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south african Jewish Report

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Mossad left Iranian general in SA after interrogation

TALI FEINBERG

When Israel released an Iranian general after interrogating him in 2021 about the whereabouts of missing Israeli Air Force navigator Ron Arad, it didn't send him back to his country, or to Syria, where he'd been captured in a daring operation. Instead, he was brought thousands of kilometres to South Africa and released on the streets of Johannesburg.

It has been 40 years since Arad went missing in action over Lebanon, and Israel has been trying to determine his fate and bring him home ever since. Now, it has emerged that South Africa was part of that story.

In 2021, Israel-South Africa relations remained strained over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, marked by sharp diplomatic friction and political opposition from Pretoria. But that didn't stop Israel from coming into the country and leaving an Iranian general on the pavement. Since then, relations between Israel and South Africa have worsened, while relations between Iran and South Africa have strengthened.

The Iranian general, Abdullah Saberi, was left on a Johannesburg street with a small amount of cash and a phone number to contact the Iranian embassy.

This is according to a new investigation by *The New York Times*, on Israel's mistaken assumption that Iran or its officials held information regarding Arad, whose jet was shot down over Lebanon on 16 October 1986. Arad was captured alive by the Lebanese Shiite militia Amal before being handed over to Hezbollah. Intelligence now indicates that he probably died in Lebanon in about 1988, but Israel officially still classifies him as missing in action.

According to *The New York Times* report, Saberi was captured in Syria. An Iranian commander, he went jogging early one morning in an upscale diplomatic quarter of Damascus. Israeli intelligence officers waited nearby. They pretended to be house movers and carried an oversized refrigerator box.

The Israelis had managed to slip past the neighbourhood's security checkpoints. As Saberi headed for a nearby park, the Israelis restrained him, drugged him, threw the refrigerator box over his head, and left with him in a white van.

As a veteran of Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Saberi was a wealth of information. But after a lengthy and unsuccessful interrogation regarding Arad in Israel, he was left on a Johannesburg street, thousands of kilometres away from where he was captured. It is unclear what has happened to him since, but there have been no reports of his death.

Willem Els, a terrorism expert from the Security Initiative for Africa, told the *SA Jewish Report* that it is unclear why Israel brought Saberi all the way to South Africa, but he can speculate why.

"It's easy to bring someone like this into South Africa and release him, because I doubt South Africa's intelligence services picked it up at all. Conditions are conducive for this type of operation in South Africa," says Els.

In addition, if they had released him in a country that they had a good relationship with, "it could have jeopardised that relationship", he explains. But with the relationship with South Africa already strained, there wasn't much left to save. "So maybe that was one of the reasons, because they didn't want to risk any of their good relationships," surmises Els.

He says it also could be because of South Africa's close relationship with Iran. "Even though it happened in 2021, South Africa was already in the BRICS camp and on excellent terms with Iran," says Els.

International relations expert Professor Glen Segell speculates that "South Africa was possibly the cheapest and quickest option [to release Saberi in], a country already hostile to Israel, so it wouldn't endanger friendly relations. If, for example, he'd been dropped in Cyprus, it would have been a major diplomatic crisis."

Segell says that in general terms, suspects are released because nothing further can be gained by holding them longer, or more information can be gained by tracking them after they are freed.

Terrorism expert Professor Hussein Solomon speculates that "given the close ties between Iran and South Africa, Israel knew that South Africa would safely get the general back to Tehran".

The executive director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute, Benji Shulman, guesses that South Africa may have been chosen "for the same reason that other groups working under the radar like to use South Africa. It's because you've got mostly first world infrastructure – roads, cars, banking – but you've also got zero law enforcement."

On the other hand, "if you were to do this in Europe or America, there would potentially be people tracking you. And to do it in other African countries might be a hassle." Therefore, South Africa was an easy option.

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World ORT chief executive Dov Ben-Shimon admiring the work of the pupils of the Curtis Nkondo School of Specialisation at the 90th birthday of ORT SA

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We are still with the recovering soldiers



OPINION

MAISH ISAACSON

When I saw Boris Shtonda complete the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii, I thought back to the rehabilitation hospital where we first met. Boris had lost a leg fighting in Gaza and on the day we met, he was adjusting to the new prosthetic. Now he has completed one of the world's toughest endurance events. I felt an enormous rush of joy, awe, and pride.

Across the corridor from Boris had been Elisha Medan, who had lost both legs. This week, he became a member of the Knesset. Two men we met in hospital, with injuries that had changed their lives, have reached extraordinary milestones.

And one small detail still makes me smile: they loved biltong.

But another conversation during that visit has stayed with everyone who was in the room.

We met a soldier from an elite unit, a father of young children. He was among the first to arrive at Kfar Aza on 7 October. He lost friends and had been shot multiple times, suffering critical wounds that left him paralysed.

What did he want to ask us? Why weren't more South Africans making aliya? Israel was the only place to live, he told us. It was ours.


Maish Isaacson presents Elisha Medan with a handmade quilt

Coming from him, those words carried a weight I cannot adequately describe. Here was a man whose life and family had been profoundly affected by his service speaking with such conviction about our shared home.

Those of us in that room will never forget his words. Nor must we forget what he, and so many others, continue to face.

We celebrate achievements like Boris's and Elisha's with enormous pride. Yet these milestones do not bring rehabilitation to an end. Our wounded soldiers are still living with life-changing injuries, alongside the demands of raising families, studying, working, and finding their way forward.

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These are practical ways to stand beside people who have given so much. Their needs continue long after a hospital visit or a moment in the headlines.

I often think about that father's words, and about the two men across the corridor who loved biltong. Their journeys continue, as do those of hundreds of soldiers who still face a long road to recovery. At Telfed, we haven't forgotten them or their families.

• *Maish Isaacson is the chairperson of Telfed.*

Knesset elects speaker from the 'change' bloc opposing Netanyahu

Israeli Parliament members elected Matan Kahana of Gadi Eisenkot's opposition Yashar party to be the next speaker of the Knesset, in a 66-52 vote on Tuesday that portends clashes with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Kahana will serve as speaker of the 26th Knesset, after defeating Ofir Katz from Netanyahu's Likud party.

A Knesset speaker belonging to the bloc actively seeking the prime minister's ouster is rare. Last week, Eisenkot got the mandate to form a new government, although he has yet to do so. Installing his ally Kahana in the powerful speaker's seat will allow Eisenkot to engineer legislative manoeuvres that will undercut Netanyahu's agenda, at least during the three-to-five remaining weeks Eisenkot has to form a coalition.

One key Eisenkot priority is passing legislation to establish a commission of inquiry into the failures surrounding the 7 October Hamas raids, the worst attack in Israel's history. Netanyahu, who was prime minister on that day, has until now resisted setting up such an inquiry.


Photo: Chaim Goldberg:Flash90
Matan Kahana of the Yashar party delivers a speech at the Knesset on 17 November

Kahana secured the speaker role on Tuesday with the support of the 48 Knesset members of Eisenkot's bloc, which includes the Yashar, B'Yachad, Yisrael Beiteinu, and Democrats parties. The Arab-majority Ra'am and Joint List parties also voted for Kahana, with just one of their collective 19 members absent.

Kahana immediately sounded a conciliatory note toward the Arab Knesset members who voted for him. "The Knesset is the home of all of Israel's citizens," he said in his first address as speaker on Tuesday evening. "I intend to be the speaker for everyone, regardless of religion, race, or gender."

He stressed that "it is possible to hold opposing views while still maintaining respect for state institutions and for those who think differently". Kahana, 54, has served in the Knesset in multiple parties off and on since 2019.

After hours of filibustering from the Netanyahu bloc, the vote was able to take place

Continued on page 3>>

Bringing the inspiration home

Torah Thought



Rabbi Motti Hadar
Pine Street Shul

Last week my oldest son put on tefillin for the first time in his life. In preparation for his upcoming Barmitzvah, I helped him wrap the straps around his arm and carefully place the tefillin on his head. We were standing in the Lubavitcher Rebbe's office in 770 Eastern Parkway, Chabad's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, surrounded by family, friends, and fellow Jews. It was a moment we had looked forward to for a long time, and an experience of deep emotion, pride, and meaning, which we'll no doubt remember for even longer.

Now back in Johannesburg, he puts on tefillin daily at school as part of morning davening. I get to think of him doing that on mornings when he's got an exam, or a cricket match, or when he's tired, or when he's excited about the day ahead. All those different mornings are part of what we began a week ago in New York. And the longer he does it, the more that first morning means to me.

In this week's Torah portion, Vayeitzei, Yaakov leaves his home in Israel for Charan. On the way, he dreams of a ladder planted on the ground, its top reaching heaven, with angels going up and down, and Hashem telling him, "I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go."

It's an extraordinary promise to hear in a dream. Imagine what it meant to Yaakov 15 years later, when he was out in the fields, looking after Lavan's sheep. When Yaakov describes his years in Charan, he remembers the heat by day, the cold by night, how hard he worked, and how little he slept. These were also the years in which he raised his family. Hashem's promise was for all of it.

Just last week I stood in a room with more than 6 000 people at the Kinus Hashluchim, the annual gathering of Chabad emissaries from more than 110 countries around the world. It's easy to feel inspired in a room full of people who care deeply about Jewish life. Since coming home, I've been asking myself what that inspiration will look like back here in Joburg. Will it change what I make time for? Who I call? What I do on a day when I'm tired and my diary is already full?

In life, all of us have moments of meaning and inspiration. But what makes them truly matter is what happens after that moment. Yaakov experienced a tremendous moment with G-d, when Hashem promised he would be with him wherever he went. And Yaakov went onward, towards Charan, to a life of challenges and difficulties. But that promise of G-d came with him and impacted every moment of his life.

Think of a moment when you felt close to Hashem and wanted more of that in your life. What did you want to do when you went home? Learn Torah with someone? Attend a *minyan* or a *shiur*? Make Friday night dinner a regular thing? Reconnect or reconcile with a friend or family member?

Pick up the phone this week and set a date. Then make another one. Give that moment a chance to become part of your life in the busy weeks, in the good weeks, and in the weeks when you need it most.

When Yaakov woke up from that incredible dream, he still had to live an ordinary life in Charan. A life of labour in the fields, of Lavan's schemes against him, of trials and tribulations. But he took Hashem's promise with him. He took Hashem with him. And that is the lesson for all of us.

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Israel's man in Pretoria full of optimism

PETA KROST

Hen Feder, Israel's new deputy chief of mission in South Africa, carries with him at all times the letter his predecessor, Ariel Seidman, received in January this year, giving him 72 hours to leave the country. Feder does this not because he fears the same fate awaits him, but as a reminder that things can only move upwards and onwards from that point.

Feder's position is the diplomatic equivalent of a deputy ambassador to South Africa. He arrived in the country in August to take up his post and was officially accredited by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in September. "I don't keep my bags packed, but I keep this letter with me so I can look back and see where we were, with hopes that we can outgrow that crisis and find ways to move forward from there," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.



Princess Lungelwa Tyali receiving her certificate from Hen Feder for completing a women's empowerment workshop

Before taking up this position, Feder spent three years in France, from July 2023 to July 2026, as spokesman for the Embassy of Israel in Paris. Moving to South Africa in the same year his predecessor was expelled could have been a difficult decision.

"It wasn't difficult at all because as diplomats we go wherever we are needed, and so I understood that I was needed here," he said. "Besides, even though there are major discrepancies between our two governments, I think that compared with other places around the world, there is so much in common between us in Israel and South Africans in general."

Feder, who was a corporate attorney in Israel and the United States before joining the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a diplomatic cadet in 2022, said that France was a great training ground for South Africa.

"Paris was challenging, to say the least, because I found myself representing a country at war very early on. As a new diplomat starting my career, I was in the media line of fire literally as soon as I had unpacked.

"For people outside the community and Israel, it is difficult to understand what is going on in the Middle East as a whole, and Israel and the Palestinian territories specifically. After 7 October 2023, very quickly the empathy towards Israel evaporated and was replaced by criticism."

He explained that, although the media and politics in France are "more nuanced" than in South Africa, where he said the leading party has taken on the Palestinian cause as part of its identity, France was still very challenging.

However, he arrived with the knowledge that there was no love lost between the ANC and Israel. He was also not expecting the mainstream media to welcome him with open arms, and they haven't.

"I am not afraid of tough conversations or difficult interviews. I welcome it, as long as I am treated with respect."

Feder said that the French journalists who came to his farewell party in Paris teased him that if he had survived French journalists, he would survive South Africa. "I think they were right because they were very critical of everything and ensured that I critically thought of every comment I made. At the same time, when I am not dealing with the media in South Africa, there are so many positive things happening here in South Africa."

In his role as a diplomat in any country, he explained, there are layers to his work. And in South Africa, it is just a little different. He explained that there is usually an official layer of liaison with government, but he is in contact with various other parties that are in Parliament. "We have been well received by the Christian and Jewish communities. Even though the Jewish community support may be considered obvious, we don't take it for granted. We have also been welcomed by traditional leaders.

"In terms of DIRCO and government, "our role is to strive for open communication to solve discrepancies and misunderstanding and so far that has been efficient. Whenever there have been issues with Israelis with problems in South Africa and South Africans in need in Israel, we have been able to resolve this well."

He said he goes all out to strengthen ties with everyone willing to engage with Israel. "We hope to strengthen this connection and show all South Africans what positive relations with Israel can bring this country.

"Obviously we would never ignore the government layer, but in that area, it takes two to tango," he said.

In both South Africa and Israel, the only certainty at this point after the elections is "change is coming", Feder said. Whatever the outcome in Israel, it will not affect his role in South Africa as he is not a political appointee.

Having been in the diplomatic corps in France and then here since 7 October, Feder has experienced what both Israelis abroad and diaspora Jews are going through. "This period has shown me that we have to be much more united that we were before the massacre," he said. "We must ensure our divisions and disagreements are at a level that we can still have meaningful and constructive discussions.

"When we look outside the melting pot, the amount of hatred towards us has become enormous very quickly. While we are dealing with this as Jews and Israelis, we cannot let our own differences get in the way. We need to keep in mind the forces that are acting against us are massive."

He said that for him what has changed since 7 October is the realisation of the importance of unity and the strength we have when we are united and the risks to us when we aren't.

"I have realised that the forces against us are so well-coordinated, planned, with long-term thinking. Without us being united against it, it is very difficult to move forward in a constructive way. For me, even when I have differences with people, I think there is a realisation that these things matter less when we have such great risks around us."

In terms of antisemitism, he mentioned Qatar's influence. "They have different influences in different countries; however, it is not by chance that Qatari news agency Al Jazeera is deemed illegal in many Arab countries but is one of the main channels in many top hotels in South Africa.

"Our haters are very good at trying to hide antisemitism in what they call antizionism. This sentiment is a global issue and is a huge challenge for diplomats because it does take different forms and faces. They know how to push the right buttons in the right countries. In Ireland, Israel is described as the new British. In South Africa, we are called the apartheid regime. In the US, we are accused of taking taxpayers' money. The message is ultimately the same."

Feder is, however, happy to be in South Africa.

"Wherever we go, we have been received with such warmth and hospitality. The people are so caring and kind, and the food – especially the meat – is so good here. The scenery in this country is breathtaking, and we will have such fun travelling and exploring when we can."

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Knesset elects speaker from the 'change' bloc opposing Netanyahu

>>Continued from page 2

when the two camps struck a deal, according to Israel's Channel 12: Eisenkot's bloc agreed to delay votes to repeal bills advanced in the previous Knesset until next week.

Chief among the bills that Eisenkot's bloc plans to repeal is the Netanyahu coalition's judicial overhaul law, which has sought to shift the balance of power by increasing the influence of politicians on judicial appointments.

Kahana expressed his hope on Tuesday evening "that the incoming government will work to implement all necessary improvements to the system of checks and balances among the three branches of government – and will do so with broad consensus". He also pledged that the Knesset would "unequivocally abide by the rulings of the courts".

"The eyes of Israeli citizens are upon us, yet in recent years, we have caused them to lower their gaze in embarrassment," Kahana added. "It is our responsibility to change and fix this."

• *All briefs supplied by JTA*

Mossad left Iranian general in SA after interrogation

>> Continued from page 1

In October 2025, an X account in Persian attributed to Mossad published a post claiming that the Israeli intelligence agency had indeed abducted Saberi.

Mossad chief at the time David Barnea said, "It was a courageous, daring, complex operation, but it was a failure."

In 2021, Naftali Bennett, Israel's prime minister at the time, had revealed that Mossad agents had recently gone on a mission to uncover Arad's whereabouts.

"It was a complex, widescale operation," Bennett told the Knesset plenum in remarks at the start of the winter parliamentary session. "We made further efforts on the path to understanding Ron's fate." Bennett said the operation involved both male and female Mossad agents.

He said that the return of captives "is a Jewish value that has become one of the holiest values of the State of Israel", and noted that continuing to search for news of Arad after more than three decades was "the kind of thing that looks strange, and perhaps a little extreme for those who look at the State of Israel from outside. But this is what defines us and sets us apart."

Bennett vowed to "continue to act to return all our boys home, wherever they may be".

Little was he to know that just two years later, Hamas would hold more than 250 hostages in Gaza.

In October this year, marking 40 years since Arad's capture, Israel's former ambassador to Australia and Lithuania Amir Maimon shared a photograph of himself, Arad, and two other classmates when they were teens.

"Ron Arad, my friend and classmate, was forced to eject his F-4 Phantom near Sidon, Lebanon," wrote Maimon on Facebook. "Forty years passed and he is still missing in action. Today and every day we remember ... I remember."

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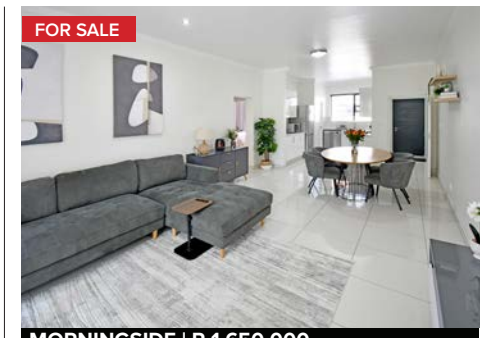
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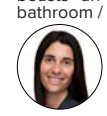
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Shifting the Israeli-Palestinian reality olive by olive



OPINION

PROFESSOR DAVID BILCHITZ

Olive growing is an ancient agricultural activity, going back thousands of years, that is common to many peoples across the Middle East. In the autumn, the trees sprout olives, which await curing for eating or crushing into olive oil. Lamentably, in the West Bank, Palestinian farmers living under Israeli occupation are facing increasingly violent attacks by emboldened extremist Jewish settlers, whose goal is to intimidate them, prevent them harvesting their olives, and, ultimately, drive them from their land.

Last week, I joined a group of Israeli and international volunteers whose goal was to deter such attacks through our physical presence during the harvest. "Protective presence" is an approach adopted in the strongest traditions of non-violent activism, and while many extremist settlers have no compunction in attacking Palestinians, fewer have been willing to do so when they risk hurting Israelis or foreigners. Such presence also helps document human rights violations and, more positively, demonstrates an active commitment to upholding the rights of these Palestinian families to their property, to harvest the olives from their land, and to earn a livelihood.

I felt a strong imperative to join in this important activity. Apart from being a proactive and constructive way to defend the fundamental rights of these families, it felt particularly important to stand up for the rule of law (both international and Israeli) and the most basic of universal and Jewish precepts – do not steal, do not assault.



Anna and Jon Roiser with David Bilchitz after picking olives

It has of late become increasingly risky to join such groups of volunteers given the rise in the number of extremist settlers and the failure by the Israeli military to stop such attacks and prosecute the perpetrators. It was thus with some trepidation that I joined about 60 volunteers early in the morning, converging from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv on a beautiful valley south of Bethlehem at the invitation of a group of Palestinian families. The delegation I joined was led by Rabbis for Human Rights, an organisation of rabbis across denominations who seek to uphold the imperatives of Jewish tradition through defending human rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Upon arrival, we were shown several small outposts on surrounding hills where a few settlers had set up homes illegally. The Palestinian families told us that they were terrified to harvest their olives as a result of violence that could be unleashed on them at any moment and that our presence had made the harvest possible.

We went to work almost immediately. As a university professor, it is not exactly part of my skill set to harvest olives. Nevertheless, I soon learned to pick and then rake them. We also separated the olives according to the informal demarcations among the families as to who owns which trees.

There was a great sense of camaraderie among the mostly diaspora Jewish and Israeli volunteers. While there were some respectful disagreements, what united us was a conviction that the fear and violence Palestinian farmers were being subjected to was wrong, and that Israel, as the occupying power, has both a moral and legal obligation to stop it. In the absence of a commitment to do so, we needed to do something about it – even if that meant putting ourselves in harm's way.

The picked olives were collated on a large piece of tarpaulin, and then scooped into buckets. Upon finishing, it was very satisfying to see that we had harvested tens of buckets of olives. After a moving farewell from the families, many of us breathed a sigh of relief that there had not been any violence.

Unfortunately, the following day, in Qusra, near Nablus, the harvest site was attacked by extremist settlers. Volunteers I had worked with the previous day told me that they had, similarly, been peacefully harvesting olives when a group of masked men had suddenly descended from a hilltop and started beating people in the fields with clubs. There is a video of one of these masked men beating and another kicking an elderly women. What kind of madness makes someone do such a thing?

Six people were injured that day. The elderly woman landed up in hospital with a head injury and bruised eye. The Israeli military and police were present – soldiers fired canisters of teargas at the settlers, which were ineffective in a vast open area and the attackers quickly regrouped. There appeared to be no effort, however, to arrest the attackers despite their being guilty of serious assault as well as theft of some olives.

This incident highlighted the current state of impunity for these extremist settlers. The outgoing far-right government, with extremist settlers among its senior ministers, has effectively enabled a major increase in illegal hilltop settlement activities and allowed the violence to continue.

One of the first actions of a new Israeli government must thus be to end settler violence. That is a necessary step to envisage an alternative future for these troubled lands in which both peoples finally break the cycle of violence and agree to live side by side in peace. Currently, that looks utopian, yet bringing it about also requires small acts by individuals that build trust, partnership, and collaboration. Perhaps, a glimmer of a different reality can be gleaned through Jews and Palestinians standing together and harvesting that emblematic and tangy fruit of the land, olive by olive.

- *David Bilchitz is a professor of Fundamental Rights and Constitutional Law in the Faculty of Law at the University of Johannesburg and University of Reading. He writes in his personal capacity.*

When power becomes predatory



OPINION

DR ROBYN ROSIN

The conviction of British comedian Russell Brand for sexual offences, alongside the allegations against comedian-actor David Walliams, have brought an uncomfortable issue into public focus: the potential abuse of power by influential individuals.

While these are distinct cases with different legal circumstances, they raise questions extending far beyond celebrity culture.

How do we protect young people from exploitation? Why do vulnerable individuals sometimes struggle to recognise or resist inappropriate behaviour? And how do we ensure that innocent people, particularly adolescent boys and young men, are not psychologically destroyed by false accusations?

These questions demand compassion, psychological understanding, and a commitment to justice.

Predatory behaviour doesn't always begin with obvious aggression. It may begin with charm, flattery, attention, and the intoxicating experience of being singled out by someone admired. For a young person seeking validation, recognition, or professional opportunity, attention from a powerful individual can feel extraordinarily significant.

This is where psychological vulnerability intersects with unequal power.

Grooming may involve gradually testing boundaries, creating emotional dependency, encouraging secrecy, and normalising increasingly inappropriate behaviour.

A young person may experience conflicting emotions: admiration, excitement, discomfort, fear, and guilt.

The imbalance of power can make refusal particularly difficult when someone believes their future, reputation, or opportunities depend on pleasing an influential individual.

We must stop asking only "Why didn't they say no?" and begin asking, "What made saying no feel so difficult?"

Not everyone responds to threat by fighting or fleeing. Some freeze. Others appease, becoming compliant in an attempt to minimise perceived danger. These survival responses are frequently misunderstood, particularly when individuals subsequently question why they didn't resist.

Delayed disclosure doesn't automatically undermine credibility. Fear of retaliation, humiliation, disbelief, and reputational damage may prevent disclosure for years.

For some survivors, the deepest psychological injury isn't limited to the experience itself but involves the destruction of their belief that they are safe, autonomous, and worthy of protection.

Although the Brand and Walliams controversies originate in Britain, the underlying power dynamics are equally relevant to South Africa. Our schools, universities, sporting institutions, entertainment industry, and workplaces aren't immune to exploitation.

Consider the schoolgirl intimidated by an influential educator, the university student dependent on a lecturer's approval, or the young employee frightened of losing her job. In each situation, authority can become a weapon.

South Africa has safeguarding policies and legal frameworks, but policies alone cannot guarantee psychological safety. We need independent reporting mechanisms, transparent investigations, and institutions willing to challenge influential individuals rather than protect their reputations.

We must also confront cultural attitudes that encourage unquestioning obedience to authority. Respect for authority should never require surrendering personal boundaries.

Psychological education must begin early.

Young people need to recognise warning signs such as inappropriate sexual comments, secrecy, unwanted touching, gifts accompanied by expectations, isolation from trusted relationships, and threats disguised as humour. They must understand that admiration doesn't create obligation and that professional opportunities should never depend on sexual compliance.

We should encourage young people to trust their discomfort, seek support, and report concerning behaviour.

However, responsibility must never rest solely on potential victims.

Adults, institutions, and those holding positions of authority have a fundamental responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries and prevent exploitation.

There is another uncomfortable reality that deserves serious consideration. False accusations of sexual misconduct can have devastating consequences, particularly for adolescent boys and young men.



Russell Brand

Photo: Russell Brand website

An allegation can destroy friendships, educational opportunities, reputations, and emotional stability.

In today's digital environment, accusations can spread through social media long before any investigation takes place. Even when allegations are disproved, reputational damage may persist.

The psychological consequences can include humiliation, isolation, anxiety, depression, and, in severe cases, suicidal thinking. For adolescents whose identities and emotional resilience are still developing, being publicly labelled a sexual predator can be profoundly damaging.

However, we must distinguish between deliberately fabricated accusations, misunderstandings, unsubstantiated allegations, and cases where evidence is insufficient to secure a conviction.

These are not interchangeable.

Research indicates that deliberately false reports constitute a minority of sexual assault allegations. Nevertheless, their consequences deserve serious attention.

We cannot advocate psychological protection for one group while dismissing the suffering of another.

Social media has created a disturbing phenomenon: public judgement preceding evidence.

Complainants may face vicious harassment and disbelief. Equally, accused individuals may be publicly condemned before receiving a fair hearing.

Both experiences can cause lasting psychological harm.

The principle of believing victims should mean listening respectfully, taking disclosures seriously, and providing appropriate support. It shouldn't mean abandoning independent investigation or the presumption of innocence.

Similarly, defending due process must never become an excuse to intimidate, humiliate, or silence complainants.

Compassion and critical thinking aren't mutually exclusive. We can support someone who reports abuse without automatically determining guilt. We can protect the rights of the accused without dismissing the possibility that serious harm occurred.

Perhaps our greatest preventative opportunity lies in how we raise young people.

Girls need to understand autonomy, boundaries, and their right to refuse unwanted attention. Boys need equally meaningful education about consent, emotional responsibility, respectful relationships, and their own vulnerability to exploitation.

Both need to recognise manipulation, understand the consequences of coercion, and appreciate the seriousness of making dishonest accusations.

We must move beyond teaching girls to fear men and boys to fear allegations. Instead, we should cultivate mutual respect, emotional literacy, accountability, and the confidence to seek help.

The controversies involving powerful public figures invite us to examine not only individual behaviour but also the systems that allow authority to go unquestioned.

We must protect those who disclose abuse without automatically declaring every accused person guilty.

We must hold perpetrators accountable without turning allegations into public entertainment.

And we must recognise that survivors of exploitation and individuals who have been falsely accused can both experience profound psychological injuries.

Ultimately, protecting young people requires a culture where authority can be questioned, boundaries are respected, allegations are investigated fairly, and psychological support is available to everyone affected.

A society that fails to protect victims is unjust. A society that abandons the presumption of innocence is equally dangerous.

Our responsibility is not to choose between these principles, but to uphold both.

- *Dr Robyn Rosin is a counselling psychologist with extensive experience in private practice, specialising in trauma, psychological well-being, and the treatment of emotional distress.*

Rediscovering the roots of a family forest in Israel

CLAUDIA GROSS

An international Jewish family – who now live in South Africa – has discovered that what it thought was its donation of 1 000 trees to Israel in 1986 was actually five times larger.

The discovery prompted newlyweds David and Laura Akinin, who live in Cape Town, to travel to Israel and plant trees of their own, continuing a tradition that began four decades earlier.

Originally from Venezuela, Akinin, 36, has lived in southern Africa for 12 years. He initially established a business in Namibia before expanding into Zambia and Zimbabwe. He and his French girlfriend moved to Cape Town about a year and a half ago. He also completed his master's degree at the University of Cape Town.

The tree story began with a newspaper clipping that Akinin's family had kept since 1986. It documented how Abraham Benarroch Bentata and Lucy Garzon de Benarroch had planted trees in Israel to celebrate their daughter Reina's marriage to Ysaac Akinin.

"As a kid, I always heard from my mother that one of the big wedding gifts my grandfather made to her and my father 40 years ago was this forest of trees," Akinin said.

After marrying in May 2026, he revisited the story with his grandmother, who still had the original newspaper clipping. His grandfather had died 18 years earlier, when Akinin was 18.

He wanted to honour his grandparents' contribution by planting trees with his new wife. "It was this mystical idea. I had never been to Israel. It was beautiful to think of the idea of planting trees."



David Akinin at his grandparents' plaque

He contacted Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) and asked whether the organisation could help locate the original forest. Its South African desk helped investigate the family's history. It retrieved the original donation certificates and eventually identified the location of the family's plaques.

The first donation, of 2 500 trees, was recorded in September 1986, in the Lavi Forest. The second followed in January 1988 on Mount Turan. Together, the donations account for 5 000 trees in what is now the Rambam Forest in the Lower Galilee, near Tiberias.

The original planting sites can no longer be identified precisely, but the trees remain part of the same forest. The plaques have been moved to the Golani Recognition Centre for protection.

For Akinin, finally standing in the forest earlier this month was an emotional experience. "It's probably the first time in many years, if not to say since 18 years ago, that I felt like I was standing next to him," he said, referring to his grandfather.

He described standing among the trees with Laura as particularly powerful. The couple invited her parents, Karen and Charles Constantini, to join them in Israel and on 12 November, the two families planted 10 trees in the Ben Shemen Forest near Modi'in.

Five trees were planted in the names of the Akinins and five in the name of the Constantinis, celebrating the young couple's marriage and extending the family tradition to Laura's family.

For Akinin, the experience represented more than a symbolic gesture.

"Many of us who live in the diaspora look for ways in which we can be helpful to Israel," he said. "Especially now, at a time where there is war and so many of us want to do more, it felt like the right thing in a physical way to actually be part of bringing back greenery to the State of Israel."

He said learning about the history of forest planting in Israel added another dimension to the experience. Early immigrants had planted trees in an arid landscape as part of establishing a new country. He said the forest hadn't contained a single tree before his grandparents' contribution had helped establish it.

"It wasn't any more just a symbolic thing to do what my grandparents had done to help create the State of Israel," he said. "It felt like we were really putting something on the ground, really giving shape to what will be the next forest in Israel."

During their visit to the Lavi Forest, Akinin and his wife also discovered a connection closer to their current home. The Venezuelan section of the forest stands alongside a section commemorating contributions from South African families and organisations.

"I had never even discussed this in South Africa. I had never heard anyone talk about it," he said. He was surprised by the number of South African names recorded there. He also discovered that a road leading into the forest had been donated by someone from Johannesburg.

The visit included an unexpected encounter with Maor Malka, a member of KKL-JNF's northern fire and forest protection team. Akinin discovered that his name was the same as the firefighter's late father and the connection prompted Malka to offer the couple a tour of the forest.

He showed them the specialist fire truck used by his team, including equipment donated by a community in New York. He also explained the dangers involved in protecting forests during the war. After 7 October, missiles fell in the northern forests, causing fires that required teams to work under military protection. Malka showed the couple the protective helmets and vests used during these operations.

He then took them on a two-hour drive through the forest, showing them views of Mount Tabor.

Akinin described the encounter as one of the most memorable experiences of their trip. "We think of firefighters as people who just stop fires, but they're also protecting legacies and protecting pretty much what the State of Israel stands for," he said.

The discovery has prompted Akinin to consider how other South African families might reconnect with their own contributions to Israel. He has contacted KKL-JNF's South African desk to explore ways of sharing the information with communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg. He hopes other families will investigate whether their relatives also planted trees or contributed to Israel's forests.

He will also encourage his family to mark significant occasions through tree donations. "Whenever we have meaningful moments in our lives, whether it's the birth of a child, a marriage, or a Barmitzvah, try to find those dates to align with a tree donation," he said. "It can be very symbolic and beautiful."





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south african Jewish Report

Jozi voted. The dealmakers aren't listening



On 4 November, Johannesburg didn't whisper. It spoke, and it couldn't have been clearer. The ANC's share of the vote collapsed from 33.6% to 20.3%, a rejection no amount of spin can soften. The DA surged from 26.1% to 34.8%, and ActionSA held at 16.3%.

This wasn't a protest vote. It was a decision. Residents looked at the dry taps, the broken roads, and the years of excuses, and they chose parties that promised honest administration, a city that works, and a mayor who stays long enough to fix things.

Less than two weeks later, the bazaar has opened. There is no plan to rescue Johannesburg, only a scramble for the spoils. News reports say the ANC has offered ActionSA the mayoral positions in Johannesburg and Tshwane, plus a carve-up of mayoral committee posts. The DA, the leading party in each of these metros, has sent a proposal of its own. No deal has been signed, but the haggling is public. ActionSA leader Herman Mashaba said it bluntly on election weekend, "I've got the cards." Voters didn't hand out cards. They handed out a mandate.

Nobody in these talks seems to be asking the question residents are asking: what happens on Monday morning when the taps are still dry?

This is not abstract. Residents in Parktown West say they have endured up to 12 weeks without reliable water. The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) reports that Johannesburg's gross unpaid consumer bills reached R71.8 billion in 2024/25, up from R15.3 billion a decade earlier. By the end of that financial year, the city also owed suppliers, principally Eskom and Rand Water, R28.5 billion. Business leaders have described Johannesburg's decline as a "national economic emergency", a phrase echoed by the CDE in a release this week.

Almost half the water Johannesburg buys from Rand Water is lost to leaks and pipe bursts. By the end of December 2025, the city had spent just 26% of its R8.7 billion capital budget. Meanwhile, the mayor has changed seven times since the 2021 election. Every change resets the clock, and every reset costs residents another season of potholes, outages, and uncollected refuse.

Let me say plainly what I believe many of us were voting for. We voted against a political culture in which too many see the city as a source of funds rather than a public trust. We voted against tenders that enrich the connected while pipes burst, and against councillors who treat residents as an afterthought.

Even the ANC's secretary-general, Fikile Mbalula, called the election result "catastrophic", and said that when the people say the party has fallen short, "the honest answer is not to argue with them but to go home and put our house in order". If that is sincere, the party should accept the verdict, not bargain its way back into the mayoral parlour through the side door.

The demand for accountability applies to every party at the table. A vote for clean government isn't a blank cheque for whoever wins the most seats. It's an instruction to anyone who would govern: show us you are different.

There is a second betrayal unfolding and it concerns the party voters actually put first. The DA won 34.8% of the vote in Johannesburg, well ahead of the ANC on 20.3% and ActionSA on 16.3%. It campaigned openly on Helen Zille as its mayoral candidate. You may admire her or not, but Joburgers voted for a DA that told them she would be its mayor. Yet the *Financial Mail* reports that much of the political energy outside the DA is now being spent on finding ways to keep Zille and her party out of government. ActionSA has made her removal a condition of working with the DA. Its national chair, Michael Beaumont, says, "Our issue in Johannesburg is not the DA; it's Helen Zille."

Meanwhile, there are news reports that ActionSA and the ANC are close to a deal that would hand ActionSA the mayoral chain and give the ANC the deputy mayoralty. Think about that arrangement. The party that came third gets to be mayor, the party that voters punished keeps a seat at the top table, and the party that won is left outside.

ActionSA says its objection is about Zille's record on coalitions, not personal animus. Perhaps. But the feud between Zille and Mashaba dates back to his 2019 resignation, from the DA and as mayor, and it is being played out in public. When a frustrated voter complained on X that Zille was being kept out of office regardless of what voters wanted, Mashaba reposted it with, "South Africa, let's all cry for Helen. Life is not fair." That is not the voice of a leader weighing the interests of a city whose taps are dry.

Political analyst Theo Neethling warned that it would be "politically odd" for the DA to replace Zille simply to accommodate Mashaba's personal objections. DA leader Geordin Hill-Lewis admitted that dropping her would be "extraordinarily difficult for us to swallow", adding that he was "not sure if it would be right for the people of Johannesburg" because "a plurality of people in Johannesburg voted for Helen". He is right about that. It takes two to feud, and Zille has had sharp words of her own for Mashaba. Coalitions require compromise, and the DA needs partners. But compromise cannot mean that a party with less than half the DA's support gets to veto the choice of the voters. The new council must sit by 28 November, and the clock is ticking.

Safety is the other half of the promise. Our community knows better than most what it costs to feel safe in this city when the state falls short. Volunteers in the CSO guard our shuls, schools, and events. CAP, which began in greater Glenhazel in 2006, reports an average 84% reduction in serious violent crime in the areas it serves, and says that last year was Glenhazel's safest since CAP's inception. That shows prevention works when it is organised and funded. But we pay for it on top of our rates, and many living here cannot afford to do so. A city that polices its streets, fixes its streetlights, enforces its by-laws, and keeps its traffic lights working is a safer city for everyone, and safety should not be a privilege of the suburbs that can afford it.

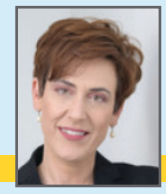
Residents need transparency and a mayor who is competent and has integrity. No portfolio can be given to anyone facing allegations of corruption, and we need to see a costed 100-day plan for water, electricity, roads, and safety. We also need a coalition that is built to last five years, with clear outcomes along the way.

Johannesburg is the engine of this country's economy and home of the most South African Jews. It has the people, the talent, and the potential to be a great city again. What it lacks is leadership that puts residents first. Voters did their part on 4 November, with more than half of Gauteng's registered voters turning out. Now it is the politicians' turn to do theirs.

Rabbi Tarfon taught in Pirkei Avot that "it is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it". Our politicians haven't even started. They should begin by listening to the people who sent them there.

Shabbat Shalom
Peta Krost
Editor

Israelis may be the future of European Jewry



OPINION PAULA SLIER

Last week, Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten appealed to Jewish families considering leaving the Netherlands because of antisemitism to stay. Speaking at a Kristallnacht commemoration in Amsterdam, he acknowledged that some Dutch Jews were questioning whether their children had a future in the country. He revealed that he had placed a *mezuzah* on his own front door after learning that some Jewish people were reluctant to display theirs for fear of negative reactions.

For generations, Israel offered European Jews a place of refuge. Now, while some Dutch Jews are considering leaving, Israelis are choosing to settle there. Could this reversal help secure the future of Jewish communities in Europe?

Research published by the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) in January last year estimated that the Netherlands has a core Jewish population of approximately 35 000 people. About 20% were born in Israel. When you include those born in the Netherlands with at least one Israeli-born parent, the figure rises to roughly one in three. Among Jewish children, four in 10 have at least one parent who was born in Israel.



Anne Frank and her sister Margot on the Zandvoort beach in the Netherlands in 1940



Alicia Slier posing in the same position as Margot, exactly 86 years later

More Dutch Jews die each year than are born. Without immigration, principally from Israel, the Jewish population would be shrinking. Instead, it is slowly growing. The movement predates the Gaza war. JPR's analysis of Dutch migration records shows a net gain of 199 people born in Israel and their children in 2015, 137 in 2016, and 367 in 2022. These figures include non-Jewish Israelis. For a country that lost most of its Jewish population during the Holocaust, this is an extraordinary development.

Dutch Jewish history has always been part of my family's identity. My father's family came from Amsterdam. My grandfather Itzhak Slier moved to South Africa before the Holocaust. All but seven of the 126 members of his wider family were murdered.

My mother, Alicia, was the first South African air hostess to fly for the Dutch airline, KLM, and speaks fluent Dutch. On a visit to the Netherlands in August this year, she returned to Zandvoort beach, where Anne Frank had been photographed with her older sister, Margot, in August 1940, less than two years before the family went into hiding. My mother posed in the same position as Margot, exactly 86 years later.

For me, the connection to the Netherlands is also tied to the homes and streets where my family lived before the Holocaust. My father's first cousin Philip Slier lived at number 128 Vrolikstraat in Amsterdam. He was murdered at Sobibor, in Poland, when he was 19 years old. In 1997, letters he'd written from the Molengoot labour camp to his parents decades earlier were found hidden in the apartment's bathroom ceiling.

My great-grandmother Betje Slier-Benjamins was 80 years old when she was taken from another apartment in Vrolikstraat. According to our family account, she was carried out into the street lying on a mattress. She died at Westerbork transit camp on 17 February 1943.

On my last visit to Vrolikstraat, I spoke to an elderly Christian man who had lived most of his life there. He remembered the deportations. As a little boy, he had watched Jewish families standing in the street with suitcases, waiting to be taken away. He spoke of the commotion and the disappearance of neighbours. I rang the bell at number 128, hoping to see inside, but the residents wouldn't let me in. I stood outside, wondering what life had been like for my family. My sister, Hayley, and I placed Stolpersteine, small brass memorial plaques set into the pavement, outside our relatives' former homes.

The Netherlands has other uncomfortable chapters in its wartime history. In 2019, Dutch journalists revealed that German wartime disability payments were still being made to former Dutch Waffen-SS members and their surviving relatives. A subsequent investigation found that only one in five recipients had declared the payments to Dutch tax authorities. Against this backdrop, there is something striking about Israelis choosing to build their lives in the Netherlands.

The pattern extends across Europe. In March 2025, JPR demographer Dr Daniel Staetsky estimated that approximately 630 000 Israeli expatriates were living outside Israel during 2021–2023. Including children born abroad, the number of people with a direct Israeli connection approached one million. These figures include non-Jewish Israelis and those living outside Europe, but roughly a third of Israeli expatriates live in Europe, where their presence is changing some Jewish communities. In Norway, Israeli-born Jews account for nearly half the Jewish population; in Finland, 41%. Over approximately a decade, the number of Israeli-born residents increased by 36% in the Netherlands, 34% in Germany, and 95% in Ireland.

The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) October 2026 assessment estimates that the number of Israelis living abroad rose from approximately 630 000 at the beginning of 2022 to 755 000 at the beginning of 2025. JPPI says the Gaza war may have contributed, but cannot fully explain the trend. A December 2025 Israel Democracy Institute study found that around a quarter of Jewish respondents and a third of Arab respondents were considering moving abroad, temporarily or permanently. Among those considering leaving, 43% preferred a European Union country. These are intentions, not actual departures.

But while some Israelis are considering a future in Europe, some Dutch Jewish families are questioning whether to stay. Their circumstances and reasons may be different, but both are making decisions about where they see a future for their families. The Dutch research also shows that Jewish life in the Netherlands is highly secularised, with many Jews living outside established religious institutions. Israeli newcomers may strengthen Jewish communities without necessarily joining synagogues or traditional communal organisations. What this will mean for Jewish schools, cultural life, and communal identity remains to be seen.

There is also the question of security. If antisemitism is making some long-standing Dutch Jews consider leaving, Israeli newcomers may eventually face the same concerns. Immigration alone cannot guarantee safety for Jews. Jetten can promise protection and encourage Jewish families to stay. Whether they do will depend on how safe they feel living openly as Jews.

The research doesn't show that European Jews are leaving in large numbers or that Israelis will eventually become the majority of European Jewry. But it does show that Israeli migration is changing the makeup of several Jewish communities, bringing in new families and a generation of children with roots in both Israel and Europe. It's a reversal my great-grandmother could never have imagined.

- *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.*

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Too much analysis just a hit job on Israel



OPINION

MUZI KUZWAYO

Political analysis is like a candle – in the hand of a drunk, it is downright dangerous. As the Russian fabulist Ivan Krylov, wrote in *The Two Peasants,* "Things go ill with a drunken man, when he has a candle in his hand; but he is even worse off when he is in the dark."

Much of the political commentary about the US midterm elections is casting too feeble a light to understand what really happened and how the future is likely to unfold. Most of it is only a hit job aimed at the State of Israel.

In the cold light of day, the mischievous claim that the war with Iran and America's relationship with Israel explain the Republican defeat, overlooks both the history of midterms, specifically that the president's party takes a beating, and what voters said about their own finances in the past election.

Since the Civil War midterm of 1862, only 12 of the 30 US presidents have seen their party retain control of both chambers of Congress at a midterm. Since 1934, only three presidents' parties have gained House seats at a midterm. They were Franklin D Roosevelt's, Bill Clinton's and George W Bush's. Barack Obama's 2010 midterm ranks sixth among the largest combined seat losses since 1862. Lyndon B Johnson, who signed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, saw his party lose seats in both chambers in 1966, though it kept both majorities.

These amnesiac pundits forget that President Donald Trump's Republicans lost the House in 2018. Trump lost the presidency in 2020 and returned to the White House after the 2024 election. He campaigned on inflation under Joe Biden, and now his own party has felt the force of the same issue. The 2026 exit polls showed that voters who said their finances had worsened backed Democrats for the House. Clinton's chief strategist, James Carville, put it best in 1992, "The economy, stupid." If you want to understand why Republicans lost, start with what Americans were paying at the till.

The Middle East needs new ideas, and people across the region deserve the opportunity to change their governments, which is something we know about and cherish here in South Africa. Israel is often held to an impossibly high standard, like a wrestler expected to wear a white suit to a mud-wrestling match and docked a point for every splash. For all the difficulties Americans and Israelis face, they can vote their governments out. Iranians can vote for a president, but the Guardian Council vets who is allowed to stand. Would the ayatollahs allow an Iranian candidate to campaign on "Give peace a chance!"? One who says, "Peace with America! Peace with Israel! Love to the world!"?



AI-generated image

Could a candidate even run on "Make Iran Great Again" instead of spewing hatred and calling for the death of peoples around the world?

The Palestinian legislative election scheduled for this month is set to be postponed, possibly until September 2027. Palestinians last elected their legislature more than 20 years ago, in January 2006. President Mahmoud Abbas, who was elected in January 2005, has been in office for more than 21 years. He has served roughly two years longer than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has served as prime minister across his three terms.

There is a saying that a society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit. What tree has Abbas planted in his 21 years? Is anyone asking him?

In his memoir, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*, the late United Nations (UN) secretary-general and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kofi Annan wrote, "Many may have felt satisfaction in the decades of endless passing of General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel's behaviour, I said, but what tangible relief or benefit had this brought the Palestinians? What effect had these had on Israel's policies, other than to strengthen the belief in Israel that the UN is too one-sided to be allowed a significant role in the Middle East peace process?" Annan's views matter enormously. During his tenure as UN secretary-general, worldwide deaths in state-based conflicts averaged about 36 125 a year, 72.2% below the 1946–2025 average of 129 854.

Annan's uncomfortable question still stands. What has all this noise done to bring peace any closer?

• *Muzi Kuzwayo is the chairperson of South Africa's Promise, a non-profit company that works with young people across the country to help them unleash their potential.*

The biggest change to US-Israel relations in half a century?



OPINION

BARUCH THE BALANCED

With the Republicans having suffered a "brutal shellacking" in the midterm elections on 3 November, it is important to analyse the reasons, as well as the potential seismic shift in US-Israel relations, that might follow come January, when the new Congress is sworn in.

Although the ruling party traditionally does badly in midterm elections, this was worse than normal. The Democratic Party had the largest congressional margin of victory, looking at the popular vote, since 1976 and the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. They won in places like Texas and Kansas, solidly Republican states, and even won in Mississippi, which they never expected in their wildest dreams. So why did this happen? The answer is the six Is:

Immigration

Although on this one issue President Donald Trump has actually been successful, almost totally shutting the southern border, the cruelty and harshness with which Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have gone about doing this has turned voters off. There have been many reported cases of the deportation of supposed illegals who then turned out to be legal US citizens, and even of some being shot. Hispanic voters, in particular, were unhappy about this, and, after supporting Trump in 2024, they deserted the Republicans in droves. This was costly in states like Texas – although the Republicans had a poor candidate there as well.

Iran

The Iran war was without doubt one of the major issues in the midterms. After campaigning in 2024 to end "forever wars abroad", Trump miscalculated badly in the Iran war and has taken the US straight back into another unpopular war that has no clear strategy or end in sight.

Inflation

Having campaigned heavily on a pledge to bring down inflation and the high cost of living, Trump's decision to go to war with Iran has directly driven up energy and fertiliser prices – US motorists are paying more than $1.66 (R28.15) a litre for diesel – as well as food prices. Americans always vote on the cost of living, and with the costs of housing, transportation, and food eating up 63% of the average citizen's spending, people went to vote looking for change.

Impropriety

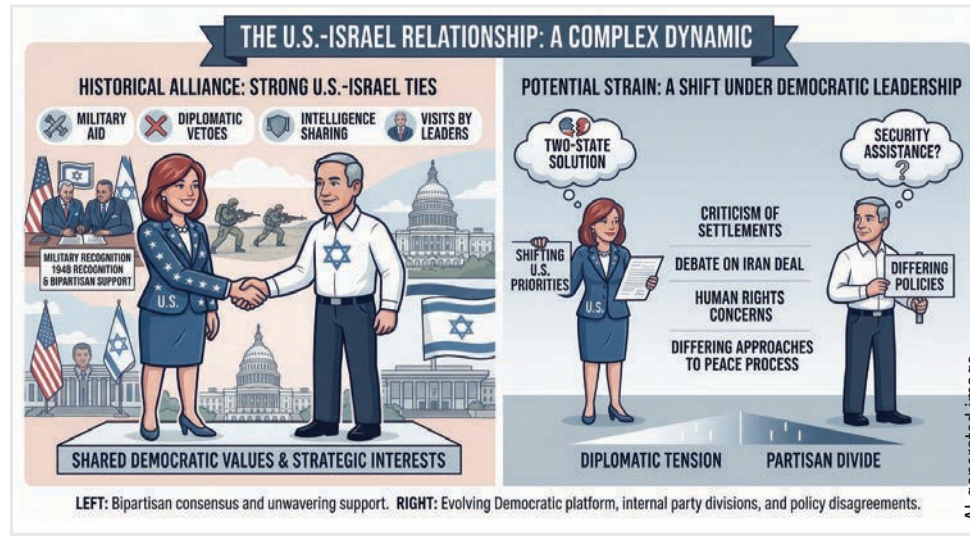
There are too many unexplained matters concerning the president and his entourage doing very well out of the office, which has turned voters off. They are unhappy with issues including Trump's memecoin, who paid for Donald Junior's wedding festivities, and son-in-law Jared Kushner's business dealings, although nothing untoward has been proven.

Illogical policies

Trump's bizarre attacks on Canada, even suggesting it should become the 51st state, and his economic warfare against one of the US's oldest allies, have been impossible to justify logically. Add to this his tariff policy, which has driven up prices in the US even more, and led to ludicrous results, like tiny Lesotho being one of the most tariffed countries in the world at a stage. The tariffs have also created unnecessary tension with vital allies like India, which has been subjected to volatile tariffs that went as high as 50% before dropping to 18%, and led the country to explore alliances with more reliable countries, and even a rapprochement with China.

Artificial Intelligence

The final I is AI, with the billionaire tycoons in the AI industry becoming obscenely wealthy, and with it accruing unrivalled power over business and politics, the average citizen is unhappy and concerned. Add to this the daily news reports about some new improved AI version "jumping out of its protected testing sandbox and executing some unauthorised cyberattack" and there is real angst among citizens. Many want more regulation of AI and possibly even higher taxation of those that run the major companies (although California's proposed wealth tax, Proposition 40, on billionaires, was defeated in a referendum on 3 November), which the Democrats can bring.



LEFT: Bipartisan consensus and unwavering support. RIGHT: Evolving Democratic platform, internal party divisions, and policy disagreements.

AI-generated image

The effect on US-Israel relations?

With the Democrats now controlling both houses, and Vice-President JD Vance being widely quoted as saying that, in addition to the Iran war, one of the issues the Republicans have to address to bring voters back is "change our relationship with Israel", Israeli commentators and academics have gone into panic mode. *The Jerusalem Post* has led with headlines like "Vance is beginning to sound like Rahm Emanuel" – referring to the veteran Democrat who has questioned the cost of the alliance with Israel – and "Washington has changed. Israel would be reckless to ignore it". What are the concerns?

The first is that the hard right of the Republican Party and the hard left of the Democratic Party seem to have found common ground on Israel, although for different reasons. They both think the US is too supportive of Israel to its detriment.

The second concern is that with the Democrats controlling Congress, Israel might find it a lot tougher to buy US weapons and fighter jets. Although Trump seems to have already ended the $4 billion (R67.8 billion) of US aid that was meant to run until September 2028, that didn't cause major alarm bells, as the amount is a small percentage of Israel's economy and Israel is wealthy enough to pay for its own weapons. A much bigger concern is whether a new Democratic-controlled Congress will either block the sale of weapons to Israel altogether, or impose stringent conditions on how they may be used. For example, there might be a block on using new fighter jets to bomb Gaza or Lebanon.

Of course, not every Democratic congressman and woman opposes military aid or weapons for Israel, and, in addition, Trump still has a veto over legislation. But Congress can override a presidential veto by passing any act by a two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate. The Democrats don't have a two-thirds majority, but could get there with the support of some Republicans who support Vance's position on Israel.

Conclusion

Israel runs the risk that its traditional close relationship with the US might cool markedly once the Democratic-controlled Congress takes effect in January. Its academics are right to fear the worst. Its politicians must grasp the urgency of the situation and realise that a centrist government of national unity in Israel is now a pressing priority. In addition, they must ensure own goals like the unrestrained violence in the territories are quickly halted, as the continued images of journalists being attacked in the area will be manna from heaven for the likes of Michigan senator-elect Abdul El-Sayed.

Finally, they need to get the message across to both Congress members and the US public alike that the US, too, gains significant advantages from the relationship. Not only does it benefit from intelligence sharing and Israel's technological prowess in developing new weaponry, but it won't find a more stable and pro-Western ally anywhere in the region.

Sadly, this message has been lost on the likes of Vance and Emanuel, and needs to be reemphasised through a sustained public relations campaign and mobilisation among Israel's supporters. Emanuel famously said in his recent *The Jerusalem Post* interview, "Israel doesn't have a problem with the Democratic Party. It has a problem with America." Israeli politicians have a critical obligation to ensure that Israel has a problem with neither.

• *Baruch the Balanced is an attorney who can't be named for professional reasons, but who also studied both politics and international relations at university.*

Jewish life revived in Milnerton

GILANA LAB

Just 18 months ago, the Milnerton Hebrew Congregation was facing an uncertain future, struggling to cover its expenses, and questioning whether it could afford to remain open. Today, children are returning to shul, young families are moving into the area, and an ambitious fundraising campaign aims to transform the community into a thriving centre of Jewish life.

The transformation has led to the establishment of ChaiCape, an umbrella organisation dedicated to strengthening Jewish life in Milnerton and across broader Cape Town, with a particular focus on creating opportunities for young Jews to remain in the city and build their futures.

ChaiCape chief executive Baruch Joffe says the congregation's financial difficulties had become so severe that its long-term survival was in question. "Income was no longer covering expenses, maintenance had to be scaled back, and fewer young families were coming to shul. There was real uncertainty about the congregation's future."

The turning point came just more than a year ago with the arrival of Rabbi Avigdor Blumenau and Rebbetzin Dr Dvori Blumenau, who began rebuilding the community. Rabbi Blumenau established Yeshivas Meshech Chochmah, bringing daily Torah learning, additional *minyanim*, and renewed activity to the campus.

"Rabbi Avigdor Blumenau and Dr Dvori Blumenau, they're a powerhouse," Joffe says. "In Johannesburg, they've built many institutions. Rabbi Blumenau ran a very successful programme called PBM [Professionals Beis Medrash]. He rejuvenated many Jewish communities there."

Joffe describes the rabbi's approach as innovative, extending beyond traditional shul activities to cater to different Jewish interests and needs.

"He doesn't think inside the box; he thinks outside the box. His idea was to create a community centre, a shul, in a sense, that provides more than just a shul to different types of Jews, a shul that has a gym, a shul that's got a deli, providing Jewish life that many people find attractive."

Rebbetzin Blumenau has played a significant role in the revival, particularly through women's Torah classes, outreach, and youth programmes. Joffe says she hosts events for young people across Cape Town and has helped bring individuals who might not regularly attend shul into communal life.

The changes are evident. Shabbos attendance has increased, Friday night services have become livelier, and classrooms have been converted into children's playrooms. A refurbished playground is now a gathering place for young families, while communal meals and youth activities have strengthened relationships.

"One of the clearest signs of change is how many children you now see at shul on Shabbos," Joffe says. "A year ago, we were asking how to bring families back to shul. Today, more families are beginning to see Milnerton as a place where they could put down roots."

Among those who have relocated are Rabbi Yitzi and Rebbetzin Leah Tanzer, who moved from Jerusalem, and Rabbi Justin and Rebbetzin Rochi Swaine, who moved from Sea Point. Both families have become involved in Jewish education and communal activities.

Yet ChaiCape's ambitions extend beyond Milnerton. Joffe believes one of Cape Town's greatest challenges is retaining young religious Jews.

"We invest in Jewish education, and many young people who become more religious end up moving to Israel, America, or Johannesburg, where there's more infrastructure to support the kind of Jewish life they want to build," he says. "We want those young people to see a future for themselves here in Cape Town. That means building the infrastructure that makes it possible to learn, find a community, and raise a Jewish family here."

ChaiCape aims to address this by bringing together independent organisations and new initiatives on one campus, while supporting Jewish programmes throughout the region. Existing facilities include the shul, yeshiva, Chai Youth in association with OHRSOM Student, a communal gym, shared workspace, and accommodation.

The organisation also hopes to appeal to Jews with different levels of religious observance.

"Some people go to shul every week, some come on the *chaggim*, and others connect through learning, social events, or activities for their children. We wanted to create a central point of connection with room for all of them," Joffe says.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein heads ChaiCape as president, a role Joffe says is particularly significant as ChaiCape is the only organisation in which the Chief Rabbi is formally involved in this capacity. Its executive board includes Rabbi Yochanan Cannon, director of OHRSOM Student Western Cape, wealth adviser and entrepreneur Sion Gelgor, and investment professional Daniel Isaacs. Rabbi Blumenau serves as the organisation's rabbi, with Joffe as chief executive.

The next phase will be supported by a 48-hour Charidy fundraising campaign on 6 and 7 December. Funds will go towards campus renovations, infrastructure, and new initiatives, including a Jewish nursery school, kosher deli and coffee shop, *eruv* (ritual boundary), and community security project.

According to Joffe, the *eruv* is nearing the final stages of council approval, while the deli and coffee shop are expected to open in December, with a more permanent facility planned for January.

Joffe says Rabbi Blumenau wants Milnerton to become "the Glenhazel of Cape Town", with a flourishing shul, a growing yeshiva, active youth programmes, and families choosing to settle there.



Sunday morning communal learning programme

For a congregation that was questioning its survival just 18 months ago, the focus has shifted to creating a future in which generations of Jewish families can thrive.

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CAPE TOWN HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE CENTRE

The many must-haves for *machaneh*

LEE TANKLE

From enough snacks to feed a small army to camping chairs and toiletries to stock a pharmacy, packing for *machaneh* is no small task. It can be a logistical nightmare, with seemingly endless shopping trips, unexpected essentials, and the inevitable last-minute dash for something forgotten.

With packing lists sometimes as long as a person's arm, parents are scrambling to get not only what's on them, but the things their children want that aren't on the list.

To keep track of all of the things that may not be on the lists sent out by the various camps, some parents have created their own inventories.

The first year her children went to camp, Caryn Sher made an Excel spreadsheet of all the things she packed. When camp was over, they revisited it and compiled a revised spreadsheet that has now been shared throughout the community.

"I asked my kids if they took anything they didn't use, or if they needed anything they didn't have, and I updated it right away, so we'd have the info for their next camp. I shared it with friends and family that first year, because Bnei Akiva shared its list quite close to departure, if I recall correctly," she said.

The extensive list is complete with camping chairs, gazebos, fairy lights, Bluetooth speakers, and enough snacks to keep a tuckshop in business.

Add to that washing lines, pegs, emergency toilet paper, and dress-up costumes, it's no wonder parents spend weeks preparing for their children's departure.

Mother of four Bnei Akiva alumni Tanya Midzuk explained that as soon as November came around, the trommels were taken out of storage for a month-long process of cleaning, repairing, waterproofing, and repainting.

Once they were ready, attention turned to clothing, with packing lists passed down from previous *chanichim* (campers) calling for as many as 30 pairs of underwear and just as many T-shirts.

"Then, of course, you needed stretchers and mattresses. I remember when we went to camp as children, we simply had a waterproof groundsheet and a sleeping bag on the floor. Now it's all about luxury, from lighting and fans to every accessory imaginable. And once you've finally bought and organised everything, the challenge is fitting it all into the trommels. Then you wish your baby well and send them off to camp for just three weeks!"

Bnei Akiva mother Dina Diamond said getting her children's trommels ready for camp is a marathon in organisation. And it can get very expensive.

"I mean, they get fed at camp, you pay for food, but kids take an entire trommel with food or share trommels with food. They take biscuits, and chips, and extra cereal, and tuna, and mayonnaise. It's an entire shop of Pick n Pay to see what additional food they can take," she said.



Brett Maunder packing his trommel for camp

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Habonim mom Susan Jaff explained that she would always pack unripe mangoes and avocados in the trommels so they would be ripe when they got to camp.

What began as Marc Weinberg supplying trommels through his regular business grew into an opportunity to cater specifically to Jewish families preparing for camp. Recognising a gap in the market, Weinberg and his wife Tandee opened the Machaneh Store and began selling trommels to parents. The business expanded over the years.

"Some of the more unusual items kids take these days are walkie-talkies so they can communicate with each other between tents. Some of the boys even like to think they can hack into the CSO channels," said Weinberg.

"Then there are the fans. We sell small fans that you can put next to your head, but we heard about a group of boys who ordered a solar-powered ceiling fan from Temu to make their tent more luxurious and comfortable," said Tandee.

"Another popular trend is creating a front porch outside the tent. They buy a whole gazebo, camping chairs, a camping table, and a groundsheet to create their own little chill area. It's basically an extension of their tent!"

Seventeen-year-old Tzipora Suchard, who has been going on Bnei Akiva *machaneh* since Grade 8, explained that one of the most important things that she takes is her own mirror.

"You need to have something that you can use to do your makeup and get ready in the morning, as the bathrooms become too hectic," she said.

Brett Maunder, who has been going on Habonim *Machaneh* for years, said that his must-haves are "Definitely two-minute noodles, as they're like currency on camp; also, I must have two-ply toilet paper."

Demi Cohen, who has been going on camp for four years, said, "My two camp essentials are a crate for under my bed, to get easy access to some random things that I use often without having to always go to my trommel and dig to find it, and a mini fan, always a lifesaver during the day because it's so hot on camp."

Fellow Habo Gabriel Spira said he hasn't started packing at all for *machaneh* yet, but he always makes sure to have extra snacks because, even though he is content with camp food, "they are an invaluable resource for trading and bargaining".

He also takes a book because "reading is the perfect thing to do at the beach, in a hammock, or whenever you need some chill time, especially to get you away from your phone".

Raphy Kaplan, who has been going on camp for five years, explained that he likes to take bottled water with him. "When you're thirsty all the time, a walk to fill up a bottle isn't worth it, so packing bottles of water helps. Cable ties are surprisingly helpful to fix your gazebo, and a fan in your tent just because of the heat," he said.

German-Jewish sports stars dimmed by the Nazis

LEE TANKLE

In the 1920s, Jewish athletes were an integral part of German sports, competing, breaking records, and representing their country with pride. Within a few years, everything changed.

Following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Jewish sportspeople were systematically excluded from clubs, competitions, and institutions, forcing many to abandon their sporting careers or flee Germany altogether.

Their stories of triumph, persecution, and survival have been brought to Johannesburg through *Between Success and Persecution: Jewish Stars in German Sports Before 1933 and Beyond*, an exhibition at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, which will run until 14 April 2027.

The exhibition tells the stories of 15 German-Jewish athletes, including national team members, record holders, and world, European, and Olympic champions, whose sporting careers and lives were forever changed by Nazi persecution.

A German sports historian and academic at the University of Potsdam, Dr Berno Bahro, has brought the exhibition to South Africa after working on it for about 10 years in Germany.

Hazel Shore, who spoke at the exhibition opening, explained that she had not known of her mother Martha Jacob's sporting achievements when she was growing up. Shore started researching her mother's sporting careers only after discovering, in 1985, three albums documenting her achievements.

She discovered a very different woman to the one she knew as her mother.

"Unlike today, when athletes tend to specialise in one discipline, athletics in Germany at the time was very different. Athletes were expected to compete in multiple events, often at least five in a single competition, much like decathletes today. They were incredibly versatile and talented across a range of disciplines," she said.

"My mother's three main events were javelin, discus, and shot put, and it was through the stories of those who knew and competed alongside her that I discovered just how remarkable an athlete she was."

Jacob won her first competition at just six or seven and became Germany's national javelin champion at 18. By 20, she had become the youngest coach of the British Olympic squad, training athletes in 1931 and 1932, although she did not accompany them to the Los Angeles Olympics.

"In addition to her three main disciplines of javelin, discus, and shot put, she competed in the 100m, 200m hurdles, and 100m relay. She was also a champion downhill slalom skier and a championship-level ice skater, which is quite remarkable for someone who threw the javelin. But that was the nature of athletics in those days, a very different sporting environment from what we know today," said Shore.

In 1933, due to the rising antisemitic politics of the Nazi regime, Jacob left Germany for London. After travelling through France and the Netherlands, she settled in Cape Town in 1936, where she married Barney Shore and had two daughters.

Shore explained that her mother's athletic career came to an end when she married and entered a conservative Jewish family in which women were discouraged from working. She suppressed her sporting ambitions to focus on raising a family.

Shore believes that this loss of identity, combined with the trauma of losing most of her family in the Holocaust, had a lasting psychological impact on her mother. Following the deaths of two people she relied on for emotional support, including her husband in 1964, her mother suffered a nervous breakdown and spent the final 12 years of her life deeply unhappy.

It was only through researching her mother's athletic past that Shore began to understand her controlling nature and the difficulties in their relationship. She now encourages immigrants to share their painful histories with their children, believing that suppressing trauma can have lasting consequences for future generations.

Alongside Jacob's story, the exhibition includes the stories of other German-Jewish sports stars who escaped the horrors of the Holocaust, and of some murdered by the Nazis.

There is Helene Mayer, a celebrated German fencer who won Olympic gold in 1928 and was widely admired for her sporting achievements. Although her father was Jewish, Mayer did not identify with the Jewish community and was often portrayed in German newspapers as the ideal Aryan athlete.

Despite Nazi restrictions on Jewish participation in sport, she was invited to compete at the 1936 Berlin Olympics as part of the regime's attempt to convince the international community that Jewish athletes were not being excluded. She won a silver medal and gave the Nazi salute during the medal ceremony, drawing criticism from the Jewish community. Mayer later returned to the United States, where she had been living.

Another athlete featured in the exhibition is ice hockey player Rudi Ball, who settled in South Africa in 1948. Ball was one of the most celebrated ice hockey players of the 1930s. He is particularly remembered as one of the few Jewish athletes permitted to represent Nazi Germany at the 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, despite the regime's systematic exclusion of Jewish sportspeople. His teammate Gustav Jaenecke reportedly refused to compete without him, while Nazi officials recognised the propaganda value of including a Jewish player. However, his Olympic participation did not protect him indefinitely. In 1943, he was formally excluded from German sport, and he was subsequently subjected to forced labour.



Cutout photo of Martha Jacob at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre exhibition

German-Jewish footballer Gottfried Fuchs made sporting history at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics when he scored 10 goals in Germany's 16–0 victory over Russia, a national record that stands to this day.

Despite once being celebrated as one of Germany's leading footballers, Fuchs was excluded from German sporting life following the Nazis' rise to power, and his achievements were erased from official records. He fled Germany in 1937 and eventually settled in Canada, where he lived until his death in 1972.

The exhibition also highlights the achievements of Cape Town-born Jewish swimmer Sarah Poewe, who made history at the 2004 Athens Olympics when she became the first Jewish athlete since the Holocaust to win an Olympic medal for Germany. Having represented South Africa at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Poewe switched to Germany in 2002 and went on to win bronze in the women's 4x100m medley relay. Her story offers a striking contrast to those of the Jewish athletes persecuted under the Nazis, marking a new chapter in Jewish participation in German sport.

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SEA POINT

Specialists give the low-down on longevity

PAULA SLIER

"Supplements make expensive urine."

It wasn't quite the advice guests expected from one of Israel's leading longevity specialists. But Professor Tzipi Strauss, founder and director of the Sheba Longevity Center, had a straightforward message for those attending the annual African Friends of Sheba fundraising gala in Johannesburg: before spending money on products promising a longer life, pay attention to what you're eating, how you're sleeping, and how much you're moving.

Held under the patronage of Lynette and Ivan Saltzman, co-founders of Dis-Chem, the evening focused on longevity, a field attracting growing scientific interest as researchers investigate whether we can delay, or even reverse, some of the biological processes associated with ageing.

Strauss, who joined online from Israel, explained the difference between lifespan and healthspan. Living to 100 is one thing. Remaining healthy, mentally alert, and independent is another. She believes children born today could easily live to 100. The challenge is ensuring those additional years are healthy ones.

At Sheba Medical Center, Israel's largest hospital, doctors are moving beyond treating diseases once they develop towards identifying health risks earlier, when there may still be opportunities to prevent or delay them.

Strauss's advice came down to five familiar areas: exercise, nutrition, quality sleep, hormonal balance, and managing stress. She emphasised maintaining muscle strength, which becomes increasingly important as people age.

She stressed something else that cannot be measured in a blood test: human relationships. Communities, social connections, and a sense of belonging have a profound influence on longevity. American research has linked loneliness and social isolation among older adults to increased mortality. Maintaining friendships and remaining part of a community may be as important to healthy ageing as many medical interventions.

For women, Strauss highlighted the importance of understanding hormonal changes and considering appropriate medical interventions.

She questioned the growing enthusiasm for supplements, warning against taking them without a clear medical need. She also argued that healthy ageing begins much earlier than most people imagine.

Before establishing the Longevity Center, Strauss spent more than 15 years heading Sheba's Neonatology Department. That experience influenced her thinking about the connection between childhood and health decades later. Nutrition, emotional security, and the psychological environment parents provide for their children may have consequences well into adulthood. To get healthier 80-year-olds, attention should be paid to how children are raised.

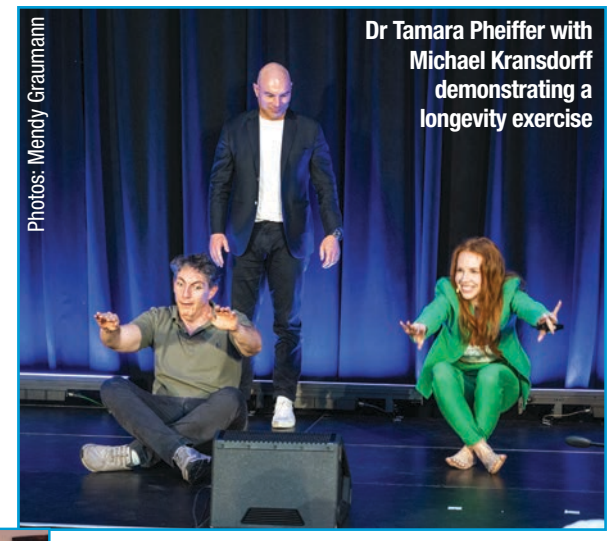
Dr Tamara Pheiffer, a South African specialist in longevity and precision medicine, discussed the emerging science of genetic reprogramming. Although the DNA people inherit remains largely unchanged, the way genes behave can be influenced by biological and environmental factors. Researchers are investigating whether these mechanisms can be altered to slow, or potentially reverse, aspects of cellular ageing. Much of the science remains experimental, however, and laboratory results don't necessarily translate into safe treatments for humans.

Pheiffer's practical advice was less complicated. Inviting an audience member onto the stage, she demonstrated how even someone in their 40s can struggle with balance and getting up from a seated position. Maintaining strength, flexibility, and balance is something that needs to be worked on throughout adulthood, rather than waiting until mobility becomes a problem. She even encouraged people to sit, eat, and work on the floor, where physically appropriate, to maintain mobility.

It was an interesting contrast: scientists are investigating ways to reprogramme cells, yet some of their strongest everyday recommendations involve activities that cost nothing.



Simiso Simelane and Dr Xolani Dube from The Luke Commission, Hen Feder, chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of Israel in South Africa, and Naomi Hadar



Photos: Mendy Graumann

Dr Tamara Pheiffer with Michael Kransdorff demonstrating a longevity exercise

African Friends of Sheba chief executive Naomi Hadar brought a more personal perspective to the evening, reflecting on patients whose lives had touched hers. The story that stayed with her most was that of popular South African radio presenter Xolani Gwala, who received experimental cancer treatment at Sheba in 2019 after his stage-four colon cancer returned. The treatment had halted the cancer's progression, although the tumours had not begun to shrink. Gwala once asked Hadar why she was helping him when he was neither Jewish nor Israeli. "Because I'm Jewish," she replied.

After months in Israel, he had returned to South Africa to see his family, but contracted flu and his condition deteriorated. Hadar recalled how, while he was in a Johannesburg hospital, Gwala took her hand and pleaded, "Please take me back to Israel." He never made it back. He died on 1 November 2019.

Hadar also spoke about Somaliland, which declared independence from Somalia in 1991 and was formally recognised by Israel in December 2025, the only country to have done so. On her most recent visit, she toured a children's hospital in Hargeisa. "What struck me was the silence," she recalled. The wards were eerily quiet, without the sounds of children one might expect in a hospital. Medical staff were caring for patients with limited resources.

Hadar described Somaliland as reminding her of Israel in its early years, a place full of opportunity. She also referred to the philosophy of Sheba Medical Center's director general, Professor Yitshak Kreiss, who believes that saving a sick child's life can help overcome deeply rooted political and religious prejudice among parents and within communities.

Closer to home, Hadar described an initiative involving the Minnie Bersohn Pre-Primary School in Sandton. Children made drawings and wrote messages for patients at Sheba's Edmond and Lily Safra Children's Hospital, while families donated toys and games for young patients to choose free of charge.

The gala also welcomed medical professionals from Eswatini ahead of a planned humanitarian mission by Sheba doctors.

Sheba was ranked seventh globally in *Newsweek* and Statista's World's Best Hospitals 2026 and sixth in the World's Best Smart Hospitals 2027 ranking, recognising advances in medical technology, including artificial intelligence and robotics.

The question raised by the evening went beyond what sophisticated technology might achieve. Can we really turn back the clock on ageing? Scientists are beginning to understand more about the biological processes involved, but many questions remain unanswered. For now, the advice from both doctors was remarkably similar. We may not be able to control how many years we live, but there is a great deal we can do to influence how healthy those years might be. And much of it begins long before we think of ourselves as old.

Chance encounter becomes a legacy of Jewish wisdom

CLAUDIA GROSS

A chance encounter between a critically ill secular Jewish woman and a rabbi became an extraordinary friendship, a spiritual journey, and, ultimately, a book intended to help people confront antisemitism through goodness.

Australian journalist Nikki Goldstein discussed her book *Conversations with my Rabbi*, with Niki Seberini during a webinar hosted by Chabad House Johannesburg. The book grew out of her relationship with Rabbi Eli Schlanger, who was killed in the terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025.

Their connection began years earlier, when Goldstein was critically ill in hospital with chronic lung disease. After her oxygen levels plummeted, doctors warned her family that she would die without being intubated. She was placed in an induced coma.



Nikki Goldstein

Her daughter noticed Rabbi Schlanger walking past the hospital room and asked her father, who isn't Jewish, if they should approach him to pray for her mother. Goldstein's husband immediately leapt up and approached Schlanger.

Goldstein's family didn't know her Hebrew name or her mother's Hebrew name, but Schlanger prayed for her and blew a shofar in the intensive care unit, as it was Elul at the time. About 24 hours later, Goldstein began recovering. When she eventually woke, she told her family that she had felt the prayers.

She later met Schlanger, who was delighted that she had survived. Their conversations developed into a close friendship.

Goldstein described the rabbi as someone who didn't simply believe in G-d, but was "absolutely saturated in G-d". Although she had always been curious about Judaism, she wasn't observant. Her relationship with Schlanger changed her understanding of religion. "I haven't become more observant, but I've become more religious," she said.

Schlanger never pressured her to become more religious. Instead, they spoke openly about faith, morality, relationships, and the challenges of being Jewish. Towards the end of 2024, Schlanger encouraged Goldstein to write a book with him. Rising antisemitism and the questions facing Jewish people after the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October had made him increasingly concerned about how to offer meaningful answers.

Goldstein suggested a book built around their conversations and the seven Noahide laws. These are universal moral principles in Jewish tradition, understood to have been given to humanity by G-d after the flood. The laws prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, sexual immorality, and eating flesh from a living animal. They also require the establishment of systems of justice.

Schlanger wanted to explore how these principles could speak to contemporary life. He and Goldstein discussed how idolatry could include placing money, possessions, celebrity, or status above everything else. They also examined people's responsibility for their use of language, particularly online, and the importance of treating animals and the natural world with care. One question that emerged was "What do we give our deepest yes to?".

For Schlanger, recognising G-d meant recognising the divine in the world and in other people. He encouraged his children to be conscious of G-d's presence in everything, even a leaf they absent-mindedly pulled from a tree.

The conversations weren't always easy. Goldstein said they had disagreed on issues including sexuality, marriage, and Jewish law. She raised concerns about how traditional religious views might affect her gay nephew.

As a modern, secular woman, she was accustomed to making her own decisions. Schlanger approached these questions from his religious tradition. Goldstein wanted the book to preserve their differences rather than present an artificial agreement. Their friendship depended on honesty and the freedom to challenge one another.

The writing process was interrupted by the attack at Bondi Beach, where Schlanger was one of 15 people killed during a Chanukah celebration. Goldstein and her husband had been invited to attend Chanukah by the Sea but had decided not to go after having lunch with other journalists. They arrived home at about 18:40, around the time the shooting began.

Goldstein's last conversation with Schlanger had been four days before.

She later spoke to a young rabbi who had witnessed Schlanger's final moments. When the shooting began, people sought cover. A young policeman and a rabbi were shot, and the wounded rabbi was trying to help the policeman. Schlanger emerged from hiding, raised his hands, and approached the gunman. He attempted to negotiate, saying, "There has to be another way." He was trying to protect the two wounded men when he was fatally shot.

Goldstein said Schlanger had encountered the darkest aspects of humanity through his work as a prison chaplain. Yet he had continued to believe that people could choose goodness and that he could make a difference.

After his death, Goldstein returned to their recorded conversations. She realised they contained enough material to complete the book. With the approval of Schlanger's widow and other family members, she approached a literary agent and secured a publishing deal within 24 hours.

Schlanger's father-in-law, Rabbi Yehoram Ulman, wrote the final chapter, which focuses on justice. Rabbi Zalman Shmotkin helped check the religious content. Goldstein was determined to preserve Schlanger's words and the authenticity of their conversations. She felt a particular responsibility to his children, including his youngest, who was two months old when he died.

The book's publication has evoked complicated emotions. Goldstein misses her friend, but has also felt supported by the Jewish community and the many rabbis who have embraced the project. Schlanger had wanted the book to reach beyond the Jewish community. His wish was for it to be available in Jewish households, and for every Jew to give a copy to someone who isn't Jewish.

For Goldstein, its message is particularly relevant amid rising antisemitism. She believes that responding to hatred with more hatred will achieve little. "Let's not meet darkness with darkness, let's meet darkness with light," Schlanger told her.

She urges people to make goodness part of their everyday choices; through kindness, compassion, and the way they treat others. "If you don't like the word G-d, then just replace it with good, because it's the same thing," she said.

A friendship that began with prayers beside a hospital bed is now preserved in a book carrying Schlanger's message beyond his lifetime: that even in the face of darkness, people can choose to bring light.

JOHNNIE WALKER

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Veteran broadcaster builds winning podcast

CLAUDIA GROSS

Broadcasting pioneer Rina Broomberg has added four South African Podcast Awards to a career spanning more than four decades, during which she helped build some of the country's most recognisable broadcasting talent.

Broomberg's latest venture, Podcast Party, has been recognised for its contribution to political discussion, current affairs, presenting, and live events.

"Podcast Party is still a relatively young platform, built by a small and committed team, so to receive four awards was particularly gratifying," Broomberg told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The recognition comes as she reflects on her extensive experience in media, leadership, and talent development in her recently released book, *Holding the Frame: Lessons from the Edge of Brilliance*.

Broomberg's broadcasting career began during the formative years of Radio 702. She joined the station in its first year, initially working behind the scenes in management. She later became its station manager and managing director, also overseeing Cape Talk.

Radio 702 became an important platform for independent broadcasting and public debate in South Africa. Broomberg was among those who helped establish its identity and develop the talent that would shape the country's broadcasting landscape.

She became known for recognising potential, mentoring presenters, and creating opportunities for emerging broadcasters.

Among the personalities whose early careers she helped nurture were Gareth Cliff and Xolani Gwala. She also helped open doors for broadcasters including Somizi Mhlongo and Tumi Morake through her work developing talent and providing opportunities.

Her relationship with Cliff eventually developed into a business partnership. Together, they established CliffCentral in 2014, moving beyond traditional radio broadcasting into online content and podcasting. The venture created opportunities for established presenters and newcomers to develop their skills and reach audiences through digital platforms.



Siya Sangweni and Rina Broomberg

Broomberg's book draws on more than four decades of working alongside exceptionally talented people. But rather than focusing on individual personalities, it examines the dynamics of talent, leadership, power, and the environments that allow exceptional people to flourish.

Broomberg reflects on her experiences working with prominent broadcasters, including John Berks, Stan Katz, and Cliff. She explores the often unseen work of supporting successful personalities and building sustainable organisations around them.

This experience now informs her work at Podcast Party, which began as a campaign on CliffCentral ahead of the 2024 national elections.

The podcast's original purpose was to encourage voter participation, particularly among younger South Africans. After the elections, it developed into an independent content platform focused on open dialogue, critical thinking, and informed decision-making.

At the South African Podcast Awards, its presenter Phumi Mashigo was named Best Host. Its *Democracy Unplugged* programme received bronze for Best News or Current Affairs, while *This Is Politics* won silver for Best Politics and Opinion. The *Democracy Unplugged* Youth Month panel, hosted by Siya Sangweni, received gold for Best Live Podcast Event.

Broomberg says the awards recognise different aspects of what the team is building, from individual presenting to political commentary and live audience engagement. She believes South Africa's current political environment makes informed discussion particularly important.

"We're living through a period of enormous political change and uncertainty," she says. "There's no shortage of opinion, but opinion and informed debate aren't necessarily the same thing." She believes audiences need opportunities to hear different perspectives, challenge information, and reach their own conclusions.

For Broomberg, giving younger South Africans a voice is equally important. She says they will live with the consequences of decisions being made today and must participate in conversations about their future. Podcast Party's Youth Month event demonstrated the value of giving young people opportunities to engage directly with these issues.

She believes podcasting has significant potential in South Africa. Digital platforms have lowered the barriers to entry and created opportunities to reach audiences that might no longer engage with traditional media.

However, she cautions, "There's a tendency to confuse podcasting with simply putting a conversation on YouTube. For me, the medium is less important than the substance."

Her ambitions for Podcast Party include developing partnerships, introducing new voices, and creating conversations that bridge generations, communities, and different perspectives. Despite her move into digital media, Broomberg's underlying approach remains consistent with the work that defined her broadcasting career.

She has always enjoyed bringing talented people together and creating environments in which they can do their best work. "The most rewarding part has been watching the team grow, seeing the conversations resonate with audiences and knowing that we're creating something worthwhile," she says.

90 years of empowering SA through education

LEE TANKLE

From vocational training and educational opportunities during apartheid to teaching coding, robotics, and cybersecurity, ORT South Africa has been adapting to the country's changing needs for 90 years. All the while staying true to its mission of empowering people through education.

As ORT SA celebrates its 90th anniversary on 17 November, it reflects on nine decades of educational transformation, community upliftment, and the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

Chief executive Ariellah Rosenberg explained that while it's almost impossible to quantify how many lives ORT SA has touched, what matters most to her are the personal stories.

"There have been many projects over the years that weren't documented. For example, Cyril Ramaphosa was a board member of ORT SA in the 1980s and was aware of the work we were doing in these communities," said Rosenberg. "But while numbers are important, the true impact of education can't always be measured in statistics. Often, it's the individual stories that really show the difference education makes."


Pupils at the original ORT-OZE wood workshop for children in Johannesburg

ORT SA was established in 1936 after representatives of World ORT toured the country and identified the need for a local organisation.

Founded in Russia in 1880, World ORT sought to equip Jewish communities with vocational and practical skills to help them earn a sustainable living. ORT SA initially served primarily as a fundraising arm, supporting educational and vocational training projects globally, including programmes for Holocaust survivors and displaced persons after World War II, as well as initiatives in Israel.

Over time, its work expanded beyond fundraising to include vocational training within the Jewish community and outreach programmes in disadvantaged communities. During apartheid, ORT SA provided university bursaries to black pupils, later establishing a technical high school and introducing teacher training programmes as South Africa transitioned to democracy.

"Since then, ORT SA has continued to grow, remaining focused on its original mission of employability. With South Africa facing high unemployment, we are constantly looking for ways to create opportunities through education, skills development, and entrepreneurship."

Rosenberg explained that in the early years, ORT SA was a social centre for the South African Jewish community.

"ORT SA gradually grew its membership, with chapters established across the country. For many in the Jewish community, it became a place to socialise with meaning and purpose. Women played a particularly important role in running these chapters and organising fundraising initiatives.

"What we also discovered was that, even during apartheid, there was a great deal of passion for working in disadvantaged communities. ORT SA was already involved in outreach programmes, including work with mining communities," said Rosenberg.

As South Africa moved towards democracy, Ramaphosa remembered ORT's work and approached the organisation to help introduce a new technology curriculum as the country moved away from Bantu education. In 1994, ORT SA established a high school offering technical subjects to black pupils, providing them with skills that would help them find employment.

"One of the former students, who will be participating in our anniversary panel, described how, even before democracy, the school gave him his first real experience of freedom through education. Many of those students are still in touch today, and graduates have gone on to become university professors, business owners, and successful professionals. It shows the lasting impact that education can have on people's lives," said Rosenberg.

"Something else we've discovered while researching our history is that ORT SA provided bursaries to black students to study at university during apartheid, in partnership with Unisa. This was significant at the time and reflected the national executive committee's commitment to supporting disadvantaged communities. We're still trying to trace some of those bursary recipients as we piece together the organisation's history," she said.

Since 1994, ORT SA has focused on improving education through teacher training, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In 2006, it introduced Singapore Maths to township schools in Gauteng, with the programme proving so effective that the Department of Education incorporated some of its teaching methods into its textbooks.

Over the years, ORT SA has expanded its work, introducing coding and robotics, equipping teachers and pupils with critical thinking and technological skills to address South Africa's educational challenges.

Since 2015, ORT SA's coding clubs have reached more than 7 000 schoolchildren, helping to bridge the digital skills gap through teacher training and support. One of them is Tanaka, a Grade 9 pupil who discovered her passion for coding in 2018. She went on to study computer science and establish coding clubs for girls in her Soweto community. Now working at Raspberry Pi, she reconnected with ORT SA and encouraged the organisation to apply for a new project.

As a result, ORT SA is set to expand its coding clubs to 80 schools in the Eastern Cape in 2027, reaching another 7 000 pupils.

Rosenberg said it is noteworthy that ORT SA has evolved along with South Africa and its Jewish community. While raising funds for World ORT's international projects, the organisation also supported education and skills development locally, including donating the first computer labs to the King David Linksfield and King David Victory Park schools.

"ORT SA also became a place where members of the Jewish community could socialise with meaning and purpose, coming together to support a shared cause. At one point, the organisation had around 10 000 members, if not more, demonstrating the important role it played in bringing the community together," said Rosenberg.

"Reaching 90 years shows that we are continuing a legacy while evolving with the times and looking towards the future. We also have a responsibility to carry forward its mission of educating for life and making an impact through education," said Rosenberg. "While respecting our roots, we must continue to evolve. That's why we're introducing programmes in areas such as cybersecurity, cloud computing, and big data for unemployed youth. It's about honouring where we've come from while preparing for the future."

Teaching children to transform their horizons

LEE TANKLE

"This organisation has given young minds the confidence to believe that anything is possible through knowledge. ORT SA's achievements aren't measured by the recognition it receives, but by the young minds it continues to empower, generation after generation."

These were the words of a pupil from the Curtis Nkondo School of Specialisation, winner of the Young Engineers Movement hackathon, at ORT SA's 90th anniversary gala on 17 November.

The school's pupils showcased their award-winning prototype, designed to convert community waste into energy.

Poetry, speeches, and personal stories at the gala celebrated ORT SA's nine decades of transforming lives through education and skills development.



Dov Ben-Shimon receives a gift from Ariellah Rosenberg

Photo: Mendy Graumann

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein described education as one of the greatest gifts a person can give another, unlocking human potential and creating opportunities.

World ORT chief executive Dov Ben-Shimon highlighted the organisation's global impact, noting that it operates in more than 40 countries and supports more than 100 000 scholars and students worldwide.

"For much of ORT SA's early history, the organisation helped raise the resources that enabled ORT to operate and grow around the world. Since 1994, it has developed its own impactful programmes, working with teachers, young people, entrepreneurs, and communities across South Africa," he said.

"ORT South Africa has always been deeply rooted in its local community while remaining connected to a much larger global network. That connection is one of World ORT's greatest strengths."

A panel of ORT SA alumni highlighted the organisation's impact. The panel featured Ian Jacobsberg, a director at Fluxmans Attorneys; Michelle Zitha, a natural sciences and technology teacher at Rebonwe Primary School; Monwabisi Qhinebe, founder of Monwa Clothing and Textile; Sasha Said, a community development social worker at the Chevrah Kadisha; and Meso Qhobela, junior marketing manager at ORT SA.

Qhinebe, an alumnus of the ORT STEP School, reflected on how the institution shaped his future as one of South Africa's first pupils to receive technology education.

"When we were taught about technology it wasn't just about what we learnt in the classroom. We were taught how to apply technology in our everyday lives, which enabled us to envision a future filled with opportunities through technology," he said.

Zitha shared how ORT SA's teacher development programmes transformed her teaching methods. Since joining the STEM Academy in 2022, she has received training in coding, robotics, and integrating technology into the classroom, enabling her to create more interactive lessons.

Inspired by her robotics training, she established a science club at her under-resourced school, encouraging pupils to enter science fairs and competitions. Her pupils have since won awards at regional and provincial levels, including laptops and tablets. She emphasised how investing in one educator can benefit hundreds of children.

Qhobela shared how ORT SA gave her a second chance after she struggled to find employment despite her qualifications. She started again as an intern at 30 while pursuing her master's degree.

"There is nothing more frustrating than feeling stagnant," she said. Realising that your potential is being limited before you've even had the chance to begin is heartbreaking. I didn't want a job just for the sake of being employed. I wanted something that would allow me to grow. So, at 30 years old, I decided to start from scratch as an intern. It taught me that learning and growth can begin at any age."

The pupil from the Curtis Nkondo School of Specialisation summed up the occasion. "As we celebrate this milestone, I leave you with this message: Don't wait for change to happen. Become the reason change happens."

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Outside of the Bagel Belt



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

Last weekend the South African Jewish Board of Deputies held its national executive council (NEC) meeting. The NEC meets three times a year, and representatives from our councils around the country travel, some of them a long way, to be in the room. It is where we debate, argue a little, plan, and set our direction for the months ahead. This meeting was particularly robust, and I came away with a clear sense of where our energy needs to go next year.

Much of our time went to the Board's policy and strategy on online and social media hate speech. This is one of the most complex areas of our work. Hatred online travels fast, crosses borders easily, and is often hard to trace to its source. As a community we need a clear strategy for dealing with online hate: where it comes from, the platforms that carry it, and what it leads to. The Cape Council has been particularly successful here, and much of the discussion focused on how we, as a national Board, can work together with them and align our strategies across the regions.

We were also joined by local elections expert Wayne Sussman, who took us through a deep dive into the election results and the coalitions likely to govern our cities and towns. Wayne is a communal treasure and, as I told the meeting, a true "*nachas* machine" for all of us. As the body responsible for the political representation of our community, the Board has to understand this new political landscape properly. New coalitions bring new people into office, and we need to engage with them effectively and build the relationships that make sure our voices are heard and our issues are dealt with.

The conversation I expect to shape our year most was about reclaiming public space. In the years since 7 October, the space Jews occupy in public life has slowly eroded. It did not happen all at once. Bit by bit, we have become more careful about where we gather and how visible we are when we do. The NEC put forward a clear call for our communities to take that space back.

Chanukah is a good place to start. Last year's public lighting, held just after the Bondi tragedy, was exceptionally powerful. It would have been understandable for people to stay home, but instead we came out and lit together. This was a wonderful and emotional event and was attended by diplomats from embassies including Australia and the US. But it took place right in the middle of our own "Bagel Belt". We were proud and we were visible, but mostly to each other.

That is a little ironic, given what Chanukah is about. The festival celebrates the rededication of a space that had been taken from us, and the custom has always been to place the menorah where passers-by can see it, so that the miracle is publicised rather than kept indoors.

Looking back over the weekend, I was struck by how often our discussions, whether about social media, coalitions, or a Chanukah lighting, came back to the same thing. Either we are present in the places where South African life happens, or we leave those places to others. In the coming year the Board will prioritise opportunities where we can reclaim our spaces across the country.

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

A licence to mind your own business



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

Robert Pattinson is the new James Bond. He might be a decent choice, but I was hoping they'd make Bond a Joburg Jew. Primarily because I'd like to see him maintain a cover story in Glenhazel.

Or find a dinner suit.

The Glenhazel man has a cupboard full of Psycho Bunny golf shirts and stretch jeans at least one size too small. He hasn't worn a tux since his matric dance at the Jewish Guild. He still has it, obviously. It's in a plastic bag at the back of the cupboard, and every few years he tries on the jacket and decides it would look fine if he didn't have to close it.

There's also the asthma, the flat feet, and a slight intolerance to gluten that no doctor has confirmed. Most of the evidence comes from that one Shabbos lunch at which he had three helpings of kugel.

MI6 could probably work around all of that. I'm less sure about the family's Life360 group.

Bond is halfway through a briefing at a casino in Monte Carlo when his phone lights up. His family wants to know why he's in Monaco when he said he was going to a conference in London. He tells them it's a long story. His mother says that's fine, she's got time. His brother wants to know why his battery is at 4%.

"Bond. James Bond," he says to the woman at the roulette table.

"Sorry," he adds. "I just need to send my family a photo of the conference."

He gets away from the casino in an Aston Martin. He is almost around the first bend when he notices he is being followed. The chase takes four minutes. The call to Discovery Insure takes 26.

"Mr Bond, can you explain the sudden braking?"

"There was a man trying to kill me."

"And the second incident?"

"Same man. He was very committed."

By the end of the call, Bond has disclosed more about the mission than he told his handler. He's still on hold, trying to find out whether the whole thing will affect his fuel rewards.

Back in Joburg, he attempts something genuinely ambitious. He goes into the kosher supermarket on a Friday afternoon to buy wine without anyone finding out where he's having dinner.

"Who's it for?" asks the woman at the till.

"Nobody in particular."

"Then why are you buying the good one?"

He hasn't even tapped his card.

He says he's going to dinner in Sandton with people she wouldn't know.

"Try me," she says.

Jewish Bond goes away on another assignment. This time he switches off Life360. For two Fridays he doesn't appear at the supermarket, which suits him fine. He's finally managed to go somewhere without providing an itinerary or hearing about his battery.

On the third Friday he's back. He's got a story ready, but the woman at the till has already reached under the counter.

"I put one aside for you last week," she says. "You always buy the good one."

He waits for her to ask where he's been. She just asks if he'd like a bag.

"I was in Monte Carlo," he tells her.

"I know," she says. "Your brother told me. Did you have a nice time?"

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Following the recent appointment of the current Head of Elementary, Mrs Nitsan Segev-Levi, to succeed Mrs Rachel Friedmann as Principal, the Board of Carmel School Hong Kong now seeks to appoint a new Head of Elementary with effect from August 2027.

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Final closing date for applications: 15 January 2027

New club encourages people to meet at their own pace

LEE TANKLE

You don't have to be a marathon runner, or even a runner at all, to find your place in Cape Town's newest Jewish running club. All you need is to be Jewish and have a pair of takkies and a willingness to connect.

Launched officially this month, with leading marathoner Adam Lipschitz, ELEVATE Run is bringing members of the Jewish community together, step by step, with the aim of building friendships, encouraging well-being, and strengthening communal ties.

From seasoned runners to those who prefer a stroll, the initiative is proving that sometimes the strongest connections are made outside of traditional communal spaces.

The club grew out of the broader ELEVATE initiative, which aims to educate, inspire, and connect members of the Jewish community. Its organisers recognised the opportunity to use Cape Town's outdoor lifestyle as a way to encourage both physical health and meaningful social connections.

The initiative held its first event on 15 October before officially launching on 5 November.

After sharing his journey as an elite athlete at an ELEVATE Leadership & Learning event the previous evening, Lipschitz was invited to take part in the launch, giving community members the chance to run alongside one of the sixth fastest marathon runners in South African history.



ELEVATE club members running with Adam Lipschitz

"Adam is one of South Africa's leading marathon runners, and he is also someone whose story reflects many of the values we want ELEVATE Run to represent: commitment, consistency, well-being, and setting ambitious goals," said Steven Liptz, founder of ELEVATE.

"We wanted the launch to be more than simply the start of another weekly run. Having Adam there gave people the opportunity to run alongside someone who competes at an exceptional level and added something special to the occasion."

However, while Lipschitz's presence added excitement to the launch, Liptz emphasised that ELEVATE Run isn't about athletic ability, but rather creating a space where everyone, regardless of age or fitness level, feels welcome.

The club was born out of wanting a less formal way for people to connect.

"Running and walking seemed like a very natural way to do that," said Liptz. "Running is accessible, social, and relatively simple to organise, but we never wanted ELEVATE Run to be only for runners. From the beginning, walking has been an important part of it as well. The idea is that someone can come and run, or simply walk, and still be part of the same community experience. That makes it much more inclusive and gives people a reason to come together regularly in a healthy and informal environment."

Participants are encouraged to stay for drinks, to catch up and meet new people. With prizes and rewards already part of the experience, plans are underway to introduce coffee runs, trail running, and other activities, all with the ultimate goal of strengthening community connections.

Liptz believes the club meets the challenges in any community of creating opportunities for people to connect outside of their usual circles.

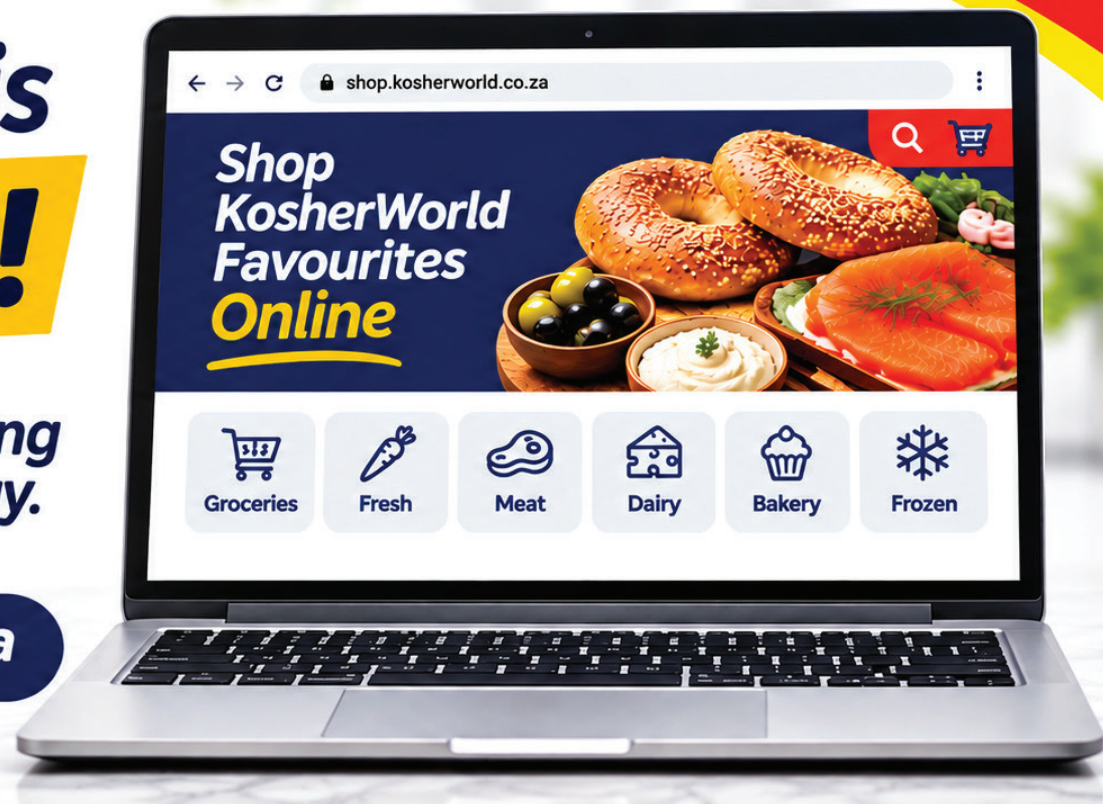
"A running and walking group can bring together people who are different ages, attend different shuls, have different interests, and may otherwise never meet. It also provides a very low-barrier way for people to participate in Jewish communal life. You don't need any particular level of knowledge or fitness. You can simply arrive, walk or run, and be part of something," said Liptz. "I think there is real value in creating more informal spaces where people can build relationships and feel connected to the broader community. This is the type of thing that can contribute towards building a sustainable Jewish community."

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