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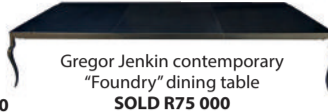


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South African

# Jewish Report

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## Man vanishes - family desperate for answers

TALI FEINBERG

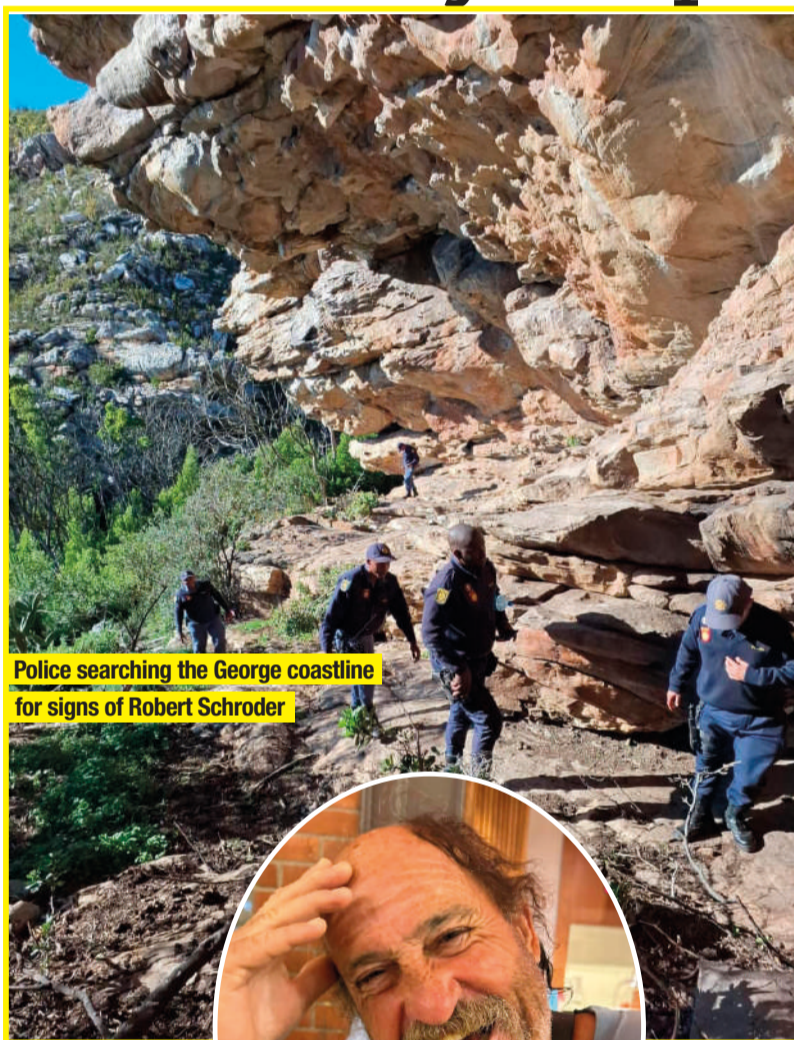
The South African Police Service has deployed heat-sensing drones, police tracker dogs, divers, and search and rescue teams to locate missing Capetonian Robert Schroder (58), but it looks like he has “vanished without a trace”, says his sister Caryn Tamari.

Tamari flew in from Israel and her brothers, Paul and Selwyn Schroder, came from Australia when they lost touch with their brother on about 11 August while he was attending a music festival near George. They realised something was terribly wrong, especially when his tent and possessions including his old Nokia phone, wallet, medication, and glasses were found at the site. He was seen at the festival on the morning of Sunday, 11 August, but after that, the trail runs cold.

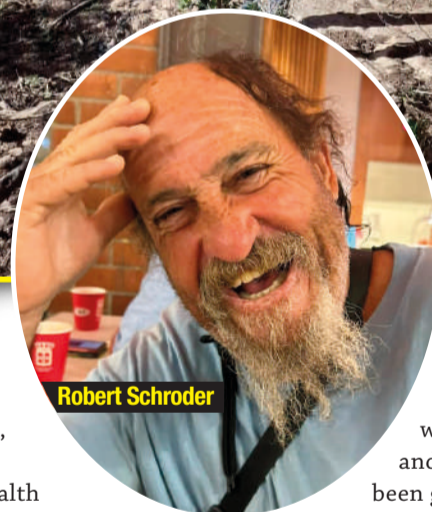
Their mother, renowned matriarch and caterer Naomi Schroder, was a stalwart of the Cape Town Jewish community. “It’s actually her *yartzeit* tonight, and as we look for Robert, we’re guided by our mom,” says Tamari, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* on Monday, 19 August. “We know she would have given a kidney for him, so we’re also doing everything in our power to find him.”

Schroder has had a difficult life, and sometimes felt alienated from a society that didn’t always accept his quirky and larger-than-life character. But when he went missing, it became clear that he has never been alone. Within hours, the Cape Town and international Jewish community rallied to spread the word that he had disappeared, with hundreds of people expressing how important Schroder and his family were to them.

From across the globe, friends and family



Police searching the George coastline for signs of Robert Schroder



Robert Schroder

shared how Schroder always remembered their names and stories, even though he battled mental-health challenges. Tamari says he struggled socially and emotionally from childhood, which increased after he was in a

car accident and a coma many years ago. She emphasises that he was “raised with nothing but love in a good Jewish home”, that he lives independently, and is a well-known figure in the community and around the Mother City. Many friends have fond memories of their time with him at Herzlia school or in the South African army. Now, as he remains missing, Tamari says she’s grateful to be part of a Jewish community that really cares for its own, from the support her brother receives in managing daily life, including a dedicated social worker, to the outpouring of love and help she and her siblings have been given. Tamari says her brother didn’t work or drive, but often went to festivals where he would find a sense of belonging with

like-minded souls. He had been to this particular festival, Louvain Burn at the Louvain Guest Farm, about four times. The venue is a working farm in the upper Langkloof Valley, halfway between George and Uniondale in the Western Cape.

“Robert was supposed to make contact with our brother, Paul, who manages Robert’s life from Australia, about organising transport back, but that never happened. We soon realised something was wrong. It’s like a movie – he’s just vanished into thin air. “The police have been phenomenal,” Tamari says. “Every preconception we had about South African police being incompetent is totally untrue. We’re blown away.”

Police have spoken to the farm owners, who are distraught and know Schroder personally, festivalgoers, and locals. Hope flared when people said they may have spotted him in nearby De Rust, but the man in question wasn’t Schroder.

“It’s been a rollercoaster ride and totally surreal, for example, hiking on the mountain behind a police dog, screaming Robert’s name,” says Tamari. “The police say that the search and rescue aspect is now over. It’s now an investigation, and they have brought in a detective.”

The detective, Sergeant Fumanekile Nofemela, cannot comment because the investigation is still underway, but called on anyone with information to come forward.

Schroder’s old friend, David Wapnick, recently crossed paths with Schroder at prayers for a friend’s mother in Cape Town. “Though we hadn’t seen each other for centuries, he quickly recognised me,” says Wapnick, speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* from London.

Continued on page 5>>

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## Ugandan gets Israeli citizenship after seven-year fight

JACKIE HAJDENBERG – JTA

**A**fter seven years in court and four conversions, a member of Uganda's Abayudaya Jewish community is now an Israeli citizen.

Israel's interior ministry, which handles applications for citizenship, this month approved the bid of Yosef Kibita, who first applied in 2018.

Israeli authorities had previously rejected immigration applications from the Abayudaya community, a group of about 2 000 Ugandans who began practicing Judaism a century ago after Ugandan statesman Semei Kakungulu declared himself Jewish and began adopting Jewish practices. The Israeli government considers the Abayudaya an "emerging" Jewish group, and ineligible for citizenship without conversion.

Kibita, like many other members of the group, first underwent conversion through the Conservative movement, which began performing conversions for the Abayudaya in 2002. It was the first Jewish movement to recognise the Abayudaya as Jewish, in 2008.

Kibita's first conversion as a child wasn't recognised by the courts. He underwent a second conversion in 2008, before any Jewish movement formally recognised the Abayudaya as Jewish. The Israeli Supreme Court then asked him to undergo yet another conversion, but that also wasn't recognised because the Conservative movement didn't require him to undergo a study period, as he had already spent almost his entire life as an observant Jew.

His fourth and final conversion included a nine-month study period. Kibita has been living on Ketura, a kibbutz in southern Israel with ties to the Masorti movement, Israel's parallel to Conservative Judaism, and was nearly deported during his long immigration process.

"Since I have arrived in Israel, I knew that this was my home," Kibita said. "I cannot describe how I feel at this moment after being approved as an Israeli. I'm shaking with joy, and I feel more connected to the Jewish world than ever."

Kibita's Conservative conversion was overseen in Uganda by Rabbi Andrew Sacks, who died in late June. "It's as if he's fixing from above what he strived to resolve until his last day," Rakefet Ginsberg, the executive director of the Masorti movement in Israel, said last week after Kibita was notified that he would become a citizen. Ginsberg said Kibita's citizenship was a

watershed moment for the often contested status of non-Orthodox converts in Israel. Although Israeli law requires that their conversions be recognised for the purposes of immigration, many – particularly Jews of colour – report years of



Yosef Kibita with his new Israeli passport

roadblocks when they apply for citizenship. "This victory doesn't belong to Yosef alone, but to all who believes in pluralistic and inclusive Judaism," Ginsberg said. "It acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse Jewish communities worldwide, and affirms the validity of conversions performed in genuine faith and commitment."

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## Heel of history



**Rabbi Ilan Herrmann**  
 Soul Workout Jewish Outreach

**T**he name of the portion this week is "Ekev". The word, "ekev" has a double meaning.

Ekev means the heel of a foot, and it also means "when you shall hearken to my voice, then I will bless you", referring to an active response "when you shall", the nature of the response being that "you hearken to G-d's voice", and the outcome is "tremendous blessings".

Why does the Torah select this word, "ekev" with its dual meaning?

The Chazal says the allusion to the heel is specific. History is a process compared to the human anatomy. It starts at the highest point of the head, and ends at the lowest of the human anatomy – the heel. The heel is the last generation. The association of the heel with the last generation before Moshiach is obvious. Just as the heel is the least sensitive part of the body, so too at that time – just before Moshiach – the spiritual level of the world and the Jewish people will be at the lowest, most desensitised state. Compared to giants of the spirit of previous generations, we're small, as the analogy puts it, like a midget compared to a giant.

However, it's precisely in this generation that the essence of the Jewish spirit is expressed more than at any other time.

In this generation, we find a combination of forces. On the one hand, we're a generation bereft of a depth of Jewish knowledge and inspiration, of deep understanding, and emotional elevation. Together with this, it's

a time in which Jews face every adversity; a time in which the world is submerged in trouble and difficulty; in which the secular world bombards us with media – visuals and narratives – in contrast to Jewish values. Antisemitism is ever rising. Antagonism toward Israel is the world's top agenda. The challenges at the heel of history seem to increase every day. Why then do Jews follow the Torah and mitzvot and identify with their heritage in spite of all this, in these days of rage?

It's because in their essence, they know that Judaism and the

path of Torah are true and that their connection to Hashem and Torah are vital to their being. In other words the Jewish essence shines at this time of history.

Thus, when the "heel hearkens to my voice", in other words, when the generation which is so estranged, distant, and challenged maintains its commitment to G-d and His Torah, it will accomplish what no other generation has been able to – the greatest blessings, including ushering in Moshiach, our redeemer. May it come speedily!

## Torah Thought

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 The manna was the miraculous edible substance that fell each day from heaven during the 40-year period in the desert. A month after their exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people turned to Moses and Aaron for food. The manna began to fall on the 18th of Iyar which would later become the day of Lag Ba'Omer.

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# SA olah faces fresh grief with Popplewell's burial

NICOLA MILTZ

South African-born grandmother and former hostage, Channah Peri, has endured unimaginable torment for more than 10 months, a nightmare that began with the horrific events of 7 October. This week, the frail mother would stand over the freshly prepared graves of her two sons, her body weakened by months of anguish.

Grief weighs heavily on her face as she confronts the unthinkable: the final resting places of both her children, side by side, a sorrow no mother should ever have to bear. Her oldest son, Roi Popplewell, 54, was murdered on 7 October, a devastating fact she discovered only after being released from captivity in Gaza in November after 49 harrowing days. He was buried in the centre of the country. His body was moved to Kibbutz Nirim to lie alongside his brother, Nadav, whose body was finally retrieved from Gaza earlier this week in a dramatic military operation along with the bodies of five other hostages.

The Hostages Families Forum said the recovery of the bodies "crucially provides their families with necessary closure and grants eternal rest to the murdered".

Captured by Hamas terrorists from Kibbutz Nirim alongside her son, British-Israeli Nadav

propaganda clip featuring Popplewell speaking to the camera. It was apparently published weeks after he was killed. Peri and her daughter, Ayelet Svatitzky, held on to any shred of hope that he was alive, but the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) pronounced Nadav dead in June, seven months after Peri's release.

This week, she faced yet another agonising chapter in her ordeal. After a long and emotional rollercoaster, his body was finally returned to Israel from Gaza.

Svatitzky has fought tirelessly for the return of her brother's body as well as all the hostages, and has held the fort for her mother since her release, describing the past few months as a "living hell" in which "the heartbreak is indescribable", and where there's "no end to sadness, worry, and tears".

The two wear a pair of matching silver necklaces with the engraved names of Roi and Nadav.

In a Facebook post in May, Svatitzky described her mother as a hero, and thanked Nadav for "saving mommy and for taking care of her in the tunnels". This was before any news of his whereabouts and condition.

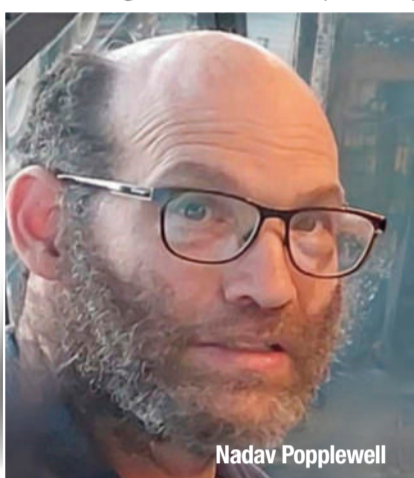
Earlier, she posted a black and white family picture of her brothers as little boys, pleading for the release of the hostages and an end to the suffering. "What's left of these two children who made a chocolate cake in the small kitchen in our

house in Kibbutz Nirim? Graves and memories and endless worry," she wrote.

For 10 months, her days have been consumed by the "overwhelming" demands of hostage activism, handling things like death certificates, organising funerals, arranging gravestones, and navigating the bureaucracy of relocating her

mother and ensuring her medical care.

Svatitzky earlier told the SA Jewish Report that her mother was born Denise Adele Levy in Johannesburg. Though she doesn't know many details about her mother's early years, she does



Nadav Popplewell



Channah Peri putting on a brave face earlier this year at a hostage protest

Popplewell, 51, and later released, leaving him behind, Peri, has been trapped in a world of gut-wrenching uncertainty.

Nadav was taken with her on that Black Sabbath. In May, Hamas shared a coerced

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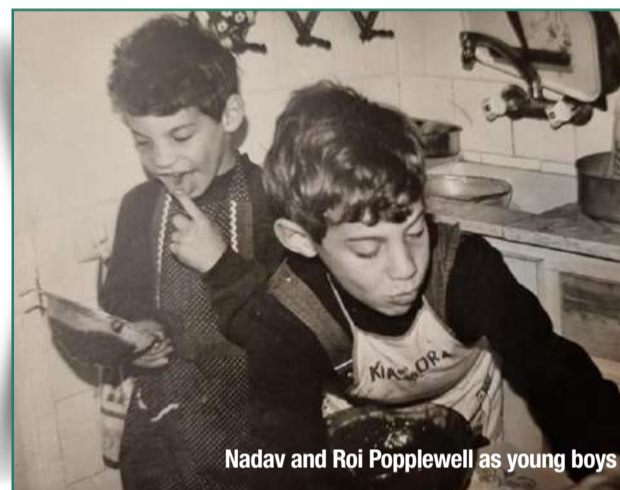
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know that Peri spent time in Gqeberha, formerly Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town before making aliya as a young woman. Peri and her sister, Leonore Armbruster, now 75 and living in the United States, immigrated to Israel with their late brother, Raymond. Although their family ties to South Africa have become more distant, some relatives have reached out to Svatitzky during this difficult period.

Peri met Svatitzky's father, Rafi Popplewell, a British-born Israeli, at Kibbutz Nirim. They married, had three children, and later divorced but remained close. Svatitzky and her late brothers hold British and Israeli citizenship.

The IDF recovered the bodies of the six hostages murdered in captivity including Popplewell; Yagev Buchshtab; Yoram Metzger; Haim Peri (no relation); Alexander Dancyg; and Avraham Munder from the Khan Younis area in Gaza.



Nadav and Roi Popplewell as young boys

Five of the six were previously known to have lost their lives. All six are known to have been taken to Gaza alive during the Hamas-led invasion and slaughter in southern Israel on 7 October, and were killed over the course of the 10-month-long war.

Munder, 79, was the only hostage among the six whose death hadn't already been established. He was abducted from Nir Oz along with three of the others: Peri, 80; Metzger, 80; and Dancyg, 75. Popplewell, 51; and Buchshtab, 35, were taken from Kibbutz Nirim.

With the bodies recovered, the IDF said it

would continue to investigate the causes of the men's deaths including the possibility that some or all of the six were killed by Israeli fire amid military operations in Khan Younis.

In December, Hamas published a video showing Peri, Metzger, and a third hostage alive, and in March, the terror group claimed that the three were killed by Israeli strikes.

It's now believed that 105 of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on 7 October remain in Gaza, including the bodies of 34 confirmed dead by the IDF. Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the bodies of two IDF soldiers who were killed in 2014.

On Tuesday, 20 August, the military said the operation to extricate the six bodies came after prolonged combat in a built-up area. It said Israeli forces found a 10m-deep tunnel shaft that led to an underground route, along which they

neutralised obstructions, blast doors, weapons, explosives, and militants' hide-outs.

The military said that Israeli forces scanned the route, and noticed that part of the tunnel's concrete lining was loose. When soldiers removed the lining, they discovered a hidden branch of the tunnel network and found the bodies.

A spokesman for the Israeli military, Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani, said that the tunnel was under an area previously designated as part of the

humanitarian zone of Khan Younis. The Israeli military has shrunk that zone repeatedly as it presses its assault.

The retrieval of the bodies came as United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken continued the diplomatic push in the region for a ceasefire deal that would result in hostages being released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. Frustration has grown in Israel over the months of halting negotiations, and family members of the hostages still in Gaza have led regular protests demanding a deal to secure their freedom.

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# Hope fights hate at UCT

TALI FEINBERG

Ben-Gurion University (BGU) President Professor Daniel Chaimovitz says University of Cape Town (UCT) students and staff who want to cut ties with Israeli universities would be shocked to know that 30% to 45% of some Israeli student populations are Arab, way more than the percentages of Arabs living in Israel.

In addition, BGU has a large Bedouin contingent of staff and students, including Sarab Abu-Rabia Queder, the first Bedouin woman in Israel to receive a doctorate and to be promoted to associate professor.

Chaimovitz, visiting South Africa from Israel, was speaking at an event titled “Ramifications of UCT resolutions regarding Israel”, hosted by the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council on 20 August. He said many Israeli universities aim to foster connections in diverse societies, yet universities like UCT want to boycott these advances.

On 7 October, 75 members of the BGU community were murdered, 10 were taken hostage, and many more were made refugees in their own country. Yet the institution continues to work to build bridges between diverse sectors of Israeli society and beyond, Chaimovitz said.

A UCT staff member speaking at the event, who the *SA Jewish Report* chose to keep anonymous for his own security, said he believed there would be negative implications for UCT of anti-Israel resolutions, with an impact on donor funding and grants from countries like America and Germany. “It will become an existential matter for UCT,” he said.

At the same event, a UCT Jewish student who the *SA Jewish Report* chose to keep anonymous for her own safety, said that during Israeli Apartheid Week earlier this year, a female student had pulled the kippah off the head of a Jewish student and thrown it on the ground, encapsulating the anti-Israel sentiment allowed to flourish at the university over the past few years. However, the way the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) reacted to the incident was hopeful for Jewish students continuing to attend an institution that has shaped the lives of thousands of Jewish alumni.

The Jewish student leader said the incident was caught on camera, and at first SAUJS members were shocked and unsure how to proceed. As things simmered down, they eventually reached out to the female student to try build a connection.

When pulling off the kippah, she said it was because the Jewish student “wasn’t a real Jew, because he’s a Zionist”. However, when engaging with the female student, SAUJS realised she had no understanding of Judaism or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It organised for her to attend a tour of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre to help her realise that her behaviour was antisemitic and to learn about Jewish history.

Its members then gave her an



Anti-Zionist incidents at UCT have had an impact on donor funding

Photo: @gjingwithtagopro

overview of the conflict, and she responded by saying that she had learnt a lot, and her behaviour and sentiments had been extremely out of line. The Jewish student leader said this approach of engaging with individual students and small groups was having a significant impact in pushing back the wave of anti-Israel sentiment that has engulfed the campus.

In another example, SAUJS recently took a diverse group of non-Jewish UCT student leaders to Israel, allowing them to experience the reality of Israel’s diverse society and the impact of 7 October. It also offered a safe space for extensive debate between them and Jewish students. They have now formed a relationship, and SAUJS has since invited students from the tour to Shabbos dinners and parties.

However, the Jewish student leader said SAUJS usually took Student Representative Council members to Israel, but this year, they refused to come, fearing the impact on their political careers. In addition, one student who went to Israel had since been punished for it. The funding he was receiving from his department was withdrawn, and he was told it was because he had been to Israel.

She said that from about 9 October, her non-Jewish friends at university had stopped talking to her and making eye contact, cutting her off simply because she was Jewish. Yet, she believes UCT remains a safe space for Jewish students, and there’s room to fight back against discrimination on campus. “I would happily run around with an Israeli flag,” she points out.

She says the radical, terrorist-supporting UCT Palestinian Solidarity Forum (UCT PSF) is small, fractured, and rife with internal politics, with little to no impact on students’ beliefs or actions. This was echoed by the UCT staff member, who said that the South African government and media encouraged radical positions and therefore the UCT PSF wasn’t just a “UCT problem” but a wider concern. He said the group had minimal traction on campus and had alienated some of its supporters.

Banning collaboration between Israeli and South African academics would have little to no impact on

Israeli universities, he said, as collaboration with South Africans is a drop in the ocean compared to their work with other nationalities.

The anti-Israel resolutions at UCT reflect current sentiment in South African society, the staff member said, but there are staff

members with opinions across the spectrum, with many supporting Israel or collaborating with Israeli researchers.

He said research between UCT and Israeli academics hadn’t yet been cut off, and the university was in “limbo” regarding the matter.

## Rabbi’s arrest for circumcision rings alarm bells

RABBI HAYIM LEITER – JTA

“What are these for?” the security guard at Dubai airport asked as three others inspected my *bris* kit – the bag of supplies I carry when I perform circumcisions on Jewish baby boys.

Whenever I travel for work and I’m away from Israel for only a short time, I never check a bag, so this can make for interesting encounters at the X-ray machines. There are times I’ve lied and said I make jewellery, but since circumcision is a cultural norm in the United Arab Emirates and other Muslim countries, I decided to come clean. “I perform circumcisions,” I replied. They looked at me with blank stares. “You know, the operation done to a baby ... on his ...” The penny dropped and all three showed their recognition in unison. It felt like I was in a movie.

I have many stories like this, most of them involving my luggage. People love to talk about Israel, Judaism, and *brit milah*, Jewish ritual circumcision, even in the most unexpected places. But as a recent trip approached, the news out of Ireland gave me pause.

Rabbi Jonathan Abraham, a well-respected mohel from the United Kingdom, was arrested in Dublin for performing circumcision despite not being a physician on the basis that circumcision is a medical procedure. The details of the story are still emerging, but what’s known is that the rabbi travelled to Ireland, which he had done many times before, to perform circumcisions for a number of non-Jewish boys.

In the court proceedings, a detective testified that she entered the home to find one baby on a changing mat who had already been circumcised, while Abraham was preparing to circumcise another child. The mohel was refused bail, and could be sentenced to five years in prison and perhaps fined up to €130 000 (R2.5 million). The arrest has come as a deep shock, as it had appeared to be settled law in Ireland that circumcision carried out for religious and cultural reasons isn’t classified as a medical procedure.

For travelling mohels like me, this is a rather disconcerting story. I flashed back to all the *brises* I had done in the past. I have certification to perform them in Sweden, but no other Jewish community I’ve visited mentioned any legal requirements for being such a practitioner.

My mind is flooded with questions, the most pressing of which is why this mohel was arrested, given the understanding of the law in Ireland. Many articles on the arrest quote a 2007 law that requires practitioners to be medical professionals, which this rabbi isn’t. But it’s 2024, and this is the first time this has happened in the region. Could something else be at play?

It goes without saying that the climate for Jews isn’t good. Israel is a hot-button topic all over the world and every day, there seems to be more news of a growing wave of antisemitism. Ireland in particular has been an epicentre of anti-Israel sentiment. I hate to say so, but it kind of felt that it was only a

matter of time before something like this would happen.

And even before the backlash against Israel and its supporters, Europe had become a hotbed of opposition to ritual circumcision, a ritual important not only to Jews but to Muslims. Some defenders of the ritual say such opposition is a byproduct of xenophobia.

The good news is that Abraham is a member of the United Kingdom Initiation Society, the institution which trains and regulates religious circumcisers. The organisation has been on top of this case from the outset. Even though he was originally denied kosher food and tefillin with which to pray, the Initiation Society and local Jewish leaders are making sure that both Abraham and our core religious values are safe.

But there are no guarantees.

The same uncertainty applies to *brit milah* in Europe and around the world.

There are many communities without a local mohel.

The practice is kept alive in these areas by travelling mohels, like myself, who visit regularly to provide this essential service. It’s quite possible that mohels will be scared off from travelling, or at least think twice before going for fear of such reprisals.

As far as I understand it, this is the first time a rabbi has been arrested for performing circumcision since the time of the Nazis. The tension surrounding Israel – and Jews more broadly – doesn’t appear to be subsiding. I pray that the next time I’m called on to perform a *brit* outside of Israel, I will have the strength to do so. I will definitely do diligent research beforehand to lessen the possibility of a run-in with the law. My hope is that Abraham will be home with his family soon, and that we mohels can band together to keep our age-old tradition alive.

• The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and don’t necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media.



A mohel performs a circumcision ceremony in Israel

Photo: David Cohen - Flash 90

# China plays 'third man' in Middle East

STEVEN GRUZD

As the Israel-Hamas war grinds on relentlessly and a deal remains elusive, the United States (US) isn't the only sheriff in town. In recent months, Beijing has convened Palestinian factions to seek unity, stepped up contacts with Iran, and increased its diplomacy in the region. With significant geo-economic interests, China has much to lose from Middle East instability, especially an uncontrolled regional war. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to several China scholars to understand the dynamics better.

opportunity to be a force for moderation."

Gustavo de Carvalho, senior researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs, said, "Engaging in the Israel-Hamas conflict is a low-risk, high-reward opportunity for China. By facilitating Palestinian unity talks, China could earn prestige for contributing to negotiations and long-term stability. If these efforts fail, China is unlikely to be blamed. If they succeed, the nation stands to benefit from regional stability and enhanced reputation."

China has a modest mediation track record, including in Sudan, the Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement in 2023, and supporting

to stability."

"The US is out of step with broad regime opinion in the Middle East," Alden said. "China will emphasise this 'negative' role in working against the aspirations of Palestine. China is slowly corroding the pre-eminence of the US in the region. But the catch is that China doesn't have much to offer regarding hard security. The Saudis still want US security guarantees, but are worried about uneven US commitment after the abrupt pullout from Afghanistan. But they have no real alternative from China, at least at this point."

So could China lean on Iran? The China-Iran relationship is long-standing, predating the 1979 Islamic Revolution. China sold weapons to Iran in its 1980-1988 war with Iraq. Iran sees China as a development-oriented partner, an alternative to the West, and is interested in groups like the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and BRICS, Alden said.

"China certainly holds influence over Iran due to positive bilateral relations, trade, and tacit support," said De Carvalho. "However, its leverage isn't unlimited. Iran is too significant a player to be completely subservient. While China seeks regional stability and may push for Iranian restraint, its influence has limits as Iran's actions are part of more complex domestic, regional, and global calculations."

"Iran has strong ideas of its own and its role in the world. There's a commercial basis to the relations. China was key in getting Iran into the BRICS, and that will strengthen ties. It may have a voice, but China doesn't call the shots," said Van Staden.

Does China have something unique to contribute in the Middle East? According to Van Staden, "China has an impressive, rapid non-Western development record. It also lacks a history of colonialism, and the US's long history of supporting Israel. That puts it in a position to work with partners like Iran, Egypt, or others."

"As China seeks operational space, it's less about ideology and more about pragmatism, De Carvalho said. "In the Middle East, China stands to lose the most if things get any worse."

"China has a bigger mission than a new Cold War," Van Staden said, "and that is to carve a space for itself as an emerging superpower, and build networks and solidarity. That doesn't mean that it necessarily wants to replace the US in something like protecting shipping in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. I don't think it does. It's positioning itself in the larger split between the Global North and Global South. But don't expect China to step in and transform the situation overnight – so much depends on Israel and the US."

both countries' entry into the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) organisation. It's increasing its military might, economic power, and is on the United Nations Security Council.

Dr Cobus van Staden, the managing editor of the China-Global South Project, said "China has been involved in back-channel diplomacy since 7 October. Sometimes it's quieter than others. Trying to reconcile Fatah and Hamas builds on the earlier brokering of the Iran-Saudi deal. Its fears about escalation is probably driving the current engagement."

Alden said China's persistent adherence to UN resolutions on Israel-Palestine had been "a signature across Chinese engagement. But this isn't the China of a decade ago that could splash out cash to pursue its economic interests like it did in Africa and Latin America. It nonetheless has capacity in all the areas that the region needs, including consumer power for a post-oil future for countries locked into the Chinese economy."

"China sees the US as a serial breaker of stability," he said. "Its actions, diplomacy, and military interventions don't resolve problems, while the Chinese believe their diplomacy leads



## China has an invested interest in the Middle East and hopes to bring stability to the region

Professor Chris Alden, a China expert at the London School of Economics and Political Science, said, "The overarching policy of China towards the Middle East is to be involved as a more active player going beyond its substantial economic interests, and to signal to the world that it's a system stabiliser, with stability best achieved through negotiation and mediation."

China, the world's second-largest economy, imports half its oil from the Middle East. Its annual trade with the region is more than \$500 billion (R8.9 trillion). Beijing's relations with the region have grown while the US's have shrunk, with diminishing American dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

"China thus has space to fill the vacuum," said Sanusha Naidu, senior research fellow at the Institute for Global Dialogue. "China wants to protect its supply chain," she said. "China also lacks the colonialist baggage of the West, and is more trusted than the US by the Arab world."

Professor Garth Shelton, a security studies expert formerly at the University of the Witwatersrand, said "Given the economic importance of the Middle East to China, Beijing is increasingly concerned about a wider war, which would be damaging to China's economic and political interests. China has a major

## Man vanishes - family desperate for answers

>>Continued from page 1

Wapnick was sad to realise that Schroder "wasn't the Robert I knew from our youth", and could see that life had hit him hard. But he found that Schroder "really held onto old-fashioned values, noticing the details of people's lives". For example, when it was Wapnick's birthday in July, Schroder was one of the few people who wished him from afar.

While in Cape Town, Wapnick gave Schroder a lift home. "He told me he keeps going because he has 'great support' and feels like there's a higher power looking after him from above." He got the sense Schroder keeps moving forward no matter what life throws at him. He believes his old friend is fine, and perhaps wanted to try living life off the grid.

Another old friend, Paul Chernotsky, also believes Schroder is safe and possibly headed to Jeffreys Bay to watch a surfing competition, or "is somewhere having fun". He says Schroder is loveable and harmless. "Everyone knows him!"

Tamari agrees that her brother is a "phenomenon on the streets of Cape Town", making a long-lasting impression on people from all walks of life, and is often seen at Giovanni's, Newport Deli, or the Company's Garden. Many people give him rides or buy him a coffee, and see him as a "gentle soul".

At this point, police are distributing missing-person posters, continuing to question festivalgoers, looking at photographs from the festival, and working with experienced volunteer hiking groups to scour the many walking trails in the area in case Schroder wandered off and fell.

"Before I came to Cape Town, I had no hope," Tamari says. "But when we got here and contacted the Community Security Organisation [CSO], and saw the effort it put in for us, I felt hopeful again." The CSO couldn't comment to the *SA Jewish Report* because the case is still being investigated.

"And then, the way the community and people around the world have rallied has given us hope," Tamari says. "Many people say they have Robert in their prayers, and are saying tehillim for him."

At the same time, Tamari fears her brother wouldn't survive long in a rural area in the winter cold without his medication or other possessions. "Some people ask if maybe Robert didn't want to continue living, but he isn't like that. He always believes in 'happily ever after'. He's committed to his family, and he always keeps going. Our faith teaches us to be optimistic, and I believe we'll find him."

Anyone with any information can contact the Schroder siblings on 072 488 2940.

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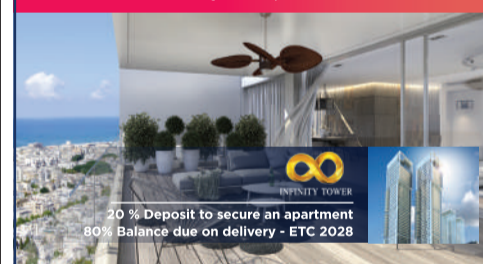
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# South African Jewish Report

The source of quality content, news and insights

## Fear of not knowing

When you read about the anguish of a family whose brother or loved one has disappeared, you can't help but feel their pain as well as be grateful for your own blessings. Such is my sense when I read our page 1 lead, wondering what happened to this man.

People we know in South Africa rarely disappear, for which we can only be thankful. That's not to say that there aren't kidnappings or that human trafficking doesn't occur. It does, and as we're well aware from a recent story we ran, there are South Africans very much involved in this horrific trade. And there are many South Africans – even children – who disappear all the time.

However, it's seldom something we're faced with as a community or have to deal with on a personal level, *bli ayin harah* (without the evil eye). So, when we do hear of someone within our community who disappears, it really hits home.

This week, as we see the messages all over social media asking for people to help search for Robert Schroder, it has been 321 days since the 7 October massacre. That means more than 45 weeks since 251 men, women, and children in Israel were violently kidnapped and taken across the border where they were held hostage.

Of those, 116 hostages have been returned alive to Israel, seven of whom were rescued by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Some we know have died.

However, to date, 109 Israeli hostages – included the two Bibas toddlers – are still being held in Gaza. We're coming up to a year in which they have been incarcerated in the worst possible conditions. Nobody knows how they are, how they are being kept, and, in most cases, there's no proof of life, just hope.

Now, I know we can't compare the situation of a South African man disappearing to that of Israeli hostages being held in a war zone. But it's obviously easier for us to understand one person missing, than more than 100.

Bear in mind that for each hostage, there's an entire family, circle of friends, and community, who are desperate for that person to come home. Consider that each one of those people have loved ones who cannot sleep for fear of what's happening to them.

Each one has a mother, son, daughter, sister, brother, husband, or wife, who cannot continue with their lives because everything came to a halt on 7 October when that person disappeared into Gaza.

Imagine not knowing when the last time was that your child had something nutritious to eat. Imagine not knowing if he or she is getting any food. It's hard even to consider how it must be, knowing that they are in the hands of people who hate them because they are *Yehud* (Jews in Arabic). Imagine not knowing whether he or she is alive or dead? There are so many unknowns in this hostage situation. There's so much devastation, fear, and anger.

Earlier this week, the IDF announced that in an overnight operation in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, it had recovered and then brought home the bodies of six hostages, all of whom were kidnapped alive on 7 October. They were Avraham Munder; Alex Dancyg; Chaim Peri; Yagev Buchshtab; Yoram Metzger; and Nadav Popplewell. See story on page 3.

Popplewell has a South African connection. His mother, Channah Peri, was taken hostage with him on 7 October, but released in November 2023. His older brother was murdered on 7 October.

Their mother has spent all this time waiting for his return. In June, the IDF maintained that he was no longer alive, but I can imagine that Peri still held out some hope that they could be wrong. That is, until this week, when his body was brought home for burial.

As for the other five, it feels important for me to name them all because they aren't just numbers. They, too, have loved ones and entire communities who have been left devastated this week by the news that they were indeed murdered by their captors in Gaza.

Every week, the families and their loved ones take to the streets or Hostage Square in Tel Aviv to call on the government to make a plan, sign an agreement, and do what it takes to bring their loved ones home. For more than 10 months, this has been going on.

Many are angry with the Israeli government, saying that if it had made a deal earlier, their loved ones would be home and alive.

Right now, we wait for news about the negotiations in Doha, Qatar, over the latest proposal for a hostage-ceasefire deal with Hamas. Initially, there was much optimism, but then Hamas rejected the offer. It's not over yet, and here's hoping it leads to some kind of agreement that will ensure the rest of the hostages are returned home.

I can only imagine the frustration of the families knowing that horse trading is happening across a table that involves the lives of their loved ones.

The problem is that once that agreement is signed, there's no going back. And though I believe the Israeli government will do anything it can to bring the hostages home, it won't and can't put the Jewish state in a position that makes it vulnerable to terrorists.

There's much to debate about this, and boy, does our community love a good debate! We're a community that loves to learn, challenge each other, and grow our knowledge base, and that leads to great discussion.

And this weekend is, for so many of us, one we look forward to all year round for this very reason. Limmud in Johannesburg is where so many of us gather to hear phenomenal speakers talk on almost any subject we can relate to. What a joy!

I have to say, I'm so looking forward to being there, and I know I'm not alone. I want to hear what the experts have to say about what's going on in Israel. I want to know how I can improve on my Yiddishkeit in my own way, gleaning from experts. Looking at the weekend's schedule, I know once again I'll be spoilt for choice. In fact, that's the only part of Limmud I find frustrating. Wanting to go to two or three talks that happen at the same time, and having to choose. Oy, may we all be blessed with such challenges!

I look forward to seeing you there.

**Shabbat Shalom!**

**Peta Krost**  
Editor



# War of no victory

OPINION

GERSHON BASKIN



Shame on those who call the recovery of six bodies of Israeli hostages a success! Shame on those who think that military pressure saves hostages – military pressure kills them! Shame on those who praise the flattening of Gaza and the killing of tens of thousands of Gazans!

To be clear, the first hostage deal in November 2023 wasn't done thanks to the military pressure, military pressure delayed this deal by at least two weeks. I say this with 100% certainty. It was possible to save dozens of additional hostages back in November 2023, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the army chiefs wanted to renew the war, to exert more military pressure, which resulted only in the killing of more hostages and many innocent Palestinians. Netanyahu is committing crimes against Israel, against the people of Israel, and of course, against the Palestinian people. This war must end, and it's Netanyahu who is preventing it.

There are another 109 Israeli hostages left in Gaza, a large number of them are probably not among the living. In order to bring them home, a deal must be made with Hamas. That includes ending the war and Israel withdrawing from Gaza. This war must end already. It's possible to reach security arrangements that will protect Israel. Let's not forget that what happened on 7 October wouldn't have happened if there were 10 to 15 tanks on the border, and three attack helicopters in the air. That's what it would have taken to prevent 3 000 murdering and pillaging Hamas and other criminals from entering Israel on that horrible day. When those Hamas fighters broke through Israel's border, they were shocked that there was no Israeli army to prevent them from entering. One Hamas leader told me that they sent 1 500 of the elite fighters (Nukhba) into Israel and expected 1 000 of them to be killed. The same person said, "If we had known that there would be no army on the border, we would have sent 10 000 fighters and conquered Tel Aviv."



**Former hostage Gilad Shalit with Gershon Baskin who successfully negotiated his release from Gaza in 2011**

What happened on 7 October 2023 was the result of criminal negligence, arrogance, and political decisions that for decades turned the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into the police force of the occupation and settlements. The IDF can protect the borders of Israel, and it could have protected Israel on 7 October if it had been there. The army and all of the Israeli security services have direct responsibility for the failure to read the clear intelligence signs that such an attack was about to happen. The chiefs or the army and intelligence services have spoken about taking responsibility, but almost none of them have yet to resign. Netanyahu refuses to accept direct responsibility, and keeps deflecting to the army, to the intelligence services, but he is the head, and he is responsible. His day is coming.

Netanyahu is also directly responsible for tying the hands of the negotiators that he appointed to bring home the hostages. Unlike negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit,

who after five years in captivity – the longest any Israeli has been in the captivity of the enemy – Netanyahu instructed the Mossad agent in charge, David Meidan, to "Bring him home!", Netanyahu hasn't told the head of the Mossad, the head of the Shabak, and General Nitzan Alon, "Bring them home!" To the best of public knowledge, even after the last rounds of negotiations, the negotiators still didn't have a mandate to make the decision to bring the hostages home. As of this morning, there remain 109 hostages in Gaza, with an assumption that most haven't survived the more than 10 months in captivity. Israel had an ethos that "we don't leave anyone behind". That ethos has been broken, and with it the sense of social solidarity and mutual aid that were so much a part of what made Israel special.

The issue of the Israeli hostages has become politicised by Netanyahu's own propaganda machine. Those who demonstrate around the country for a deal, including the families of hostages, are cursed at and look upon as traitors, aiding Hamas in defeating Israel. Even hostages who have come home are often attacked on the streets by some people yelling at them that it's a pity they survived. This kind of behaviour was unheard of in Israel in the past.

Israel will never be the same after 7 October, and it will take many years to overcome the trauma of having so many hostages sacrificed for the unattainable goal of total victory. Hamas has largely been destroyed as a military machine and a government. But it remains powerful enough to engage in armed insurgency for many years to come, killing many Israeli soldiers along the way. It's quite clear that the longer Israel remains in Gaza, the easier it will be for Hamas to recruit new fighters from the hundreds of thousands of people who have lost family members in this war and from the hundreds of thousands who have lost their homes and property to Israeli bombs. One would think that Israel had learned

the lesson of staying in Lebanon for 18 years. But apparently not. There are still leaders in this country and officers in the army that think that total victory is within our reach and that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be solved through

the use of force. That isn't the case now, and there never has been a military solution to this conflict.

Eventually, we'll have new leaders in Israel and in Palestine. Eventually, we'll understand that Israel will never have security if the Palestinians don't have freedom and dignity. The Palestinians won't have freedom and dignity if Israel doesn't have security. To achieve this – freedom, dignity, and security for both peoples – we must, all of us, remove our failed leaders – on both sides and as quickly as possible.

• *The writer is a political and social entrepreneur who has dedicated his life to peace between Israel and her neighbours. He's a founding member of the Kol Ezraheihā – Kol Muwanteneihā (All of the citizens) political party in Israel. He's now the Middle East Director for ICO – International Communities Organization, a United Kingdom-based nongovernmental organisation.*

# Deaf Miss SA speaks volumes about changing norms



DR CAROLYN FEDLER BATZOFIN

OPINION

In a nation known for its diversity, the experiences of those who navigate the world with hearing loss often go unnoticed. But the crowning of a deaf contestant as Miss South Africa made me reflect on the strides toward inclusivity and the vital role of sign language in the context of my journey of growing up in a predominantly hearing society.

My experience may resonate with the broader struggles, triumphs, and realities faced by many South Africans with disabilities. However, I had access to private speech therapy, where I was guided to achieve speech fluency and to assimilate into the hearing world.

I faced a critical choice: to continue my education in a mainstream school or attend one for the deaf, where proficiency in sign language could hinder my opportunities for higher education. These decisions were difficult for my parents, and shaped my trajectory in profound ways.

My journey has been characterised by the interplay between my deafness and my interactions with a hearing world. I perceive "voice" as visual, not auditory.

In group settings, I must focus on one person at a time in spite of having speech fluency. I identify strongly with the term "deaf", as "hearing impaired" suggests a deficiency, while "hard of hearing" can be ambiguous.

"Deaf" encompasses all levels of hearing loss, which in my case is within the severe-to-profound range.

This provides comic relief as I cannot hear my husband snoring – a blessing I cannot extend to him!

Navigating life in a hearing environment presents challenges, particularly when there's little accommodation for alternative communication methods. I have had to cultivate resourcefulness to navigate these situations effectively.

### A childhood of challenges

My story began when awareness of hearing loss was limited. A lack of newborn screening at that time still exists in some hospitals today. It wasn't until I was two years and five months old that I was diagnosed with hearing loss after numerous consultations with specialists, one of whom mistakenly stated that I had "definite minimal brain damage".

Growing up, I encountered significant hurdles in communication and learning. The only school willing to accept me was King David



Photo: Miss South Africa Facebook page

Miss South Africa 2024 Mia le Roux is the first deaf Miss South Africa

Linksfield. I was in large classes, and struggled to keep pace with teachers. Sacrifices were made to provide extra lessons to help me catch up on the extensive material I missed. The concentration required to follow lessons often left me with headaches, and after school, I had to attend speech therapy and do homework. Basically, a case of all work and no play!

I found myself on the periphery, grappling to connect in an environment that offered limited tools for communication such as sign language or cued speech.

Moments were marked by feelings of invisibility, especially when others struggled to understand

my speech. Today, I'm seldom asked if I'm from another country or suffering from a cold.

Through perseverance, I was able to excel academically. Becoming speech fluent eventually allowed me to pursue my true passion: medicine. However, my pathway wasn't without obstacles.

I initially enrolled in a Bachelor of Science with Honours degree, where my admission was contingent on proving my ability to cope with university-level study. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) lacked support for students with disabilities.

I made no demands for special treatment, and used my peers' notes and additional readings to keep up. During my internship, I acquired a special pager at my own expense, which transcribed messages, to facilitate communication in a tech-limited situation.

The lack of awareness and support often led to feelings of isolation

and imposter syndrome in my youth. Yet, this adversity ignited my determination to press on, proving that no challenge is insurmountable.

Today, I find it easier to communicate my needs, a task that was once daunting in a hearing world. Embracing my identity over time has been empowering, allowing me to feel more comfortable in my own skin.

### The influence of Miss South Africa

The participation of a deaf contestant in the Miss South Africa pageant is a powerful affirmation of diversity and resilience. It challenges societal perceptions, allowing others to see the capabilities of individuals regardless of their hearing abilities.

Deafness remains stigmatised and seen as a limitation instead of being reframed as a unique and enriching way of experiencing the world. High-profile advocates like Miss South Africa help normalise diversity, opening doorways to acceptance and understanding.

### The role of sign language

The recent acknowledgment of South African Sign Language (SASL) as the 12th official language represents a major step toward recognising the rights and identity of deaf individuals. It affirms that communication transcends spoken language, and highlights the beauty of non-verbal interactions – a simple moment of shared silence with a friend or loved one can be deeply meaningful.

SASL isn't solely a means of communication, it fosters identity, artistic expression, and cultural community, creating a sense of belonging. For me, signing doesn't come easily as I primarily communicate through speech. While I know a few signs, and signing feels liberating and expressive, the fluidity of SASL is something I sometimes envy.

This raises critical questions about the pressures faced by deaf individuals who strive to fit into a hearing world. There's a fragile balance between ensuring accessibility and enforcing conformity. While mastering the spoken language can open doors in a hearing-dominated society, as my experience illustrates, it should never come at the expense of one's unique identity or the authenticity of deaf culture.

I have worked on cultivating individual identity and community, allowing me to navigate both cultures without fully conforming to either.

Continued on page 11 >>



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23 - 25 August 2024

# Digital tools add new dimension to Holocaust memory

JESSICA CONNÉ

As eyewitnesses to the Holocaust become few and far between, new ways to memorialise the Holocaust have been digitised through technology, and are increasingly transmitted through social media.

Professor Jackie Feldman, who lectures at Ben-Gurion University, spoke at Limmud Cape Town 2024 about how fourth-industrial-revolution technology has changed the way we interact with and memorialise the Shoah.

"What happens when we move from an analogue to a digital generation? When the Yale Archive was instituted and you could see the faces of survivors on video, it wasn't the content of what the survivors said but what they couldn't say – their facial expressions, tears, and choking up that was emphasised. So, a transition took place. What counts as Holocaust memory is now also a function of technology. If there were no videos showing faces and all we had was what could be written, what couldn't be written wouldn't be remembered."

"In the digital age, there's a transition that takes place when memory is transmitted through visual images and video, soundbites, 30-second segments that can be interacted with comments and tags," Feldman said, arguing that new media and technology has extended the way Holocaust memory is consumed, allowing more people to connect to the

human story behind the picture.

For example, "Black and white photos have been reconstructed to be coloured photos with the goal of making people look like they aren't simply a part of history but are real and can be identified with." Additionally, in Germany and Eastern Europe, there are *stolpersteine* (stones that mark the names of where Jews and others affected by the Holocaust used to live). Feldman said there are many places where these stones aren't marked, either because the people owning the land don't want the mark in front of their buildings or because the stones simply haven't been funded.

However, through the application Tracing the Past, one can see the residential street addresses of known victims of the Nazi regime who were persecuted. The app also allows users to see the biographies of the people who once lived there.

Other impressive technology includes hologram-like projections, less commonly known as "Pepper's ghosts", in which projections of Holocaust survivors are displayed. "These are testimonies that have been recorded in a series of hundreds to thousands of questions asked over a period of three to four days," Feldman said. "The answers of survivors are fed through a computer programme. This data is fed through a screen or various screens – the technology varies – that make the survivor look three dimensional." These projections, shown in museums across the world, are interactive and can be asked

questions which will be answered by the projection of the survivor.

"This is a way of creating conversation with survivors who are no longer alive or aren't able to be there in person," Feldman said. Virtual reality (VR) tours have additionally become popular over the years. VR in the context of Holocaust memory has been used for tours of concentration camps, which has extended the reach for those who can't visit Holocaust sites. Similarly, the Auschwitz Museum has chosen a project called Auschwitz in Front of Your Eyes, in which people can do a live digital tour of Auschwitz in the museum with a guide.

With the digital age has come a rise in self-documentation through social media. Selfies "continue the tradition of photographs and portraits that began several centuries earlier", Feldman said, however, selfies at memorial sites have generated heated public debate.

"Auschwitz curators said there was a phenomenon that took place around 2005. Before that, people were taking photos, but the camera swivelled around, and instead of people taking a photo of the site, they are now standing with their back to the site and making themselves the focus," he said. Selfies make the photographer's face the aesthetic focus, whereas most people believe that when viewing a memorial site, the focus should be on the memorialised tragedy. In this way, the selfie appears to be narcissistic and disrespectful.



Professor Jackie Feldman

However, Feldman argues that the act of taking a selfie can be seen as a person adding their presence to the collective act of remembering, in the same way that people may take photographs, write postcards, or buy souvenirs.

"In many ways, a precedent is created that allows people who take selfies to say, 'Hey look, I was there, I was witnessing.' So, whether selfies are an act of desecration or of bearing witness is a question I will leave open."

## A pause for thought: intermezzo of a Jewish traveller

OPINION

It's holiday season in Europe, but is it appropriate to travel? Are we allowed to laugh after visiting Auschwitz? Is it permissible to go on holiday after 7 October? Yes and no.

Of course, it's allowed. Who should forbid it?

So, it's good to laugh after visiting Auschwitz? What else is there to do? But sometimes, the laughter can get stuck in your throat.

The same goes for 7 October 2023 – you can go on holiday, but your mind and soul might not take a break. I listen to the news every hour and ask myself, day in and day out, are those poor hostages still alive? Will they be saved? And if they are saved, what will their lives be like afterwards? Will they be able to go back to school? To a festival? To work? Or will their lives be destroyed by what they have been through? Will they be so traumatised that nothing works anymore? Or will they develop resilience like many Shoah survivors I've seen? They found a way back to life despite the hell the Nazis put them through. I've always admired them so much.

Then my night's sleep is over, and I drink milk and listen to podcasts that are supposed to calm me down but don't. Until dawn, I doze in my armchair.

I read articles by clever philosophers about anti-Zionism coupled with antisemitism. I read writings from students and professors at German and American universities, and I'm unsure whether they, themselves, are reading.

I receive hostility in the post and by email, and the line between friend and enemy blurs every day.

A friend of mine, Barbara, moved from Vienna to the Peloponnese, her retirement destination. She calls and says I have to think about other things and visit her. Her mother came to England from Vienna with the Kindertransport, but at the age of 88, returned to Vienna. Barbara was 40 at the time, and moved with her. Now Barbara has left Vienna – too many idiots there, she says.

So, I travel to Athens and continue by bus until I'm greeted by the glistening sea.

There are newspapers here too. I can't read them, but I see pictures of Palestinian civilians, and it makes my heart ache.

"Yes, you can despair over the massacre perpetrated by Hamas and sympathise with the



You can physically go on holiday, but your mind and soul may not be able to take a break from what's happening in Israel

Palestinians at the same time. The heart is big enough!"

These are my standard phrases in the last few weeks before I set off. They are necessary to counter my increasingly aggressive surroundings. But they also show my helplessness in the face of the situation.

In the meantime, some Jewish friends have left Berlin. They have rented flats in Basel or Zurich. They say they will feel safer in Switzerland, and ask if I want to come with them.

"I don't want to leave," I stammer quietly. "You'll have to leave," they reply firmly.

This isn't 1933, but 2024, and I feel like I'm in the wrong film. For the first time, it's not my grandparents or parents who are being targeted, but me. Because I'm Jewish.

But I'm so much more: a woman, an artist, a mother, a human being! How can I protect my humanity?

Fat, ripe red tomatoes, lots of feta, the sea, and plenty of retsina take my mind off things, even though the war is very, very close.

I drink Nescafé Frio, listen to the bouzouki, and stare at the waves rippling in the wind. What a beautiful world we have!

And then I hear Hebrew at the table right next to me. The next day again in the supermarket, later on at the beach. In the café, I learn that the area is full of Israelis. They are looking for houses to rent or buy; they want to get away as quickly as possible. They want to come here because it's close to home and a bit like home.

Until now, most people would never leave Israel, with the country meaning more to them than their

own safety.

Here, I meet others who can no longer stand the warlike situation. Esthi has heard the tunnels being built near her kibbutz for years. "Lebanon is a single tunnel," she says. "I heard them drilling day and night."

Jossi has a construction company and his workers are in Rafah and won't get to work anytime soon – if they survive at all. "I don't trust our government," he says.

I'm in Greece, but it feels like Sheinkin – a trendy street in Tel Aviv. If you imagine the mountains a little redder, it could also be Eilat.

Some leave *eretz Yisrael*, others leave Berlin. Because if you squint your eyes in Zurich, you might think you're at Wannsee ... maybe.

The sun is blazing, and the fig tree provides me with shade. It's June, mostly pensioners are here, a sea of white-haired people populate the café.

Barbara smiles. "It's nice here, isn't it?" she says.

"My mother came out of Vienna on the very last Kindertransport on 9 November 1938, the Reichskristallnacht. Later, her cousin, who became a journalist, told me that they took only very bright, very healthy children from wealthy, educated families – 10 000 of them from good families. They left orphans behind, even those with a darker skin tone or those who were ill. Those kids were then deported. You didn't know that, did you?"

No, I didn't know that.

Flight, expulsion, mass migration everywhere.

"But we're lucky, we're here voluntarily. A refuge for some, warmth for others. Some need peace and quiet. Many can no longer deal with their home country. Is there a nicer retirement home?"

Barbara is right. And the Peloponnese isn't just a wonderful destination when you get old!

I love Greece. The people, the country, the food, but there's no place where it's over. Where you forget. And it's probably right because there's only one world we live in.

A short interlude, my holidays. Then I travel home and throw myself back into the hullabaloo of Berlin life.

• *Adriana Altaras is a German Jewish actor, opera director, and author. She was born in Croatia, grew up in Italy, and later moved to Germany. She is a "Die Zeit Online" columnist. She will be speaking at Limmud in Johannesburg from 23 to 25 August on "The Holocaust in Ukraine, Marc Chagall, and the Soviet Yiddish Theatre."*



ADRIANA ALTARAS

## Disclosure critical in combatting abuse

JESSICA CONNÉ

Abuse exists in our community, and though it's not easy to talk about it, we must expose it, Melanie Uranovsky told Limmud Cape Town last weekend.

Uranovsky, who works with Koleinu SA, an organisation that helps the victims of abuse, said

no social, religious, or economic group was immune.

"One in five children will be victims of some form of unwanted touch by the age of 18," she said, quoting from the latest child sexual

abuse statistics. "It takes an average of 20 to 30 years for a victim of child sexual abuse [CSA] to disclose it. And, as many as 86% of CSA goes unreported. Ninety percent of children who are victims of sexual abuse know their abuser. Sixty percent of abusers are acquaintances, teachers, neighbours, or community leaders. Thirty percent of children are abused by immediate or extended family, and 10% of children are sexually abused by a stranger."

"These statistics are global," Uranovsky said. "We have no idea what the statistics are in the Jewish or South African community generally. There are probably many more cases."

"In the Jewish community, it's hard for people to come forward because we have this DNA, this *shemzach* [shame], that we mustn't tell anybody," she said. "So, when it

takes a [non-Jewish] woman one to seven years to talk about the fact that she was abused, it takes a Jewish woman seven to 15 years."

"The police aren't trained to take in people who walk in off the street and report sexual abuse," Uranovsky said. "They will ask, 'What did you do that made him abuse you? Did you wear your skirt too short? Were you exposing your shoulders? Were you drunk? Did you come onto him?'"

The way one responds to disclosure is important, she said. "You have to praise them and thank them for doing so. You need to tell them that you believe them, and that it's not their fault."

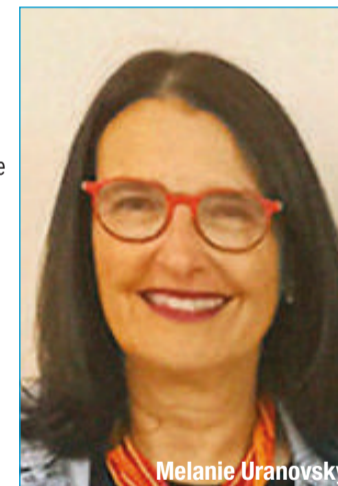
"You should encourage them to talk more by asking open-ended questions like, 'What happened next?' rather than leading questions like 'Where did he put his hand?'"

In front of a child, you cannot show anger towards the perpetrator, as that may stop the child from saying more. You also need to assure the child that it's your responsibility to protect them. If a child under 18 tells you that they have been sexually abused, you must report it. Everyone over 18 is a mandatory reporter."

To report abuse, call the helplines below.

Cape Town: 074 180 5687; Johannesburg: 011 264 0341; Email: koleinusa@gmail.com; Monday to Thursday: 19:00 to 22:00, Friday: 09:00 to 15:00

For after-hours reports, call the Chai Helpline: 0800 24 24 36.



Melanie Uranovsky



# Why there's only one solution, and that solution is peace

OPINION

YONATAN MIZRACHI



The murderous attack by Hamas on 7 October and the subsequent 10 months of war in the Gaza Strip have made every Zionist question whether peace with the Palestinians is possible. Could the level of killing and brutality we experienced on 7 October from Hamas terrorists be the clearest evidence that between the river and the sea, there can only be one state – Israeli or Palestinian?

Yet, in such a period of ongoing violent reality, it's worth remembering at least 10 reasons why peace is the only solution that can preserve both peoples in their land:

- 1. The fight against Islamic fundamentalism.** Combating Islamic fundamentalism requires a combination of tools: military action; an education system promoting democracy and human rights; and creating conditions for economic prosperity. War alone cannot defeat extreme ideology. It's necessary to join forces with moderate elements in neighbouring countries who are as threatened by extremism as the Israelis. Such co-operation cannot occur if Israel is fighting against the Palestinians;
- 2. Israel's desire to live.** The best proof of this is the

country's achievements in the economic, security, and cultural fields, among others. Until the current government was formed, there was a sense that Israel was working for its citizens. A country that desires to live must ensure that as many friendly states as possible are along its borders, and furthermore, that these states are willing to co-operate in security and economic domains. The global landscape, from the European Union to economic agreements in North America, Asia, and beyond, provides examples. Israel and Middle East countries cannot afford to lag behind in this regard;

- 3. The Israeli presence in the West Bank.** This is neither economic nor security-driven. The settlements consume funds without adding economic value to Israel. The security forces are compelled to protect more than 350 settlements and outposts instead of maintaining a well-defined and agreed-upon border. The financial expenditure and amount of manpower the military allocates to securing these settlements are a significant economic and security burden;

- 4. The cost of war.** Even when "winning" a war, the economic, social, and personal costs are overwhelming, let alone when not winning. The balance of power between rivals is constantly shifting, and even a weaker enemy can exploit the weaknesses of a stronger opponent, as seen on 7 October;

- 5. Enduring hatred.** Palestinian hatred towards Israel won't disappear after any war. On the contrary, it's likely to increase. Peace agreements are just the beginning of the journey toward peaceful coexistence. Both sides will need to maintain this path through an education system focused on peace, reconciliation, the development of economic interests, and commercial and cultural co-operation;

- 6. Hope for the future.** Millions of Palestinians aspire to live with hope for a better future. Palestinian society is one of the most educated in the Middle East, and understands the West better than any other Arab society. An era of peace would bring unprecedented prosperity to the Palestinians;

- 7. The nature of peace.** Peace means painful compromise for both sides, and involves a two-state solution. Palestinians will live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, giving up the dream of a greater Palestine, while Israel will evacuate a significant portion of the settlements. It's crucial for Israel to acknowledge the dangers posed by the settlements to prevent social, economic, and political collapse;

- 8. The international dimension.** The conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians extends beyond a struggle between two peoples. The International Court of Justice's opinions are one indication of the conflict's international scope. Over time, the international community won't accept the Israeli occupation. If there's one issue

on which Western countries and major powers like Russia and China agree, it's that the Israeli occupation must end. Withdrawal from the occupied territories is essential for regional stability. For Israel, the danger of confrontation with the international community represents an existential threat. Israel cannot afford to isolate itself economically, security-wise, or culturally from the world and create a closed and pariah state without connections to supportive nations and powers;

- 9. The Palestinian Authority's role.** It's easy to criticise the Palestinian Authority as corrupt and undemocratic, but we cannot ignore its success in combating terrorism. For nearly 20 years, there were almost no terror attacks originating from the Palestinian territories. In the past two years, the Palestinian Authority has weakened to the point where it struggles to combat terrorism in Palestinian cities, but its strengthening largely depends on Israel's willingness;

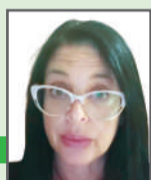
- 10. Peace isn't a magic solution.** Even after achieving peace with the Palestinians, Israel will still face hostile states and existential threats from movements and countries that seek its destruction. However, peace is the smartest and fastest way to strengthen itself to better handle these threats. It involves building a strong military while also developing a strong society and economy.

• Yonatan Mizrachi is a research associate at the Forum for Regional Thinking and the co-director of Settlement Watch in the Peace Now movement. He will be speaking at Limmud Johannesburg this weekend on issues including "Is a Political Solution Between Israel and the Palestinians Possible?"

## Holocaust Museum reveals unlaminated truth about prejudice

PERSONAL STORY

KIM HATCHUEL



Being in Melbourne when an employee at the Elsternwick branch of Officeworks refused to laminate a Jewish newspaper article, citing her "pro-Palestine" stance as the reason, I felt the need to visit the Melbourne Holocaust Museum. Elsternwick is home to approximately 23 600 Jewish people and is Australia's largest Jewish community and cultural home.

As a South African tourist, I was curious to see what this person, who worked at the Australian chain of office supply stores, might learn if she spent some time in the museum. She had received a final warning, additional training, relocation to a different store, and was required to visit the museum. Perhaps she might understand the profound impact of antisemitism.

control. These artifacts aren't just relics of the past; they're poignant reminders of the resilience and humanity of the victims.

Walking around the exhibits, I saw examples of the spread of antisemitic propaganda in pre-war Europe; the erosion of Jewish rights; and the devastating indifference of the world. It showed how such an atrocity could have occurred, and underscored the importance of vigilance in the face of hatred and bigotry.

Antisemitism isn't just something that happened in the past; it's a persistent threat that continues to rear its ugly head. The rise in antisemitism post-7 October is a stark reminder of this. Hate crimes against Jews have increased, and antisemitic rhetoric has become more

prevalent. This resurgence of hatred makes the mission of Holocaust museums around the world more urgent than ever. By educating people about the Holocaust, these institutions play an important role in combating antisemitism and fostering a culture of tolerance and understanding.

I spent about a week after I left the museum reflecting on why a visit to such an institution would be beneficial for the likes of the woman from Officeworks. It wasn't immediately apparent, as I initially thought that it may seem to people like her that the

Jewish people – and Israelis in particular – are treating the Palestinian people the same way the Nazis treated the Jews.

My thoughts moved to a reflection on the parallels between the past and the present. The Holocaust didn't begin with mass extermination; it began with words – hateful rhetoric that dehumanised Jews and laid the groundwork for genocide. We're now experiencing a disturbing echo of this in the rise of antisemitic behaviour, hate speech, and attacks on Jewish institutions. In Melbourne, a hamburger restaurant in a Jewish area was torched as the owner was Jewish. Another shop on the same road is receiving messages of hate online. All because the owners are Jewish.

The few hours I spent at the museum reinforced my belief in the importance of remembering the past to build a better future. As a South African, I understand the impact of systemic discrimination and the importance of fighting it. My visit reminded me that we need to remember, to educate, and to act. In a world still grappling with the scourge of antisemitism, its message is more important than ever.

As we were leaving, one of the volunteers suggested that we take some time to process what we had just witnessed and to be kind to ourselves. Her words were a gentle reminder of the emotional toll that confronting such profound human suffering can take.

• Kim Hatchuel is the proofreader at the SA Jewish Report.



Melbourne Holocaust Museum Core Exhibition

We started our tour with a virtual reality experience, which provides a visceral connection to the history of the Holocaust. It's the story of John (Szaja) Chaskiel, a Holocaust survivor. Szaja was sent to the Poznan slave labour camp when he was 10 years old, and later to Łódź Ghetto. In 1944, he was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and then sent on a death march, before reaching the Buchenwald concentration camp. After liberation, Szaja emigrated to Australia in 1950, and lived in Melbourne until his death in 2023.

We followed him from his hometown of Wieluń in Poland, to Łódź, Auschwitz, the Buchenwald camp, and finally back home to Melbourne. Szaja shared his testimony at the sites of his incarceration, and we walked with him through the journey of his past as though we were right there beside him.

The realism and detail were overwhelming, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of the daily horrors faced by the prisoners. This technological innovation is a powerful tool for empathy and education, making the past feel immediate and real.

On the second floor of the building, we listened to a few testimonies from Holocaust survivors who had settled in Melbourne. I was reminded of the strength of the human spirit. Despite unimaginable suffering, these survivors rebuilt their lives, and their stories are a testament to the power of hope and resilience.

Photographs of smiling children, letters filled with hope, and personal belongings left behind spoke of lives interrupted, dreams cut short, and egregious social



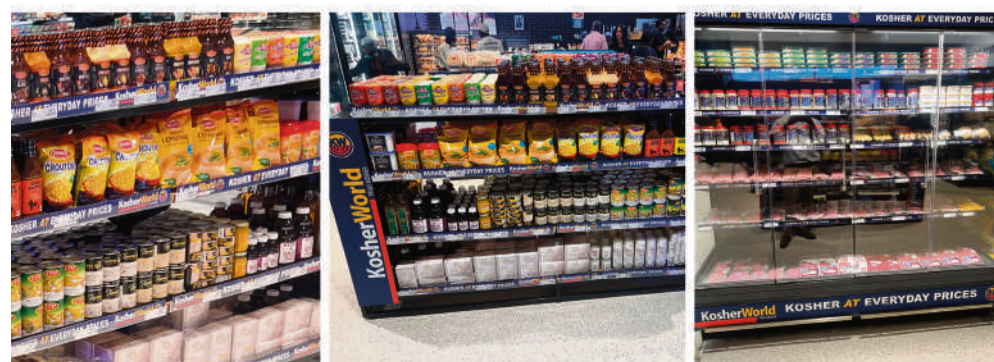
## Kosher convenience at LXX Sandhurst shopping centre

A new Checkers has opened its doors at the LXX Sandhurst Shopping Centre, 68 Rivonia Road, and we're thrilled to announce that KosherWorld offers a complete range of products at this store.

Our mission is to make kosher living accessible and convenient for everyone. Whether you're in search of traditional kosher staples or new and exciting kosher products, you'll find everything you need and more in the KosherWorld section at Checkers.

KosherWorld is proud to be part of the LXX Sandhurst community, and looks forward to serving you. Visit the KosherWorld section at Checkers today and experience the difference!

For more information about KosherWorld, visit [www.kosherworld.co.za](http://www.kosherworld.co.za).



# Courage in adversity, and the power of sharing

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

There's nothing like celebrating our achievements, but there's also power in sharing our struggles. The Women of Courage breakfast hosted by the Union of Jewish Women in collaboration with King David Schools on 18 August encouraged women to "choose courage over comfort" and share their stories.

Before the unthinkable happened, working mom Dionne Mincer did it all. "To say I'm a hands-on mom is putting it mildly," she said. "I could never ask anyone for help." The fittest she'd ever been, she was constantly on the go. She felt amazing. Until she didn't.

What began as a heart rate that didn't come down quickly enough after an exercise class, evolved into flu-like symptoms. Soon afterwards, Mincer collapsed twice within 24 hours, cutting her head and landing up in hospital with very low blood pressure. After she was treated for a head injury, a CT scan showed blood on the brain which was attributed to the fall.

"But in the early hours of the morning, my heart unexpectedly started to give in," Mincer recalled. "My blood pressure was non-existent, and I started to swell up until I was almost unrecognisable." During an emergency procedure to suction fluid off her heart, her doctor battled to gain entry through her ribs, and accidentally punctured her lung.

Also battling excruciating pain in her legs, Mincer said the worst part was that the doctors were completely baffled. She then developed compartment syndrome, a painful condition when pressure within the muscles builds to dangerous levels. The pressure can decrease blood flow, preventing oxygen from reaching the nerve and muscle cells. She needed an immediate operation to save her legs.

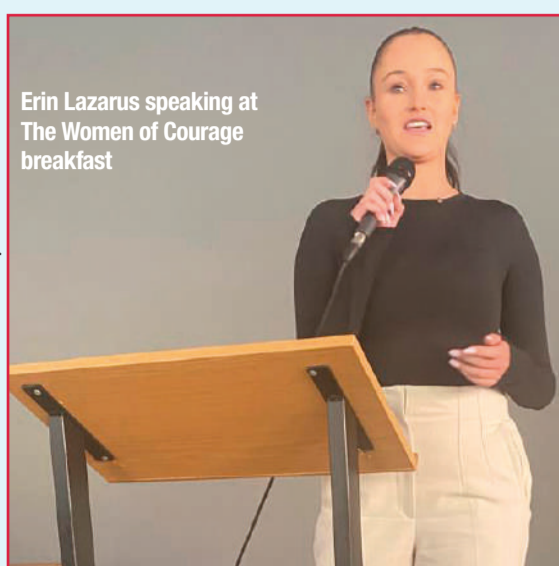
Afterwards, Mincer awoke on a ventilator and dialysis with both legs sliced open. "It was a nightmare – not able to communicate, losing control, so much going on at home, no time for this," she said.

Yet, upon hearing of the hundreds of people from around the world praying for

her on tehillim groups and those helping her husband and kids in multiple ways, she realised she needn't worry. She finally understood the depth of the community's support.

"Over the whole six weeks in intensive care, there was never any doubt in my mind that I would walk again," Mincer said. She was, however, forced to confront the fact that she couldn't do everything alone. Today, she's running, attending therapy, and accepting help.

The cardiologist's theory is that she had a cytokine storm. "In response to a virus, probably COVID-19, my body built up too many fighter cells," she said. "They attacked my heart, sending my blood levels up, and turning my blood to sugary syrup.



Erin Lazarus speaking at The Women of Courage breakfast

"What got me through is all of you here today," she said. "We need each other."

Jacqui Miller is the mom of a son with special needs, Jude, 11. Jude is on the autism spectrum and has apraxia of speech. In her book, *Hey Jude*, Miller shares her story, emphasising the importance of kindness and empathy.

While initially neurotypical, Jude began developing excessive temperatures at 21 months. Initially diagnosed with Kawasaki disease which doctors later suggested was actually encephalitis, Jude retreated into himself. When he was later found to be on the spectrum, the Millers were shattered.

"At times, life feels like a battle," Miller admitted. "Nothing with Jude is easy." Yet with the help of his facilitators, online communication tools, and a gluten and dairy-free diet, Jude and his family have adapted. They've also consulted doctors around the world, seeking new treatments.

"What I've learnt from Jude is that the other side of struggle is always strength," said Miller. "My biggest lesson is that love needs no words."

Approaching her leg amputation as a new journey as opposed to a disability, Erin Lazarus is proof that humour and a positive attitude provide strength in adversity. Always sporty, she felt increasingly unwell during her honours studies and after completing exams, her body crashed.

Initially misdiagnosed with anxiety, she knew something was wrong when her left foot instantly turned black and blue when she placed it into a swimming pool, causing intense pain. Tests ultimately revealed that she had the autoimmune disease lupus.

Her foot pain steadily worsened. In January 2022, after two operations, Lazarus was faced with amputation. The lupus had attacked her blood vessels, stopping blood flow to her foot.

She's now raising money for the Trojans Neurological Trust, which funds rehabilitation for those with neurological conditions, by running steadily longer distances. Having recently run 16km, she's tackling a half marathon next month.

As a baby, Itumeleng Sekhu-Pedi lost a hand, and suffered other devastating injuries in a fire caused by a candle. Today, she runs a candle-making business. Infusing horror with humour, Sekhu-Pedi spoke of frustration following multiple unsuccessful suicide attempts, and revealed how she eventually found purpose in sharing her story.

"With one hand and one finger, I can do everything people with two hands and 10 fingers can do," she said. "There are people with two hands and 10 fingers who walk around feeling sorry for themselves. And I think, 'You are so blessed!'"

"At one point, I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror," Sekhu-Pedi said. "Now I speak, motivate, and encourage hundreds of thousands of people on big stages. That's freedom on a whole other level."

Coming from a tiny KwaZulu-Natal township, coach and international speaker Dr Vumile Msweli worked to attain a scholarship to private school St Mary's DSG, where she matriculated with seven distinctions.

Yet, upon pursuing honours in accounting, she failed for the first time. "I always defined myself by my academic prowess," she said. Msweli realised that one can either identify as a failure, or use failure as feedback.

Choosing the second option, she ultimately attained a Master of Business Administration at the University of London.

In sharing our stories, we give others the courage to share theirs. And, said Msweli, by immersing ourselves in someone else's world through their stories, we truly learn.

## The art of being your parents' primary caregiver

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

They're your strength, your foundation, the people you look up to. Yet, one day, you'll realise that while they're still right beside you, they're no longer who they once were. Though it's a privilege to have elderly parents, it can be heart-wrenching to watch them grow old.

Not only are many confronting the challenges that come with guiding their parents through old age, they're also becoming their primary carers, said senior social work supervisor at Sandringham Gardens, Irene Jansen van Rensburg, at a talk hosted by Chevrah Kadisha Community Social Services at the David Lopatie Conference Centre on 31 July.

Studies show that 10% of adults aged 60 to 69 whose parents are still living will serve as their caregivers, said Jansen van Rensburg. That's because not only do people live far longer than they did in decades past, but few are equipped to support themselves financially past 85 and beyond.

What's more, the inevitable role reversal that comes with caring for elderly parents often means navigating an emotional minefield. It's something we and our parents, who find it difficult to admit they need help, are reluctant to face.

"We all wait too long to have the conversation," said Jansen van Rensburg, "to acknowledge that they're aging and ask what we can do to help. No-one likes to be told that they're starting to struggle with things." It's something they battle to admit for fear of losing their independence.

That's why "positive aging", which means embracing the fact that things change, is important. "It's about changing thought patterns and attitudes that affect physical and emotional well-being, teaching them the skills to deal with getting older," said Jansen van Rensburg. Long-held beliefs around aging also need to be challenged, she said, especially the misconception that as people become older, they lose value.

We need to remind our parents what a gift it is to grow older, and remind ourselves what a gift it is to still have them around. Adopting the positive aging mindset starts with encouraging our parents to have a healthy lifestyle. Experts recommend 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day, five days a week.

"The most common struggle older people face is a sense of purposelessness," said Jansen van Rensburg. As they age, our parents often feel facility or house bound, so getting them active gives them a sense of freedom and boosts mental acuity. This ties into encouraging your parents to take up hobbies that are meaningful to them.

"Having an active and rewarding social life is another key element of aging with positivity," Jansen van Rensburg said. "We often find that elderly people become isolated because either their friends and family have moved away, or they reach the age where they start

passing away. We hear them say often that there's no point in making new friends because they're just going to die."

Yet, spending time face to face with others – and with you, even if it's just 10 minutes a day – is important. Encourage them to invite friends over for tea or to eat with someone at their retirement home, she suggests. It also gives them something to talk to you about rather than having conversations that revolve around aches and pains.



Face to face engagement and spending time with others is an important daily routine

One thing the elderly must never lose is their identity, Jansen van Rensburg said. "Don't let them forget that they have a history." Ask them things about growing up, about life when they first started working, about starting a family. Take an active interest in them, and don't let them feel forgotten.

Complaining is often synonymous with the elderly, but we need to encourage them to find the joy in each day, Jansen van Rensburg says.

It's important to assess their needs as opposed to yours. She suggests making a list of what they need support with, including things like preparing meals, collecting pharmacy prescriptions, managing finances, handling their personal hygiene, and accommodating mobility limitations.

Assess whether their daily needs are something they can manage, things you can help with, or whether hiring a qualified carer or moving them into your home or a facility is necessary. "Whatever you choose, make sure that they are included in the decision, she advises.

This isn't always simple, as people tend to become

more stubborn as they age. When it comes to their safety and that of others, as is often the case with continuing to drive, though seniors may be distressed at the loss of independence, there's no room for argument. Be empathetic but firm.

It's something we often avoid, but we need to be proactive about discussing their final wishes – a difficult but vital conversation. "Don't wait for the crisis, see what they want in terms of a living will before they're ill or unable to speak," Jansen van Rensburg said. Pick a

relaxed moment, and know that not all decisions need to be made at once. It's a series of discussions.

Regardless of how hands-on you are when it comes to caring for your elderly parents, remember to care for yourself, she said. "It will become one of the most stressful jobs of your life if you aren't prepared. Be realistic and honest about how much you can help, how much time you can devote to their needs without harming your health."

Catching up with your work until 02:00 to fit everything in does no-one any favours. "The worst thing you can do is judge yourself for not being a superhero and then trying to prove yourself wrong," Jansen van Rensburg said. "Burnout can make it difficult for you to prioritise your mental health and set boundaries as a caregiver." That's why it's advisable to get family and friends to pitch in – build a village – you can't be available 24/7. Through it all, having support, making time for the things you love, feeling joy amid the challenges, and maintaining a sense of humour will lighten the load.

# Polish struggle with Jewish genocide has global relevance

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

From misuse of the word “genocide” to Poland’s relevance to Jews today, Polish-Jewish journalist, educator, author, activist, and former war correspondent Konstanty Gebert has a unique perspective on history’s enduring impact. Recently in South Africa to speak at two Holocaust-related conferences, Gebert shared his insights with the *SA Jewish Report*.

“Genocide gets recognition,” he said. “The downside is that nothing but genocide gets recognition.” Among his many books is *Final Solutions: Genocide Perpetrators and their Work*, which was released in February 2022, days before Russia invaded Ukraine, inadvertently boosting sales. In 2023, Gebert published a book on the history of Israel. “Again, I didn’t expect much success, but Hamas took care of the marketing. I’m scared of writing a new book!”

Speaking of misappropriation of the word “genocide”, Gebert said it has become a means of gaining political capital. “Any oppressed group would claim to be the victim of genocide, not because they’d like to be exterminated in war but because if the allegation sticks, it gets them the recognition that any oppressed group deserves.”

While suffering isn’t quantifiable, we’re thereby creating a world in which nothing is considered as bad as genocide, he said, desensitising us to other horrors faced in war zones. There’s also confusion about what constitutes genocide, with more than 50 academic definitions.

Yet in international law, there’s only one definition, coined by Polish-Jewish lawyer and Holocaust survivor Raphael Lemkin. “It says that these are actions committed with the intent of exterminating in part or in whole, an ethnic, national, racial, or religious group,” Gebert said. “So, in genocide, the intent is crucial. It’s not about the number of victims. It’s not a moral judgement on the victims, it’s a

statement of fact.”

Though he argues that there are crimes on both sides of the war in Gaza, Gebert believes there’s no basis to claim genocidal intent.

“It’s pretty obvious why this particular war, with its concomitant horrors, has launched allegations of genocide,” he said. “It’s not about the victims, it’s about the alleged perpetrators. It’s obvious that nothing would hurt Jews more than being put in the same category as the Nazis. Whether you stand with or against Israel has become the issue here, and that’s nonsense. The issue is whether you stand with the meaning of words. If people don’t take a stand against unfounded allegations of genocide, it

happened, it can happen again,” he said. “If we don’t study it, we won’t be able to identify the forerunners.”

The fall of communism helped open the debate about what happened between Poles and Jews during World War II, and Gebert became a public voice here. “Part of the problem was the antisemitic teachings of the Catholic church,” he said.

In helping to create a new narrative, Gebert played a key role in the formation of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews. The council applies religious moral reflection to current issues, looking at them from both a Jewish and Christian perspective. “It normalised the idea that Christians and Jews can talk and even work together,” he said.

Yet the difficulty about discussing World War II is that Polish citizens consider themselves the victims, Gebert said. “Legitimately so, considering that Poland lost six million citizens during the war, three million of them Polish Jews, and three million non-Jewish Poles. Yet, victims often find it difficult to accept that they might also have been perpetrators.”

With the publication of *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* written by historian Jan T. Gross in 2000, the debate developed a surprisingly honest edge. The book explores the 1941 massacre committed against Polish Jews by their non-Jewish neighbours in the village of Jedwabne in Nazi-occupied Poland. Yet, while it got people talking, without associated action, the debate faded away.

“Today you’ve got a segment of public opinion that says that this is anti-Polish slander, but there’s a substantial segment of Polish civil society that says it happened, and needs to be studied and remembered,” Gebert said. These local activists work to preserve Poland’s Jewish legacy.

“The conflict between the two subsections of Polish civil society is really not about the Jews, it’s about the kind of Poland we want to have,” Gebert said. “Because if you’re antisemitic, chances are that you’re also homophobic, anti-democratic, anti-European, and so on. If you’re against antisemitism, chances are you’re the opposite of all those things.”



Konstanty Gebert speaking at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre

devalues the term.”

Gebert’s entire career has been underpinned by his understanding of the power of words. In the 1980s with Poland under communist military rule, he became an underground journalist, publishing *Kos*, which stood for the Committee for Social Resistance. *Kos* became the second largest print-run underground publication in Poland.

“These were the last years of communism, even though we didn’t know that yet,” he said. “We were one of the more important voices in the public debate, breaking the ruling party’s monopoly on information.”

A passionate activist, Gebert has also been instrumental in confronting Poland’s troubled past. “Since history

## Deaf Miss SA speaks volumes about changing norms

>>Continued from page 7

I advocate for a balanced approach to fostering the needs of the deaf community in South Africa: promoting fluency in sign language alongside raising awareness among hearing individuals. This dual approach can create a more equitable society in which communication is a two-way street, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

If speech fluency is offered as an alternative, it should be accompanied by sign language education and cued speech.

Cochlear implants are another option, but finding the best solution for each deaf child should account for personal and socio-economic circumstances. One size doesn’t fit all.

For instance, a nurse once asked how her eight-year-old daughter could communicate with a deaf neighbour’s child in Soweto. After learning that the mother was unaware of the communication choices available to her child, I referred them to Hi Hopes, a local organisation that offers support and guidance around children with hearing loss. Hi Hopes sent a parental advisor to evaluate the family’s situation, and determined that sign language would be the most effective mode of communication for her child.

This decision opened a world of connection for both the child and her mother, as well as inspiring my colleague’s daughter to learn SASL.

Changing attitudes toward deafness takes time, and opportunities like the Miss South Africa pageant provide the forum to highlight stories and spark conversations that lead to meaningful change.

Workplaces should foster inclusive environments that allow deaf individuals to flourish. This involves providing sign language interpreters – the Wits Centre for Deaf Studies offers training courses – producing material in accessible formats, and nurturing a culture of inclusion. Although some advancements have been made, they remain rare.

Being different doesn’t equate to being any less. The journey toward inclusivity requires a collective effort from all South Africans, deaf and hearing, enabling everyone to thrive in meaningful and authentic ways.

• *Dr Carolyn Fedler Batzofin is a chemical pathologist at Ampath and a keen ceramicist and cat lover. She has a Bachelor of Science with Honours cum laude, a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, a Post-graduate Masters of Medicine, and a diploma in Palliative Medicine. She is also a fellow of the College of Medicine in Chemical Pathology.*

Today, there are only 7 800 Jews in Poland affiliated to Jewish organisations, an approximately further 15 000 who identify as Jewish but remain unaffiliated, and thousands more who don’t acknowledge or may be unaware of their Jewish roots. “In practical terms, Jews don’t matter in Poland,” Gebert said. “In a nation of 38 million, there is no election where we’d play any role. Yet as a litmus test, we remain important.”

While Gebert stays in Poland to be close to the people he loves, there’s

more to it than that. “I had people go to jail because they printed what I wrote, and that gives me incentive to stay and make sure that something like that never happens again,” he said.

“There’s a Jewish interest in having Jews live in Poland. Poland is, at least for Ashkenazi Jews, so much a part of our collective identity that we cannot afford not to understand it. And, with such complicated Polish-Jewish relations, understanding from outside isn’t recommended.”

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# SA aliya to Israel not slowing

LEE TANKLE

South Africans making aliya in the first part of 2024 were even more resolute, and not deterred by concerns about emigrating to a country at war.

The numbers for the first half of the year are higher than that in the first half of 2023. As of 5 August, 189 *olim* left South Africa, while in the first half of 2023, 97 made aliya. By the end of last year, however, 303 South Africans had moved to Israel.

This was lower than the 471 *olim* in 2022 and 577 in 2021, but it's significant that they are moving to a country at war in which parts of the economy are unable to function properly.

Kim Fine, who left Johannesburg to make aliya with her husband, Pete, a labour consultant, on *erev* Shavuot, was determined to make it to Israel on that day because that was when she met her husband. "It was apt for us to restart our lives again 30 years later," she said.

In her short time in Israel, she has felt the strength and love of Israelis, and said she had experienced only positivity from anyone who discovered she had made aliya recently. "When we tell people that we have made aliya, their faces light up. They are genuinely happy for us."

Even though Kim and Pete still feel like they are on holiday, they have encountered some roadblocks to finding a home. "We spent days searching for a rental apartment in Ra'anana while our new one is being built. Because of what's happening up north, there are no properties available as they are being grabbed by evacuees."

Another *olah*, Yehudis Menucha, decided to make aliya at 70 years old after visiting Israel over December and January. She said when she heard that the South African government was taking Israel to the International Court of Justice, she decided to make the move to Israel because she "didn't want to live in a country that would do such a thing".

Menucha made aliya six weeks later, on 21 March, catching one of the last aliya flights before El Al cancelled its South African flights. Menucha returned to Tzfat, where she had attended seminary about 20 years ago. "I love Tzfat. I love the north. Even through sirens and threats from Hezbollah, everyone carries on with their lives."

She has been able to work cleaning houses and create a lovely life for herself in spite of all the hardships and threats from Hezbollah that have become very real in recent weeks.

Former craniosacral therapist Donna Arden made aliya to Eilat in November 2021, where she works taking care of the elderly, babies, teaching English online to Indian students, and writing a book. She was in India for three months with a group of Israelis when war broke out on 7 October. She returned to Israel in January 2024.

"On 8 October 2023, while chatting to a huge group of Israelis over breakfast who were staying at the same guesthouse as me in Alleppey, India, the phones started ringing. Expressions changed, and voices softened. Confusion set in, shock evolved," Arden said.

Arden then went to Munnar, trying to grapple with what was happening in Israel. While there, she decided not to share that she was Israeli for fear of her safety.

"I returned to my guesthouse to be told by the owner that the Tourist Police had knocked to check on the register of Israelis staying there for protection reasons," she said. "I needed to leave as most of the friends I had in India knew I was Jewish. A loud, heavily clouded bolt of thunder hit me in that sore and sad moment. I had to hide not only my origin, but my passport too."



Bianca Brower giving a sports massage to a soldier

Arden spent some time in South Africa before returning to Israel in March. "After being away for six months, I felt like I was returning to a

completely different Israel post 7 October," she said.

"I went to visit my hairdresser and friend, looking forward to a catch-up. We hugged, and she said goodbye to her client before me, and shared her beautiful, smiling, strong energy. I didn't pick up any weakness, sadness, or sense of a void until she told me her son was killed at the Nova festival and showed me the tattoo on her arm with her son's name. I went ice cold."

Similarly, Bianca Brower who made aliya two years ago after completing the English teaching programme, Talma, moved from Eilat to Tel Aviv in September. She said she was seeing the city through new eyes.



Kim and Peter Fine

## Murals bring new life to Sea Point Promenade

LEE TANKLE

When artist Shani Judes saw the empty spaces on the Milton Road ablution blocks on the Sea Point promenade, she knew she had to fill them with some beautiful works of art showing the importance of ocean conservation.

Judes started the organisation behind these murals, SJ Artists, in 2012 to meet the need for support for mural artists and large-scale public artists. "I founded SJ Artists to provide management, logistics, and opportunities that align with artistic vision. The mission is to bring impactful art to public spaces, enriching communities and inspiring conversations."



Painting murals on Sea Point promenade

Judes has been creating public art on the Sea Point Promenade for more than a decade. "I have a passion for the ocean, and spreading the message of conservation through public art," she said. So, when she saw the empty or old spaces on the Milton Road ablution blocks, she knew she had to find artists who could bring the vision of conservation and blocks of cement to life.

Judes recruited Russell Abrahams, a Cape Town-based illustrator and the founder of illustration studio Yay Abe; Asian-American artist and muralist from Los Angeles Mika Revell; and South African artist Amy-Leigh

Braaf otherwise known as Hakopike, to create three unique murals that shine on the promenade, bringing colour to passersby.

Before the murals were painted, "We selected the artists and finalised the designs. Then, we secured permits from the city. I also partnered with Blok, a company that has created industry-leading, intuitively designed urban apartments within buildings inspired by art, nature, and fashion, to provide financial support for the project," said Judes.

Judes had worked with each of the artists before, so she knew that they were the right people to bring these beautiful pieces of work to life.

"I prefer working with those whose styles complement the promenade and who I know

will execute the work to a high standard," she said. "So I knew that these artists would be perfect."

Abrahams' mural, titled *Ocean Daze*, is a bold and stylised take on a day at the beach. It

features a peeking sun, Table Mountain, ocean waves, raindrops, and cute plants interspersed with hidden faces, inviting viewers to discover and connect with the details.

Revell's mural, *Impossible City*, blends traditional architectural elements with Bo-Kaap houses and Cape Dutch thatch roofs into an impossible architectural space. It prompts viewers to question the future of their city, challenging conventional notions of home and community and asking who the individuals are that shape and inhabit the vibrant neighbourhood. It uses *trompe l'oeil*, a technique for tricking the viewer into perceiving painted objects or spaces as real.

Finally, Braaf's mural, *Coastal Lullabies*,

"The events of 7 October were the first time that I had considered myself to be a Zionist," Brower said. "My way of dealing with the stress and the trauma was to give back."

Brower has spent a lot of the past 10 months volunteering any way she can. For the past four months, she has done sports massage for soldiers every day throughout the country.

"It was therapeutic for me to see that the soldiers were okay and to interact with them," she said. "In some way, it was grounding, and it's put a lot of things into perspective. From a distance, the war is terrifying, but when you're here, believe me, it's all consuming. You look around every corner, and there's a poster of a soldier who has been killed or a hostage being held. However, there's an unbelievable sense of community and the knowledge that we're all going through this together and life needs to keep going," she said.

"There was no fear in making aliya even though there's a war. Israel is such a happy place. I have never seen people so happy when there is a war. I would make this decision again and again."

"There's a hint in the air of something possibly going to happen with Iran, but people continue living," Fine said. "The streets are full, shops are busy, life is buzzing. And we're loving being part of *am Yisrael*. We feel the pain of every soldier that passes. We feel the pain of what Israel is going through. In spite of it all, there's no place that I would rather be."

is a visual poem, illuminating the beauty in nature, dreams, and the captivating ocean life of South Africa. A majestic whale is centred on the canvas, surrounded by a tapestry of seals, jellyfish, octopus, coral, and seaweed. As the animals gaze towards the horizon, they are captured in a world of vast beauty, bearing witness to the mystery of the ocean. A crimson sun, a beacon of hope, guides their journey through life. The diverse marine life enveloping them signifies the connection between humanity and the ocean, inviting introspection on shared experiences, preservation, and the harmony between humans and the natural world.

"Collaboration was essential," Judes said. "I worked closely with each artist to align their vision with the theme of ocean conservation while giving them creative freedom. We discussed the message of each mural, and I supported them with materials, logistics, and co-ordination. It was a collaborative effort from start to finish."

"For the artists, these murals represent an opportunity to showcase their work in a high-profile, public space and to contribute to a cause they care about," said Judes, "it's incredibly rewarding to see how the project has brought people together and sparked important conversations about public art. It's a reminder of the power of art to inspire change and connect people with the natural world in meaningful ways."

Judes said the reaction to the murals had been overwhelming. "The community has embraced the murals, and many have shared how much they appreciate the beauty and message behind the artwork. It's been wonderful to see people engaging with the murals and taking photos."

The murals are going to be a feature of the Sea Point Promenade for years to come. Though they won't last forever, Judes hopes that the message of the murals reaches every person who walks by.

"Murals are temporary pieces of public art, they can last a few years depending on weather and durability," she said. "Their impermanence adds to their charm, capturing a moment in time and encouraging viewers to appreciate them while they last."

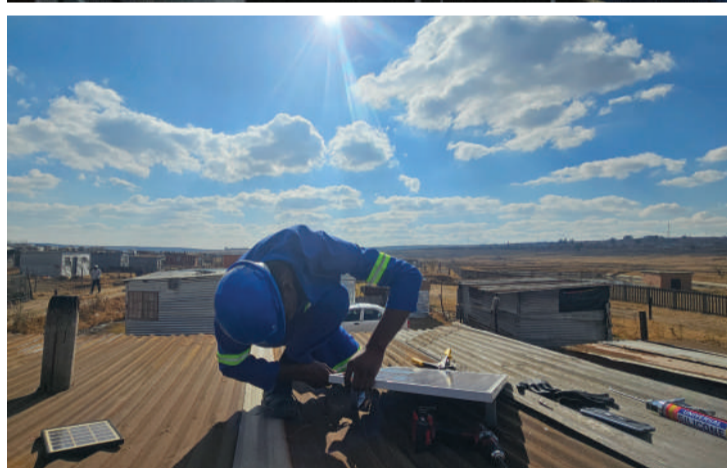


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# SA pianist sings Israel's praises after winning award

DIANE WOLFSON

A young South African pianist, Sulayman Human from Oudtshoorn, won the coveted Pnina Salzman Memorial Prize 2024 in Israel this year, after having been 'discovered' by an Israeli concert pianist and teacher during anti-Israel protests back in 2013.

Human, 31, was a joint winner of the award last week with Israeli pianist Yali Zaken.

Human, who studied a Bachelor of Music at Stellenbosch University, may never have heard of the Tel-Hai International Piano Master Classes festival, where the competition for the award was held, had it not been for world renowned concert pianist and teacher, Israeli-born Yossi Reshef, having come to South Africa 11 years ago.

Reshef first heard Human when he was in South Africa on a performing and masterclass visit back then. On that tour, Reshef was scheduled to play to at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), but his show was disrupted by anti-Israel activists on campus. Eleven students were charged for the disruption of his concert during Israeli Apartheid Week that year.

The protesters, drawn from the ranks of the Wits Student Representative Council, Muslim Students Association, Wits Palestinian Solidarity, and the Progressive Youth Alliance, intimidated concert goers, damaged university property, and disrupted the recital to the point that it had to be abandoned.

The university arranged to re-host the concert, but another artist appeared instead of Reshef.

His concerts at Rhodes University, Stellenbosch University, and the University

of Cape Town (UCT) were all cancelled, but he was able to hold master classes at a few universities including UCT and Stellenbosch University.

However, it was at his Stellenbosch University masterclasses in March 2013 that Reshef met the young Human. He remembered Human fondly, and how talented he believed him to be, and invited him to participate in this year's Tel-Hai event, which was enabled through sponsorship by the Israeli embassy in Pretoria.

Said Reshef, "Sulayman is an exceptional pianist, one whom I had the privilege to tutor on his way to winning this prestigious award, named after my teacher and mentor, Pnina Salzman. His achievement as well as our connection fills me with great pride and a sense of fulfilment."

Reshef recalled meeting Human when his tour was targeted by demonstrators. "While Israel continues to be accused of apartheid at this time," he said, "Sulayman's participation demonstrates how music truly unites people and has no borders.

"Sulayman, who was the best candidate for the prize, won it justly. Seeing the audience's enthusiastic reaction to his performance in Tel Aviv was a crystalline moment of pleasure."

Human started playing piano at the age of 12. In 2010, at the age of 17, he was the first high school pupil to win the Lionel Beethoven Bursary for the playing of a Beethoven sonata. This was the first of many prizes and competitions he has won for piano.

He has performed piano concerti with many of South Africa's orchestras, and is an active chamber musician, performing regularly with fellow students and professionals.

For two and a half weeks in August every



Sulayman Human

year, dozens of young pianists from all over the world gather at Midreshet Sde Boker, an educational centre in the Negev desert in southern Israel, to practice their craft with the world's most celebrated piano teachers.

This year was Tel-Hai's 32nd anniversary. Organisers expected at least 78 participants from 17 countries to attend the event, which opened on 30 July and ended on 17 August. Students who excel get the chance to perform at respected piano concerts and win prizes.

The festival took place in Tel Aviv this year due to the volatile situation in the north of Israel. Human was among the few brave foreign pianists who were unafraid of the war and came to Israel.

Human is a devoted Christian, and is proud to talk about his first visit to Israel, which he said was a wonderful experience. "The people I interacted with daily are so genuinely kind and warm. Sometimes I felt a bit reluctant to say that I'm from South Africa, but I did every time" he said.

He said he was always treated with respect, "in fact it seemed like no-one really bothered about these things, they just saw me as a person and wanted to talk to me, regardless of politics".

In regard to fear of escalating war in the country, Human said it was revitalising to be among people just living their everyday life, having coffee, ice-cream, and eating out.

As a dog lover, one of his favourite memories was how so many Israelis walk their dogs every day. He said Israel is a beautiful country and people with amazing architecture, which made him wonder how it did it. "In general, I'm impressed with Israel, and wouldn't think twice about returning."

Human said he was surprised to be chosen to win the Pnina Salzman award "since there are such amazing young pianists here, and they can easily do things I'm still struggling with after so many years, but I'm honoured to know that my playing is appreciated".



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## Record number of nominations for Jewish Achiever Awards

STAFF REPORTER

Though the South African Jewish community may be getting smaller, the number of nominations for the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards is growing in leaps and bounds.

This year, the *SA Jewish Report* received a record number of nominations. Though the team hasn't audited the numbers, it's clear that as far back as it can recall, it has never received this many.

There were 825 nominations tallied across the 10 different categories, with the Absa Business Leadership Award and Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award receiving the highest number of nominations, the former getting 169 and the latter 175.

Following closely behind those two was the Europcar Women in Leadership Award, with 102 nominations.

In 2023, the numbers in these categories were also high, with the Absa Business Leadership Award garnering 83 nominees, and the Entrepreneur Award getting 167. Last year, the second highest number of nominations in a category was for the Rising Star Award, which was in its first year, with 105 nominations.

"We have been overwhelmed by the number of nominations we have received this year," said *SA Jewish Report* Director Dina Diamond. "In a time when the community seems to be getting smaller, we are massively encouraged by the achievements of the individuals and companies in this country that continue to innovate, contribute, and make a difference to the lives of all South Africans, punching way above their

weight in all spheres from business to philanthropy."

The nomination process wrapped up last Thursday, 15 August, completing the initial process of the awards.

Each nominee in the following categories will be contacted to see if they are willing to accept their nomination. These categories are: Absa Business Leadership Award; Absa Professional Excellence Award; Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award; Europcar Women in Leadership Award; Absa Business Icon Award; and Rising Star Award.



Jordyn Urdang reading an advert for Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

The other nominations, including for the Mann Made Community Service Award; Kirsh Family Lifetime Achievement Award; Art Sport, Science, and Culture Award; and Bertie Lubner Humanitarian Award in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris go directly to an esteemed judging panel whose decision will be final.

The *SA Jewish Report* is working behind the scenes to contact the nominees, who will then move forward to a stringent judging session in which they will come before experts in their field.

The public also has a huge role to play, and will be called upon once again to vote for who they believe are the deserving winners in the different categories. Public voting opens on Thursday, 19 September.

The decision of the judges is final.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Riding high

This past weekend was a momentous one for South Africa, marked by a series of victories that filled the nation with pride. It began on Saturday morning, 17 August, with the Springboks triumphing over the Wallabies in Perth (fontein), despite the challenging weather conditions. The celebrations continued on Sunday morning, when Ultimate Fighting Championship fighter Dricus Du Plessis secured a hard-fought victory over Israel Adesanya. South African Jewish Board of Deputies President Zev Krengel had the good fortune of being in Perth for both victories!

Particularly moving was the sight of Du Plessis being led out by Springbok captains Siya Kolisi and Eben Etzebeth, a gesture that reciprocated Du Plessis leading the Springboks out at Loftus earlier this year. These moments of unity and shared triumph across different sports brought a sense of national pride reminiscent of the unity we experienced during the early days of our democracy.

This spirit of unity continued on Sunday, when I had the honour of sending off the Cycalve ride for its 26th year. This remarkable initiative, launched by Board member Rabbi Dovid Hazdan, brings together students from Torah Academy, Moletsane High School in Soweto, and Pace Commerce and Entrepreneurship School of Specialisation in Soweto for a ride from Johannesburg to Durban. Cycalve is a shining example of the values we hold dear – unity, hard work, respect, leadership, and charity – values vital for the future of South Africa.

The impact of this programme on its participants is profound, with many alumni going on to achieve

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

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



significant accomplishments. The initiative also serves as a valuable platform for fostering connections between communities that might not regularly interact.

Just like the 700km route between Johannesburg and Durban, being a South African is beautiful, but comes with many ups and downs. This is why it's so important to be able to savour a unique moment of national jubilation and positivity.

This weekend, we turn our attention to the annual Limmud conference. This event has become a highlight of the community calendar, and this year, the Board's leadership will be presenting a number of topics in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

On Saturday, National Director Wendy Kahn and I will host a session titled "Bark or Bite? When to Act on Antisemitism", followed by my participation in a session on "Conversations about Campus". On Sunday, National Deputy Director Charisse Zeifert will speak on "Journalism in the Digital Age: Evolution, Challenges, and the Quest for Public Trust", and will moderate a panel discussion, "Israel: Tomorrow and the Day After".

Limmud affords the Board the opportunity to introduce its members and engage more directly with the community in an intimate setting. The debates and discussions are always enriching, and it's such a pleasure to be able to engage with experts in fields that resonate deeply with our community. I strongly encourage those of you who haven't yet booked, or who have never been to a Limmud, to join us at this year's event.

# Control, WhatsApp, delete – the dark art of privacy

There are two types of people in the world: those who are happy for their WhatsApp phone contacts to see when they were last seen, and those who are having extra-marital affairs. Or at the very least, have something to hide.

They are the people who have turned off their "read receipts" in case they provide a revealing window into their world.

A few years ago, I bumped into a woman I know but whom I preferred not to see. "Howard!" she said, in an unnaturally high pitched, annoying voice, "I've been trying to get hold of you!" I stared at her, waiting for the pain to end. "I've called, sent messages, but it doesn't seem to go through!" "Yes," I responded calmly, "It's because I blocked you." It was her turn to stare for a moment. Which was just the time I need to "carpe diem" away from her.

When I recounted the story to my wife, I was shocked to hear "we don't do that", and that it would have been preferable to feign confusion about why her messages had failed to reach me. I apparently should even have made a show of looking at my phone in wonder, while saying, "So strange, no messages have come through."

Our use of technology says more about us than we might think. How we engage with the communication tools available to us is an indication of several factors that provide insight about our stresses, irritations, and pastimes.

There are some who have good reason to hide their "read receipts" and "last seen". Doctors and psychologists get a pass. Impatient patients might not be able to cope with knowing that their message has been seen, read, and not responded to. And teachers and school principals have good reason, seeing that parents are in some cases not able to conceive of the idea that the educator might be busy with something

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



or someone else other than their darling.

And finally, teenagers, until 18 at the least, have the right to hide from their parents. Parents who honestly have no reason to know everything about everything. But for people in finance or technology or regular, run-of-the-mill moms, dads, and developers, there's little reason to keep movements hidden.

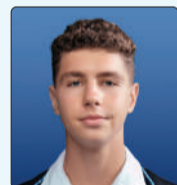
I asked around. And was surprised by what I heard. "Mark" – not his real name – told me he has "last seen" and "read receipts" on for everyone but one friend who can send him a bunch of messages and then get irritated that he hasn't answered immediately. "Stacey" – not her real name – told me that she switched it off because her boss drives her mad; and "Steven" – not his real name – her boss, who was sitting next to her, said he turned it off because no-one needed to know his business. He claimed not to be having an affair.

"Private setting" people care about what other people think. They prefer to remove the information rather than have someone be upset with them. They would rather no-one know when their message was read than let them know that the message was opened, but there was neither the time nor the interest in replying.

WhatsApp etiquette won't be found in *The Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette*. Like so much in our ever-changing world, it's up to us to forge ahead, find a way, and determine what does and doesn't make sense. And whereas telling someone that you have blocked them might not be for everyone, I can confirm that doing just that at least once is arguably one of the most liberating and invigorating experiences imaginable.

## New King David student leaders

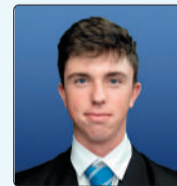
### Victory Park



**Aidan Goralsky**  
Head Boy



**Raquel Meyerowitz**  
Head Girl



**Ross Raven**  
Deputy Head Boy



**Emma Dakes**  
Deputy Head Girl



**Daniella Beira**  
Chief Whip

### Linkfield



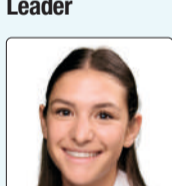
**David Levitt**  
Head Student Leader



**Talya Cohen**  
Head Student Leader



**Aidan Cohen**  
Deputy Head Student Leader



**Cameron Lyons**  
Deputy Head Student Leader

## Shaq sends support to Israeli kids at camp

JACOB GURVIS – JTA

National Basketball Association (NBA) great Shaquille O'Neal recorded a message for Israeli children whose relatives were killed or taken hostage in Hamas's 7 October attack, telling them, "I love you", and speaking in Hebrew.

Shaq recorded the video for children at Camp Timberlane, a summer camp in Haliburton, Canada, that, in partnership with the Israeli organisation OneFamily, runs a programme for Israeli youth directly affected by terror and war.

The recording came about when Chen Kraunik, a OneFamily employee and former Israeli professional basketball player FaceTimed O'Neal, the organisation said in an Instagram post it later deleted. Kraunik's father, Arik, was murdered on 7 October in Kibbutz Be'eri. A representative for OneFamily said the group took the video off social media because "it's actually not ours to share, we didn't take it".

"Camp Timberlane! Hello! *Shalom!* This is Shaquille O'Neal," the retired hall-of-fame

centre said in the video, which the camp posted on Instagram last week before also deleting it. "I just wanted to give you guys a shoutout and let you know I love you."

O'Neal continued, "To all the amazing children from the OneFamily, I know you came from far, far away. Hope you're having a good time. We love you so very much. Thank you for coming. And we'll talk to you soon."

He concluded with a string of Hebrew messages one right after the other: "*Shalom*"; "*Baruch Hashem*"; "*L'shana tova*"; and "*Shabbat shalom*."

According to the Canadian Jewish News, Timberlane welcomed 39 campers and staff from Israel for the northern hemisphere summer, including children whose family members were killed or taken hostage on 7 October. A 16-year-old named Niv, also from Kibbutz Be'eri, lost his grandmother and brother in the attack. Another brother was killed in captivity.

O'Neal, 52, is regarded as one of the

greatest basketball players in history. In his 19-year NBA career, the 7-foot-1 (2.16m) centre won four NBA titles while earning the 2000 NBA MVP award and 15 All-Star selections. His jersey number is retired by three teams.

O'Neal, who was raised by a Baptist mother and a Muslim stepfather, has expressed interest in Judaism and Jewish culture numerous times, throughout his playing career and in his current role as a TV analyst on TNT.

O'Neal has danced the hora at a Jewish wedding; spoken Hebrew with Jon Stewart; and explained that Sukkot was his favourite Jewish holiday because "*sukkah*" translates to "shack". He also recently struck up a friendship with Jewish National Hockey League star Zach Hyman, whom he calls "Shaq Hyman". On his reality show *Shaq Life*, O'Neal's family has explored the tradition of hosting a Shabbat dinner.

"Fact is, I'm Muslim, I'm Jewish, I'm Buddhist, I'm everybody 'cause I'm a people person," O'Neal said in a 2011 interview with PR.com.



Shaquille O'Neal

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## Sandringham Gardens' Katie Dimenstein joins three-digit club

**S**andringham Gardens resident and former fashion guru, Katie Dimenstein, celebrated her 100th birthday on 19 August surrounded by friends and family. Born in Wilno, Poland in 1924, Esther Kayla "Katie" Dimenstein (née Handel) came to South Africa in 1929 with her mother and siblings to join their father who had gone ahead to settle. Katie married her husband, Phil Dimenstein, at Jeppe Shul in downtown Johannesburg in 1943, and is the proud mother of three daughters, nine grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. Katie credits her longevity to a healthy dose of

sweets and chocolates, and playing cards to keep her mind active and sharp.



**Katie Dimenstein (front) with her daughters Lyn Sack, Joyce Fleiser, and Janine Boswell**

## Pop up Barber Shop makes Tisha B'Av less hairy

**T**he Yeshiva College Parent Teacher Association hosted an innovative post Tisha B'Av fundraiser with a pop up Barber Shop, offering shaves and haircuts for boys and dads. The association wanted to make the lives of parents a little easier, knowing that the scramble for a haircut immediately after the three weeks leading up to Tisha B'Av can be hectic, when barber appointments are in short supply and hair is overgrown.



**Jamiee Kruger holding her son Gavi while the barber cuts his hair**

## Child-friendly wheelchair moves hearts

**A** specially designed wheelchair donated by the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) will improve Nokubonga Moyo's quality of life, allowing her to sit at the table with her family, and move around more comfortably.



**Nokubonga Moyo in her new wheelchair**

The child-friendly wheelchair from Israel was donated by WIZO after Moyo's mother reached out to the organisation. Her mother had to carry her everywhere, which would have become more difficult as she grew.

The wheelchair is an Israeli innovation by nongovernmental organisation Wheelchairs of Hope as a humanitarian mission specifically to help disabled children in developing countries. The wheelchairs were developed by specialist Israeli doctors and engineers from ALYN Hospital, Israel's leading

paediatric and adolescent rehabilitation centre, with the wish to "empower education through mobility". WIZO South Africa is proud to align itself with the Wheelchairs of Hope project.

WIZO works to uplift and empower women and children in Israel. Never forgetting the enormous need in South Africa, it has been fortunate to be able to give many local children the gift of mobility with the wheelchairs.

## King David holds torch for Olympics at sports day

**P**arents and grandparents cheered from the sidelines as the Olympic torch was run around the field at King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield on its Olympic sports day on Thursday, 15 August. Children showcased their skill in running, sack races, egg-and-spoon races, while some parents took part in their own events. Each sport received its own Olympic medal and certificate. The atmosphere was electric, and it was a wonderful family morning.



**King David Pre-Primary School Linksfield Olympic Games participants**

### Friday 23 August

Sandton Central Shul hosts *Friday Night Live* with Kabolos Shabbos followed by drinks and snacks. Time: 18:00. Contact: 079 434 1293

### Saturday 24 August

Linksfield Shul invites you to bring your children to come play with the *Tumbling Tigerz* team. Time: 10:30. Contact: 072 584 1708

### Sunday 25 August

Yeshiva College hosts a R10 book sale. Time: 10:00 to 17:00. Contact: 063 925 5596 or 076 336 6218

Sandton Central Shul hosts *Learn, Pray, Shmooz* with tefillin, coffee, and snacks. Time: 08:30. Contact: 079 434 1293

### Tuesday 27 August

Second Innings hosts a guided tour of the Johannesburg Art Centre. Time: 09:15. Cost: R290. Contact: 082 561 3228



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