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Israeli police rescue women from SA prostitution ring

NICOLA MILTZ

Israeli police have rescued two South African women caught in a South African prostitution network after being allegedly lured to Israel with promises of employment.

In a dramatic rescue, the police saved the two victims, believed to be from KwaZulu-Natal, from an apartment in Israel last Thursday, 1 August, also arresting four foreign nationals from South Africa and Nigeria.

This is the second rescue of South Africans in a few weeks after three other South African victims were located by Israeli police under the guidance of the National Anti-Trafficking Unit (NATU) in the social justice division of the justice ministry, according to information from the justice department.

It brings to five the number of South African victims rescued by Israeli police in recent months in an ongoing criminal investigating involving a South African-linked human trafficking and prostitution network.

Israeli police have been working on this case for several months. According to the police the case involved six apartments, in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, three of which they went into on Thursday. "Our objective is to end trade in women and shut down this organisation," a police spokesperson told KAN, Israel's national broadcaster.

Freelance political writer and columnist Kenneth Mokgathe, who is doing a master's degree in African Studies at Ben-Gurion University, told the SA Jewish Report that the two victims were traumatised. He is in contact with

a social worker who is dealing with the case.

The social worker, a fellow student at the university, approached him about this case, knowing that he was a journalist. "She has two South African clients who were rescued by Israeli police. They were trafficked for prostitution. A South African woman along with others are in police custody," Mokgathe said.

"According to her, the two victims, who were seeking employment back home, were offered cleaning and hospitality jobs at restaurants in Israel,"

Mokgathe told the SA Jewish Report.

"Seeing this as a good work opportunity, it's understood that they borrowed money for their flights, believing they could pay it back from their earnings. Upon their arrival in Israel, all their travel documents, including passports and possessions, were confiscated by the alleged female perpetrator and her team. They were taken to an unoccupied, filthy apartment, held against their will, and forced into prostitution," he said.

"From what I've been told by the social worker the two victims are

traumatised. They are still in shock. They are devastated. I believe they have requested further treatment and support in Israel before returning home."

The South African Department of International Relations and Co-operation (Dirco) said it had not received any requests for assistance regarding South Africans allegedly lured to Israel by a South African prostitution network.

"No family member has reached out to Dirco, nor has any request for assistance been received," Dirco

spokesperson Clayton Monyela told the SA Jewish Report. "The Israeli embassy here also hasn't formerly written to us about the issue."

Brigadier Athlenda Mathe, the national spokesperson for the South African Police Service, said she wasn't aware of the case. "We can't comment while we need to verify. Interpol has made contact to get more information."

However, the SA Jewish Report has uncovered that the two women are being cared for in a special shelter in Israel set up for victims of human trafficking.

Last week Ynet and KAN reported that four foreign nationals from South Africa and Nigeria living in Israel had been arrested for bringing women from South Africa to traffic and solicit them for prostitution. Video footage of police arresting a number of people and seizing cash, cellphones, and documents was viewed on KAN.

An indictment was filed on Sunday, 4 August, charging a number of perpetrators with, among other offences, trafficking in persons and holding under conditions of slavery, according to information provided to the Israeli embassy in South Africa. Embassy staff said they had received this information from the Israeli justice ministry.

The case yielded its first results some weeks ago, after the first three rescued victims were transferred to a dedicated shelter for victims of trafficking where they received services and support. After an initial period in the shelter, the

Flying to victory



Israeli windsurfer Sharon Kantor, whose father is South African, wins a silver medal at the Olympics on Saturday, taking Israel to a record six medals.

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Be the light for our hostages this Shabbat

STAFF REPORTER

The Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNF SA) and The Base shul are calling on Jewish South Africans to light yellow Shabbat candles this Shabbos in the merit of the more than 100 Israeli hostages still in captivity in Gaza after more than 300 days.

The organisers of this initiative, set for Shabbat Chazon, which is a significant and introspective time leading up to Tisha B'Av, are also calling on the community to give charity in merit of the release of the hostages, and to assist returned hostages and their families to come to South Africa for some respite and recovery.

"This Yellow Shabbat Candle project gives us the opportunity to put our feelings of empathy and mutual responsibility into action in a positive way," says Rabbi Aharon Zulberg of The Base community. "We're doing this together, and we're doing it for each other."

"These days preceding Tisha B'Av are a time of solemn reflection and introspection. There's an urgency for us to examine our actions and aspire to a better future."

"In spite of the sombre tone, there's a strong message of hope and redemption. We cannot underestimate the power of one more good deed. Let's work together with each other to do just that. This message of hope for redemption

even in our darkest hour makes this a poignant time for communal and personal reflection."

Saul Jassinowsky, one of the campaign organisers, says, "The yellow candles symbolise solidarity, remembrance, and hope. By lighting these candles and bringing the light of Shabbat

"In spite of the sombre tone, there's a strong message of hope and redemption. We cannot underestimate the power of one more good deed. Let's work together."

into our homes and our lives, the community is urged to reflect on the plight of the Israeli hostages still held captive in Gaza. We urge everyone to stand in solidarity with them and their families, and the unimaginable collective trauma of *am Yisrael*."

Each pack, which can be ordered by following the link below, consists of two yellow Shabbat candles, a prayer in the name of a hostage still held in Gaza, and a small *tzedakah* box. The campaign, according to Michael Kransdorff, the



Volunteers Elisheva Falkson and Leyla Jassinowsky assembling yellow Shabbat candle packs

chairperson of JNF SA, extends further than a symbolic act to providing tangible support.

"The funds raised will be used to bring returned hostages and their families to South Africa, providing them with a much-needed

opportunity to recover in a supportive and nurturing environment," he says.

JNF SA and The Base community have run numerous projects since 7 October, in Israel and South Africa, to highlight the plight of the hostages. These include the yellow ribbons that drape around many trees and street poles in Johannesburg, yellow hostage pins, and an empty Shabbat table outside Kosher World.

"Following the success of the first visit to South Africa and Mauritius a few months ago by returned hostage Sapir Cohen, we have been asked by the Hostage Families Forum in Israel to facilitate additional trips. A brother, whose two siblings remain in captivity in Gaza, will be visiting South Africa shortly, and we're proud to have him as a keynote speaker as part of JNF SA and The Base's upcoming programme."

"This initiative embodies our community's long-standing tradition of standing shoulder to shoulder with Israel in her hour of need and offering practical assistance to those who have endured unimaginable trauma," Kransdorff says.

To take part in the initiative, go to: <https://jnml.io/Candles>

War and the blessing of peace

Torah Thought



Rabbi Greg Alexander
Cape Town Progressive
Jewish Congregation,
Temple Israel

This week, we begin the last book of the Torah: *Devarim* (Deuteronomy). It contains the words that Moses speaks to the Israelites on the plains of Moav as they prepare to cross the River Jordan without him into the Promised Land.

It's a mixture of history, explanation, and inspiration. Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses the master educator, is giving the Jewish people everything they need to know before he dies.

It's striking to us, reading these words in August 2024, how the opening chapters are so filled with war. Moses reminds the children of Israel how they fought with Amalek, with kings Og and Sihon, and how Joshua will need to prepare the soldiers for war when they enter Canaan. It's a startling reminder of how the history of the Jewish people has so often been about our need to manage the conflict between ourselves and other people - to fight, flee, avoid, and survive.

And yet, we've never stopped

praying for a better world, for a time "when nation shall not lift up sword against nation or learn war evermore". (Isaiah 2:4). Every time we daven, we end our Amidah with a prayer for peace.

Is this just naïve? Look around the world today, read a newspaper - who can possibly think about peace? Be a historian, and look back at the history of conflict and conquest, wars and treaties, power against power. And yet, it's not the whole story.

"Indeed, the eternal, your G-d, has blessed you in all your undertakings. G-d has watched over your wanderings through this great wilderness; G-d has been with you these past 40 years; you have lacked nothing." (Deuteronomy 2:7)

What did Moses want to teach in recounting the journey of the past 40 years? Was it that the cycle of war, trauma, slavery, and rootless wandering would have to continue? Or that with the knowledge of the past, with a greater understanding of our history and a reminder of the many blessings we're constantly showered with, we can learn to build a better future? As he looked out across the Jordan, knowing he wouldn't be leading the Israelites any further on their journey, he used

all his skills as a teacher and speaker to let his people know that they had everything they needed to live good lives, break the cycle of the past, and create communities founded on justice and peace.

We have to believe that our past doesn't have to predict our future. We can choose to have faith in the best of humankind, created in the divine Image, and that we'll find ways to build a more loving and respectful universe where all can find their place.

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National Women's Day (9 August) commemorates the 1956 march of 20,000 women to petition against the country's pass laws that required South Africans defined as "black" to carry an internal passport, known as a passbook. In 2006, a re-enactment of the march was staged for its 50th anniversary, with many of the 1956 march veterans.

My grandson turns five in Hamas captivity



ELI BIBAS

OPINION

On that horrific Saturday, 7 October, I was supposed to visit my son, Yarden, and his family in Kibbutz Nir Oz. At 06:30, sirens blared. I called Yarden, who assured me they were in the shelter. We thought it was just another round of rocket attacks from Gaza. But at 09:20, I received a text message from Yarden with three words that still haunt me: "I love you." Then, silence.

My young grandchildren, Ariel and Kfir Bibas, along with Yarden and my daughter-in-law, Shiri, have been held captive by Hamas for more than 300 days. Every day, I feel their absence. Every day, it crushes me, but every day, I make the decision to continue to fight to bring them home.

The horror of what unfolded was gleefully distributed by Hamas through images and videos. The entire world has surely by now seen my beautiful daughter-in-law, Shiri, clutching the world's most famous redheaded children, fear etched across their faces as they are dragged into captivity. Yarden, violently kidnapped into Gaza on a motorcycle, has been shown bloodied and surrounded by terrorists and civilians. In the months since their abduction, we've all been victims of the cruel psychological warfare waged by Hamas. They forced my son to appear in a video, telling him his children were dead to break his spirit. But we can't help but cling to hope, even as each passing day makes it that much harder.

Ariel should be celebrating his fifth birthday this week. He probably would have loved to get another Batman toy or another tractor to play with in the yard. Instead, he marks this milestone in the darkness of captivity. His little brother, baby Kfir, barely nine months old when he was taken, has now spent more of his young life in Hamas captivity than in the loving arms of his family.

Last August, for Ariel's fourth birthday, the entire family gathered at Kibbutz Nir Oz. It was a beautiful family event – aunts, uncles, and grandparents all came together. Like every family birthday, Shiri, with her loving attention to detail, prepared themed decorations, a cake, and delicious food, while Yarden took care of the music. It was joyful, it was loving, it was filled with laughter and warmth.

It was the last birthday we all celebrated together. Shiri's parents, Yossi and Margit, were brutally murdered on 7 October. We know we can never recreate those exact

moments, but we continue to hold onto hope. We're waiting for the release of my Yarden, Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir. When that day comes, we dream of celebrating together once more, even if some familiar faces will be painfully absent.

For more than 300 days, we've met everyone we could, across the world. We've spoken, pleaded, shaken hands, and pressed for action. We made sure every time people around the world saw us, they remembered those two small, ginger-haired boys – the last children still in Hamas captivity.



Eli Bibas with grandson Kfir Bibas

And now, finally, there's a deal on the table. This deal is the only way to bring all the hostages home - some, tragically, for proper burial rather than joyful reunion. We need a deal urgently. We have no time to waste. Every week, every day, and every minute in captivity is a danger to the lives of my grandchildren, my son, my daughter-in-law, and all the other 111 hostages. How long can a baby and a toddler survive captivity hell?

I will never stop hoping that one day, I will see my family again, embrace them, kiss them, and witness their innocent smiles once more. But hope alone isn't enough. We need action, and we need it now. Anyone who hears this: please, help me bring my family home.

• Bibas is the father of Yarden Bibas; father-in-law of Shiri Bibas; and grandfather to Ariel and Kfir Bibas.

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Life goes on in shadow of Armageddon

OPINION

ROLENE MARKS



Hurry up and wait. This is all one can do when an impending mass attack from the terror-sponsoring country that has vowed to wipe you off the face of the planet is imminent. The tension is palpable in Israel as we brace for Iran's retaliatory strike in response to the elimination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh. Israel hasn't commented on Haniyeh's elimination.

The assassination was a major embarrassment for the Iranians and a message that Israel has the ability to reach its enemies, no matter how far away. Haniyeh was filmed the day before, chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" as new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian was sworn in.

Iran is more than rattling sabres, it's threatening a massive blow to Israel and doesn't care if it ignites the region. Israelis brace for impact.

Life in Israel is a series of paradoxes. On the surface, we seem extremely resilient – and we are. But scratch beneath the surface, and we're a country in deep pain, angry that 115 hostages are still in the hell of Gaza, and war fatigued. We're also a country longing to dance again, packing restaurants and bars because the tourists aren't here, and defiantly going about our daily business because war, sadly, isn't new to us.

Our resilience muscles are well flexed. Israelis are living a bizarre double life. Our shelters are prepared, ensuring that we have water, spare chargers, snacks, and whatever else we may need. We're still going about our daily routine, doing whatever we need to do, albeit with one eye on news updates. We wait for the orders from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Home Front Command about any changes to the guidelines, and we're highly annoyed at WhatsApp groups trying to grow followers by pushing messages that create panic. We know what to do, and will have sought out where

the shelters are when we're out and about our daily lives. Contrary to a popular "news" group – and I use this term loosely – that many follow on Telegram, we're not running for our gas masks and waiting for Armageddon. Do we anticipate possible interruptions to services and infrastructure? It could happen, which is why the mayors of cities have been working closely with relevant IDF units.

We're not panicking. We have faith in the IDF and the air-defence array and allies that will probably join a coalition similar to the one that defended our skies on 13 April. American warships stand ready off our coast. As I write this, the overwhelming sentiment in

Israel is "Get it over with already." We know that prolonged threat is also a form of psychological warfare.

We're not naive. We're aware that this is the most dangerous phase of the war since the first hours following 7 October. Hezbollah has blatantly threatened to target civilians, and the response has been deafening silence. We're aware

that we could face an unprecedented amount of missiles and drones. The IDF has said that we're prepared for any eventuality, and can quickly move from defence to offence.

For the Israeli public, in the event of Armageddon, proceed to the nearest shelter and wait for the storm to pass. Some may wonder, how are you so calm and resigned? How do Israelis have this "keep calm and carry on" attitude when an attack looms? The answer is simple. We have no choice. *Am Yisrael chai!*

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



People going about their daily lives by the entrance to an underground shelter at Habima Square in Tel Aviv

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SA's Hamas support 'immoral and dangerous'

TALI FEINBERG

As Israel braces itself for retaliation after the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on 31 July, South Africa once again blames Israel and commiserates with Hamas.

On 1 August, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) released a strongly worded statement regarding Haniyeh's death. It's the first significant announcement that Dirco has made since the beginning of the government of national unity (GNU), demonstrating what appears to be a continuation of the Hamas support expressed by Dr Naledi Pandor, the former minister of international relations and cooperation.

"It is regrettable once again that SA chose to deviate from its stance on international relations by taking sides and refusing to engage with Israel," says Wendy Kahn, South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) national director. "Had it done so, then perhaps it would have had relevance or a role to play in de-escalating this frightening conflict. By siding with Iran and Hamas and refusing to engage with Israel it has become irrelevant on this critical platform."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks says, "As the threat of an Iranian attack on Israel intensifies by the hour and global markets weaken, the South African government's continued support for rogue states and recognised terrorist groups again places it on the wrong side of history."

"Iran has signalled its intent to strike Israel, directly and through proxy groups," she says. "While South Africa has remained silent on the brewing tension, its recent actions have increasingly aligned it against the West and with the Iranian government and its violent proxies. At this critical juncture in global politics, South Africa has unfortunately once again positioned itself on the wrong side of the moral divide. Our

government aligns with oppressive regimes and consistently seeks to legitimise terrorist organisations. This radical foreign policy stance doesn't reflect the values of South Africans."

She notes that "the South African government's allegiance with terrorist entities and rogue nations also jeopardises crucial economic ties with key trading partners in the United States and Europe. As the US provides military support to Israel in preparation for potential conflict, South Africa's backing of Iran and terrorist groups is morally indefensible and economically reckless."

"The South African government's actions have contributed to a political climate that emboldens genocidal regimes against the world's only Jewish state," says Marks. "Should the conflict escalate, South Africa's role in delegitimising Israel's right to self-defence through unfounded genocide accusations at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will bear partial responsibility."

Marks says the SAZF "urges the government to adopt a more balanced foreign policy that recognises Israel's right to self-defence. Israel doesn't seek broader conflict, and the SAZF hopes for a peaceful resolution."

Toby Dershowitz, the managing director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies Action, known as FDD Action, a non-partisan organisation that lobbies the US Congress on national security issues, says, "The Haniyeh statement telegraphs that South Africa hasn't made a strategic decision to abandon its embrace of Hamas and its patron, the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"This will remain a source of tension in its relationship with the US," says Dershowitz. "The new international relations and cooperations minister, Ronald Lamola, hasn't proven that he wants to have a constructive impact on peace and stability."

His comments come after Lamola visited

Iran, where he said, "South Africa took the step to put an end to Israel's impunity [with its ICJ case]. Many countries including Iran have expressed their support for this aim."

Says Dershowitz: "To be respected by the democratic world, he [Lamola] would need to pivot from supporting Hamas to pressing Hamas to release the more than 110 hostages and ending its oppressive rule over Gaza."

Dirco's statement sends a message to the

role makes him a legitimate military target. Haniyeh's abhorrent tactics should draw the ire of the world, not South Africa's approval," Dershowitz says.

Karen Milner, the SAJBD national chairperson, strongly condemned Dirco's statement, describing Haniyeh as an "arch-terrorist".

"Dirco's pro-Hamas bias has been evident since former minister Naledi Pandor's call to Haniyeh in the immediate aftermath of the 7 October atrocities," says Milner. "The depiction of Haniyeh in Dirco's statement ignores the atrocities he was responsible for, both against the people of Gaza and Israeli civilians. Haniyeh amassed extreme wealth while his people suffered in poverty. Given Haniyeh's history, the hypocrisy of the South Africa government's statement is ludicrous."

"What the statement fails to recognise is that Haniyeh was one of the master minds of the 7 October attacks that started this current conflict and the root cause of Gazans' suffering," says Milner. "Furthermore, by refusing to release the hostages, Haniyeh extended the plight of Gazans."

"The statement should be juxtaposed by the same government's failure to acknowledge the callous murder of 12 Israeli children, bombed by Iranian proxy Hezbollah while [they played] soccer on 27 July," she says. "It appears that there's no compassion for Druze children if they don't feed into the department's demonisation of the only Jewish state."

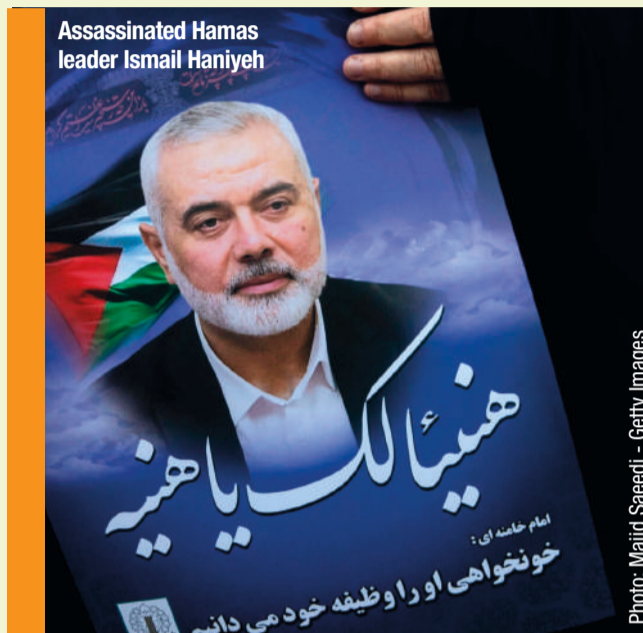


Photo: Majid Saeedi - Getty Images

Financial Action Task Force, which has placed South Africa on its grey list, "that Pretoria isn't yet serious about tackling terrorism finance, corruption, and other illicit activities".

According to Dershowitz, "Pretoria may have its own reasons to cosy up to Iran's terrorism proxy as a distraction for its domestic woes, but the facts speak for themselves: Haniyeh played a pivotal role in collaborating with Iran leading up to 7 October."

"Haniyeh may have worn expensive suits and sought to hide his atrocities behind his veil as a negotiator. However, he cannot be absolved of orchestrating war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moreover, his

Israeli soldiers have no beef with biltong

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

"You don't know how much it helps. It gives us a boost of energy when we need it." Based on this and other rave reviews from a growing number of Israeli soldiers, it's clear that biltong is fast becoming a staple for members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

It's tasty, compact, and doesn't need to be refrigerated – ideal for soldiers craving a protein-rich snack. It almost seems inevitable that biltong would become a South African IDF hero. And it's not just those with South African roots who are talking about it.

Michelle Nathan, events and volunteer co-ordinator at Telfed, the absorption organisation for South Africans in Israel, recently met injured Israeli soldier Elisha on a visit to Tel HaShomer Hospital in Tel Aviv with colleagues.

"Elisha is a double amputee with six children," says Nathan. "He heard our accents, asked where we were from, and then told us how much he loves biltong, especially now, as he's struggling to meet his daily protein intake." Struck by his story, Nathan and her colleagues decided to surprise Elisha with ten packets of biltong when they returned to visit another soldier at the hospital a week later.

"Biltong is easy for soldiers to carry while they're in the field," Nathan says. "It's light and delicious, and it's been fun to share some South African flavours with our amazing soldiers."

Meaghan Fisher, who made aliya with her family from South Africa in 2010, agrees. She's been volunteering to help soldiers throughout the war, sourcing them anything they need, from underwear to snacks.

Along the way, she heard about Ariel Geffen, a South African expat living in Modiin, who was using donations to make biltong for soldiers. Biltong wasn't initially well known in Israel, she says, but it's suddenly burst onto the scene.

When she gave a batch of Geffen's biltong to the Yamas unit – one of the units upon which popular Israeli TV series *Fauda* is based – Fisher says one soldier said he didn't expect to enjoy it. "Many said the taste that was unique and it wasn't something that they got used to straight away." Yet once they did, they never looked back.

"It gives me a warm feeling that I'm able to share something from the home I was born in with the home I live in," Fisher says.

For Geffen and his wife, Maxine, who together produced and distributed more than 60kg of biltong to soldiers – more than 1 000 individual 60g bags – this project was an ideal way to show their support. Geffen, the son of caterer Shelley Geffen, has long been a foodie and periodically produced and sold biltong prior to 7 October. Stuck overseas following the massacre, he and Maxine immediately began to consider how they could give back upon their return.

"At the time, the biggest challenge the troops were facing was getting good protein in the field," Geffen says. "They were given rations in the army, mostly of tuna, or what they call 'kabanos', which are long, thin, dried beef or chicken sausages. So, we thought about biltong as

we had everything that we needed to make it. I built a relatively big machine, and pulled out my old machine to raise the capacity."

The couple began raising funds in their WhatsApp groups, and initially distributed bags to friends and community members who had volunteered to return to the army and or were in the *miluim* (reserves). "It snowballed from there."

"Aside from South Africans, people from all

we a fixed, lower price on the meat because it was for soldiers," Geffen says.

Yet, the biltong-making process was time consuming. It took hours to break down a giant piece of meat, which is what they were buying. "We were breaking it down, trimming it up, seasoning it, and letting it marinate. Then we'd hang it for three or four days, check when it was ready, and then cut slices and package them. We would hand-write on each bag that it was kosher, and include a short message like 'am Yisrael chai'. It was rewarding when soldiers sent us their feedback and photos."

However, ultimately, making biltong and maintaining a full-time job became too demanding, and Geffen was forced to take a break. However, he's still part of a distinctly South African meat tradition, joining men from his community who braai for soldiers.

Raising money to buy and send kosher biltong to Israel from South Africa, Cape Town based Martine Trope and her niece, Olivia Diamond, run Operation Biltong Boost for IDF soldiers. Diamond got the idea from her mentor on an Ohrsom Israel tour, and enlisted Trope's help. Trope secured the services of kosher butcher Stanley Norrie, who gives her a good price and divides the biltong into easily transportable 50g bags.

"The biggest problem is getting the biltong to Israel," she says. "I've taken some, and we scatter it in people's bags when they agree to take it with them. From there, the biltong is delivered to two ladies in Jerusalem who distribute it. We've heard that there's a huge need and ideally, we'd like to send over boxes of biltong, but it's got to be cost effective."

In spite of the challenges, Trope remains focused on her mission. "These kids going into the army could be my children. They're heroes. They believe in Israel, and they're doing it for all Jews around the world. There isn't much we can do here, so if we can do something small that will touch them directly, that's what I want to do."



Israel Defense Forces soldiers in Khan Younis, Gaza, eating biltong supplied by Ariel Geffen

backgrounds – Israelis, Americans, Canadians – reached out to me as they'd tasted biltong or knew about it from a friend. Mothers who were looking for something to send to their kids in the army also contacted me."

The couple purchased quantities of meat based on how much money they'd raised and how much freezer space was available. "Luckily, the butcher gave

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A symbiotic relationship

I remember waking up on 7 October 2023, 307 days ago, to my phone pinging with messages about what was happening in Israel. My colleagues and I, who rarely have reason to talk on weekends, began WhatsApping each other non-stop as we needed to share our fear, horror, and worry about the information coming our way from Israel.

None of us were able to resume our Shabbos or our weekend. I'm sure that most Jews around the world had very similar experiences. And, to date, while we all live the lives we have always lived, nothing has gone back to normal for us.

Though we may be about 6 000 kilometres away from Israel, the heartbreak and devastation of that day felt like it happened right here because it seemed way too close to home – and I don't mean in distance.

When we heard of the atrocities that Hamas terrorists perpetrated on those living on the Gaza border, it was as if it had happened to our own family. The horror, the shock, the initial disbelief! It hit home to this community in a way that was almost surreal because it was so real to us, but almost irrelevant to the rest of the country. The rest of South Africa carried on as usual, which was bizarre because, as Jews, our lives were massively altered.

For months, most of us were almost addicted to our phones as we watched and read as much as we possibly could about what was happening in Israel. We simply couldn't get enough of it because we needed to be a part of it even though we were thousands of kilometres away. When we heard what happened to young women, it was as if it was our sisters or daughters. And we all felt the pain of having loved ones dragged off into captivity and not being able to contact them. And we still feel anguish for those who are still there, and for their families (see page 3).

As Israel went into Gaza to make sure that Hamas could never again do what it did on 7 October, and to try and get the hostages back, we braced ourselves for the fallout. We worried that there would be backlash against Jews around the world as soon as Israel retaliated. And it happened with a vengeance!

We felt it. We still feel it.

Then, three terrorist leaders were assassinated in the past week or so, and Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah threatened massive retaliation. Although Israel has accepted responsibility for only one of these assassinations, the leaders of world terrorism blamed Israel and threatened revenge.

And we know they aren't just threatening. So, Israelis, all our families living in Israel, Jews around the world, and those of us in South Africa are bracing ourselves for retaliation. We're holding our individual and communal breath for what will happen.

We know it's just a matter of time. What we don't know is what will happen, how bad it will be, how long it will take and, worst of all, what harm will be done to Israel. Suffice to say, the stress is mounting, and while Israelis are doing their best to continue as normal, I'm not sure how that's possible.

I guess, we can't actually know what it feels like to be in Israel right now, but Israel and the Jewish world have an incredible symbiotic relationship. And so, we go in for yet another night of light sleep and worry as we wait for this inevitable retaliation.

Meanwhile, the Israeli team came home from the Olympic Games in Paris bringing a record number of six medals with it. Windsurfer Tom Reuveny brought home gold, while in the women's division, Sharon Kantor, whose dad is South African, won a silver medal. These medals were the first for Israel in windsurfing since 2008. And Reuveny's gold is Israel's fourth ever gold at the Olympic Games. Kantor is the first woman surfer to win an Olympic medal for Israel.

Artistic gymnast Artem Dolgopyat took second place in the finals, barely losing to Carlos Yulo from the Philippines. Then, there were the three Israeli judoku: Raz Hershko and Inbar Lanir, who both won silver, and Peter Palchik who won bronze.

Not for one moment did Israel's sports champs forget who they were and where they came from. As Reuveny told Channel 12 after winning gold, "I did it for our brave soldiers!"

Reuveny's brother is a combat soldier fighting for Israel, and the sports hero admitted that over the past nine months, it hasn't been easy to focus on training for the Olympics.

"It was so hard to train while everyone else was crying over lost people, dead people. I still had to put my head down and keep training, and it's all for this moment," Reuveny told Reuters after he won.

Due to security concerns, the six Israeli medallists weren't even able to participate in the medal presentations in front of the Eiffel Tower. The delegation was under the highest level of protection in the wake of threats of violence.

News of their achievement lifted spirits in Israel, however, as the nation waits for the expected attack.

"You made an entire nation happy, a nation at war that's praying for the return of its hostages. You brought us a great light," Israeli President Isaac Herzog told the team before it left France. "Thank you on behalf of an entire nation that was so moved. I salute you, and I think I speak for the entire Israeli public which salutes you."

And as my colleague said after interviewing Kantor and her family this week, "Isn't it weird how it feels like she's one of us – like family! It's bizarre being Jewish sometimes." I know exactly what she means. We all do. We're all family, a slightly dysfunctional, argumentative, hot-headed, interesting, and wonderful family!

May Israel and all our people survive the upcoming onslaught!

Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



Communities need rebbetzins. Let's empower them

OPINION

REBBETZIN AVIVA THURGOOD



My time as rebbetzin has ended, but as I look back, I'm aware of how much more my role could have been.

A lot of what I have learnt comes from being involved in a special community. Though my husband was the rabbi at Beit Midrash Morasha, I always told people how lucky I felt that I got to belong to the community that I would have chosen even if he wasn't the rabbi. A little more than two years ago, when he stepped down to move into education, I got to prove this.

The title "rebbetzin" is unique in that you obtain it when marrying a rabbi. It's bestowed on a woman whether she's capable of taking on the role or not.

I know of rabbis who decided to not take on a community position because their wives weren't comfortable with being rebbetzins. I respect that.

It's important to know who you are and who you aren't.

Being a rebbetzin is hugely rewarding, and can be massively draining. You're involved in the happiest and saddest moments of your community's lives. You're invited into their hearts and into their homes, but you're required to do the same.

Initially I resisted the title, feeling that it wasn't who I was. I had a career outside of being a rebbetzin. I met my husband when he had plans to be an actuary. By the time he had changed his mind, I realised I loved him more than what his chosen profession was going to mean to me as his wife, and so there I was.



The shift to embracing the role began when the chairperson at the time gently reminded me that the title wasn't actually about me. The community needed a rebbetzin. He was right. With at least 50% of a community's membership being female, communities need rebbetzins.

The problem with a title being attached to one's husband's status is that when a rabbi passes away before his wife, what happens to her? I'll never forget an event we attended. Numerous rabbinical dignitaries were there, and the event began with each of them coming into the banquet hall, marching towards the centre of the room to their seats at a table on a raised platform. Two of the honoured guests were women who had lost their husbands. These husbands had been leaders of the South African community, people who had helped to create the foundation for what we have today. The two wives were giants in their own right, having created incredible programmes and foundations independent of their husbands' work.

Both had been mentors, and I was proud that they were being acknowledged. I can still feel the room go still and my mouth go dry at the memory of the moment when these two women, who had walked in with the other rebbetzins and rabbis and confidently made their way to the table of honoured guests, were ushered away to our table. No longer having their rabbinical husbands at their sides, they were demoted to sitting with everyone else.

My recollection of their embarrassed, lost, and bewildered faces are a constant reminder to me of how careful we have to be with a person's *kavod* (honour). If we're going to give women titles because they are married to a certain individual, if we are going to ask them to give so much of themselves to this role, we dare not take away this title when

rabbis pass away.

When we arrived in Cape Town, my husband was the youngest pulpit rabbi at the time. We had a lot to learn. The best advice we were given was from a senior rabbi who told us not to try to be our predecessors, but to find out what our strengths were and build on that.

I was challenged to do things I didn't know I could do but which the community needed to be done. Luckily I love research and learning new things.

"...wouldn't it be awesome if there was a place where women could learn how to fulfil this role? I'm not just talking about how to make a delicious Shabbat meal."

There's still plenty I can't do, and I learnt quickly to say yes to some things and no to others. Rebbetzins have a certain luxury in that way that rabbis may not.

I'll always be grateful to all the rebbetzins around me who were supportive, and endless sources of information. I feel particularly privileged that the late Rebbetzin Ann Harris was a long-standing patient of mine.

When I would see her name on my calendar, I would plan all the things I wanted to ask her opinion about and see if I could squeeze it into our 45-minute sessions. She became so much more than a mentor. She was a dear friend whom I miss terribly. Her sharp wit, clarity, and world view were refreshing. I appreciated that she was a woman committed to her family, community, and career, but who somehow managed to be there for what sometimes felt like the whole world, never missing a beat.

It inspired me to think that I could maybe juggle a little bit too. I feel for rebbetzins who might not have had the positive experience I have had, who have maybe had things demanded of them that they aren't skilled in doing and not given the resources to learn how to do them.

As much as the concept of a rebbetzin is a modern one, we're aware of all our forefathers having equal partners in their wives. I love the story of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, who when asked if Mashiach will be a man or a woman, replied that Mashiach will be a couple.

We know that in communities today, rabbis are successful when their spouses are a part of their community roles. It makes sense. A community is so much more than just a *minyan*, and if we want women to feel comfortable in our shuls, we need leaders in our rebbetzins.

It can take years and years of study to be honoured with the title of rabbi. Rebbetzins earn their title through the years of self-sacrifice and love that they invest in their communities.

But wouldn't it be awesome if there was a place where women could learn how to fulfil this role? I'm not just talking about how to make a delicious Shabbat meal – although I would have appreciated this training – or how to cater for 30 people when there are 15 minutes until Shabbat comes in and you thought you had only 10 guests coming – again, a skill I would have gladly learnt beforehand. I'm talking about skills in dealing with death and trauma; knowing how to handle the tough situations; self-care; making sure the community is held while not neglecting your own family; how to give a high-level, text-based shiur on par with any rabbi; and answering halachic questions that arise where a woman would much rather approach her rebbetzin than her rabbi.

It's time we acknowledged that being a rebbetzin is a full-time job for those blessed enough to hold the title. We need to honour our rebbetzins independently of what their husbands have achieved. They are the cheerleaders behind their husbands' success, but they are successes themselves, and should be recognised as such. Finally, if we expect rebbetzins to be the leaders we need them to be, let's support them, uplift them, and empower them to tap into their full and unique potential. How much richer we and our communities would be.

• *This piece is the personal opinion of the author, who has been rebbetzin in a Cape Town community for the past 10 years.*

In shadow of war, university focuses on renewal

OPINION

DANIEL CHAMOVITZ



As threats continue to hang over Israel, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) has played an active role in defending the country and securing the home front. Since 7 October, 7 000 students and faculty have been called up for reserve duty in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Several hundred remain on active duty as I write this. Since 7 October, we have lost 115 members of our community.

university could be a major part of a renewed south.

The traditional concept of universities as detached ivory towers is gradually dissipating, giving way to a more integrated and impactful role in their respective regions. At Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, we've always embraced the vision of what Arizona State University President Professor Michael Crow terms a "fifth-wave university". This

positions universities as pivotal in driving sustainable growth and prosperity within their communities. living in the Negev. As a university, we can make significant contributions in four key areas: economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship; social embeddedness and empowerment; research and global solutions; and education, access, and equity.

This ethos was evident in the founding vision for our university. When David Ben-Gurion envisioned a Hebrew Oxford in the Negev, he prophesied back in 1955 that this future university would "play a key role in turning the Negev into a flourishing region through scientific research and technological advancement" while building a more just and inclusive society. This is what we've been doing since our founding 54 years ago.

In the challenging context of the ongoing war, we must reinforce our commitment to holistic engagement with our surroundings, guided by the following question: How can we maximise our impact?

While we remain committed to the foundational roles of education and research in transforming society, our focus has expanded towards envisioning and preparing for post-conflict reconstruction in the Negev by embracing all facets of societal development - economic, social, and beyond. BGU stands ready to play a critical role in this process, leveraging its existing partnerships across society, industry, government, and the IDF. Our collaboration with the Tkuma Authority and other initiatives exemplifies our proactive approach.

We must remember that reconstruction encompasses much more than physical rebuilding, it's an opportunity to elevate the standard of

These new initiatives and opportunities will also make BGU an attractive place for international students seeking not just an excellent academic opportunity but also the opportunity to help rebuild the Negev and take part in ushering in a new era of hope and prosperity.

• Daniel Chamovitz is the president of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He will be speaking at Limmud in Johannesburg, held 23 from 25 August, on topics such as "What a plant knows", "Is Ben-Gurion's dream dead?" and "Conversations about campus".



The campus of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

We joyfully welcomed home our student, Noa Argamani, from captivity in Gaza and stood beside her sorrowfully as she buried her mother. We have three BGU hostages still in Gaza, and we recently mourned the confirmed loss of Alex Dancyg in Gaza, whose body was returned to Israel by the IDF. We're helping our students wounded at the Nova massacre and during the war both psychologically, physically, and academically.

We're also looking ahead. It's important to realise that although the grievous toll of this war weighs heavily on us all, it hasn't broken us. We're determined to build back better, and I believe our new type of

to the foundational roles of education and research in transforming society, our focus has expanded towards envisioning and preparing for post-conflict reconstruction in the Negev by embracing all facets of societal development - economic, social, and beyond. BGU stands ready to play a critical role in this process, leveraging its existing partnerships across society, industry, government, and the IDF. Our collaboration with the Tkuma Authority and other initiatives exemplifies our proactive approach.

We must remember that reconstruction encompasses much more than physical rebuilding, it's an opportunity to elevate the standard of



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Why Tisha B'Av is still on our calendar



RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN

OPINION

The Western Wall is where our people go to pray, to celebrate *simchas*, and to mourn the destruction of our Holy Temple. As next week we will mark Tisha B'Av, our national day of mourning, the Kotel will be the central point of our commemorations and prayers.

Once upon a time, there were some who wondered why we should still continue to mourn. After all, didn't we have a sovereign state of Israel? Wasn't Jerusalem united under Jewish rule?

But the fact is that no Israeli rabbi has ever suggested that Tisha B'Av be deleted from our calendar. Nor have the staunchest, most zealous Zionists ever proposed doing away with the custom of breaking a glass under the chupah. This tradition has always reminded us that our personal joy is incomplete until our nation's joy is re-established. And that requires the total restoration of our national life, including a Jerusalem fully rebuilt.

Thank G-d, since 1967, we're again able to visit the Western Wall. But every visit to the Kotel, as important as that sacred shrine may be, reminds us that it's only a pitiful remnant of a glorious Temple that once stood inside those walls.



We're certainly not yet independent of Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah, or their supporters who threaten us daily and who declare brazenly that they would happily wipe us out if they could.

So, the reality is that although we have a Jewish state operating in our eternal homeland, the national state of exile is more than just geographical. Exile – *galut* – is a state of being, not a place on the map. Whether we live in Jerusalem or Johannesburg, we're all in exile. Until the era of redemption arrives and the Temple is rebuilt, exile isn't over. You might live in an apartment in the old city of Jerusalem overlooking the Western Wall but you, too, are in exile because the entire Jewish people is still in a state of exile.

Sure, it would have been wonderful if David Ben-Gurion's announcement in 1948 spelled out not only a declaration of independence but also real, practical, and total independence. The truth, however, is that we're far from independent.

We're certainly not yet independent of Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah, or their supporters who threaten us daily and who declare brazenly that they would happily wipe us out if they could. Nor are we independent of the extreme pressure exerted on our leaders by our friends in Washington, London, and Paris.



The Western Wall or Kotel where the Holy Temple once stood

When Jewish lives are being lost to terrorist armies, when rockets are still shot at Israel from north and south, and our neighbours are determined more than ever before to drive us into the sea, when they still deny us our basic legitimacy, and when world courts and the

international media challenge our most basic right to defend our citizens, can we claim that we are really and truly independent?

Thank G-d we have the heroic and courageous Israel Defense Forces with an army, navy, and air force. Thank G-d

they are fighting valiantly to thwart our mortal enemies' murderous machinations. But true independence means that our national security is no longer threatened, and that a genuine and lasting peace has been achieved.

No wonder Moshiach is called the "messenger of peace". Who else can we turn to for that long-awaited dream? Politicians? America? The United Nations? The European Union? None of the above inspire any confidence whatsoever.

And so, unless Moshiach comes before next Monday night, we still observe Tisha B'Av. And we'll still fast and sit on low chairs in the manner of mourners. We'll mourn the destruction of our Temple and the state of exile it created. And we'll pray for the full return to Jewish sovereignty and total independence from our enemies, even from our so-called friends. We'll yearn for the time when terror will finally be vanquished, and our children will feel safe and secure. May that time be now. Amen!

• *Rabbi Yossy Goldman is life rabbi emeritus at Sydenham Shul and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.*

Renewed relevance of mourning our history

OPINION

MOSHE TARAGIN



With every passing year, Tisha B'Av mourning for the lost Temple becomes more challenging. The disastrous fall of Jerusalem and the derailment of Jewish history occurred thousands of years ago. Authentic mourning requires actual sadness, and it's difficult to experience genuine woe about events so far in the rear-view mirror.

Additionally, not only have thousands of years passed, but our society has dramatically advanced, bearing little resemblance to the ancient world of the Temple. We're governed by enlightened democracies; operate in progressive free-market economies; are privileged to have widespread education; and enjoy advanced medical care. The world of Judea and Jerusalem, of Romans and of Persians appears dated. It sometimes feels as if these catastrophic events occurred not only in a different era, but on a different planet.

On top of all this, many Jews view our return to Israel as the inception of a broader redemptive process. Facing a future of optimism and opportunity, we feel gratified to live in an era of historical reawakening. In spite of the reality that many of our dreams have yet to materialise, our collective happiness over this historical awakening dulls our grief.

In exile, when we endured unending violence and hatred, Tisha B'Av felt contemporary and pertinent. Our bleak existence felt like an unending nightmare, permeated with the same sorrow and mourning of Tisha B'Av itself.

Having arrived home in Israel, we assumed that our suffering was a relic of the past.

The date 7 October changed all that.

Everything changed, and suddenly Tisha B'Av feels more real and relevant than ever. Darkness has once again cast its shadow over Jewish history. We're waging a relentless struggle for survival against fanatical murderers, intent on erasing us from the map. Fierce antisemitism rages across the globe, as furious mobs hunt down Jews with unchecked hatred. In the post-7 October world, Tisha B'Av resonates with relevance and urgency like never before.

How should it be observed in the aftermath of the horrific tragedy which befell us just 10 months ago. How can we connect 2023 to 70 CE?

In the past, in an effort to imbue the day with deeper meaning and spirituality, some rerouted Tisha B'Av from its original purpose. Facing the daunting task of mourning over a tragedy which occurred 2 000 years ago, many redirected the day toward introspection, improvement, and *teshuvah* (repentance), effectively converting Tisha B'Av into a mini-Yom Kippur. Others stressed Jewish nationhood by visiting sites related to the fall of Jerusalem such as the Kotel, the Old City, or Herodian. Still others held *kumsitz*



Tisha B'Av feels more real than ever before since the outbreak of the 7 October War with heightened levels of mourning across Israel

gatherings suffused with soulful, sorrowful songs to capture the melancholy mood.

In truth, none of these perspectives capture the ideal of mourning on Tisha B'Av. At its core, the day is earmarked for pure mourning and sadness without any external distractions.

Ideally, Tisha B'Av should simulate actual mourning and shouldn't be oriented to *teshuvah* or other important values. It should be a day of frustration and despair over the tragedy of Jewish history.

This year on Tisha B'Av, we have so much to mourn over: the loss of thousands of innocent lives; the horrific pogrom we faced on our own land; the hostages who still live underground in excruciating conditions; the immense number of injured soldiers whose lives have been forever altered. And of course, the horrific desecration of G-d's name. This year, it's imperative to dedicate Tisha B'Av, as much as possible, toward pure mourning and sadness without rerouting it to other important, but less Tisha B'Av-relevant experiences.

However, our anguish over 7 October cannot be severed from the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem or the sadness of our prolonged exile. There's real danger that our continued agony over 7 October will obscure the broader story that Tisha B'Av is meant to lament. How can we incorporate the suffering of 7 October into past Jewish tragedies?

First, acknowledge and lament our role in the rupturing of history. Jewish history wasn't meant to evolve this way. There was a different trajectory to our history and, by extension, history in general. We were meant to enter the land of Israel, establish Jewish monarchy, erect a model society, and model the dignity of a G-d-like lifestyle. Tragically, after centuries of betrayal and religious failure, we were expelled from the land of G-d.

Ever since that bleak moment, history hasn't been the same. If history feels broken, it's because we broke it. Our broken world gave rise to centuries of antisemitism and the atrocities of the past 10 months. Of course, we don't take blame for the crimes and violence of others. But on Tisha B'Av, we mourn the potential we lost and the turmoil that ensued. Our rupturing of history destroyed two Temples, provoked terrible Jewish persecution, and produced the tragedy of 7 October. The day we left Jerusalem, the world broke, and it has remained shattered for the past 2 000 years. That shattered world is still, in many ways, morally and spiritually broken.

On Tisha B'Av we read about the 10 martyrs who were brutally massacred by the Romans. Rome subjugated many cultures, but there was only one nation whose leadership it hunted down and sadistically tortured and murdered. The brutal death of our 10 martyrs underscored this discrepancy. We are G-d's people, tasked with calling the world to higher moral and religious ground. The children of G-d living in the land of G-d will always elicit ferocious opposition.

We were reminded of this harsh reality on 7 October, when we faced similar sadism and brutality. There's no logic to the hatred and animosity our enemies feel for us. It's obvious that we're unlike other nations, as our history reflects. This asymmetry reflects our chosen status and our lofty mission. There has to be higher meaning to the hatred and anger.

We outlived the hate and violence for thousands of years, and we'll outlive the current attack upon our people. The massacres of 7 October remind us that the great struggle of Jewish destiny continues. On Tisha B'Av, we mourn the steep price of that mission. The events of 7 October show that we're still paying that price.

• *Moshe Taragin is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a Master's degree in English literature from the City University of New York. He's the author of Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below (Kodesh Press), which provides religious responses to 7 October.*



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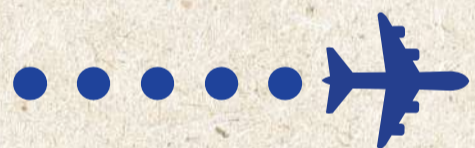
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Kantor's windsurfing dreams take flight with silver medal

NICOLA MILTZ

Pride washed over the South African-born father as he sat on a sun-drenched beach in Marseilles, his eyes fixed on his Israeli daughter gliding across the water during the finals of the Olympic Games women's windsurfing event.

For her breath-taking display of skill and determination Sharon Kantor (21) clinched a silver medal in the women's IQFoil windsurfing final at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Unbeknown to her, her father, Steven, and two brothers, Michael and Guy, were hidden in the crowd, witnessing her triumph in spite of her request for them not to attend, fearing their presence might overwhelm her on such a grand

stage.

"We had to be there," said an elated Steven this week.

His wife and their other children were watching back home in Israel in the living room of their home in moshav Avihayil in central Israel. The moshav, he said, had never experienced as much excitement as it did last Saturday, 3 August, when Sharon became the first female windsurfer to win an Olympic medal for Israel, a historic moment celebrated by the entire community.

"It's a dream come true for Sharon," said Steven, who lived in Glenhazel in Johannesburg before making aliya with his family in 1969 aged five. "We're all excited about Sharon's achievement. There's a huge celebration, with flags and a parade, planned for her return."

Well-wishers arrived at Ben Gurion Airport in droves to welcome her back, offering respite from a week of extreme tension as rockets flew overhead from Lebanon and Iran threatened retaliation for Israel's killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Teheran.

"There was already celebration on the moshav last week, with news crews and everyone cheering Sharon on during the race," said Steven.

Sharon's coach, Shahar Zuberi, who won a bronze medal in Beijing, guided her to this remarkable victory. Israel clinched three medals that day, including a gold medal for windsurfer Tom Reuveny.

Sailing is Israel's second most decorated sport following judo. Sharon, whose parents are both olim –her mother, Nurith Dinte, was born in Australia – previously won a gold medal at the IQFoil World Championships, following a silver at the European Windsurfing Championships a year earlier.

In IQFoil windsurfing, sailors fly off the water at high speed, lifted by a foil.

"It's exciting to watch," said Steven, pointing out that sailing at such a high level requires enormous determination and hard work.

"Sharon wakes at 07:00 every day, and spends up to three hours windsurfing in all weather conditions. She trains hard in the gym, runs, swims, and cycles. She eats three full meals a day because she burns a lot of energy. It's a full-time job with physiotherapists, dieticians, a mental coach, and sports doctors."

After Shabbat last Saturday, President Isaac Herzog called Sharon to congratulate her on her accomplishment. "He told her that she made history as Israel's first woman to win a sailing medal, and thanked her on behalf of the nation," Steven said.

Steven was the Israeli national



squash champion and for a decade chairperson of the Israel Squash Association. Sharon is the middle child in her family, with two brothers and two sisters. She attended Ramot Yam High School in Michmoret.

Steven said his daughter's passion for windsurfing started at an early age. She first got on a board at the Michmoret Sailing Club aged 10, and was instantly taken with the sport.

"The club, which is near Netanya, is about 2km from our house and all our kids took to sailing when Michael started as a youngster," he said.

Soon, Sharon showed signs of talent, and it became necessary for her to choose between athletics and surfing.

"When she was 13, the manager of the club said to me, 'She's going to be in the Olympic Games one day.' I asked him why, and he replied, 'She can read the sea.'"

Sharon told reporters, "Everyone is windsurfing in Israel. We have a lot of sea, so we're always out on the water spending time practising. We also worked really hard to get here. It didn't come easy."

Said Steven, "She was emotional and said she felt like she was racing for her whole team."

"I'm writing with tears in my eyes," Sharon posted on Instagram. "This campaign was a rollercoaster for me."

I feel like I'm 12 years old and that maybe I don't understand what history was made yesterday, especially in this horrible moment in Israel."

The athlete is said to be taking a well-deserved break.

Sharon Kantor with her silver medal

Paris – an Olympic experience for SA fans

LEE TANKLE

You may not remember watching a local sports match, but you never forget being at an Olympic Games, especially when it's held in Paris.

Two million spectators from all over the world, including from the 206 countries participating, descended on France for the 2023 Olympic Games that began on 26 July and will end this weekend on 11 August.

The SA Jewish Report caught up with some South Africans on their experience of Paris.

Shaun Levitan, the father of chess prodigies Judah and Caleb, said he was lucky to be in France for the beginning of the Games with his two sons, watching France play its first football game in Marseilles on 24 July. They also got to catch the beach volleyball and skateboarding competitions before returning home on 30 July.

"The beach volleyball was an unbelievable vibe," said Levitan. "I've been to a lot of sporting events – rugby games, premiership soccer, and World Cup games, and wasn't expecting much from the beach volleyball, but the atmosphere was fantastic."

"They had live commentary in English. They blasted music between points. The crowd was doing the Mexican wave. Every seat in the stadium was taken. You could just feel that something special was taking place. They have a temporary stadium in front of the Eiffel Tower, so you've got beach volleyball taking place in front of you and on the right, you've got the Eiffel Tower."

Veteran South African football administrator Raymond Hack, who lays claim to having been at every Olympic Games as an adult except the one held in 1980, said crowd participation this year exceeded anything he had seen before. "The French public get behind their stars like you cannot believe," he told the SA Jewish Report.

Hack said from the moment he arrived on French soil on 24 July, he attended any sporting event that he could. He was at the opening ceremony on 26 July, in which, he said, there would have been a greater atmosphere and crowd participation had it not rained.

Hack wasn't the only one let down by the opening ceremony.

"We thought it was going to be the most extraordinary ceremony in the world because it was going to take place in Paris rather than a stadium," said writer and wedding officiant Carol Ann Ross, for whom watching the opening ceremony was a bucket-list item. "I paid a pretty penny for my tickets, and we were seated in a grandstand on one of the bridges that happens to be in front of the most expensive, famous restaurants in Paris, the Tour d'Argent."

Ross felt great anticipation before the ceremony, but was quickly left in the rain. "We probably saw six boats go by before the rain started. Some people had umbrellas. Some had raincoats. We sat in the rain for four and a half hours, determined to get our money's worth. It was an absolute disaster. My skin was soaking wet and I was freezing cold. There was a screen that was supposed to help us see what people on TV could see, but in front of the screen was the thickest, largest, tallest lamppost, so we couldn't see anything."

Paris during the Olympics wasn't what she expected,

and she has spent much time in the city throughout her life. "Paris is empty at the moment," she said. "There's no one here. The streets are empty. There's no traffic, just spectators going to the games. All the Parisians left in anticipation of the panic, and there are more police on the street than civilians. There's no business for taxis. Paris doesn't have the same energy it usually does. It's disappointing."

"That doesn't take away from the remarkable things I've seen at the sporting events. These athletes have worked so hard to get where they are, and to see them succeed is amazing," Ross said.

Mark Stein, chief executive of Adam International Group, arrived on 1 August to watch the athletics. Being at the Olympics was a special experience, he said. The 1969 King Edward School Victor Ludorum told the SA Jewish Report he had always dreamt of going to the Olympics and has now attended three, including the one in Paris.



"I have never seen such a beautiful city so quiet and orderly," said Stein. "The streets are relatively empty of cars, and it's a haven for bike riders. The people who didn't leave on holiday were friendly and helpful. There's a sense of complete safety and easily accessible transportation to and from the stadiums. Other unique moments include the ability to stumble on events like road cycling happening through the streets."

Stein is spending his time watching athletics until he leaves Paris on 10 August. "The build-up in the stadium from the 100m semifinals and finals in the same session was breathtaking. The fact that there was a photo finish among all the athletes except one shows the intensity of the race," he said.

For Levitan, the highlight of the trip was being able to watch South African athlete Brandon Valjalo compete in skateboarding. Valjalo exhibited such sportsmanship, Levitan said, he was "able to show my boys the sportsmanship that exists at that level. Just to be able to compete at the highest level is good enough to represent your country. You don't have to medal to be a success at this after the tournament."

Israeli police rescue women from SA prostitution ring

>>Continued from page 1

victims felt protected and safe enough to cooperate with the police investigation.

The information they provided led police to locate the two additional victims, ultimately making the indictment possible.

Victims of trafficking in Israel are automatically given help, taken to a dedicated shelter, and receive the necessary treatment whether or not they help the police. This includes psycho-social, medical, and psychiatric care, legal aid for action against their traffickers, work visas, and assistance with safe repatriation after the conclusion of the rehabilitation period.

"The case demonstrates Israel's commitment to a comprehensive anti-trafficking response and its commitment to a victim-centred approach," the ministry said.

NATU aims to assist Israel in setting up an anti-trafficking policy as well as protect and care for victims of trafficking; advance legislation, regulations and procedures that could promote the combat of human trafficking; identify new patterns of trafficking and act to eradicate them; tackle problems while they are arising and minimise risks factors; and initiate awareness campaigns, professional training, research studies, and different projects.

Human trafficking has been on the rise across the world for several decades. Israel set up NATU to combat this scourge and assist victims.

The closure of the South African embassy in Israel has highlighted the crucial role of intergovernmental consular services in this regard. This diplomatic gap could have an impact on vital services, including support for victims and repatriation efforts.

Ear doctor's life changed by Madiba's listening power

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

For leading ear, nose, and throat surgeon Professor Peter Friedland, telling his patient, former President Nelson Mandela, that he was planning to emigrate was a formidable prospect. This and other startling conversations with Mandela had a profound impact on his life, and Friedland's book, *Quiet Time with the President*, reveals the inextricable connection between listening and healing.

Co-written by his sister, Jill Margo, Friedland, who treated Mandela for hearing difficulties in his later years, adds his stories to the former president's legacy. "There's one fundamental thing that Madiba, as I referred to him, taught me, something I'm trying to impart in my book," says Friedland. "You need to recognise that there's a spark of humanity in every single individual born in this world, irrespective of their colour, race, religion, or the country they live in."

Friedland acknowledges the wealth of material already written about Mandela's life. "Yet very little has been written about the latter part of his life – his twilight years," he says, explaining why he saw fit to add his stories of Mandela to an already considerable collection. "I had that unique gift of having access to him in the quiet of his home where there weren't huge demands on his time and hundreds of people trying to get access to him."

For years, as Friedland relayed his stories of Mandela to his family and friends, they urged him to write them down. When Margo, a well-known biographer and the senior medical editor for the *Australian*

Financial Review, offered to help him write his stories for his 60th birthday, he accepted. What began with Friedland recording his stories for Margo to collate for his personal use, evolved into a fully-fledged book. "I thought I could share the legacy of what Madiba taught me for future generations," he says.

Emphasising the difference between curing, which is generally done with antibiotics in Western medicine,

Through listening, one also evolves. As Mandela told Friedland and many others, you cannot expect people to change unless you can change yourself. "He said, 'Doctor, I've worked on myself for 27 years, and I will ask people to change.'" Yet, he acknowledged that he needed to negotiate with human beings, not angels, just like he himself wasn't an angel.

Mandela's ability to see beyond surface classifications

has long been lauded. Though he recognised where people came from, he levelled the playing field in a way many couldn't understand, Friedland says. "He viewed the world's greatest leader and the cleaning lady on a completely equal level. This wasn't false humility, he spoke across people. It didn't matter who you were."

Quiet Time with the President

juxtaposes the peace that Mandela brought to the world with the violence Friedland confronted in his professional and personal life. "I wanted to contrast the serenity and peace in Madiba's Houghton home – I loved going there – to the chaos in my life," Friedland says.

"I had an overexposure to violence. I was working in a level-one trauma unit, and I had friends who had died tragically. It was one extreme to another. Yet in Madiba, there was steel beneath that velvet glove. He was as tough as one could be, one just had to look at the adversity he had dealt with."

After numerous violent incidents, including witnessing a hijacking and a tragedy in which a close friend died in

his arms following a shooting incident in 2008, Friedland suffered post-traumatic stress disorder. He had reached the point where he knew that he and his family had to leave South Africa. The decision was the most difficult of his life.

"The greatest dilemma was that here was a man who gave up his life and family for the sake of peace in this country and the world," he says. "On the other hand, look at me. I have all the privilege and opportunities afforded to white people. Yet, I have the audacity to go to Madiba and say, 'I'm leaving the country because of all of this violence. I'm sacrificing the country for the sake of my family!'"

"That conflict stood out for me, and it stays with me today. I was committed to making positive change, but left when the country desperately needed my skills. And I went to a skills and talent-rich country that didn't need me. That I'll have to live with."

Friedland says he's forever grateful for the opportunities and humanity South Africa afforded him. This gratitude is something his mother taught him through the lesson of *hakarot hatov* – the ability of man to recognise good that was done. Yet, leaving was the best decision for him.

It was Mandela's unexpected response to the news of his imminent move to Perth that gave Friedland comfort and added a layer of purpose to his journey. Mandela revealed a mistake he had made when he'd first visited Australia. Through ignorance of the plight of the Aboriginal people, he failed to meet with them initially. Upon being criticised for it, he immediately organised an unofficial meeting and made amends.

He stressed the need for Friedland to learn about the indigenous people of the country he was moving to and to treat them, something Friedland has actively done ever since. "He said, 'Wherever you do that in the world, we're all one people, all part of humanity, and you have my permission,' and I cried. Madiba changed my life."

Life isn't necessarily about curing ills, Friedland says. As Mandela himself once wrote, whenever he reached one plateau, there was always another mountain to climb. "That 'long walk to freedom' is a process," Friedland says. "We're all still walking."



Professor Peter Friedland and former President Nelson Mandela in 2005 at the Donald Gordon Medical Centre

and healing, which is a process, Friedland says Mandela was a healer. "He healed relationships between South Africans, between nations. You heal people by healing relationships, by bringing families into it, and by listening. Madiba taught me how to listen."

Entrepreneur Award inspired by Eric Ellerine

DYLAN BERGER

Late business icon Eric Ellerine was the ultimate entrepreneur, having started out with a single shop and building an empire on that foundation. It is therefore fitting that the Absa Jewish Achiever Entrepreneur Award will be renamed in his honour as the Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award.

"The name Eric Ellerine is synonymous with entrepreneurship and business in South Africa," said Howard Sackstein, chairperson of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards. "It's an honour and privilege to have our entrepreneur award named after him. With this, we recognise his achievements and the icon he became in South Africa."

"Great entrepreneurs inspire other great entrepreneurs, and that's why being able to put Eric's name to this award means that it can be even more of an inspiration for people to move from success in business to significance," he said.

Ellerine, who died in December 2023, won the Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2021 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards for his business legacy and assistance of young business people.

His youngest daughter, Dionne Hirschowitz, who is a long-time judge of the Absa Jewish Achiever Business Awards, said, "Sponsoring the Entrepreneur Award is a fitting way to honour the entrepreneurial spirit and legacy of my father."

"As an ambitious 16-year-old, my father opened his first store with his Barmitzvah money in 1950, and called it Eric's Furnishers. This laid the foundation for what became South Africa's largest furniture retail chain – Ellerine Holdings," said Hirschowitz, who now runs the family empire.

"By sponsoring this award, we aim to inspire and recognise individuals who embody the same tenacity, innovation, and dedication that my father demonstrated throughout his life. The award serves as a reminder that with hard work and determination, the legacy you leave could be more significant than you could ever have hoped for," she said.

"My father was known for his innovation and ability to identify opportunities in the market. He constantly adapted to changing conditions, ensuring that Ellerines stayed relevant and competitive," Hirschowitz said.

After Ellerine retired and handed the reins of the businesses to his youngest daughter, he established an office to support other entrepreneurs. According to his daughter, he believed entrepreneurship was a driving force for economic growth and a way to improve lives. He invested in young talent, and loved seeing others succeed.

Ellerine saw this as a second career, and together with capital and advice, was able to help build some of South Africa's most successful businesses, Hirschowitz said.

She said her father looked out for the next generation, and wanted to share with them the wisdom he had learned over the years.

As an entrepreneur, her father had a list of firm beliefs, Hirschowitz said, which budding entrepreneurs could learn from. These are: start small and dream big; show consistency every day; be humble; value family; show resilience; commit to excellence; be disciplined, and always be thorough.

Sponsoring the Entrepreneur Award allowed the Ellerine family to keep their father's spirit alive by inspiring others to follow in his footsteps and make their mark in the business world, she said.

Nominations for the 2024 Absa Jewish Achiever Awards close on Thursday, 15 August. Don't miss this opportunity to acknowledge and recognise those in our community who are excelling and doing great things.

To nominate, go to <https://bit.ly/ja2024nom>



Eric Ellerine

Photo: Ian Ossendyver

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Wine in a war: SA vitner gryps chance in desert

ELKA COHEN

Boaz Dreyer (58) made aliya from South Africa with a vision of one day planting a vineyard, making wine, and leaving a legacy for his four children and 12 grandchildren. He has realised this lifelong dream in a raging war.

Dreyer describes himself as an unconventional thinker. “I always wanted to plant vines. I discovered, after years of living in Israel, that where there are no vines, there is no peace.” His wife,

Rina (58), fortunately always had the foresight to rein him in from a lot of his wild ideas. “I’m glad she didn’t stop me this time,” he says, pointing out, “We were in it together from the start.”

The couple built a 2ha vineyard out of nothing but dusty desert dunes. Located on the Egyptian border, just 30km from the Gaza strip, Dreyer Estate is now a fully operational biodynamic vineyard and winery after 12 years of blood, sweat, and tears.

“When the first vines were planted in 2012, we had no idea

what we were doing,” admits Dreyer. “How do you grow vines in sand dunes?”

“We ran into many problems, because it’s quite crazy to think you can grow wine grapes in sand that reaches temperatures of more than 40°C.” But that didn’t stop them. Dreyer sought advice from his brother – a plant buff and lecturer at the University of Cape Town.

“Together, we worked out how to combat the severe climate by developing a unique double trellised system, and we planted



Boaz and Rina Dreyer

in two tiers.” Adding the second shaded level really helped in ensuring the grape skins matured and didn’t just produce a sugary grape-water version of the real deal.

Although innovative, the system built by the Dreyer brothers means that the grapes take a lot longer to ripen, but it works. “Our first harvest in 2016 was made and bottled through an off-site contracted winery.”

Dreyer called it Shefa Wines, “*shefa*” being Hebrew for abundance, because it was made out of nothing but sand dunes. “There was literally no water and no electricity when we started,” he says. “But with lots of hard work, and the help of friends and family, we got it going. The fact that we produced a harvest from the vineyard in our lifetime is already a dream come true.”

Going into the wine business entails waiting at least 10 years for a return on investment. “I was working two other jobs just to keep us going while we waited for the vineyard to harvest,” he says.

More abundance followed. In 2021, Dreyer was inspired to change the farm’s growing protocol to a biodynamic process, which means no pesticides or herbicides are used, and all the pruning and picking is done by hand. The first natural wines were produced from the 2022 harvest through spontaneous fermentation.

“It’s more expensive to do it the natural way,” he says, “but it’s an emerging market worldwide as more and more people lean into making healthier lifestyle choices.”

The following year produced four grape varieties and 5 500 bottles.

“Vines aren’t a business without making the wine,” Dreyer says, “so I went off to study how it’s done. Today, we’re grateful to be in the final phase of building our own on-site winery. Although construction has been delayed by the war, we continue to finish it on our own.”

He decided to change the name from Shefa to Dreyer Estate when his youngest daughter, Carolyn (35), and her husband, Yan, got on board, managing the farm and taking care of sales.

Rina was inspired to grow herbs and create a natural range of essential oils, which they have been producing since 2014. “The oils were born out of Rina’s need to treat our son, who suffered serious post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after being called up to fight in the Second Lebanon War.”

“

WE RAN INTO MANY PROBLEMS, BECAUSE IT’S QUITE CRAZY TO THINK YOU CAN GROW WINE GRAPES IN SAND THAT REACHES TEMPERATURES OF MORE THAN 40°C.

Her research into alternative treatments for PTSD brought her to the use of essential oils, and within a few weeks, their son made an almost miraculous return to normality.

“The whole country changed on 7 October, and I don’t believe there to be one Israeli citizen who isn’t suffering from some form of PTSD,” Dreyer says.

Dreyer also proudly runs an internship programme on the farm for students from all over Africa, including Zambia and Malawi, who are studying advanced agriculture.

“Next, I would like for the farm to be part of *avida me’odefet*, for soldiers to work in the vineyards and hopefully in the new winery after their service to the army. I believe strongly that working with nature helps to unwind and repair the soul,” he says.

The war has been a setback for business, Dreyer says, but it’s part of the dynamics of living in Israel.

“We’ve been at war since independence, and our resilience is certainly being tested now. They say wine gladdens the heart of man, and we have so much to be thankful for. We live in hope that we can continue living our dream.”

Crochet and carry on: olim stitch hope together

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

With every stitch, a group of women who have long crocheted and knitted for charity are joining the broken threads of displaced families and soldiers fighting for Israel.

Comprising expats – many South African – and Israelis, the group has made more than 150 blankets for various beneficiaries since 7 October.

“Everybody’s worried,” says the group’s co-ordinator, South African expat Louise Lipschitz. “I don’t know how to describe living through this. You wake up and try your best to get on with it and do what you have to do. In the beginning, you watch the news every hour and then go on your phone to see what’s happening, and eventually, you can’t anymore because you’re so down and bewildered. It’s awful. So, you carry on doing what you have to do for the cause. The whole country, as far as volunteering and helping goes, is amazing. We carry on, crochet, and knit.”

Among the many beneficiaries of the 150 blankets the group has put together are lone soldiers, displaced families, and others impacted by the war. Each of the group’s 37 members knits or crochets squares which are stitched together to make blankets, and then donated to various charities and institutions.

The group started 25 years ago, when one of a group of women chatting at a bowling club suggested they start knitting for charity. The small group met monthly at members’ homes, but grew steadily. It ultimately moved its get-togethers to the hall at retirement home Vera Salomons Centre in Kfar Saba. Some of its residents joined, and today those at the centre still contribute their squares.

A qualified graphic designer who moved to Israel in 1978, Lipschitz retired from her job at Beit Issie Shapiro, Israel’s leading disabilities nongovernmental organisation, eight years ago. Upon retiring, she decided to volunteer for the knitting and crocheting group in spite of her limited knitting abilities. She was later asked to crochet as those skills were in higher demand. The fact that she was left-handed meant that for her, crocheting would be easier than knitting. Determined, Lipschitz soon taught herself to crochet with the help of YouTube videos.

When Lipschitz was asked to take over the running of the group, she was initially reluctant but soon found herself at the helm. “It’s good working with people, although you sometimes have to be a social worker to deal with all these ladies,” she laughs. “Crocheting is a different line of artistic ability, and I love it.” The group expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, with so many stuck at home with little to do.

Among other organisations, Lipschitz frequently collaborates with Telfed (the South African Zionist Federation – Israel) and WIZO (the Women’s International Zionist Organisation) to donate the blankets and is constantly seeking new beneficiaries. “There’s so much need in

Israel, people can’t believe it, and that was even before this war,” she says. “We’re making them like a factory.”

Having family involved in the war effort only strengthens her desire to help. Lipschitz’s granddaughters are serving the army, with one in the navy and another providing training for soldiers. “It’s a lot of pressure and stress, but it’s small in comparison to what other people are going through,” she says.

Making blankets has given the group purpose in a tumultuous time, Lipschitz says. “All the ladies say, ‘Thank G-d for our squares and our knitting and knowing that they’re going to soldiers or to people from the south!’”

A member of the group, Annette Samuelson, originally from the then Rhodesia, says she’s always been a “crochet lady”. She also stresses the importance of having a way to help at this time. “I’ve been here about 47 years. The mood is horrendous and it’s heartbreaking,” she says. “We don’t want to watch television anymore. We listen for five minutes, and just switch off. Half the country is in mourning, and the other half is depressed, including children.”

Though she doesn’t have family directly impacted by the war, Samuelson knows of relatives of relatives and friends of friends. “Our granddaughter’s boyfriend’s brother was killed,” she says, sharing one of many examples. “She’s been to numerous funerals, and she’s 18, for G-d’s sake! It’s never ending. My son does hydrotherapy, and one of the workers from the pool was killed. He’s also now treating some soldiers without limbs.”

Crocheting is a small way for Samuelson to lift morale. “We give blankets to people who have moved out of their homes, or whose homes have been destroyed, or they’ve left everything behind and they’re sitting in a hotel –

sometimes a family of five in one room. When we get pictures of the kids or parents hugging the blankets, it gives us a wonderful feeling. We can’t go there, so this is what we do.”

South African expat Riva Kasan has been living in Israel for more than 50 years. “Our generation learned to knit, sew, crochet, and embroider,” she says. “As our children grew, we always knitted for them, but they never wore what we made. Then, five years ago, I heard about Louise’s group, and I thought it would be a great outlet for my frustrated love of knitting. It’s been a lot of fun, we do a lot of good.”

It’s also through the group that she’s connected with South African expats for the first time. “Finding a peer group of South Africans who’ve been here for a long time has been rewarding,” she says.

While she hasn’t experienced the impact of the war personally, Kasan describes the trauma the entire country is experiencing in waves. “It’s a *mitzvah* to be able to contribute, even in a small way,” she says.

“It’s satisfying knowing that something which gives me pleasure can give somebody else a bit of pleasure. That applies to all the beneficiaries of our work, from children in need to battered women to the homeless and those impacted by the war.”



South African olim show off some of the blankets for soldiers and displaced families

Centenary hat-trick amid tragedy at Jaffa

MICHAEL BELLING

Tragedy marred the first-ever hat-trick of centenarians at Jaffa, the Pretoria Jewish home for the aged, when Willie Pokroy joined Ockey Salmenson and Zelda Wolfe in that elite group last weekend. Pokroy's son, Darryl (67), visiting from Belgium for the occasion, passed away suddenly three days before Pokroy's birthday.

Pokroy had said earlier that he was grateful to be able to celebrate this birthday. Four years ago, when he turned 96, his planned third Barmitzvah at Pretoria shul was sabotaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, and he and his family and friends from all over the world missed out. This time, he was looking forward to sharing his celebration with his family.

He's the "baby" among the three centenarians – Salmenson turned 101 in June, and Wolfe reached three figures earlier this year. All of them are independent and mobile – Salmenson and Wolfe use walkers to get around, while Pokroy relies on his trusty walking stick.

Born in Claremont, Cape Town, he came to Johannesburg at the age of two, later attending Doornfontein Primary School and Athlone Boys' High School.

He married Rhona in 1950, and they settled in Pretoria, where he had been in the South Africa Air Force during World War II. Rhona passed away nine years ago, not long after she had been attacked in their home.

Recalling his wartime service, Pokroy said, "I couldn't fly as I had an impediment – a birthmark in the pupil of my eye – and one needed 20/20 vision to be a pilot. I landed up being an instructor."

He has lived in Pretoria since 1946, where he started a branch of L Feldman Tobacconists.

"In my time, I was a heavy smoker until a four-way bypass and then an aorta bypass put paid to that." Now he walks regularly to keep going. He's spritely enough to push a much younger wheelchair-bound resident into the dining room almost every day.

He was also a musician, playing the trumpet in several popular dance bands. He still attends get-togethers for retired musicians in Johannesburg.

Upright, dapper, and well-groomed, Pokroy has been at Jaffa for ten-and-a-half years, participating in many activities, including a klaberjass school.

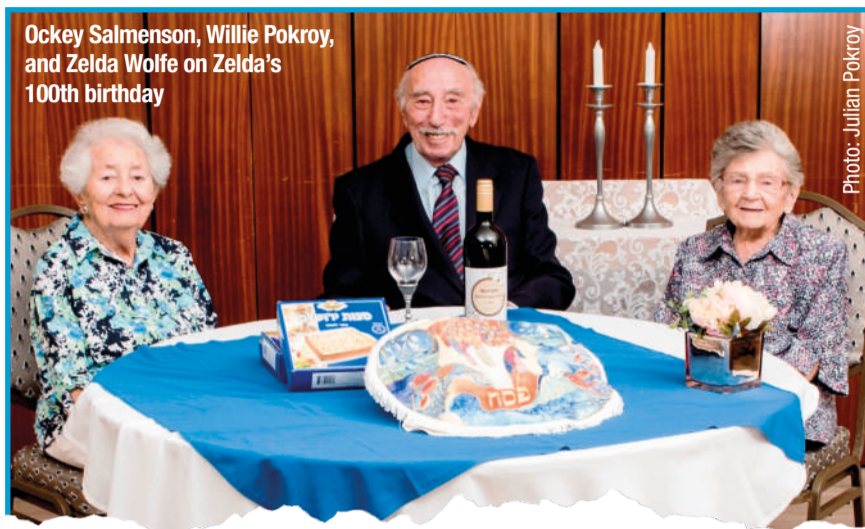
He says he met "special friend" Sonia Gordon, who had also lost her spouse, at a New Year's Eve party after moving into Jaffa.

He has three other children, two still living in Pretoria, and the other in Dubai, with seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Salmenson, known as "Ockey" although her real name is Rachel, has lived in Pretoria her entire life, going to the Hamilton School and

Wolfe was born in Johannesburg, but grew up in Balfour in Mpumalanga. She finished school at Johannesburg Technical College.

She's a slip of a woman – quiet, reserved, greatly loved at Jaffa, not the kind of person usually associated with a military career.



Ockey Salmenson, Willie Pokroy, and Zelda Wolfe on Zelda's 100th birthday

Photo: Julian Pokroy

Pretoria Girls' High School.

Her first job after school was at the Union Buildings, which that time housed the department of home affairs as well as the prime minister's office. In that pre-computer age, when a legible handwriting was a great recommendation, she completed birth, marriage, and death certificates by hand at home affairs.

She then worked for a period as a receptionist at ABC Coal. At that time, she met her future husband, Joe, at a dance. He was from Piet Retief, but first came to Pretoria as a boarder at Pretoria Boys' High School.

After their marriage, Joe started Penpoint Stationers in the Pretoria central business district and Ockey went to work there.

They had three children, two sons and a daughter, all now living in Atlanta in the United States, and Ockey has four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Her sister, June Berson, has done even better than Ockey's clan, she says, with five generations alive at one stage.

Ockey was active in the Jewish community, particularly in the Union of Jewish Women and Bikkur Cholim (visiting the sick), as well as being a keen bowls player at Wingate Park and "a good bridge player". She was also an avid reader until her eyesight declined.

Ockey moved into Jaffa about 15 years ago.

Pokroy and Ockey met in 1946, shortly after he arrived in Pretoria when she was working at the Union Buildings. He said she was the first Jewish girl he met in Pretoria.

"She wouldn't go out with me," he said. "She didn't want to know my troubles, because she was a year older than me."

Nonetheless she began her army service in 1941, spending the remaining years of World War II in the Women's Army Auxiliary Services, popularly known as the 'Wozzies', ending up with the rank of sergeant. Moving to Pretoria, Wolfe worked in the army paymaster's corps, handling the soldiers' pay and writing letters to the families of those killed in action in North Africa where the South African forces were deployed.

"It was a big job," she said. The prime minister, General Jan Smuts, recognised the significant contribution of the 'Wozzies' to the war effort when he visited the Pretoria branch when Zelda was there. In 1947, Princess Elizabeth also paid special tribute to them during the royal visit to South Africa.

"I was there for the whole four years," she said. "That's where I met my husband, Jock Wolfe. He had been up north, but came back on leave in 1943. We were married in the old shul in 1945."

They had four children, two girls and two boys, with two still living in South Africa, one in Sweden and one in Israel. She now has nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, two of whom are married and living in Israel.

Wolfe did voluntary work for the Pretoria Chevrah Kadisha and Bikkur Cholim, and played bowls at Wingate.

She moved to Jaffa 18 years ago after Jock suffered a stroke. He passed away three years later.

She's completely independent, taking part in Jaffa activities and keeping herself busy with reading and crocheting. She's also adept at using her smartphone to keep in touch with her family all over the world via video calls.

A week ago, it might have been appropriate to mark this winning trifecta by echoing the words of the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris: "To 120 plus VAT". But instead of celebrating, Pokroy is receiving condolences.

Grannies turn 100 – on both sides of family

DYLAN BERGER

Married couples generally have lots in common including similar interests, mutual life goals, and complementary career aspirations. However, they don't often have their maternal grandmothers both turning 100 years old in the same year, one month apart.

For Greg and Debbie Hack, this special and rare milestone took place when Greg's grandmother, Selma "Billie" Sack, turned 100 on 9 June, and Debbie's grandmother, Lily Isaacman, turned 100 on 29 July.

Selma Sack (née Malitskie), who was born in Vereeniging south of Johannesburg on 9 June 1924, celebrated turning three digits with friends and family. She says she has no plans of slowing down. A former music teacher, Sack credits her longevity to a healthy dose of exercise to keep her body and mind active. She's an avid bridge player and crossword puzzle fundi, and she also enjoyed playing golf and bowls in years gone by.

Born to English parents, Sack gets *naches* from her



Billie Sack

Photos: Greg Hack

three daughters, eight grandchildren, and 21 great-grandchildren.

Melrose resident and knitting machine Lily Isaacman (née Band) was born in Johannesburg on 29 July 1924. Known for her sharp sense of humour, Isaacman has a love for cooking and baking that has never waned. With an ever-increasing brood of descendants, she enjoys seeing her three children, six grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren thrive.

Both centenarians agreed that exercise, keeping busy, staying away from drama, and striving to make the people around you happy are the best ingredients for a long and healthy life.

"We're extremely blessed," says Greg. "To have four generations all here in South Africa to celebrate these milestones is amazing."

"Though our children have yet to grasp that they have two great-grandmothers over 100, we feel lucky and look forward to sharing more *simchas* with them in the future."



Lily Isaacman



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Daphne Kuhn – theatre’s guardian angel

PETA KROST

Countless successful South African performers attribute much of their nurture and growth to one woman: Daphne Kuhn.

In fact, some of them were given their big break by Kuhn, the owner and founder of Theatre on the Square in Sandton that celebrates its 30th birthday this month.

The consummate Jewish mama of divas and performers, Kuhn has made it her mission not only to deliver exceptional entertainment, but to give talent a chance.

In little more than one year, a young actor, Daniel Anderson, 24, has become a big name in musical theatre in South Africa. He wrote and performed in the shows *Vincent* and *Mad about The Boys* at Theatre on the Square to huge acclaim.

He was a virtual unknown, he said, except in East London where he hails from. That is, until Kuhn gave him a break.

Anderson walked into Theatre on the Square while walking around Sandton City, without so much as an appointment. “I knocked on Daphne’s door, and she came out, asking who I was,” he recalls. Within minutes, they were chatting, and it didn’t take long for her to spot his talent and agree to co-produce *Vincent* at her theatre.

“I left there feeling this lightness, especially considering I was a nobody from the Eastern Cape. I had gone in cold, and Daphne was so embracing and warm.”

Said Kuhn, “I read reviews all the time, and I had heard of what he was doing in East London. I could tell this was going to work.”

Vincent, now a multi award-winning production, is about to open its third season at Theatre on the Square after it sold out the first two seasons.

“Daphne isn’t just kind and generous and all those wonderful things. She’s hugely knowledgeable about theatre, what audiences want, and she’s a clever businesswoman,” Anderson said. “She’s a rare combination in this industry that can be cold and unfriendly. She gave me a shot, and I haven’t looked back.”

Harry Sideropoulos, an award-winning stage actor and singer, attributes the beginning of his theatrical career to Kuhn, who took a chance on him more than 23 years ago.

“I was a nobody who wanted to do a comedy about losing weight and the battle of the bulge,” said Sideropoulos. “I hadn’t even finished writing the script and she said, ‘Let’s do it’ and opened her theatre to me.”

“She’s wise and kind, with a deep sense of what will work. However, she has taken risks with unknown artists as well as known artists with projects that haven’t been done before.”

For Kuhn, it’s less about being a fairy godmother and helping people become stars than about seeing talent, drive, and commitment, and nurturing it. “You can’t always go with what’s tried and tested. It’s

important to allow talent to grow and try things you believe will draw an audience, old and new,” she said.

Around 2001, Kuhn launched a show titled *Drumstruck* in her theatre. Warren Lieberman, the creator of The Drum Café, a team-building initiative, decided to turn what he did into a theatrical production. Billed as the world’s first interactive drum theatre experience, Lieberman was able to do it because Kuhn gave him a chance.

Drumstruck has since performed on Broadway, and toured the world including countries like China, Australia, and Japan to sellout audiences. “Daphne took a risk with us. No-one else was interested in a mad drumming show, but she saw the potential,” said Lieberman. “True to her abilities as a theatre maestro, our first season was hugely successful. However, on the last night, we somehow



Daphne Kuhn

miscommunicated and ended up selling more tickets than the venue could handle.

“She organised another show to fit between the two sold-out shows that day, and we ran three fantastic shows to end our first run. Nobody had any complaints.”

Multi award-winning actor and director James Ngcobo, who became the artistic director of the Market Theatre Foundation and later artistic director of the Joburg City Theatre,

also attributes much of his theatrical confidence to Kuhn.

“I had already started directing when I met Daphne, but she encouraged me to do things that others shied away from. While driving down to Cape Town, I was inspired to direct Athol Fugard’s *Boesman and Lena*, and I called Daphne and told her. And so, we did it in 2012. She believed in me, and that made it all possible, whereas most people would

never allow a youngster like me to take something like that on,” he said.

“Daphne holds a strong space as an interpreter for emerging voices, which I was at the time. She recognises the passion and devotion people have for their art, and she gives them the opportunity and confidence to fly – and they do,” said Ngcobo.

Stand-up comedian Nik Rabinowitz, who has performed at Theatre on the Square every year – sometimes more than once – for the past 15 years, refers to Kuhn as “a guardian angel for insecure artists with imposter syndrome”.

“I love her, and deeply appreciate everything she has done for me and the difference she has made. Together, we have survived ISIS terror threats and Jewish charity shows, which were in some ways a lot more stressful than the threats.”

Over the past 30 years, the list of performers, musicians, singers, and even lighting folk that Kuhn has inspired and led to greatness goes on and on. While she has built a strong and dedicated audience, she’s always trying to grow it with people who wouldn’t otherwise come to theatre. In the same way, she’s always looking for new talent for the theatre, and something that hasn’t been seen or nurtured before.

Stellenbosch campus rabbi caters for growing Jewish presence

LEE TANKLE

Jewish students at Stellenbosch University have more than tripled in number over the past five years, growing from 40 in 2019 to more than 150, creating the need for a campus rabbi.

Rabbi Chananyah Duthie is already comfortable as the Stellenbosch University Chabad on Campus rabbi, having completed his BCom at the university. Although he and his wife, Eliana, have already established themselves with students, having arrived in Cape Town three months ago, they will only be made official on campus in the new year.

Duthie, who is a Cape Town native, converted to Judaism six years ago while studying at Stellenbosch University. After completing his degree in 2019, he went to learn in a yeshiva in Jerusalem. He then moved to Crown Heights in New York in 2021, where he continued his yeshiva studies and married Eliana.

Rabbi Nissen and Ariella Goldman, who founded Chabad on Campus Cape Town, have been going to Stellenbosch once a week since 2017, but they knew it wasn’t enough to keep the Jewish spirit alive.

“I have my hands full at UCT [the University of Cape Town],” said Goldman. “I knew that we couldn’t do students justice without a full-time rabbi. So we felt the need to expand Chabad on Campus to Stellenbosch.”

“We need more Jewish infrastructure in Stellenbosch because more students are going to Stellenbosch,” Goldman said. “We want to help keep their Yiddishkeit alive when they are away from home.”

Duthie said Jewish students were gravitating to Stellenbosch because they wanted to get away from the political and antisemitic environment at UCT. “Jewish students want to go where they can just be themselves,” he said.

“Knowing that my Jewish journey started at Stellenbosch, knowing



Rebbetzin Eliana and Rabbi Chananyah Duthie with their children

about the growth of Jewish students in Stellenbosch, and seeing that it’s the future hub of Jewish students,” said Duthie, “it was a no-brainer.”

“There was no one there. Stellenbosch almost gets forgotten by Jewry in Cape Town.”

“Our goal with Chabad on Campus is to fulfil the vision of the Rebbe and make it possible and practical for every Jew, no matter where they are, to live a fully Jewish life,” said Goldman, “That means living in a community. It means having the infrastructure for Jewish living. For that, you need someone who is going to wake up every morning dedicated to the cause of the Jews in that place. That’s why there are Chabad shuls all over the world in the craziest of places to cater to the needs – not just spiritual but physical – of the Jewish population.”

“We want to bring Jewish infrastructure to Stellenbosch,” Duthie said. “We want to have a

Jewish centre of learning, which will also be a place where a Jewish student can feel that they can be free to be Jewish.”

Even before Duthie touched down in South Africa, he was in touch with students online, making the connections he feels are necessary to enter this new era at Stellenbosch University.

“A lot of Jewish students don’t know that there are other Jews on campus unless they went to school with them, but there are a lot of Jewish students who didn’t go to Jewish schools, so they fall through the cracks,” said Duthie. “We want to make sure they know that there’s someone for them on campus, someone accessible and who can help to provide kosher food.”

Duthie is training to be a *shechita* or ritual slaughterer, so he can provide kosher food to the Jewish community.

In the three months that Duthie

and his wife have been in the country, they have already made a large impact, even though they aren’t fully established yet.

Samuel Nathan, a first-year international relations student, describes the importance of having a rabbi on campus. “With Rabbi Chananya’s arrival, the weekly ‘lunch and learns’ have resumed, but with increased efficiency and have taken on a new shape with the rabbi’s perspective. The rabbi can also give Stellenbosch students a more relatable view as an alumni of the university.”

Similarly, first-year BA student Ruby Kurgan said she felt honoured that Duthie and his family had moved from New York to dedicate their time to Jewish students in Stellenbosch. “He’s the first super ultra-orthodox Jew that I’ve seen in Cape Town, black hat and all. I find it cool and inspiring, and I love to ask him questions. He’s a deep person, and he always has good answers. We’ve had some amazing Shabboses at the shul, dinners, braais, and lunch and learn every Wednesday.”

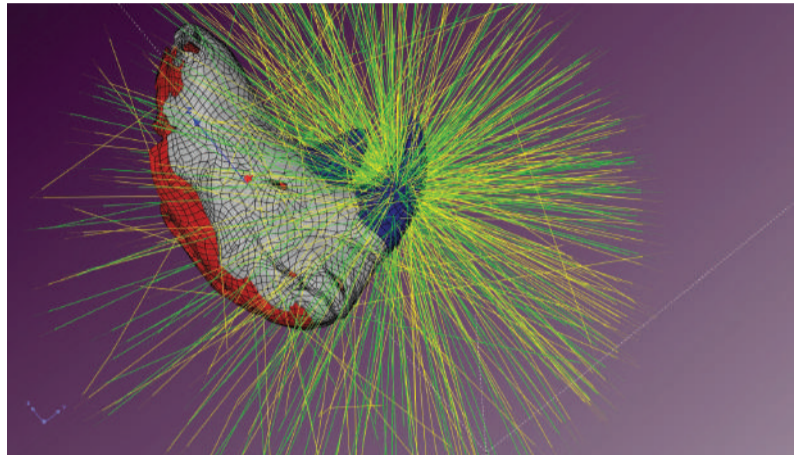
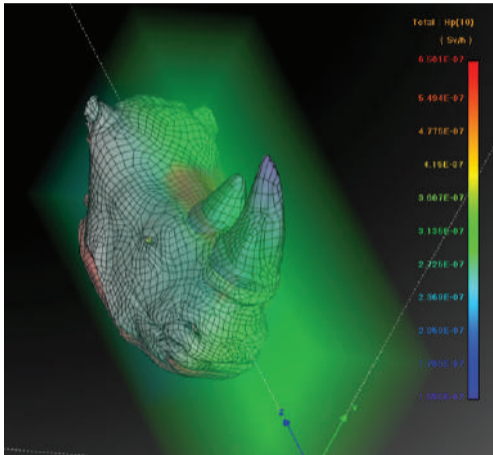
Adam Lieberman, a second-year bioinformatics student, said, “It feels like people are now making Stellenbosch students their priority. It makes students feel more accepted and eager to get involved in the community as we feel we have someone we can’t let down and someone who won’t let us down. It’s amazing to feel a part of a community in which we can come together, learn, and get a home-cooked meal on a Friday night.”

Rabbi Mendel Popack, the head shaliach of Cape Town, said, “On behalf of Chabad in Cape Town, I’m thrilled with the advent of a new Chabad shaliach for Stellenbosch. The students can rest assured that there’s a Jewish presence in the community who will care for their needs materially and spiritually. In addition, every Shabbat will be special and inspirational.”



Wits Rhisotope Project

The Power of Nuclear Science for Rhino Conservation



What if nuclear science could be the key to rescuing our majestic rhinos from the brink of extinction? This is what Wits University's innovative Rhisotope Project, an initiative that harnesses the potential of radioisotopes to protect our beloved rhinos, hopes to achieve.

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Science Saving Rhinos

By rendering rhino horns radioactive, we diminish their allure as a commodity. This heightened radioactivity increases the likelihood of detection at international borders, exposing smuggling syndicates to prosecution under anti-terrorism laws.

People Saving Rhinos

The Wits Rhisotope Project extends beyond science, fostering a strong philanthropic ethos. Our efforts focus on empowering communities through education and support initiatives, cultivating a new generation of rhino champions. Together, we enable communities to benefit from the presence of living rhinos, rather than mourning the loss of dead ones.

Rhinos Saving People

Wildlife crime ranks among the top four black market activities, ranking alongside drug-, human- and weapons trafficking. By combating wildlife crime, we can strike a blow against international terrorism, making the world a safer place for all.

Join us in the fight to safeguard our rhinos and secure a brighter future for generations to come.

Together, we can make a difference for good.

Visit <https://rhisotope.org/>



Intelligent medical engagement wins top tech award

LEE TANKLE

Dr Benji Ozynski and his medical assistance platform, Engage MX, won the prized tech entrepreneur category in the 2024 South African Future Trust (SAFT) Awards on 24 July. Engage MX has revolutionised healthcare, with at least 400 000 people with lifelong conditions being cared for without having to shuttle back and forth between doctors.

Ozynski, the chief executive of Engage MX, says the competition in this category was “so fierce” that they didn’t think they would land up on top, “so it was a pleasant surprise when we got the award”.

As a doctor, Ozynski recognised that “no doctor has time, over and above their day-to-day duties of seeing patients, to go looking through all of their files to identify and recall those patients who should be coming back to their practice but haven’t, for whatever reason”.

“Everyone has had the miserable experience of a close family member, friend, or even ourselves beginning to develop symptoms, seeing the doctor, doing some tests, and then being given a lifelong diagnosis,” he said. “That could be a chronic disease like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, or something even more serious like cancer.”

“The problem there is that healthcare is reactive. Hence, the system waits for patients to come and see their doctor. Forty

percent of patients are non-compliant within their chronic disease.”

Engage MX’s availability to doctors and patients for the past two years has helped hundreds of thousands of South Africans manage lifelong diagnoses through this artificial intelligence driven smart assistant.

“It analyses all their billing data, medication data, and lab data, and uses all that to build a unique health, disease and risk profile for every patient in the background. It then recalls those patients who, based on their unique profile, are eligible for something with their doctor, and then Engage MX engages personally with each patient, informing them why they need to come back to their doctor,” says Ozynski.

“The truth is that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of patients walking around like that. Maybe they already have a diagnosis, but, for whatever reason, haven’t returned to their doctor, or they are yet to be diagnosed and walking around with asymptomatic disease.”

Through the system, they identified and recalled a few hundred thousand of those patients. This year alone they have assisted in the prevention of two suicides because the system also works for mental health and psychiatry. Two patients were identified as being non-compliant. They had mental health conditions and hadn’t come back to their providers.

Care co-coordinators reached out to the patients to make sure that they were on the right track regarding their mental health,

and got them the help they needed. Ozynski says there was a stringent application process for SAFT, followed by an interview. As finalists, they had to provide information such as financial documents. Engage MX was one of three finalists in its category, and when the winner was announced the founders “felt a huge sense of support from everyone in the room”, says Ozynski. SAFT, run by South African billionaire, businessman, and conservationist Jonathan Oppenheimer, enables small businesses by working with various partners in South Africa. The awards include six categories: innovation; youth; social; playbook; women in business; and tech entrepreneur. Ozynski says having Oppenheimer as part of the selection process added to the gravity of winning the award. “Knowing that he was part of looking at our business and deciding that in our category we were the best is amazing.”

“One of our first customers was a patient who had been identified and recalled by Engage MX. When the patient came back to the doctor, the patient had dangerously high blood pressure but it was asymptomatic so they weren’t feeling anything,” Ozynski says.

“When you start a business, you’re kind of in the trenches and your head is down,” says Ozynski, “and even though your business grows, the growth is incremental and so sometimes it’s difficult to gauge your progress because of that.”

“When you win an award against really strong competitors, it just gives you that little bit of reassurance that you’re on the right path.”

Each category winner received R500 000, including a cash injection of R250 000 for immediate business growth. A support package with mentorship from industry leaders and essential resources to accelerate the business trajectory is included.



Dr Benji Ozynski and Jonathan Oppenheimer

Maccabi Under-16s score goal on and off field

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Under-16 South African football team narrowly missed out on a bronze medal at the European Maccabi Youth Games in London this past week, but it left an impression on its opponents and those from other countries in the tournament.

“They were shocked at how good we actually were,” says the team’s captain, 15-year-old King David High School Linksfield student Saul Goldberg. “We were also complimented on how well we behaved throughout the tournament and how well we were managed.”

The team won two of its three group stage games – 8-1 against France, and 2-0 against Israel. South Africa lost to Argentina in the semifinal, meaning that it contested the bronze medal match against Denmark. The Danes, who beat South Africa 4-2 in the group stages, once again came out trumps, winning 3-1 to clinch third place.

Goldberg’s side managed to score a goal seconds before the final whistle, but it wasn’t enough. The teams to beat this year were Argentina and Great Britain. The final between the two of them was won 2-0 by the hosts, who took gold.

Goldberg says his team could have played better in a tough bronze medal match against Denmark. The boys never gave up, however, holding their heads high and playing with passion, says Darryl Sklar, the father of 14-year-old twins Asher and Aryn, who played in the team.

“The *nachas* from watching them play was immeasurable,” Sklar says. “The joy and pride of all the parents watching live and following from back in South Africa was amazing.

It was special to watch, and difficult to remain humble, not only for my two boys but the whole team, and not only about their performance. Their maturity, composure, team spirit, and South African *gees* were elevated to a new level over the past 10 days.”

While most of the team members live in Johannesburg, Cape Town was represented by Herzlia students Josh Stein and Daniel Gruz.

Goldberg, like vice-captain Raphael Kaplan, was selected captain by team vote. The team prepared for the games for three months at Balfour Park, Johannesburg.

Preparations included a number of matches against Balfour’s teams and Highlands FC, as well as two five-day camps focused on skills, fitness training, team bonding, and mental preparation. They also played against Afrika Tikun’s Under-16 team, made up of players from Orange Farm and Alexandra.

Goldberg, whose father, Jonathan, played rugby for South Africa at the 2001 and 2005 Maccabi Games, winning two gold medals, says playing against different countries was “a good experience in seeing how other countries play soccer. The refereeing was also different to South Africa. The refs were a lot less strict, and it took a lot more contact for a foul to be given.”

Having arrived in England on Monday, 29 July, the South

African team played its group stage games on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday before the semifinal on Sunday, followed by the bronze medal match the next day.

In its 8-1 win against France, the South African team went into the match with a good mindset, Goldberg says. “We were prepared and knew we had to win this game if we wanted to make the semis, so we went in wanting to make a statement. We were pumped for the match.”

Says Sklar, “It was an interesting and confusing tournament in terms of results. Denmark lost to France in a tight game. South Africa beat France convincingly. Israel, also in our pool, had wins and suffered losses. The Europeans all have a different style of play to us. The Danes were a more polished and composed team on the day compared to our other opponents.”

Goldberg’s most memorable moments from the tournament were meeting people from different countries at the opening ceremony, and learning about their cultures.

The team had a lot of time to socialise with athletes from other countries. “Our building was right next to France, Denmark, and Israel – all the teams in our group – so we actually grew close to all of them,” Goldberg says.

“In spite of the competition on the pitch, all the boys mingled with delegations from the other countries,” says Sklar, whose eldest son, Seth, was in the South African Under-16 football team that went to the 2022 Maccabi Games in Israel. “They sang, danced, and *jolled* together off the pitch. The Maccabian spirit lives in all the participants and their families who have had the blessing of sharing in the experience. A highlight was the kit swapping ritual after the closing ceremony, in which our boys walked off with souvenir tops, shorts, caps, and tracksuits from the other athletes.”

As part of the off-field activities, the South African team learned about antisemitism and how to respond to it. “We went on tours, to shopping centres, and on the Hop-On Hop-Off bus,” Goldberg says. “We also went to Wembley Stadium.”

The Under-16 boys doubles tennis pair of Jayden Myers and Dean Herskovits won a bronze medal to continue South Africa’s record of winning at least one medal at every Maccabi tournament the country has contested since 1935.



Saul Goldberg

Nothing nice about people pleasers

They walk among us. But they aren't one of us. They are the people pleasers. And they not only invite unhappiness and misery into our personal lives, but have negatively altered the course of history. They have enabled monsters to wage wars, they have convinced us that weakness is kindness, and they have conspired with evil to fool good people into believing that appeasement is the answer.

People pleasers destroy the world.

I looked it up. According to *Medical News Today*, "People pleaser" isn't a medical term, so there's no clinical definition for what it means. Generally, however, it describes a person who consistently strives to please others, often sacrificing their own wants or needs in the process.

Most people want to feel loved and valued. This is typical, as humans are social creatures and want to belong. As a result, many people occasionally adapt their behaviour to make social interactions smoother. They say what they think others want them to say.

Altruism, or the desire to help others, is another common trait in humans. And whereas this might involve an element of self-sacrifice such as giving money, time, or energy to a cause, people pleasers find it difficult to recognise when it's time to stop.

Like gamblers – or is that winners – who don't know when to quit.

On a global scale, people pleasers have left carnage in their wake. Neville Chamberlain, one of the most famous of this type, chose to appease Hitler. And in doing so, allowed him to build a base that took years and many millions of deaths to reverse. Barack Obama, with his inability to name terrorism for what it is, even to enforce even his own "red line", is partly to blame for slaughter of hundreds of thousands in Syria and the empowerment of Iran. And Cyril Ramaphosa, failing to act against a corrupt African National Congress, allowed the country to sink so low that it cost his party the elections.

It's not only world leaders who suffer this affliction. Business leaders, rabbis, teachers, professors,

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



community leaders, moms, dads, grandparents, and partners in a relationship can suffer the affliction, failing to recognise when to say no, draw the line, and risk an uncomfortable short-term conversation for longer-term behavioural gain.

People pleasing causes the heads of Ivy League universities to stumble and stutter when asked a simple question, and transitioning athletes to compete in divisions that award them unfair advantage. People pleasing robs us of the courage to speak out.

People pleasing is often sign of low self-esteem or of anxiety. It has an impact on people who are afraid of conflict, or feel they must avoid it, and will do what they can to prevent disagreements. The result is that boundaries are seldom set, behaviour isn't modified, and remediation becomes more difficult.

Whether it's Iran or aunty Bessie, a congregant or a colleague, a child or a chairperson, we all need to be curtailed. Failure to do so will result in us becoming the monsters we fear.

In an age of social media, where "likes" has become currency and "followers" represent power, we are a generation more at risk than before. We might not, like Chamberlain, be remembered for supporting the policy of appeasement towards Hitler over the annexation of Czechoslovakia, or be responsible for not stopping the nuclear empowerment of Iran, but we will, without doubt, contribute to the scale of the chaos in the world around us.

Every family has at least one. It's time to identify who that is, and to address it. And if you're unable to determine who it is, the people pleaser might well be you.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Leadership and ludicrous statements

Last weekend, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) hosted its bi-annual national executive conference (NEC). The NEC is always a highlight of our calendar, as representatives of all of the Board's regions come up to Johannesburg. The NEC provides a platform to report on various issues affecting our communities, including antisemitism, political dynamics, media influence, and other significant events.

This year's NEC was particularly notable as we marked the election of the government of national unity (GNU), and continued to address the ongoing war in Gaza. It goes without saying that the events of 7 October have had a profound impact on our situation in the country and our relationship with the government. While antisemitic incidents have returned to pre-October levels and remain among the lowest globally, the spike following October underscores the need for vigilance and proactive measures in safeguarding community rights. The GNU presents an opportunity to reengage with national leadership, albeit with caution, given the treatment of our community by certain elements over the past 10 months.

As can be expected, whenever a group of Jews meet, there's robust debate and strong opinions. However, this is required and impactful, given that this is the forum in which the Board's strategies are formulated and carried out. As a democratic institution, the decision-making processes can be lengthy and measured, but it's important that there's consensus, given our mandate as the representative body of the entire community.

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Tension in Israel

Unfortunately, as I write this, tension in the Middle East is once again heightened following the death of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

The SAJBD is dismayed by the statements by the South African ministry of international relations and co-operation (Dirco) on the death of Haniyeh, which ignored his atrocities against both Gazans and Israeli civilians. It's also infuriating that the same Dirco failed to acknowledge the heartbreaking and callous murder of 12 Israeli children, bombed by Iranian proxy Hezbollah while they were playing soccer on Saturday, 27 July. Though we're aware that Dirco has shown bias towards Hamas, given Haniyeh's history, the hypocrisy of the South African government's statement is frankly ludicrous.

We're all on tenterhooks as we await an expected Iranian response to Haniyeh's death among the continued rocket and missile fire from both Lebanon and Gaza. There's community-wide anxiety as we collectively worry about our families and friends in Israel. We pray for the swift resolution of this tension and for the return of the hostages who have already marked their 300th day in captivity.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM, every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.

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Works of Heart for the aged

Ninety students from Jewish schools submitted works of art to adorn the walls of Sandringham Gardens in the Chevrah Kadisha's Works of Heart competition. This is yet another example of our youth enriching the lives of our aged.



Rothman. They were impressed by the level of talent displayed by the young artists.

The top prize was a 64Gb iPad10 plus an Apple pencil. Winning submissions

will be featured in the Chev's Our Community magazine over Rosh Hashanah.

There were close to 1 000 people attending the all-day exhibition of the works on Sunday, 4 August, at the David Lopatie Centre.



The overall winner was Daniella Wes (King David Victory Park). Layla Yutar (King David Victory Park) won the 16-18 age group, and Levi Centner (Yeshiva College) the 12-15 age group.

JNF conference an education for teachers

Yeshiva College teachers who attended the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) educators' conference in Israel last month said that it enriched their professional life and touched their souls.

The programme brought together educators from Jewish schools worldwide and offered an immersive exploration of Israel, from north to south. Participants visited KKL-JNF sites including national parks, Houses of Excellence, and the Switzerland Forest, as well as the offices of Stand With Us.

The historical and cultural landmarks of Zichron Yaakov, Kfar Kedem, Yizrael, and the Herzl Museum were explored, as well as Mount Herzl and Yad Vashem. Tours of a Druze village, Tiberias, Jerusalem's Old City, and the Tower of David all gave deeper perspective on the Zionist history of Israel.

The conference was a forum for meaningful dialogue and exchange through round-table discussion, allowing ideas to be shared and the integration of global educational activities with KKL-JNF's comprehensive educational resources.

One of the most poignant experiences

was visiting sites affected by the events of the 7 October massacre such as Kfar Aza, the Nova site, Kibbutz Alumim, Sderot, Ofakim, and the Burnt Cars Memorial. The trip culminated with a braai with soldiers, a powerful testament to Israel's resilience. The wisdom and inspiration from speakers like Yosef Haddad and Abraham Infeld left an indelible mark.



Frances Spangenberg, Rosen Ress, Tia Koutakis, and Dominique Meiring planting a tree at the Nova site

It deepened everyone's understanding of Israel's history and culture, and fostered a sense of solidarity. The trip was empowering and profound, signifying strength in unity, encouraging shared learning experiences, and inspiring participants to be part of a better future for all.

Batmitzvah season of giving at Great Park shul

The girls becoming Batmitzvah at Great Park shul this year joined Rabbi Dovid Hazdan to donate blankets and share warmth with children at the Afrika Tikkun Uthando Centre on 1 August 2024.

Hundreds of blankets were handed out to children aged between two and six years. The blankets were bought from women who sewed them and who support their families with the proceeds.

The Bnotmitzvah girls shared thoughts about the privilege and joy of sharing and giving. They will always remember that their greatest Batmitzvah gift was the one that they gave.



Rabbi Dovid Hazdan handing out blankets at the Afrika Tikkun Uthando Centre

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