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Volume 27 – Number 30 ■ 5 September 2024 ■ 2 Elul 5784

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# Top SA Muslim leader says: 'I am Hamas'

TALI FEINBERG

On the morning of 1 September, shortly after Israeli soldiers found the bodies of six young Israeli hostages executed by Hamas in Gaza, the president of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), Sheikh Riad Fataar, told a crowd in the middle of the Mother City, "I am Hamas! Cape Town is Hamas! Viva Hamas, viva!". Those he was addressing repeated, "Viva Hamas, viva!" and responded with laughter, cheers, and applause.

blood. Hamas has clearly signalled its intention to kill all Jewish people and these ill-timed words from the MJC leader incite violence and hatred towards the local Jewish community.

"As a religious leader, Sheikh Fataar should be condemning the loss of innocent life and should be calling on Hamas to return the remaining hostages, which will inevitably lead to a ceasefire agreement," says Bloch. "Instead, he has chosen to celebrate these murders and further exacerbate hatred towards the Jewish community.

"That the MJC stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people is to be expected, but siding with extremists should cause alarm to all South Africans and be called out," he says. "The Cape

SAJBD mourns the loss of all the innocent lives in this terrible war and we will continue to call for peace in the region."

Says Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, "This disturbing support for a brutal terror organisation isn't isolated to the MJC. It's part of a concerted effort to radicalise many stakeholders in South Africa, including the mainstream media, academia, and government.

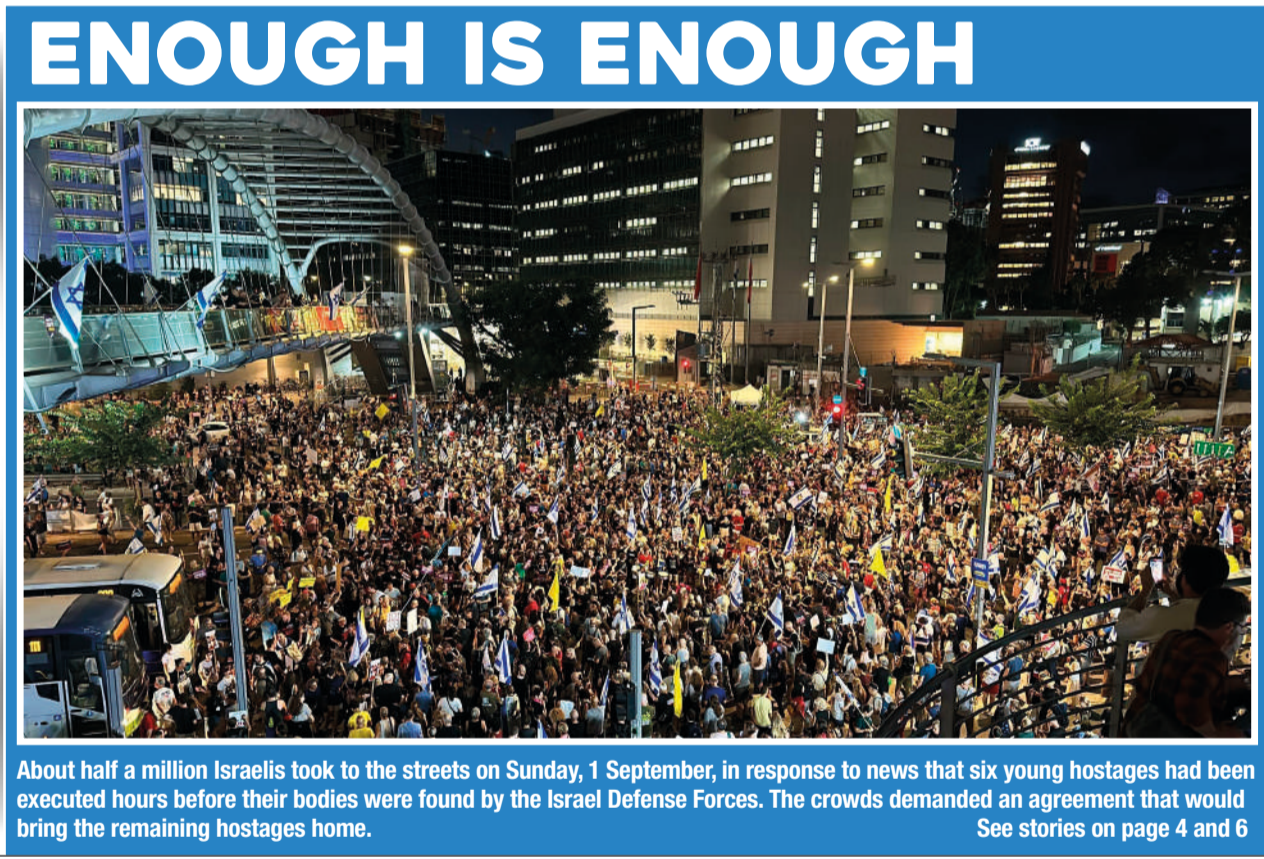
"This radicalisation takes the form of stigmatising Israel by false accusations of genocide and the moral equivalence between Hamas, a murderous terror organisation, and Israel, a free democracy fighting for its life within the ethics of international law.

"This campaign has been effective, which is why open support of Hamas by the MJC is being raised as an issue only by the SA Jewish Report. No other media considers it objectionable or even noteworthy. The MJC statement is also a timely reminder for law enforcement to investigate the allegations raised by global media regarding how funds raised by the MJC and others for Hamas have been banked and transferred from South Africa via local banks to Hamas, an organisation on global terror lists."

"When Sheikh Riad Fataar publicly declares, 'I am Hamas', he is unequivocally aligning himself with the ideology, values, and unconscionable atrocities of an internationally-designated terrorist organisation," says South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks. "Hamas's actions represent the pinnacle of human cruelty and barbarism, defying the most basic tenets of morality and human rights.

"On 7 October 2023, Hamas launched a war against Israel, committing horrific atrocities including burning children alive, raping women, and shooting civilians in cold blood, acts documented by the terrorists themselves and corroborated by eyewitness accounts," says Marks. "By identifying with Hamas, Fataar is endorsing genocidal mass murder, rape, the burning of children, the kidnapping and execution of hostages, and the genocide of the Jewish people, all of which are clearly outlined in the Hamas charter.

"Hamas has openly declared its goal to annihilate the state of Israel, a plan that would lead to the murder of nine million civilians, including Arabs,



## ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

About half a million Israelis took to the streets on Sunday, 1 September, in response to news that six young hostages had been executed hours before their bodies were found by the Israel Defense Forces. The crowds demanded an agreement that would bring the remaining hostages home. See stories on page 4 and 6

Continued on page 7 >>

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# Far-right victory in German state alarms Jews

TOBY AXELROD – JTA

For the first time since the Nazi era, a far-right party in Germany has won the largest piece of the electoral pie in a state election.

Mainstream politicians and Jewish leaders are expressing alarm following the elections on Sunday, 1 September, in which the anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, and pro-Russia Alternative for Germany (AfD) party came out on top in the state of Thuringia, with 32.8% of the vote.

The 11-year-old party also earned second place to the traditional conservative Christian Democratic Union party in the neighbouring state of Saxony. Both states are in the former East Germany.

"No-one can brush this off as a 'protest' vote anymore," Charlotte Knobloch, the head of the Jewish community of Munich and Upper Bavaria, said on Sunday.

"Exactly 85 years after the start of World War II, Germany is in danger of becoming a different country again: more unstable, colder and poorer, less secure, less worth living in," said Knobloch, a former head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany

who herself survived the Holocaust in hiding.

The election came just over a week since a Syrian refugee was arrested after a stabbing spree at a festival in the city of Solingen, and only days after Germany resumed its programme of deporting refugees convicted of crimes. The knife attack, in which three people were killed, reignited popular anxiety about unrest connected with the more than one million refugees admitted to Germany since 2015.

AfD stresses isolationism, takes an anti-European Union and pro-Russian stance, and is accused of fomenting anti-Muslim sentiment. Some of its most extreme representatives have also belittled the Holocaust, saying that Germany has paid enough penance for the sins of an older generation.

Mass protest against the party took place earlier this year following revelations that it had held a secret meeting at a lakeside villa to discuss plans to deport foreigners, including those who had become German citizens. Prominent neo-Nazis attended



Leader of the Alternative for Germany party, Björn Höcke

Photo: Daniel Vogl - picture alliance via Getty Images

the meeting, according to the news organisation that broke the story, inducing painful echoes of the gathering of Nazi leaders at nearby Wannsee in 1942 to devise a plan to deport and murder Jews.

But though support for the AfD dipped in polls at the time, it soon rebounded and then accelerated. Now, its breakthrough results have raised concerns for next year's national elections.

The party, whose Thuringen leader, Björn Höcke, has been convicted twice of using a Nazi slogan to boost it, is unlikely to form a ruling coalition in either state since it's shunned by other parties. Still, it will have additional seats in the state legislatures and will have the numbers, particularly

in Thuringia, to interfere with some governing decisions.

The election results bode ill for Germany's future, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster said on Sunday.

Younger voters overwhelmingly favoured the AfD in this week's elections, according to an NTV-Infratest exit poll.

"The survivors are asking themselves, 'Didn't we do enough to teach, to tell, to show?'" Christoph Heubner of the

International Auschwitz Committee, told *The Guardian*.

Some Jewish leaders say German politicians would do well to address the concerns apparently expressed by voters.

"The election results in Thuringia and Saxony are a clear wake-up call to the centrist parties in Germany to listen to the real concerns and fears of the people," said Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis.

## Torah Thought

# Time for spiritual stocktaking



Rabbi Levi Silman  
rabbinical co-ordinator  
for Kosher SA

Have you ever seen a sign on a shop that the store is temporarily closed for stocktaking?

Why would a businessman want to close up shop in the middle of a busy workday and take count of all merchandise on the shelves and in the warehouse? Isn't this a loss of potential income?

The answer is obvious. It's this assessment of inventory that helps him to understand where his greatest profit and biggest loss is. If he didn't take count of the merchandise, he could very well lose more than he gained in certain areas.

This, our sages teach us, is the month of Elul. It's time to take stock of our souls' inventory. For one month a year leading up to Rosh Hashanah, we take a step back, make a calculation about where we stand in the spiritual realms of life, and make amends for any misdeeds during the year.

In the teachings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad movement, there's a parable of the king in the field. Briefly, this concept refers to the time when the king leaves his royal palace and goes out to meet his subjects in the field. It's a time when everyone, regardless of his

state and station, can approach the king, and the king receives everyone graciously and fulfils their petitions.

In ordinary times, the king is inaccessible to the general public. Only select royal subjects are able to speak to him at specific times and by invitation. However, when the king goes out to the field, all formalities pertaining to royal audiences in the palace are dispensed with. Even the most ordinary individual in work clothes has an extraordinary opportunity to get up close with His Majesty, greet him personally, and take time to converse with the king.

Of course, the king in the parable is the King of Kings, and the field is the month of Elul. During this month, we should capitalise on the opportunity by making a concerted effort to prepare ourselves for time to meet the King. When we submit our supplication in good faith, we can be sure that it will be received with divine favour.

Let's all maximise our spiritual potential and prepare to meet the King.

Please G-d, we'll merit a happy, healthy, sweet New Year!

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Elul, a time of introspection and personal stock-taking, is the last month of the Jewish year, and the final month prior to Rosh Hashanah.  
This is a month in which to spiritually prepare for the high holiday season of reflection and repentance. Make every day count.

# UCT prof sues university over anti-Israel resolutions

TALI FEINBERG

Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the head of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) historical studies department, is taking his university to court to set aside its recently adopted anti-Israel resolutions.

Mendelsohn, who is also the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at UCT, says the resolutions curtail his research and have profoundly negative implications.

He's calling for UCT's council, the establishment's highest-decision-making body, to review or set aside the resolutions, which it formally adopted on 22 June 2024.

"I don't pursue this course lightly, but the council hasn't acted with responsibility," Mendelsohn said this week. "Its failures will cost UCT dearly."

He filed his affidavit in the High Court of South Africa, Western Cape division, on 29 August.

His application includes five supporting affidavits from UCT academics and Trevor Norwitz, who resigned as chairperson of the UCT Fund in 2023 in protest of the university's one-sided anti-Israel stance.

"I was disturbed by the tone and content of the debate around these motions in senate, and then by council adopting them unchanged, errors and all," Mendelsohn, also a member of the UCT senate, told the *SA Jewish Report*. "UCT has now endorsed a very problematic position on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. That Norman Arendse, the chairperson of the council, signed an agreement on behalf of the university in September last year committing to the IHRA definition, makes the adoption of such inflammatory language all the more surprising."

"I worry, too, about the implications for academic freedom, grant and donor funding, and the politicisation of the university," said Mendelsohn. "When this was raised at the senate, they were shouted down and seemingly disregarded by the council in its decision-making."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF)

spokesperson Rolene Marks said the SAZF welcomed the case.

"The resolutions will have a severe impact on UCT's ability to fundraise, limit academic freedom, and exacerbate the hostile environment for Jewish students at UCT. They also curtail UCT academics' ability to engage with international counterparts."

The first resolution states: "No UCT academic may enter into relations, or continue relations with, any research group or network whose author affiliations are with the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] or the broader Israeli military establishment." The second resolution rejects "the IHRA conflation of critique of Zionism and Israel's policies as antisemitism",

among other points.

Said Mendelsohn in his affidavit: "My research, which focuses on modern Jewish history, will be impacted by these sweeping resolutions. I cannot clearly anticipate the impact, which is precisely why they are irrational."

"But it's clear enough that they will have a detrimental impact on my research, which often relates to or involves Israeli citizens, including citizens who were conscripted to the IDF or remain reservists."

He goes on to clarify that "the council is not an authority on the Israel-Hamas war, or on the conduct of the IDF. The council didn't consult with experts or hear views of persons who represent parties to the conflict. The council is well-placed to speak on issues facing UCT, but not a complex war thousands of kilometres away."

policy, making it unlawful."

Furthermore, "The council didn't afford academics affected by the resolutions an opportunity to be heard," Mendelsohn said. He noted they set a dangerous precedent, easily banning academics from collaborating with scholars in other countries that may be seen as "undemocratic".

Mendelsohn also raised concerns about how the resolutions will affect funding. "On 8 August, the recently-appointed vice-chancellor, Mosa Moshabela, said that in his first week, he had been informed that there had been a withdrawal of at least R300 million in donor funds. He said that wasn't going to be the end of it."

"A senior colleague showed me a contract of a donation to UCT, for a very substantial amount, which includes as a term that UCT show zero tolerance for antisemitism, as defined by the IHRA," said Mendelsohn. "The council's resolutions place UCT in breach of this contract and at risk of losing the donation."

This is echoed in Norwitz's supporting affidavit, which explains that UCT may struggle to raise funds in the United States due to several states' laws prohibiting donations to institutions boycotting Israel.

Norwitz told the *SA Jewish Report*, "There's little doubt that the resolutions will harm UCT. It's disappointing that individuals would abuse their positions and put political priorities ahead of their duty to act in the university's best interests. Either the reconstituted council or the courts need to step in and repeal or invalidate these resolutions before real harm is done."

In their supporting affidavits, other UCT academics from a range of disciplines including quantum nanoelectronics, organisational psychology, pathology, and economics expressed their concerns.

Professor Keertan Dheda, the director of the Centre for Lung Infection and Immunity at UCT, said that he was part of a "network" of academics that may be considered "affiliated" with the IDF or the "broader Israeli military establishment".

For example, he collaborates with Professor Hossam Haick, a highly accomplished academic in Haifa. They recently submitted a grant application for tuberculosis research. "This is particularly relevant to South Africa, where TB remains a leading cause of death," said Dheda. He fears this now may be torpedoed because of the resolutions.

He said the council had "signalled to the UCT community that there is a 'right side' to the Israel-Hamas conflict, and even a 'correct' definition of antisemitism. This has a profoundly chilling effect."

Emeritus professor of philosophy at UCT, David Benatar, who has written about the deterioration of UCT, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Given recent changes in UCT's leadership, there is some reason for hoping that the new council won't contest the case and will reverse the previous council's decision. If that doesn't happen, it remains to be seen whether the case will be considered fairly."

In his affidavit, Mendelsohn said the case was urgent. "Once the council begins implementing its resolutions, academics will suffer harm that cannot be remedied. There can be no undoing of cancellations of existing relations with academics or interruptions to time-sensitive research. Second, there's imminent concern that donors will withdraw funding."

Marks notes that "reducing partnerships could potentially jeopardise UCT's international rankings. If UCT is willing to base decisions on political expediency, it's shutting itself down as a free academic institution."

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson said, "Academics at UCT are exercising their constitutional rights. The matter is sub-judice, and we respect the legal process. This boycott will have major ramifications on university faculty, students, and the academic community."

UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola said, "UCT has noted the review application filed in the Western Cape High Court by an academic staff member at the institution. UCT is considering the matter, and will respond through the relevant processes."



Photo: @gingerwithagopro

A pro-Palestinian supporter at the University of Cape Town in March 2024



Professor Adam Mendelsohn

"The resolutions limit academic freedom in two ways," Mendelsohn said. "They preclude academics from 'entering relations' with certain groups or networks." Then, "rejecting the IHRA definition of antisemitism is akin to taking a position on scientific theories or deciding that one scholar is right over another. That cannot be what 'governing' a university entails."

Mendelsohn said his academic freedom will be impacted because he has networks that include Israeli citizens and universities. In addition, his research will be affected. For example, he is the principal investigator of a project tracking antisemitism on social media in South Africa. "Central to this research is the freedom to define antisemitism. The decision by the council to 'reject' the IHRA's definition potentially imposes such restraints," he said.

"The resolutions are hopelessly vague," he said. "Crucially, the resolutions don't provide for the consequences of entering the prohibited 'relations'. UCT academics are in the dark."

He said the council didn't have the power to pass these resolutions, because in 2010, it adopted a policy regulating when it may take positions on public issues. "The council's decisions contravene its own

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# 'Finally, you're free', says Goldberg-Polin at son's funeral

PHILISSA CRAMER – JTA

**H**ersh Goldberg-Polin's mother looked almost as the world has gotten to know her when she took the podium at her son's funeral in Jerusalem.

Rachel Goldberg-Polin had her hair pulled back neatly and was wearing a crisp white shirt, the trademark piece of masking tape marking the number of days since her son and 250 others were taken hostage on 7 October affixed to its breast.

But the shirt was ripped, in keeping with the Jewish tradition of rending one's clothing upon learning of the death of a loved one. And she had something new to say.

"I no longer worry about you," Rachel Goldberg-Polin said. "I know you are no longer in danger."

Her maternal concern captivated the world as, over nearly 11 months, she and her husband, Jon Polin, engaged in a tireless effort to bring their son home. She had spoken to the Pope and the president, to the United Nations, to 20 million Americans watching the Democratic convention. She had illuminated a portrait of her son in a world filled with darkness. And now she was saying goodbye, with the quiet faith and determined love that has made her an icon for so many.

"I have had a lot of time to think about my sweet boy, Hersh over the past 332 days, and one thing I keep thinking about is how out of all the mothers in all the entire world, G-d chose to give Hersh to me. What must I have done in a past life to deserve such a beautiful gift?" she asked.

"I want to do *hakarat hatov* [recognise the good], and thank G-d right now in front of all of you for giving me this magnificent present of my Hersh," she said, sobs audible around her. "For 23 years, I was privileged to have the most stunning honour to be Hersh's mama. I'll take it and say, 'Thank you.' I just wish it had been for longer."

Thousands of people flooded into Jerusalem for the funeral, held at Har Hamenuhot, the largest cemetery in the city. Mourners sang psalms as the space filled, not near the plot where Goldberg-Polin would be buried as initially planned, but in the main parking lot to accommodate the crowds.

First, Israeli President Isaac Herzog spoke, apologising to Hersh and his family for the state's failure to carry out its duty to protect and return him.

Then, Hersh's father, Jon, took the podium, sketching out a portrait of his son as a wise, inquisitive, kind, and gentle soul who was a top-tier conversationalist and an engine of justice in the family and beyond.

"From the time Hersh was a toddler, he had a wisdom that always expanded my own thinking," Polin said. "He was my *rav* [rabbi], my teacher, my companion."

The funeral came amid an



Photo: Gil Cohen-Magen-pool-AFP via Getty Images

Rachel Goldberg-Polin, speaking at her son's funeral on 2 September

outpouring of grief from around the world over the deaths of Goldberg-Polin and five other hostages in Gaza this week, nearly 11 months after they had been taken hostage by Hamas.

From Chicago, where Rachel and Jon grew up, together attending the Orthodox Ida Crown Jewish Academy, and where members of the extended family still live.

From Berkeley, California, where the family lived when Hersh was born in October 2000. His family's synagogue there, Congregation Beth Israel, was crowded on Sunday night, 1 September, for a vigil in his honour.

From Richmond, Virginia, where the family, now including sisters Leebie and Orly, moved when Hersh was a young child.

From Georgia, where the family were regulars at the Ramah Darom Passover retreat, even after they moved to Israel. "There are no words to express the heartbreak we're all feeling," the camp said on Sunday.

And from Jerusalem, where the family is a fixture in the Baka neighbourhood that is home to many English-speaking, religiously observant immigrants. The family's synagogue, Hakhel, held a gathering on Sunday night for mourners. Supporters of the local soccer team, Hapoel Jerusalem, of which Hersh was a devoted fan, attended the funeral in large numbers. So did people affiliated with Himmelfarb High School, the religious boys' school from which Goldberg-Polin graduated.

Two of his closest friends from Himmelfarb also died in the current crisis: Aner Shapira, who was killed on 7 October after defending Hersh and others in a bomb shelter after they fled the Nova festival; and Ben Zussman, who was killed while fighting in Gaza after being called up as a reservist. Both of Goldberg-Polin's parents acknowledged those losses in their comments.

Jon said his son had always sought justice and to take principled stands, even when they weren't always the most popular. Now, were he alive and free, Polin said, Hersh would be seeking more than just the release of the

remaining hostages.

"You would keep on pushing for a rethinking of this region. You would say – you have said – that we must take a chance on the path with potential to end the ongoing cycles of violence. You would ignore people's public posturing and what people say at press conferences, and you would push every decision maker to truly look themselves in the mirror and to ask themselves selflessly every single day,

## Herzog apologises for Israel's failure to free captives

PHILISSA CRAMER – JTA

**I**sraeli President Isaac Herzog apologised for Israel's failure to free the captives held by Hamas in his comments at the funeral of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, the 23-year-old American-Israeli hostage murdered in Gaza this week.

Herzog was the first speaker, preceding Goldberg-Polin's parents, Rachel Goldberg-Polin and Jon Polin. He spoke first in Hebrew and then in English in a nod to the many English speakers among the mourners and the broad international interest in the funeral of a young man who had become a symbol of Israel's hostage crisis thanks to the advocacy of his family.

In both languages, Herzog used the vocabulary of apology – "*slichah*" in Hebrew, "sorry" in English.

"As a father and as the president of the state of Israel, I want to say how sorry I am, how sorry I am that we didn't protect Hersh on that dark day, how sorry I am that we failed to bring him home," he said in his English comments.

"In his life and in his death, Hersh has touched all of humanity deeply. He has shaped our world and woven his essence of light and love into the story of the Jewish people and into our human story."

In Hebrew, he had offered more expansive comments, asking for forgiveness directly from Hersh and his family.

"I apologise on behalf of the state of Israel, that we failed to protect you in the terrible disaster of 7 October, that we failed to bring you home safely. I apologise that the country you

immigrated to at the age of seven, wrapped in the Israeli flag, couldn't keep you safe," Herzog said.

He added, "Rachel, Jon, dear Leebie and Orly, grandparents, and the whole family, I ask for your forgiveness, forgiveness that we couldn't bring Hersh back home alive."

Herzog also spoke in Hebrew with more force about the roughly 100 hostages still known to be in Gaza, and in acknowledging the breach of the state's responsibilities in allowing them to be taken and kept there.

"Now, the state of Israel has an urgent and immediate task," he said. "Decision-makers must do everything possible, with determination and courage, to save those who can still be saved, and to bring back all our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters."

"This is not a political goal, and it must not become a political dispute. It's a supreme moral, Jewish, and human duty of the state of Israel to its citizens. We didn't fulfil this duty. And now, we have a sacred and shared obligation to stand up and bring them all back to their homeland."

The remarks were a nod to the new wave of anger within Israeli society that has opened since the discovery of the bodies of Goldberg-Polin and five other hostages this week. Protest has spread over the government's failure to bring the hostages home since they were taken during Hamas's 7 October invasion of southern Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the main target of the anger over the perception that he has blocked ceasefire proposals that Israeli security and military leaders endorse, apologised directly to the family of one of those killed on Sunday, marking his first public apology to any family affected by 7 October. But other families declined to take his calls.



Photo: Screenshot

Israeli President Isaac Herzog speaking at the funeral of Hersh Goldberg-Polin in Jerusalem on 2 September

# Life goes on, but we're not okay

OPINION

People marvel at Israel's resilience. They think life just goes on for us. They see us going to work, to the beach, and to restaurants. Everything looks "normal" in spite of the war that rages all around us. "Israelis are so resilient," they say.

Let me tell you what our resilience is, it's going about our daily lives as normally as we can because if we stop moving, we'll crumble. We're like that prize vase that fell and broke into a million pieces and was hastily glued back together but will never be the same. So, if you see us on the beach, going out, or looking "normal", we aren't. Every precious soul murdered or still held captive by Hamas shatters us. Every fallen soldier breaks our heart more. We dread the words "cleared for publication". Our hearts stop. We read the names, each one a punch to the gut. We go to the funerals. We go to the *shivot*. We rage and cry.

It may be September, but for Israelis, it's still 7 October. So, yes, we may appear resilient, but take a few moments to scratch the surface and look inside.

This week was case in point. We're broken-hearted and shattered by the news that Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Ori Danino, Carmel Gat, Eden Yerushalmi, Alex Lobanov, and Almog Sarusi were brutally executed by Hamas in captivity, so close to their possible release. Each one a universe.

When the news broke, a collective cry of grief and despair rang out across the country. We were shattered. Nothing else mattered that day except the "beautiful six" and their families. All I could think about was the exceptional Rachel Goldberg-Polin standing at the border with Gaza last week, screaming,

"Hersh, Hersh, it's mama!" Her anguish and that of the other families squeezed my soul. I pray with all my heart that he heard her. I pray that in those final hours, he heard the raw, magnificent love of his mama.

I struggle not to contemplate the final moments of Ori, Hersh, Alex, Almog, Carmel, and Eden. Ori. Hersh. Alex. Almog. Carmel. Eden.

Devastation and grief is interspersed with anger.

Anger. Anger at the situation. Anger at the futility of it all. Anger that so many across the world said, 'All eyes on Rafah', but failed to turn their gaze to our hostages who were there. Anger at world leaders who discouraged the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from entering Rafah. As someone who grew up in South Africa, anger at those who claim that South Africa is the moral conscience of the world because of the case at the International Court of Justice. This idea is laughable when those who have Hamas leaders on speed dial could



Bank. Houthi rebels are sponsored by Iran; the IDF is engaged in heavy combat in Gaza; other projectiles are fired from Syria and Iraq; and the non-kinetic battlefields are in the courts and media.

Israel is at war with Iran, which is fighting through its terror proxies.

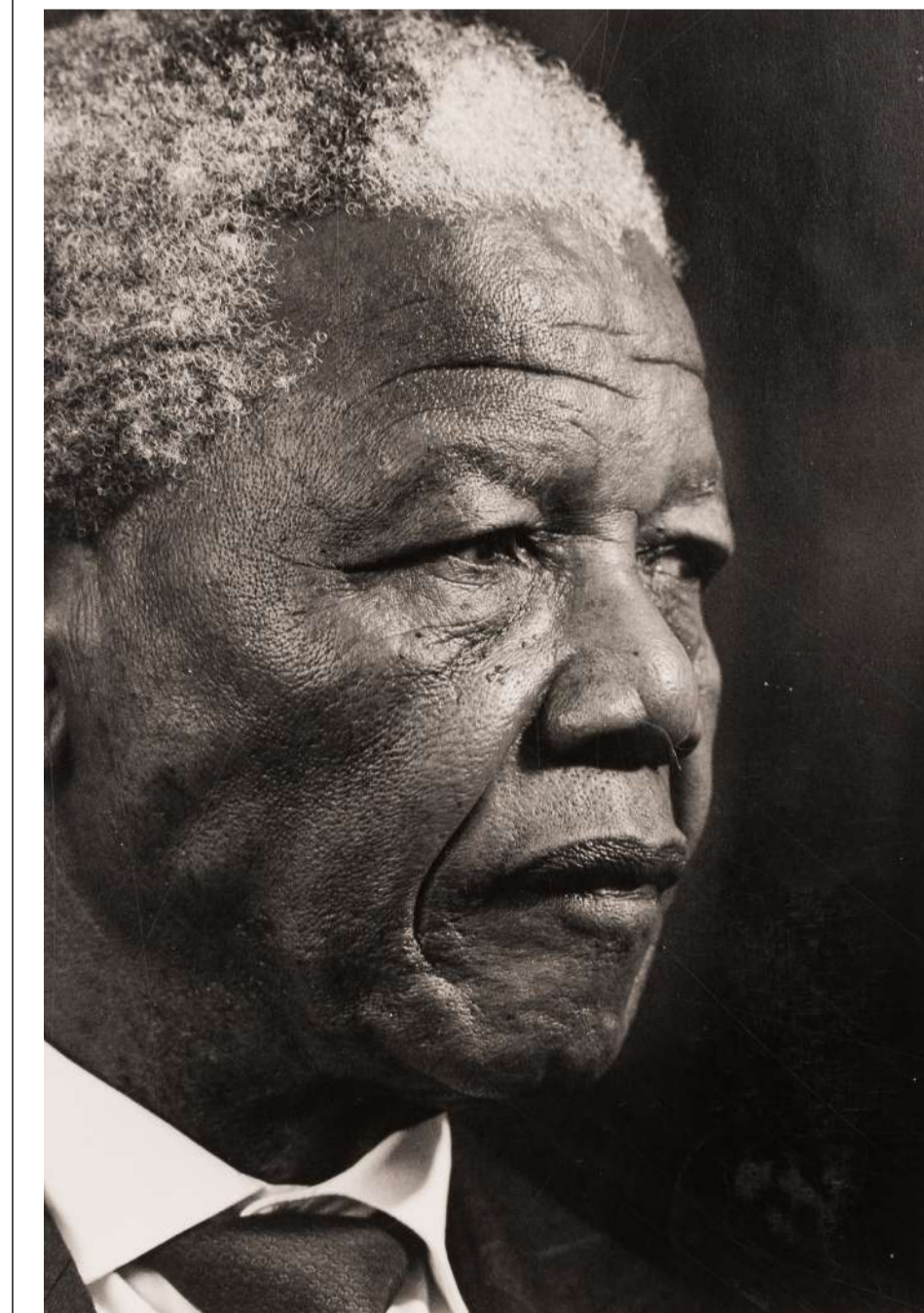
We in Israel know that the Jewish world aches with us, but the Israeli experience is very different to that of the diaspora. We know many of you feel that the distance makes you helpless but the one thing you can and must do is speak up for the remaining 101 hostages. Please don't allow them to be forgotten. This isn't just an Israeli issue, it's a global issue and needs a global response. There are Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and others from more than 20 countries held captive in the Hamas terror tunnels. Be their voice.

Ask us how we're feeling, because we're still not okay. The Jewish nation is devastated, but for us in Israel living through war, the devastation is different. It's a pain more excruciating than words can express. We don't know how or when this ends, but we do know that as difficult as it is some days, we'll get up every morning, put one foot in front the other, and get on with our lives. We'll go to the beach, get on the train to work, eat in restaurants, and continue to fight for our captive brothers and sisters. We'll live. That's our victory.

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



ROLENE MARKS



David Goldblatt  
Nelson Mandela, Houghton, Johannesburg, April 1994  
R300 000 – 400 000

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## Love – the most powerful weapon

**H**ersh Goldberg-Polin could have been any of our sons. In the past 11 months, as his parents, Rachel and Jon, have done all they could to appeal to the world to help bring him and the other hostages home, we got to know him and them.

There's something in the disarming honesty and love that was so evident in his parents' pleas for their son that touched all our hearts, especially as parents. Also, as people who understand the true meaning of love.

When his mother called to him across the Gazan border last week and at any other opportunity she could get to tell him she loved him and that he needed to "stay strong and survive", it resonated with each of us.

I hardly think you had to be Jewish to feel her pain. I'm not sure you had to be anything other than someone who feels love. And the love of a child is, in my opinion, something impossible to replicate.

And Hersh was clearly an incredible young man. Someone who challenged others to think further than they could throw. He made people think. He didn't just accept things at face value, he pushed the boundaries. We all know youngsters like that. We have children like that. We admire those people for whom life is never simple. But then, simplicity isn't what they want. To be interesting, challenging, and be able to make a real difference in the world is what they want.

Hersh was that kid. He had strong values and principles, and saw everyone's pain and humanity.

And this week, I'm not alone in feeling Jon and Rachel's pain as if we were kin. Hersh was one of the six beautiful young people – Carmel Gat, Eden Yerushalmi, Alexander Lobanov, Almog Sarusi, and Ori Danino included – who managed to survive 11 months of captivity in Gaza. Eleven long and hellish months. We'll never know what horror they endured in those months because just hours before the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were about to rescue them, Hamas executed them one by one.

For the depraved Hamas terrorists, it was better to kill these beautiful souls than for Israel to rescue them and take them home alive. There's no humanity in people who think like that!

They were executed in the tunnels under Rafah, close to where the IDF rescued Qaid Farhan Al-Qadi last week. They were so close, the hostages may well have heard the soldiers and even got excited thinking they were about to be rescued.

Do you recall how the slogan, "All eyes on Rafah" went viral on social media with those who hate Israel? Well, clearly their eyes weren't seeing so well because they missed the innocent hostages stashed in the tunnels underground. They didn't care, did they? Because, as is evident in our media in South Africa, Jewish lives don't matter. Imagine ignoring six innocent people who had been held for 11 months and then executed? You don't need to study journalism to know that that's international news.

While I may be angry and very sad, I feel the need to take a leaf out of Rachel and Jon's book. The two of them have in the past 11 months become household faces for us because of their determination to use their voices to bring their son and all the other hostages home. They stopped at nothing.

They – much like their son and the five other hostages – are peace-loving humanitarians. Because of them, Hersh's smiling face, personality, and story touched all of us, as did the wisdom and love of his parents.

For months, I've been quoting Rachel in saying, "In the competition of pain, there are no winners", referring to the fact that Israelis aren't the only people suffering in this war. This woman, whose son had his arm blown off before being stolen from her 11 months ago, still didn't buy into hatred. She still didn't call for the destruction of innocent people. She continued to love with all her heart.

As she said all those months ago – another comment that really resonated with me – "When you get outraged only when one side's babies are killed, then your moral compass and humanity is broken." She made the point that hatred was "seductive and easy", but not helpful.

She asked that people set aside hatred and find solutions to the conflict to stop the killing and bring the hostages home.

When the couple spoke recently at the United States Democratic National Convention, Jon said that although wars were based on politics, holding innocent hostages for all this time wasn't a political issue, it was a humanitarian disaster.

There's a surplus of agony on all sides of the tragic conflict in the Middle East, and it needs to stop, he said. As he said this, he and Rachel were enduring the worst kind of agony and anguish.

Rachel explained that she and all the family members of those, she said, "were stolen from us" were living on another planet to the rest of the world. "We live on a planet of tears, agony, of no sleep," she said.

When at that convention and on the Gaza border, her call to her son was spine chilling. Her pain evidently knew no bounds. Turns out that it was days after her calling him at the Gaza border that he was executed.

And even now, her dignity and that of her husband is inspiring. They still have no hate, just love. I have a deep sense that their love is our weapon of survival.

This sentiment clearly echoed around Israel this week at the beginning of the school year. As the country went back to school with deep sadness following the execution of these six young hostages, there were pockets of inspiration.

One soldier drove three hours to ensure that his slain comrade's daughter didn't go to her first day at school without a father figure. And there were numerous such stories because of the care and love that was so evident.

As sadness continues to engulf us as long as the hostages are still in Gaza and soldiers and others continue to die and be injured in this war, we can learn from the Goldberg-Polins and choose love rather than hatred.

**Shabbat Shalom!**

**Peta Krost**  
Editor



## Hamas's hostage murder and 'long war' strategy

OPINION

DR DAN DIKER



**H**amas's cold-blooded execution of six Israeli hostages after 331 days in captivity in Gaza's underground terror tunnels have underscored the urgency of freeing the remaining 101 kidnap victims. The question is, at what price?

Referring to the hostages, thousands of Israeli demonstrators have demanded for months that Israel "Bring them home now!" The language is a demand on Israel and not on the Hamas kidnappers to free the hostages, vindicating the terrorists' relentless pressure strategy on the Netanyahu government and Israeli society.

In spite of harsh criticism of Israel's inflexibility in negotiations, the record tells a different story. As Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted in a dramatic Hebrew language press conference on 2 September, the last two American bridging proposals noted Israel's flexibility and Hamas's refusal to budge. Why? Because Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar doesn't want a deal. His plan is to cause Israel to bleed profusely, divide Israeli society, create civil strife – even civil war, bring huge pressure on Netanyahu, and trigger a regional Iran-driven war on Israel.

It seems that Hamas is making progress in its psychological war against Israel. Hamas made sure to record each of the hostages on video with the aim of galvanising Israeli and international public opinion to attempt to force Israel to capitulate to Hamas's demands. When Israel refused, Sinwar ordered the execution of six innocent victims, depicting the Israeli government as intransigent. This win-win situation for Hamas reflects its "total warfare".

Sinwar's strategic thinking was confirmed by recently discovered instructions in Arabic issued by Hamas leadership and recovered by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) units in Gaza. Hamas's strategy directive stated, first, increase distribution of hostage photos and videos to maximise psychological pressure; second, lay blame on Netanyahu for the ongoing war and hostage crises; and third, counter the Israeli narrative that the IDF offensive manoeuvres will bring the return of the hostages.



**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu explains the importance of The Philadelphi Corridor on live television on Monday 2 September**

Why else is a hostage deal stuck in the ruins of Hamas-controlled Gaza? The Israeli hostage fiasco is also subject to media misinformation. Calls for "ceasefire" and "bring them home" don't reflect the per deal on the table. Israel would pay an enormous price for very few live hostages. The 28 August deal negotiations included the proposed return of between 12 and 20 live hostages. The prospective agreement leaves the vast majority of live hostages in Hamas dungeons, increasing the probability of death for the remaining victims.

Israel is profoundly concerned that there won't be a "second stage". This is why the prime minister is holding out for the maximum number of hostages to be returned in the "first stage", which many believe will be the only one.

While Sinwar's psychological warfare on Israel is succeeding, Israel has drawn local and international ire for refusing to leave the strategically vital Philadelphi Corridor, the 14km passage that separates Gaza from Egypt. The issue is one of the highest importance in terms of

securing Israel and preventing the massive flow of arms and ammunition through scores of tunnels that have been discovered in the past months from Egypt into Gaza.

An Israeli pullout from the Philadelphi Corridor would leave this vital passage in the hands of Hamas, enabling the terror group to maintain power, rearm, and resupply. This would also reassert Iran's presence in the Gaza Strip and serve as an escape route for Hamas leadership as well as scores of hostages that can be moved into Egyptian Sinai and ultimately to Iran or other countries. Retreating from the corridor and merely depending on technological means to monitor it, as some in the Israeli defence establishment have suggested, would represent a strategic disaster for Israel that it cannot afford to risk.

The claim that Israel can allow itself to pull back from the Philadelphi Corridor in order to complete a prospective deal and then return after several weeks or months is highly unlikely. History shows that it's far more difficult to retake evacuated areas, even when under fire or strategic threat. Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's concession of the Philadelphi Corridor and the subsequent highway of terror created there since Israel's 2005 withdrawal is a good example. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's unilateral retreat from southern Lebanon and the resulting massive rocket and missile fire from Hezbollah on northern Israel is another example of creating a vacuum of security, which has led to the evacuation of about 80 000 Israelis from their homes. Israel hasn't re-occupied southern Lebanon to stop the assault. International pressure on Israel has prevented it from retaking territories vital to protecting both northern and southern Israel.

Now, with Hamas's cold-blooded execution of innocent women and men, the worst thing that Israel could do would be to guarantee its loss of the war by negotiating with the murderers of its civilians. The way forward is complex. Though many in the West may think that this is a political conflict that can be negotiated to a successful solution, Israel is facing a broader ideological,

religious, Islamic war on its existence, led by the Iranian regime and executed by its proxies – Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria, the Houthis, and radical Shiite militias in Iraq. Hamas's strategy was dictated years ago when Sinwar visited

Tehran, consulting with terrorist mastermind Qasem Soleimani, subsequently assassinated by the United States.

Israel finds itself in a Catch-22 situation to which there are no easy answers. History has taught us painful lessons about confronting and overcoming evil. The US response to 9/11 and the British response to the 7/7 Al-Qaeda attack was to eliminate Al-Qaeda militarily in Afghanistan and Iraq. The West's response to Nazi Germany's invasion of Europe wasn't to negotiate with Hitler, but to destroy the Nazi regime.

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was discovered in homes across the Gaza Strip, a reminder that Israel – and by extension the West – is in a long war opposite an ideologically immutable, apocalyptic enemy that is exploiting 101 hostages to achieve its goal of Israel's destruction and its promise of regional domination.

• Dr Dan Diker is president of the Jerusalem Center for Foreign Affairs.

# SA's 'genocide' lawyers take aim at Israel soccer

NICOLA MILTZ

As FIFA contemplates whether or not to ban Israel from participating in international soccer, it's legal analysis from South African lawyers that the organisation will be using to make its decision.

FIFA, the global soccer governing body, will use a report from the same South African lawyers who represented South Africa at the International Court of Justice "genocide" case in early 2024. They are attorney Max du Plessis, who cowrote the analysis to ban Israel with Sarah Pudifin-Jones.

In a month, FIFA will decide whether to ban Israel temporarily from participating in international soccer, a move that could have significant consequences for the soccer-loving nation.

Du Plessis and Pudifin-Jones have claimed that Israel must be banned from any soccer-related activities for violating FIFA's statutes amid the war against the Hamas terror group in Gaza.

They argue that "Israel's conduct demands censure in line with the position adopted by FIFA in relation to similar egregious violations of its objectives and internationally recognised human rights".

The demand stems from the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) approaching FIFA.

The two South African advocates, who specialise in international law and human rights, have been at the forefront of the push to oust Israel from competing on the international stage. Their analysis was commissioned by Eko, a global non-profit, social justice organisation.

Eko has put pressure on FIFA to take decisive action.

Vicky Wyatt, Eko's senior campaign director, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We're member-led, so if our members indicate that they would like us to work on an issue, we'll run a campaign on it. Eko members indicated that they wanted us to campaign on this issue, and more than 400 000 members have signed our petition."

In recent years, when the PFA brought motions to suspend Israel from international soccer, FIFA didn't impose sanctions. In 2017, FIFA declared that the matter was closed, and it wouldn't be subject to further discussion until the legal or de facto framework changed.

The report argued that developments since October 2023 had given rise to "a new legal framework that necessitates FIFA's intervention".

Israel faces a potential ban from competing in a sport extremely popular in the country.

At no time was soccer's prominence more apparent than this week, as murdered hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, was laid to rest. All year, his face has been a fixture at Hapoel Jerusalem Football Club games, a club in Israel's top-tier Premier League.



The Israel's women's soccer team

"After nearly a year of crying out his name and praying for his safety, the mourning is unbearable, and words can't begin to describe it," the club said. Its message was one of countless shared by team and fans throughout the past year as Goldberg-Polin became a symbol for the team itself, with banners bearing his name and face accompanied by messages like: "Bring Hersh Home!" commonplace at every match.

The PFA submitted its official proposal in May, and a decision is now expected in October. FIFA has postponed the ruling several times, including days before the Olympics – a tournament in which the Palestinians also challenged Israel's participation – and again ahead of its planned 31 August announcement.

FIFA sought independent legal review, and solicited input from both the Israeli and Palestinian soccer federations.

In a statement on X last Friday, 30 August, FIFA said, "FIFA has received independent legal assessment of the Palestine Football Association's proposals against the Israel Football Association [IFA]. This will be sent to the FIFA council to review in order that the subject can be discussed at its next meeting, which will take place in October."

Israel has firmly denied the accusations in the PFA's claim, which IFA Chairperson Moshe Zuares called a "cynical, political, and hostile attempt by the Palestinian Association to harm Israeli football".

Said Rolene Marks, the spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation, "Hamas started the war, and Israel is defending itself against a group whose stated aim is to annihilate Israel from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. It's odd then that the PFA wishes Israel to be excluded from FIFA tournaments when Israel wasn't the aggressor. Israel has the right under international law to defend its borders."

She said that if all countries that defended themselves against war or were prepared to

defend their citizens from terrorists were forced to step away from international sport, there would be no-one left to play.

"Moreover, this isn't a once-off request but part of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions group's push to delegitimise Israel.

"Sport is a great unifier of groups across languages and culture, and shouldn't be used by lawyers and nongovernmental organisations to sow division," Marks said.

"We take the time to remember one of the six murdered hostages, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who loved soccer and was murdered by Hamas, the very terror group Israel is trying to stop as it defends itself."

A ban would have an immediate effect on Israel's national team, which is to compete in the upcoming Nations League tournament organised by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), the European division of FIFA, of which Israel is a member. Israel plays its first tournament match against Belgium on 6 September in a game that has already been mired in controversy as Belgium refused to host the match citing security concerns.

The game will instead be played in Debrecen, Hungary. The tournament's initial phase extends into November, and the playoffs continue through June 2025, meaning Israel's participation could be interrupted should it advance.

Depending on the duration of a possible ban, Israel could also be excluded from the qualifying tournament for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which begins in March, and from other future European and global tournaments. Last summer, Israel finished third at the 2023 Under-20 World Cup and reached the semi-final in the UEFA European U-21 Championship.

FIFA banned Russia from international competition just days after its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and South Africa was banned for more than 20 years over its apartheid policies.

## Top SA Muslim leader says: 'I am Hamas'

>>Continued from page 1

Jews, and others," she says. "The organisation routinely sacrifices the lives of Gazan civilians by using them as human shields, storing weapons near babies' cribs, in hospitals, and schools, while imprisoning hostages in civilian areas. Instead of using international aid to develop Gaza's economy, Hamas has diverted billions of dollars to build tunnels for its fighters. Most recently, it executed six innocent hostages just days before a potential rescue.

"By identifying with Hamas, Fataar is publicly supporting an organisation that promotes terrorism, violence, and the systematic oppression of both Israelis and Palestinians," Marks says.

Toby Dershowitz, the managing director of FDD Action, a non-partisan organisation that lobbies the United States Congress on national security issues, asks, "Is the sheikh calling on South African Muslims to kill any Jew they see on the street? Imagine the tragic implications for the good people of South Africa if that were the case, as it appears to be. South African leaders should regard the sheikh's boastful comments as a threat to the community he claims to represent. They should investigate whether his incitement to violence should have consequences.

"By proclaiming, 'I am Hamas,' was the sheikh shamelessly justifying the savage murder at close range of six innocent hostages?" asks Dershowitz. "Was he encouraging Hamas to execute baby Kfir, who was just nine months old when he was kidnapped, among the 101 hostages Hamas still illegally holds? Was he bragging that he was part of a group that murdered nearly 1 200 people including Jews, Muslims, Druze, Christians, and Hindus, from 35 countries?"

"It's hard to imagine that the sheikh is unaware of Hamas's hate-filled charter, which says the 'day of judgement will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them', which contradicts Islam's tenets to love your neighbour," she says. "People of good will, of faith or no faith, should educate themselves on the unlawful, hateful, violent, rejectionist, and morally bankrupt course Hamas has charted, which hasn't brought a single moment of peace or success for the Palestinians.

"Rather than inciting violence by championing Hamas, responsible leaders – religious, political, or otherwise – ought to encourage those they shepherd to follow the path of peace, negotiations, and compromise, no matter how arduous."

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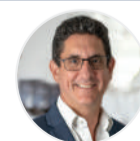


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# Dinner celebrates 'one of a kindness' Miracle Drivers

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Chabad House Miracle Drivers '24 demonstrated the impact that doing one small act of kindness can make in the lives of many. In an entertaining evening punctuated by singing, dancing, and a marching band, this was the message shared by speakers including Rabbi Mendel Lipskar and Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Gayton McKenzie.

"Making the most Jewish guilt since 1989," as master of ceremonies, comedian Nik Rabinowitz joked, the 35th annual Miracle Drive Gala Dinner was held on 3 September at the Sandton Convention Centre. In keeping with last year's name change to Miracle Drivers, the event's core message was that "a single act of goodness and kindness can change the world".

Speaking of Chabad's mission to uplift every person in this country, Chabad House Johannesburg director Rabbi David Masinter spoke of the multitude of programmes that strive to realise this goal. From the "Give Prayer a Chance" campaign, which aims to help everyone live life to the fullest by focusing on what we do have; to refurbishing 21 libraries and planning to reach 18 000 children soon throughout the country, the organisation is clearly upping the ante. Through The Kindness Lab, Chabad, in partnership with Henley Business School, is now also teaching how kindness can improve productivity in the workplace.

"Each and every single individual has a unique mission in G-d's great world," said Rabbi Mendel Lipskar, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's head *shaliach* in South Africa, "without which the world is imperfect." No-one else can fulfil your ultimate purpose. While today, a 'satnav' may guide drivers to their destination, we still need to type in where we want to go.

"The end result of your journey is something that you have to choose because you're one of a kind," Lipskar said. "Regardless of how smooth or treacherous our journeys may be, we'll get to our destination because all that G-d creates has a purpose.

"We sometimes look at the world and wonder, 'Can this world ever come right?' This world



Chabad House Johannesburg director Rabbi David Masinter at Miracle Drivers '24

Photos: Trevor Sachs

isn't a jungle, it's a magnificent garden, and we all can do something to bring out the colours, the beauty, and the intense joy of that divine garden that G-d created," he said. We do that by becoming drivers and by recognising and fulfilling our purpose through partnering with G-d in creating a better world.

Inspired by the theme of kindness, keynote speaker McKenzie said his own story embodied the fact that one act of kindness could change individuals, generations, and communities. After he was released from jail, McKenzie was determined to abandon criminality and earn a legitimate living. Yet he found that no-one would employ him. It was through the help of one woman, Rhea Davalios, that his whole life changed. She not only taught him how to speak effectively, but helped him to develop the social skills he'd missed out on while spending years in prison.

"That woman took me under her wing. That woman invested in me," McKenzie said. Not only did she buy McKenzie, who had no money, basic necessities, she gave of her time. When her family told her she was risking her life in helping McKenzie, she replied, "G-d has given some of us privilege, and we are just a

conduit." That privilege, he told the audience, had been entrusted to them so that they could share it with different people.

Through the skills he gained through Davalios, McKenzie got a job where he saved money and ultimately began his entrepreneurial journey. "I started a small fish business hiring ex-prisoners, started a mining company, and eventually became hugely successful in financial terms."

But his true wealth lies in the fact that through giving ex-prisoners a chance, he helps them to turn their lives around, indirectly saving those they otherwise would have harmed. "They have purpose because I have purpose," McKenzie said. "And it was only because Rhea gave me a chance. Today, I give jobs to more ex-prisoners



than anyone in this country, I give money to charity, and I'm a political leader simply because I got this chance."

McKenzie spoke of his support for the Jewish

community amid South Africa's virulently anti-Israel stance after 7 October. Yet, he urged the community to stop threatening to leave the country.

"You live in the greatest country in the world, and you don't help anyone by saying that you're going to leave. When everybody was turning against you, there were people who said, 'We are for you'. A lot of people stood up for you. Stop complaining, not everybody is going to love you, and that's ok."

He recalled how at a talk many years ago, he heard Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein say that no matter which direction you look in South Africa, there's always someone who will uplift you. "You have been blessed beyond measure in this country," McKenzie said. "South Africa has blessed you; it has blessed your families; it has given your children a future. This country needs you.

"You come from a great people, don't let the media, don't let terrorists, don't let anybody tell you that you aren't great," he said. "I know the work this community has been doing. You were an integral part of our struggle, and we can't forget those things. The hate was always there, and now it's come out. But concentrate on the people who admire who you are and who know where you come from, because you come from great people, you have survived worse things."

McKenzie also spoke of the hope that the Government of National Unity (GNU) holds for South Africa. "The GNU is the best thing that could have happened to South Africa," he said. "All the ministers are trying to outdo each other, and the beneficiaries of that behaviour are members of the public. This country is going to go from strength to strength because of it." Not to mention, he said, because of its people, saying, "We are one nation."

## Blue coalition shows grassroots but needs watering

OPINION

Though the groups driving BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) activism in South Africa have found common ground in their opposition to Israel, so too have those who support Israel. However, the dynamics of the so-called "blue coalition" are quite different.

It's essential to understand that this piece is simply to aid understanding. Reality is complicated, and while certain philosophical orientations may predispose people to support Israel, not everyone who holds these views will necessarily do so. Also, people may subscribe to more than one of these perspectives at once.

In South Africa, the blue coalition consists of five main groups who tend to support Israel: Zionist Jews; covenantal Christians; classic liberals; traditionalists; and economic actors. Each of these groups brings a unique perspective and motivation to its support for Israel, making the blue coalition diverse and diffuse.

Zionist Jews are at the core of the blue coalition in South Africa, and comprise more than 90% of the Jewish community in the country. They are organised, have some financial backing, and maintain strong connections with Israel, culturally and politically. This group often spearheads pro-Israel advocacy, and is instrumental in organising events, educational initiatives, and lobbying efforts. However, in spite of its influence, the Jewish community in South



Many Christian denominations and individuals in South Africa have shown unwavering support for Israel

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Africa is relatively small, comprising less than 0.1% of the population.

The second group, which for the purposes of this discussion we call "covenantal Christians", is the largest contingent of pro-Israel supporters in South Africa. This includes a wide range of Christian denominations and individuals that take seriously the covenant that G-d made with Abraham about the future of Jews and the holy land. For these Christians, Israel holds a special place as the land of the Bible and as a source of blessings and prophecy. Covenantal Christians are some of the most enthusiastic supporters of Israel in the blue coalition but their level of exposure to contemporary Israeli issues can vary widely. Some are deeply active, engaged, and well-informed, while for others the topic is still fairly new.

Classic liberals form the third part of this analysis. These are individuals who focus on values such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and individual rights, principles they see embodied in the Israeli state. Classical liberals are typically wary of autocratic and totalitarian regimes. They contrast Israel's democratic system with the more authoritarian regimes in the region, and find common cause with the Jewish state.

This group is politically active and often engaged in public debates. Classic liberals are often found in academia, think tanks, and the legal profession. Their support for Israel is usually intellectual and grounded in their philosophical commitment to liberal democracy.

The fourth part of the coalition, traditionalists, includes ethnic, tribal, religious, and cultural minorities, like Jews,

who may feel vulnerable to the larger majorities and totalitarian agenda of the "red-green alliance". For traditionalists, Israel's military strength and its ability to provide a safe haven for Jews and other minorities in the Middle East resonate deeply. They see Israel as a model of how a small nation can protect itself and maintain its cultural identity in the face of external threats.

Traditionalists appreciate Israel's focus on self-defence and its determination to preserve its unique cultural and religious identity. This group's perspective is less ideological than that of Zionist Jews or classical liberals. Their alignment with the blue coalition is often based on shared experiences of persecution and an interest in co-operation in this regard.

Finally, there are economic actors, a diverse collection that spans a large selection of entities including government departments, large corporations, academic researchers, and entrepreneurs. This group is drawn to Israel for its technological innovation, its reputation as the "start-up nation", its ready sources of globally competitive solutions, and its strong economy. It includes those who value its ethic of "tikun olam" (healing the world) and the opportunities for collaboration to address developmental challenges. Economic actors are a powerful driver of the blue coalition, but they are always the

most conservative looking to avoid public confrontation over political issues.

The differences between the red-green alliance and the blue coalition are immediately obvious. The blue coalition forms the moral majority of the country but the political minority. Based on values, most South Africans would fit into one of the blue coalition categories, but in Parliament, parties with this perspective represent perhaps only 35% to 40% of voters. The blue coalition also has far more grassroots support than the red-green alliance, which is an elitist phenomena to be found in government, media, trade unions, academia, and nongovernmental organisations. This elite layer has been boosted by until recently the hegemonic, concrete presence of the African National Congress (ANC) in national government. However, grassroots do grow and every so often, one finds someone breaking through the asphalt of the national discourse – a mayor here, a judge there, the occasional high-profile business person and celebrity, and of course, now, a whole raft of government ministers. As the rule of the ANC continues to crumble, watering the grass roots of the blue coalition will be crucial to continuing its growth trend in the public life of South Africa.

• Benji Shulman is an executive office bearer of the South African Zionist Federation.





# Wartime Israel doesn't deter thousands of *olim*

LEE TANKLE

**M**aking aliya amidst a war is sometimes seen as stepping from the frying pan into the fire, or perhaps true Zionism. But, since 7 October, 23 000 people from around the world have made aliya, 250 from South Africa.

by doing volunteering work and helping around. There would be lots of requests for people to come and help with certain things that they are doing for their soldiers and things like that. I'm keen to do that kind of thing."

Adler said her aliya had been a long time coming since her husband passed away three years ago.



Young *olim* receiving their farewell gift of Theodor Herzl socks

Photos: Wendy Grauman

world," said 16-year-old Daniel Dosson from Cape Town.

Similarly, 16-year-old Lily Todes is leaving her parents in Johannesburg and joining her brother who is also completing high school at Na'ale. "I'm not nervous to go to Israel right now. I know the war affects the country on a large scale, but it seems that day-to-day life goes on."

Dorron Kline, the chief executive of Telfed, the organisation which supports South African *olim* in Israel, told those at the farewell party, "This is a step for yourself and your immediate family in Israel. You are becoming a part of a modern-day



Alida Schoultz, Director of Ebenezer Operation Exodus

miracle – the continuing growth of the Jewish nation."

Dafir Forer Kremer, the director of the Israel Centre, said while giving the *olim* pairs of socks with the face of the father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, "Aliya warms the hearts of Israelis. We're a nation of survivors, so it's no wonder our anthem is *Hatikvah*."



Dafir Forer Kremer, director of the Israel Centre

what's happening there, but we're aware of the fact that Israel is at war. We'd like to participate and contribute more than anything else."

Daniel Sauer, a former employee at CAP Security who is moving to Bat Yam, told *the SA Jewish Report*, "I want to be able to make a difference, whether it be by giving back and volunteering,

playing a role in building the economy, or even just showing the true resilience and beauty of Israel."

Four youngsters are also going to Israel with this group, leaving their families behind, to complete their schooling at the Na'ale Elite Academy. "I think it's better to be in Israel given what's going on in the



Jodi Dayan and Shelley Bookatz

"I have been staying in the house on my own.

It's hard, you know. I can't go out at night by myself. I don't drive at night. So, I'm sitting at home. I went to visit my children last year in Israel and felt the freedom and ease of getting around. At this age and stage of my life, it's a good place for me to be. Especially having children there and hopefully, at some stage, the rest of my family will join me there."

When Jessica Lurie heard what happened on 7 October, she knew she had to go to Israel. "My sister is there on her own. She's younger than me, and I felt distant from her after what happened. I just feel that

the older I get, the more I need to be with my sister. She's my best friend, and the way things are going here, it's better for me just to be there with her.

"It sounds crazy, but I still feel like no matter what's happening there, there's still a better future there than here. There's more of a plan there for them. I feel excited. I'm not as nervous as I should be," said Lurie.

Virgil and Ruth Challeng, a couple in their 60s and members of Temple Emanuel Shul, decided to make aliya to Be'er Sheva and leave their children in South Africa because, they say, "It has always been a dream of ours to live in Israel.

Every time we visit, we feel this massive feeling of homecoming."

Said Ruth, "We look forward to contributing and volunteering in various projects. Every time we read the reports and see that more people have died, our hearts sink into our feet. It's hard to see



Farewell gift of Theodor Herzl socks for the *olim* from the Israel Centre

The ministry of aliya in Israel is expecting a further 17 000 *olim* this year.

"Since the war in Israel started, not one person has cancelled their plans to make aliya," said Shelley Bookatz, aliya consultant at the Israel Centre at a farewell event for *olim* on 30 August.

"Going to Israel is my purpose, especially having seen what happened on 7 October," said reflexologist Jodi Dayan, who was one of those South Africans on the verge of making aliya.

"After seeing how the kibbutzim were destroyed that day, I knew that one of the things I wanted to do was go down south and help resettle the kibbutzim. The war has taken longer than any of us wanted or anticipated, but as soon as we can start resettling, I'm there."

"I've just completed a yoga teacher's training course and I want to specialise in trauma yoga and reflexology. Whatever else comes up and whatever else I need to do I will do to help in any way I can," said Dayan.

Marcelle Adler, 75, was also inspired to make aliya sooner rather than later after the 7 October massacre in Israel. "After seeing the devastation, I feel that I might be able to give back to the people there

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September 15, 2024  
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Session 2  
**Antisemitism post October 7 – panel discussion with Dr David Hirsh and Prof Karen Milner, moderated by Danny Mofsowitz**



**Dr David Hirsh**  
Academic Director and CEO of London Centre for Study of Contemporary Antisemitism



**Danny Mofsowitz**  
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**Prof Karen Milner**  
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# Jewish vote solidly Democrat, but fraying over Israel

STEVEN GRUZD

Despite the hostility shown towards Israel and Jews from the political left in the United States, about 70% of American Jews are still likely to support the Democrats in the too-close-to-call November election. So said former American diplomat and writer, Brooks Spector, speaking at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre in Johannesburg on 1 September.

Before President Joe Biden (81) pulled out of the presidential race after his disastrous CNN debate against Donald Trump (78),

Spector was going to subtitle his presentation, “The dance of the dinosaurs.” He now called it, “The prosecutor versus the felon”, as former prosecutor and vice-president, Kamala Harris, squares up against Trump, convicted for lying about his hush money payments.

Spector noted that Jewish Americans have largely voted for the Democrats

since the first Franklin D Roosevelt

victorious election in 1932 in the midst of the Great Depression. As

the great wave of migrant East European Jews in the 1900s became US citizens, they voted overwhelmingly for the Democrats, while an older generation of German Jewish emigres tended to vote Republican.

“For years now, American Jews have taken for granted

**“For years now, American Jews have taken for granted the fundamental of US government support for Israel and voted largely on the basis of socio-economic issues and the welfare state.”**

the fundamental of US government support for Israel and voted largely on the basis of socio-economic issues and the welfare state,” Spector said. “Now, however, the Israel-Gaza conflict has driven some of the old and new left away from the Democrats. In addition, some wealthier Jews have become Republicans, such as Miriam Adelson and a number of Las Vegas and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs.

“In my view,” Spector said, “Harris’s very careful formulation of Israel’s legitimate security, liberating the remaining hostages, relieving the suffering Palestinians living in Gaza, and the right of self-determination and the two-state formulation seems to have struck the right notes where American policy wouldn’t be beholden to the maximalist goals of any of the protagonists. She’s doing a tap-dance on a highwire.

“But would those who disagree with the current Biden-Harris administration, or the Harris formulation above, vote for Donald Trump in any numbers?” Would they support a minor candidate or simply stay home? We cannot know that yet.

“If current estimates are right,



Brooks Spector speaking at the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre

this will mean that Jews finally turn their backs on the Democrats.

“What would either president mean for Israel and Jews? We already know in broad outlines what a second Trump administration would set out as policies there. A Harris administration would have a relatively balanced position and probably less patience towards the Netanyahu government and its continuing programme in Gaza. I think it’s likely that either administration would be interested in pursuing a comprehensive peace programme, albeit with different

points of emphasis perhaps. A comprehensive peace has been US policy for decades, after all,” Spector said.

“What will either president mean for South Africa? My suspicion is that a Harris administration

**Democrat presidential nominee and US Vice President, Kamala Harris**



the split will be something close to 70/30, Democrats vs Republicans. Jewish votes may, or may not, be important in a few states, but those are probably Democratic-leaning states already. It’s cash that may matter more in the race for funding as campaigns are fiendishly expensive. Perhaps most important of all may be the impact of the commentariat and the intellectual content of prominent writers and analysts.”

Spector cited a 2023 opinion poll, conducted a few months before 7 October, that showed that in a high polarised US, “Jewish voters remain focused on the cultural issues that divide the country – democracy, abortion, and guns. They also prioritise inflation and climate change.” While more than 70% felt emotionally attached to Israel, they hold negative views towards Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – 28% favourable to 62% unfavourable.

With rising antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment from the political left since 7 October, more Jews are questioning their safety in the US and their political allegiance. Trump and the Republicans hope

will largely represent continuity with the broad outlines of the Biden policies, including support for continuation of AGOA [the African Growth and Opportunities Act]. I also expect some increased emphasis on climate and environmental protection.

“By contrast, a second Trump administration may well be less supportive for AGOA – note the vote will be by Congress, not a presidential decision – and will probably be more aware and attentive to South Africa’s actions that look like an embrace of Russia or China or Iran on issues of importance to the US such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine or American efforts to limit Iranian support for militants beyond its borders.”

The next big moment will be on 10 September, Spector said, in the first televised debate between Harris and Trump. “How she manages to portray herself will make all the difference. How a candidate looks is as important as what he or she says.”

No-one expects the two months before the US elections in November to be dull.

## The Tattooist of Auschwitz moves hearts in TV adaptation

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Recently released on M-Net (DStv Channel 101), *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* is based on the bestselling 2018 novel by Heather Morris which tells the true story of Holocaust survivor Lale Sokolov. Speaking exclusively to the *SA Jewish Report*, Israeli director Tali Shalom-Ezer and Scottish executive producer Claire Mundell provided a behind-the-scenes look at making the series and confronting difficult material.



Jonah Hauer-King as young Lale Sokolov in *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*

Photo: Screenshot M-Net

“At the same time, our objective was to bring the show to the biggest, most diverse audience. You have to find enough light and balance in the emotion of the story to enable people to stay with it, because otherwise, it would just be too traumatic to watch. It’s the hope in the DNA of the story that really pulls people in. Although it’s harrowing to watch in places – as it should be – the hope gets people through emotionally.”

Ezer-Shalom says her Jewish identity reinforced the need to approach the subject matter with particular sensitivity. “Many of the creators of the show, including myself and cinematographer

David Katznelson are Jewish, and we have some connection to this story,” she says. Ezer-Shalom’s grandfather is a Holocaust survivor whose first wife, daughter, siblings, and parents were murdered at Auschwitz, and Katznelson’s father also survived the concentration camps.

“So, this story is so meaningful for both of us,” she says. “We were always talking about whether we felt that our family members would think that it’s respectful. Most of the prisoners in Auschwitz were murdered there, they didn’t have the same luck as Lale and Gita.” In their ongoing discussions, their guiding light was always to focus on trying to tell Sokolov’s story in the most authentic way possible, says Shalom-Ezer. Considering the traumatic subject matter, counselling was also constantly available on set.

It’s impossible to understand fully what happened at Auschwitz, Shalom-Ezer says. It’s one of the biggest traumas in human history and as you read survivor testimonies, it’s so hard to comprehend. “Yet, it did happen, so I think we all want to understand how something like this could in fact happen,” she says. This is why she believes there’s such an enduring desire to engage with such stories.

In increasing the series’ relevance to a contemporary audience, the writers tried to depict the ongoing impact of the Holocaust on Lale in his old age. “A significant change we made in the adaptation was to incorporate scenes between Lale and the novelist Heather Morris, played by Harvey Keitel and Melanie Lynskey, respectively,” says Mundell.

Despite the fact that on one level, Lale and Gita had a happy ending, the trauma of Auschwitz never left them. “Through Lale’s memories, we’re trying to honour the fact that the survivors very soon will be gone, and once that happens, who will be there to remind us of what occurred? This was a way to try to bring that to life for a mainstream audience.”

At a time when the trauma caused by hatred is all too real, the series is also arguably that much more relevant today. The show was shot and mainly completed before 7 October, says Shalom-Ezer. Yet its first release was in May 2024. “We live in such a violent time, so remembering past traumas, of course, resonates with traumas that are happening now,” she says. While remotely editing the film with Mundell and the team in October from her Tel Aviv home, Shalom-Ezer in fact had to run back and forth to her safe room.

“We could never have envisaged that the show would be released in the context that it was,” says Mundell. “I hope it makes people reflect a bit more on the consequences of intolerance, hatred, and antisemitism, and where these things lead. The story is ultimately about the power of love and how as human beings, somehow, in these unbelievably dire situations, we can find it within ourselves to connect with each other.”

While using his position as a tattooist of prisoners in Auschwitz to help his fellow captives, Sokolov found himself falling in love in the most unlikely of places. A Sky and Peacock original drama, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* brings his story to a wider audience.

“As a producer, you’re always looking for the sort of story that captures people on a global scale,” says Mundell, the founder and creative director of Synchronicity Films. “The way Heather Morris’s book captured the hearts and minds of so many people around the world was testament to the power of Lale and Gita’s unique love story. The book brought an audience to the story of one man’s experiences of the Holocaust in a way that that few books have ever been able to do.”

The audience itself was also far more diverse than the one that would typically read a non-fiction book about the Holocaust, she says. “It was a great opportunity to use the power of drama to speak to a core audience of Jewish people, to people affected directly by the Holocaust. But we’re also bringing it to a wider audience, many of whom I don’t think would have come to this material without the love story element.”

Shalom-Ezer agrees. “There’s something so incredible about this story that it just speaks to so many people,” she says. “It’s almost impossible to understand what Lale and Gita went through.”

The fact that it did happen is what has attracted so many people to the story, she said. “It somehow makes you believe in humankind again. I believe this is because Lale and Gita were so brave and exceptional.”

Yet producing a love story in the context of the Holocaust posed a unique challenge. The tone of the series was a daily conversation, says Mundell. “We had to strike a balance where we could be respectful in what we were portraying. You cannot, of course, recreate Auschwitz, all you can do is give an audience a sense of what that suffering and horror might have been like.

# Jews actively resisted persecution, new Holocaust research shows

LEE TANKLE

The old understanding of Jews as being passive during the Holocaust has become obsolete with new research, says Wolf Gruner, the Shappel-Guerin Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Southern California, who wrote the book, *Resisters: How Ordinary Jews Fought Persecution in Hitler's Germany*.

This is challenging the narrative, said Gruner, the founding director of the University of Southern California Dornsife Centre for Advanced Genocide, in a webinar hosted by the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre and Classrooms without Borders on 28 August.

"Since 1933, the Nazis complained in their official reports that Jews were impudent. And during the war, the Reich Security Main Office emphasised that it had received information about the impudent attitude of Jews from various corners of the Reich," said Gruner.

"In July 1935, the Gestapo emphasised in a report for Berlin that Jews were born with disrespect for state authority. And during the same months, police arrested more than 100 Jewish men and women in Berlin for offences against the German state and Nazi party."

Said Gruner, "The frequent complaints about impudent Jews points to a forgotten reality of widespread acts of resistance by individual Jews.

"One thousand two hundred Jewish men and women served sentences for political and criminal offences in prisons across the German Reich," said Gruner. "This was

2% of the remaining Jewish population."

He said that since 1945, historians had discussed Jewish resistance mostly in terms of art and group activities. "Israeli scholars, however, emphasised early on that there was day-to-day resistance. But for decades, most scholars settled on the fact that only organised and armed resistance was accounted for, and that it was very rare, and if it happened, it was only in the eastern occupied territories like Poland or the Soviet Union."

Through his research, Gruner has tried to widen the concept of Jewish resistance to "any individual or group action in opposition to known laws, actions, or intentions of the Nazis and their helpers."

"In contrast to other groups of the German population, Jews were exposed to racial persecution or racist persecution, but also to special or particular legislation," he said.

Gruner explained that Jews resisted persecution in Germany by contesting Nazi propaganda, through oral protest, written protests like petitions, and defying anti-Jewish laws and restrictions like changing their names, refusing to wear the yellow star, and breaking curfew. Jews would also use physical self-defence in attempting to resist.

"There were no patterns of resistance," he said. "Every Jewish person sought ways to defy and resist."

Gruner gave many examples of how Jewish people in Germany and Austria sought to resist the Nazi regime. "Lizzie Rosenfeld from Vienna, who is on the cover of my

book, committed three crimes in literally one sitting. She sat on a bench which was forbidden for Jews. Then, she had her friend take a picture of this defiant act. You can see how she embraced this act of defiance through her body language. She finally smuggled the negative of that photo out of Germany, when she emigrated to the United States."

Similarly, Gruner said, "Throughout the 1930s, Jews were arrested in Munich and Hamburg for these moving displays of antisemitic newspapers;

for destroying Nazi flags; or ripping down anti-Jewish propaganda posters."

He told the story of David Bornstein, in Hamburg in 1936, who accompanied his wife to a bus terminal on the outskirts of Hamburg. While he waited for the bus to leave and chatted to his wife, he tried to destroy the swastika on the bus with his walking stick. Bornstein was arrested, spent five weeks in jail, and fled from Germany to Israel.

"Even later, even during the war, police reports mention the arrest of Jews, for example in Leipzig, for ripping down Nazi flags or destroying anti-Jewish posters," Gruner said.

"In March and April 1933, Jews were prosecuted in German cities for publicly criticising the beatings and murder of Jews by stormtroopers or the torture in early concentration camps. Throughout those years, Jewish men and women spoke up in public against specific anti-Jewish laws or violent events," he said.

Petitions were often used as an act of resistance as

they challenged the prerogative of German policy. Said Gruner, "These petitions were usually discarded as written in vain. However, when you look closely at them, they were always used by their authors to reclaim their rights

as German citizens and taxpayers. And so, they tried in these petitions to challenge the prerogative of the Nazi persecution that Jews were kind of subhuman and not worthy of being Germans."

After the violence in 1935 and demonstrations

against Jews in Berlin, many Jewish store owners petitioned the Berlin police president.

However, at the same time, Jews also drafted anonymous leaflets against persecution, Gruner said. In his research, he found that Benno Neuberger, a real estate broker, distributed postcards denouncing the Nazi regime and calling Hitler the "murderer of five million".

Said Gruner, "Many more people were capable of doing these things than we ever thought. These weren't unconscious acts. Jews knew what they were getting themselves into. They knew that there were repercussions, not only for themselves, but maybe for their friends and family.

"Today, the situation is different with social media," he said. "It allows for quicker organisation beyond the individual. However, we also shouldn't underestimate the fact that at the time, people had telephones. People would visit each other. They would talk. So there was some level of self-organisation which isn't yet really tapped into."



Lizzie Rosenfeld sitting on a bench that was forbidden for Jews to sit on

## Ex-South African helps school library turn new page

LEE TANKLE

After Gary Meyers, a South African architect living in Australia, helped raise enough money for a new prosthetic arm for Kerry-Lee Brandt Salamon, he set his sights on raising funds to renovate the media centre at the Orange Grove Primary School where the pair met.

Marion Bloch, Gill Jankelowitz, and Barbara Novick, who volunteer with Salamon at the Orange Grove Primary School saw what he did for her, and approached him to help them raise funds to renovate the school media centre.



Orange Grove Primary School students unpacking books in their new library

"Twenty years ago, I, a retired librarian, and a small group of dedicated women who felt as passionate about books as I did, started a library for the pupils in a run-down house on the school's property," said Bloch. "We fixed it up as best we could, using clothes cupboards as bookshelves and off-cuts of second-hand carpets for the pupils to sit on."

Meyers, who is a friend of Novick, said he was "roped in" to help and went to see the place when he was last in Johannesburg last June. "The library was dilapidated," he said.

"The carpet was falling apart, half the books were damaged, and they didn't even have bookshelves. It leaked when it rained. It was cold. There was no air conditioning. There was no heating. I don't think the walls were ever painted. There was no lighting. I think there were naked fluorescent lights in there," Meyers told the SA Jewish Report.

"These women don't get paid, it's all on a volunteer basis. They bring stuff from home, give stuff. They just help," said Meyers.

He started a GoFundMe page for the project in December 2023. It took him a few months to pull the

project together, and the renovations were completed in August this year.

As well as raising the money, Meyers recruited Jodi Kampel of Kez Design Studio to design what the media centre would look like to spur more donations. "We had a wonderful concept, which we changed a bit because it would have been too expensive," said Meyers. "But it gave everyone a vision and a clarity of purpose.

"It was amazing that on my most recent visit to the school in August, I was able to see the difference this has made. The kids are beyond excited about this new space. They were high fiving me as I walked by," said Meyers. "They had a new carpet, new bookshelves,

and they fixed the bathrooms. They fixed the lighting, and the leaking roof. They put new cabinetry in, and they put up a big TV for the kids. And they got new books, and new furniture. It's bright and cheerful.

"I believe that if we teach people right and give them a good education, they go to jobs rather than crime," said Meyers. "I know that these women believe this too, so I thought it was a worthy cause.

"If we look after people at the age of eight or nine years old, and show them that education is important, it stops them from mugging, killing, and fighting. It's such a good investment in the future of this country."

Said Bloch, "I thought his passion would be dampened once I told him that we had no money, but not to be daunted, he immediately set up a GoFundMe campaign and raised the money needed to make Orange Grove Primary School Library a beautiful, welcoming haven for the children to experience the beauty of literature and wealth of knowledge that can be found in books."

Meyers campaigned rigorously to get donations for this project, with his GoFundMe getting 39 donations. "Most of the people that gave were people from overseas," he said, "which I thought was lovely in terms of expat South Africans giving back and feeling the way I do about this beautiful country.

"I do this because I love this country. I love the people. I always have, even though I've been living overseas for 39 years."



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# Diamond award shines Hatzolah's global reputation for care

LEE TANKLE

**H**atzolah Medical Rescue has an excellent track record in emergency care, but last week, it was internationally recognised for its treatment of strokes.

The World Stroke Organization (WSO) Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Angels Diamond Award was granted to Hatzolah on 29 August for the second quarter of 2024. This was the first time that the WSO has given this award to any organisation in Africa.

The EMS Angels Awards was established to acknowledge the top-performing providers of pre-hospital stroke care and is highly prestigious within the emergency medical services community.

It's awarded to organisations that demonstrate outstanding performance, particularly in the management of time-sensitive emergencies like strokes. Receiving this award places Hatzolah among the top EMS providers, not just in South Africa, but globally.

Strokes are the second leading cause of death and disability worldwide, and are responsible for 116 million years of healthy life lost each year, according to the WSO.

**"For Hatzolah, this recognition embodies our core values: caring for life; community service; and the principle that saving one life is akin to saving an entire world."**

"Accepting this award was a significant milestone for Hatzolah," said Hatzolah Medical Manager Yudi Singer. "It acknowledges the hard work, dedication, and relentless pursuit of excellence that our team demonstrates daily. It's more than just a trophy, it's a validation of our effort to uphold the highest standards in emergency medical services."

"This award represents the culmination of years of focused work in areas like stroke management, where every second counts. It symbolises the collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment of our volunteers and professionals to improving patient outcomes. For Hatzolah, this recognition embodies our core values: caring for life; community service; and the principle that saving one life is akin to saving an entire world."

The WSO EMS Angels Initiative works with hospitals and EMS providers to ensure that more patients get the best treatment faster. This involves standardising

and optimising pre-hospital stroke care, monitoring performance, and sharing data between hospitals and EMS providers.

"It underscores the importance of our work and motivates us to continue pushing the boundaries of what we can achieve," said Singer.



To be considered for an EMS award, medical services need to be registered with the WSO; offer an established annual stroke education or refresher programme; make use of stroke scales in the management of their stroke patients; and submit data for at least 30 consecutive stroke patients during the previous quarter.

To achieve diamond status, medical services need to be on the scene in less than 25 minutes; have a 95% rate of prenotification to a hospital; have 95% of patients delivered to stroke-ready hospitals; and have time last known to be normal for 95% of patients and medication recorded.

"We believe we received this award due to our dedication to continuous improvement, particularly in stroke management," said Singer. "Our team has been diligent in training, using simulation exercises and implementing best practice to ensure that our response isn't just fast, but also highly effective." Hatzolah's collaborative approach with hospitals, its strict adherence to protocols, and the use of cutting-edge tools like the Angel's pre-hospital checklist all contributed to it achieving diamond status.

He said Hatzolah had implemented advanced stroke-management protocols including



Hatzolah Medical Rescue was awarded The World Stroke Organization Emergency Medical Service Angels Diamond Award

prenotification of hospitals and direct transport to CT scans when possible. It continues to build strong relationships with local hospitals, ensuring seamless co-ordination during emergencies, and is engaged in continuous data submission and analysis to refine its processes and improve patient outcomes.

"Winning the EMS Angels Diamond Award enhances our reputation, strengthens our relationships with hospitals, and attracts more volunteers and support," said Singer. "It also encourages our team to continue striving for excellence, knowing that its efforts are making a significant difference in the lives of those they serve."

## Architect Rose Norwich's life's work a priceless edifice

RUTH COGGIN

**R**ose Norwich, who held a Masters in architecture, passed away on 26 August 2024 at the age of 103, having lived her life in service to humanity and the Jewish community of South Africa in particular.

Rose will always be remembered for having compiled an exhibition of South African Jewry for the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Israel in the 1980s. This mammoth task culminated in the opening of the exhibition on 9 March 1983 at Beth Hatefutsoth in Tel Aviv.

The exhibition, open for three months, was seen by more than 60 000 people. Several years later, it was brought to South Africa and, with Standard Bank sponsorship, was moved around the country.

Around this time, Rose embarked on her Masters in architecture with a seminal work, *Synagogues on the Witwatersrand before 1930: their origin, form and function*. In this, she compiled a history of the shul buildings, tracing, copying, and drawing the plans of each.

Finding some of them took a fair amount of dedicated detective work, but Rose set about this with a passion and her high level of organisation. One of the interesting finds from this study was that the earliest South African buildings faced east, which was the aspect of European buildings.

She found out that Chief Rabbi Landau insisted that the synagogue in Wolmarans Street should face north as that was the direction of Jerusalem from South Africa. Since then, every new synagogue faced in a new direction. Ultimately, the project was a huge work, with 43 buildings documented, all done by hand.

Rose was born in Johannesburg in 1921 to Abraham and Lily Sive. Her father was a Lithuanian immigrant in 1895 when he started work in a pharmacy. Her mother's family came from England in the late 19th century.

Rose was one of five children who grew up in a home in Houghton. She wrote in her biography, *In Celebration of a Century*, that the house had a lovely garden with a willow tree, from which her father made whistles, as well as a tennis court, and an orchard with plums, figs, and walnuts. Her mother used to make Pesach wine every year in a small wooden barrel from the grapes growing on the tennis court wire.

Rose attended Johannesburg Girls' High School, known as Barnato Park, with her sister, Annette. Apart from music and elocution lessons, the children had private Hebrew

lessons every week. The family attended Wolmarans Street Synagogue. She later became a founding member of the Great Park Synagogue in Melrose, giving a generous donation towards it and funding two stained glass windows.

Rose began her Bachelor of Architecture degree at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1939, the beginning of World War II.

She graduated during the war, and though there were few jobs for architects – even fewer for women architects – she was taken into the office of Cook and Cowen. There she worked without pay for a long time before they began paying her a pitiful salary.

It was while visiting her aunt and uncle in Kalk Bay, Cape Town, that she met Dr Oscar Norwich. After returning to Johannesburg after the holiday, she and Oscar started dating and soon married.

In spite of the age difference – Oscar was 35 and Rose 24 at the time – the couple had almost 50 happy years of marriage, which was launched by an "extended honeymoon" and adventure in America.



Rose Norwich at 100 years old in 2021

They worked and travelled in the United States from July 1945 to the following year, when they returned to Johannesburg. Rose and Oscar moved into their first home in Houghton, where they were to live for many years, and brought up their family of four: Michael Saul, Brahm, Elda May, and Lorraine Sue.

Rose's interests during this time were many and varied. She became an active member of the Transvaal Council, later to become the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. In 1966, she got involved with ORT, an international educational organisation, and helped to grow and

strengthen it considerably. With her help, ORT developed into a highly respected outreach organisation in teacher training, robotics, and maths instruction. It also provided bursaries for Jewish students.

In 1968, Rose was asked to join the executive committee of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW). One of her first assignments was to arrange a Jewish photographic exhibition in the Johannesburg Library. It was the first of many visual displays of Jewish interest that she made in South Africa and abroad.

In 1967, the couple sought medical treatment for Oscar in London, where he was operated on. Various complications meant that the trip was extended to six months. Fortunately, he recovered and life in Johannesburg resumed.

In 1976, Rose was elected president of the UJW. She worked hard at ensuring that the organisation had sufficient finances and its different divisions were active. During her term, she visited all the UJW branches with the exception of Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp, a record that other presidents hadn't achieved.

She was outspoken in her opposition to apartheid, saying at the UJW's 1979 conference that "history has shown us that it isn't possible for one section of the population forever to dominate another".

Oscar died on 16 October 1994 following a short illness, at the age of 84.

Rose told people she had to get herself together, as she put it, and continue with her life. It wasn't easy, and she missed Oscar for the rest of her life. In memory of him, she and the children started the "Oscar Norwich Travelling Fellowship" in 1995 to encourage and reward the study of new skills.

Rose became the joint convenor of a documentary project to record the history of Jewish communities in country areas of South Africa, co-heading a team with Adrienne Kollenberg and Phyllis Jowell. It grew into the publication of six volumes by The South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth.

Titled *Jewish life in the South African Country Communities*, the books cover more than 1 500 centres across the country. The collection provides a unique record of the estimated 10 000 to 20 000 Jewish people who lived in the country districts of South Africa at various times from as far back as the 1820 Settlers to the present day.

Rose is survived by her four children, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

She used to describe herself modestly as having been "lucky in life", with good parents, an excellent education, a happy marriage, and a family who were all good human beings. She was always grateful to her family and friends for the support they gave her. "You can't do it all yourself," she would say.

# Lessons on life from a forensic pathologist



PROFESSOR RYAN BLUMENTHAL

OPINION

As someone who sees life through the lens of working with those no longer living, I find it easy to see the mistakes we make when we're alive. Here are the lessons I've learnt in my days as a forensic pathologist.

**1: Get out of your own head. Socialise.**

Every human being in the world is trying to rid themselves of their inferiority complex and self-esteem issues. They are trying to keep face. Even the most deranged megalomaniac has an inferiority complex.

People need to find outlets for their lives, loves, and passions. They need activities which will help them gain greater self-esteem.

**2: Nature doesn't care about your private logic.** Watch David Attenborough. You're a mammal.

Nature and life are irrational, illogical, and unpredictable. Time and death, living and dying, are all irrational and unpredictable.

Just look up at the sky at night. Look at the awful brooding silence of the stars – that uncanny, enveloping silence. It should speak to you in the tones of a full orchestra.

To deny this is to forego the vitalising forces of nature and life itself. Therefore, learn to embrace life's challenges with courage, insight, and a sense of humour.

You need to add continuously to the sum total of human happiness. Attack life with intellectual and emotional enjoyment.

**3: Finitude. Spend your earthly time solving earthly problems.**

Make the world a better place to live in. Devote time, energy, and private resources to the cause of human service.

Live dangerously. Refuse to accept life's bogeys and taboos.

As Daniel Burnham said, "Make no little plans – they have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans. Aim high in hope and work."

Time will soon be hanging heavy on your hands. Use constructively the leisure of the future years. Turn your hobby into a business or a profession. Don't waste time, spend time.

Bravely seek that which will fulfil your life. Take chances! Make little journeys of discovery to remote places.

There are 16-year-olds who are old, rigid, unadaptable, and pessimistic. There are 66-year-olds who bubble over with the constant joy of fresh discovery and new enjoyment of life. Youth is a matter of one's point of view, not a problem of chronological age.

Don't spend too much time with middle-aged people who suffer their middle age. Spend time with those younger than yourself, and stay in closer contact with the changing world. And those older and more experienced in the technique of being mature.

Don't stay too close to your family hearth. Spread your wings. Those who fly solo develop the strongest wings.

**4: Beware your contacts in life.**

We weigh, we measure, we analyse, we understand. We've lost sight of the poetry of life. We've become cut-off from the mysterious earth force. We've become deaf to the pounding rhythms of the sea and quiet whispers of the wind.

We need to return to the primitive fountain of strength and archaic well-springs of nature. Living in concrete jungles has removed us further and further from it.

Our eyes were made to scan horizons of savannah for game, and ocean horizons for ships out at sea. Now, our eyes are in constant near focus – we all live with constant myopia.

We've also lost touch with the earth. When last did you feel the earth beneath your feet? You need to feel grounded by the earth. Shoes separate you from nature.



Professor Ryan Blumenthal at the autopsy table

**5: Be a lighthouse.** Stand up, shine, be battered by the waves. Know where the dangerous reefs are.

We all need heroes. Thousands of years ago, even the most primitive tribes told their children of the mythical exploits of their ancestors to stimulate pride and activities. Try to become an unsung hero. Do good without expecting a thank you or recognition. Find out where your contribution lies.

**6: Live dangerously.** Life is short. Time is a thief. Precious minutes seep through the hourglass. Put aside the taboos that you accepted uncritically in your youth. Bravely seek that which will fulfil your life. Take chances! Make little journeys of discovery to remote places.

**7: Achievement appears to mean nothing nowadays.** New structures and systems appear to have wiped out excellence. The problem starts in junior school – there are no leaders, and no prefects. Everybody gets an award so that feelings don't get hurt. This phenomenon breeds mediocrity, and kills striving for excellence. We're hardwired to compete. There's nothing wrong with a bit of healthy competition to bring out the best in us. We must compete with ourselves and others, even though this new, postmodern world requires us not to compete.

**8: Communicate better.** The sudden, unexpected death of a person will leave a family feeling desperate and unable to accept what happened. Sensitivity and clear communication from all healthcare professionals during this process is crucial to support grieving families and help them to understand the circumstances surrounding their loved one's death.

**9: Cultivate a hobby of dealing with social service, lest you spend your old age in unhappy isolation.** Cultivate a hobby which will enable you to get along with yourself in your lonely and leisure moments.

**10: Your first three or four decades of life are but preparation, a sharpening of tools, a learning of techniques.** In those decades, you plunge into the stream of life with enthusiasm and inject love and passion into your career. Beyond that comes the real work which gives a meaning to life.

**11: The fifth, sixth, and seventh decades of life may prove to be empty husks.** You've tested your previous decades and may have found them wanting. Maybe you sacrificed everything for fame, money, or prestige. Maybe you've attained the goals of your childhood, and discovered that it was an empty fiction. Professional prestige or business acumen, even money in the bank, have a curious way of being small comfort on a cold, wintery night. You cannot go on working your whole life for fame, for security, or money. Your name and fame mean nothing if you cannot share them with someone. Old age is solved by acceptance or help from children, relatives, or the community.

**12: You're never too old to be a complete human being.** Make a psychological inventory of your assets and liabilities as a human. Look forward to the years ahead to enrich your soul with the great classics, music, poetry, drama, the great history of human civilization.

Never before has information been so cheap and available. Even if you live in the most isolated community, just flick a switch, and you'll be in New York or Paris, or in the company of beloved friends. There's no more need for unhappiness, emptiness, and loneliness.

**13: Nature doesn't care if you're happy or unhappy, how much money you have, or how powerful or popular you are.** The only thing nature cares about is whether you've passed on your genetics or not. You'll need something more. The best insurance against melancholia, depression,

and a sense of futility in old age is the development of wide horizons and the cultivation of mental elasticity and interest in the world.

Fill your days with work and recreation. Fill your nights with the enjoyment of social and intellectual activities. The best investment is a wide horizon of interests, emotional vitality, broad social activities, and a career of service to your fellow human.

Keep busy – many of your worst problems are the result of too much introspection. Plan future activities in such a way that there will be the thrill of new interests in your life.

**14: The term "burnout" is a fashionable diagnosis, but I don't think it exists.** At autopsy, there's nothing to suggest any pathology behind the term "burnout".

Adrenal fatigue is a term used by alternative health practitioners to explain tiredness and other symptoms which are thought to be due to chronic and long-term exposure to stressful situations. However, it isn't a recognised medical diagnosis, it's a general term used to describe a group of symptoms that aren't specific. Examples of those include tiredness, weakness, sleep problems, and cravings for sugar and salt.

In my experience, one gets adrenal cortical lipid depletion – a stress hormone response – when one is lying in intensive care for a length of time.

"Burnout" is a postmodern diagnosis. Our ancestors never suffered from it. I believe people aren't busy enough. The human can always do more.

• Professor Ryan Blumenthal is a prominent figure in forensic pathology in South Africa and aims to improve public awareness of forensic science in his books, including his bestsellers, *Autopsy* and *Risking Life for Death*, and his documentary, *Lightning Pathologist*.

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# Joburg Jews do the big walk to see the Boks

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Johannesburg Jewish Springbok fans walked from all around Johannesburg to Emirates Airline Park on Saturday (31 August) so they could watch the Boks take on New Zealand while still keeping Shabbos.

More than 50 people walked from various areas to the Victory Theatre on Louis Botha Avenue, Houghton Estate, from where they all walked together to the stadium. Many walked for between two to three hours to be at the game, and they weren't disappointed when the Springboks won 31 to 27.

Flyhalf Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu played a starring role for the full 90 minutes in front of a 60 000-capacity crowd, contributing 16 points in his first ever Test against the All Blacks.

Waverley-based rugby enthusiast Dovi Finger described the walk as "the most incredible, most insanely amazing experience. About 50 people walked from Glenhazel, Oaklands, and Illovo. We had arranged to meet at the Victory Theatre at 15:00 from different areas around Joburg."

The walk presented Harry Joffe with an amazing opportunity to watch a Test match for the first time since he started keeping Shabbos about 15 years ago. Having found out about the walk from a colleague who is "in the know", Joffe says the walk "really showed me the power of our Jewish community. We could get a group to walk to the game, have drinks along the way, and really enjoy a fantastic experience.

"I even found a couple of people walking who weren't *shomrei* Shabbos, but walked for the experience and comradeship. What I loved as well was how everyone had organised for someone to meet them at the game with their tickets so we didn't have to carry them on Shabbos."

Joffe and his friend of many years, Gavin

Sacks, had never taken part in such a walk to a rugby game before.

Sacks did the walk despite not being *shomrei* Shabbos. What motivated him to take part was the chance to spend time with Joffe while walking to the game and then watching the spectacle live. "I didn't visualise that most of the walk we were going to be with 40-plus people," Sacks says. "This came as a complete surprise and a pleasant one as well."

Trevor Trope was one of five "hyped-up and excited" Jewish friends who walked from Illovo to the game. "The experience was great," he says. "You got a strong sense of people celebrating the game. We had a really good walk. It was actually less tiring than I thought it was going to be." A drive from Illovo to Emirates Airline Park via the M1 is more than 10km.

Trope and Finger say it was nice to be able to keep Shabbos and not miss out on being at a big game. "It was great being part of a truly proudly South African moment," Trope says. "Watching a Springbok game against a team as fantastic as the All Blacks isn't your average Shabbos activity. It was made so much better by the fact that we won the game."

Trope and Finger used words like "fantastic", "incredible", and "exciting" to describe the game. "The match really was a thriller," Finger says. "I felt privileged and happy to be able to have been there."

"We were lucky to win," Trope says. "At one stage, it looked like we were in a situation that was quite precarious. We looked like we weren't going to win it. Snatching a win at the last minute was a

phenomenal turnaround."

Sacks says the game was full of ups and downs, "At times, we thought the Boks were just not playing well, we were out of it, and were going to lose. At other times, it looked like we were coming back, getting on top, and I was thinking, 'We're going to win this.' The greatest feature of the experience was the social experience,



Springbok flyhalf Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu

Photo: Facebook

"Then we walked up Louis Botha, turned left into Harrow Road, and then the truck came back with more drinks, biltong, and chips," Joffe recalls. "All the way through, people were singing Springbok songs and the atmosphere was really festive. I found the walk amazing because first of all, I made some new friends and reconnected with old friends. It was nice to see the

comradeship, and the response we received on the streets of Louis Botha and Harrow Road was also amazing."

Says Finger, "A bakkie with beers, Coke, water, biltong, and droë wors stopped every 500m or so, which was incredible. Every car that drove past would hoot and shout, 'Bokke!' It was an amazing highlight of the whole experience. From the Victory Theatre until the

final whistle was just great."

Joffe had a work colleague scan him in at the entrance to Emirates Airline Park. "What I liked after the game was that seven or eight people had parked their cars there on the Friday afternoon to secure parking so they could drive themselves and other people home."

This memorable day gave Sacks, who usually watches the Springboks from the comfort of his own couch, "a good reminder of why it's good from time to time to actually go to a game and feel the atmosphere".

which reminded us of all the good stuff in this country."

Joffe describes the day as "very special", with people showing their love for rugby and Yiddishkeit all at once. Having arrived at the Victory Theatre at 15:00 with his friend, Joffe thought the walk wouldn't pan out as he found only a couple of people there. However, an amazing sight soon greeted him when he looked up and saw 45 Springbok-jersey wearers singing and walking along Louis Botha Avenue. A truck filled with food and beverages for the walkers also arrived at the theatre.

## Sheitels: the hair raising cost of quality

ELKA COHEN

What began as a niche product to fulfil the *mitzvah* of married Orthodox Jewish women is now a thriving industry. The modest sheitel has cast a big net of new business across the board – from specialised salons and stylists to those responsible for care, maintenance, and repair.

without having to sacrifice their identity.

If you once bought your sheitel from the house on the corner out of the back room of some enterprising neighbour, you'll be completely blown away by the growth and evolution of the sheitel business.

Chai Hecht (34) is a licensed cosmetologist who specialises in wigs, and since graduating from a top cosmetology school in New

York City, she has been working in the industry for the past 15 years. "I have a huge passion for my line of work, which is essentially making women look and feel confident and beautiful."

The sheitel has made a dramatic shift with the introduction of lace tops. Skin tops, also known as silk tops, were the only wigs available until about five years ago. With these wigs, the hair is injected through the fabric of the silk caps, creating a hidden knot. The silk cap matches the colour of your scalp and so looks like the hair is coming from your own head. However, sometimes those sheitels moved a little. With these wigs of the past, no matter how beautiful the hair quality, cut, colour, or style, the weight and fit was uncomfortable, heavy, clumsy, and often revealing that it was a wig.

The growing accessibility and affordability of lace tops – the new-age sheitel – in which virgin or untreated human hair is finely woven into a lace top, has been a complete game-changer. These are more lightweight, realistic looking, although a little more fragile.

"I love my new lace-top sheitel," says a satisfied customer, "My hair falls and moves naturally, it's light and comfortable, fits so well, and gives me an incredibly natural hairline and parting."

According to Hecht, it's a case of once you go lace, there's no going back.

The latest range of sheitels are all imported from America or Israel, and clients are charged in dollars. Prices vary widely depending on brand, the quality of hair, if it's processed or 100% virgin, and the length increases the price as does colour treatment. Blondes are harder to come by, so they are always more expensive. But the bottom line is that you're in for anything from \$1 500 (R26 877) to \$4 000 (R71 671) a piece.

When it comes to staying on trend, wigs by their very nature are a different game and can't always keep up with the latest in Hollywood hair. Says Hecht, "When a woman has just spent an untold fortune on her wig, she's less likely to take too much risk or get too adventurous when it comes to cutting. But many women do still have fun, embracing creative looks when it comes to styling and colouring."

Marilyn Medalie was one of the first to import sheitels to South Africa and has been in the industry for more than 40 years. Along with her experience and depth of knowledge, she is surrounded by a top team of professionals. The bulk of her clients are Orthodox Jewish women, but they include a

broad range of women dealing with cancer, illness, alopecia, balding, and hair loss.

Faygie Sztern manages a wig repair and service team and makes her own brand of wigs. Patching or weaving human hair into delicate lace tops due to balding or hair loss – yes, wigs get it too – is a whole other sector of the business.

Conventional hairdressers can do damage to an expensive wig by not washing it correctly or using styling aids that are too hot, placing heat in the wrong places, and burning the hair.

Women who have made the investment know that the fragility of the lace sheitel means that it must be worn, looked after, and maintained with the utmost gentle care. All of them know they must bring it to the right place for the right people to wash, style, colour, and maintain it.

"It's very different today from when I wore my first sheitel 28 years ago," says a local rebbetzin from the Johannesburg community. "The sheitels that younger women are wearing literally look like the hair is growing out of their head. I think it's a beautiful *mitzvah* and still important for Jewish women to present Yiddishkeit. They should look beautiful, and having beautiful hair means it has to start from the top."



The sheitel market is growing exponentially, especially in South Africa

A new wave of professionalism has washed over this industry, offering women of all ages a variety of personalised services with customisable sheitels to suit their style, not to mention their bank balance. All in support of women who wish to continue the tradition

The sheitel has made a dramatic shift with the introduction of lace

tops. Skin tops, also known as silk tops, were the only wigs available until about five years ago. With these wigs, the hair is injected through the fabric of the silk caps, creating a hidden knot. The silk cap matches the colour of your scalp and so looks like the hair is coming from your own head. However, sometimes those sheitels moved a little. With these wigs of the past, no matter how beautiful the hair quality, cut, colour, or style, the weight and fit was uncomfortable, heavy, clumsy, and often revealing that it was a wig.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Stay strong, survive!

Spring Day in South Africa typically heralds a season of renewal, with the opening of public pools and the blooming of flowers. Yet, 1 September was darkened by the heartbreaking discovery of six recently executed hostages in Gaza.

The six, Eden Yerushalmi (24); Carmel Gat (40); Almog Sarusi (27); Alex Lobanov (32); Ori Danino (25); and Hersh Goldberg-Polin (23), had endured 331 days of unimaginable suffering in captivity. Our community, like all of the world's Jewry, has been in a state of shock and heartbreak over this tragic news.

We weep together as a community, finding solace in the shared nature of our sorrow. As a community leader, a mother, and a fellow human being, I grieve with you. In the face of such loss, we find strength in our unity and resilience. Though we may not have known them personally, they were our family, and we should all be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Israel.

In particular, American hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin had become one of the most well-known faces, and his mother had gone to every effort to secure his safe release. Only a few weeks ago, Hersh's parents, Rachel and Jon Goldberg-Polin, delivered an emotional plea at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Their appearance at the event was greeted with thunderous applause and led to the chant of "Bring them home!" The speech, on the most important night of the conference, brought the issue into the spotlight in an extremely public manner. Rachel ended her speech with a heart wrenching plea, "Hersh, if you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive."

The families of these hostages, especially the

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

### ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Goldberg-Polins, have exemplified the essence of Jewish peoplehood and the fierce love of a parent. Their unwavering commitment to securing the release of their loved ones has been a beacon of hope and inspiration for all of us. Only last week, the family were among a group of relatives who used a loudspeaker to project their voices into Gaza and tell their loved ones that they are loved and that they should stay strong and survive.

Even in the face of unimaginable loss, Rachel has continued to champion the motto that guided their campaign, "Hope is mandatory." In spite of the pain of losing her son, she has shared words of hope with fellow parents, praying that this tragedy might lead to an end to the madness and the swift release of the remaining hostages.

At the funeral, President Isaac Herzog expressed deep regret and sorrow for failure to secure the safe release of the hostages, calling for global leaders to come together to end the conflict. Hersh's father poignantly expressed his hope that his son's memory would inspire change, saying, "May his memory be a revolution", and that his death might not be in vain but rather a catalyst for peace.

We held on to so much hope that we would one day see these six hostages among those who, G-d willing, will be freed, and though hope has now been lost for Eden, Carmel, Almog, Alex, Ori, and Hersh, it's not yet lost for the others. To them we say, "If you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive!"



## The day we became adults

To have adult children is to know that though you are expected never to make a wrong decision, you always will. It's to know when to treat them like the strong independent people they are, and when to metaphorically dab their brows, say "open wide", and "airplane" cough mixture into their petulant mouths. All while humming something from Mary Poppins about a spoonful of sugar making the medicine go down.

I might have mentioned the time when my 20-something-year-old son asked me when he would feel like an adult. A question I had no definitive answer to, and that I put to listeners. Answers included suggestions like filing the first tax return, getting married, having a child, and hosting the first Shabbat meal.

I've come to think that we grow up when we can see our parents for who they are. And not for who we want them to be. We become adults when we accept that they do both brilliant and stupid things, and that they make both inspired and terrible decisions. It's also around realising that no matter how old they are, there are times when they, too, would love to be read a bedtime story that ends in the same predictable way each time.

Israel supporters experienced adulthood on 7 October 2023. It was the day that went off script and when the story took a terrible turn. It was a day of stark and painful recognition that Israeli intelligence could fail, that prior decisions – like the disarming of individuals in the Gaza envelope – could have consequences. It was also the day that the sophisticated border was able to be breached. It was a day that elucidated that enemies had weaponised a generation with hatred and rage so intense, they were willing to perpetrate the unthinkable.

It was a day when our generation of Jews was forced into adulthood.

What has exacerbated this is that Prime Minister

### INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Benjamin Netanyahu had long branded himself as the "protector". Unafraid to challenge global leaders, to take on Iran at the United Nations, and to demand what was needed for Israel's security, he couldn't have projected more of a "dad" image if he tried.

If that wasn't challenge enough, the 11 months post October have shown success, but also further failure. Netanyahu has had to balance an increasingly hostile world with a hostile and angry voter base. He has struggled to handle the relationship with the hostage families particularly well. He has also underestimated the deadly and sophisticated enemy waging war on the mainstream media and social media fronts. He has largely avoided answering questions posed by the Israeli press, and avoided directly acknowledging responsibility.

He has also done some things right. He has remained steadfast, supportive of the Israel Defense Forces, resolute regarding the threat of Iran, and has stood firm when pressured by the United States. He has also withstood allegations that he wishes to prolong the war, that his priority is his political career, not the people of the country. He has also been accused of not caring about the hostages, which is one of the allegations that are amplified by a social media battalion trained in psychological warfare.

The reality is that he is neither all good nor all bad. He has strengths and weaknesses. He is a human with flaws. And my belief that he should resign and call for an election doesn't change that.

The transition to adulthood is rarely easy. And rarely linear. But if 7 October has taught us anything, it's that failure to do so can be deadly. As much as we would love to be read a story and be tucked into bed, the reality is that growing up is the only way we might stand a chance of living happily ever after.

## Yeshiva College celebrates art of spring

Yeshiva College Primary School hosted a spring art exhibition and auction on Spring Day, Sunday, 1 September featuring the artwork of its students in class. A silent auction was held for parents, with proceeds being donated to charitable organisations in our community.



Spring Day art exhibition and auction held at Yeshiva College Primary School

## Hebrew Order of David International marks 120 years

The Hebrew Order of David (HOD) International, a distinguished organisation with roots dating back to its founding in South Africa in 1904, commemorated its 120th anniversary last month with a grand celebration and awards evening held at the HOD Centre in Orchards, Johannesburg.

The event underscored the organisation's enduring legacy and global presence. Grand President Anton Teper, who travelled from London for the occasion, was joined by members from across South Africa, including Cape Town, Durban, East London, and Gqerba.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards to members for their exceptional dedication and long service. Many honourees have been part of the organisation for more than 50 years, with Neil Melnick standing out for his remarkable 66 years of commitment.

The HOD continues to flourish internationally



The Hebrew Order of David International 120th anniversary dinner

with lodges in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Israel, while maintaining a strong presence in South Africa. The celebration not only honoured the order's illustrious past, it looked forward to its ongoing impact and future growth on the global stage.

The HOD conducts a significant range of services and community activities aimed at improving the lives of the less fortunate in all communities by raising funds and distributing aid to worthy causes.

## Jewish values take centre stage at Momentum summit

Momentum's Fellowship Summit in Grabouw from 22 August brought together more than 100 women from 27 different Jewish organisations.

Part of Momentum's Fellowship programme, the summit was an emotional and empowering three-day experience to leverage leadership and connect with Jewish values.

"There are hundreds of leadership opportunities and courses out there, but the fact that this one is driven by Jewish values and looks at leadership from a Jewish lens is something sacred," said Dana Sender-Mulla, the director of leadership development at Momentum. "We're all really working toward *tikkun olam* [healing the world],

the greater good, and living a life of purpose."

Momentum, which works closely with the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, arranges trips to Israel for Jewish parents from around the world, the majority of whom

are mothers, to help them connect with their Jewish values and heritage. The organisation refers to the experience as a "journey of growth".



Momentum's Fellowship Summit in Grabouw

Photo: Emima Levin

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# Rugby newcomers selected for Golden Lions Under-15s

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Prop Gabriel Schiffman started playing rugby only six months ago and blindside flank Devon Berger initially never really liked the sport, but both have been selected for the Golden Lions Youth Rugby Under-15 squad.

These two 14-year-old King David Linksfield students, who play for Wasps Rugby Club in Edenvale, will be heading with the Lions Under-15 team to Durban to play against the Bulls, Sharks, and Falcons in an interprovincial tournament from 22 September to 28 September.

Proudly donning a Lions jersey, Berger and Schiffman's team will be playing five out of those seven days in this annual interprovincial tournament for teenage boys and girls.

When the 26-man squad was announced on 7 August, Berger and Schiffman were two of seven players from the Wasps. The other players play for Diggers, Alberton, and Pirates rugby clubs.

"While at Wasps, we were encouraged to attend the trials for the Golden Lions youth teams," Schiffman, a Grade 8 student, says. "After two gruelling rounds, I made it through to the final round held in Alberton. I didn't enjoy that game and thought it was very hard. I didn't hold high hopes of being selected."

Grade 9 student Berger, who took up rugby at the beginning of last year, says they played for their club teams in the first two weekends of the three tough



Gabriel Schiffman (wearing the black scrum cap)

weekends of the trials. "For the last weekend, only 60 boys out of all the teams were invited back for the last round of trials," he says.

"The competition was tough. We were also under constant observation from selectors looking for any mistake, but also for the moments of brilliance. These games were also unlike any other game, as I had to play for my team but also ensure that I stood out if I wanted to make it. I knew this wouldn't be easy, so I pushed myself to the limit and it paid off."

Berger stood out by "always making my tackles, sealing rucks, and running hard at my opponents. I made sure I kept my fitness levels up by doing some training at home on the treadmill."

Two weeks after the final round of trials, the selection process took place. "I found out that I made the team when it was released on the Golden Lions Instagram page," Berger says.

Schiffman was at school when a friend came up to him

and wished him *mazel tov* as he had just seen the announcement on the Lions Instagram page.

"I couldn't believe it!" Schiffman says. "The hard work and effort certainly paid off." In the past six months leading up to his selection for the Lions youth squad, he went to school rugby practice three times a week and club practice twice a week. He also swam laps in the pool when he had time.

Says Schiffman, "It's a huge honour and privilege to play for the Lion's provincial team, and I'm really proud of myself. I can't wait to go to Durban with my team and hopefully bring home the gold medal for Lions.



Devon Berger with ball in hand heading for the try line

Maybe one day you'll see me playing for the Springboks at the Rugby World Cup." Lions youth players have gone on to represent the Springboks. Schiffman's fellow prop, Julian Redelinghuys, for example, represented the Golden Lions at junior level and went on to play for the Springboks.

Schiffman never realised rugby would be his calling

because he is an avid swimmer, having completed two Midmar Miles. When he started high school at the beginning of this year, he gained a new-found knowledge about rugby and started enjoying the sport, having played touch rugby in primary school.

The previous year, Schiffman joined a clinic called Young Guns, run by two ex-King Davidian first-team rugby players to get primary school students ready for their first season of rugby in Grade 8.

At the start of his high school career, Berger "never really liked rugby, but decided to do it because my friends told me it would be fun. I went to a few training sessions and played a few games for the King David Linksfield A team. After a week or two, I was hooked. I loved being on the field. I love the physicality and speed of the game."

Some of Berger's memorable moments in rugby include "winning the Pirates League Cup with my Under-14 King David Linksfield team; getting players' player of the season for my club Wasps; and of course, making Golden Lions. I was captain of my Wasps team a few times and loved the leadership role."

Berger not only hopes to win the tournament with the Lions in September, but would like to win more Pirates League cups with King David Linksfield and get selected for the Grant Khomo Week next year. The latter is a prestigious South African Rugby Union Under-16 tournament named after one of the country's best rugby centres who put to rest the myth that only white players could excel in the sport.

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