Dean’s mother’s pavlova. The schnitzel my mother had waiting for us after school. These dishes didn’t start as menu items. They started as memories. The restaurant is really just our way of sharing those memories with the world,” she said.

Now, 14 years later, there are five branches of the restaurant and it is near impossible to get a table for brunch. However, following their values of generosity, they will always try to make room for more.

“That instinct is so deeply wired into both of us that it just naturally became the foundation of everything we built. We also both grew up with a strong sense of community and belonging, and that’s something we have always tried to create at Jack’s Wife Freda,” said Jankelowitz.

Even though the restaurants are such popular spots, they keep the warmth of a neighbourhood café by never forgetting where they started and creating human connection with their guests.

“We still notice when someone is having a hard day.

We still send over a malva pudding when it feels right. The size of the operation has grown, but the intention has never changed. Every guest who walks through our doors deserves to feel seen. That’s not something you can automate or scale. It has to be lived every single shift, by every single person on the team,” she said.

Many South Africans have walked into the restaurant, and Jankelowitz describes the Proustian moment when they taste peri-peri chicken or malva pudding and are transported back home, despite being so far away.

“We love being that for people,” she said. “We regularly meet guests who recount their memories of meeting Jack and Freda in Africa, playing bridge with Freda, or sometimes even a distant relative of Dean’s. It has become a beautiful meeting spot for South Africans to feel that sense of community in New York City.”

The many typical South African and Israeli dishes on the menu evolved organically.

“I don’t start with a cuisine; I start with a feeling. What do I want someone to feel when they eat this? More often than not, the answer leads me back to something from my childhood or Dean’s. The shakshuka on our brunch table. The malva pudding that has been on our menu since the very beginning. These things find their way onto the menu because they’re genuine, and guests



Dean and Maya Jankelowitz at Jack’s Wife Freda

can always taste the difference,” said Jankelowitz. For her, the chopped salad is particularly personal. She describes it as “Israel in a

bowl”. “There isn’t a meal in my memory that didn’t have one somewhere on the table, breakfast to dinner.”

For Dean, it’s peri-peri, the flavour of Johannesburg, the taste of growing up. “Neither of us could imagine cooking without it. It just quietly shows up, like family always does,” she said.

While tradition is always going to be important for the couple, they don’t want to be constrained by it.

“We like to think we’re always gently holding onto who we were while imagining who’re becoming. The restaurant lives in that space in between, where the two get to meet, shake hands, and create something new. Israeli food already sits at a crossroads of so many cultures. South African food does the same. Put them together in a kitchen in New York City, and something wonderful happens,” she said.

WEEKLY SPECIALS

Offers valid till 12 August 2026 or while stocks last

KOSHER **AT** EVERYDAY PRICES

MANY MORE SPECIALS IN-STORE



Raisin Rib Roast

R25⁹⁹ p/100g



36⁹⁹

ALBANY WRAPS WHEAT WHITE OR WHEAT GARLIC & HERB 270G EACH



28⁹⁹

MEXICORN NACHOS SELECTED 250G EACH



8⁹⁹

TENDERCHICK GRADE A WHOLE P/100G



59⁹⁹

ALL JOY MARINADE CHICKEN 750ML



59⁹⁹

OSEM SOUP ALMOND FAM MINI CROUT 400G



29⁹⁹

GRAPE WHITE S/LESS PUNNET



61⁹⁹

LUCKY STAR PILCHARDS IN HOT CHILLI SAUCE 400G



29⁹⁹

SERENA PASTA PENNE RIGATE & FARFALLE 500G EACH



68⁹⁹

AVOCADO RIPE & READY 4'S



24⁹⁹

DIVELLA 10 VERMICELLINI & 14 LINGUINE 500G EACH

MADE FRESH IN OUR DELI



Feigels Est. 1968

R26⁹⁹

Fish Balls per 100g

To Ensure your Personal Comfort and Hygiene



115⁹⁹

TENA LADY INCONTINENCE PADS MAXI 12'S

087-803-4000 082-711-4342

HOMETOWNPHARMACY@PROPHARM.CO.ZA



24⁹⁹

RHODES MEXICAN TOMATO STYLE 400G



37⁹⁹

MIAMI ATCHAR MANGO GARLIC 400G



44⁹⁹

PEPPADEW ATCHAR MANGO HOT 400G



99⁹⁹

CLOVER CHEESE GOUDA & CHADDAR VP 550G EACH



81⁹⁹

MOOIRIVER BUTTER SALTED 500G



68⁹⁹

CAPE HERB & SPICE CHILLI ADDICT SAUCE SELECTED 200ML EACH



21⁹⁹

CIAO BLACK BEANS 400G



19⁹⁹

IMANA SOYA MINCE CHILLI BEEF & CHAKALAKA 200G EACH

עם ישראל חי

KosherWorld



THESE DEALS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE AT KOSHERWORLD JHB