

New blood for the SAJBD in Joburg

LEE TANKLE

A crop of new leaders has stepped forward, offering to help shape the future of Jewish life in Johannesburg. Several fresh faces are standing for election to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Johannesburg Council on 11 October.

Appliance Repairs on Site

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

Call Jason
082 401 8239 / 076 210 6532

FREE QUOTATIONS

 **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

 **Michael Kaplan**
wants to buy
military medals
awarded to
Jewish veterans.
We also buy gold
and silver coins.

083 555 5101 • 011 485 2195
medals@wirelessza.co.za

 **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

 **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

Among them are influential lawyers, educators, and politicians. They bring experience from different areas of Jewish communal and professional life and have their own reasons and ideas about how to contribute to the Board's work.

The election of Joburg's Jewish representatives on Sunday will bring affiliate organisations to the ballot box. These include shuls, schools, women's organisations, youth movements, and many others. They will have the opportunity to review the 20 candidates and make their selections for the 15 seats on the council.

Many of the candidates have worked with the SAJBD in some capacity before. However, they are still excited to have the opportunity to have more of an impact.

"It is important that our affiliates elect leaders that will represent them effectively and stand up for their interests," says Wendy Kahn, national director of the SAJBD. "This is a remarkable Jewish community, renowned globally, and it is the role of our leadership to promote, protect, and ensure that this continues to flourish."

Attorney **Sarah Levy** was co-opted onto the SAJBD Gauteng Council after initially advising the Board on a matter in 2025. Since then, she has gained insight into how the organisation operates and a deeper appreciation for its work.

"Standing for election is an opportunity to use my professional expertise to serve our community.

I share the Board's commitment to ensuring that South African Jews can participate fully in all aspects of life in our country," she says.

Gila Abramson, who has practised construction law for 17 years, is standing for election because she believes she can help advance the Board's goals, particularly its work to uphold the civil and religious rights of South African Jewry.

"This work is all crucial to maintaining a vibrant Jewish way of life and creating a safe and positive future for South African Jews. For me, raising three daughters in South Africa makes the work of the Board and its goals that much more personal," she says.

Darren Bergman brings decades of community service and political experience, including as a ward councillor and member of Parliament. Having often been asked why he'd never put his name forward for the SAJBD, he felt the time was right to see how his experience and the organisation could mutually benefit each other.

"I believe that it's at a time like this – for all bodies that share a common identity or cause, albeit in religion or in the love for our Constitution and the country that she protects – that unity and networking are key to our continued stability and contribution. I believe that I can add value positively and productively, and that is exactly

how I intend to contest these elections," he says.

Monica Solomon has been involved in communal affairs since 1996, holding leadership roles in the SA Union of Temple Sisterhoods, Women of Reform Judaism, and the SA Union for Progressive Judaism. A member of the SAJBD Gauteng Council and national executive since 2016, she is standing for election to ensure Progressive Jews are represented.

"If elected, I hope to continue working together with the amazing members of the Board for our community, whatever their affiliation. It has been an absolute privilege to have been part of this amazing organisation that does so much incredible work for our community," she says.

Mark Oppenheimer plans to bring his experience as an advocate, involvement in university governance, defence of constitutional rights, and confronting of antisemitism to the SAJBD.

"If elected, I would focus on strengthening the Board's response to antisemitism through public advocacy and, where appropriate, legal action. Supporting Jewish students would be a particular priority. Universities must be places where students can learn and debate freely, including expressing support for Israel, without being

targeted or excluded.

"I would also work towards greater transparency and accountability within the Board. Members of the community should understand how decisions are made, have meaningful opportunities to contribute, and be able to hold their representatives accountable," he says.

Bethia Milner, a former national chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), has served on the SAJBD Gauteng Council since 2024. With a background in youth leadership and communal organisations, she is passionate about combatting antisemitism and believes she can continue making a valuable contribution to the Board.

"As the youngest member of the Board, I hope to bring a youth perspective. As former SAUJS national chairperson, I also bring a wealth of experience in dealing with issues that Jewish students face on campus and an ability to engage across communities to achieve my vision of making a South African Jewish community that is strong and proud and not insular," she says.

A complete newbie to the SAJBD, **Joseph Gerassi**, executive head of Redhill School, has more than three decades of experience in educational and community leadership

Continued on page 4>>

Starting over

A fellow ordered a pair of pants to be custom-made by an expert tailor. When he came to collect the trousers, the tailor apologised and said they weren't yet ready. Quite upset, the man said, "G-d made the whole world in seven days. How long does it take to make a single pair of pants?!"

To which the tailor responded, "Yeah, but look at what a mess the world is in. Do you want your pants to look like the world?!"

This is the week of *Bereishith*, Genesis, when the Torah reading in shul is the story of creation, with the famous opening line "In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth". But the Chassidic masters have interpreted this also to mean that "G-d created beginnings". Not only did He create a new world, but he created new beginnings, and new opportunities for all of us.

How critical and vital is this to our continued well-being, success, and happiness? Imagine if there were never a time or opportunity to start over again.

You may be surprised to learn that, according to the Midrash and Kabbalistic tradition, ours was not the very first world created by G-d. He created other worlds too, but they did not please Him and so they did not endure. Only when it came to our world does it say, "And G-d saw that it was good."

Is the Midrash telling us that G-d made mistakes? That He messed up and had to keep trying until he got it right? "Oops! Not quite what I wanted. Let's try again." That

doesn't sound like the kind of perfect Supreme Being we subscribe to.

It reminds me of my friend who is totally bald. On his desk he has a little plaque that reads, "G-d created only a few perfect heads. The rest He covered with hair."

Rav Joseph Ber Soloveitchik explained that of course G-d doesn't need to practise until He gets it right. In creating several worlds before ours, Hashem was deliberately teaching us that it's okay to make a mistake. That there can be new beginnings.

Take Adam and Eve. Their son Cain killed his own brother, Abel, wiping out a quarter of the world's population. Can you imagine how they felt? They could have been completely forgiven if they had decided not to bring any more children into the world. But they went on to have another child. His name was Seth, and he became the forefather of Noah and Abraham.

What if Adam and Eve had given up hope? Where would we be? Would we, in fact, be? Thank G-d they started over and rebuilt their family. Thank G-d they made the correct decision based on hope and the possibility of starting over, and that there can indeed be new beginnings.

If G-d could start over, if Adam and Eve could start over, then so can we.

This Shabbat *Bereishith*, the first Shabbos

Torah Thought

**Rabbi Yossy Goldman**
Life rabbi emeritus of
Sydenham Shul and
president of the South
African Rabbinical
Association

following the festive *yomtov* season, is a bridge into the new calendar year and is rich with opportunity and potential. It helps us infuse the new year with the inspiration of our high holy day experiences.

Even if there may be areas of our lives that haven't quite gone the way we would have liked, it's not too late to try again. Don't be discouraged. Let's grasp this wonderful opportunity for a fresh start and a new beginning.

Shabbat Times brought to you by

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

	Starts	Ends
Johannesburg	17:53	18:44
Cape Town	18:37	19:30
Durban	17:44	18:35
Bloemfontein	18:03	18:54
Gqeberha	18:08	19:01
Plettenberg Bay	18:15	19:10
East London	17:58	18:51
Jerusalem*	17:34	18:49
Tel Aviv*	17:54	18:51

Spencer Schwartz • 084 524 4616 • spencer@yourealtycoza

**You.
Realty**

Just as Shabbat candles brighten our tables, the right home can brighten our lives. Let me help you find a place where your light shines, your family feels secure, and your community feels close.

*Please note: Israel time is 1 hour ahead

US antisemitism envoy says SA’s ‘genocide’ claim fuelling Jew-hatred

NICOLA MILTZ

WASHINGTON – The United States antisemitism envoy linked South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to deteriorating relations between Pretoria and Washington, while warning that accusations of “genocide” are being weaponised against Jews and Israel.

Ambassador Rabbi Yehuda Kaploun, the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, made the comments in Washington on Monday, 5 October, during a Foreign Press Centre briefing on the Trump administration's efforts to combat soaring global antisemitism.

Asked by the *SA Jewish Report* whether South Africa's decision to make its ICJ case against Israel a centrepiece of its foreign policy had contributed to global antisemitism, and whether the case was connected to worsening US-South Africa relations, Kaploun was unequivocal.



US Ambassador Rabbi Yehuda Kaploun, the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, speaking on Monday in Washington

Hamas in Gaza. Israel has rejected the accusation of “genocide”, maintaining that it is acting in self-defence following Hamas’s 7 October attack and that it is bound by international humanitarian law.

Kaploun said the US government had made its opposition to the “genocide” allegations clear. He said the ICJ case “has no merit whatsoever”.

Kaploun also turned his sights on the legacy of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, after being asked about a motion passed last week by the Green Party of England and Wales

equating Zionism with racism.

He said Washington intended making representations over the issue.

“The fact that people are still equating Zionism with racism because of a Durban conference” was deeply troubling, he said, pointing to recent US efforts at the United Nations to persuade countries to distance themselves from the Durban process. Kaploun said dozens of countries had withdrawn from references to Durban following US diplomatic efforts.

He accused countries that singled Israel out of applying a double standard. “I think a lot of countries are being hypocritical in the sense that they will only focus on Israel; they will not focus on other countries,” he said.

Referring to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, Kaploun said, “The same condemnation that you want to use about Israel has to be used across the board on every country, and I don’t think they’re living up to that standard.”

Kaploun’s comments came just a week after more than 40 countries, including the US, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Australia, and Israel boycotted a UN high-level meeting marking the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration.

The global briefing in Washington took place this week for international journalists participating in the Foreign Press Centre’s International Reporting Tour on Combating Global Antisemitism, taking place in Washington and Florida.

Setting out the administration’s broader approach, Kaploun described antisemitism as a global problem requiring active US diplomatic engagement.

“Antisemitism is all over the world. It’s virtually in every country,” he said.

He described his position as “a role that I wish did

not exist, not just in America but in the world”, saying the State Department’s response went beyond the protection of American Jews to the defence of religious liberty internationally.

“As antisemitism surges globally, the president took unprecedented measures,” he said. Kaploun pointed to the executive action targeting antisemitism on university campuses, strengthened visa vetting, withdrawal from certain international bodies, hate-crime prosecutions, counterterrorism efforts, and work with foreign governments on education.

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order in January 2025 directing federal departments and agencies to identify civil and criminal mechanisms available to combat antisemitism, with particular emphasis on Jew-hatred at universities. The order also directed officials to examine immigration-law measures applicable to foreign students and staff engaged in unlawful conduct.

Kaploun said visa policy had become one of the administration’s tools, claiming more than 250 000 visas had been revoked. “We’ve implemented a rigorous visa vetting process.”

He said the envoy’s office was also focusing heavily on education and the role that school curriculums could play in either perpetuating or countering hatred.

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

He singled out Saudi Arabia, saying his office had worked with the Saudi government to remove antisemitic material from its curriculum.

“This office believes that most people who hate are ignorant, and if educated properly with respect and dignity for all of humanity, we can all reduce the levels of not just antisemitism but all levels of crime against all religions,” he said.

Kaploun stressed that his office’s work was not confined to attacks against Jews. It worked closely on wider religious-liberty issues and had raised concerns about “churches being burned, synagogues being burned, women being tortured, and women being raped across the globe”.

He also accused the international community of selective outrage, citing the deaths of Iranian citizens while, he said, much of the world remained silent.

His central message was that the US administration increasingly views antisemitism not simply as prejudice against individual Jews, but as an international diplomatic, educational, law-enforcement, and security challenge.

Antizionists target Jews on 7 October

>>>Continued from page 1

little if it cannot acknowledge the worst day for the Jewish people in generations. Its presence appears to lend Jewish legitimacy to hostility directed at Israel and, by extension, at its own community.”

He says that UWC students “glorified terrorism, and UWC must say whether it accepts such messaging on its campus. St George’s Cathedral hosted the finale of the 7 October antizionist procession, and the cathedral’s leadership owes Cape Town an explanation.”

Bloch says Hezbollah flags and clothing bearing the words “I am Hamas” “are not innocuous symbols of solidarity. They carry an entirely different and deeply disturbing message, particularly to a Jewish community preparing to commemorate 7 October.”

Language portraying Jews or Zionists as an “invasive, contaminating, or destructive presence echoes dehumanising tropes directed at Jews for generations”, he says.

Milton Shain, an antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, says that “choosing to protest at the very time that decent people recall with revulsion the 7 October attack is an act of painful insensitivity”.

But it hardly comes as a surprise, says Shain. “Within six hours of the world waking up to wanton violence, murder, and rape in the south of Israel, permission was sought by antizionists in London to march against the Jewish State. Sydney

and New York, too, saw huge protests against Israel on 8 October.”

Initially, Shain thought a 7 October protest outside local Holocaust centres was a prank. “Surely antizionist Jews would not choose that day to vent their hatred of the Jewish State?” he says.

“Instead of seeking a solution to a complex problem, SAJFP only enhances division. By all means, protest. But why choose a day on which the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust took place?” asks Shain. “These are protests of hate. Instead of recognising the barbarism of 7 October, SAJFP is celebrating murder, torture, and rape.”

Movement Against Antizionism founder Adam Louis-Klein told the *SA Jewish Report* that “attempts to turn the Gaza war into a ‘Gaza genocide’, to replace and invert the history of Jewish suffering, is a central antizionist tactic”.

He says the root of the problem is “antizionist violence, committed with the explicit intent to annihilate Israeli national identity and existence. A full reckoning with antizionism means recognising 7 October as a genocide, and the antizionist hate movement as built on genocide inversion.”

Says Bloch, “We will not surrender the memory of 7 October victims, and we will not allow their suffering to be erased in service of somebody’s political narrative. The facts remain. The victims matter. And we will remember.”

JAWITZ

PROPERTIES

Leading

REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD

FOR SALE

GLENHAZEL | R 2 399 000

4 2

Web Ref: JRL45174

Asking more. Spacious Sunningdale family home on the Glenhazel border, in a 24/7 boom. Huge bonus 2 bedroom income producing cottage. Offering 3 – 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms (m.e.s), study/TV room, patio, pool, garden, workshop, double garage and 1 carports.

Joel Harris: 082 926 0287
Lauren Shalpid: 083 789 0229

FOR SALE

LINKSFELD | R 1 950 000

2 2

Web Ref: JRL45608

Rare find, 2-bedroom garden unit in sought-after Linksfeld. 2 North-facing bedrooms with BIC's, modern kitchen, 2 renovated bathrooms (m.e.s), enclosed exclusive use patio, communal garden and pool. Secure complex, garage and additional parking. Excellent access to schools, shuls and shopping.

Lauren Shalpid: 083 789 0229

FOR SALE

WAVERLEY | R 3 450 00

3 2.5

Web Ref: JRL43203

Seeking a lock-up-and-go home to fit your lifestyle? Look no further. Compact, simplex cluster offers all the comforts of home, 3 beds, 2 baths, 2 receptions + multi-use suite (guests/wfh/staff). Lovely, secure, access-controlled estate.

Chrissie Hammer: 082 568 0440

FOR SALE

SANDOWN | R 1 250 000

3 1.5

Web Ref: JRL44920

Stylish, upgraded 2-bedroom apartment in sought-after Sandown Gables, 800M from Chabad of Strathavon. Bright open-plan living, modern kitchen, private garden and pet-friendly complex, close to Sandton City, Nelson Mandela Square, Gautrain and major business hubs.

Kevin Jacobson: 084 777 8477

Keeping a brother’s light and leadership alive

CLAUDIA GROSS

Three years after 7 October, Doron Libshtein is still learning how to live with the loss of his brother Ofir, who died defending Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Ofir, 50, was head of the Sha’ar HaNegev Regional Council and a community leader in the Gaza border region. His 19-year-old son, Nitzan, was also killed that day. In an interview with the *SA Jewish Report*, Doron explains how he has turned his grief into an effort to preserve Ofir’s approach to leadership. He describes a family changed forever by the attack. “It is the toughest thing for me, for my sisters, my brother, my mother, and the kids. At the beginning you tell yourself, ‘Just for a while.’ But now you realise he’s not coming back.”

Doron and Ofir were four years apart, but extremely close. They looked almost alike and built businesses together. In 2005, they created a coaching business and worked with international mentors. Their relationship was rooted in friendship as much as family.

Doron says his brother was a leader in the family, on the kibbutz, and in the wider Jewish world. Ofir led the Sha’ar HaNegev Regional Council, which includes communities near the Gaza border. He also created Netaim, a network connecting small Jewish communities around the world with Israel.

“Ofir was very proud of being Jewish,” Doron says. “And he wanted to have a better future for his children and grandchildren.”

One of Doron’s books, *The Light and Good Will Prevail*, explores the qualities that defined Ofir. Its chapters include optimism, certainty, integrity, friendship, loyalty, togetherness, determination, heart, peace, giving, and legacy. The book says Ofir regarded leadership as a responsibility to listen, give, act for others, and build trust.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog describes Ofir as a leader whose love for Kfar Aza, Sha’ar HaNegev, and the surrounding region created cohesion and hope. In a letter to Doron following Ofir’s murder, Herzog writes that Ofir “understood leadership as responsibility and service”. He describes him as a man of vision who knew how to turn that vision into action.

Those qualities were tested on 7 October 2023. Ofir was at home in Kfar Aza with his wife, Vered, and three of their sons. Nitzan was in the kibbutz’s young-adult neighbourhood.

When Ofir learned that terrorists had entered the kibbutz, he collected a weapon from the armoury and joined the fight to defend the community. His weapon later jammed. He was shot near his home and died at 07:07.

The family didn’t initially know what had happened to him. Doron says they tried calling Ofir and eventually located his phone. Aviv, Ofir’s eldest son, found his father’s body. Nitzan, 19, was fatally wounded in his safe room after terrorists entered the young-adult neighbourhood. The attack also killed members of Vered’s family.

According to Doron, the family spent 12 days waiting for confirmation of Nitzan’s death.

The kibbutz remained under terrorist control for several days, and bodies had to be collected and identified. He returned to the area while soldiers were searching for Nitzan. The experience remains one of the most difficult he’s been through.

Yet Doron says Ofir’s family has continued to rebuild. Vered moved them out of the kibbutz, created a home where relatives could gather, and later helped lead the return towards Kfar Aza. “She’s a hero,” he says.

For Doron, rebuilding Kfar Aza is part of continuing Ofir’s work rather than simply remembering him. He says Ofir believed strongly in the importance of people living in the Gaza Envelope. He points to the desire of families to return despite the danger as

evidence of that commitment. “Going back there and rebuilding the kibbutz is a continuation,” he says.

The same idea lies behind the Or Ofir Foundation, created with Ofir’s colleagues and supporters to continue programmes in leadership, community building, and support for young adults.

Netaim, which began with 40 communities, has grown to about 240 communities, according to Doron. The foundation also runs a leadership programme for young Jews from around the world. Each group includes about 20 participants.

Its projects include building Jewish communities, supporting young leaders, and encouraging partnerships with people who support Israel and Jewish communities. Doron says the foundation is not intended simply to preserve Ofir’s memory; it puts his values into practice.

He believes one of those values is the idea that Jews in Israel and the diaspora are “two legs of the same body. If one hurts, the other one supports the leg that is hurt.” That belief has taken on new meaning since 7 October, he says, as antisemitism has increased in many parts of the world.

Doron believes Ofir’s legacy also offers a response to internal divisions within Israeli and Jewish society. He says disagreement is natural, but people should remain united without demanding that everyone think alike. He distinguishes between being identical and being united. For him, unity allows different opinions while maintaining a shared commitment to one another.

This is reflected in the concept of *reut*, which Doron describes as a form of friendship based on mutual responsibility. He says Ofir lived that principle by making people feel that he would stand beside them.

Three years after his death, the loss has not become easier. Instead, Doron says, Ofir’s absence has become clearer. Yet he also feels his presence when he speaks and teaches about leadership. “Sometimes when I talk to people and do a lot of teaching around the world, I feel that a lot of his words are coming through me.”

Herzog’s letter similarly presents Ofir’s legacy as something that should become action. The president writes that the book should inspire readers to turn memory into responsibility, responsibility into service, and pain into renewed hope and growth.



Doron and Ofir Libshtein

For Doron, the most important way to remember his brother is therefore not simply to speak about what was lost. He wants people to ask what they can do for others.

“After 7 October, I heard this sentence from all around the world: how can I help?” he says. “By doing that, I think that to lead is to serve. By doing that, we are continuing his legacy.” Doron says Ofir believed that life and goodness would prevail. Three years later, he is trying to ensure that belief is expressed through action.

New blood for the SAJBD in Joburg

>>>Continued from page 2

in South Africa and internationally. Gerassi decided to run because he believes leadership should reflect the breadth and diversity of the community it represents.

“If elected, I hope to help strengthen the connection of younger generations to Jewish communal life, broaden participation, and ensure that different Jewish voices feel that they belong and are heard. I would also like to contribute to building meaningful relationships beyond our community. For me, a strong Jewish future in South Africa depends not only on protecting who we are, but on creating a

community that the next generation actively wants to be part of,” says Gerassi.

Benji Falkson, who combines a decade of Torah study with experience in Jewish education, business, and communal initiatives, is also running for the SAJBD for the first time. “I am seeking election to the Board to advance the objective of peace through complex dialogue, bringing communities together by navigating difficult conversations with nuance and empathy,” he said.



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

Flydubai suspension costs SA travellers

LEE TANKLE

A routine stopover in Dubai quickly turned into uncertainty for South African travellers as flights to Tel Aviv were cancelled without warning.

The move by flydubai caught many off guard. With the final leg of their journey no longer going ahead, they were left scrambling to rebook, reroute their journeys, or find another way to reach Israel.

Flydubai suspended all flights between Dubai and Tel Aviv following the 30 September security incident aboard flight FZ1073, in which one pilot stabbed another before he was restrained by passengers.

The airline has said the suspension, imposed at the request of authorities, will remain in place until further notice while the incident is investigated. This has affected many travel plans.

Michael Kransdorff, chairperson of the Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNF SA), explained that for its upcoming solidarity trip to Israel, five participants, including himself, had booked flights on Emirates to



alternative arrangements.

“Basically, Emirates is helping people to reroute via Cyprus and Rome and Athens, but there are no connecting flights now to Israel. So even though they’re offering the reroute option, it’s not possible because the flights are all full,” said Kransdorff. “The only other option is to cancel the ticket and rebook on another airline, which is exorbitant.”

Steven and Linda Kantor are also going on the JNF SA solidarity trip and were some of the first to sign up for the trip. But then suddenly, they had to change their flights so that they could still go.

“An email was sent to me stating that all flights from Dubai to Tel Aviv had been cancelled and asking us to make our own arrangements,” Steven said. “I then called Emirates and asked if they could assist us with an alternative flight, but unfortunately they couldn’t, so we had to look elsewhere. I went online and checked the Ethiopian Airlines schedule. There were very few seats available, but we managed to get onto a flight to Israel via Addis Ababa and return the same way.”

Travel agent Yochee Katz explained that when things like this happen, passengers will need to find an alternative airline that is flying to Israel and pay for the new booking themselves, as they cannot be rerouted onto another carrier. They will receive a refund for their cancelled flight, with the exception of certain non-refundable taxes.

“What else can we do? The airlines make the rules and we have to follow,” she said.

Kransdorff said he needed to be in Israel for a JNF SA solidarity mission and had an important meeting with the chairman of KKL-JNF in Jerusalem on Monday morning. Unable to reroute his existing ticket, he planned to cancel it and book with another airline, potentially flying via Ethiopia or even France. He hoped travel insurance would cover the additional cost but was not optimistic.

“Because it’s so late, it makes things much more difficult. When I spoke to them on the phone, I was told that passengers had been notified on Friday, but I wasn’t. It would have been much better if I had known then because I could have rebooked when prices were still a bit lower. Now, at such short notice, it’s really not good,” he said.

Kransdorff rebooked his flight with Ethiopian Airlines, but since it was so close to departure, he had to pay almost double the price of his initial ticket.

“The problem in these situations is that when we first heard about the tour, we booked early and therefore got a much better rate. But because we suddenly had to make alternative arrangements at very short notice, prices had increased substantially. We ended up paying approximately R8 000 more for essentially the same journey,” said Kantor.

AI-generated image

Their lives changed on 7 October

CLAUDIA GROSS

Three Israeli women with South African roots were confronted with the unimaginable on 7 October. One lost her son in battle, one was taken hostage by Hamas, and one fought to save her family while holding her newborn daughter.

For Debbie Chitiz, the day began with a family Shabbat still fresh in her mind. Her son Yaron was serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and would eventually be killed in battle. For Aviva Siegel, the morning became a fight for survival. She and her husband, Keith, were taken hostage to Gaza, where she spent 51 days. For Liora Ben Tsur, the first hours were spent desperately trying to reach her husband, children, and South African-born mother, who were trapped on their kibbutz.

Three years later, each woman is living with the consequences of that day.

Chitiz, who lives in Ra'anana, woke at 06:30 on 7 October to a siren. She and her children went downstairs to the safe room, without initially understanding what was happening. They later dressed to attend shul, but on the way, they saw that synagogues were closing.

"At some stage we started hearing snippets that the terrorists had infiltrated," Chitiz said. "It was really the biggest *balagan* [chaos]. Nobody knew what was going on."

Her son Yaron was serving in the IDF's permanent force, in the Givati Brigade. Her third son, Dovie, was called up after the attack.

Yaron's unit was deployed to the south, and he didn't return home until 21 December, after about 80 days away. It was his first and only weekend at home. He spent that Shabbat surrounded by his family. He received an aliya, visited friends, and ate the food he'd asked his mother to prepare.

Chitiz remembers the weekend as surreal. "We weren't realising that this was his last Shabbat in this world," she said. Yaron returned to his unit on the Sunday morning. He was killed two days later, on 26 December.

In the months that followed, Chitiz learned more about Yaron from people who'd served alongside him. She heard how he had helped lone soldiers, resolved problems, and refused to leave until the people around him were taken care of. One commander recalled Yaron repeatedly calling about a lone soldier's debt. He continued pushing for a solution until the soldier received help. For Chitiz, these stories reinforced what she already knew about her son. "He always took care of the other first."

Yaron was also a passionate Liverpool supporter. The club's motto, "You'll never walk alone", has taken on a new meaning for the family. Chitiz has adopted her own version through swimming. "You'll never swim alone," she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Swimming has become an important part of how she copes with her grief. Yet she says the hardest part remains the longing for the future Yaron never got to experience. "You long for the person that's not here," she said. "You long for what he would have been."

On 7 October, Aviva Siegel was on a kibbutz under attack. She and her husband Keith were woken by the sound of the Tzeva Adom, Israel's nationwide rocket-alert system, which warns residents of incoming rocket fire.

The couple had lived with rocket attacks from Gaza for years. Initially, the morning seemed familiar. Then the sounds changed. "We looked at each other and said, 'What's happening? It's different. It feels different, it sounds different,'" Aviva said.

The couple eventually heard shooting outside their home. Their house was attacked and terrorists entered. The couple was beaten, shot at, and forced from the house. Aviva injured her knee and Keith suffered broken ribs and a gunshot wound.

They were taken to Gaza. For 51 days, Aviva was held underground and subjected to starvation, threats, violence, and conditions in which she repeatedly believed she was going to die.

During that time, she became convinced that her son, Shai, had been killed. She returned to Israel believing she had lost him. Then she was told he was alive. "I was 100%, not 99%, I was 100% sure that my kid was dead," she said. "And there he was standing in front of me and giving me a hug."

Keith remained in captivity for more than a year

before he was released alive.

Aviva says she is still recovering from the trauma. Everyday experiences can trigger memories of captivity, including drinking water, opening the fridge, sudden sounds such as someone sneezing, hearing an aeroplane, rain, hearing Arabic being spoken, or seeing places that resemble Arab towns. "I'm still feeling many, many things because of the trauma," she said.

The Siegels won't return to live on the Kfar Aza kibbutz. Sixty-four members of their community were killed on 7 October, Aviva said, while many others were physically and psychologically injured.

For Ben Tsur, the attack unfolded from a different perspective. She was in hospital with her newborn daughter, Asif, while her husband, other children, and mother were on the Ein HaShlosha kibbutz. At first, Ben Tsur struggled to understand why the rockets were heading towards the area around the kibbutzim rather than central Israel.

Then her family stopped answering their phones. As a former journalist, she began contacting everyone she could, including the army, police, and medical contacts. Eventually, her husband reached her. "Baby, I love you," he told her. "Please do everything that you can to save us."

Ben Tsur contacted her brothers, who travelled more than 100km to help rescue the family. Her mother, Marcelle, was murdered on the kibbutz. The day before, on 6 October, Marcelle had met Asif for the first and only time.

Ben Tsur discovered afterwards that her husband had taken a photograph of the moment. She describes the photograph as a gift from her mother.

Marcelle was born and raised in South Africa before making aliya. Ben Tsur remembers her as deeply committed to Israel and says her mother's belief that Israel was her homeland shaped the family.

After burying her mother, Ben Tsur decided that she would return to the kibbutz with her children. It wasn't an easy decision. Her mother had been murdered only 100m from her home. Still, Ben Tsur wanted her children to have a future there.

"I knew that we needed to go back," she said. "I told them that we will rebuild and go back to the kibbutz and make it much better and larger."

She subsequently joined other residents of the Otef region in rebuilding



Yaron and Debbie Chitiz

Vote for your achievers now

GILANA LAB

The nominations have been submitted, nominees have told their stories, and judging has taken place. Now, the community gets to have a say as voting opens for the 2026 Investec Jewish Achiever Awards.

This year's awards, to be presented on 1 November, will celebrate the people whose work, leadership, and achievements have made an impact not only within the Jewish community, but across South Africa. From established business leaders and professionals to community stalwarts and rising stars, the nominees reflect the breadth of achievement within the community.

Among the awards are the Investec Business Leadership Award, recognising outstanding leadership and impact in business, and the Investec Professional Excellence Award, honouring

those who've achieved national recognition in their professions.

The Eric Ellering Entrepreneur Award celebrates the innovation, determination, and resilience required to build and grow successful ventures, while the Europcar Women in Leadership Award recognises women making their mark



in business, public life, philanthropy, the arts, academia, and the broader South African society.

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star Award recognises those aged 35 and younger who are already showing exceptional promise, leadership, and achievement.

There's the Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in Honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and the Mann Made Community Service Award.

Achievement beyond business is recognised through the Art, Sport, Science, and Culture Award, while the Lifetime Achievement Award in Honour of Helen Suzman celebrates a sustained and extraordinary contribution made over many years.

With such different fields and achievements represented, voting isn't about choosing the most recognisable name. It's an opportunity to look at the nominees, discover what they've accomplished, and decide whose contribution deserves the nod.





Aliyah is a life-changing move. You don't have to do it alone.

Telfed provides free, personalised guidance to help you prepare, settle and build your life in Israel.

✓ Free, personalised guidance.

✓ Support before, during & after Aliyah.

✓ Trusted by generations of Olim.



READY TO START YOUR ALIYAH JOURNEY?

Sponsored by

משרד העלייה והקליטה

Ministry of Aliyah and Integration





aliyahprep@telfed.org.il | +972 58 687 8550 | www.telfed.org.il

south african

Jewish Report

We dare not forget 7 October

It’s hard to believe that three years have passed since 7 October 2023. In some ways, it feels like yesterday. In others, it feels like something from a terrible dream, the edges of which are beginning to blur. Yet on that morning, the Jewish world changed irrevocably as Hamas terrorists swept into southern Israel, their sole reasons were to kill as many Jews as possible. They were determined to maim, rape, and brutalise as many Jews as possible, and take hostages – dead or alive. They went all out to ensure they left as much devastation and horror in their wake. And they did it all with glee, filming much of it and putting it out around the world on social media.

This week, the *SA Jewish Report* once again carries stories and opinion pieces about that day and everything that has happened since: the toll on Israel, the damage to Jewish communities around the world, and the horrifying rise in antisemitism.

We don’t return to 7 October because we are unable to move forward. We return to it because, even as we live with its consequences, others are trying to rewrite it. There are those who minimise what happened, those who justify it, and those who deny it altogether. Some even claim that Jews did it to themselves to win sympathy, or for whatever sinister purpose they choose to imagine.

It’s difficult to comprehend such thinking, but it follows a familiar antisemitic pattern. Jewish victims are recast as villains. Jewish pain is treated as propaganda. Jewish testimony is presumed to be a lie.

Over the past three years, this hostility has also imposed a cruel test on people in public life. Jewish authors, artists, musicians, and business leaders have too often been pushed to declare which “side” they are on. Those who openly support Israel, defend Jews, or refuse to disown their own community can find themselves boycotted, or even “cancelled”.

It isn’t much of a choice when one answer may cost you your audience or your livelihood. All the more reason, then, for us not to shrink or apologise, but to be loud and proud about being Jewish. We saw something of the same poisonous instinct after the apparent attempt to bring down flydubai Flight FZ1073 on its way to Tel Aviv last week. Imagine the terror in that cabin: the captain attacked, the aircraft suddenly plunging thousands of feet, and more than 170 people wondering whether they were about to die.

Yet despite the terror they were feeling, Israeli passengers intervened. Two off-duty flydubai pilots onboard – one of whom is believed to be South African – helped take control of the aircraft, and eventually landed safely in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. All 174 people on board survived.

There were extraordinary acts of courage and it was nothing short of a miracle. But even this story of lives saved in terrifying circumstances has been dragged through the mud. Instead of seeing human beings who faced an extraordinary emergency and acted, some people have searched for a conspiracy, a publicity stunt, even an event Jews supposedly engineered for applause. Why is Jewish heroism so difficult for some people to accept? We seem to be permitted to be victims, but not rescuers. We can mourn, but when Jews survive and fight back against terror, suspicion follows. That is worth thinking about. The people on that plane weren’t performing for anyone. They were ordinary people caught in an unimaginable situation, who acted when they had to. Their bravery deserves our awe, not an asterisk.

We know what happened. We should be able to tell the story without apologising for the fact that Jews and Israelis were among those who helped save lives. The truth is that 7 October was the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. That comparison isn’t made lightly. The Holocaust was the purposeful murder of six million Jews, and yet there are still people who deny, distort, or diminish it. We know only too well that even the most documented horror can be questioned once hatred is allowed to drown out truth. This is why we dare not allow this anniversary to pass as just another date. We have to remember what was done to our people and the extent of the damage. We must remember those murdered, wounded, and abducted. We need to hold those bereaved families; the shattered kibbutzim; the displaced communities close to our hearts. We dare not forget the countless lives divided forever into before 7 October and after it.

Saying this doesn’t mean that we cannot or should not mourn innocent Palestinians who’ve died in Gaza. We must. Their lives matter, and their suffering is real. But that mourning cannot come at the expense of Jewish mourning, or be used instead of it. Compassion for Palestinians shouldn’t require the erasure of what happened to Jews on 7 October. One people’s pain doesn’t invalidate another’s. Still, memory does strange things. As time passes, even the unimaginable begins to feel less immediate. Think about COVID-19. At the height of the pandemic, fear followed us everywhere. We counted infections, worried about those we loved, and grieved the many lives lost. Today, much of that fear feels distant. Our minds soften the sharpest edges because, perhaps, that’s how we survive. That softening makes the deliberate telling of truth even more important. As American-Israeli journalist Natasha Raquel wrote this week, “Telling the truth keeps you whole. It protects the record from being rewritten. Truth outlasts denial.”

But survival cannot mean forgetting and truth will outlast denial. We have to remind ourselves what happened, describe it honestly, preserve the testimony, and teach it to those who come after us. We cannot assume that the truth will look after itself. If we don’t hold onto our history, others will reshape it for us. So, on the third anniversary, we remember. And on the three-hundredth anniversary, our descendants must remember too. These were the lives of our people. This is our pain, our history, and our responsibility. Others may deny what happened. We will not. We will hold our heads high, speak the truth, honour those whose lives were stolen or changed forever, and refuse to forget.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Making excuses for rape sustains GBV culture

OPINION

LEE TANKLE



Whenever a man is accused of sexual violence, someone inevitably worries about the accusation ruining his life. There’s often far less concern about the life of the woman who says the violence happened to her.

This has been one of the major points of discourse about an incident at Cornell University in the United States, where an anonymous student, referred to in her lawsuit as Jane Doe, accused seven men of gang-raping her in a fraternity house for seven hours while she was incapacitated. Doe alleges that, despite being underage, she was given alcohol at a bar before going to the fraternity house, where she was given more alcohol and ketamine. A photograph of her was then allegedly posted to a 57-member fraternity Snapchat group with the caption “Free Pu**y”.

Seven hours. Seven men. One woman. Those numbers have stayed with me. But so has another: the number of people around them. Friends and peers who may have seen the warning signs, heard the comments, or witnessed the behaviour that came before. Sexual violence does not begin with rape. It begins much earlier, in a culture that teaches women how not to become victims while failing to teach men not to create them.

After Doe came forward, two of the accused were expelled, two were suspended, while others were reportedly required to attend a workshop or write an essay. She was also allegedly warned, “You had better be sure in what you are doing, because an accusation can ruin these boys’ lives.”

Excuse me? Maybe they should have thought about the consequences of their actions when they decided to violate this young woman. In any case, too many men accused of sexual assault experience literally no consequences – they still have their careers and lives and become even more powerful.

Not raping someone is easy. Men don’t deserve a trophy for not having raped anyone or saying “I would never rape anyone”. It is not an achievement, but rather the bare minimum. Oftentimes when men get into groups they say the most abhorrent things, and there’s not enough acknowledgement of the harm that this does to the society at large.

It’s exactly what fuels men to believe that they can treat women as if they are disposable, that every woman is at the mercy of a man, and all she wants is to have sex with them. Or if she doesn’t, there’s something wrong with her.

Growing up, girls are constantly told that we need to do certain things to keep ourselves safe: walk around in groups, never go in an Uber alone, carry pepper spray or a Taser, don’t dress too revealingly, don’t drink too much, watch your drink the whole night, and so much more. Why do we think this is? It’s so that we can do everything possible to not get raped.

But when it happens – because we can’t lie to ourselves and believe that if we do these things it won’t happen – victims are immediately met with justifications or just pure disbelief.

Any man has the capacity to rape. Every man has the social currency to be able to get away with it. From a young age, when a boy does something hurtful to a girl, the girl is told that “Boys will be boys” or “He only did it because he likes you”, and so he is encouraged to continue the behaviour.

Honestly, that excuse doesn’t cut it; boys need to be taught that doing something that another person doesn’t want done to them is not okay. The fact that “Boys will be boys” is so popular is frightening. This justifies the idea that it’s

something they cannot control. But they can. If girls can control their urges and hormones, so can boys.

There’s the whole idea of “not all men”, but that really means nothing. A woman who’s alone can see a man and, no matter how friendly or non-threatening he looks, wonder if he’s a rapist, or a murderer, or both. A rapist looks and behaves like a regular man; they can have high-powered jobs, they go to the gym, they drive their car to and from work like anyone else does. There’s nothing to distinguish a rapist from another human.

The rape at Cornell University is not an isolated incident; in fact, it is far from it. The World Health Organization estimates that one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner, or both during their lifetime.

In South Africa, 11 430 rapes were reported to police in just three months at the end of 2025, an average of about 124 every day. And even those numbers cannot capture the full scale of sexual violence, because many survivors never report what’s happened to them because they fear they will be laughed out of the police station.



AI-generated image

Looking back over the past three years, the world has completely glossed over the incredible amount of sexual violence on 7 October. We’ve seen the rape and sexual violence questioned, minimised, and, in some cases, dismissed. As a Jewish community, we rightly demanded that the world listens.

But that demand cannot apply only when the perpetrators are our enemies and the victims are our own. We need to be willing to have the same uncomfortable conversations in our own communities, schools, universities, residences, and friendship groups. We need to stop teaching girls an endless list of ways to avoid being raped and start asking what we are teaching boys about consent, respect, and accountability.

And men need to understand that saying “I would never rape a woman” isn’t enough. Call out the friend who makes the joke. Question the behaviour that makes you uncomfortable. Don’t look away from the red flags because he’s your friend and you cannot imagine him doing something worse.

Because rape culture isn’t created only by rapists. It is sustained by every excuse, every joke, every justification, every instance of victim-blaming, and every person who sees something wrong and chooses silence because speaking up would be uncomfortable.

So the next time a woman comes forward, and someone asks whether her accusation might ruin a man’s life, we should ask a different question: What are we doing to ensure that another woman’s life isn’t ruined first?

• *Lee Tankle is a 26-year-old reporter at the SA Jewish Report.*

They betrayed us and we grew stronger

OPINION

KAREN MILNER

Three years ago this week, Simchat Torah, a day we set aside for dancing with the Torah, became the darkest day in Jewish life since the Holocaust. In the days that followed, the numbers settled: more than 1 200 people murdered and 251 taken into Gaza. It took us weeks to absorb the scale of it. In some ways, I am not sure we ever fully have. Still today, three years later, new details keep emerging and the scale of the horror continues to expand.

Psychologists Dr Miri Bar-Halpern and Dr Jaclyn Wolfman have given a name to what so many of us felt in the months that followed, “traumatic invalidation”. In their research, they describe how Jews, “rather than being met with compassion and care”, were “instead met with a stunning mix of silence, blaming, excluding, and even outright denying the atrocities of 7 October along with any emotional pain stemming from them”. When I read that, I recognised our own community. The trauma was real. So was the second wound, the sense that our grief was not permitted, or was somehow suspect.

We have seen our trauma disregarded. Spaces set up for the express purpose of protecting victims met our tragedy with ambivalence, disdain, and disbelief. The victim was turned into the aggressor, and every evil was justified through a lens of resistance, anti-imperialism, or misappropriated human rights.

Here in South Africa, that denial took a very physical form. Within a month, the billboard the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) put up for the hostages was torn down at gunpoint. Posters of kidnapped children and grandparents were ripped down as quickly as they went up. The message, sometimes spoken and sometimes not, was that we should keep our heads down and our grief to ourselves.

We did not. A community that might have made itself smaller chose instead to be loud and proud. In November 2023, we lined the Nelson Mandela Bridge with hundreds of red balloons and the faces of the hostages, so that Joburgers on their way to work could stop and hear their stories. We plastered the Ponte building with an Israeli flag, and took hostage posters to the beach in Durban. Our students at the University of the Witwatersrand held a vigil for all to see and hear.

On the first anniversary of the attacks, nearly 40 community organisations, from youth movements and schools to shuls and women’s groups, built installations for a 7 October Square among the trees at the Great Park Synagogue in Johannesburg. When a violent convoy arrived to intimidate visitors, our community sang and danced. Their hatred and attempts to other us only built unity. Crucially, a large media contingent also visited the 7 October Square, allowing us to tell the story in our own words. We refused to have our story rewritten.

One installation simply asked visitors to complete the sentence “After October 7 I am feeling”. So many wrote “proud”, “stronger”, and “more Jewish”. I believe this speaks to something I’ve felt personally and heard from so many others: that Hamas’s terror and the world’s apathy about Jewish suffering only strengthened Jewish identity.

The return of the hostages was the turning point. When the remaining living hostages came home last October, and when the body of Ran Gvili, the last hostage, was finally returned for burial in January, after 843 days, it felt as though we could breathe again. We went back to the bridge, this time with blue balloons and a yellow sticker on every poster: came home alive, home for

burial. As SAJBD national director Wendy Kahn said at the time, the relief was real, but the faces on those posters reminded us of the loss and the cruelty.

We cannot speak honestly about the past three years without acknowledging the devastating toll of the war in Gaza. What we will not accept is the ongoing attempt to erase 7 October. On Saturday, days before the anniversary, thousands marched along the Sea Point promenade in protest at the “genocide” in Gaza. Staging a march like this on the eve of the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust, whatever its stated purpose, sends a clear message: that Jewish suffering does not count. One speaker complained that people still “have the audacity” to ask about 7 October. And to that speaker we say yes. We will always remember 7 October for what it was: the darkest day for Jews in 80 years, and a singularly evil event characterised by murder, rape, torture, and kidnapping.

The same impulse has been turned on our Holocaust centres. Last October, activists protested outside the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and the Durban centre has been targeted too, with demands that these institutions take up a political campaign against Israel. To picket a memorial to six million murdered Jews in order to cast Jews as today’s perpetrators is a cruel inversion. And placing a tiny fringe group of Jews to front the protest in no way diminishes its antisemitic foundation.

Three years on, we are dancing again. Our shuls are full and our young people walk in Johannesburg as proud, identifiable Jews. Yet the world will never be quite the same, and neither will we. We have learnt the pain of ambivalence from those who should have stood with us, we have learnt who actually stands with us, and we have learnt that we can stand on our own.

May the next anniversary find us all in a gentler world

- Karen Milner is national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.



What we become post-7 October is our choice

OPINION

CRAIG PANTANOWITZ



Three years ago, on Simchat Torah, my phone started buzzing before dawn. Not the ordinary morning noise. Messages from people in Israel, one after another, asking if I had heard, if I understood, if I was watching. I went onto Twitter and saw the footage that would define that morning for anyone who watched it: a white pickup truck moving through Sderot, and the bodies of pensioners who had been gunned down in the street. I woke my wife and told her something terrible was happening in Israel, that I could feel our world tilting on its axis, and that I did not think it would ever sit the same way again.

I had been invited to Great Park Synagogue that *yomtov*. Because it was Simchat Torah, most of the congregation had no idea what was unfolding while they davened. I remember moving between people, telling them what I had seen, and watching the shock on face after face. Men and women who had walked into shul that morning as they always did walked out of it into a different world. By the time we understood what Hamas had done, that a terrorist organisation had murdered families in their homes,

raped women, burned children, and dragged the living and the dead across the Gaza border as trophies, I already knew two things with total certainty. The first was that Israel would never be safe in the way we had allowed ourselves to believe it was. The second was that I, as a South African Jew, would never again describe my Zionism the way I had the day before.

That is the part we do not talk about enough – 7 October did not change only Israel. It changed us, here, in Johannesburg and Cape Town and every WhatsApp group, dinner table, and *chag* in between. It changed what it costs to say you are a Zionist out loud. It changed who looks at you differently at work when they find out. It changed what our children have had to explain to classmates, and what our university students have had to survive on campuses that decided, with unmistakable speed, whose grief counted and whose did not.

For three years, this community has lived in something close to emergency mode. We organised. We fundraised. We showed up to vigils and rallies and briefings. We learned the names of hostages the way you learn the names of family, because in the truest sense they were.

We became fluent in a vocabulary we never wanted: proof of life, ceasefire negotiations, body identification. We watched South African political leadership fail, repeatedly and by design, to name Hamas as what it is, and we understood that this failure was not an oversight. We built our own record because others would not.

I am proud of every part of that response. I would not undo a single vigil, a single placard, a single uncomfortable conversation at a braai. But I want to say something to this community that I think we need to hear as we mark this third anniversary: a people cannot live permanently

in a state of siege and call that a Jewish life. Emergency mode is not identity. It is a response to a wound, and a necessary one, but it cannot be the whole of what we pass on.

Here is my personal observation, the one I keep returning to. In the months after 7 October there was a general instinct in this community to become smaller in public. People I know quietly stopped wearing anything that identified them as Jewish on the street. Not out of shame. Out of a fear that had settled into daily life without anyone naming it out loud. I have two sons, both proud Zionists who have never hidden it, and I watched them navigate a world that had suddenly made that pride feel like a risk rather than a birthright. Children and young adults read what we do not say. And I realised, somewhere in that first year, that if we weren’t careful, the single clearest inheritance we would leave the next generation of South African Jews was fear itself: fear dressed up as vigilance, fear mistaken for wisdom.

I refuse to accept that as our legacy. Fear is not what we owe our children. Responsibility is.

There is a difference between belonging and responsibility, and 7 October is what forced us to learn it. Belonging is comfortable. It asks nothing of you beyond showing up to shul on the high holy days and feeling warmly held by a community that has always been there. Responsibility is different. Responsibility means understanding that Jewish life in South Africa, and support for the world’s only Jewish State, is not a birthright we passively inherit but a position we have to actively hold, explain, and defend, generation after generation, in rooms that are not always friendly. Belonging was what we had on 6 October. Responsibility is what 7 October demanded of us, and what it will keep demanding.

What does it mean to stand tall as a South African Jew and a Zionist in this moment? It doesn’t mean shouting louder than the people who wish us gone. It doesn’t mean performing our grief for an audience that has already decided not to listen. It means something quieter and harder: showing up consistently, not just in crisis. It means teaching our children the history and the language of this conflict properly, so they can hold their ground in a lecture hall without needing us beside them. It means refusing to let campus intimidation or diplomatic hostility or social exclusion convince us to make ourselves smaller. Standing tall is not a posture we strike for a photograph. It is a discipline we practise on ordinary days, when no one is watching and there is no crisis to respond to.

That is the real lesson of these three years, and it is the one I want us to carry forward. We learned what showing up actually requires. Not adrenaline. Not outrage, though outrage has its place. What showing up requires is endurance: the willingness to keep doing the unglamorous work of community, advocacy, and education long after the news cycle has moved on to something else. The world’s attention is short. Ours cannot be.

So as we mark this anniversary, I am not asking this community to relive 7 October in our kitchens and our synagogues once more, though we will, because we must never let it be forgotten or minimised. I am asking us to decide, deliberately, what Jewish life we choose next. Not a life defined by what was done to us. A life defined by what we build in response: proud, informed, unafraid, and rooted in responsibility rather than fear.

Our children are watching us decide this right now. Whether we mean to or not, we are teaching them what it means to be Jewish in this moment. Let them inherit backbone, not dread. Let them inherit a community that stood tall, not one that merely survived.

- Craig Pantanowitz is the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation.



Photo: Ian Ossendryver



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

How much smaller are we expected to make ourselves?

OPINION

EZRA STONE



7 October did not end on 7 October

OPINION

DR HANAN BUSHKIN



Before 7 October 2023, I opened social media without thinking much about it. A friend's joke. Someone's holiday photos. A bit of news before the day began.

After the massacre, that changed.

The old accusations came back that very day. Jews control the media. One Jewish businessman behaves badly, so all Jews must answer for him. Jewish suffering is exaggerated, perhaps even invented. And wherever we live, whatever we believe, we are expected to account for absolutely everything Israel does.

None of this in itself was new. What felt new was finding it everywhere on my phone before breakfast, and now often from people I'd never thought of as hostile towards Jews.

On 7 October, Hamas murdered about 1 200 people and took 251 hostage. Families were still searching for their loved ones when, the following day, an anti-Israel rally took place in Times Square. I don't believe that marching for Palestinians is antisemitic. But I remember seeing those images while people were still frantically trying to find out whether their children were alive.

I need to say this plainly. Palestinian civilians in Gaza have suffered terribly. I see that, and I care. Their grief does not diminish Jewish grief any more than Jewish grief diminishes theirs. Yet so much of what I encountered after 7 October seemed to demand that one be acknowledged only at the expense of the other.

It wasn't only a feeling. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue examined comments on YouTube videos about the conflict. In the three days after the attack, the number of antisemitic comments was more than 50 times higher than in the three days before it. The researchers were measuring antisemitism, not criticism of Israel.

Fifty times higher in three days.

I cannot tell you what was in the mind of every person who posted one of those comments. I can tell you that hatred with a long history found its way back onto our screens with frightening speed.

It had been circulating well before 7 October. During the pandemic, researchers documented the spread of antisemitic conspiracy theories online. Another study found that Twitter's engagement-based feed amplified emotionally charged posts hostile to an opposing group. The platforms did not invent the prejudice. They made it both easier to spread, and far harder to escape.

That leaves me asking questions about the people and organisations making what we see.

Al Jazeera is funded by Qatar. Its AJ+ videos are made to travel easily through social feeds. In 2019, AJ+ Arabic published a video that downplayed and misrepresented the Holocaust. Al Jazeera removed it and suspended two journalists. That does not mean every report it produces is false. It does mean the incident belongs in any honest discussion of how Jews and Israel are presented to vast audiences.

Qatar also appears prominently in American higher education. According to US Department of Education disclosures, sources in Qatar accounted for more than \$1.1 billion (R18.2 billion) in gifts and contracts to American universities in 2025, much of it connected to branch campuses in Doha. A figure like that doesn't tell us what is taught in a classroom or why a student joins a protest. It is still reasonable to examine large sources of foreign funding closely, whoever provides them.

To this exact point, I have read congresswoman Elise Stefanik's argument in her book *Poisoned Ivies* that the hostility seen on campuses after 7 October was years in the making. I may not share every conclusion she draws, and I would not put every single student who protested into the same category. There was massive ignorance and huge peer pressure. But I certainly recognise the reality that something deliberate and sinister had been gathering for a long time, and that many people noticed it only when it became impossible to miss. *Poisoned Ivies* is an excellent book and I would recommend reading it.

Not even the university heads whom Stefanik boldly questioned would dare admit that calling for the murder of Jews was unacceptable. "It depends on the context," they each responded. What context?

Then there were the posters.

Photographs of Israelis kidnapped on 7 October appeared on walls in cities around the world. Some

were of small children. Some were of elderly people. Strangers tore them down. I kept wondering what someone had to tell themselves to remove the face of a missing person. A human being. They would never tear down a poster of a missing cat or dog.

The real damage that lasts is often less visible. A person now hesitates before posting a photograph from Shabbat dinner. Another reads the comments with a sinking feeling before deciding whether to say anything at all.

In a 2024 Anti-Defamation League survey, 41% of American Jews said they had changed their behaviour online to avoid being identified as Jewish.



Jews make up about 0.2% of the world's population. How much smaller are we expected to make ourselves?

I do not want criticism of Israel banned. Its government should be challenged for its decisions, just as any government should. I want its actions judged seriously, without asking Jews everywhere to defend them, and without applying a standard no other country ever faces.

The United Nations Human Rights Council, for example, has a standing agenda item concerning Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. It is the only permanent item devoted to a particular country or territory. North Korea, Iran, and Syria do not have one.

I think it is fair to question that distinction.

What I want in my own life is less complicated. I want Jews, like any other people, to be able to mourn without having to explain why the people they mourn matter.

I want us to be open about who we are without being appointed spokespeople for a government we have never voted for.

October 7 did not create antisemitism. It amplified it. It showed me how readily it could enter an ordinary day, through a screen, a conversation, a poster pulled from a wall.

We should be able to recognise it without calling every critic of Israel an antisemite. We should also be able to criticise Israel without making any excuses for people who hate Jews.

I would like to open an app without bracing myself. I don't think that is too much to ask. Nor is a little more room, in a hard world, for all of us to remain human.

- Ezra Stone was born in KwaZulu-Natal, and now writes from Buenos Aires. His work explores history, resilience, and identity, tracing the unbreakable threads between past and present.

There is something about trauma that we often misunderstand. We think trauma is the terrible thing that happened. Sometimes it is. But often, the deeper psychological wound comes from what the terrible thing teaches us about the world afterwards.

On 7 October 2023, Jews around the world woke up to horror. For Israelis, it was immediate and physical. People were murdered, kidnapped, injured, displaced, and confronted with events most of us had previously encountered only in history books or in the stories of our grandparents.

For South African Jews, thousands of kilometres away, the experience was obviously different. We weren't physically there.

But distance doesn't necessarily protect people from trauma.

Because 7 October didn't simply confront Jews with what had happened in Israel. In the weeks and months that followed, many South African Jews were confronted with something else: a changed understanding of the world around them.

People whom we regarded as friends suddenly seemed unable to understand why we were grieving.

Conversations became more cautious.

Some people began thinking twice before saying they were Jewish, wearing something recognisably Jewish, posting something online, or discussing Israel in a workplace or university.

Relationships changed.

For some, there was anger.

For others, fear. For many, an extraordinary sense of loneliness.

And perhaps that is one of the least understood psychological consequences of 7 October. It wasn't simply fear. It was disorientation.

As a psychologist, I spend much of my professional life thinking about what allows human beings to remain psychologically stable when life becomes unstable.

In developing the Anchor-Based Approach, I have described human well-being in terms of the anchors that give our lives stability: our relationships, our physical well-being, our behaviour, our sense of purpose, our beliefs about ourselves and the world, and the structures that allow us to feel that life remains navigable.

Trauma shakes those anchors. It doesn't necessarily destroy them. But suddenly things that felt solid don't feel quite as solid anymore.

For many South African Jews, one of those anchors was belonging.



We knew we were Jewish, and we knew we were South African. Those identities didn't feel mutually exclusive. South African Jewry has built businesses, schools, charities, hospitals, communal organisations, and families here for generations.

Then suddenly some Jews began asking a question they hadn't expected to ask: Do I still belong here in quite the same way?

That question matters psychologically.

Safety isn't only the absence of physical danger. Human beings also need social safety: the feeling that the people around us recognise our humanity; that our grief will be understood as grief; that we don't have to pass an ideological test before we're allowed to mourn.

People can disagree deeply and still recognise one another's humanity.

The psychological harm begins when grief is dismissed or a person's identity becomes a reason for suspicion. That is the boundary between disagreement and dehumanisation.

And many Jews have experienced moments over these past three years in which that boundary appeared frighteningly thin.

This isn't merely perception. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies recorded 139 antisemitic incidents between October and December 2023, compared with 19 during the same period the previous year.

But statistics don't fully describe the experience.

They don't measure the Jewish child who suddenly becomes more conscious of the school uniform they are wearing. They don't measure the university student who calculates whether to mention Israel in a conversation. They don't measure the parent wondering whether their child's Jewish school is safe.

They don't measure the WhatsApp conversations between families asking questions they never imagined they would need to ask.

That is how collective trauma often works. It enters ordinary life.

But there is another side to what has happened since 7 October.

Trauma can destabilise anchors, but it can also reveal them.

Over the past three years, I have watched South African Jews turn towards one another.

People who hadn't entered a synagogue for years came back. People became curious about their Jewish identity. Families gathered. Communities mobilised.

People travelled to Israel, raised money, supported families, attended memorials, prayed, argued, cried, and showed up for one another.

In psychological terms, this matters enormously.

One of the mistakes we make when talking about trauma is to imagine that healing means returning to who we were before. Often we can't. Some experiences change us permanently.

The more useful question is: Who are we going to become because this happened?

That is where our agency lies.

One of the principles underlying the Anchor-Based Approach is that we cannot always control what happens around us, but we can continue strengthening the parts of life over which we still have responsibility.

We can strengthen our families. We can protect our relationships. We can take care of our bodies. We can continue working, building, and creating. We can deepen our communities.

We can choose courage over paralysis.

And we can refuse to allow hatred – from anybody – to determine the people we become.

Perhaps that is the psychological challenge facing South African Jewry three years after 7 October.

We shouldn't pretend that nothing happened.

Something happened. Something changed. Many of us lost a certain innocence about how secure Jewish life is in the modern world.

That deserves to be acknowledged rather than minimised. But acknowledging trauma isn't the same as surrendering to it.

The purpose of an anchor isn't to make the storm disappear. The storm is outside our control. An anchor gives us something solid enough to hold onto while the storm is happening.

For South African Jews, those anchors have always been there: family, community, faith, tradition, responsibility, purpose, and an extraordinary capacity to build. Perhaps the task now isn't simply to remember 7 October.

It is to make sure that what happened on 7 October doesn't get to decide what happens to us next.

- Dr Hanan Bushkin is a psychologist and founder of the Anchor-Based Approach.

The names, the families, and the responsibility to remember

OPINION

HEN FEDER



Three years after 7 October it still feels like it happened yesterday, or was just a nightmare we needed to wake up from and were never able to.

For Israelis and Jews around the world, it has become a day of remembrance: a day to recall lives taken, families shattered, communities transformed, and people who were taken from their homes, sometimes in their pyjamas, and held hostage.

On that morning, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups launched a coordinated assault from Gaza into southern Israel. They killed more than 1 200 people, the overwhelming majority civilians, and abducted hundreds and took them to Gaza. They deliberately injured, mutilated, tortured, raped, beheaded, and killed civilians, and took hostages, the youngest nine-month-old Kfir Bibas, who was brutally murdered in captivity.

Numbers and statistics, however, can never tell the whole story.

There was Gil Taasa, a father who jumped on a grenade to save his two sons Koren and Shai. There was Romi Swisa, a six-year-old who saw her parents shot in front of her and her three-year-old sister, Lia. And, of course, there were the families of the hostages, many of whom I had the privilege to meet in person when they came to plead with tears to French leaders, as they did all over the world to anyone who would listen, “Help us get our family members out of the hands of Hamas.”

As we commemorate the first Remembrance Day on which there are no more hostages in Gaza, I would like to mention the families I met personally, who did everything in their power to

bring their loved ones back. I still remember how I kept asking them where they got their strength to continue, often to receive the reply “We have no other choice”. Cohen, Angarest, Kalderon, Yahalomi, Kooper, Adar, Nimrodi, Kupershtein, Bohbot, Miran, Sharabi, Shtivi, Samerano, Idan, Shoham, Elziadna, Talalka, Yerushalmi, Danino,



Shem, Toledano – a small portion of the hundreds of families that had to live through this unbearable reality – you will always be in my mind and heart.

For the Jewish community in South Africa, these events were not distant. Like communities across the diaspora, its members experienced 7 October through the people they knew and loved: relatives, friends, colleagues, congregants, and friends in Israel. The sense of vulnerability created by that

day reached far beyond Israel’s borders.

Remembrance matters because too quickly the world forgot about 7 October and started blaming Israel for all world’s problems once again. Some went so far as to insinuate that Israel allowed the attacks to occur, in order to use that as an excuse to start a war. There were other vile conspiracy theories.

Universal concern for human life must include the Jewish lives lost on 7 October and beyond. It must include the families who continue to carry grief, and it must include the men and women who went through mutilation and sexual abuse during the events of that day and in captivity.

The South African Jewish community has demonstrated repeatedly that remembrance is not simply an act of looking backwards. It is an expression of solidarity: gathering in synagogues and community centres, lighting candles, saying Kaddish, supporting families, and creating spaces where testimony can be heard.

The Embassy of Israel in South Africa has participated in such commemorations alongside members of the Jewish community and other

faiths. Last year, for example, the gathering in Johannesburg was an opportunity both to honour those who were killed and to recognise those who had returned from captivity.

For Jewish communities, remembrance has a particular meaning. We know what happens when the world forgets names. We know the danger of allowing the murder of Jews to become a footnote, explained away by circumstances or absorbed into a larger political argument.

October 7 deserves neither simplification nor silence.

It deserves remembrance.

It deserves the telling of survivors’ stories.

It deserves recognition of the families who continue to grieve.

And it deserves a commitment to a future in which Jewish children can live openly and safely, in Israel and throughout the diaspora, without fear that their identity makes them legitimate targets.

Memory cannot change what happened that morning. But memory can determine whether those who were lost remain present in the conscience of those who came after them.

On this anniversary, we remember the victims by name and by story. We remember the families whose lives were changed forever. We remember those who were taken hostage, returning in person, or too many times, in a coffin. And we reaffirm the simple principle at the heart of Jewish remembrance: every human life has a name, a family, and a story – and none should be forgotten.

• *Hen Feder is the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Israel in South Africa. Prior to this he was the spokesperson for the Israeli Embassy in France.*

The day that forever lives in us

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



The smells and the images that I have encountered in the past three years, as I have covered 7 October and the ensuing war, are seared into my soul. I have seen the evidence and smelled the aftermath and they are ingrained in my DNA.

As a journalist, when you cover war and bear witness to depravity, you almost function on auto-pilot because the importance of recording history and giving voice to the victims supersedes everything. As painful as it has been at times, it has also been the greatest privilege to help give a voice to the victims. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that they are never silenced.

Once the adrenaline of covering a story leaves, the emotions flood in, and they are impossible to control. Three years later, they are as vivid as ever. Time has not healed this wound for Israelis. I doubt it ever will.

I remember every minute of that Black Shabbat and what followed. I recall a visit to Kibbutz Nahal Oz shortly afterwards. The houses were mostly intact, the only signs of the carnage that happened inside were the bullet holes, ZAKA stickers, and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) shorthand sprayed on the walls. The family that lived in that house was murdered, save for the son who had gone out for a run that morning and, once spotted by a member of the kibbutz rapid response team, was taken to a safe room where he hid, not knowing the fate of his family. The kitchen window of the house faced the same direction as the front door, covered with a ZAKA sticker and the IDF yellow circle with a dot inside. A family was murdered here. I looked at the row of detergent bottles on the window sill and all I could think about was the people who’d lived there. Were they washing dishes? Enjoying a coffee? What were they doing when the forces of evil stole their lives? I cannot get the neat line of detergents out of my mind.

The milking area of the kibbutz dairy was a different story. Glass shattered, the machines shot up and broken,



and the living quarters of Thai workers burnt. Standing in stark contrast, was a pristine sukkah, a living reminder of what we have endured and what sustains us.

In the darkest places, there were always signs of hope. I remember visiting Kfar Aza just after the attacks. The stench was overwhelming, the destruction out of a horror story. Our IDF escort warned us to be careful where we walked because they still had to test whether the ash on the ground was human or structural. I cannot adequately describe what it feels like to hear that. Words fail me.

In the “young generation” neighbourhood, destruction, charred edifices, and belongings that were looted made navigating the space tricky. Nobody wanted to touch anything that had been looted, not even to move it out of the way. These were once the belongings of people either murdered or held hostage.

And there it was among the ruins. Untarnished in any way, a *chanukiah*. A sacred Jewish symbol, unblemished. Impossible to tell who it belonged to. Would anyone ever light it again?

Three years later, the pain has not subsided.

Our hostages are home, but our wounds are still gaping.

October 7 informs our decisions as a country and who we are as Israelis.

Three years of war, pain, perpetual demonisation, isolation, betrayal, fighting on multiple fronts, and fighting for our very existence have birthed a different kind of Israeli. We don’t wait for the world to rescue us. We determine our own future. And we fight. Because we have no other home. We have learned that we have to rely on ourselves as the political sands of the world shift.

This month, Israelis will go to the polls in our most consequential election to date. Among the many issues competing for our vote is the failure of this coalition



government to take responsibility for the failures that allowed 7 October. The buck stops with the top man in office. The past three years will inform how we determine our future and how we respond to the threats on our doorstep.

Through the pain and everything that has followed that Black Shabbat, despite the divisions and disagreements, I refuse to lose sight of who we are. We are Aner Shapira and Tali Hadad, Eli Sharabi and Ahsan Daxa, we are Rachel Goldberg-Polin and Ibrahim Kharuba. We are Yuval Raphael and Shiri Bibas. Hersh Goldberg-Polin and Awad Daramshe. We are Amit Mann and Tomer Grinberg. We are Idan Amedi and Gadi Moses. We are the sum of all of us throughout our noble history, and those who have built this home, brick by brick. We are the *chanukiot* that still shine in the darkness, the everyday people who continue on.

They say time heals all wounds. There is not enough time in existence that will heal this wound, but it has changed who we are. I believe our very DNA as a people has forever been altered. We have learned that strength and grief can coexist. Three years later Israelis are still deep in trauma – but we are not broken.

That day will live forever in all of us. As the world forgets, we need to remember. The preservation of memory is sacred to us as Jews.

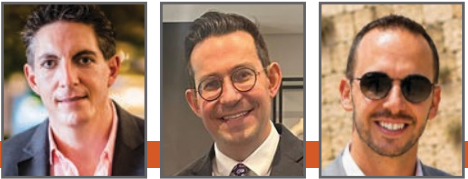
On 7 October and every day, may we be worthy of the soldiers who continue to fight for our lives. May we be worthy of all who fell in our defence. May we honour and continue to be the voices of those so cruelly taken from us. May the memories of all who were brutally murdered that day be an eternal blessing.

• *Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.*

The yellow ribbons have come down. Our unity must not

OPINION

MICHAEL KRANSDORFF, RABBI AARON ZULBERG, AND SAUL JASSINOWSKY



Three years ago, on October, the Jewish world changed forever. We woke to news that seemed impossible to comprehend. Communities in southern Israel had been invaded. Families murdered. Children killed. Women assaulted. Two hundred and fifty-one people were taken hostage into Gaza. Among them were South African-born Aviva Siegel and Channah Peri. For those of us thousands of kilometres away, there was a terrible feeling of helplessness. We couldn't fight the terrorists. We couldn't reach the families. We couldn't bring the hostages home. But we could stand together. And we did. The campaign for the hostages became one of the most extraordinary expressions of Jewish solidarity in generations. Across Israel and throughout the Jewish world, people who disagreed about almost everything found something all could get behind: Bring Them Home Now. For more than two years the yellow ribbon carried that commitment.



In Johannesburg, we distributed ribbons with calls to tie them on trees, street poles, and outside Jewish institutions. We gave out and wore yellow hostage pins. We laid empty places at Shabbat tables. We packed yellow Shabbas candles with *tehilim* cards. We displayed names and photographs, refusing to allow the hostages to become numbers. Behind every photograph was a human being. And behind every hostage was a family waiting for them. For the Jewish National Fund (JNF) of South



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver

Africa and The Base, that shared commitment turned into an unlikely and extraordinary partnership. Among the many initiatives, we created a programme that brought released hostages, survivors, and their families to South Africa – not primarily to speak, but to breathe.

Away from the cameras. Away from the anniversaries. Away, if only briefly, from the burden of having become public symbols of 7 October. We watched Or Levy, freed after 491 days, meet children at Bramley Children's Orphanage in Pretoria. His own young son, Almog, had been left without a mother after Or's wife, Einav, was murdered on 7 October. In South Africa, we chose to honour her by bringing comfort to other children who had experienced loss. We watched Eliya Cohen arrive barely a month after emerging from 505 days underground. Cane in hand, he was still learning how to walk freely through the world again. He hadn't intended to speak publicly during his visit. But something about the embrace of this community changed his mind. Again and again, something remarkable happened. People who arrived here carrying unimaginable trauma discovered that thousands of kilometres from Israel, a Jewish community they barely knew had been carrying a small part of that burden with them. Perhaps nobody expressed that more powerfully than Sapir Cohen. Sapir was held hostage in Gaza for 55 days. She told a Johannesburg audience how, during captivity, one of her captors had allowed her to see television footage of thousands of Israelis gathered at Hostage Square.

He had looked at the crowds and told her, "When the Jews are together, they are very strong." Think about that. A Hamas terrorist understood something we sometimes forget. When Jews stand together, we are strong. Sapir experienced that unity again when she came to South Africa. Driving from OR Tambo International Airport towards Glenhazel, she saw hundreds of yellow ribbons tied around trees. She began to cry.



For someone who had spent 55 days in captivity, unsure of what was happening outside Gaza, those ribbons carried a simple message: You were not forgotten. That is what our community did.

And the people who came here noticed. One described feeling the warmth of this community as a "giant hug from Africa". The ribbons eventually came down. On 26 January this year, the last hostage, Ran Gvili, was returned to Israel after 843 days. Some hostages came home alive. Others came home to be buried. But at last, every one of them came home. That should be a source of enormous relief. But it also leaves us with a question. What happens to the unity now? It would be tragic if one of the most powerful expressions of Jewish solidarity in our lifetime disappeared together with all the yellow that we held



Machine gun in one hand, phone camera in the other

GILANA LAB

Israel Defense Forces reservist Major Nimrod Palmach defied orders from his commander on 7 October and drove south to save his ex-wife's boyfriend and his children. "It could've been my own kids. It hit me hard," Palmach explained when he was visiting South Africa recently and spoke at Rabbi Shmuel Moffson's shul in Glenhazel. "I knew that if I were in his shoes, I would want someone to act, to fight for my family," Palmach said. Palmach had been at home with his family when messages from his commander began appearing on his phone. "When my commander reaches out urgently, something's wrong," he recalled. He left without waking his family and in such a rush that he forgot to put on shoes. He was initially instructed to report to Jerusalem, and while driving, began receiving videos and messages showing terrorists inside Israeli communities. "But it was the call from my ex-wife that changed everything." Her boyfriend and his children were trapped in their safe room at Kibbutz Nir Oz after terrorists had entered their home. Palmach called his commander and said he needed to go south, but was told to continue towards Jerusalem. "The system told me to wait, to sit quietly until the situation became clearer. But deep down, I knew I didn't have that privilege," he said. "I had this gut feeling telling me I should head south." As he drove down Highway 6, he contacted soldiers and others he knew, trying to gather people who could help. "If you have a gun, come here now; you'll save lives. I said that to anyone who called or messaged." He was carrying his personal handgun and limited ammunition when, at about 10:00, he met Kirieli Shutko, another civilian with military experience who had headed south. By then, Palmach had begun to believe he wasn't going to survive. "I never truly thought I'd make it through the day," he recalled. He stopped beneath a tree and recorded a short video for his children, Guni and Aluma. "I needed them to know how much I loved them, just in case. I thought that by the time they woke up, I'd be gone," he said. "It

was the hardest thing I've ever done." As Palmach and Shutko continued into the area under attack, he began recording on his phone what he was encountering. "I began filming, knowing that no one would believe the horror unfolding before my eyes," he recalled. They eventually reached Kibbutz Alumim, where hundreds of civilians were hiding as terrorists attempted to enter their establishment. "It was only when I got there that I realised how bad it was," Palmach said. He joined soldiers and others fighting at the kibbutz. "The team I fought with prevented 30 Hamas terrorists from entering Kibbutz Alumim," he said. "They sought to replicate the massacre in Kibbutz Be'eri." When Palmach's ammunition ran out, he grabbed the weapon of a soldier who'd been killed and continued fighting. During the battle, he was shot in the chest but didn't realise the extent of the wound at the time. He later discovered that his sternum had been broken. His phone remained with him as he moved through the area. "During the inferno, I asked myself who would believe me," he said. "I realised that I had become an eyewitness to one of the worst atrocities perpetrated against humankind." Palmach later reached Kibbutz Be'eri, where more than 100 residents were murdered and others were abducted to Gaza. He continued recording. "Throughout the fighting on 7 October, I held with one hand a machine gun and with the other my iPhone, and I recorded; I documented what I saw," he said. "Unfortunately, I saw everything." At one point in Be'eri, Palmach and those alongside him were pinned down during a hostage situation and couldn't simply enter the building. It was during one of these pauses in the fighting that he began to process what he'd been seeing. "My emotions started to kick in, and I realised I wanted to share my story, but who would believe me?" he

recalled. He has spoken about seeing bodies on the roads and the destruction inside the communities, but also about the people he wasn't able to reach. "The sights, the sounds, the stories of the survivors and the dead in Be'eri are etched into me to this day," he wrote two years later. "The guilt over those I could not save will remain with me forever." Palmach fought for about 15 hours on 7 October. Fortunately, he survived the day and returned to his family. He realised almost immediately that what he had experienced would affect him and contacted a psychologist the following morning. Palmach's work before 7 October had already centred on telling Israel's story through personal encounters. He was chief executive of ISRAEL-is, a non-profit organisation that promotes Israel's image abroad. After the attack, the question he'd asked himself while fighting, "Who would believe me?", took on a new significance. His testimony has since become part of Survived to Tell – Be the Witness, a virtual-reality project allowing audiences to hear survivors' accounts while virtually experiencing the places in which they occurred. For Palmach, documenting the attack began long before that project existed. It began while he was still fighting on 7 October. "I knew no one would believe what I had just witnessed," he said. Almost three years later, when he stood before a Johannesburg audience, it was this first-hand account he continued to share. • *Nimrod Palmach's book out about his experience on 7 October, Rebel Heart, is available on Amazon.*



Major Nimrod Palmach

Where were you on 7 October?

CLAUDIA GROSS

Three years after the Hamas attacks of 7 October, South African Jews remember where they were when they first started hearing about the massacre in Israel, and how that morning changed their lives. For some, the first indication was a siren in Israel. For others, it was a WhatsApp message from a child called up to reserve duty, or a conversation at the gates of a synagogue.

For Amy Markus, the morning began in Tel Aviv with a siren that came at the wrong time. Markus had made aliya seven years earlier and was accustomed to rocket warnings. Usually, she said, the alerts followed a pattern and residents could prepare for them.

On 7 October, however, the siren sounded in the morning. “I heard the siren, I put on my gown,” she recalled. She was looking after a friend’s cats and went outside, where she saw similarly confused neighbours.

She returned to bed, but another siren sounded about half an hour later. This time, her body began shaking. Then two messages arrived, one from a friend in Albania and another from South Africa.

Both told her to pack her bags and leave Israel immediately. “I told myself this can’t be real, this isn’t a real thing,” Markus said. She switched off her phone and went back to sleep for about five hours.

When she switched it on again at around 12:30, the scale of the attack was becoming clearer. Friends were trying to establish what had happened, while people who couldn’t reach her worried she might have been at the Nova festival.

Markus was working as a nanny in Tel Aviv. Three families contacted her and offered to take her with them as they left Israel. One was travelling to Berlin, another to Athens, and the third to New York. She chose New York.

Her father, however, told her not to leave. “He phoned me and he said, ‘You don’t leave, you stay,’” she said. Markus left anyway in the coming days, and stayed in New York for three months.

“It felt so personal how the whole thing happened,” she said. “They attacked us. It felt personal.” She struggled to process the reports from Israel while living thousands of kilometres away. She also encountered hostility and protests in New York, including the removal of hostage posters she had put up.

Markus said the experience strengthened her Jewish identity, but also changed her relationship with Israel and her sense of safety. After returning to South Africa for five months, she went back to Israel but stayed for only two months because she found the war too difficult. “I’m still that person,” she said. “If there’s going to be a big war, I’m going to leave.”

Sue and Ian Levin experienced 7 October from inside Israel, but weren’t at home when the attack began. The couple, who’ve lived in Israel since 1977, had been in Ra’anana and decided to return to their home in the Negev.

They knew something was happening, but didn’t understand what they were driving towards. Ian drove towards their community through Ofakim as roads began closing. When soldiers stopped him, he turned around, and eventually drove through fields to try to get home.

When they arrived, the gates were locked and had to be opened for them. The couple entered their safety room and remained there. The following morning, security officials instructed residents to gather at the gate and evacuate.

There was a line of cars stretching about three kilometres. The convoy was taken towards Beersheba, but Ian left it and went to a friend near Yokneam. The couple eventually stayed in Haifa, first in one hotel and then at the Kedem Spa Hotel.

They remained away from home for about four and a half months. Their neighbours hadn’t been so fortunate. One neighbour’s daughter was killed at the Nova festival, while another neighbour’s daughter, a police officer, was also killed.

Returning home was emotionally difficult for Sue. The couple had been looked after in the hotel, where they received meals, clothing, and other necessities. Back on the



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

moshav, normal responsibilities returned. “It was hard for me to settle down back here on the moshav,” she said.

The wider community faced extraordinary disruption. Some residents stayed behind to farm and maintain their homes, while others were evacuated. Soldiers helped residents with basic needs, including getting food and attending medical appointments. The couple said the experience had changed their understanding of their own security.

Rachel* was thousands of kilometres from the fighting when her three adult children were called into reserve duty. She lives in

Continued on page 15>>

KEHILLAT

MASADA

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

RABBI AND REBBETZIN

Rabbinic leadership couple | Sydney, Australia

Lead, build and inspire the next chapter of a vibrant Modern Orthodox Zionist community

Join us in building a stronger Jewish future.

●

Build & grow our Kehillah through relationships, new initiatives and engagement.

●

Bring an entrepreneurial spirit to attract, engage and connect new people and families.

●

Focus on kiruv with welcoming pathways for all ages and levels of observance.

●

Strengthen Jewish learning, communal participation and connection to Israel.

●

Develop the relationship between Kehillat Masada and Masada College.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR LEADERS WHO

✓

Are committed to Modern Orthodox Judaism and Zionism, with recognised semicha (for the Rabbi) and Halachic authority.

✓

Have a deep commitment to serious Torah learning and a Torah-centred lifestyle.

✓

Have a proven record of community-building and relationship development.

✓

Are energetic, creative and proactive, with an entrepreneurial mindset.

✓

Are passionate about kiruv and Jewish engagement.

✓

Can engage children, teenagers, young adults and families.

✓

Are warm, approachable and inspiring teachers and communicators.

✓

Bring sound pastoral judgement, empathy, discretion and integrity.

If you are excited by the opportunity to lead, build and inspire, we would like to hear from you.

applications@masada.org.au

30th November 2026

KEHILLAT MASADA | ST IVES | SYDNEY



2026

INVESTEC
JEWISH
ACHIEVER
AWARDS

le
FESTIVAL
des **JUifs**

Celebrating a tapestry of Jewish culture

VOTE NOW

For the Investec Jewish
Achiever Awards 2026
Nominees.

Go to:

 bit.ly/ja26vote



SCAN ME

Voting closes midnight 29 October 2026

 Investec

 ERIC
ELLERTINE
Trust

 **jiff**
ICHIKOWITZ
FAMILY FOUNDATION

 Europcar


Lubner Family Foundation
TO GIVE TO LOVE TO LIVE

 mann
made

Domestic workers put employers’ home lives on TikTok

CLAUDIA GROSS

A growing number of Johannesburg and Cape Town homeowners say they’ve discovered their private lives playing out on TikTok without their knowledge. Some videos have apparently attracted tens of thousands of views. They show household routines, pets, possessions, family events, and children.

Now, a digital communications lawyer has warned that such filming and publication might violate privacy laws.

The issue came to light after a Johannesburg woman, who asked to be identified as Leah, discovered her domestic worker’s TikTok account by chance.

Leah had employed the woman for about seven years and supported her earning other income. “I’ve always encouraged anyone working for me to have some kind of side hustle,” she told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The worker had enrolled in an online marketing course and was selling herbal tea. Leah said she understood that participants were required to create social-media content and didn’t initially

object. But that changed when TikTok suggested one of the worker’s videos to her. The video featured Leah’s English bulldog and had almost 40 000 views. She subsequently found videos filmed throughout her home.

One showed dishes following a Shabbat dinner. Leah said the worker had eaten the meal with the family and had declined an offer of help to clean the dishes after the meal. The following morning, she had filmed the dishes and presented them as part of her work burden.

Other videos allegedly showed cleaning, laundry, pets, and other parts of the household. Leah said the worker discussed her working hours and made derogatory comments about her.

Leah works American hours, roughly 22:00 to 07:00 South African time, and then sleeps until midday. She says the domestic worker made videos complaining about needing to work quietly as Leah was lazy and slept half the day away.

The discovery raised concerns about what strangers might learn about the family’s home and routines. “She filmed in every room in my house,” Leah

said. She was relieved that the house’s exterior and location weren’t shown.

Her discovery also prompted her to investigate the marketing course. According to Leah, the domestic worker told her that participants were taught

herbal tea being sold and found other domestic workers making similar content. She subsequently posted anonymously about her experience on the Joburg Jewish Mommies and Cape Town Jewish Mommies Facebook groups.



to make videos showing how difficult their working conditions were. The purpose, she said, was to encourage other domestic workers to join the programme.

Leah then searched TikTok for the

She said two women had contacted her privately with similar stories. Both allegedly involved domestic workers taking the same course, selling herbal tea, and filming inside employers’ homes.

Two further homeowners interviewed by the *SA Jewish Report* described similar experiences. Darren*, in Cape Town, said a family member had discovered his live-in domestic worker’s TikTok account, where videos showed his home, child, and pets. “I was scrolling through TikTok and I saw my lounge and my child.” Darren said the account had attracted tens of thousands of views and hundreds of comments.

He alleged that some scenes had been staged to make the household appear worse than it was. “When I confronted her, she admitted her online sales coach had told her that sympathy sells,” he said. The worker told him that exaggerated duties and staged scenes were intended to increase engagement.

He believed the social-media activity formed part of an online sales strategy for wellness products, in particular, a product called Royal Blue Tea. It claims to promote gut health, suppress appetite, and stimulate weight loss; although these claims lack scientific evidence. One R400 sachet makes about five litres of tea.

Another Johannesburg homeowner, Sharon*, said her domestic worker had been employed for more than five years when she discovered her TikTok account featuring footage from family gatherings and Friday-night dinners.

One video showed dishes left after a large family meal. Sharon said the context presented online did not reflect the circumstances behind the work. “She took a video of a pile of post-holiday catering dishes and posted it with a sad song,” she said. The worker had, in fact, been paid overtime and given food to take home, she said.

The accounts have prompted questions about whether domestic workers may legally film and publish material from their employers’ homes. Justine Limpitlaw, an electronic communications law specialist, said the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) could apply.

Limpitlaw said information about a person’s home, habits, family life, and identifiable possessions can constitute personal information. She said POPIA contains an exemption for purely personal or household activity.

However, that exemption does not

extend to wider dissemination for commercial purposes. “If the person is doing this for commercial purposes, that is a commercial activity,” Limpitlaw said. Creating TikTok content intended to attract views or generate income would therefore fall outside the purely personal household exemption.

“Taking these videos without her employer’s consent and putting them on social media is absolutely a violation of POPIA.”

Limpitlaw cautioned that employment-law consequences require separate consideration. She is not an employment lawyer. However, she said employers could address the issue directly in employment contracts. Such agreements could prohibit photography or filming inside the property without express permission. They could also prohibit posting material from the household on social media without permission.

Homeowners who discover such content can approach the relevant social-media platform and request its removal, according to Limpitlaw. She cautioned that removing a post does not necessarily mean the material has disappeared completely.

The experiences have also raised questions about the online programme connecting the tea sales and videos. The homeowners interviewed believe the programme operates as a form of multilevel marketing.

The *SA Jewish Report* hasn’t independently established the identity or structure of the programme, nor verified the claims about what its participants are taught. The domestic workers involved weren’t interviewed for this article, and therefore couldn’t respond to the allegations.

However, interviewees sent links to some of the videos in question, which show domestic workers complaining about their daily life and encouraging others to join them in changing their financial situations by selling Royal Blue Tea.

Leah said her experience had changed the way she thinks about privacy in her home. She ended her employment relationship through a mutual separation agreement. She said she doesn’t believe the experience means domestic workers generally cannot be trusted. Instead, it exposed a risk she’d never considered. “I really hadn’t thought about social media as a household privacy and security issue before this happened.”

For Darren, the discovery has similarly changed the way he views household privacy. “It’s not just about hurt feelings. It’s a severe security vulnerability.”

Sharon said she had also struggled with the emotional consequences of discovering that private family moments had become online content. “We had built what I thought was a five-year bond of mutual respect,” she said.

The homeowners’ experiences highlights a question that is increasingly relevant to households where employees have access to private spaces. In an era when almost any moment can become social-media content, employers may need to make their expectations about filming and posting explicit.

For Limpitlaw, that starts with understanding the legal boundaries. “People have no idea what they can and can’t do,” she said.

*Names have been changed at the interviewees’ request.

Childhood friends cross SA for a cause close to home

CLAUDIA GROSS

Documentary filmmaker and photographer Joshua Rubin known on social media as ‘joshwideawake’, had been dreaming about travelling around South Africa for years. But it took the leukaemia diagnosis of a child in his family to turn that dream into a journey with a purpose.

Rubin recently spent weeks travelling the country with his childhood best friend, Daniel Schultz. They set out to explore South Africa, meet people, experience places they’d never seen, and raise money for two-year-old Ethan, who has leukaemia.

The fundraising journey had a R200 000 target. Rubin has since increased that to R250 000 after donations surpassed the original goal. At the time of the interview, the new target had not yet been reached, but Rubin said they were close.

“I’ve never done a trip around South Africa,” he said. “It’s something I’ve always been interested in doing.” The idea had been developing for some time. Rubin said his life had begun to feel monotonous, with much of his time spent filming videos before returning home to edit them for weeks. “I just didn’t really like that kind of way of life anymore,” he said.

When his cousin told him that his son, Ethan, had been diagnosed with leukaemia, it provided the final motivation to make the trip happen. Rubin and Schultz spent about two months planning activities and encounters in each province, but flexibility became essential as they travelled.

We Buy Cars provided them with a vehicle for the journey.

“We just took the whole thing day by day,” Rubin said. They would wake up, find accommodation, drive several hours, and try to make contact with people they wanted to meet. By the end of the journey, Rubin said, they had managed to do almost everything they had planned.

The trip was expensive, particularly because of the amount of driving involved. Fuel became a significant cost. The experience also challenged some of Rubin’s expectations about travelling in South Africa. Safety had been one of his concerns before leaving, particularly because they were carrying valuable equipment and travelling in a vehicle provided by a company. Instead, Rubin said, they had felt safe throughout most of the journey. “I think the biggest takeaway is that South Africa is actually a lot safer for travellers than most people think it is,” he said.

One of the more unusual stops was Ponte City in Johannesburg, the cylindrical residential tower that has become one of the city’s most recognisable landmarks. Rubin had visited the building before, but had never stayed there. During the trip, he decided it would be an interesting place to spend a night.

Rubin was also determined to visit Clifford, a man known online as the “caveman” of Wilderness. Rubin had first heard about Clifford from a friend several years ago and subsequently travelled to Wilderness to make a video about him. He had not seen him since. Rubin and Schultz decided at the beginning of their journey that seeing Clifford would be a fitting way to end their trip. They eventually did exactly that.

The journey also brought an unexpected addition to Rubin’s family. Near the end of the trip, the pair found an 11-year-old golden retriever, Mia. After getting hold of the dog’s owner, who informed him that Mia had been missing for seven weeks, they had discussions that led Rubin to adopting her, and she has since joined his family. “She’s very sweet,” he said. The dog has cancer and had already undergone surgery, Rubin said, adding that she is receiving treatment.

For Rubin and Schultz, however, the most significant part of the trip was not a destination or an unusual encounter. It was finally reaching Ethan. They saw him about a month into the journey and spent two days with him. Rubin had last seen Ethan towards the end of the previous year.

The time apart had made the changes particularly striking. “Last time I saw him, he had hair and all that,” Rubin said. “It was before the diagnosis.” Yet Ethan remained recognisably himself.



Joshua Rubin and Ethan

“He’s such a happy kid,” Rubin said. “Even with all the things he’s going through, he just wants to play, just wants to have fun.”

The visit also gave them a glimpse of how unpredictable Ethan’s treatment can be. Rubin said they saw him during what was a good week, although Ethan also had difficult periods due to the effects of chemotherapy. While Rubin and Schultz were visiting, Ethan went in for chemotherapy. Rubin said he handled the treatment relatively well, but that it could affect him badly at times.

The contrast between the scale of their journey and the reason for undertaking it remained central to Rubin. They stayed in unusual places, met strangers, and explored parts of a country they’d long wanted to see. But the journey remained connected to a young boy facing cancer.

For Rubin, the trip was more than a road trip with a childhood friend. It combined a long-held personal ambition with a practical effort to support someone close to him. “I think it was just the right time to make it happen,” he said.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

A say in the matter

This weekend, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) will hold its Great Mayoral Debates. These traditional pre-election events give our communities in Johannesburg and Cape Town the chance to hear directly from the mayoral candidates and their parties, and to hear them address our concerns. The Johannesburg debate will take place on Sunday evening, 11 October, and will be moderated by journalist-writer Mandy Wiener.

Democracy is about more than voting. It requires engagement, participation, and a commitment to the ideals of our Constitution, and the SAJBD is one expression of that. As the representative body of the community, the Board is tasked with engaging government and political parties from across the political spectrum. The Board is itself apolitical, which allows us to sit down with any party we need to. So many of our community's concerns are dealt with at local, municipal, or provincial level, and in the era of coalitions, those governments are often made up of a number of smaller or less well-known parties. That is why it matters so much that we hear from the broadest possible range of voices, and that the Board keeps close, friendly working relationships with as many leaders and parties as possible.

Many of us remember the queues of April 1994, winding around school halls and church grounds, with people waiting for hours in the sun to make a mark on a piece of paper. Thirty-two years on, we should hold onto that spirit and see voting once again as a privilege, one that most South Africans were denied for most of this country's history and that so many around the world still do not have. Democracy does not promise that our preferred

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



candidate will win, or that every councillor will deliver. What it does promise is that we have a say, and that those who govern us must come back and ask for our support again. That promise holds only if we use it. Local government is where democracy comes closest to home, in the water that comes out of our taps, the lights in our homes, and the state of the roads we drive on, and a single ward can be decided by a handful of votes. I cannot overstate how important it is to exercise this privilege and make your mark at the ballot box.

The debates are open to everyone, and I would encourage you to register and join us on Sunday. Bring your questions. Whether your concern is safety, service delivery, or the way our city is run, this is a rare opportunity to put it directly to the people who want to govern us, and to judge their answers for yourself. Come with an open mind and listen carefully. Then, when the day comes, go and vote.

Finally, although I have written an OpEd on this topic in this week's paper, it would be remiss of me not to mention the third anniversary of 7 October. The Board set up seven activations at key locations across the country, each displaying seven facts about that day. In doing so, we made a clear statement that, despite so many attempts to hijack this day from us, we remain committed to telling the truth about what happened. October 7 was a horrific terrorist attack in which innocent Jews were murdered, raped, tortured, and kidnapped. It was unprovoked. Rape and murder are not resistance.

Where were you on 7 October?

>>Continued from page 11

Houghton, Johannesburg and has three children who made aliya after completing high school at King David. On the morning of 7 October, all three were called up.

Her middle son sent her a short message, "Called up. Pray." Within two hours, all three children were in uniform and heading to different staging areas. "My life became like *Saving Private Ryan*," Rachel told the SA Jewish Report.



She described the distance between South Africa and Israel as agonising. "You sit in your lounge in Houghton, looking out at a tranquil garden, while your entire heart is on the other side of the world in a bomb shelter or an armoured vehicle."

Her children were serving in different locations. Her daughter was on the northern border, one son was involved in combat engineering near Gaza, and her oldest was in intelligence. Every phone notification brought fear. "You learn to live in five-minute increments because planning a full day ahead feels like tempting fate," she said.

For David*, 7 October began at a Cape Town synagogue. He arrived at shul in Sea Point at about 07:30 to prepare for the

morning service. Security personnel were receiving information about the attack, while many congregants remained unaware because it was Simchat Torah and they had switched off their phones.

David said he was faced with the difficult task of deciding how to communicate the news without causing panic. "People were walking through the doors dressed in their holiday suits, smiling, wishing each other Chag Sameach, completely oblivious because their phones were off," he said.

The news eventually reached the sanctuary. "When the rabbi finally addressed the sanctuary before the Torah reading, the air completely left the room," David said. The congregation was suddenly confronted with the reality that Israel was under attack. Many had children, grandchildren, friends,

or relatives in Israel.

"October 7th changed the DNA of our shul experience forever," he said. "We have had to up our security at great expense for our shul and I personally no longer wear my *kippah* outside the shul property and walk with it in my pocket until I reach the sanctuary."

For these South Africans, 7 October began in a different place. Three years later, their memories remain tied to those first moments of uncertainty. For Markus, 7 October ultimately made her feel more connected to her Jewish identity. "I feel very, very, very proudly Jewish," she said. "It's made me much more of a proud Jew." *Interviewees have requested anonymity for privacy reasons.

Being on brand

I can tell guests in our home that I'm done, I'm going to bed, and they're welcome to stay. If my wife made the same announcement, people would wonder what had happened. Was she upset? Had someone offended her? Should they leave? Should they phone tomorrow to check how she is feeling?

With me, the investigation is shorter. No need to call. Howard is tired. And rude. I would like to believe this is because I have established an honest and authentic personal brand. It's also possible that I've spent years lowering expectations and am now enjoying the returns.

Either way, the identical sentence, in the identical lounge, produces an entirely different response depending on who says it.

Donald Trump understood this long before I discovered its application to bedtime. In January 2016, he said he could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue, shoot somebody, and not lose voters. Imagine Hillary Clinton delivering that observation. I suspect the campaign team would have removed her from the microphone and begun discussing exhaustion.

Trump was describing the loyalty of his supporters. He was also describing his brand. For an audience that expects provocation, another outrageous statement can confirm that they've chosen the right man. The offence becomes evidence of authenticity. He says what others won't. The outrage from his opponents becomes part of the product.

Closer to home, Julius Malema said in 2016, "We are not calling for the slaughter of white people, at least for now." Those last four words do a terrifying amount of work. There was condemnation, including from the Democratic Alliance (DA) and others. But what's clear is that it's possible to survive outrage when outrage is already built into what people expect from you.

Imagine a DA leader offering an equivalent qualification about another racial group. I doubt

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



anyone would file it under colourful personality. We don't need to imagine the DA's sensitivity to its reputation. In 2017, it suspended Helen Zille from party activities over a comment. The statements weren't equivalent but remain a useful comparison as to how each party understood the damage: A party selling responsible government has more to lose from sounding irresponsible. A politician selling defiance may gain from being condemned.

That should disturb us. Familiarity can make appalling language feel routine. "That's just Julius" isn't an argument. Neither is "That's just Donald". Being predictable doesn't make someone harmless.

Unfortunately, the same mechanism operates in less alarming settings. The person known for being blunt is allowed to be rude. The reliable person misses one deadline and gets asked whether everything is all right. The unreliable person arrives on time and receives applause.

Which is why a reputation for excellence can be exhausting.

But there's a cost to the easier arrangement too. Keep insisting that you're the difficult one, the funny one, the one who doesn't care, and eventually people stop expecting anything else. You might even stop offering it.

Knowing your brand matters. So does knowing which parts deserve your loyalty and which are merely habits that other people have learned to accommodate. I can remain recognisably myself and occasionally stay up with the guests. My wife should be allowed to go to bed without triggering a diplomatic incident. Especially if everyone has accepted my invitation to stay.

After all, someone still has to lock up.

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

Sidley’s Checkers story reads like fiction

Steven Boykey Sidley has just launched his latest book, *Checkmate: How Shoprite Checkers rewrote the rules and won*. The SA Jewish Report caught up with him between launch events.

What made you want to tackle the Checkers story?
I’ve always been a Woolworths/PicknPay loyalist. And then one day, soon after moving to Cape Town, I wandered into Checkers Hyper and said, “WTF”. It looked like Disneyland. I wanted to know how they got there.

What research and work did you put in before you started writing?
There was a massive amount of research, an Alexandria library’s worth of information on the company because it is so big – South Africa’s largest by revenue and employees, who number 170 000. Plus, it is now much more than a provider of groceries. It’s a national institution providing products to 35 million South Africans. Data, stats, anecdotes, news, interviews, analysis, stores, Sixty60 stories, ex-employees, employees, executives, shareholders, and shoppers. It was an embarrassment of riches, and the challenge was to mine it for the most interesting story I could tell.

What were you trying to achieve with the book?
First, to tell the story of an astonishing ascendance of the company post-Whitey Basson to a position of

unchallenged competitive dominance, but moreover to get the reader to have fun while reading it, because the journey from 2017 is surprising and, at times, a little wild. And sometimes even amusing.

Much has changed since Clive Weil and ‘twolley for twolley’. How have the ethos and identity of the company changed since then?
Oh yes. It’s primarily an advanced technology company now, one that happens to ride on retail rails. Weil would not recognise anything about it other than its fuzzy store outline, especially if he peeked into the back offices where the data wizards play.

Would you call this a business book, or what genre of writing would you put it in?
It’s a book about a business, but it is not a business book. I am in the story. It reads more like narrative

non-fiction. The reader doesn’t need to have any interest in business at all – there are strange and smart and unconventional humans all over the Shoprite Group stage. It is also about the transformation of South Africa and its habits.

What was your process in writing this book?
I structured the entire story by writing the narrative arc – it really does read like a dramatic plot – then a short description of each chapter. Then research and write Chapter 1, then research and write Chapter 2, then research and write Chapter 3, etc. Then read and refine, read and refine, read and refine.

In this instance, what does ‘unauthorised’ mean? Did Checkers big guns see the final version? Were they in agreement from the get-go?
No, they saw nothing until this week. They had no control, no approval, and there was no commercial

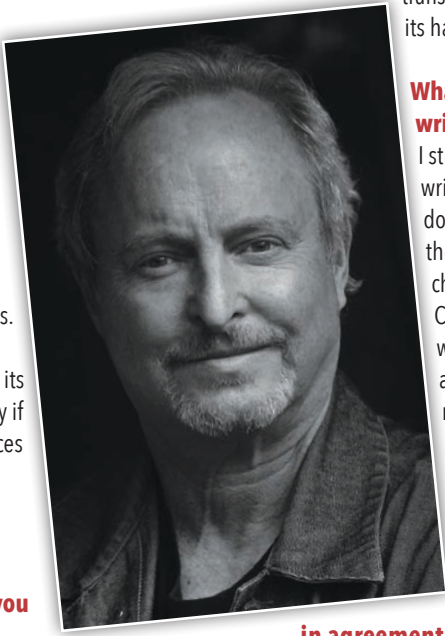
arrangement with them. I had to be very charming to get the interviews. I guess they trusted me somewhat.

What is the magic of Sixty60? Why is it so successful when there are other retailers offering the same or a similar service?
It is a completely unlikely story. I don’t want to spoil it, but it starts with a Zulu boy in Limpopo and eventually gets its nuclear fuel from a global pandemic and a corporation’s willingness to take a risk on some starry-eyed techies.

What did you learn from this project?
Writing a book about a business was as much fun as fiction and technology, my two other playgrounds.

Was there anything that astounded or surprised you in what you found out?
Almost everything surprised me. Read the book, you’ll see.

• Checkmate: How Shoprite Checkers rewrote the rules and won *will be launched in Cape Town at Exclusive Books Constantia at 17:30 for 18:00 on 15 October, and at Exclusive Books Hyde Park in Johannesburg at 17:30 for 18:00 on 20 October.*



WEEKLY SPECIALS

Offers valid till 14 October 2026 or while stocks last

KOSHER **AT** EVERYDAY PRICES

MANY MORE SPECIALS IN-STORE



58⁹⁹



24⁹⁹



49⁹⁹



74⁹⁹



13⁹⁹



6⁹⁹



54⁹⁹



69⁹⁹



R38⁹⁰ p/100g



R53⁹⁹



38⁹⁹



12⁹⁹



7⁹⁹



21⁹⁹



24⁹⁹



47⁹⁹



66⁹⁹



64⁹⁹



74⁹⁹



34⁹⁹



10⁹⁹



11⁹⁹

1 Long Avenue, Glenhazel | 011 440 9517 | www.kosherworld.co.za | CONCIERGE SHOPPING SERVICE: orders@kosherworld.co.za

Actual offers may differ from visuals shown. KosherWorld is available at selected Checkers stores. We reserve the right to limit quantities. While stocks last. E&OE.

עם ישראל חי

KosherWorld

TRULY KOSHER

THESE DEALS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE AT KOSHERWORLD JHB