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A new era for Yeshiva College

NICOLA MILTZ

Yeshiva College is embarking on an ambitious turnaround strategy to boost enrolment and rejuvenate its campus. This week the school appointed veteran sports executive Stan Matthews as its new executive director and Rabbi Daniel Kaplan as *rosh hayeshiva* in a bid to spearhead a new chapter for the Johannesburg Torah-led school.

Matthews, appointed from 1 January 2027, will take charge of the school's day-to-day management, finances, fundraising, academic, cultural and sporting development, infrastructure, and operations, with all principals and department heads reporting to him.

Rabbi Kaplan, appointed with immediate effect, will serve as the school's spiritual head, with authority over Torah, religious, and halachic matters, ensuring its religious Zionist identity remains central to its educational mission.

"We have lost kids. That's the reality, and we have to take it on the chin," Matthews told the *SA Jewish Report*. "We have to up our game."

Yeshiva's enrolment has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic, from more than 900 approximately five years ago to 864 today. Although the decline is relatively modest, the new leadership acknowledges that the school hasn't always kept pace with changing expectations.

Matthews, the long-serving chief executive of SuperSport United Football Club, is candid about the shortcomings, describing Yeshiva College as "a great school that's underperforming".

"As a parent at the school, I've seen first-hand where Yeshiva College delivers in a massive way, but I've also seen where it falls short," he said.

He is energised by the opportunity to help reshape the school's future. "I'm super excited to build something even more special. This is a big leap into a new era for Yeshiva College."

His vision is to rebuild enrolment to sustainable levels, strengthen academic and sporting opportunities, and position the school as an incubator for future Jewish leaders.

"Yeshiva College has produced extraordinary alumni who have gone on to make a massive impact on Jewish communities around the world. I want us to build on that legacy."

The chairperson of the Yeshiva board of governors, Michael Sassoon, said in a statement, "The demands facing schools are increasing, and the expectations of families continue to evolve. To meet them we are strengthening our organisational leadership to complement the Torah and educational leadership at the heart of our school."

"Part of my job is to find the money," said Matthews.

The school has announced plans for a major campus rejuvenation, including a proposed nearby sporting precinct incorporating playing grounds and a clubhouse. Pupils will also benefit from discounted access to off-site gyms, golf courses, and padel facilities, alongside coaching, physical conditioning programmes, and organised leagues, Matthews said.

"The idea is to broaden sporting opportunities beyond the school campus, making a wider range of activities more accessible and affordable to pupils.

lessons they learn from following a structured programme will help them become the best they can be," Matthews said.

Beyond sport, he plans to introduce an alumni mentorship programme. "Yeshiva College does amazing things, but we haven't been good at telling people about them. We don't sell the sizzle," he said. "We need to improve how we package and market ourselves. I'm excited about bringing some energy and pizzazz to that."

Matthews brings more than two decades of executive experience, having overseen three Premier Soccer League (PSL) titles and 10 domestic cup victories at SuperSport United. He previously served as PSL chief executive and founded Forwardzone Sports Agency.

His career began in education as founding principal of Boston City Campus in Bedfordview. A Yeshiva College parent whose two older children matriculated from the school, he has another entering matric in 2027. He served as president of Linksfield Shul for several years and led its renewal project.

For Kaplan, the challenge is to modernise without compromising the school's religious foundations.

"I'm standing on the shoulders of a giant in the late Rosh HaYeshiva Rabbi Avraham Tanzer," he said.

"As a graduate, a born-and-bred Yeshiva College student, from nursery school all the way through to being head boy, this has been my home for many, many years," he said.

Kaplan will continue serving as rabbi of Mizrahi South Africa.

He believes Yeshiva College occupies a distinctive position between Jewish schools focused primarily on Torah and religious education and those offering a broader secular experience.

Continued on page 3>>



Rabbi Daniel Kaplan and Stan Matthews at Yeshiva College

A high-performance programme is planned for netball, volleyball, and soccer for boys and girls, supported by biokineticists, physiotherapists, and specialist trainers."

The school's first Yeshiva Golf League has already launched, with a padel league scheduled for February 2027. Internal leagues and interschool competitions are intended to broaden participation while identifying talent.

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ChevrahKadisha

Israelis vote for the country's *neshama*



ROLENE MARKS

To call this election consequential would be an understatement. This election is more than a decision of choice for the next government of Israel; it is a battle for the country's soul.

On Saturday night, more than an estimated

100 000 people gathered in Tel Aviv to rally for change. The familiar scene of bereaved families, imploring Israelis to remember the victims of the atrocities of 7 October, is a reminder of what Israelis have endured over the past three years. It is also a reminder of the failure of the coalition government to take responsibility for the climate leading up to the atrocities. One of the key platform points for several parties is the establishment of a national commission of inquiry.

October 7 remains front and centre in the Israeli psyche. The atrocities and circumstances around that Black Shabbat inform much of our identity and how we approached this election. Israelis want accountability for the failures.

Israelis are battle hardened and war fatigued and after these last years, beset by turmoil including before 7 October, we are auditing our national value system.

While no bloc and candidate has the clear majority of 61, former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief Gadi Eisenkot has led in the polls, ahead of the incumbent, Benjamin Netanyahu. Polymarket polls have him as the most likely to be prime minister. But polls and reality tell different stories and the results coming in have been far from what pundits predicted. The big

shock for many is the gaining of many seats by Arab parties. This will be key when forming coalitions or moving towards a national unity government. This is Israeli democracy in action: never dull and always unpredictable.

Netanyahu has headed a government that many believe has been the worst in Israel's history, with policies that border on the catastrophic. The Israeli electorate approached the election acutely aware that we are now an Israel maligned by many. Misunderstood –

yet maligned.

Netanyahu, who has survived scandals and controversies in the past and is often considered to be one of the greatest orators in the world, has failed to effectively communicate Israel's narrative in the wake of 7 October, preferring instead to build his persona as a "wartime prime minister". "Total Victory" has been his clarion call and while Israel's astounding military victories under his leadership must be noted, the buck stops with the big guy in charge – and he has yet to take responsibility.

Eisenkot has paid an enormous personal price, losing his son and two nephews in combat in Gaza. Where Eisenkot may lack the polish and oratory skills of Bibi, his story is one of Israeli achievement. Born in Tiberius to a poor Mizrahi family, he rose through the ranks of the IDF to become chief of staff. Should he win, he would

make history as Israel's first Mizrahi prime minister.

It is no surprise that voter turnout was the highest in decades. The turnout was at a 53-year high, including the surprising number of Arab voters, fed up with the policies of far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

It wasn't just local Israelis exercising their civic duty. An estimated 70 000 flew in, including *Wonder Woman* Gal Gadot. "That's it, I'm exercising my right to vote, and I ask all of you to go out and exercise your most basic, most important, the most democratic right, and to vote for who you believe in," said Gadot in a recording of herself at the polling booth.

"I'm voting for change, and I hope that today, Tuesday, *pa'amayim ki tov* [Tuesdays are traditionally viewed in Jewish culture as a lucky day], that it will only be good for us all," she said, blowing a kiss at the camera.

I have voted in a number of elections since making aliya in 2010. The thrill of exercising my civic duty in the nation state of the Jewish people is an enormous privilege that fills me with pride. It is also a democratic responsibility, one that cannot be taken lightly. We carry generations who dreamed of being a free people in our own land. More so, in post-7 October Israel.

Decisions about who to vote for cannot be taken lightly. October 7 changed our DNA as a nation. We have paid a massive price for fighting for our freedom and survival.

May whoever leads the next government be worthy of our history. May they be worthy of the fallen, the murdered, and the bereaved. May they be worthy of us all.

• *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.*

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What Hashem left out

After welcoming guests and preparing a lavish lunch for them, Sarah overhears her visitors promise a son to her and Abraham, and she laughs. "After I have withered, shall I have smooth skin? And my husband is old!" (Genesis 18:12). Soon afterwards, Hashem reports the laugh to Abraham, but leaves out a crucial detail (18:13). In the version that Abraham hears, the reason Sarah finds the promise implausible is "I am old". Abraham's age has vanished from the sentence.

Rashi, based on the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 48:18), says the Torah altered her words for the sake of peace, and the Gemara (Yevamot 65b) makes the same point. In other words, rather than telling Abraham that Sarah was weighing up two compounding factors (her own age as well as Abraham's), Hashem gave Abraham the impression that it was Sarah's age alone that made this such a miracle. Why for the sake of peace? Because even when you know that you are an old man, you don't like hearing that your spouse thinks of you in that

way!

But even though there is a good reason, we are seeing that Hashem Himself, whose "seal is truth" (Shabbat 55a), is willing to bend the truth in this instance. What interests me here is that we like to believe that the right values, properly ordered, will spare us

from choosing. They won't. Truth, peace, dignity, and loyalty pull against each other in an ordinary marriage, an ordinary staffroom, an ordinary family dinner. And we don't receive a revelation from Heaven guiding us in all situations. Beit Hillel called every bride beautiful, and Beit Shammai refused (Ketubot 16b-17a). It seems that the answer depends on the disposition of the person and the call of the hour.

In every situation where two important values do not align, we have to make the call, and the call has a price. Abraham is spared a stinging remark, but he receives a false picture of Sarah's thoughts. Hashem shows us that this is not free. The person who says everything pays in damaged relationships, and the person who smooths everything over pays in closeness that is never quite real.

One of my favourite prayers is the Serenity Prayer, in which Reinhold Niebuhr asks for the courage to change the things he can, the serenity to accept the things he cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference. We often think of that second clause as comfort: to easily accept what we can't change. But to me it is really

Torah Thought

Rabbi Sam Thurgood
Head of Jewish Life and Learning, United Herzlia Schools



about making peace with the price that we have to pay, sometimes unfairly, and often against our will.

May Hashem bless us to make the right call. To say less than everything when everything would only hurt. To say all of it when silence would corrode. To live with the choices we make, and to ask for blessing in the way forward.

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Legal battle over ‘soul’ of Zionist foundation

TALI FEINBERG

Dianna Yach, chairperson and director of local Jewish charity the Mauerberger Foundation Fund (MFF), has once again overseen a donation of R1 million to a South African organisation, yet categorised it as a donation to Israel, according to new documents in court. It’s believed to have been an attempt to conceal the MFF’s alleged underfunding of Israeli entities, which should receive half of its grants.

This is after local businessman Steven Levy and global health expert Dr Derek Yach took Dianna Yach to the Western Cape High Court over her volatile management of their family foundation. Dianna Yach is Levy’s cousin and Dr Yach’s sister. All three are directors of the foundation. Court papers showed that Dianna Yach donated R1 million to Gift of the Givers, to be sent to Gaza. Now, it has emerged that this was not a once-off incident, but a pattern.

In their replying affidavit, Levy and Dr Yach question why Dianna Yach categorised a R1 million donation to the Jewish Democratic Initiative (JDI), a South African non-profit organisation, as an allocation to Israel.



Dianna Yach donating R1 million to Dr Imtiaz Sooliman of Gift of the Givers

The JDI, founded as a space for liberal Zionists in South Africa, has become increasingly anti-Israel. It frequently collaborates with antizionist hate group South African Jews for a Free Palestine, and has blamed rising antisemitism, including the Bondi Beach attack, on Israel’s actions. “The Jewish State, in its refusal to come to terms with another group living on the same land, has made the world less safe for Jews,” stated the group, in response to the Roedean School scandal.

The affidavit shows that Dianna Yach once again categorised this donation as going to Israel, despite the JDI having South African tax and public benefit organisation status, and its physical address in Milnerton, Cape Town.

Morris Mauerberger, grandfather of the Yachs and Levy, was a staunch Zionist. He set up the foundation and stipulated that 50% of donations must go to Israeli entities, 25% to the Jewish community in South Africa, and 25% to non-Jewish entities in South Africa. Nowhere did he say that donations must go to Gaza.

Yet court papers showed that the MFF donated R1 million to Gift of the Givers, to be sent to Gaza, which Dianna Yach categorised as part of their allocation to Israel. This was after Gift of the Givers founder and antizionist Dr Imtiaz Sooliman said that the Gaza war would “end Israel”.

Levy and Dr Yach allege that Dianna Yach is the cause of the MFF’s failure to adhere to its founding document. Its Israel allocations declined from 49% in 2020 to a mere 3% in 2024. In contrast, a single South African non-Jewish beneficiary, the University of Cape Town (UCT), received 21% of MFF grants in 2024.

The case was heard in court on Monday, 26 October, before Judge Phillipa Susan Van Zyl.

Representing Levy and Dr Yach, Advocate Johann Gautschi SC told the court how Levy had repeatedly objected to the foundation departing from its mandate, reducing funding to Israel while increasing funding to local entities like UCT. Dianna Yach sits on the UCT Council executive, its highest level of leadership.

Gautschi demonstrated how Levy became increasingly desperate to stem this tide of non-compliance. He repeatedly urged the foundation to allocate the mandatory donation percentages to Israel, but he was consistently blocked, silenced, and dismissed by Dianna Yach and fellow directors Igshaan Higgins and Professor Brian Figaji.

Levy and Dr Yach are now asking the court to suspend the three from the MFF board, and to declare them “delinquent directors”. This is a classification for leaders found guilty of gross abuse of position, wilful misconduct, or a total breach of fiduciary trust.

After two other experienced directors resigned, Levy became a lone voice in trying to steer the foundation back towards compliance with his grandfather’s wishes and its memorandum of incorporation. Dr Yach also became increasingly concerned. But instead of getting back on track, Dianna Yach presented a four-year “transition” plan, devised by Figaji, that would perpetuate non-compliance while creating a veneer of remedial action.

Dianna Yach’s legal team described the case as “purely a boardroom fight”. They argued that this was a disagreement over Israel’s response to the 7 October massacre and Dr Yach and Levy’s disapproval of UCT’s Gaza resolutions, in a possible attempt to dilute the serious governance concerns raised.

On behalf of the JDI steering committee, Basil Dubb told the *SA Jewish Report* that the JDI has received significant funding from the MFF, “based on a shared commitment to social justice”.

In their annual funding proposals to the MFF, “we have supplied detailed reports on our structure, our activities, and our finances, to ensure that the directors know who they are funding,” he says.

It is unclear whether this was presented to Dianna Yach alone, because one of the issues raised in court was her persistent suppression of Levy’s attempts to secure information and documents relating to the foundation’s funding of beneficiaries, including the JDI.

Three months after that allocation of R1 million, the JDI wrote an

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article defending and praising Dianna Yach. It defended her voting in support of UCT’s antizionist Gaza resolutions and her donation to Gift of the Givers. “She knows Sooliman personally, has invited him over for coffee on many occasions, and has had long discussions with him,” JDI wrote. “She is of the opinion that he is ‘a lovely man, not antisemitic at all,’” it said.

Yet Sooliman has called himself “5000% antisemitic”, described Israel as a “terrorist state” and said that Zionists “run the world with fear and control the world with money”. At the same time, he accepted money from a foundation founded by a staunch Zionist, Mauerberger.

Beyond the MFF, commentators have expressed concern about Dianna’s Yach’s conduct in other spheres, particularly at UCT. She is not only a central figure in the Mendelsohn review application regarding UCT’s Gaza resolutions, but she is cited in

the August 2026 review application filed by UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela. She also oversaw the sudden closure of the Irma Stern Museum, as the chairperson of the museum committee.

Covering these events in a YouTube video, local commentator Thee Sama Sambit said that Dianna Yach “apparently cannot walk past an institution without that institution immediately catching a court case”. Neither she nor the MFF has commented on Sambit’s video.

Another observer, speaking on condition of anonymity, says that Dianna Yach is no longer guided by the stipulated wishes of her grandfather. Instead, “It seems that if Dianna likes you, you simply get a million rand”.

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Yach for comment, but she didn’t respond.

Judgment in the case was reserved.

A new era for Yeshiva College

>>Continued from page 1

“We are not just for people who are only *from*, and we are not just for people who don’t want religiosity,” he said. “That is why we are so important, because we play in the middle.”

Parents interviewed by the *SA Jewish Report* expressed differing views about the school’s performance.

“There are a lot of quality kids and quality families,” said a mother whose children have attended the school over the past decade and who requested anonymity.

“While I appreciate the school’s strengths, I believe there is room for improvement, particularly in teaching standards, leadership, and communication with parents. My older children benefited from exceptional teachers and inspiring Torah leadership. I feel the school has struggled to maintain that consistency.”

Despite these concerns, she remains deeply appreciative of the school’s Jewish ethos, strong friendships, and commitments to Torah and Israel. “The school really does instil a love for Israel, a love of Torah, and a love of learning,” she said.

Another mother, whose daughter is in Grade 7 and son in Grade 4, said, “We’ve really enjoyed the smaller environment. It’s small enough that everyone knows each other, but not so small that there aren’t options.”

She praised the school’s acceptance of families with different levels of religious observance. “It is very inclusive, very tolerant, and actually a very calm environment.”

A third mother said, “What I’ve experienced with my own children is that Yeshiva College sees beyond their marks and achievements. It cares about their *neschama*, their soul, the very essence of who they are and who they’re becoming. There is something deeply special about that.”

The partnership between Matthews and Kaplan also has an unusual history. Matthews coached Kaplan in soccer approximately 35 years ago.

Today, the two are preparing to guide different aspects of Yeshiva College’s future. Rabbi Gilad Friedman has also been appointed primary school principal.

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Voting so vital it’s worth a flight home

CLAUDIA GROSS

For some Israelis living in South Africa, voting in this election meant spending thousands of rands, crossing continents, and returning to a country whose future they believe is too important to leave to others.

As Israelis headed to the polls on 27 October, three people who made the journey from South Africa to vote described why they believed participating in the election was worth the cost and effort. Their reasons ranged from a desire for political change to concerns about national unity, military service, and the future of generations to come.

For Kelly Melnik, a Cape Town resident who has lived in South Africa for 14 years, returning to vote was never in question. “I’m Israeli, so I have to do it. There was no question.”

Melnik, who is involved in the local Jewish community through the Women’s International Zionist Organisation, said this election felt particularly important. She has two children in South Africa but remains closely connected to Israel and its future. “It’s the future of my kids, of my grandchildren, and for the future of them, for all of us, we need to come and vote,” she said.

Melnik has returned to Israel to vote before, but said this time felt different. She booked her flights as soon as the election date was announced, allowing her to plan ahead. She said some hotels had offered special discounts to people travelling to vote, and she planned to stay for a few days rather

than her usual week-long visit.

Among the issues shaping her vote were the need to investigate the failures surrounding the war that began three years ago, the question of equal military service, and Israel’s economic situation. She also wants to see a change in the country’s direction. “We need something different,” she said. “Peace, quiet.”

For Melnik, the election was about more than domestic politics. She believes the consequences extend to Israelis and Jews living outside the country. “We don’t need to be afraid anymore,” she said, describing her hope for a more united Israel and a new beginning.

Naomi Hadar, who was born in Israel and moved to South Africa after the end of apartheid, also believes voting is both a right and an obligation. Hadar returned to Israel for a conference and arranged to stay for the election before returning to her work as chief executive of African Friends of Sheba Medical Center. Her career has kept her closely connected to Israel, including through efforts to strengthen medical cooperation between Israel and African countries.



Hadar believes Israel’s future matters to Jewish communities worldwide, particularly given the history of the Holocaust and the importance of having a Jewish State. “The future of Israel for us, for our kids, our grandchildren is the most important thing and for the Jews around the world,” she said.

Hadar is particularly concerned about divisions within Israeli society. She wants a government that prioritises citizens over political interests and believes national unity is essential. “The division between us is the worst thing that can happen to us,” she said. “Nobody can destroy us when we are strong and when we are united.” She also believes military or other forms of service should be shared more equally across society.

Hadar said the journey home was more expensive than her previous trips, particularly the return flight. She hoped the election would attract a high turnout and give Israelis a meaningful say in their country’s direction. “You can’t sit and wait for the other to change or to support,” she said. “You have to be part of it.”

For a younger voter, the decision to return to Israel is also tied to experiences that have shaped his life since 7 October.

After completing his military service in August 2023, Guy*, 24, had planned to work and save money before travelling. The

Hamas-led attacks on Israel on 7 October changed those plans. He was called up for reserve duty and has returned to serve several times since. “It feels like I never stopped serving in the army and like I never completed my military service,” he said.

Guy had delayed travelling because he felt he needed to remain available if Israel required him. Eventually, he decided he had earned a break. When the election was announced, he arranged his trip around the voting date. “I felt like I had earned enough and been through enough to deserve a trip, so I booked my flights and made sure that I could be back in time to vote,” he said.

He had been travelling around southern Africa before flying from Johannesburg, via Addis Ababa, to Israel to vote.

Despite the time he has spent serving, Guy said he saw voting as another way to contribute to his country. “Voting is the single most important thing anyone in Israel could be doing today,” he said. “Nothing else matters. It’s about the future of my homeland.”

“Israel needs a big change and new ideas,” he said. “The old guard need to be replaced and held accountable.”

For these three voters, distance has not diminished their connection to Israel. Instead, they believe living abroad makes it no less important to take part in decisions affecting the country and its people.

As Hadar put it, voting is not simply a right to exercise when convenient. It is a responsibility that requires participation.

* Interviewee has requested anonymity for privacy reasons.

South African *olim* weigh in on their future

CLAUDIA GROSS

For South Africans who have made aliya, voting in Israel meant more than choosing a political party. It was a chance to influence the future of a country they’ve chosen to call home, amid uncertainty about its security, economy, leadership, and place in the world.

As Israelis prepared to vote, South African immigrants had various priorities. Some were looking for greater unity and stability, while others were concerned about the country’s direction and the consequences of their choices.

Julio Woznica, who moved to Israel about 14 months ago after living in South Africa for almost 50 years, said becoming an Israeli citizen had given him an opportunity to participate in the country’s future. “I’m honoured to be accepted as a full citizen and invited to put my opinion forward,” he said.

Born in Uruguay, Woznica moved to South Africa in 1976. He and his wife recently decided to make aliya, joining family members who have settled in Israel. They are delighted with their decision. “The people of Israel are beautiful people,” he said. “Many times, we have to live in a society with uncertainty, but people live between uncertainty, happiness, and sadness.”

Woznica hoped the election would help Israel move towards peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. However, he recognised that the political outcome might not deliver what he wanted. “The biggest challenge is to try to find a world of peace. I would like to see a world where people can coexist in peace.”

Johnny Orlanski, who has lived in Israel for just under five years, was voting for the second time. He arrived shortly before the last election, before 7 October. Although he has settled in Israel, he said his feelings about the election had

changed in recent months. “I actually felt more comfortable about voting two or three months ago,” he said. “But in the last few weeks or months, I’ve been kind of in two minds.”

Orlanski, who works in the high-tech and finance sectors, said the economy was his biggest concern. He was particularly worried about the cost of living and the potential economic consequences of Israel’s international standing.

He fears possible sanctions against Israel could affect businesses and international investment. His experience in finance has made him aware of how companies assess the risks of operating in countries facing potential sanctions.

He also raised concerns about social welfare spending and the economic participation of the Haredi community, many of whose members devote themselves to religious study. However, his greatest hope for the election was greater unity among Israelis.

“I would like to see a united Israel,” he said. “I think the biggest existential threat isn’t particularly outside influence. It’s what happens internally.” He believes political divisions are

weakening the country and hopes the next government will bring together Israelis with different perspectives.

Hilliard Ezra, another South African living in Israel, said deciding how to vote required weighing personal political preferences against the broader implications for the country. As a religiously observant Israeli, Ezra places considerable importance on preserving Israel’s identity as a Jewish State. Security and the country’s long-term future were also central to the decision.

Ezra said the election had made many Israelis nervous because its outcome could represent a turning point. “There are bits and pieces that I appreciate in certain places, but you can’t vote like that,” Ezra said, explaining the difficulty of finding a political party that reflects every personal priority.



Ezra believes voters should have considered parties’ policies and principles rather than focusing exclusively on individual politicians. The future of Israel’s military and the treatment of soldiers were also important considerations. Ezra said the next government would need to address the psychological effects of military service and ensure soldiers and their families receive appropriate support.

The relationship between religious identity and military service was another contentious issue. Haredi men have historically received exemptions from compulsory military service, an arrangement that’s become increasingly

controversial. Ezra believes Israel needs leadership capable of managing these divisions without abandoning its core values.

For newcomers, understanding the political landscape can be difficult, particularly when the issues differ from those in South Africa. Tracy Milner, who made aliya from Johannesburg on 27 May, said she felt anxious about Israel’s political future. She returned to South Africa six weeks after arriving to finalise arrangements at home, before returning to Israel two weeks before the election.

Milner said she was still unfamiliar with many of the issues shaping Israeli politics. “I’m feeling quite anxious because I don’t really know a lot of the Israeli issues,” she said. “The issues are very different from what we experience in the diaspora.”

She also expressed concerns about political accountability, drawing comparisons with South Africa’s experience of former president Jacob Zuma and the legal proceedings against him. Milner believes political leaders should be held responsible for their actions, regardless of their position or party affiliation.

Her experience highlights how newcomers can feel invested in Israel’s future while still learning about its political system. For these South Africans, the election brought different experiences, expectations, and concerns. Some prioritised economic stability, others focused on security and Jewish identity, while others hope for a more peaceful future. Their perspectives differ, but each reflects the process of building a life in a country whose political decisions directly affect them.

Despite the uncertainty, Woznica remains happy with his decision to move. “I really enjoyed being in South Africa. Equally, I adapted to the new environment.” For South African *olim*, participating in Israeli democracy is part of that adaptation. It also gave them an opportunity to help shape the future of their new home.

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More parties, less certainty, except in Cape Town

CLAUDIA GROSS

With dozens of political parties competing for voters and established political loyalties under pressure, the local government elections could deliver significant changes across the country. But Cape Town may be heading in a different direction from other major cities, according to elections analyst Wayne Sussman.

Speaking at the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) annual general meeting on 21 October, Sussman examined the trends shaping the 4 November elections.

Fragmentation was one of the defining features of the current political landscape, said Susman, who analyses elections and polling for eNCA and MarkData. With more parties competing for support, even established political organisations face challenges in retaining voters.

majority in Cape Town, although he was less confident that it would match the 58% of the vote received previously.

"I don't like silver bullets," he said, cautioning against relying on a single indicator to predict an election result. Nevertheless, he argued that perceptions of municipal performance would play a large role in determining how voters cast their ballots.

The growing number of political parties was another significant factor. Sussman pointed to Tshwane, where the number of parties on the ballot had increased substantially since the 2021 local government elections. In one ward, he noted, the number of parties had risen from 37 to 67.

The proliferation of choices could affect parties across the political spectrum, including the DA in the Western Cape. Sussman expected the Patriotic Alliance (PA) to make gains in some areas, but

challenge. Sussman described the city as politically fragmented, reflecting its diverse population and the range of parties competing for support.

He pointed to Helen Zille's campaign and the DA's polling performance as significant developments. At the time of the discussion, MarkData polling placed Zille ahead of the ANC, although the DA wasn't expected to secure an outright majority.

Sussman said the central question was how a governing coalition could be formed if no party won enough votes to govern Johannesburg alone. The result would depend not only on the strength of individual parties, but also on their willingness to cooperate after the elections.

He cautioned that campaign promises and statements ruling out potential coalition partners might not survive contact with the practical demands of governing.

The broader implications extended beyond Johannesburg. Sussman said it was possible that the ANC would fail to win any of the six largest metropolitan areas. He connected this prospect to public dissatisfaction with municipal governance. The polling suggested that voters were increasingly concerned about whether their cities were being run effectively.

Sussman said surveys indicated that 66% of respondents prioritised service delivery when deciding which party to vote for. By comparison, 27% identified political identity and history as their primary considerations.

These findings reflected the importance of practical concerns in shaping voting behaviour, particularly as South Africa moved further from transition to democracy. "South Africans are sending a message that they're not happy with the way their metropolitan areas are run," he said.

The results also raised questions about the ANC's ability to respond to changing voter expectations. Sussman described the party's position as increasingly vulnerable, particularly where voters associated it with poor municipal performance and unstable coalition arrangements. He also discussed the possible influence of the uMkhonto weSizwe party and the Economic Freedom Fighters, noting that political fragmentation affected these parties as well.

For the Jewish community, Sussman's

analysis touched on the relationship between local politics, international affairs, and political representation. He discussed the electoral prospects of smaller parties whose positions against Israel and the war in Gaza had attracted attention among Jewish voters. These included Al Jama-ah and the National Coloured Congress, as well as other parties campaigning on identity-based issues.

Sussman cautioned against assuming that strong social media visibility or claims made through unofficial polls necessarily translated into electoral support. He expressed concern about misinformation, including the circulation of unreliable polling figures.

He emphasised the importance of distinguishing established polling organisations from sources making claims

without credible evidence.

Sussman's central argument was that the elections could not be understood simply by looking at which parties were gaining attention. Voter sentiment, service delivery, campaign organisation, and the ability to govern would all influence the outcomes.

With the elections approaching, the question was whether established parties could retain their support while smaller parties capitalised on changing political loyalties. The results would also determine whether South Africa's major cities could produce stable administrations capable of responding to residents' needs.



Cape SAJBD executive director Daniel Bloch and Wayne Sussman at the Cape SAJBD AGM

Speaking with Cape SAJBD executive director Daniel Bloch, Sussman suggested that the DA was well positioned to retain its outright majority in Cape Town. Johannesburg, however, presented a more complicated picture, with political fragmentation making the formation of a stable governing coalition uncertain.

One of the clearest indicators came from polling conducted across the country's six major metropolitan areas. Respondents were asked how they viewed their municipality's performance over the previous five years.

Cape Town was the only metro where positive sentiment outweighed negative feelings, Sussman said. The city recorded a positive balance of 25 percentage points, while Johannesburg recorded a negative balance of 42 percentage points.

He said the findings helped explain why he expected the DA to retain its

questioned whether it could translate its growth in by-elections into comparable success across a wider electoral contest.

He also highlighted the importance of campaign organisation and leadership. Smaller parties can experience rapid growth when their leaders attract public attention, but they may struggle to sustain momentum without sufficient organisational capacity.

Sussman argued that the PA's dependence on its prominent leadership could become a vulnerability. Larger parties, by contrast, generally have deeper structures and more people available to campaign and govern.

He said the final weeks of a campaign could prove decisive, as parties with greater resources and stronger ground operations attempted to consolidate support.

Johannesburg presented a different

Barring of antisemitic film a victory against dangerous hate speech

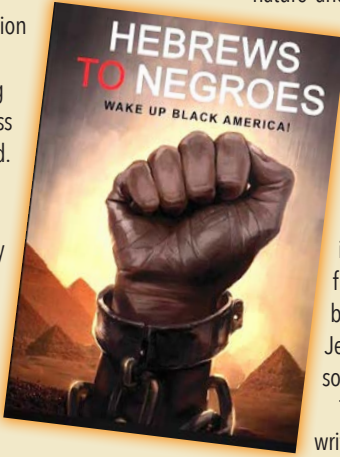
LEE TANKLE

More than three years after the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) lodged a complaint against the antisemitic film *Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America*, the Film and Publication Board (FPB) decision to refuse it classification has been formally gazetted, bringing the lengthy process to a successful end.

The decision means that the film cannot legally be screened or distributed in South Africa, including online.

Though widely described as a "ban", the SAJBD stressed that the correct legal terminology is "refused classification", a decision first communicated in December 2025 and now finalised through its publication in the Government Gazette.

Makhosazana Lindhorst, acting chief executive of the FPB, outlines the reasons for the decision in the Gazette. "The film's assertion that the Holocaust is a 'falsehood' is a direct advocacy of hatred based on identifiable group characteristics, serving to trivialise immense suffering and perpetuate antisemitism," she says.



"The explicit text comparing Jews to 'parasites among the nations' is an egregious act of dehumanisation. This language has a well-documented history of justifying discrimination, violence, and genocide, clearly demonstrating hatred," she continues. "The film posits 'five major falsehoods' aimed at concealing Jewish 'nature' and protecting their 'status and power', inherently promoting antisemitic tropes."

The SAJBD was alerted to *Hebrews to Negroes* in June 2023 when it was screened at the Soweto Theatre. The Board was alerted by its counterparts in the United States, where the film's producers live. They have been involved in distributing anti-Jewish conspiracies, films, and social media for many years.

The 2018 film, directed, written, and produced by Ronald Dalton Jr, promotes the belief that

some people of colour, including black Americans, are the true descendants of the biblical Israelites. One of its core ideas is that the Jews of today aren't Jews but have culturally appropriated the religious heritage of black people and covered it up.

The film includes claims of an international Jewish conspiracy that aims to oppress and defraud black people. It quotes *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Henry Ford's *The International Jew*; conspiracy theories about the Rothschild family, and

Continued on page 9>>

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Jewish Report

Swords into ploughshares

Johannesburg is my home, and helping to fix and uplift it is my responsibility. As our local elections approach, I am committed to doing what I can for this city and our country. I am wholly South African, third generation on one side and fourth on the other. My concern and love for Israel doesn't diminish that commitment.

Yet when Israel went to the polls on 27 October, I longed to have a say in its future. I have no right to vote there; that belongs to its citizens. But having no vote doesn't mean having no stake. What happens in Israel reaches Jewish communities around the world.

It is vitally important to me and those around me that Israel elects a leader who will put the longevity of Israel and the Israeli nation first and foremost. It is vital that the leader is going to enhance the long fought-for democracy and will look for a path towards peace for Israel.

There are many other vital issues, and I understand every Jewish person, and every Israeli, has his or her own perspectives on what those are and who might address them. But I believe that in our hearts, every Jewish person wishes for Israel to be able to live in peace.

It is for good reason that twice in the Book of Prophets in the Tanach, Isaiah and Micah share the prophetic vision of "beating their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks". Obviously, this can only happen in times of peace, when there are no longer enemy threats. That is a dream for all of us. The only time we can repurpose weapons is when our neighbours and their neighbours are our friends, or when – as we believe – Moshiach arrives.

I'm sure I'm not the only South African Jew who has been sitting on *shpilkes* (nervous, anxious) over the outcome of Israel's election. It is a pivotal election for all of us.

Antisemitism often erases the political differences among Jews, treating support for Israel as automatic endorsement of Benjamin Netanyahu, Betzalel Smotrich, and Itamar Ben-Gvir. That is precisely the distinction we must insist on: concern for a country isn't a blank cheque for its politicians.

Haters would have the world believe that all Jews want Palestinians, and Israeli Arabs at that, dead. But this week, more than two million Arabs voted in Israel and their votes counted just as much as an Israeli Jew's. In fact, their votes counted far more than they would in most Arab countries, which aren't democracies. So much for apartheid Israel! I don't need to tell you that during apartheid, black people weren't allowed to vote.

When I saw a picture of the actual ballot paper, I was interested to find that it was in Hebrew and Arabic, not English. Again, so much for apartheid Israel!

You know, Israelis, and perhaps Jews, are different to other nations. When war hits, Israelis and Jews head to Israel to help. It's a known fact.

This week, around 67 000 Israelis flew home at a premium because ticket prices skyrocketed. Why? So they could "save their country". Some of those Israelis may have been living in the diaspora for decades. But, in their hearts, once an Israeli always an Israeli. There was no question for them whether they would do the right thing, no matter the cost, and go home and vote.

They may have left Israel because they believed they couldn't live under the government of the day, but when it comes to the future of their homeland, they have no question about their priorities. While some countries ensure their citizens vote by allowing them to do so at embassies or special voting stations internationally, not Israel. Only diplomats, civil servants, and their families are allowed to vote in other countries. A mere 4 500 or so Israelis are eligible to vote outside Israel.

Israelis are very divided right now. There are numerous issues that they are angry about and argue about, and dinners in Israeli homes can get quite heated because family members don't necessarily agree with one another. The spectrum of political views is vast. However, when push comes to shove, they are united in wanting a part in the future of Israel. And they want a peaceful Israel.

But right now peace is something that seems quite far away. The more pressing issues for most Israelis are security and the consequences of the 7 October infiltration, massacre, and subsequent war. Who should bear responsibility for the intelligence and security failures three years ago?

There is another reason not to mistake election night for the end of the story. Israelis vote for party lists in a 120-seat Parliament, not directly for a prime minister. A majority is 61 seats, and coalition negotiations will determine who can assemble support to govern. The largest party and the next government aren't necessarily the same thing.

The next major question for Israelis is Bibi or not Bibi? In other words, this is a form of referendum over whether Netanyahu should or should not continue leading Israel. This is highly disputed.

The economy and high cost of living are also up there with the most important issues in question. Then there is the matter of who serves in the Israel Defense Forces and who doesn't? There is massive anger over religious exemptions, and this is a pivotal voting issue. Then, of course, there is the issue of the power of the Supreme Court, the government's ability to reshape the judiciary, and the relationship between religion and state.

Watching from the diaspora, we know that Israel's election can affect how others treat Jews both inside and outside the country. Some of us may hope that a different result will soften hostility. But that cannot be our measure of the election's success. Antisemitism is the responsibility of those who practise it, not something Israelis must vote correctly to prevent.

The result may bring relief to some of us and disappointment to others. But the central hope cannot be that it will satisfy those determined to demonise Israel or Jews. It must be Israel's long-term security, the protection of its democracy, and a future in which its people can live in peace. Here in Johannesburg, I remain committed to helping build the country I call home. Caring about Israel doesn't release me from that responsibility; it reminds me why a country's future matters.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Is Israel a factor in SA elections?

OPINION

PAULA SLIER



South Africans have learnt not to take running water, working traffic lights, or reliable electricity for granted. You would think that, with municipal elections approaching, the argument would be about who can actually fix these problems. But it's Israel that's being debated.

Ashley Mama, Johannesburg mayoral candidate for Al Jama-ah, a small Muslim political party, has ruled out working with the DA because of its position on Israel and Palestine. Franco de Lange, the Freedom Front Plus (FF Plus) mayoral candidate for Johannesburg, has ruled out working with the Economic Freedom Fighters and the uMkhonto weSizwe Party, describing them as antisemitic.

It's not only in Johannesburg. At a Cape Town mayoral debate last week, Fadiel Adams, leader of the National Coloured Congress (NCC), challenged the DA over its support for Israel, even as candidates debated housing and other municipal concerns.

These may be important political positions, but they don't tell residents whether their taps will run or their roads will be repaired.

For Jewish voters, the question is more complicated. Most are understandably angry about the positions South African political parties have taken on Israel since 7 October. But how much should that anger influence a vote in an election that's supposed to be about running municipalities?



I put the question to several Jewish voters and elections analyst Wayne Sussman.

One voter, who asked not to be named, said service delivery should be the priority and that any party bringing Israel into a municipal campaign would lose his vote. He described the FF Plus as a pleasant surprise because of its condemnation of the 7 October attacks and support for Israel's right to defend itself.

Yet when asked whether he would support a party capable of governing effectively if he strongly disagreed with its position on Israel, his answer was an unequivocal "no". He doesn't want Israel brought into local government politics, but he isn't prepared to overlook a party's position on Israel when deciding how to vote.

For politicians, Israel may be a foreign policy issue. For Jewish voters, it can be much more personal, touching on identity, security, and antisemitism.

Sussman is sceptical that positions on Israel and Palestine significantly influence voting patterns. The ANC, for example, has made its support for Palestine a prominent political issue, but Sussman says "there's little evidence to show that it has helped the ANC in recent elections".

He believes the issue may have benefited smaller parties such as Al Jama-ah and the NCC to some extent, but says it hasn't significantly hurt the DA either.

Consider the 2024 national elections. The ANC made its support for Palestine a prominent part of its political messaging. South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was receiving worldwide attention. Yet the ANC lost its parliamentary majority for the first time ever. That doesn't mean its position on Palestine cost it votes, or that it won votes. Unemployment, corruption, and failing public services were also major issues.

If campaigning so prominently on Palestine couldn't prevent the ANC from losing its majority, why assume Israel will determine how South Africans vote in this year's local government elections?

Johannesburg businessman Errol Hurwitz offers one possible answer. His opinion of the ANC has hardened since

7 October. Already critical of its record in government, he says its position on Israel and what he regards as antisemitism have strengthened his opposition. Would he support a party capable of running Johannesburg effectively if he strongly disagreed with its position on Israel?

"No, I wouldn't vote for them, no matter how well they could run Johannesburg."

But has his vote changed?
"Funny enough, the way I intend to vote hasn't changed, although my reasons may just have been reinforced." Israel has strengthened Hurwitz's existing political allegiance rather than changed it.

Sussman's analysis of results in areas with substantial Jewish populations suggests continued strong support for the DA. He cites Sea Point, Glenhazel, Linksfield, Norwood, Oaklands and, to some extent, Umhlanga.

"There was an idea that Jews were voting for a party like the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). It gets very little support from the data I've observed and seen," he says. Sussman believes the overwhelming majority of Jewish voters supported the DA in the last election. Neighbourhood results aren't the same as surveying Jewish voters directly, but they offer some indication of voting patterns. Still, Israel may influence some voters differently.

Leanne Shulman says her voting intentions have changed since the 2021 municipal elections. She wants "a party invested in South Africa and all its citizens", one that delivers water, electricity, and infrastructure. But she also wants a party that supports Israel. She is outraged by the ANC's decision to take Israel to the ICJ and believes the government should concentrate its resources on crime, unemployment, and other South African problems.

Would she support a party capable of governing effectively if she strongly disagreed with its position on Israel?

"No. The choices are either to stand with or against humanity," she insists.

Shulman's answer exposes the dilemma. Jewish voters can care deeply about service delivery and still refuse to support a party whose position on Israel they find unacceptable. The two concerns aren't mutually exclusive, but they can make choosing a party more difficult.

And what happens when the elections are over?
Johannesburg's municipal government has spent years lurching from one coalition to another, with mayors coming and going. Now, before the votes have even been counted, parties contesting the city are ruling out potential coalition partners over Israel and antisemitism. Will those declarations survive coalition negotiations?

Sussman doubts it. "I think foreign policy will play a very small role in the coalition negotiations after these elections."

He points out that Al Jama-ah is politically closer to the ANC for reasons extending beyond foreign policy. Yet the Patriotic Alliance, which he describes as more pro-Israel and pro-American, also leans towards working with the ANC. The ACDP, another supporter of Israel, tends to work more closely with the DA. Once the votes are counted, coalition arithmetic may matter more than campaign declarations.

Three interviews cannot tell us how South African Jews will vote. But they suggest that parties' stances on Israel may reinforce existing political loyalties as much as change them. What matters deeply to voters doesn't always alter where they place their cross.

For these voters, Israel and antisemitism aren't issues they can simply set aside because an election happens to be municipal. They're part of how they judge a party's values and credibility.

But political parties face a test of their own. It's one thing to rule out coalition partners over Israel and antisemitism during an election campaign. It's another to maintain those positions when the votes have been counted and negotiations begin.

For some Jewish voters, Israel is a red line. Will the politicians asking for their votes hold to their own red lines when political power is at stake?

• *Paula Slier is an international journalist, war correspondent, and speaker who has reported from conflict zones across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Her work focuses on geopolitics, modern conflict, information warfare, and the battle for truth.*

Raphaely kept the door to SA open for Jewish refugees

LEE TANKLE

When Leo Raphaely wrote to his cousin in Berlin in the 1930s, asking her to spread the word that there were opportunities for Jews in South Africa, he could hardly have known how important that message would become.

As conditions for Jews in Nazi Germany deteriorated and opposition to Jewish immigration grew in South Africa, Raphaely became deeply involved in helping refugees reach safety, personally signing hundreds of the financial guarantees required for immigrants and organising many more. His efforts became intertwined with the story of the SS Stuttgart, which arrived in Cape Town on 27 October 1936 carrying hundreds of German

Jewish refugees.

His granddaughter Carolyn, a journalist, has pieced together his story through family documents, memoirs, and historical research.

Raphaely's commitment



Leo Raphaely

to other Jews had begun decades earlier. His father, Max, founded the Chevrah Kadisha in Johannesburg and became its first president in 1888, and by the age of 19, Raphaely was involved in communal work. He met newly arrived Jewish immigrants and helped them find accommodation, and prepared bodies for burial.

"I think that probably prepared him for his later communal work and shaped the way he felt about helping people, particularly his efforts to help Jews fleeing Europe," Carolyn said.

By the 1930s, that commitment had taken on new urgency. Between 1933 and 1936, antisemitism was growing in South Africa, with political movements campaigning against Jewish immigration. At the same time, conditions for Jews in Nazi Germany were rapidly worsening.

Raphaely recognised both the danger facing German Jews and the opportunity provided by South Africa's immigration laws, under which German Jewish immigrants could enter using financial guarantees rather than having to provide the money themselves.

In 1936, amid mounting pressure to restrict Jewish immigration, the South African government announced that from 1 November, financial guarantees would no longer be accepted and immigrants would instead have to provide a £100 cash deposit. As many German Jews had already been stripped of much of their money and possessions, the requirement threatened to make immigration considerably more difficult. It created an urgent race to get refugees into South Africa before the new rules took effect.

The SS Stuttgart arrived in Cape Town just days before the deadline.

According to Carolyn, Raphaely's involvement appears to have begun when he tried to persuade his cousin to leave Germany, after Hitler came to power in 1933, and settle in South Africa.

"He pointed out that there was a loophole in South Africa's Quota Act that allowed German Jews to enter the country provided they had a valid passport and a financial guarantee. Importantly, he asked his cousin to circulate this information. Somehow, the letter eventually reached the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, a Jewish aid organisation. The letter was circulated to Jewish communities throughout Germany, and Leo was then inundated with requests for help."

Though Raphaely provided refugees with various forms of assistance, his primary role was organising and securing the financial guarantees required by law. He personally signed hundreds and persuaded other members of the community to provide guarantees of their own.

"It wasn't easy to secure these guarantees. Had Leo been called upon to honour all the guarantees he signed, he could have found himself in serious financial difficulty. However, I think only one or two were ultimately called in."

For Carolyn, her grandfather's willingness to take that risk reflected a deeply held sense of responsibility towards other Jews. "He felt very strongly that it was the non-negotiable duty of every Jew to assist his Jewish brothers and sisters.

"He was a very generous person, but also headstrong and determined. I think one of the things that defined his personality was his sense of duty, responsibility, and obligation. Helping others was simply second nature to

him," she said.

Nearly a century later, Raphaely's role in helping German Jews find refuge in South Africa may be little known, but the lives made possible by those guarantees form part of his legacy.

In 1961, 25 years after the arrival of the Stuttgart in South Africa and in recognition of Raphaely and his wife Judith's efforts, German Jewish refugees who'd arrived between 1933 and 1936 organised a jubilee dinner in

Cape Town.

They presented a cheque for R10 000 to the Cape Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) to establish a bursary fund for Jewish students in their honour. Although the funds were subsequently absorbed into other SAJBD accounts, the Raphaelys' grandchildren re-established the bursary in their honour in 2015, offering future generations the opportunity to build better lives of their own.

The SA legacies of those who fled Germany

LEE TANKLE

The story of the SS Stuttgart, the last ship to sail from Germany with Jewish refugees before the start of World War II, can be told through numbers. There were around 500 Jewish refugees, one ship, and an arrival in Cape Town in October 1936.

But Professor Shirli Gilbert believes the history is better understood through the people behind those numbers, Jews whose lives were interrupted by Nazi persecution and who had to start again in an unfamiliar country.

Marking the 90th anniversary of the Stuttgart's arrival on 27 October, Gilbert explored the lives of refugees who arrived on the Stuttgart and other ships, how they rebuilt their lives in South Africa, and the legacies they left.

"The arrival of Jewish refugees in South Africa is fairly well known, but 90 years later, surprisingly little attention has been paid to their experiences and the impact they had on South African Jewish life," said Gilbert, speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

"As a historian, I'm interested in a much wider and more multifaceted question, which is: How did the arrival of a cohort of educated, mostly middle-class, German-speaking Jews impact life and society in South Africa? What skills, ideas, and knowledge did they bring? And what happened in the chemistry of encounter between those skills and ideas and the reality of life here over the years?" she said.

Gilbert focused on three lesser known of those refugees, Ernst Hochfeld, Willy Rosenstein, and Ruth Middelman.

Hochfeld, born in Germany in 1911, trained in chiropody but built a career as a shoe salesman. In 1935, he was dismissed along with the company's other Jewish employees. After attending a Nazi rally in Nuremberg and concluding that he had no future in Germany, he left for South Africa, aged 24, arriving in Cape Town in May 1936.

With little to his name, Hochfeld worked as a barman, farmhand, chiropodist, and salesman before helping his future wife, Sigrid, escape Germany in 1937. He later began recycling discarded hessian bags from a furniture removal company, eventually turning the idea into his own business, which employed other German Jewish

refugees.

In 1939, he tried to bring his sister Lotte to safety, but the £1 000 deposit required for a visa was beyond his means. Lotte and her family, Hochfeld's mother, Paula, and Sigrid's mother, Elsa, remained behind and later perished in Bergen-Belsen.

In November 1941, Hochfeld collected two more letters, one through the Jewish Board of Deputies, certifying that he was a reliable man with undoubted loyalty to the government and state. The second was from a Johannesburg solicitor, certifying that he was a Jewish German refugee and a loyal subject and against the Nazi regime.

"The first man who's a Jew in Nazi Germany, the second who's now an enemy alien in South Africa. Asking his employers to help him establish that he is not what the state expects him to be or suspects that he is, that he's just an ordinary man trying to support himself," said Gilbert.

Willy Rosenstein, a German Jewish fighter pilot and racing driver, arrived in Durban in 1936, aged 44. During World War I, he had served in a squadron led by Hermann Göring, but left after confronting him over an antisemitic remark.

Unable to take his money out of Nazi Germany, Rosenstein secured permission to bring three aircraft to South Africa and established Union Aviation in Johannesburg, which trained more than 50 pilots by 1940. Yet, with the outbreak of war, he was classified as an "enemy alien" and became one of 86 German and Austrian Jews interned by the South African authorities.

"These refugee internment camp sites are dotted all around South Africa, but these sites are completely erased from the landscape of Holocaust memory," Gilbert said.

Rosenstein survived internment and wrote his memoir while being held. After the war, he returned to flight instruction but was tragically killed in 1949 when a student pilot landed on his aircraft.

Middelman arrived in Cape Town in August 1930, aged 26, with just £10 and a collection of practical possessions – including a typewriter, sewing machine, and camera – that could help her earn a living. She initially struggled, working as a seamstress and governess

while taking on additional sewing and photography work, before finding employment in photographic processing.

Her life took an unexpected turn in 1942 when she became fascinated by a protea she saw at a Cape Natural History Club gathering. She began experimenting with growing proteas from seed, and in 1947, she and her husband bought a largely unusable piece of mountain land. What began with selling a small bunch of wildflowers to a Sea Point florist grew into a thriving business supplying hundreds of dozens of proteas across Cape Town.

Middelman eventually became an internationally recognised authority on protea propagation, running a nursery and seed and book export business, while also mentoring some of South Africa's leading botanists.



"There is something quite remarkable to me about the story of a refugee, a German Jewish refugee, who taught South Africa, her adopted land, how to propagate its own national flower," said Gilbert.

She explained that the skills, ideas, and values these refugees brought with them made their way into South African society in ways not easy to quantify.

"But what is clear is that they were not simply 'flotsam and jetsam', as refugees are so often described, who quickly disappeared. They were agents of history whose presence made a distinct impact. As we think about the legacy of the Stuttgart today, it is an opportune moment to remind ourselves of how that generation helped shape the world, the community, and the society we inhabit today," she said.

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Here’s what politicians are promising

With the local government elections on Wednesday 4 November, the SA Jewish Report asked candidates and political parties where they stand on issues affecting the Jewish community and the country more broadly. Representatives of the ANC, Freedom Front Plus (FF Plus), and the Patriotic Alliance were contacted, but did not respond. All parties were given the same questions to answer.



Ferlon Christians – African Christian Democratic Party Cape Town mayoral candidate

Why should members of the Jewish community vote for you?

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) unashamedly supports Israel and believes in Judeo-Christian values.

What would you do to improve the lives of South Africans, and the Jewish community specifically?

We believe that we are all equal in the sight of G-d and appreciate the contribution that the Jewish community has made to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. Also, the skills and brilliance of the Jewish community regarding

technology are exceptional.

Many members of the Jewish community feel let down by local government. What would you do to improve service delivery and restore confidence in the city?

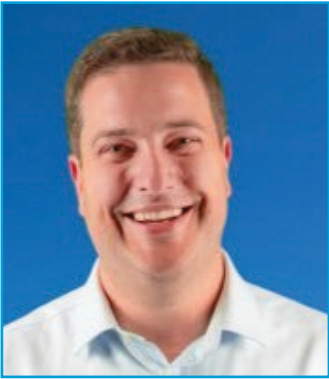
It’s important to make sure that our communities are safe by making sure that we address the root causes of crime. The ACDP, in its manifesto, spells out the solutions to the many problems we encounter. It’s important in this election to be solution-driven and not to play the blame game. There are many issues we will address, namely, a reliable and affordable energy supply, boosting local business, and economic growth.

Which parties would you be willing to form a coalition with in order to govern the city effectively, and are there any parties you would rule out working with?

The parties we are willing to work with are the DA and FF Plus. We will exclude the ANC, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), and Al Jama-ah.

What is your view on international issues being brought into local municipal politics, for example, the controversy surrounding the proposed renaming of Sandton Drive?

The renaming of Sandton Drive is uncalled for and ridiculous.



Geordin Hill-Lewis – DA mayor of Cape Town, seeking re-election

Why should members of the Jewish community vote for you?

Because I believe every South African deserves to live in safety, dignity, and freedom, regardless of their faith, race, or background. South Africa’s Jewish community has made an extraordinary contribution to our country. It deserves leaders who respect that contribution, defend religious freedom, and stand unequivocally against antisemitism. I have been clear that antisemitism has no place in Cape Town. No Jewish family should ever have to feel unsafe practising their faith or expressing their identity.

But I also want Jewish voters to judge me, and the DA, by what we deliver. We believe in clean government, safer communities, economic opportunity, and a city that works for everyone. Cape Town is showing that this is possible, and I want us to build on that progress.

What would you do to improve the lives of South Africans, and the Jewish community specifically?

My ambition is to build a safer, cleaner, and more affordable Cape Town, with more jobs, more homes, and better services for everyone.

Over the past five years, Cape Town has added 418 000 jobs. We are now pledging to enable another 500 000 jobs over the next term. We will invest in essential infrastructure, expand our policing capacity, improve public spaces, and make it easier for businesses to grow.

For the Jewish community specifically, this means protecting the freedom to worship, ensuring that Jewish institutions and places of worship can operate safely, and working with community leaders and law enforcement to respond firmly to intimidation, threats, and antisemitic incidents.

Many members of the Jewish community feel let down by local government. What would you do to improve service delivery and restore confidence in the city?

I understand that frustration. People pay their rates and taxes, and they rightly expect a government that delivers. They should not have to fight for functioning streetlights, clean streets, reliable water, or safe public spaces.

Cape Town is not perfect, and I will never pretend that it is. But we have demonstrated what determined, competent local government can achieve. We invested R12.2 billion in infrastructure in the last financial year alone, and we are accelerating the replacement of water and sewer pipes, improving public spaces, and expanding municipal law enforcement.

Our commitment for the next term is to do more, faster, while keeping services affordable and holding ourselves accountable for results.

Which parties would you be willing to form a coalition with in order to govern the city effectively, and are there any parties you would rule out working with?

My first choice is a strong, stable DA majority in Cape Town. That is how we have been able to plan for the long term, invest in infrastructure, and deliver consistently without the political instability that has paralysed other major cities.

I don’t want Cape Town to become another Johannesburg, where political horse-trading has too often taken precedence over the needs of residents.

If voters deliver a council without an outright majority, we will consider the result responsibly. Any coalition must be based on shared commitments to constitutionalism, clean government, financial discipline, and reliable service delivery. We won’t compromise those principles for political office. But the best way to protect Cape Town’s progress, and keep the city moving forward, is to give the DA an outright majority on 4 November.

What is your view on international issues being brought into local municipal politics, for example, the controversy surrounding the renaming of Sandton Drive?

Municipalities should be fixing roads, not fighting foreign policy battles. South Africans are entitled to strong views on international affairs. That is part of living in a free democracy. But municipal government has a different responsibility, namely to deliver services, maintain infrastructure, and bring communities together.



Herman Mashaba – ActionSA Johannesburg mayoral candidate

Why should members of the Jewish community vote for you?

ActionSA is the only party in this country committed to public service, providing services to all communities. We are a party with the commitment to building a non-racial society, but with our core value of social justice.

What would you do to improve the lives of South Africans, and the Jewish community specifically?

ActionSA believes in treating all law-abiding South Africans on an equal basis, including the protection of the rights of

all religious groups.

Many members of the Jewish community feel let down by local government. What would you do to improve service delivery and restore confidence in the city?

My personal commitment to public service in South Africa is unmatched, including the rights of our Jewish communities.

Which parties would you be willing to form a coalition with in order to govern the city effectively, and are there any parties you would rule out working with?

ActionSA will work with any party given to it by the voters of the city of Johannesburg. Our non-negotiable conditions to enter a coalition: 1. Corruption to be declared public enemy number one. 2. We must agree to provide public services to all communities as demanded by the Constitution.

What is your view on international issues being brought into local municipal politics, for example, the controversy surrounding the proposed renaming of Sandton Drive?

ActionSA’s position regarding the renaming of streets and buildings is based on names that have negative historical ramifications exclusively for our country. To us, changing Sandton Drive is unapologetically unacceptable, and will never serve the interests of South Africa around building the rainbow nation that Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu envisaged for our country. ActionSA would not support anything that causes division of our united nation.



Mmusi Maimane – leader of Build One South Africa

Why should members of the Jewish community vote for you?

The Jewish community deserves a government that sees them first and foremost as equal South African citizens, while respecting their religious and cultural identity. Build One South Africa believes strongly in religious freedom, constitutionalism, and the right of Jewish South Africans to practise their faith openly and safely. We will also stand firmly against antisemitism and discrimination in all its forms.

Most importantly, we want to build a Johannesburg that works, where families are safe, services function, and businesses can grow.

What would you do to improve the lives of South Africans, and the Jewish community specifically?

Our priority is making Johannesburg functional again. It means reliable water and electricity, better roads, effective refuse collection, safer neighbourhoods, and a municipality that responds to residents.

For the Jewish community, that means working with community organisations on safety, protecting Jewish schools, synagogues, and communal institutions, and ensuring that Jewish South Africans can live their lives openly without intimidation or discrimination. We don’t believe the Jewish community should have to choose between being proudly Jewish and being proudly South African.

Many members of the Jewish community feel let down by local government. What would you do to improve service delivery and restore confidence in the city?

Confidence will return when government delivers. We would set clear service-delivery targets, hold officials accountable, and focus relentlessly on the basics: water, electricity, roads, refuse, and public safety.

The Jewish community has a particularly strong interest in safety around schools, synagogues, and community facilities. Those concerns must be taken seriously by the city.

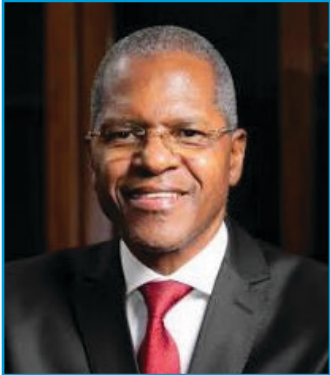
Which parties would you be willing to form a coalition with?

BOSA will work with parties that are committed to constitutional democracy, clean government, and competent service delivery. We won’t enter coalitions simply to obtain positions. Any coalition must have a clear programme for governing Johannesburg. We are focused on change in the cities we work in. Those who have been corrupt and inept at service delivery are already excluded.

What is your view on international issues being brought into local municipal politics, such as the proposed renaming of Sandton Drive?

There is a place for international affairs in national politics, but Johannesburg’s municipality should focus on the issues it is elected to address: water, electricity, roads, refuse collection, public safety, and housing. The Jewish community, like all residents, needs a city that works. Renaming neutral streets does not improve service delivery, create jobs, or make Johannesburg safer.

We should be particularly careful about using municipal institutions to import international political disputes into local communities. Johannesburg should bring people together, not deepen divisions. Our priority is to fix the city, rather than use the city to make political statements about the world. South Africa belongs to all who live in it, this is important for Jewish citizens who have contributed significantly to our nation and played an important role in our democracy.



Velenkosini Hlabisa – president of the Inkatha Freedom Party
Why should members of the Jewish community vote for you?

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is South Africa’s fifth-largest political party, with a strong track record of servant, ethical, and principled leadership. Moreover, the party’s founder, the late Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, had a longstanding relationship with the Jewish community.

The IFP is also strongly grounded in family and religious values. The IFP currently leads the Government of Provincial Unity in KwaZulu-Natal, where we have helped secure billions of rands in investment for infrastructure and job growth. Our track record puts people first.

How would you improve the lives of South Africans, and the Jews specifically?

The IFP has set out five commitments in its local government manifesto, with a focus on practical solutions and getting the basics right:

- Get people working: Create conditions for local businesses to grow, support entrepreneurs, and promote sustainable job creation.
- Deliver basic services and working infrastructure: Prioritise water, sanitation, electricity, roads, streetlights, refuse collection, housing, and accessible clinics.
- Protect traditional and Khoi-San institutions and leadership: Work with traditional and Khoi-San leaders and strengthen rural communities.
- End corruption and make every rand count: Promote transparent procurement, financial discipline, and accountability.
- Empower women, young people, and

people with disabilities: Expand access to skills, bursaries, mentorship, and practical opportunities.

These commitments are intended to benefit all residents, including the Jewish community, by building safer, better-run municipalities that respond to people’s everyday needs.

Many members of the Jewish community feel let down by local government. What would you do to improve service delivery and restore confidence in the city?

The IFP would take a “fix the basics” approach, dealing with visible service failures early and maintaining infrastructure before it breaks down. That means prioritising repairs and preventative maintenance for water, sanitation, electricity, roads, and refuse services. We would also strengthen municipal capacity by appointing qualified professionals, reduce unnecessary reliance on external service providers, and hold municipal managers accountable for clear performance targets. Regular meetings, accessible information about municipal spending and progress, and better ways for residents to report problems and follow up on repairs would help rebuild trust.

Which parties would you be willing to form a coalition with in order to govern the city effectively, and are there any parties you would rule out working with?

It’s too early to discuss specific coalitions. The IFP is a member of the Government of National Unity and continues to work with parties that respect and uphold the Constitution and put South Africans first.

What is your view on international issues being brought into local municipal politics, for example, the controversy surrounding the proposed renaming of Sandton Drive?

Local issues should find expression in local government. There is no place for international political battles at municipal level. People’s needs and service delivery must come first.



Helen Zille – DA Johannesburg mayoral candidate
Helen Zille was asked the same questions. This was her response:
Local government is about service delivery – water, electricity, roads, stormwater, streetlights, refuse removal, sewage, parks, etc. Everyone needs these basics. And we will strive to deliver them to all communities, irrespective of their religious affiliation.

Barring of antisemitic film a victory against dangerous hate speech
>>Continued from page 5

quotes attributed to Adolf Hitler that appear to be fabricated.

“The frequent and unmitigated use of racial slurs such as ‘Negro’, ‘Kaffir’, and ‘Coolie’ constitutes hate speech,” says Lindhorst in the Gazette. “The content, as presented, incites hatred and spreads dangerous misinformation, failing to provide the objective and informed perspective required for a bona fide documentary. Acknowledging that a bona fide documentary must adhere to historical accuracy, by denying the Holocaust, the film fundamentally fails this criterion.”

For the SAJBD, which pursued the matter for more than three years, the gazetted notice matters not only for the film itself, but for what it says about the limits of freedom of expression in South Africa.

“The FPB has refused classification of the film. This decision makes it clear that freedom of expression cannot be used as a cover to vilify and spread hatred against an entire community based on their identity and beliefs,” said Wendy Kahn, national director of the SAJBD.

“This outcome is an encouraging demonstration that South Africa’s regulatory bodies, established to prevent free speech from crossing into hate speech, are effectively carrying out their mandate. In doing so, they are upholding the constitutional rights to dignity and equality that belong to every South African. Although these processes take time, the SAJBD persists and ensures that issues of this nature are resolved,” she said.

The SAJBD presented its case against the film to the FPB in June 2024, with Dalton Jr appearing to defend it. The FPB subsequently upheld the complaint and refused the film classification.

Now that the decision has been gazetted, knowingly broadcasting, distributing, publicly exhibiting, selling, hiring out, or advertising the film constitutes an offence, carrying a possible fine of as much as R500 000, five years’ imprisonment, or both.

“It is heartening to know that there are limits to speech in our country, and when it crosses into hate speech and the impugning of the dignity of a community, or is incitement to violence, this is not permitted,” said Kahn. She explained that this is momentous because it can set a precedent for other antisemitic films.

“Freedom of speech is an important constitutional right in our country. However, there is no absolute freedom of speech, and when it crosses into hate speech, it becomes prohibited. The SAJBD has successfully lodged several hate speech cases with the SA Human Rights Commission, the Equality Court, and now the FPB. Our intention is never to curb free speech, but rather to protect our community against material or speech that infringes on our right to dignity and incites violence,” she said.



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The green pedigree of Cape Town’s only Jewish candidate

CLAUDIA GROSS

For Danielle Klaff, protecting Cape Town’s environment and improving food security aren’t new political promises. They’ve shaped decades of community work, from environmental education to vegetable gardens in vulnerable communities.

Now, the environmentalist and DA member hopes to bring that experience into local government. Klaff is standing on the party’s proportional representation (PR) list for the upcoming municipal elections and is the only Jewish candidate in the Cape Town metro.

If elected, she wants to focus on water security, food security, and protecting green spaces. She believes her experience working directly with communities could help the city address challenges affecting residents across Cape Town.

“I definitely go for integrity, accountability, and transparency,” she says. “I stand up for what’s right. I’m always standing up for the underdog or the animals.”

Klaff’s environmental convictions began long before her political career. Born in Cape Town, she grew up in Hyde Park, Johannesburg, before studying art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.

Her interest in sustainable living took shape during a gap year in Europe in 1989. While visiting an organic farm in Bordeaux, France, she encountered a different approach to food production and energy. The farm used renewable energy, composting toilets, and organic vegetable cultivation. The experience changed her understanding of how people could live. “That was my ‘aha’ moment,” she says. “They just woke me up. It was brilliant.”

She returned to South Africa during the final years of apartheid and helped establish *Kagenna*, a green magazine, before moving to the Garden Route in 1991.

There, she spent a decade living in a community, teaching art and gardening. However, she eventually felt that living sustainably in an isolated setting wasn’t enough. “I realised by the end of that that I wasn’t really making a difference,” she says. “It was so easy to live out in the bush.”

In 2006, she moved back to Cape Town and settled in Hout Bay. She became involved in community development and joined Envirochild, an environmental education nongovernmental organisation (NGO) where she now serves as chairperson.

Her work included establishing environmental clubs at local schools and organising the Hout Bay Green Fair. The event ran for about a decade, from 2009, and became a zero-waste event powered by renewable energy.

Klaff also helped introduce environmentally friendly cutlery and crockery. The initiative received several awards before the COVID-19 pandemic brought it to a halt.

Her community work extended beyond environmental education. During the pandemic, she raised a large amount of money from friends living abroad to support vulnerable

people in Hout Bay. She worked with community organisations to help distribute food. The experience reinforced her belief that food security requires sustainable, long-term solutions.

Rather than simply providing meals, Klaff began establishing vegetable gardens in township communities. She believes these projects can help people develop greater food independence. “I don’t want to feed people, give them veggies,” she says. “I want to give the people a fishing rod, so to speak.”

She received a Civic Honours Award from the City of Cape Town in 2021 for her community work. She subsequently established Yummi Organics, a business supplying organic produce sourced from farms in Hout Bay and Philippi.

Klaff’s environmental work eventually led her into party politics. She stood for the Green Party in the 2019 elections but decided it wasn’t the right vehicle for her ambitions. She joined the DA in 2020 after a local councillor encouraged her to become involved. She says the party offered a way to pursue environmental change through municipal structures.

Klaff has since worked within the party and served as a secretary and campaign manager. In addition, she has served two terms as the environmental representative on the ward committee for Hout Bay. In this position she represented all the environmental NGOs in Hout Bay and liaised with the City of Cape Town. Klaff recently received an Appreciation Award for this work.

She is currently campaigning in Sea Point and Camps Bay alongside Nicola Jowell.

Errol Anstey, the DA’s city councillor, says Klaff comes from a family with a long history of political involvement. Her father, David Woolf, chaired the Progressive Federal Party, Democratic Party, and DA Sandton branch over 25 years.

Anstey told the *SA Jewish Report* that Klaff’s experience in food sustainability would be an asset to the council if she is elected. “I think she will be a very good proportional councillor if she’s successful.”

Michael Bagraim, a DA parliamentarian, also praised Klaff’s commitment to public service. He says she had devoted much of the year to campaigning and keeping service delivery central to her work. “She has demonstrated stamina and compassion,” Bagraim says.

He adds that Jewish representatives have struggled to persuade other members of the community to stand for city council. Klaff’s candidacy followed a rigorous party selection process. Bagraim believes her appointment would continue a long history of Jewish involvement in Cape Town’s public life.

The PR system allows political parties to gain council seats according to their share of the vote. Unlike ward councillors, who represent specific geographical wards, PR councillors are selected from party lists.

Klaff hopes to use her experience to contribute to the city’s water and food security work. She has attended meetings on water resilience and wants to help address infrastructure



Danielle Klaff canvassing on the Camps Bay Promenade

challenges.

She is particularly concerned about food insecurity among vulnerable communities, and proposes establishing township vegetable gardens and supporting early childhood development centres with access to nutritious produce.

She also wants the city to protect green spaces and trees as Cape Town grows. Her environmental interests include reducing pesticide use and encouraging sustainable approaches to managing public spaces.

Klaff acknowledges that residents face a range of concerns beyond environmental protection. During

the election campaign, she says residents had raised issues including municipal rates, water outages, traffic congestion, and the management of baboons.

She believes communication between residents and the council is important. Explaining the reasons behind infrastructure projects, she says, can help residents understand why temporary disruptions occur.

Her political ambitions are also shaped by her Jewish identity. Klaff says she believes in freedom of religion and the right of people

to practise their faith without harming others. She supports peaceful dialogue and a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which she described as consistent with the DA’s position.

She has also experienced hesitation about publicly identifying herself as Jewish amid hostility surrounding the conflict. Abusive interactions on social media have made her more cautious about putting herself forward.

However, she remains willing to represent Jewish concerns if elected. She says members of her community have

encouraged her to act as a liaison between Jewish residents and the city.

Klaff describes herself as someone who wants to translate her convictions into practical action. She believes her environmental work, community relationships, and political experience have prepared her for a role in local government.

“I walk my talk,” she says. “For me, it’s also very important not just to say it, but to take it and put it into action in your life.”

Young Jews invested in SA elections

LEE TANKLE

Young Jewish South Africans are under no illusion that the decisions made at the ballot box next week won’t affect them.

From service delivery and safety to jobs, the future of Johannesburg, and concerns facing the Jewish community, young voters told the *SA Jewish Report* what will be on their minds when they make their mark.

“Local government is where the future is decided,” said Jacob Hanson, a 20-year-old BCom Finance student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the national vice-chair of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), and former political officer of SAUJS Gauteng. “Water, electricity, roads, safety, and service delivery shape our daily lives far more directly than most national debates do. If we want a world-class, functioning Johannesburg, we have to hold the people running it accountable, and the most direct way to do that is at the ballot box.

“Young people often feel that our vote doesn’t count, but staying home only hands the decision to someone else. Our community is small, so every vote matters even more. Showing up is how we earn a seat at the table and make sure our voices are heard,” said Hanson.

Twenty-year-old political officer for SAUJS Wits, Jonathan Landau explained that after being exposed to student governance at university, he realises how important elections are.

“I am aware of the influence that a student council has on campus and how quickly student sentiment changes when issues in the administration become public, and service delivery becomes less of a priority and more of an afterthought. I feel that it is effortless to get caught up online with the amount of content we are fed, and adding elections to the mix can make young people feel more overwhelmed and worried about the state of affairs in our cities, on top of all the other content parents worry about their children being exposed to online,” he said.

Landau said he’s been especially amazed by the role that social media has played in these elections, going from banners on light poles to videos of a politician swimming in potholes.

“It is necessary to educate ourselves on politics and make sure that we are keeping the discussions at dinner tables, in the car home from school, or at work open,” said Landau.



AI-generated image

“Seeing how discussions of elections have transitioned from noticing a poster board of a political organisation hanging on a lamp post, to seeing a candidate row an inflatable boat through a waterlogged pothole shows just how much influence social media in political campaigning holds. Parties like the Democratic Alliance have made a massive effort in campaigning online directly towards youth and new voters. Teenagers and students are talking; the youth is aware. The conversations at the Shabbat table show how everyone is engaging with election-related content online daily,” he said.

Ben Shmukler, a 23-year-old studying electrical (information) engineering at Wits, believes his vote on 4 November is about shaping the South Africa his children will grow up in.

“I want them to be able to grow up in a country where they feel safe, where basic services work, and where they have access to the resources they need to build the best lives for themselves and their children,” he said.

Shmukler explained that when he enters the working world next year, he wants to be in a city that works.

“I want to live and work in a city that functions properly. I want to be able to drive to work on roads without potholes, with working traffic lights, and infrastructure that is maintained,” he said.

Landau is excited to vote in his first municipal elections and make his mark for his city.

“I feel like I am constantly encouraged by parties to vote, but some more than others because they have made me reflect on the state of affairs in Johannesburg, in my neighbourhood, and how my Jewish community has adapted and transformed in recent years,” he said.

“I genuinely believe Johannesburg is one of the best cities in the world,” said Hanson. “It’s home, and I want it to be a place where Jewish South Africans, and everyone else, can build their futures here rather than plan their exits.”

Beyond service delivery, Jacob Boner, 22, who is studying towards an honours degree, explained that he is voting on 4 November because he knows how important it is to do so.

“I just believe that many people fought for the incredible, lively democracy and the amazing rights we have in this country. And it would be a shame to let that go to waste. And it’s a privilege to be able to participate in democracy and to exercise our democratic right to vote,” he said.

Getting into the spirit of Halloween

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Ghosts, witches, monsters, pumpkins, haunted houses, and trick or treating. Halloween, once an American-centric holiday has gained global popularity. While its roots lie in an ancient Celtic pagan festival and Christian medieval holy days, it's become a fun, mainstream celebration that brings communities together regardless of their religious backgrounds.

Born on Halloween, ceramicist Mandi Friedman says the holiday was always part of the rituals she observed growing up. "A lot of people have issues about it around religion and the devil, but it's just a bit of fun and it's about doing something a bit different," says the owner of Potted Glass Studio in Linden, Johannesburg.

As part of events run by the Linden Meander, which she founded to put her beloved suburb and its creativity and community spirit on the map, Friedman hosts an annual Halloween celebration. The upcoming third edition of the event is titled "Dr Frankenstein's Laboratory of Curiosities" and will include a cabinet of curiosities, live music, dinner, and a comedy horror movie.

Bringing her artistic skills to the fore, Friedman has sculpted a custom Frankenstein lamp for the event, while her studio partner, an art teacher, is making a brain. They're also working together on creating a corpse. "There's a lot that goes into it," she says.

"They say that on Halloween, the veil between the living and the dead becomes very thin and people cross over, but I don't know if I subscribe to all that," Friedman says. "I just enjoy the macabre, the witches and the skulls, and the celebrations. I love it."

For Dani Getz, the appeal of Halloween is about

creating memories with her 10-year-old son. "We started celebrating when my son was seven years old," she recalls. "Our friends had trick or treating in their area and asked us to come along. I thought that it would be a fun thing for our son to do. Plus, I would get to have a good *hak* and get in some steps at the same time."

The tradition stuck, and today Getz and her husband take a carload of children to fun neighbourhood Halloween events. "My son and his friends like to ride around in the car boot laughing and looking through their stash of sweets," she says,



recalling traditions they've established around the holiday. "One year a golden labrador dressed up as a lion. His name was Potato. That really made the kids' day."

While Getz is aware of the history behind Halloween, she sees it as a harmless bit of fun for her son and his friends, who this year are all wearing Super Mario costumes. They relish the chance to dress up, hang out, have fun, and accumulate sweets,

she says. "If a Jewish person chooses to celebrate Halloween for the wrong reasons, then it's a problem. We're not lighting bonfires or warding off any spirits. It's just an excuse for our son to dress up and party."

This year, at the request of their son, the Getzes are hosting a Halloween party, complete with a "spooky" themed room. "We're also preparing some fun games for the kids, making brownies shaped like bats, and will have some drinks and desserts with gummy worms. There will be music and fun things to do." The fun will also extend to the parents, many of whom are taking their costume preparations very seriously.

"We really want our son to have awesome memories," Getz says. "Hopefully he'll look back one day and remember the fun times he had growing up. It's just a bit of light-hearted fun. There are so many hectic things going on around us at the moment, so why not have an excuse to have a jol? If it makes my son and his friends happy, it makes us happy. It also gives us an excuse to act like kids again."

Discussing the Jewish take on Halloween, Rabbi Ari Kievman of Chabad Sandton Central says that as Halloween has historical roots in pagan and folk customs, we generally don't participate in celebrations around it, even when they seem purely social. "We try to be mindful of the traditions we adopt and have so many beautiful ways to celebrate that are rooted in our own heritage," he explains.

Growing up in New York, Kievman had a front-row seat to American traditions around the holiday. "I saw the pumpkins and elaborate Halloween decorations,

but also the darker side," he recalls. "As children, we sometimes had to shield ourselves from hooligans throwing eggs at us or our school bus. 'Trick or treat' could sometimes feel more like intimidation than innocent fun."

Nevertheless, if one is drawn to the spooky, playful side of Halloween, Kievman suggests following the example of one of his friends. "His family celebrates 'Shabbos Shpookey' after Halloween, enjoying the post-holiday sales on horror-themed goodies," he says. "And if you love dressing up, Purim is our own wonderful festival for costumes, fun, and celebration."



Kievman says that while Halloween revolves around frightening figures, creating a scary atmosphere, and asking others for treats, Purim is about "joy, celebrating our heroes, and actively giving gifts and treats to others".

"It's important to be cognisant of the values we communicate to our children," he says. "It's not just about how to have fun, but how to spread happiness, look up to heroes, and become contributors who bring joy and goodness into other people's lives."

Ultimately, not marking Halloween is not about denying ourselves enjoyment, he says. "It's rather to find ways to enjoy the fun without adopting a celebration that isn't part of our tradition. We have so many opportunities to celebrate, spread goodness, and bring more light into the world."

Watch the Jewish Achiever Awards from your couch

GILANA LAB

The countdown is on to one of the biggest nights on the South African Jewish community's calendar, and this year, you don't need a seat at the table to be part of the celebration.

The Investec Jewish Achiever Awards 2026 on Sunday, 1 November will be livestreamed, giving everyone the opportunity to experience the excitement and inspiration from wherever they are.

While more than 800 guests will gather in person for the prestigious event in Johannesburg, those watching from home won't miss a moment of the action.

The awards recognise South African Jews who are making their mark in business, entrepreneurship, professional excellence, community service, and sport, art, science, and culture. From established leaders who have shaped industries to rising stars building the future, the evening celebrates the talent, determination, and generosity within the community.

The livestream extends the celebration far beyond the venue.

So why not make an evening of it? Gather family and friends, prepare your favourite snacks, order a takeaway, and settle in for a night of celebration. Whether you're cheering on a family member, supporting a friend, or simply celebrating the extraordinary achievements of fellow Jews, you can experience the excitement together.

This year's theme, *Le Festival des Juifs*, celebrates the rich tapestry of Jewish culture, heritage, and identity. The evening promises to showcase not only individual success, but also the strength and diversity of a community that continues to make an impact.

For nominees and their families, the livestream also offers an opportunity for loved ones who cannot attend in person to share in those special moments, wherever they may be.

So, whether you're watching from Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Israel, or anywhere else in the world, there's no reason to feel left out.

Register to watch the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards 2026 online and join the celebration on Sunday, 1 November.



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Kosher wine promoter becomes a whisky Master

GILANA LAB

Tim Hutchinson, the executive chairperson and chief executive of South Africa’s largest independent wine and spirits producer and distributor, DGB, won’t let one of the whisky industry’s highest honours go to his head. The Durban-born businessman, who has spent nearly four decades building some of the world’s best-known whisky brands in South Africa and is now producing and importing a substantial percentage of local kosher wine, was recently named a Master of the Quaich. “I’m an under-the-radar, low-key guy who grew up in Durban. I’ve never had illusions of grandeur. Money’s not my G-d,” he says.



Tim Hutchinson

“It’s flattering, but the show goes on. Put it in the drawer and move on. My grandkids might talk about it in 20 years, but for me, it’s a very nice honour. Business as usual.”

A quaich is a traditional Scottish drinking vessel symbolising friendship and hospitality. “If I welcomed you to my home, or in the old days to my clan, I would

get a quaich out, pour whisky into it, and share it with you. It would be a cup of friendship,” says Hutchinson. “A Master of the Quaich is, I suppose, in military terms, a five-star general.”

In August 2021, Hutchinson entered the kosher wine market when DGB acquired a majority shareholding in Backsberg Family Wine. This landmark acquisition included Backsberg’s portfolio of kosher wines under the “Unorthodox” trademark.

Hutchinson has close ties with South Africa’s Jewish community. He describes Solly Kramer as his best friend of 40 years and recalls his relationship with the late Graham Beck, from whom he bought a business and alongside whom he worked for many years. “I was like a son to Graham, and we were very close. His charity work was legendary. He never talked about it, but he was an amazing guy.”

Beck’s approach to philanthropy continues to influence Hutchinson,

who has been involved in charitable initiatives, including raising funds and sending containers of supplies to Ukraine. “One thing I did inherit from Graham Beck is all the charity work we do; we don’t talk about. We certainly as a company give a hell of a lot back, and we’re proud of what we do.”

However, it was for his whisky that Hutchinson received the distinction at the Keepers of the Quaich Autumn Ceremony at Blair Castle in Scotland on 5 October. He was one of just two people awarded the title of Master, recognising his contribution to the Scotch whisky industry over almost 40 years.

“It was a very special honour considering the fact that I was first inducted as a Keeper of the Quaich 32 years ago,” he says. “It is very special to be acknowledged for your contribution by your own peers. When your peers and competitors recognise your contribution to the industry, then I guess it does make it

a little more special,” he says. The Keepers of the Quaich was established by leading whisky producers to promote Scotch whisky internationally. “There was Irish whiskey, Japanese whisky, whiskies from around the world lifting their heads, and they wanted to get together as a collective and work together for the betterment of Scotch whisky,” Hutchinson says.

The title of Master is reserved for individuals who have made an exceptional contribution over an extended period. “After many years, they say, ‘Well, you’re at another level. You really have made a huge contribution over an extended period of time.’ There are a couple every year from around the world who become Masters. It’s very rare, but I guess that’s the ultimate accolade.”

Since joining Douglas Green in 1986, Hutchinson has helped develop the South African market for Scotch whisky, working with brands including Bell’s, Dewar’s, Glenfiddich, The Balvenie, Laphroaig, The Macallan, and Highland Park. His official award citation recognises his role in building brands, educating consumers, and strengthening Scotch whisky’s presence in South Africa.

However, Hutchinson believes the recognition belongs as much to his colleagues as to him. “I have a lot of colleagues who’ve done probably more work than me who should share it with me. We have 100 sales reps throughout South Africa, 12 depots, and about 20 sales managers. They’re the guys at the coalface who’ve done all the work. I get all the plaudits,” he says.

“We’ve been consistent players. We understand brands, we understand how to get people with money to sample our products. Most whiskies are struggling. Our Macallan whisky is growing at 30-odd percent, which tells you we’re doing something right.”

Having appointed a managing director and begun stepping back from the business’s daily operations, he says, “The team’s far more important than me. It was certainly a left-field surprise, but I have my feet firmly on the ground.”

His wife, Lesley, accompanied him to Scotland. “My wife probably enjoyed it more than I did because her parents were Scottish. Going to an old castle and being inducted, all the pomp and ceremony was very nice,” he says.

Hutchinson is now focused on achieving greater international recognition for South African wine. “My goal at the moment is selling more and more South African wine globally. Whisky’s achieved its global recognition. South African wines aren’t getting the recognition they want, and I’m leading the charge,” he says.

“I’m an optimist, and I’m very proud of what South Africa is producing at the top end of wine. What’s been achieved by the whisky guys is a huge lesson for us in wine: that we can be global.” Pointing to Boschendal’s international expansion, he says, “When I bought it from Anglo American, they were in eight markets around the world. We’re now in 72. We’re doing a job, but we’ve got a lot more to do.”

Cracks in Israel’s education system

CLAUDIA GROSS

Israeli schoolchildren recently delivered a result that is difficult to ignore. Their performance in mathematics, reading, and science has fallen to its lowest level since the country began taking part in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) international assessment of pupils. Teachers and education researchers caution against blaming the decline solely on 7 October and the resulting war. Professor Ayal Kimhi, vice-president of the Shores Institute for Socioeconomic Research, said Israel’s results had been near the bottom since it began participating in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) before 2023.

than non-teachers with academic degrees. The study found that 37% of Israeli teachers held a master’s degree, compared with 49% in the OECD countries examined. It also found particularly low skill levels among teachers in the Arab education stream and among early childhood teachers. Kimhi said improving the quality of teaching should be central to any response. He argued that Israel needs to change how it recruits, trains, and rewards teachers. South African-born teachers working in Israeli schools offer a more immediate view of the pressures in classrooms. Tanya Jayes taught in South Africa for 15 years before making aliya. She now teaches English and science and is a homeroom teacher for Year 12 pupils at King Solomon School, an elite private school in Ramat HaSharon.



Photo: OECD.org

PISA tests representative samples of 15-year-olds in maths, reading, and science. The 2025 assessment involved 760 000 students across 91 countries and economies. In Israel, the average scores were 433 in mathematics, 436 in reading, and 442 in science. The OECD averages were 463, 461, and 482 respectively. Compared with 2022, Israel’s maths score fell by 25 points, reading by 38 points, and science by 23 points. The OECD recorded declines across many countries, but Israel’s were substantially larger than others. “It would be too easy to blame it all on the war,” said Kimhi. “Israel’s education system suffers from many deficiencies that seem to get worse over time.” A study published by the Shores Institute in August found that Israeli teachers had lower literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills than teachers in most OECD countries surveyed. Israeli teachers also measured lower

contacting teachers during emergencies, including when family members were called up for reserve duty and when mental health struggles arose. For English teacher Shelley Berman, who previously taught in Johannesburg, the impact of the war has been impossible to separate from education. Berman teaches at a religious girls’ high school in Tel Aviv. During periods when schools were closed, lessons moved online and assignments were uploaded for pupils. Many pupils have experienced loss or have close family members serving in the military. This has affected what and how she teaches. She recalled a pupil becoming distressed during a lesson on *Macbeth* because the violence in the play felt too close to the reality around her. The pupil asked Berman to avoid content that touches on violent themes. Lorelle Schwartz, who has taught in Israel for 14 years

and currently teaches at a public school, said repeated disruptions had created a cycle that was difficult for pupils and teachers to escape. “We’ve been stuck in this time capsule.” Schwartz said pupils had become accustomed to moving between classroom learning and Zoom lessons during periods of conflict. She also pointed to teacher shortages, discipline problems, and a lack of support for educators. Her concerns echo the recent Shores research, which found that Israel has difficulty attracting and retaining highly skilled people with academic degrees in teaching. The study argues that schools struggle to compete with other parts of the labour market for highly skilled workers. Research by Kimhi, Ariela Savin, and Dan Ben-David found that pupils’ educational outcomes in Israel are more strongly linked to their parents’ education than in leading education systems. The study examined PISA results from 2006 to 2018 and found that gaps linked to parental education were particularly large among Hebrew-speaking pupils. Even after accounting for other differences between households, the relationship remained stronger than in the leading countries. Israel also faces significant differences between education streams. Most Haredi boys don’t study the material required for PISA and therefore don’t participate in the assessment. Kimhi said their inclusion would probably make Israel’s overall results worse. However, he said that, “the fact that ultra-Orthodox girls did fine in PISA indicates their unfulfilled potential”. The teacher skills research similarly found substantial differences between education streams. Arab-Israeli teachers recorded lower skill levels than teachers in the secular, religious, and Haredi streams. Yet the teachers interviewed for this article didn’t describe Israeli pupils simply as failing. Jayes stressed their resilience and said she remains strongly supportive of Israeli education. Berman said her school continued to achieve strong exam results despite the disruptions. The challenge may be how consistently the system can give pupils the conditions to succeed. Kimhi believes the answer requires structural change. He has called for a more unified core curriculum, greater freedom for municipalities and school principals, and changes to teacher recruitment and training. He also sees the issue as economic. Israel’s technology sector depends heavily on highly skilled workers. “The economy rests on the shoulders of the technology sector,” he said. “We have no advantage in any resource other than the human resource.” The PISA results therefore raise a question that extends beyond school reports and rankings. If Israel wants to preserve its economic and technological strengths, it will need to ensure those strengths aren’t carried by a small group of exceptional pupils alone.

Things I just don't care about

I care about a lot of things. I care about family and friends and community. I care about politics and social trends, and I care about my garden. I care about words and language and kindness and grammar and manners.

I care a lot about greeting people, and I probably care a bit too much about "their" and "there", and "where" and "were", and "weather" and "whether". I care about the actual weather, medical stuff, and making sure I don't die of something embarrassing. Because that would be embarrassing.

But what I don't care about is aliens. And I care even less about whether dinosaurs did or did not walk the earth. Or what their names were. Because, honestly, who cares?

I should say that I think I might believe dinosaurs existed. I've seen the skeletons in very dull museums and I'm prepared to accept that someone has done the necessary work. I just don't feel the need to follow the story any further. If a scientist discovers a new dinosaur tomorrow, I'll be pleased for the scientist. I won't need to see photographs.

Aliens are different because, as far as I know, we haven't found any. But even if we did, I'm not convinced I would have the energy to get involved. I imagine I'd have questions. Are they friendly? Do they understand personal space? And have they come all this way to ask whether I've considered investing in a funeral policy?

Beyond that, I'd probably check the news, mention it to someone, and then return to whatever I was already worrying about.

Add to the list the question of how G-d calculated the six days of creation. Whether each day was 24 hours, 26 billion years, or something else entirely is not something that keeps me awake at night. I trust G-d with pretty much everything else, so why would I need to check His calculations

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



on something I know I don't have the capacity to understand in any event?

At 120, when I meet my Maker, assuming there's an opportunity for questions, I have a list of things I'd like to discuss. The dinosaurs and the length of the first Tuesday don't make the top 20.

I'm aware that these questions matter a great deal to other people. For some, the origins of the universe inspire a sense of wonder. For others, exploring the relationship between science and faith is a serious pursuit. I'm grateful that there are people willing to think about things that I would struggle to explain even if I had been paying attention.

And that's probably where my confidence becomes a little less impressive. Because while I'm comfortable admitting that I don't understand creation, I'm less comfortable admitting that I don't understand someone who steadfastly refuses to learn the difference between "lend" and "borrow".

The truth is that at 120, I imagine arriving with my list of questions for G-d, carefully arranged in order of importance. But before I get very far, I suspect He might produce a list of His own.

It will probably be longer than mine. And considerably more specific. He might ask about the times I was impatient, the things I said that I thought were funny, and the people I assumed would be fine because I was.

I can already hear myself trying to explain. "Yes, but You don't understand. He said 'borrow me your pen'." And I can already imagine the response.

"I created him too, Howard."

Strangely, I imagine Him saying it in exactly the same tone as my wife.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

On the record



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

This week a media storm has brewed regarding a report that the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has had a film titled *Hebrews to Negroes* banned on account of its Holocaust denial. Regular readers will know this story is not new. We received the ruling in December last year, and I wrote about it here at the time. What has changed is that the Film and Publication Board's (FPB) decision has now been published in the Government Gazette. It is official, and for the first time we can read the reasons behind it.

A few points are worth highlighting. The first is a matter of accuracy. The film has not been banned. It has been refused classification, which means it cannot knowingly be broadcast, distributed, exhibited in public, or offered for sale or hire. The reason for that decision is that the film advocates hatred and impugns the dignity of our community. Nothing about the decision conflicts with the Constitution. It falls squarely within the protections the Constitution gives every one of us, and within the very robust South African hate speech laws.

The second point is what the ruling actually says, and I consider it groundbreaking. The FPB gives five reasons for its decision. They are Holocaust denial, dehumanisation, the promotion of antisemitic views, prejudicial language, and content that incites hatred and spreads dangerous misinformation, failing to provide the objective and informed perspective required of a bona fide documentary. The FPB goes further, finding that by denying the Holocaust, the film fundamentally fails to offer an informed and objective perspective. That is a significant finding, and it tells me our concerns were heard and considered with real seriousness.

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

None of this came quickly. The process began in 2023 and included painstaking hearings at which we sat through hate-filled diatribes, falsehoods, and defamatory accusations aimed at the Jewish people. The SAJBD refused to let this film reach South African audiences, and through sheer persistence it has succeeded in standing against a film that attempts to export hate globally.

Sadly, though perhaps predictably, the comments under the story online this week were full of hate and accusation, with no short supply of Holocaust denial. I suspect none of those commentators was planning to watch the film anyway. This has never been about censorship. It is about hate speech that would strip us of our dignity as equal citizens of this country. That is a fight we will keep fighting for as long as it takes, on behalf of our community.

Finally, this is my last column before the elections on Wednesday. The SAJBD has held election debates in three provinces, and on election day will lead an election observer team. None of that matters, though, if we do not go out and vote.

So, allow me to repeat my call. Please vote, and take your running group, your street group, your shul group, and your card group with you. The results, especially in Johannesburg, may come down to very few votes. This is our chance to save our cities and to start pushing for the viable and meaningful change they so badly need. I will see you in the queue.





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Cohen shoots his way to a second world title

LEE TANKLE

At an age when many sportsmen have long since called time on international competition, South African shooter Joel Cohen, 74, is getting better at it. Three years after becoming world champion in Thailand, Cohen successfully defended his title at the largest IPSC (International Practical Shooting Confederation) Shotgun World Shoot ever held, in Corinth, Greece.

Cohen returned home with two gold medals, winning the individual grand senior title and helping South Africa claim team gold in the super senior category. He was also honoured with carrying the South African flag at the competition's opening ceremony.

Cohen has been shooting the shotgun for about 36 years, having started when a friend invited him along one day to come and see what it was about.

In 2023, he won the Grand Senior Open category at the 2023 IPSC Shotgun World Shoot in Thailand, and now he has successfully defended his title in Greece.

The IPSC shotgun competition isn't conventional clay pigeon shooting. Competitors move through courses involving obstacles and barricades and shoot at different targets under time pressure. Their performance combines accuracy and speed, rather than simply counting how many targets they hit. A

South African competitor at the 2026 event described stages as testing the shooter's ability to perform under pressure as quickly as possible.

More than 300 people competed in the Open division, 277 in Standard, 172 in Standard Manual, and 162 in Modified, with 363 senior-category competitors overall.

Over the six days of the competition, Cohen was unsure whether he would keep his title or not after not getting off to the best start. However, as the days went on, he made slow and steady progress to win the title.

"It was quite an amazing feeling because I don't think anybody in our sport has done it before – successfully defending a world title. I dedicated the three years in between to preparing in all kinds of ways. I exercised, I looked after my health, and I trained. It's something I built towards, so it's difficult to explain exactly how it felt. It was quite amazing," he said.

"The most challenging part was having such a poor start on the first day. I was lying fifth after that day, so I had a lot of catching up to do, and I couldn't afford any errors going forward."

Being able to represent South Africa, as well as being its flag bearer, means a lot to Cohen.

"It's always a big thing to represent your country. You wear the colours, people back home recognise



Joel Cohen with his medals

you, and you become recognised by international competitors as well. It's not something you can just buy or get. It's a real honour," he said.

Being chosen as the flag bearer was a big surprise.

"At each international competition, the South African team members get together and select someone to carry the flag. I was also the flag bearer in Thailand, and I didn't really expect to be selected twice because it's an honour that is usually passed on," he said. "When they selected me again, it was a total shock. The reason they gave was that I was the only South African gold medallist in the shotgun competition. So I got it for a second time, which was a surprise. I really didn't expect it," he said.

Cohen also helped the South African team win the gold medal in the super senior age category.

"I didn't really know what was happening until the very end. There are four members in each team, but only the top three scores count towards the overall team standing. I came second within our team, so my score contributed towards our victory," he said.

Cohen would like to compete in the next ISPC competition in 2030.

"I'm 74. It's an achievement for someone like me. Health permitting and everything being equal, I'd love to take part again. I don't expect to do as well because I understand that young people are coming onto the scene all the time. But that's the goal," he said.

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